

# THE FRAGRANCE

OF EAST

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Vol. VI No. 2

April to June 2004

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Academy of Journalism and Publicity  
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Rs. 30/-

# The Fragrance of East

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Annual Subscription	:	Rs. 100 (per copy Rs. 30) In India \$ 25 (USA, UK, Asian Africa and European Countries)
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**Editor's Note:**

## **The Legacy of Islam**

After September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Centre buildings were attacked and hundred of lives lost, Islam became as hot as a piece of coal for its followers. Yet it had more followers than ever before and they were spread all over the globe. However, Muslims everywhere appeared to be in turmoil and felt themselves in the dock, accused of belonging to a terrorist, fanatic and extremist religion. Islam it seemed was under siege. The war on terrorism that President George Bush declared after 9/11 threatens to stretch into the century. For many Muslims it appears to be war against Islam. For a Muslim therefore on both a global and personal level this is a time of challenge and despair.

Terrorism in any form does not have the sanction of Islamic ethics. The Holy Quran has repeatedly warned Muslims to live a pious and peaceful life and eschew violence. Even in a few wars, which were fought during the life of the Prophet Muslims mostly, remained defensive. The wars were mainly against the tribes of Mecca and were in retaliation.

The political edge to Islamic expansion made it perforce accretive and adaptive. It is not without significance that Christians and Jews were not forced to convert in the recently acquired Islamic lands since this was not politically expedient. And Islamic law sanctified this. Linguistic conversions, i.e. speaking of Arabic language preceded religious conversions. After the demise of the Prophet this spirit of tolerance only intensified. Under the Ummayyad and later the Abbasid Caliphate the first cultural transformations that were noticed had more to do with language than religion. Within one century Arabic became the official

language of the state and its bureaucracy. Being Arab in the Islamic Empires implied a linguistic identity more than a religious or ethnic identity.

The spirit of accommodation was more than evident in the flowering of a rich Islamic scientific culture during the period of the Caliphates. Until the rise of modern science, no other civilization engaged as many scientists, produced as many scientific books, or provided as varied and sustained support for scientific activity as Islam. Religious discourses on science advocated its separateness from religion. As a result a value free or ethically neutral scientific knowledge that is not specific to any particular culture was able to develop. Islamic science inherited all the earlier pre-Islamic and Christian and Iranian scientific traditions and fused them into one new whole. Baghdad was at the center of this scientific activity. Here the Abbasi caliphs Harun-al-Rashid and Al Mamun patronized scientific activity of higher caliber. The latter started a programme of astronomical observations in Baghdad and Damascus. Along with Baghdad and Damascus many other centers also emerged. These were located in Shiraz and Isfahan in Iran. Scientists from Muslim Spain-Andalucia- travelled to these centers for training. And like in astronomy and mathematics in the realm of medicine as well Baghdad remained the dominant center for the production of the Arabic medical tradition. It was here that many Greek medical treatises were translated into Arabic. A worth mentioning fact here is that most of these centers of learning under the Muslim rulers had non-Muslim scholars and translators. They were given due recognition of their merits.

This narrative of Islamic expansion reveals that Islam carries a rich intellectual legacy of tolerance of other cultures and a spirit of open mindedness to learn and adopt the good

points of other civilizations. Moreover, in Islamic states non-Muslims lived quite happily and carried out their religious obligations freely. Even in trade and other commercial activities they enjoyed full liberty. Such a religion can never encourage violence and hatred. We need to remind ourselves of this rich history of our religion and use it to mould us into better human beings. ■

S.A.

Patrons are requested to introduce The Fragrance of East amongst their circle of influence.

We also invite suggestions for better presentation of views and make the magazine more attractive.

Editor



# CALIPHATE OF HAZRAT ALI

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

For a few days after the demise of 'Uthman the administrator of Medina Ghufqi b. Harb and other citizens of the city awaited in suspense about the person who comes forward to assume the reins of caliphate. The Egyptians were insistent that 'Ali should take over as the new Caliph but 'Ali declined. He hid himself in walled greeves; nobody knew what to do in such a situation. At last Ali yielded to the entreaties of his friends. Before the oath of allegiance was taken, a public opinion survey was made in Medina. Everybody opined that no one except 'Ali was competent to hold that precarious office. In fact, nobody was left there after Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman who had the ability and competence of 'Ali to hold the helm of Islamic empire at that crucial stage. A report says:

" 'Ali came to the mosque clad in a wrapping and a woollen turban. He had his shoes in his hand. Leaning on his bow, he ascended the pulpit and received the oath of fealty from the people. It was Friday, the 24th Dhill Hijja 35 A.H. (23rd June, 656).

## First Sermon of 'Ali

The time for Friday prayer arrived. When 'Ali ascended the pulpit, those who had not earlier pledged allegiance took the oath of fidelity. It was the last Friday of Dhil Hijja when 'Ali first addressed the congregation as their Caliph. After praising God he said:

"Allah has sent down His Book as the Guide which elucidates the good and the evil; so adopt the good and eschew the evil. Allah has made many things inviolable; of these the highest is the (life of a) Muslim. Allah has firmly integrated the rights of Muslims through *tauhid* (Oneness of God) and sincerity. He is (alone) a Muslim from whose hands

and tongue all other Muslims are safe, except that the religion and its law require any Muslim to be reprov'd and dealt with according to law. It is not meet for any Muslim to put another Muslim to harm save that it become mandatory to do so. Make haste to discharge the obligations you owe to the commoners and the elites both. The people are in your front and the Doomsday behind you. It is approaching fast, keep yourself light so that you reach your destination. The life of the hereafter is awaiting you. Fear God in fulfilling your obligations to the creations of God and their habitation. You will be questioned even about the beasts and the land (on the Day of judgement). I ask you again to obey Allah and keep away from His disobedience and sins. Adopt if you find anything virtuous; evade if you find an evil.

"And remember, when ye were few reckoned feeble in the land, and were in fear lest men should extirpate you; how He gave you refuge, and strengthened you with His help and made provisions of good things for you, that haply ye might be thankful."

It was the most appropriate sermon delivered at the right place and right time. The Commander of the faithful had invited attention towards what Muslims required to be reminded. The disastrous conditions they had brought upon themselves had been cause by losing the sense of dignity of Muslims and inviolability of Muslim blood. The blood of Muslims had been rendered so cheap that Caliph Uthman had to become the victim of their insurgency. This calamity had befallen in Medina, near the grave of the Prophet and his own mosque in the presence of the Muslims. Therefore, it was incumbent for the successor of the departed Caliph to dwell upon on the inviolability of Muslim life and blood in his first address, urge the people to inculcate awe of God and remind them of the grave responsibility lying on all as

the custodians of the dominion and authority bestowed by God on them - their obligation to all the creatures of God including the beasts and the land.

'Ali adverted, in his pithy and articulate address, what would be the guiding policy of the new government. He said: 'Adopt if you find anything virtuous, evade if you find an evil.' The verse from the Qur'an recited by him thereafter was very timely since it reminded Muslims to compare their earlier and present positions. There was the time when they were fewer in numbers, materially weak and culturally backward. Nobody in the world thought of them as of any consequence: they were like the piece of meat on the palm which could be snatched away by any bird of prey. These were the people who had gained power and prestige, a vast empire, peace and security and affluence. God had made them glorious, their flag was fluttering over land and sea and all other nations had been filled with their awe.

### **Troublesome Times**

Ali's accession to caliphate took place at a time when the situation was most difficult and complicated. Caliph 'Uthman had been brutally killed a few days back which was shocking and abominable to all conscientious men. Scandal-mongers were spreading rumours; everybody asked the other what was going to happen next. The thorny problems of the state were being discussed everywhere and everybody had a new suggestion to make. To this was added the cry of vengeance from certain quarters which had been a passive spectator of the ghastly crime of the late Caliph's murder. Among these agitators the foremost were the Egyptians and Iraqis and Bedouins from the Arabian desert.

Mutinous conditions in any country normally result not only in the break up of law and order but also camouflage those objectives which keep a nation or country united. At the time Arabia was passing through a crisis, one Caliph had been killed, the other was not firmly in the saddle and a

sort of vacuum existed in the nation which constituted the greatest danger for the stability of the country in those unsettled conditions.

'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad has discussed the precarious and perplexing situation 'Ali had to face as the Caliph of Muslims although he was completely blameless since he had exerted more than anyone else among the aged companions to save the situation and his son Hasan had actively defended the late Caliph. He says:

'Ali received the oath of fealty after the mishap which was one of the most tragic and bloody events of Islamic history. Caliph 'Uthman had been done to death in his old age after being confined in his own house. He would have died of thirst if his murderers had prolonged the blockade for a few days more.

"The most delicate aspect of the whole affair consisted of the fact that the situation had become so involved and intractable that no course was left to resolve the dispute. It was something destined which, it seems, would have to come to pass in any case. Those who were responsible for this disastrous event were many and dispersed. There were different groups: if one became placid, the other became active and violent; leaving the problem as tangled and out of control as it had ever been. The groups that were well-disposed and spiteful were exerting equal pressure, but it was simply unfortunate that the measures that hastened the tragedy were taken by 'Uthman himself. May be that he had taken those measures after giving full thought to them, but their reaction was natural and led to the result not different from what his enemies had desired."

He goes on to say:

"The difficulty with 'Ali was that he had to hold the

reins of his charger tightly and at the same time remove the hurdles in the way so that his speed was not slowed down because of any barricade in his way."

Yet another difficulty was that those who had committed the crime had not been identified. No legal action could be taken against them since even the wife of the late Caliph had not been able to make out the culprits.

But the situation was even more complex. As 'Aqqad says:

'Once 'Ali desired to punish the murderers of 'Uthman. His entire soldiery numbering ten thousand turned up with lances in their hands crying that all of them were responsible for the murder of 'Uthman. If punishment was to be accorded to any one, all of them should be punished."

He says further :

'Whenever anyone insisted that the culprits should be punished, 'Ali replied: 'I am not aware of what you know, but how should I deal with the people on whom I exercise no authority, or rather they dominate over us. These are the people who had been assisted by your slaves and the Bedouins had also joined forces with them. They are all before you, they are doing what they desire. Do you see any possibility of gaining a hold upon them and taking the action you desire?

"If the persons demanding punishment to the murderers of 'Uthman had adopted the right course, they should have extended their support to the Caliph, so as to enable him to enforce the law. It was then that they should have called for punishing the culprits in keeping with the laws of *Shariah*."

Ibn Hajar has described the situation then obtaining

in the *Al-Isabah fi Tamiz is-Sahabah*. He says:

"Ali took the stand that the people demanding retribution should first submit to the head of state, the heirs of 'Uthman should lodge a plaint against the offenders and then the law of *Shariah* would take its course. Those against him insisted that criminals should be identified and slain. But 'Ali held the view that no retribution was possible without any complaint and evidence in its support. Both the parties were competent to form a juristic opinion. There were also a few among the companions of the Prophet who had remained neutral and not taken part in the battle as partisans of any party. 'Ammar's martyrdom had, however, left no doubt that 'Ali was right in his stand, and thus all the misgivings in this regard had been cleared."

### **Küfa as the Capital**

'Ali shifted his capital to Küfa in Iraq which became the new administrative and military centre of his dominion. It may be asked why 'Ali chose Küfa for his residence and the seat of Islamic realm, since Medina had enjoyed that position from the time of the Prophet to the martyrdom of 'Uthman.

The reason it seems to me, was that 'Ali wanted to spare his beloved city, where the Prophet had migrated, from internal strife and possible military depredations foreseen by him as the writing on the wall: sancity of the place which had the Prophet's grave and his mosque demanded that it should no more be the venue of any further disorder. A man like 'Ali should have naturally been anxious in this regard; for, after a few years the disastrous event of Harrah did take place during the reign of Yazid which stunned the entire nation of Islam because of the ravages committed in that holy city. However, Mahmud al-'Aqqäd had attributed geographical location, administrative convenience and

cultural reasons for the choice of Küfa.

" 'Ali made Küfa the metropolis of Islamic empire owing to political and strategic compulsions. The Islamic empire needed a central place, at that stage, where all the nations under it could repair conveniently. It had to be a place at the crossroad of trade routes to India, Persia, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Küfa had also developed as a cultural centre of calligraphy, language, recitation, geneology, poetics and storytelling. The place was eminently suited for being made the capital of the empire.

### **Battle of Jamal**

After the pledge of allegiance had been given to 'Ali, Talha, Zubayr and several other prominent companions of the Prophet approached him to punish the murderers of 'Uthman in accordance with the law. 'Ali however, contended that the culprits were not a few individuals; they had a large number of supporters and defenders and hence they could not be chastized in a day.

Talha and Zubayr went away to Makkah where they met 'Aisha who had gone there for the pilgrimage. With her they repaired to Basra demanding retribution for 'Uthman's murder. 'Ali, on coming to know these developments, made haste to reach Iraq leaving Sahl b. Hunayf as his deputy in Medina. Sahl b. Hunayf was later summoned by 'Ali to Iraq giving the charge of the city to Abul Hasan al-Mäzni. 'Ali halted at Zü Qär and sent 'Ammär b. Yasir and Hasan b. 'Ali to Küfa with the message to send reinforcements. After collecting his forces 'Ali advanced to Basra, where he gave battle to the force of Talha, Zubayr and 'Aisha on the day of Jamal, by the end of Jamadi-al-Akhir, 36 A.H. 'Ali emerged successful in the battle but he forbade pursuit of the fleeing army, killing of wounded soldiers and plunder of any kind. A number of persons enlisted in the army of 'Ali demanded distribution of booty captured from the enemy but 'Ali rejected this plea. Sabäites altercated with 'Ali on the issue,

but when 'Ali asked who would like 'Aisha, the mother of the faithful, to be allocated to him, they had no reply.

'Ali did not start the fighting. The engagement took place only after the other party attacked 'Ali's forces.

Tahāwi relates from Zayd b. Wahb that 'Ali had made camp at Dhi Qārah. he sent 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās to Kūfa for parleys with the opposite party but they showed disinclination to accept his suggestions. They, however, sallied forth when challenged by 'Ammār. Zayd also says that he was one of those who had come forward on the occasion along with others. Other reports also show that Zubayr and his men opened hostilities and then 'Ali had to fight them.

### **Respect Accorded to 'Aisha**

'Ali showed highest marks of respect to Aisha after the battle was over.

'Aisha was given a warm send off, record the historians, with a retinue of 40 women and a large number of bodyguards as her escort. She was also presented a purse of 12,000 *dirhams* which was further augmented by 'Abdullah b. J'afar b. Abi Tālib. She was not put to any trouble except that she had received a scratch from an arrow in the battlefield. The day she set off for Medina, 'Ali remained present along with others. 'Aisha bade farewell to all, saying, 'My sons, nobody should have any cause of complaint against the other. If there had been any grievance or misunderstanding between me and 'Ali, it was not more than what sometimes arises between a woman and her in-laws. Notwithstanding my grouses, 'Ali is among the righteous of the nation. 'Ali rejoined: By God mother of the faithful has told you the truth. We had no more differences than related by her. She is the wife of your Prophet in this world and the next.' 'Ali accompanied 'Aisha on foot for a few miles. He spent the whole day attending her when she left Basra on Monday, 1 Rajab 36/24 December 656.



A number of witnesses have reported that 'Aisha used to repent on her action and often said: 'Would that I had died before the day of *Jamal*.' She wept on remembering the incident so bitterly that her head-scarf used to get wet with tears.

After the battle was over, 'Ali inspected the dead bodies of the slain soldiers. Most of those killed in the battle were recognised by the people of Basra as rabble-pousers. 'Ali led their funeral prayers and ordered them to be buried collectively.

On his way back from the battle of Jamal, Zubayr stopped for rest at a place called Wādi al-Sab'a. He was pursued by 'Amar b. Jarmüz who overtook Zubayr when the latter had fallen asleep, and he killed Zubayr. Talha was wounded by an arrow shot by Marwān b. Hakam. He came to Basra where he died due to saturation of blood. According to another report he was killed in the battle and recognised by 'Ali who wiped his face and said: 'Allah may have mercy on you, O Abū Muhammad. It is heart-rending for me to find you here beneath the stars of the sky.' Thereafter he said lemantingly : 'God, I bemoan for all that has happened and wish that I had died twenty years earlier.

Zubayr was beheaded by 'Amr b. Jarmüz who took the head of Zubayr to 'Ali in the hope that he would be applauded for the feat and rewarded richly for it with some post of responsibility. But when he sought permission to present himself before 'Ali, the latter said : 'Do not allow him to come in. Instead, give him the tidings of hell!' Another version relates that 'Ali also said, 'I heard the Prophet saying that the murderer of Ibn Safyah would dwell in hell. Give him the tidings of bottomless pit.'

### **Differences and Dissensions among the Companions**

The conflict among the Prophet's companions which ultimately led to hostilities needs to be reviewed dispassionately and coolly. It would not be fair to condemn those responsible for the discord as forward, worldly-minded

or self-centered for this would mean arriving at a hasty decision without giving full thought to the events and circumstances. A historian has to analyse the situation and conditions connected with an event in an objective, impartial manner, consider the character of the persons who had a role in it and social conditions of the time. The complexity of any situation cannot also properly be understood without taking into account the emotional state of the people. It is not unoften that we make a mistake in delivering a verdict on happenings of the recent past simply because we sometimes fail to take a balanced view of the conditions and circumstances of such events. Therefore, it becomes all the more necessary to consider the circumstances, social conditions and motives and emotions of the people involved in any incident of the days bygone which were entirely different from our own. In such a case it would be essential to take a total view of the incident along with the religiosity and past services of the principal actors in the cause of Islam. The battle of Jamal was the outcome of a complex situation: a group was demanding punishment of the assassins of Uthmān while the other was finding itself unable to comply with this request. 'Ali representing the latter group, was placed in this predicament and had to bear the brunt of ensuing discord and hostilities.

Abul Bakhtari has been quoted by Abu Bakr that when 'Ali was asked whether the people who fought him at Jamal were polytheists, he replied: "They had already forsaken polytheism." He was again asked if they were hypocrites? He replied, "Hypocrites seldom engage in the remembrance of Allah." 'Ali was again asked: "Then who were they?" "They were," replied 'Ali, "my own brothers who had risen in revolt against me. I pray Allah that they and we, all of us, might be amongst those about whom God has said: *And We remove whatever rancour may be in their hearts.*" A large number of reports have been handed down which show that those who participated in the battle of Jamal recanted from their earlier stand. A report related by 'Aisha

on the authority of Zubayr, which has been confirmed by Abu Bakr and several others, says that Al-Häkim was told by Thaur b. Mujzät that he found Talha, after the battle of Jamal, in the throes of death. Talha asked: 'To whose party do you belong?' On being told that he was for 'Ali, Talha said, "Stretch your hand so that I may take an oath of fealty on thy hand." He gave out his hand and Talha swore allegiance to 'Ali and gave up the ghost. When the incident was narrated before 'Ali, he remarked: "God is Great. The prediction made by the Prophet came true. Allah did not like that Talha should enter paradise without swearing allegiance to me."

Ibn Khaldün, the great philosopher-historian of Islam has correctly observed in his *Prolegomena* that:

"Beware! Do not think or speak ill of anyone of them. One ought to find some justification for each faction for they deserve to be rated highly by us. They differed on principle and rightfully fought the battle. All those who killed or were slain were fighting in the way of God for upholding truth and justice. Rather, I think that their differences were a blessing for the later generations so that everyone may choose anyone of them as his guide and Imam. Keep this in mind and try to understand the divine wisdom governing the world and the beings."

Ibn Khaldün further writes:

"The doors of menace were wide-open (after the assassination of 'Uṭhmän). Every group was justified in taking the course it did, for each wanted the truth to prevail and further the cause of religion. None wanted that the religion should be put to any harm. Each reviewed the situation in this light and took a decision according to his understanding. Allah knows their situation as well as what was in their hearts. We deem all of them as virtuous, as proven by their own deeds and reports handed down by reliable witnesses."

Ibn Khaldün also says:

"The stand taken by 'Ali in this dispute was undoubtedly correct yet no evil intention can be attributed to Mu'āwiyah also. He was well-intentioned but made a mistake. Thus both the groups were justified so far as their motives are concerned, but a peculiarity of the power is that one should wrest it for himself alone from others. It was not possible for Mu'āwiyah to give up this peculiarity either for himself or for his people. This was a natural trait strengthened by one's own predilections and the support one gets from his family and tribe."

The battle of Jamal was like a storm in the tea cup in which the outburst of excited feelings subsided promptly but confrontation between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah which followed it took the shape of a struggle between two precepts and differing viewpoints. It was a fratricidal war which resulted in heavy bloodshed.

### **War Between 'Ali and Mu'āwiyah**

The year 36 A.H. set in with Caliph 'Ali at the helm. He had even appointed governors for various regions among whom was also Sahl b. Hunayf who was to replace Mu'āwiyah as the governor of Syria. When Sahl reached Tabük he was met by the cavalry of Mu'āwiyah and told that he would be acceptable to the Syrians if he had not been appointed by 'Uthmān. Sahl asked them whether they were aware of the latest developments. They replied in affirmative but refused to acknowledge him as their chief. He accordingly returned to 'Ali.

Mu'āwiyah also sent an emissary to inform 'Ali that the people of Syria were adamant that the murderers of 'Uthmān should be punished. He also told 'Ali that when he left Damascus, the shirt of 'Uthmān was placed on the pulpit of the mosque where seventy thousand elderly persons were weeping and lamenting the martyrdom of 'Uthmān. Thereupon 'Ali exclaimed: 'O Lord! Thou knowest that I have no hand in 'Uthmān's bloodshed.'

'Ali resolved to fight the Syrians and set out from

Medina after appointing Qatham b. 'Abbās as the governor of the city, with the intention of fighting those who were flouting his authority. Hasan, son of Ali, advised his father to desist from the fratricide since it was likely to result in a great carnage and drive a wedge between the Muslims. 'Ali, however, disregarded his advice and started making preparations for the conflict. But before he could take the road to Syria, he had to bend his steps for the battle of Jamal described earlier.

'Ali left Basrah and arrived in Kūfa on 12th Rajab, 36/3rd January 657. There he was asked to stay in the white palace built by Iranian Emperors but he refused since 'Umar had refused to put up there. He pitched his camp in an open ground and offered two rakats of prayer in the chief mosque of the city. He delivered a sermon in which he commanded the good and forbade evil. Thereafter he sent a letter to Mu'āwiyah through Jarir b. Abdullah in which he wrote.

"Those who swore allegiance to Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman have sworn allegiance to me on the same basis on which they swore allegiance to them. He who was present has no other choice and he who was absent has no right to reject; and consultation is confined to Muhājirs and Ansars. If they agree on an individual and take him to be Caliph, it would be deemed to mean Allah's pleasure. If anyone keeps out by way of objection or innovation and he would be returned to the position from where he kept out. If he refuses he would be fought for following a course other than that of the believers and Allah would put him back from where he had run away."

### **Battle of Siffin**

'Ali set out from Kūfa with the intention of invading Syria, Mu'āwiyah, on the other hand, collected his forces and headed towards Siffin on the Euphrates for it was the route to be taken by 'Ali. 'Ali despatched a vanguard under Ushtar al-Nakha'i with strict instructions not to attack the

enemy first but to invite it to swear allegiance to him. Ushtar Nakha'i followed the directions scrupulously for three days; his contingents stood face to face with the enemy but there was no fighting except minor skirmishes. In the meantime 'Ali himself reached the battlefield. Mu'äwiyah had already brought his forces to the front. Initially there was some fighting over the water courses taken by the Syrians under their control and closed by them to the Iraqis. Ultimately, the two parties reached a settlement that both the parties will have free access to the water courses.

'Ali then sent a few of his officers to advise Mu'äwiyah to render allegiance to him but Mu'äwiyah insisted that the murderers of 'Uthaman should first be dealt with. A desultory fighting continued for a month but with the opening of the new year, the 37th of the Hijra, a truce was agreed upon for the month of Muharram in the hope that the interlude might be helpful in averting the clash of arms. The month was spent in exchange of deputations between the two parties but no settlement could be reached. At last both the armies were drawn in full array and hostilities were renewed. 'Ali, however, gave directions to his men that they would not begin the fighting, no wounded person would be killed, no woman would be attacked or insulted nor anybody would imprecate upon the chiefs of the opposing army. For a week the fighting was desultory as before but it became increasingly severe. Both the armies fought during the day and separated in the night to renew it next morning with greater vigour. Feats of bravery were displayed by both the armies and many men of rank were slain. 'Ammär b. Sir was slain by the Syrians which, as Ibn Kathir says demonstrated that 'Ali was in the right.

the fighting continued in this wise until Friday, when 'Ali's forces were about to have the upper hand. The Syrians army then raised the sacred scrolls aloft on the points of lances and started shouting; The Book of the Lord. Let it decide between us! They argued that if all of them were to die fighting, who would defend the Islamic realm, who would

fight in the way of God and who would defeat the infidels and polytheists. Witnessing the Scripture held aloft the Iraqis also said that they accepted the Book and its judgement. At the same time, Mus'yir b. Fidki, a man from the tribe of Tamim, Zayd b. Husain of Tayy (alias al-Sabäi) and a number of others including some *qurra*, the reciters of the Quran, said in unison, 'O Ali, agree to the judgement of Book of God. If you reject, we would hand you over to the enemy or, deal with you in the manner we treated Ibn 'Affän. 'Ali expostulated with his men. He pleaded to continue the fight since it was a ruse to avoid defeat. Ushtur al-Nakha'i also tried to reason with them but to no avail. The Syrians and Iraqis ceased fighting and protracted negotiations ensued which brought the two parties to agree on referring the matter for arbitration. It was decided that the matter of appointment of Caliph should be left to the decision of two umpires - one each to be appointed by 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah nominated 'Amr b. al-Aas while 'Ali wanted to appoint 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas but the *qurra* persisted on the nomination of Abu Musä al-Ash'ari.

### **Arbitration**

Abu Musä al-Ash'ari was summoned from his house. When the news of accord was broken to him, he said, 'Praise be to God,' but when he was told that he was to act as an arbiter, he added: 'To God we belong and unto Him do we return.'

An agreement signed by 'Ali and Mu'awiyah bound them to accept the decision of umpires to whom guarantee was given for the safety of their person and families by both the parties. It was also agreed that their decision would be accepted by the entire nation of Islam.

### **Emergence of Khärijites**

The agreement was read out to the people of Bani Tamim by Ash'ath b. Qays. 'Urwa b. Uzina immediately sprang up on his feet to say: 'Do you appoint arbiters in the religion of God?' The hint dropped by 'Urwa was seized

upon by a number of *Qurras* among the supporters of 'Ali and they began to shout: 'Judgement belongs to God alone.' That is how the schism of the sect known as Kharijites came into existence and the saying became their article of faith.

As 'Ali returned to Küfa, a body of 12,000 men fell out from his army ranks and withdrew to a place called Harüra. Their secession gave them the name 'Khawärij, that is, those who went out. 'Ali sent, 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas to them who succeeded in bringing back some of them who recanted their views but the majority remained firm on its stand. They agreed among themselves to be strict in commanding the good and forbidding the evil but vigorously protested to 'Ali against the setting up of a human tribunal above the divine world.

Ibn Jarir has related that once when 'Ali was delivering a sermon, a Kharijite stood up and said, 'O 'Ali, you have associated people with the religion and God although judgement belongs to God alone.' At once those present there began shouting: 'Judgement belongs to God alone.' 'Ali replied : What you say is correct but the interpretation you are putting upon it and intention of those repeating it is wrong.' Thereafter those people deserted Küfa and settled in Nahrwan.

### **Decision of the Umpires**

The two umpires, Abu Müsa and 'Amr met at Dumatul Jundal during the month of Ramadhan. 'Amr pressed Abu Müsa to accept Mü'awiyah as the Caliph, but the latter disagreed. After considering a few other names they agreed that in view of the turn of events it would be in the interest of the Muslims to depose both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah and then leave it to the people to elect someone else as the Caliph.

'Amr asked Abu Müsa to announce the decision before the people who had assembled to hear them. Abu Müsa stood up and said, 'We have given thought to the affairs of the Muslims and found that nothing will be more helpful in restoring peace and concord amongst the people



than to depose both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. After that your elders shall choose a man to take their place. Therefore, I depose 'Ali and Mu'awiyah both.' He stepped aside and 'Amr came forward. 'You have heard the judgement of Abu Müsa,' he said, he has deposed his claimant. I, too, depose him and appoint my claimant Mü'awiyah for he is the heir of 'Uthman, an avenger of his blood and most entitled hot words, but Abu Müsa felt so ashamed and disgusted that he immediately left the place for Makkah.

Kharijites, on the other hand, gained strength. They got so infuriated that one of their leaders threatened 'Ali that if he submitted to arbitration in the matter of Allah's Book, they would fight him for the sake of winning the pleasure of God. They assembled in the house of 'Abdullah b. Wahb al-Räsibi who made a harangue urging the people to lead a life of virtue and prepare for the hereafter. He asked them to command the good and forbid the evil and condemned all other people as transgressors. He also implored the Kharijites to leave the place for taking up residence in some cavity of the hills or to go to Madain so as to overpower the city and live there according to their tenets. They accordingly left the place leaving their kith and kin under the delusion of betaking the path of virtue.

### **Arbitration**

It would be appropriate to cite here the observations of Al-'Aqqad about the circumstances in which 'Ali had to accept the proposal of arbitration since it will help us to understand the extremist view taken by the Kharijites. Al-'Aqqad writes in the *Al-Abqariyat al-Islamiyah*:

'Those who had condemned 'Ali for accepting the arbitration had, in my opinion acted impetuously. Had 'Ali refused arbitration they would have promptly criticized him with the same fervour and insisted upon its acceptance because 'Ali had not agreed to it willingly but in the circumstances in which he had no other choice. He gave assent to it when his forces had

declined to fight and were about to group themselves into two contending factions, one in favour of arbitration and the other against it, and to start fighting with one another.

'The historians who approve 'Ali's action in accepting the arbitration but disapprove his nomination of Abu Mūsa Ash'ari, whose weakness and indecisiveness was known to 'Ali, forget that abu Mūsa was imposed on him precisely in the same way as he was forced to agree to arbitration. An even more important fact that is usually lost sight of is that 'Amr b. al-'Aas would have never agreed to depose Mu'awiyah no matter who among Abu Mūsa Ash'ari, Ushtur al-nakhai and 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas has represented 'Ali. Nor would have 'Amr b. al-'Aas consented to the caliphate of 'Ali with the result that both the umpires would have remained adamant and the matter would have ended almost in the same way as it did. Thus, a critical appraisal of history leads to the conclusion that the best choice for 'Ali was the course he had adopted whether by mistake or knowing that the result of either alternatives would be the same."

### **Khārijites and Sabaites**

It appears necessary to describe here the Khārijites and Sabaite sects which became a source of great trouble to 'Ali. Only God knows why 'Ali had to face these ordeals. These exasperating problems had perhaps been destined to enable 'Ali to demonstrate his unusual talents and brilliance.

### **Khārijites**

The Khārijites were instinctively simpletons who took every word literally, had a negative attitude for their puritanism was marked by an extremism which failed to see contradiction in the application of their principles.

They had been conscripted into 'Ali's army and mostly

belonged to the tribe of Tamim. They revolted against 'Ali for submitting to the decision of a human tribunal in a matter pertaining to the Book of God but ultimately came to believe that every arbitration was a sin since the commandments of God were self-evident. They argued that referring any matter for arbitration meant that there was a doubt about the correctness of the issues referred for a decision. Their annoyance on the point found expression in the adage: "Judgement belongs to God alone," which was accepted by them as a principle denoting their self-righteousness. They also liked to call themselves as *al-shūrāt*, that is, those who had sold their lives to God, taking the expression from the Quranic verse: "And of the mankind is he who sells himself, seeking the pleasure of Allah." 'Ali fought them at Nahrawan where a large number of them were slain. Their defeat increased their aversion to 'Ali to the extent that they intrigued against him and ultimately 'Abdur Rahman b. Muljam assassinated him. Their Bedouin simplicity and equalitarian attitude had a strong appeal for the non-Arab converts to Islam. Extremists both in their virtues and vices, they very often differed from their leaders and were predisposed to groupism on trivial issues. Being narrow-minded they were extremely intolerant of all opposition. At the same time, they were brave, frank and straightforward, and easily placed their life at stake for their beliefs. They never took even a date without first obtaining the permission of its owner but were ever willing to perpetrate any crime against Muslims not subscribing to their doctrines. 'Abdur Rahman b. Muljam was reciting the Qur'an while he stabbed 'Ali to death by his dagger. He was all in a flutter when told that his tongue would be severed. Enquired about the reason of his nervousness, he replied, "I do not want to live in the world like a dead man (i.e., not being able to recite the Qur'an). A writer has aptly observed that:

"These are the young men who look old in their youth; their eyes are downcast before evil; and their steps heavy in going to vice. They are lean because of

excessive prayers and pale and feeble due to frequent vigils."

### **Sabäites**

Al-'Aqqad writes about this sect:

"Sabäites are the followers of 'Abdullah b. Saba who was also known as Ibn Sa'ida. A Jew from Yemen, he was born to a Negress. His faith, called by some as the eclectic creed, was a combination of different doctrines. One of it was the Jewish belief that a saviour will be born in line of David; another was taken from the Hindus that God reincarnates Himself in a human form; the third was the Christian belief that Jesus Christ will come to the world again, and the fourth embraced the ancient Persian thought that the descendents of nobles and grandees have a sacred blood in their veins."

Al-'Aqqad further says:

"Sabaism was born in Yemen where its adherents ruled for sometime. The Sabaites exaggerated their devotion to 'Ali and ascribed divinity to him. In Egypt and Iran the seeds of Fatimide and Imamite sects of the Shi'as were sown and nourished until their shoots sprouted after a few generations."

The *Rijäl Kashi* is the most authoritative biographical dictionary of the Shi'ite sect. It says about 'Abdullah b. Saba that"

"He was the first man to declare that essentiality of belief in the Imamate of 'Ali and disavowed his enemies, declaimed against them and proclaimed them as disbelievers. The charge levelled against Shi'ite faith by its adversaries that its source lies in Judaism, is on account of him."

'Abdullah b. Saba and his followers elevated 'Ali; they first equated him with the prophets of God and then promoted him to divinity. He started preaching this strange

and startling doctrine among the people in Küfa. When 'Ali was informed of his beliefs, he first ordered to consign him and his followers to flames in two pits but later on banished them to the vicinity of Madain. After 'Ali was assassinated, Ibn Saba declared that 'Ali could not die and that he had gone to the sky like Jesus Christ. Some Sabaites hold the view that 'Ali is concealed in the clouds and the crash of thunder is in fact his voice. They greet 'Ali with the words 'Peace be on you, O Commander of the faithful' on hearing the roar of thunder. When Ibn Saba was informed that 'Ali had been martyred, he replied, "We will not believe it even if you bring his brain in a bag. He will not die till he has descended from the sky, and he will establish his kingdom over the world before his death.'

There has perhaps been no other movement based on intrigue and machination which has, as far as the writer of these lines is aware, so successfully thrived after the death of its founder.

The intellectual and functional framework of Ibn Saba is made of several conspicuous elements. Ibn Saba's psychological and religious traits and family features are clearly discernible in his creed. His followers prefer heavy going to smooth sailing and furtiveness to clarity. The Qur'an refers to this way of thought and inclination of the people of Saba by citing those who say : 'Our Lord! Make the stage between our journeys longer.' This phrase divulges the racial lineament of 'Abdullah b. Saba which lingered on for a long time in succeeding generations. Ibn Saba's mental state also shows traces of inferiority complex which he inherited from his Negress mother, and after whom he was called Ibn Sauda. The doctrines formulated by him reflect his Jewish legacy. All through history the followers of Judaism have tended to be destructive, have exerted baneful influence, damaged healthy traditions of literature and culture, corrupted the morals, and stimulated clandestine and conspiratorial activities. 'Ali's relationship with the Prophet his august and sublime character and brilliance of his head

and heart proved helpful to enlist supporters for this secretive movement.

The two sects diametrically opposed in their concepts and convictions, really marked the fulfilment of a prophecy by the Prophet of Islam. A number of narrators have reported on the authority of Hārith b. Husaryā, who was told by Abu Sādiq that 'Ali once said to Rabi b. al-Nājid :

"The Prophet on whom be peace and blessings, one day sent for me and said, 'You are akin to Jesus son of Mary. The Jews became so malicious towards him that they charged his mother with a calumny while Christians adored him so ardently that they elevated him to a position not occupied by him.' 'Ali continued : 'Lo! two groups shall meet their doom on account of enlarging or depreciating my personality : my admirers exaggerating me and attributing merits which I do not possess; and those bearing malice towards me will incite others to malign me . Hearken! I am neither a Prophet nor I receive revelations but I follow the Book and the *sunnah* to the best of my ability. It is incumbent on you to obey me in whatever I command for the obedience of God, whether you like it or not."

### **Example set by 'Ali**

All-knowing God knew that the community He had commissioned with the moral trusteeship of the world and which was to provide religious and ethical standard for guidance of all peoples and nations would have to come across all vicissitudes of human existence; often its members would be faithful and obedient, sometimes rebellious; there would be external aggressions as well as internal espionages, for all these were natural to human beings. It was therefore given specific instructions for different occasions, and conditions were created for its leaders to provide a practical example for varied occasions, so that the followers of Islam may not grope in the dark on a

new situation arising amidst them.

Dissension within the ranks of the Muslims and revolt against the rightful leader of the community, howsoever distasteful, was thus a situation as much inevitable as war against the infidels and apostates. Such a state of affairs required an example to be set by a righteous leader of the earliest generation of Muslims so that the community walked in his footsteps in the ages to come.

Sufyan b. 'Uaina, an eminent successor of the prophet companions, has expressed this reality cogently in these words :

'God conferred the Prophet with four sets of swords.

"One of it was with which he fought the idolaters. The other was with which Abu Bakr faced the apostates for God had commanded: *Fight them until they surrender.*"

"The other sword was with 'Umar with which he subdued the Megians and People of the Book since God had ordered: *Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah.....*

"Yet another sword was with 'Ali with which he faced those who rebelled and exceeded the bounds for God had said : *Fight ye that which doeth wrong till it returns upto the ordinance of Allah.*"

Abu Hanifa, the great jurist, has said:

" 'Ali was justified in fighting those whom he had to face and had he not done so Muslims would have never known what course was to be adopted in the case of dissension among Muslims." ■

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Editor



# SOCIAL CONDUCT AND MUTUAL RELATIONS

Mohammad Manzoor Nomani

Social conduct, good manners and respect for the right of each-other, again, form an important part of Islamic teachings. One can become a good and true Muslim only when one also observes faithfully the social code of Islam by which we mean the rules and regulations governing the modes and manners of behaviour between man and man and between man and society, as laid down by it. For instance, what should the attitude of parents be towards their children and of children towards their parents? What sort of conduct should prevail between brothers and between brothers and sisters? How should husband and wife live together? How are we to treat those who are older than ourselves and those that are younger? What are the rights of neighbours on us? How should the rich behave towards the poor and the poor towards the rich? What mode of relationship should obtain between master and servant? And, so forth. Islam has provided us with a most precise and complete guidance on how are we to fulfil our social responsibilities and act in our dealings and relationships with all those individuals and groups with whom we come into contact, one way or the other, in different walks of our daily life, and that is what we are going to discuss in the present chapter.

## **Rights of Parents**

The most primary relationship in this world exists between man and his parents. In Islam the rights of parents have been described as next only to the rights of God. To quote from the Qur'an :

The Lord has ordained that ye worship none but Him; and to show kindness to your parents whether one or both of them attain

to old age with thee; and say not to them "Fie!" neither reproach them; but speak to them both with respectful speech; and defer humbly to them out of tenderness; and say, "Lord! have compassion on them both, even as they reared me when I was little" (XVII : 23-24)

Another verse of the holy Book goes on to tell that should the parents of a person be Polytheists and want him also to follow their faith, he ought to decline to obey them, but even then he should continue to treat them well and to behave towards them with respect. The exact words of the verse are:

"But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me, things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear the n company in this life with justice (and consideration). (XXXI:15)

Besides the Quran, in the Traditions also, a very great stress has been laid on rendering full devotion and obedience to one's parents. To disobey one's parents, to ignore their feelings, or to disregard their comfort and happiness in any other way has been characterised by the Prophet as a grievous sin. Take these Traditions, for example:

"In the pleasure of parents lies the pleasure of God, and in their displeasure, the displeasure of God."

Once a person enquired from the Prophet, "What are rights of parents?" The Prophet replied, "Parents are the Heaven and Hell of their children (meaning, salvation and Paradise could be gained by serving one's parents well while disobedience to and ill-treatment of them could lead one to Hell)."

The Prophet once observed, "Every time a dutiful son or daughter looks with affection and respect towards his or her father or mother, God writes against his or her name the reward of an approved *Haj*." Upon this, some of the Companions enquired, "Our Master! Suppose a person does so a hundred times each day, will he, even then, be

given the reward of an approved *Haj* for every glance he casts?" "Yes", the Prophet replied, "God is most Great, Most Holy (meaning that the bounty of the Lord is boundless)."

"Heaven lies under the feet of parents."

The Prophet once said to the Companions that the most mortal sins in the world were three: "To associate anyone with God, to disobey parents, and to give false evidence."

Again, "There are three types of men towards whom God will not look with mercy on the Day of Judgement and one of them are those who disobey their parents."

### **Rights of Children**

Islam has laid an equal stress on the rights of children on parents also. We will leave out here the responsibility of parents to feed and clothe their children since there is found in them an instinctive awareness of it and they carry it out normally and in the natural way.

The rights of our children about which we are generally careless and neglectful are those concerning their moral and religious education and upbringing. Islam has made it binding on us, as a matter of duty, that we brought up our wards and children in such a way that they did not have to make their way to Hell after death. We are required to be extremely careful in this respect. Says the Quran:

O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from the Fire of Hell. (LXVI: 6)

The Prophet has, in a Tradition, stressed the need of giving proper training to the children in these words:

"No better gift can there be from a father to his children than that he brought them up properly."

Some parents are more fond of their sons than daughters. They take a great interest in the upbringing of their male issues while the welfare and training of female

ones is generally neglected. Daughters are, sometimes, considered to be a burden. For this reason, Islam has devoted particular attention to the proper upbringing of girls and extolled it as an act of great virtue. The holy Prophet has said:

"Anyone who has a daughter or a sister and he treats her well and looks after her welfare and training carefully and marries her at the right place, God will reward him with Paradise."

### **Mutual Rights Between Husband and Wife**

Conjugal relationship occupies a place of outstanding importance in the economy of human affairs. It is a most strong and intimate tie that binds husband and wife into a life-long partnership. Islam, therefore, has furnished a complete guidance in respect of it as well. In a nutshell, Islam demands from wives to be scrupulously faithful to their husbands and to remain their best friends and true well-wishers and never to betray their trusts. the Quran declares:

Therefore, the righteous women are obedient, and guard (in the husband's) absence. (IV:34)

And from husbands it requires that they should give of their love ungrudgingly to their wives, maintain them as best as they can within their means and leave nothing to be desired by way of emotional contentment. Says, again, the Quran:

Live with your wives on a footing of kindness and equity.

(IV:19)

In keeping with these teachings of the Quran, the Prophet used to attach profound importance to the harmony of married life among Muslims. He used to urge upon Muslim husbands and wives to keep each-other happy and to attend to each other's needs and interests with loving care. Some of his Traditions in this connection read:

"If a man calls his wife to him and the wife refuses and

he stays annoyed with her during the night, the angels will not cease to curse her name till daybreak."

"The woman who dies in such a state that her husband is pleased with her shall go to Heaven."

"By the Lord in whose power lies the life of Mohammad, no woman can fulfill the rights of God who does not fulfill the rights of her husband."

"I charge you to be kind to your wives. Remember this advice of mine. See, they are subordinate to you and in your power."

"Good among you are those who are good to their wives."

"He is the most perfect believer (in God) who is perfect in his manners and most affectionate towards his wife and children."

### **Rights of Relatives**

Besides our parents and children and husbands or wives there also exists a special tie of kinship between us and our other relatives. Islam has paid due attention to this aspect of our social existence, too, and evolved certain rights and duties in respect of it. Thus, in the Quran we are told to be kind to our kinsmen and one who disregards and pays no heed to the bonds of kinship has been condemned as a transgressor and sinner of the worst order.

The Prophet once said, "He who violates the rights of kinsmen and shows no respect for the bonds of kinship in his conduct shall not go to Heaven."

In this connection a special advice of the Prophet is that if a relative violates the ties of relationship with regard to us even then we should continue to fulfil, on our part, the obligations we have towards him. The exact words of the Holy Prophet are, "If a near relative treats you indifferently and ignores the bond of relationship do not turn your back on him but keep on discharging, on your part, the obligations

of relationship towards him."

### **Rights of the Old on the Young and of the Young on the Old**

It is a general principle of Islamic social behaviour that everyone should respect his elders and carry himself with due deference, in their presence. In the same way, those who are older are required to treat those who are younger to them with kindness and affection, even if there be no relationship with them.

Said the Prophet: "He is not of us who is not affectionate to those who are younger than himself and respectful to those who are older."

"For the young man who will honour an old man because of his years, God will appoint men who will honour him in his old age."

### **Rights of Neighbours**

Apart from relatives, there obtains a permanent association also between a man and his neighbours. In Islam full attention has, accordingly, been paid to it and definite instructions have been provided for our guidance in this behalf as well. The Quran calls upon us to be good and courteous in our behaviour towards our neighbours in the same way as it has commanded us to maintain the best of of conduct towards our parents, brothers and sisters and towards other near relatives:

Neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companions by your side. (IV : 36)

Three categories of neighbours have been spoken of in this verse and is expected of us to maintain cordial relations with all of them.

The phrase 'neighbours who are near' denotes neighbours who may also happen to be our relatives; 'neighbours who are strangers' denotes those with whom we have no family ties, and 'companions by our side' means

persons with whom we come into contact temporarily in the course of our daily activities, like a casual acquaintance, an intimate friend, a fellow-traveller, a class-mate and colleague, whatever their religious denomination. Islam reminds us that we have an obligation to be friendly and sympathetic towards all the three categories of neighbours.

Says the holy Prophet:

"He who believes in God and the Day of Recompense will never harm his neighbour."

"He is not a Muslim who eats his fill and lets his neighbour go hungry."

It is narrated that the Apostle of God once emphatically exclaimed, "He-He is not a believer in God." The question was asked, "O Apostle of God! Who is not a believer in God?" The Prophet observed, "whose neighbour does not feel secure on his account."

Yet another Tradition reads:

"He shall not go to Heaven from whose mischief his neighbours do not feel secure."

It is reported that once a Companion said to the Prophet, "Sir, there is a woman about whom it is said that she offers a great deal of prayers, observes a great deal of fasts and does a great deal of charity, but she also causes a great deal of trouble to her neighbours owing to sharpness of her tongue." The Holy Prophet observed, "She will go to Hell." The Companion, then, said, "O Apostle of God! There is another woman about whom it is said that she engages herself little in prayers, fasting and charity (that is, she observes the supererogatory prayers, fasts and charity less than the first woman) but never offends her neighbours by her tongue." The holy Prophet observed, "She will be in Heaven."

### **Rights of the Weak and Poor**

So far we have dealt with the rights of men with whom

we have an intimate personal connection of some kind, whether of family or neighbourhood or business or friendship. In addition to these, Islam has conferred certain special rights on the weaker and the poorer sections of the society and on every kind of a needy person. It has been made the duty of all well-to-do people to look after their well-being and serve them in whatever way they can. The more prosperous among Muslims should realise that their less fortunate brethren, too, have a share in their wealth and other capabilities. The Quran has enjoined at a number of places that the needs of the orphans, the weak and the indigent and other needy and destitute persons should be taken care of, the hungry should be fed, the ill-clad should be clothed, and, so on.

It is narrated that once the Prophet joined two of his fingers and showing them to the Companions said, 'He who supports an orphan shall be as close to me in Heaven as these fingers are to each-other.'

He is also reported to have observed:

"He who endeavours to relieve the widow, the depressed and the needy is as one who strives in the service of God, and, in Divine reward, he is as one who permanently fasts during the day and spends one's nights in prayers."

"Feed the hungry, visit the sick and free the captives."

"Help the distressed and be a guide to those who have lost their way."

No distinction has been drawn in the above Traditions of the Prophet between a Muslims and a non-Muslim. All poor and needy persons have a claim on us no matter to what religion they belong. We cannot withhold our helping hand from anyone on the ground that he is not a co-religionist. In some Traditions, the Prophet has exhorted us to show kindness also to animals and promised a great reward to those who take pity on these dumb creatures of the Lord.



Islam, truly, is a blessing to the entire universe and the whole of creation, and our guide and master, the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), "a mercy to the worlds." The pity is that we ourselves have wandered away from his teachings. Would to God we, too, became a mercy to the whole world by becoming true Muslims!

### **Rights of Muslims on Each-other**

Further, there is a special claim of Muslims on each-other which flows out of the common bond of Islam.

Says the Prophet:

**"Every Muslim is a Muslim's brother. He should neither harm him himself nor leave him alone (when someone else does so but try his best to help him and to protect him). Whoever among you will fulfil the need of his brother, God will take it upon Himself to fulfil his needs, and a Muslim who will remove the distress of a Muslim brother will, in return, find a distress of his removed by God on the Day of Requital, and anyone who will hide the shame of a Muslim, and his sins will be hidden by God on the Last Day."**

**"Do not bear a grudge or enmity against each-other, do not be jealous of each-other, and do not indulge in backbiting."**

**"Live like brothers and the servants of One God. It is not allowed to a Muslim to cease to be on talking terms with another Muslim for more than three days."**

**"The life, honour and property of a Muslim are sacred for another."**

We will now close the present discussion on social relations and mutual rights and duties with the following Tradition which alone is enough to fill our hearts with fear.

The Prophet is reported, one day, to have put the question to the Companions. "Who is a pauper?" The Companions replied, "Our master! A pauper is a person

who is without a penny of his own." The Prophet said, "No. A pauper among us is a man who will appear on the Day of Recompense with a large stock of prayers, fasting and almsgiving but in the world he would have abused someone, slandered someone, beaten someone and cheated and transgressed against someone. When he will be made to stand at a Place of Reckoning those against whom he would have been guilty of these transgressions will come forward and they will be given from his good deeds what will be due to them till all the fund of his good deeds will be exhausted, and, then, the sins of the aggrieved parties will be forced down upon him and, he will, ultimately, be thrown into Hell."

Brothers, - Ponder over this Tradition and think how utterly ruinous and disastrous it is for us to enroach upon the rights of others and indulge in back-biting, slander or abuse. If you have transgressed against anyone or usurped his rights, make amends for it in your lifetime, pay back to him what may be his due or seek his forgiveness, and resolve sincerely to be careful in future otherwise it is going to cost you very dear in the life to come. ■

# ISLAM : A RELIGION OF PEACE: A SYMBOL OF PROGRESS AND A SAFE HAVEN FOR THE MINORITIES

Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi

## **Islam: A Religion of Peace and Tranquillity**

Islam is a religion of peace. The Qur'an, being the fundamental text for the religio-political order of Islam, takes man back to Allah, the Sovereign Lord and the source of peace (as-Salām) (59:23). Once the Muslim reverts back to the fundamental teachings of the Book, he becomes peace-incarnate. The Muslim Umma is raised as a moderate community. The Qur'an, says;

'Thus have We appointed you a middle community.'  
(2:143)

and there is no concern and compulsion in religion.

'There shall be no coercion or compulsion in religion.'  
(2:256)

The Qur'an teaches the middle Umma to be tolerant and forgiving. Those who control their wrath with anger are rewarded by Allah infinitely, because Allah loves the forgiving people, who forgive one another (3:134), and forgiveness is better than revenge. The reward of such noble people is multiple (42:40) and they are divinely blessed (4:149). The human relations, based on love, mutual respect, compassion, mercy, tolerance and forgiveness and consultations (Shūra), are highly appreciated by the Almighty. Such men are divinely blessed (3:159). The Qur'an teaches us to be tolerant towards the Christians (2:109) and enjoins to respect the people of the Book (3:113-115). These are the fundamental teachings of Islam. Islamic Fundamentalism, being a liberating force, emancipates man from all kinds of bondage and injustices, tyrannies, atrocities, religious hierarchy, deification, and discrimination

against each other, on the basis of religion, colour, race, sex and wealth. The best man in the eyes of the Almighty is the one who is sublime in conduct and in piety (49:13). Every individual is equal in the eyes of Law and justice. A fundamentalist strives to establish justice in all the spheres of life, and to eliminate injustice (5:8). A nation of moderation can alone protect mankind from the extremes on either side and can keep it on the straight path (*Sirät al-Mustaqim*). The Prophet of Islam was sent as a mercy and compassion unto mankind. He left the fundamental message concerning the sovereignty of the Almighty and the vicegerency of man and laid the foundation of human civilization on monotheism, which fosters unity of faith and respects human life and human rights. Killing is forbidden by the Qur'an. The killing of one innocent person amounts to the killing of all mankind and protecting one innocent person amounts to saving the lives of all mankind (5:32). Schism and division are condemned by the Qur'an (16:159). Thus people can live in harmony, and peace with themselves, with the people and with their Creator. The conspirators, the schismatics and the wicked people have to face their Creator, and be punished in the Hereafter (6:159).

### **Islam : A Symbol of Backwardness or a Symbol of Advancement and Progress?**

Islam, as usual, is being demonised today by its enemies. A deliberate campaign is launched across the globe, broadcasting that Islam is a backward religion. It is medieval, militant, fanatical, and terrorist in nature. It is an enemy of democracy, etc. The red peril is replaced by the green peril. It will destroy the world order and world civilization. The onslaughts cannot be catalogued even in volumes.

The fact is that Islam is a symbol of advancement and progress. The Arabs, with their fundamental faith, travelled with their message across the globe and established World empires and World culture and excelled in the art of government and administration, in social and physical

sciences, in art, architecture, in agriculture, industry, engineering, medicine, mathematics, navigation and astronomy. They built magnificent buildings and palaces, bridges and towers, highways, libraries, colleges and universities. They marvelled in chemistry, physics, geography, calligraphy and in geology and philosophy, etc. Their contributions to the art and sciences astonished the World. They discovered America five hundred years before Columbus could even reach the Caribbean. They also led to the discovery of Cape of Good Hope.

The fundamentalists developed international law, the law for the time of peace and war. Land and maritime commanders were given instructions by the Caliphs in regard to the conduct of war. They were based on the Qur'anic law. Islam was never militant, as is propagated today. The Meccan Arabs imposed the war on the Prophet. According to the reports only 250 pagans lost their lives within a period of 10 years of the war, which they waged against the believers. The Muslim losses were much less. Those who blame Muslims as militant, tend to forget their own history. They fought two World wars and wiped out about 7.5 million lives in the First World War and 22.5 million in the Second World War. The Korean and Vietnam wars, the Afghan war etc., etc., did cost millions of lives. The nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki destroyed the human race from these areas.

Islam forbade fighting with peace loving people, to destroy the field of corn and vegetables or to set fire to the dwelling houses, towns and cities of the vanquished. The opposite is the case today. Killing of women, children and old men was also forbidden.

Muslims are instructed to stop hostilities as soon as the enemy surrenders and seeks peace. In Christianity 'fighting was condemned altogether,'<sup>1</sup> but all the wars were incited by the churches by the Popes, who shed human blood in the name of Jesus. The feudal wars, fought in Christendom through the centuries, are numerous. The

Muslim rulers also fought wars, but not in the name of religion or in the name of Islam, as was the case with the Crusade wars, waged by the Popes and the European Emperors against the Muslims for centuries and which have not yet stopped.

The Holy Qur'an, also guided the Umma on inter-communal relations. The Constitution of Madina (*Dastur al-Madina*) is an illustrious example in this regard. The first declaration of Human Rights announced by the Holy Prophet of Islam on the Mount of Arafat in 632 C.E., has no parallel in human history. The interfaith relationship was signified by the Qur'an for inter-faith co-existence.

The allegation that Islam is a medieval and a backward order, the real cause of the decline and decay of the Muslims in the contemporary World, is both fallacious and malicious. Islam appeared as an anthropological and epistemological revolution. It emancipated man from the slavery of the Greeks and the Romans and gave him the status of the vicegerency of God (*Khalifa*). In the field of knowledge, Islam gave a lead to medieval Europe, which was lost in darkness. The triliteral Arabic imperative '*IQRA*' (Read), changed the history of epistemology. Reading and writing acquisition and dissemination of knowledge became a religious duty. Medieval Europe remained lost in ignorance for centuries. At the beginning of the European scientific Renaissance, Galileo church in the name of religion and a bizarre trial was held by the court of Cardinals under the command of the Pope. Many scientists suffered banishment and humiliation like that of Galileo, who believed that the earth is round and it revolves around the sun. Loyd Graham, in his book entitled '*Deception and Myths of the Bible*' under the heading "*The Church: Its False Foundation*" makes an interesting confession about the advancement of the knowledge of the Moors (the Arabs). The opposition of the church to sciences and medicine, in Christian West, is compared with the advancement of Moorish West, in arts and sciences. He says;

"Yet there were no knowledge and learning

everywhere except in Catholic Europe. At a time when even kings could not read or write, a Moorish King had a private library of six hundred thousand books. At a time when 99 per cent of the Christian people were wholly illiterate, the Moorish city of Cordova had eight hundred public schools, and "there was not a village within the limits of the empire where the blessings of education could not be enjoined by the children of the most indigent peasant," and "it was difficult to encounter even a Moorish peasant who could not read and write." S.P. Scott (The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe) says, in Christian Europe scholars were burnt at the stake; in Moorish Europe they were the highest paid men in the realm. One Moorish king gave his leading scholar forty thousand pieces of gold each year, while in Christendom, Roger Bacon, credited with inventing the camera, clock, telescope and lens, gunpowder and steam power, was imprisoned for fourteen years as a sorcerer and heretic. Pope Sylvester II was an educated man, but he had to go to these Moorish universities to get his education. On his return and elevation, he manifested some interest in medicine, and so fell under the suspicion of sorcery. He escaped the witch-burners only because of his high office."

### **Islamic Fundamentalism Portrayed As a Peril to the World**

The President and the Prime Minister of Israel, have been portraying Islamic Fundamentalism as a World danger, threatening the World civilization, and have been inciting and exciting christendom to be aware of the perils and to crush it as soon as possible. They need to be reminded of the Jewish history of the past. They have forgotten that Islamic Fundamentalists, imbued with the Qur'anic teachings, had protected them and had provided safe havens to them in the Muslim countries. It happened at a

critical time when the entire Christendom had become a blazing inferno for the Jews, who had no place to hide. The Roman Empire, the Byzantine, the Sassanian and the Babylonian Empires were sealed for them. A historian remarks about their fate in the Byzantine Empire in the following words:

"Byzantine Emperors repeatedly made use of their legal prerogatives of completely outlawing Judaism in their realm."

No different was the history of the Sassanian Empire and other parts of Europe. Now an honest student of history can compare and contrast the situation in the following citations which tell the World as to how the Jews were treated in the Muslim World. The Jews, while being persecuted, the World over, not only found the Islamic World as their safe haven, but felt that they were, indeed, enjoying the rebirth of the second commonwealth, after it was lost by David and Solomon.

"The Jews gained in strength under Islam not only in Babylonia, their national and religious centre during the last pre-Islamic centuries but in Persia and in Palestine, in Egypt and all the rest of North Africa, in Spain and in many adjacent countries, the Jews increased in number and influence, duplicating in a way the experience of the second commonwealth.

It was under Islam that the Jews, after having suffered at the hands of the Babylonians, the Sassanians, the Byzantine and the Europeans, achieved their great period:

"The rapid spread of Islam in the century after its rise, the establishment of an enormous empire reaching from India and Central Asia to Morocco and Southern France, brought about a marvellous rejuvenation into a vast flourishing realm, most of the provinces of the Byzantine Empire, all of Persia, and many adjoining provinces of India, North Africa



and Western Europe. The cultural and economic superiority of the Caliphate over its Eastern and Western neighbours, including Byzantine, was uncontested. The Jewish people too were quickened and entered into their great period of achievement. But first they had to suffer the greatest agonies under both Persia and Byzantine, and even amidst the newer civilizations slowly emerging from the smouldering ruins of Western Europe."

The ottoman Empire or Turkey was the greatest haven of refuge for the Jews who received special favours from the Sultan of Turkey:

"The greatest haven of refuge was Turkey where the new comers were sedulously encouraged by the Sultan and treated with a favour that reached its climax in the career of Joseph Nasi, duke of Nasi, duke of Naxos."

Can any bigoted reader mutilate the historical facts recorded on the canvass of time?

"In short, the Jewries of the Dār-al-Islam (World of Islam), together with the masses of other non-Muslim subjects, helping shape the new World order, now achieved a novel equilibrium under their much improved socio-political and economic status."

One can see as to how the Jews were persecuted in the Western lands and how they did enjoy an enviable measure of security of life in Islamic lands, where they suffered neither religious intolerance nor expulsion, nor forced conversions, as they had suffered in Christian Europe. The following historical document is self-explanatory

"Compared with the pogroms and massacres which followed especially after 1096, began to fill one sanguinary page after another in the Jewish annals in the Western lands, the Jewish communities of the great Caliphate and its

successor States enjoyed an enviable measure of security of life. Nor were they exposed, with two major exceptions limited in scope and duration, to those sudden withdrawals of religious toleration, expulsions and forced conversions, which were to mar much of the medieval Jewish history in Christian Europe."

The author of the above passage, Salo Wilmayer Baron, who has written 'A Social and Religious History of Jews' in twelve volumes (Columbia University Press 1952), has written an exclusive chapter entitled "Protected Minorities" and has generously praised the Islamic religious toleration and treatment of the non-Muslim minorities. The World can see today, whatever the same Jews have done with the Muslims who had saved them from oblivion.

Having these facts in mind the President and the Prime Minister of Israel, may learn some lessons from the dictates of history, which repeats itself, and may refrain from global campaigns against Islamic Fundamentalists. The Jews were safe in the Islamic World only because the Muslims followed the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunna in letter and spirit. Had they not been fundamentalists, the history of the Jews would have been different today.

One more example of the protected minority in Islam can also be cited here. Abu Ubaida, the Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic army, returned the taxes to the *Zimmis* (the protected ones) of Hims, only because he could not protect them against the Roman invasion, during the war at Yarmuk. The *Zimmis* were shocked and saddened. They preferred the protection of Muslims rather than of the Romans, their co-religionists. Al-Baladhuri, the primary source on wars and maghazi, says that the non-Muslim minority, so well protected under the Muslim rule, did not like the return of the Romans. They said:

"We prefer your government and its keen sense of justice to the cruelty and injustice of our own co-

religionists, and we are not going to allow their agents to enter the gates of the city unless we are overpowered by them."

The World history fails to provide such examples. This was the effect of fundamental teachings of the Prophet, who had himself declared general amnesty to all the Meccan pagans in 8 AH (Conquest of Mecca), who had tortured the Prophet and his Companions for a decade with utter savageries and inconceivable brutalities. All the enemies were pardoned and forgiven. Only a Prophet could do it.

### **Islamic Fundamentalism As An Instrument of the Revival of the Golden Age of Islam**

The current resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism aims at reviving the golden age of Islam. Every religion, or religio-political order needs rejuvenation and revival and it has a right to revive itself. Every nation or system undergoes a period of decline and then it revives itself. Muslims were alienated from their creator and were absorbed in worldly greed and lust, which blinded them of the concept of the Day of Judgement. They befriended the enemies of Islam and their leaders. They, being Muslims in name, conspired with the enemies and served as the surrogates of the Western Colonialists. The entire Muslim World was subjugated by Christendom, which tortured and persecuted Muslims in their own lands, exploited their wealth and natural resources for its own national interests and kept Muslims ignorant and illiterate and it distorted the image of Islam. The religious leaders, such as Hasan al-Banna, Syed Qutb and others, were executed by the so-called Muslim leaders, who were deputed to carry on the mission of their masters. The Ottoman Empire was destroyed by the Crusaders in 1924 and thus the unity of the World of Islam was destroyed. The Crusaders revived the hatred of Shu'übiyya, among the Arab and the non-Arab Muslims. They created the 'Arab League' in order to alienate the Arabs from the main stream of the Islamic World. Non-Arab organisations, such as 'African Unity,' RCD, South East Asian Treaty, etc., were

also created in order to widen the gulf of differences between the Muslim countries. Muslims were divided into nation States so that they fight with each other. Under the compelling circumstances the saviours of Islam like Afghani, Hasan al-Banna, Sanüsi, Mahdi, Maududi, Syed Qutb and Awda, came to the forefront to save the Umma. They, like their predecessors, revived the fundamental teachings of Islam and challenged the Western secularism which had alienated Muslims from the Qur'an and the Sunna.

The Western educational system had brainwashed the Muslim youth. They were taught that religion was a personal issue between man and his Creator, and had nothing to do with the State or with the public life. They were taught that the real cause of the backwardness of Muslims in the field of science and technology was due to Islam. Advancement was not possible without abandoning religion, as was done by Europe. Turkey became the first prey to secularism, but unfortunately it is still regarded as a developing country, unable and unqualified to join the European Union.

It is interesting to note that whenever a renaissance is resurged in the Muslim World, the Christendom is alarmed and brands it as militant Fundamentalism, etc. It is a deliberate campaign and an assault on Islam. Christendom has realised that one billion Muslims are disunited, and have no voice. They form a dumb and deaf community. They are unable to defend themselves and to halt the genocide of Muslims in any part of the World, be it Bosnia or in Kashmir. There is no one to scream for them. This is because the Muslims had lost the spirit and faith. The religious leadership, torn by polemics, has failed to give guidance to the Umma or change its conditions, without which no revival is possible (3:11). Allah may create another nation which would love Allah and Allah will inspire it to revive the golden age of Islam (5:54). ■

# ISLAMIC REVIVAL IN THE BALKANS 1970-1992

Fikret Karcic

## Introduction

Islamic revival in a blanket term used to denote an increasing interest in Islam among the Muslims especially since the 1970s. This term encompasses different manifestations ranging from the call for introduction of the *Shari'ah* into national legal systems of Muslim nations to increased personal religiosity. Revival in Muslim majority countries has taken the form of more or less radical demand for changes in the social reality of the Muslims while Muslim minority nations focussed on the preservation of Muslim identity against advancing secularization and assimilation.

Most researches on Islamic revivalism deal with Muslim majority countries. Even the elements of a definition of this term have been distracted from that experience. As far as Muslim minorities are concerned, there are several case studies without attempts for identification of the distinctive features of the revival among those communities.

The study of Islamic revival in the Balkans is important for several reasons. It tells us how Islam survived a century long rule of hostile regimes and ideologies, what revival means for Muslims who live on the periphery of the Muslim world, and how non-Muslims perceive that process to react to it. In the present paper investigation will concentrate on three major Muslim groups in the region - the former Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria - between 1970 and 1992.

## Historical Background

Muslim communities in Europe belong to two broad groups: (a) Muslim communities in the southeastern part of the continent, mainly the Balkans, which trace their origin, at least continuously, from the Ottoman times, and (b) Muslim communities in other parts of Europe which are

mainly composed of Muslim immigrants in quest of better economic opportunities from 1950s and 1960s and political immigrants from most recent times.

These two groups differ significantly in terms of group structure, history, and political and legal status. The Muslims of the Balkans represent a conglomerate of different ethnic groups ranging from the Illyric-origin Albanians, Slavic Bosniaks and Pomaks, the descendants of Turkish settlers from Anatolia, Circassians, Tatars, etc. They all belong to *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-jama'ah* (except the Bektashis in Albania) and adhere to the Hanafi school of *Fiqh*.

The historical encounters between the Muslims in the Balkans and European Christian peoples and states have been also different from that of the Muslim communities in Western Europe. To the immigrant Muslim labourers or political refugees, Western Europe has been perceived as a land of better opportunities, and a safe haven from oppression obtaining in their own homelands. On the other hand, the Muslims of the Balkans have been learning about Europe through the acts of insufficiently "Europeanized" states such as Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Romania. Those nation states see the Muslims either as former occupiers (Turks) or as 'renegades' (local Islamicized population) and Islam as an alien religion and an obstacle to national unity.

It was on these grounds that Muslims were massacred during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-1878, the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, the First World War (1914-1918), and the Second World War (1941-1945). In fact, in all the conflicts of the modern Balkan history, Muslims were victimized, killed, expelled from their homes, and forced to migrate to Turkey or other countries. While West Europe opened its doors for the Muslim immigrants from Asia and Africa, some Balkan countries continued their policy of expelling local Muslims under the slogan "Go back to Asia".

The tragic aspect of the historic experience of the

*Muslims in the Balkans* was that they, from the second half of the the 19th century, had to face extremely nationalistic, exclusivist and anti-Islamic Orthodox-Christian regimes. Additionally, after the Second World War Communist regimes were established in most of those states, thus replacing one dictatorship with another. Under the Communist rule, the Muslims were victimized on two grounds: as believers (because all religious people were persecuted) and as Muslims (adherents of "an alien religion"). Even the movements for independence in the former Communist countries did not bring peace and freedom for the Muslims. More than 300,000 Turks of Bulgaria were forcibly expelled from their homes in summer 1989. *Bisniaks*, who, compared with the other balkan states, enjoyed relatively greater religious freedom were subject to all forms of genocide between 1992-1995. Albanians in Kosovo have continued to live under the Serbian imposed police regime since 1981. Post-Communist history of the Balkans has been stained with Muslim blood and suffering.

The political and legal status of the Muslim groups in the Balkans during the period of 1970-1992 was also different. Muslims constituted an absolute majority in Albania, a large minority in the Yugoslav federation and Bulgaria, and a considerable minority in Greece and Romania.

The course of post-Ottoman history, the different legal and political status of Muslims under the Communist rule in each of these three Balkan states as well as different developments in the post-Communist era, have influenced the manifestation and dynamism of the process called Islamic revival.

### **The Dynamics Of Islamic Revival**

Islamic revival in the different countries of the region did not start simultaneously. Among the Communist countries in the Balkans, Yugoslavia has had the most liberal political atmosphere especially ever since the fall of the state

Vice-president and the head of internal Security Service (UDB), Aleksandar Rankovic, in July 1966. Since that time, all religious communities in Yugoslavia have recorded some revival, euphemistically called in the official usage as "normalization of relationship between state and church".

Belgrade and the Vatican signed a protocol on June 1966 and that was followed by the launching of a number of religious periodicals. After the fall of Aleksandar Rankovic, the Orthodox Macedonians were able to get otocephaly in ecclesiastical affairs in 1967. The situation of Muslims was complex. Certainly, they benefited from the decentralization of political and administrative system which ended with the adoption of the confederal constitution of 1974. The Bosniaks were recognized as a separate ethnic group (nation) under the name *Muslimani*, a move which positively influenced their further affirmation and which, at the same time, also gave rise to the new controversies. The Albanians were given the status of a separate ethnic group (nacionalnost) with a large set of cultural rights and political autonomy in Kosovo.

That process of "national affirmation" of both Muslim groups necessarily opened the issue of the place of Islam in the cultural identity of Bosniaks and Albanians. In both cases, the Marxists attempted to direct and control the process of "national affirmation". In Bosnia it took the shape of an attempt to create a Muslim nation without Islam. In that regard it was possible for the protagonists of that orientation to construct expressions such as "Muslim atheists", i.e. members of the ethnic group *Muslimani* but atheists by conviction. In addition, the Marxist-sponsored project of "national affirmation" of Bosniaks took place under the very dogmatic regime in Bosnia in 1970s and 1980s. In that way the Bosniaks were relieved from the pressures from Belgrade but not from their own Marxists.

Similarly, among the Albanians in Kosovo and western Macedonia the secular intellectuals became the most influential figures, in their case the situation was worse than



in Bosnia because the Albanian intellectuals were formed under the strong influence of dogmatic Marxism and nationalism from Albania. Therefore, when the revival of interest in Islam began in the 1970s among the Bosniaks and later among the Albanians, Muslim activists were faced with two sets of obstacles: the prejudices and hostility of non-Muslim circles and opposition from the Muslim secularized (officially Marxist) elites. The non-Muslim political elements, the ruling political elite embodied in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), were uneasy about the process of increasing growth of political self-consciousness among Bosniaks and Albanians. On the other hand, the Muslim Marxists, in the need to protect their project of "national affirmation", very often attacked the Islamic circles. By doing so, they were trying to eliminate the concurrent ideological trend within the Muslim corpus and to prove their loyalty to LCY.

Apart from the liberalization of the political regime and the political emancipation of Bosniaks and Albanians, several other factors have contributed to the Islamic revival in the former Yugoslavia. Among them one should mention the increased economic power of all Yugoslav citizens, including Muslims, due to the loans they received from abroad and the remittances of the "guest workers" in Western Europe. This factor, rather than foreign aid, has brought about massive (re)construction of mosques throughout Yugoslavia. Besides, the 1970s also saw the emergence of a new generation of young Muslim graduates, not only from the middle-eastern universities but also from the state universities of Yugoslavia, including - paradoxically enough - the Marxist-controlled Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo. At the same time, the first M.A. and Ph.D. graduates in Islamic studies returned to Bosnia from al-Azhar, the University of Baghdad, the University of Kuwait and other Muslim institutions of higher learning abroad. The new generation brought new impulses in the petrified structure of Islamic Religious Community (IVZ), an official

administration of Islamic affairs in Yugoslavia, formally separated from the state but never allowed to be out of control.

Lastly, global trends in the Muslim world are the new wave of religious fervour approximately since the turn of the 15th century *Hijrah* in November 1979 have contributed to the new self-perception of the Muslims in Yugoslavia. Strangely, perhaps, they learned more about Islamic revival, a new development in the Muslim world, through the secular liberal media from Belgrade and Zagreb than through the publications of "The Islamic Community" which were still being carefully scrutinized by the state prosecutors and internal censorship.

Islamic revival among two other big Muslim communities in the Balkans - Bulgaria and Albania - began after the easing of the Communist dictatorship in autumn 1989 and winter 1991 respectively. In both the instances, Islamic revival took the form of revitalization of the elementary functions of religious communities.

In Bulgaria, a joint statement of the State Council and the Council of Ministers adopted on December 29, 1989 denoted an end of several decades long policy of restriction and abuse of religion, civil, political and cultural rights of the Muslims by the Communist regime. That policy, which was a continuation of the previous Bulgarian nationalist attitudes toward Muslims since 1958, including the following: constant ideological attacks on Islam as an alien religion, the banning of Muslim attire, circumcision, religious sacrifices (*qurbani*), observance of other Islamic practices and the use of Turkish language. The radicalization of that policy after 1971 added a striking change of policy in so far as pressure was brought on Muslims to change Muslim names and adopt Slavic (Orthodox Christian) names. Muslim resistance to these violations of fundamental human rights and freedom was met by death penalties, long-term imprisonments and deportations. The most notorious episode of the Bulgarian anti-Muslim policy was the deportation and emigration of

over 310.000 Muslims to Turkey in summer 1989.

The change of Bulgarian leadership in the fall of 1989 and the prospects for further democratization of the country enabled the Muslims to stay in their homeland without losing identity. The basic functions of the Islamic religious administration were revived and traumatic experience of long persecutions have brought emergence of Muslim-based "Movements for the freedoms and liberties".

The non-violent Muslim struggle for equal rights is far away from its end in a country where a symbiosis between the Orthodox Church and the state is an established tradition. It should be remembered that at the same time when an anti-Muslim policy was launched in 1953, the Bulgarian Patriarchate was restored and that even the democratically adopted constitution recognized a special role for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Islamic revival in Albania symbolically began in November 1990 with the popular demand for a public prayer in the main mosque of Tirana - *Xhamia e Plumbit*. That event has been followed by the official opening of the remaining mosques in the main Albanian cities. Revival of popular interest in Islam was a part of the mass movement against one of the most oppressive Communist regimes and its denial of fundamental rights and liberties. That movement, led by secular intellectuals and activists, demand democracy and thereby acknowledged religious liberties as an integral part of the emancipation of the Albanians. As a natural consequence, Albanians of different religious backgrounds began to show increasing interest in the roots of their cultural identity. Therefore, Islamic revival in Albania, which overthrew the communist dictatorship in a country with nearly 75% Muslim population, did not have an ideological orientation. Rather, it was an outcome of a large pro-democracy movement.

The challenges which faced the Albanian Muslims were considerable. Living in "the first atheistic country in

the world", as proclaimed in the Albanian constitution of 1967, the Muslims found themselves in 1991 virtually without any religious structure. They only had a small number of mosques which survived aggressive secularization, about sixty surviving members of the last batch graduated from *madrasah* (*Medreseja-e-Pergjithshme*) in Tirana, expropriated *waqf* property and secularized post-war generations.

During the first two years of the post-Communist era, the Albanian Muslims concentrated on the basic groundwork of building the religious institutions. On February, 14, 1991, the Islamic Community of Albania was restored; the mosques in the bigger cities were constructed or renovated; about 10 Islamic schools were opened, Islamic newspapers began to be published and young Albanians were sent to different Muslim universities to pursue their studies.

That was just the beginning of the revitalization of the Islamic community aimed to provide the basic religious services to the Muslims in an atmosphere of severe competition between concurrent ideologies and intensive Christian missionary activities.

### **Manifestations Of Islamic Revival**

Renewed interest of Balkan Muslims in their religion has found its expression, with different degrees of intensity, in some of the following areas:

- (1) (re)construction of mosques,
- (2) education,
- (3) publishing,
- (4) use of Islamic social symbols,
- (5) political culture and organizations, and
- (6) emergence of the Muslim solidarity institutions.

On the basis of the available data we shall try to examine these manifestations.

### **(Re)Construction of Mosques**

The Yugoslavia of 1970s and 1980s saw construction

activities on a relatively large scale. A total of 2060 *jame-masjid* mosques (mosques with *minaret* where Friday prayers are performed) was recorded in 1991. In addition, there were 740 *masjids* (smaller places of worship, in local terminology), 1210 *maktabs* (places of religious instruction) and 44 *tekiyes* (places of sufi *dhkir*). In April 1992 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the centre of Islam in Yugoslavia, there were 1144 *jami*, 557 *masjids*, 594 *maktabs*, 15 *tekiyes*. Out of the total number of mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some 400 mosques were built during the period 1945-1985 and about 380 were renovated. When we interpret these facts we should keep in mind that a large number of mosques were destroyed during the Second World War, especially by the units of Yugoslav Royal Army (Chetniks). Thus renovation refers to those mosques destroyed during the war or those which needed it due to passage of time.

Newly-built mosques were mainly the result of increasing economic power of Muslims and the improvement of standards of living in the villages. During the last few decades, hundreds of villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other parts of Yugoslavia came to have elementary schools, roads, clinics, post offices and, naturally, in the case of Muslims, mosques. It goes without saying that mosques were built by the donations of the local Muslims. The aid given by foreign Muslim organizations was only symbolical and related to the big construction of Gazi Husrevbeg mosque in Sarajevo.

In Albania in 1945 there were 1,127 mosques and they were either closed or had been destroyed together with other places of worship in 1967. In July 1993 there were 25 main working mosques in the bigger cities and 23 were under construction or renovation. Therefore, in the case of this country, the Muslims need several decades to reach the number of mosques necessary for the religious life of their population.

In Bulgaria all mosques (data are not available) except

those preserved for propaganda purposes, were gradually closed down after 1946. That policy drastically changed the landscape of the traditional Muslim regions in this country. therefore. reconstruction of certain mosques after 1991 was an attempt to provide the necessary places of worship and focal points of activity to the Muslim community.

### **Islamic Education**

In case of Yugoslavia there were two types of Islamic education: (a) intitutionalized education provided by the Islamic high school (*madrasahs*) and the Faculty of Islamic Theology in Sarajevo meant to produce religious officials, and (b) religious instruction for the common believers provided in the form of weekend classes in specially designated places (*maktabs*). Out of hundred *madrasahs* in Yugoslavia only two survived after 1945: Gazi Husrevbeg in Sarajevo (established in 1537) and Alauddin in Prishtine (Kosovo). In 1984 Isabeg *madrasah* was opened in Skopje and this faculty could be considered as a continuation of the Higher School of Shari'ah and Theology which had been closed down by the Communists in 1946. In the same year a Girls' division of Gazi Husrevbeg *madrasah* was opened, again continuing the tradition of the girls' *madrasah* which had been closed down after the Second World War. In all these schools a total of 820 students were receiving formal Islamic education in 1991. Precise data on non-formal Islamic education provided in the *maktabs* are not available but the number of those children in 1980 was estimated at 120,000.

In Albania there were 17 *madrasahs* in 1945. The *madrasah* in Tirana was closed down in 1965. In 1993 there were 10 *madrasahs* with 1058 pupils. Some of those schools are without appropriate equipment. Albania continues to remain without any institution of higher Islamic learning.

In Bulgaria the Islamic courses were included in the curricula of the "minority schools" of the Turkish community.

The Communist regime, continuing the practice of its fascist predecessors, first nationalized "minority schools" in September 1946 and later in June 1960 abolished separate education. *Medrese-i- Nuvvab* in Shumen, a school for training *muftis*, opened in 1923, was first put under the influence of modernists and transformed into "Nazim Hikmet Turkish Gymnasium" (1947) and finally closed down after a short time.

The Muslims of Bulgaria were not only left without proper Islamic educational institutions but their very existence was imperilled. Changes in the political atmosphere in 1989 led to the (re)opening of the Islamic College in Sofia and the revitalization of elementary Islamic instruction.

### **Islamic Publishing**

Since 1970 Islamic publication activities in Yugoslavia were rapidly intensified. The Centre of those activities was Sarajevo. Apart from the publication of the translation of the *Qur'an*, of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and a number of books written by classical and contemporary Muslim authors, a number of periodical publications also emerged. *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starjesinstva/Rijaseta* (*The Herald of the Supreme Islamic Authorities/Riyasat in Yugoslavia*) was an official journal of the Islamic Community published as a bimonthly since 1933. *Zemzem*, a paper of the Society of the Students of Gazi Husrevbeg Medresa has been in publication since 1968. The most important promoter of the revitalization of Islam was the biweekly *Preporod* (Renaissance), which first appeared in Sarajevo on 15 September 1970. In September 1995 this paper celebrated the 20th anniversary and it has been recorded that during that time some 2100 contributors published their works in this paper.

During the same decade a monthly magazine *Islamska misao* (Islamic Thought) was started in Sarajevo. Around the same time the Association of '*Ulama*' in

Sarajevo was regularly publishing an almanac, *Takvim*, whose circulation reached, 50,000 copies. 1980s saw the appearance of *Educata Islame* (Islamic Education), published in Albanian in Prishtine; *Elif*, published in Bosnian in Titograd/Podgonica; *El-Hilal*, published in Macedonian, Turkish and Albanian languages in Skopje.

After the decades of suppression, this mushrooming of Islamic news/views papers was perceived as a "revivalist boom" by the regime's ideologically staunch and anti-Islamic circles.

In Albania *Drita Islame* ("Light of Islam"), the organ of the Islamic Community, has appeared as a monthly since 1991. Besides, there is *Shkelqimi Islam* ("Splendour of Islam"), a paper of the Islamic Youth federation of Albania (Bashkimi te Rinise Islamike Shqiptare) was founded towards the end of 1990.

In Bulgaria Muslim publications have had a long history since the Ottoman times. The most flourishing period in it was the period of monarchy (1909-1941) when 67 Turkish papers and 13 magazines were published. Under the Communist rule that number was, first, radically reduced (only 5 papers and 1 magazine) and all publications were put under firm ideological control. Finally, even the publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Turkish language (*Yeni Isik* - "New Light") was stopped in January 1985. Therefore, Muslim publications which emerged after 1990 were a modest effort to cater for the needs of the Muslim Community in Bulgaria.

### **Use of Islamic Social Symbols**

The period of Islamic revival under study witnessed the reappearance of the Islamic social symbols in public life such as attire (scarfs and long skirts for girls and women), appearance (e.g. beard for men) and characteristically Islamic social etiquette. Those symbols expressed the increasing consciousness of the Muslims concerning their identity emphasizing what distinguished



them from others. In all the three Balkan countries mentioned above, viz. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, and Bulgaria, those symbols had been forbidden by the Communist regimes and had virtually disappeared from Muslim practice. In that sense their reappearance was not only an indicator of the widening of the horizons of freedom but also of the new Muslim consciousness, and of their conviction that faith demands certain social behaviour and their readiness to show to the public their distinctiveness.

In Yugoslavia, the traditional Islamic attire for Muslim women (*zar* and *feredja*) were prohibited by a law passed by that People's Assembly of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina on September 27, 1950. In the following decades Muslim women and girls in urban areas adopted European attire and fashion. In the rural areas of Bosnia, Sandjak, Kosovo and Western Macedonia as well as in devoted Muslim families in towns, the traditional attire was preserved. But, the general trend until 1970s was toward Europeanization.

In the 1980s some observers noticed small group of young educated men and women in Bosnian urban centres, especially in Sarajevo, who, through their appearance, manifested adherence to Islam. After the collapse of the Communist rule this group enlarged and became much more visible.

The reappearance of Islamic attire in public by convinced, young, urban, educated Muslims was completely different from the preservation of the traditional Muslim costumes by womenfolk in the rural areas of Bosnia or among Albanian Muslims in Kosovo and Western Macedonia. Because of its different nature this phenomenon drew the attention of observers in other parts of Yugoslavia and abroad.

In Albania during the Communist drive for the creation of the "new Albanian man", especially after 1967, all Islamic social symbols were condemned as "reactionary". The

traditional Muslim attire was preserved only in the rural areas as a part of the national folklore. Young women and girls were prohibited to wear scarfs. It was only after winter 1990/91 that in big cities such as Tirana, Shkodra and Berat some women began to wear *hijab*. That practice was limited to a few individuals, mainly from devoted Muslim families, or those married to Arabs, or Albanians from Kosova, or graduates from the Islamic Universities. But that trend is increasing and the local people respect those who opt for the Islamic attire.

Likewise, in Bulgaria the Communist regime prohibited traditional Muslim attire for women as well as for men in public places, offices and schools as a part of its assimilation policy guided by the concept of "one compact Bulgarian nation". Muslim attire was considered as a manifestation of "the overall backwardness of the Turkish population". Liberalization of the policy toward the Muslims in Bulgaria contributed to encouraging some Muslim women and girls to return to traditional attire.

### **Political Culture and Organizations**

One of the main characteristics of the Islamic revival is the increasing use of Islamic vocabulary in political life and the emergence of political organizations inspired by Islam. Of the three Balkan countries under discussion, Muslim-based political organizations emerged in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

In Albania, political change was brought about by the pro-Western political forces rather than by Islamists. The most influential newly established party in Albania, the Democratic Party (DPA) led by Sali Berisha and Gramoz Pashko, proclaimed the Helsinki Final Act as the basis for the building of the new Albanian society. The term revival (*rilindja*) has been frequently used in Albanian political life but with the prefix "democratic" rather than "Islamic".

In Yugoslavia, the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije*-SDA) under the leadership of Alija

Izetbegovic was formed in May 1990. The party defined itself as a "political union of citizens of Yugoslavia who belong to Muslim cultural and historical circle". The party attracted the major proportion of Bosniaks in Bosnia, Sandjak, Croatia and Macedonia and attempted to articulate their specific political interests. The party used certain Muslim symbols such as the green coloured flag with the crescent and introduced into public discourse almost forgotten Muslim greetings. Islam is referred, in the party's usage as an element of Bosnian identity and religious liberties as a part of general humanrights and freedoms. There were no demands for the establishment of the state on the basis of an Islamic ideology nor any call for the implementation of the *Shari'ah*. The best illustration of the attitude of SDA toward political system is a statement by its president, Alija Izetbegovic: "To be quite clear, I don't want an Islamic republic, but I want Islam to survive in this part of the world, somebody likes it or not".

The emergence of SDA was basically the result of the introduction of political pluralism in Yugoslavia, on the one hand and increased political self-consciousness of Bosniaks on the other. Islamic revival certainly influenced that process and led it toward a positive acknowledgement of the role of Islam in the creation of a separate Bosniak identity.

In Bulgaria the political organization of Muslims, mainly of Turkish ethnic origin, began through the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MFRF) led by the former political prisoner, Ahmed Dogan. This was a grassroots movement for the protection of human rights of the Muslims. The very name of this movement indicates the need of the Muslims in the Balkans to protect their rights. Similar organizations were established among the Turks and Albanians in Yugoslavia in 1918 under the name 'Organization for the Protection of Rights of Yugoslav Muslims' (*Yugoslavya'da Islam Muhafazayi Hukuk Cemiyyeti*). The movement in Bulgaria became a political party in 1990 and won 7.5 per cent votes of a total electoral body in the first free elections

and 20 seats in the National parliament. In spite of being the third largest group in the parliament, MFRF was prevented from participating in the government only because of its Muslim bases. Political observers agree that MFRF has a predominantly secular outlook and appeals to Turkish national feelings. Nevertheless, MFRF continued to be looked upon by most of the Bulgarian Orthodox as an undesirable element.

### **Emergence of Muslim Solidarity Institutions**

One of the distinctive characteristics of Islamic revival in the 1970s was its stress on Muslim solidarity and the development of Islamic international organization and institutions. The emergence of the Organization of Islamic Conference in September 1969 was a very significant expression of such trend.

A certain attempt for the institutionalization of the link between Muslims in the Balkans, or rather East Europe, was initiated in 1989. It was aimed to overcome the isolation of individual Muslim communities in this region where Muslims did not have a unifying institution like the universal church of their Catholic fellow citizens or the unifying links between Orthodox national churches.

The collapse of Communism provided an opportunity for the institutionalization of Muslim solidarity in South East Europe. After the cessation of the Ottoman rule the religious institutions of the Balkan Muslims had been built within the framework of nation states. Before the Second World War most of the Balkan states had accepted the legal obligation to allow the Muslims to have links with the Office of *Shaykh al-Islam* in Istanbul. But the mutual relationship between the Balkan Muslims were not developed nor put into any institutional form. The lack of the sense of belonging to a regional Muslim community and strategy of the Balkan national states to deal with the Muslims separately were the main causes of that situation. Until the collapse of Communism, the Balkan Muslims were interlinked only by

their religious feelings.

From 1989 to 1991 there were some encouraging signs such as the trend toward the institutionalization of the links between Balkan Muslims. This became evident at the time when the expulsion of Turks from Bulgaria took place. The representatives of some East European Muslim communities (Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece) and the international Islamic organizations met at the Islamic Centre in Vienna between 30 June and 4 July 1989 to discuss, among other matters, the possibility of the establishment of an umbrella organization for the Muslims in that region. A special committee was entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the Basic Act of that organization.

The second meeting in this connection was held in the middle of March 1990 where a draft version of the Basic Act was discussed. Unfortunately, the representatives of the three major Muslim communities (Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia) were absent in this meeting. Finally, in August 1991 the third meeting was held with full participation of all Muslim communities of South East Europe: Muslims of Yugoslavia (23 delegates), Muslims of Bulgaria (26 delegates), Muslims of Romania (9 delegates), Muslims of Greece (3 delegates), Muslims of Albania (15 delegates), Muslims of Poland (8 delegates), Muslims of Hungary (23 delegates), and Muslims of Czechoslovakia (5 delegates). The delegates adopted the proposed Basic Act of the future institutional link between them which paved the way for the beginning of the Islamic Council of Eastern Europe (*al-Majlis al-Islami li Sharq Urubba*).

The objectives of the Council, defined in the article 3 of its Basic Act were, among others, to deal with the strengthening of belief among the Muslims of the region; to improve the Islamic work (*da'wah*); to facilitate the distribution of Islamic books; to provide scholarship to Muslim students; to encourage the memorizing of the Qur'an among young Muslims; to secure separate graveyards for Muslims in places where there are no such graveyards and

to encourage Muslims to develop strong cultural and social links with the societies in which they live. In addition, the Council was supposed to work on an adequate presentation of Islam to non-Muslims; to develop mutual administrative cooperation among the Muslim communities; to assist the development of Islamic educational institutions in the region and to follow the problems of the Muslims in this region and to present them to the Muslim international institutions as well as to the relevant bodies of the international community.

These aims, in fact, indicate the nature of the Islamic revival in the Balkans. Obviously, the Balkan Muslims wished to forge some kind of cooperation in matters which fall under the category of universally reorganized religious liberty. The means of the realization of these aims were generally described as "all means permitted by legal systems of countries where the respective minority lives" (Art. 4 of the Basic Act mentioned above).

The organizational structure of the Islamic Council for Eastern Europe includes a Board of Trustees consisting of representatives of the official Islamic organizations from Eastern Europe, representatives of Islamic organizations and institutions from the Islamic world, the director of the Islamic Centre of Vienna, and chairpersons of specific committees recommended by the Board of Trustees. It was decided that the Board should meet once a year and should convene an urgent meeting whenever necessary. Apart from the Board of Trustees, among the organs of the Council were also General Secretary, Executive Committee and treasury.

The headquarters of the Council was to be located in the city where the President-elect of the Council happened to be living. Since the first President of the Council elected on 11 August 1991 was Haji Jakub Selimoski, the then *Ra'is al-'Ulama'* of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia. The site of the Council *de jure* was Sarajevo.

At the same time when the Islamic Council for Eastern

Europe was established, war broke out in Croatia and several months later in Bosnia. In regard to these events, the most tragic in the modern history of the Muslims in the Balkans, no voices were raised by the Islamic Council of Eastern Europe. Even the urgent meeting of the Board of Trustees envisaged in the Article 5 of the Basic Act was not convened.

The *Ra'is al-Ulama'* of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia was removed from that post in April 1995 following the structural changes in the Community. The disintegration of the Yugoslav federation brought about the disintegration of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, which followed a federal pattern. The Muslim leadership focused its attention on the consolidation of the Islamic Institutions within the borders of the newly independent states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia). The Islamic Council of Eastern Europe ceased to function.

Much more research needs to be conducted in order to highlight causes of the failure of this institution of Muslim solidarity. In the light of available information, it seems that lack of sufficient time for the consolidation of a new institution has significantly contributed to bringing about its end.

### **The Nature of Islamic Revival**

The manifestations of Islamic revival in the Balkans (1970-1992) show that this process was mainly related to the religious and cultural sphere, that it was a part of the greater social change in the former Communist countries, and that it was the outcome of internal developments, within the respective Muslim communities.

The main reason for the religious and cultural character of the Islamic revival in the Balkans is the apolitical nature of Islam in this region in the post-Ottoman period. The Balkan Muslims, in spite of being exposed to the hostile policy of their Orthodox-Christian neighbours, failed to organize themselves as Muslims until they were uprooted in most parts of the region. Besides, most of the Balkan Muslims

born after 1945 were deprived of Islamic education and the possibility to live according to Islamic tradition, and for all practical purposes were hardly no more than "nominal Muslims". For them the fall of Communism gave a chance to express interest in their cultural and religious roots. That process has become the substance of Islamic revival. The highest demand of the Muslims was to be free to profess and practice Islam as the Muslims did in Western Europe.

The religious and cultural character of Islamic revival in the Balkans has been noticed by certain European scholars who had been following the whole process with their field work. Cornelia Sorabji (UK), while doing research on Islamic revival and marriages in Bosnia before 1988, concluded that Islamic revival in that country was not a political movement. There were no calls for the reinstatement of *Shari'ah*, but rather a return to certain *Shari'ah* prescriptions such as the head covering of women. Likewise, Gyorgy Lederer (Hungary), researching on Islam in post-Communist Albania, concluded: "At the moment (1994) Islam in Albania is as the West would like to be: non-political, moderate, loyal to the government and fully respecting the rules of European democracy".

On the other hand, some authors because of their ethnic or ideological connections, have portrayed Islamic revival particularly in some Balkan countries as a radical or militant movement which is spread from the Middle East towards Europe. Darko Tanaskovic (Serbia), analysing the revival of Islam in the Balkans after the demise of Communism, expressed doubt in the possibility of the existence of a "moderate Islam" acceptable to Europe. He qualifies the beginning of cooperation among the Balkan Muslim communities (like in the case of the Islamic Council for Eastern Europe) as a part of the larger strategic plan for the reconquest of the region. Similarly, Zachary T. Irwin's judgement on Islamic revival in Bosnia was quite negative. He said: "The objectives of the Bosnian Muslims were similar to those of militant Islam elsewhere".



These dissonant tones in analysing Islamic revival in the Balkans at times inclines one to suspect that a number of analysts and experts were interested from the very beginning not only to explain this phenomenon but also to influence its direction.

Islamic revival in the Balkans was in fact the part of greater social change which took place in all the former Communist countries after 1989-90. In all these countries the Marxist model of modernization failed. The demise of the Marxist ideology and of aggressive secularism was, an integral part of the change brought about by the revival of religion. In the case of Muslims in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria it was also the failure of the concept of the "ruling nation" (Serbs and Bulgaria respectively) which necessarily implied some degree of alienation of the Muslims. In those cases, the revival of Islamic cultural identity was a Muslim reaction to an existing threat to their vital rights and interests.

The Communist attempt to create a Muslim nation in Bosnia without Islam and the Bulgarian attempt to bring Pomaks back into the religion of the "forefathers" and the Bulgarian Orthodox Christian nation have failed. Both Bosniaks and Pomaks eventually realized that without Islam they cannot keep their identities nor exist as nations.

The main protagonists of Islamic revival in the Balkans were the local Muslims educated mainly in the Balkan institutions of higher learning or in the Middle East. Those Muslim intellectuals were not necessarily part of the official Islamic administration, nor did they always belong to the circle of the '*ulama*'. Besides, the external Muslim factors also played a certain role in the revival. The role was sometimes exaggerated. We have found that the Muslims from abroad influenced Islamic revival in two ways: through the presence of the Muslim students and through the work of humanitarian organizations.

Foreign Muslim students brought into sharp focus the new trends in the Muslim world and served as a link between

the Islamic heartland and periphery. The influence of these students was through marriages or small circles of their local friends. That influence was limited due to two reasons: first, their unfamiliarity with the local Muslim tradition and customs and, second, the general uneasiness of official Islamic workers to contact foreigners and thus provoke the state. As it is known, the Communists were obsessed with the foreign threat and the influence of the centres abroad.

Muslim humanitarian organizations appeared on the Balkan soil together with a number of Western organizations of the same kind after the humanitarian crises in Albania in 1990 caused by isolationist policy and in Yugoslavia in 1992 caused by the deliberate devastation of economic bases of the Muslims.

In Albania in 1993, the number of Muslim humanitarian organizations reached 14. These organizations supported publication activities and Islamic education which positively influenced Islamic revival. In Yugoslavia these organizations appeared after the break-up of the federation and influenced only more recent developments which are beyond the scope of this work.

## **Conclusion**

The Balkan Muslims have been trying to preserve their existence, especially as a distinct religio-cultural entity, in their homeland since the end of the Ottoman rule in the region. The consecutive hostile regimes did not allow the Balkan Muslims to consolidate and to develop their theoretical and institutional responses to the challenges of life in the European southeast.

During the period 1970-1992 the Muslims in the then Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania experienced a revival. It first began in Yugoslavia, the most liberal Communist state in the region, and spread subsequently to the other two countries after the fall of Communism. That process was influenced by different socio-political status of the Muslims, the strength of the Islamic institutions and intellectual

potentials of respective Muslim communities.

Islamic revival was expressed in increased personal religiosity, (re)construction of mosques, development of Islamic education and publications, increased use of Islamic social symbols and the attempts to building regional Muslim solidarity institutions. The Islamic influence on the political culture and organization was not substantial. Muslim-based parties in the region addressed Islam in their programmes as an element of national identity and its manifestations as a part of the general religious freedom.

The dissolution of Yugoslav Federation in 1991 and the subsequent genocide of Bosnian Muslims marked an end of one period of Islamic revival in the Balkans. The repetition of the century-long pattern of the solution of "Eastern question" in the Balkan introduced new impulses and orientation in the self-understanding of the Balkan Muslims and their attitudes toward others. The coming years will show the real consequences of that change. ■

## **'NOBEL PRIZE' FOR INDIAN**

An Indian was among five scholars from across the world to receive the King Faisal International Award, considered as the Nobel Prize in the region.

The Saudi riyal 7,50,000 (Rs 75 lakh) prize is awarded each year for outstanding works in the fields of science, Arabic literature and service to Islam.

Indian Ali Ahmad Nadwi shared his prize for Islamic studies with Saudi Yacoub al-Bahussain. In a book on Islamic jurisprudence in financial matters. Al-Nadvi has attempted to adapt some of the concepts of earlier Islamic scholars to modern circumstances. ■

# QUR'AN AS GUIDANCE

M.A. Sherif

*We reproduce below extracts from "Searching for Solace" a biography of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953). An interpreter of the Holy Qur'an. Ali joined Indian Civil Service in 1894 and was allotted to U.P. An Oxbridge product, he penned a number of papers on varied subjects and established himself as an eminent scholar*

Editor

Yusuf Ali's scholarship on the Qur'an was published in instalments between 1934 and 1937. Though he continued to write articles and reviews on a variety of topics for at least seven more years, this was to be his best known work. It has made his name instantly recognisable in the English-speaking Muslim world. The commentary took the form of over six thousand footnotes to the translation, numerous appendices and a running interpretation written in the style of blank verse. It was a monumental effort that records the encounter of an intelligent and contemplative mind with the majesty of the Qur'an. Its hallmark is its emphasis on the spiritual dimension of Islam and message of moral revival. The origins for this orientation can be traced back to Yusuf Ali's life experiences, aspirations and ideological commitments. A troubled domestic life, early academic specialisations and employment as a college principal were experiences which intertwined with his vision of the meaning of the Qur'an.

By the time Yusuf Ali was thirty years old the young Bombay scholar of modest means had become transformed into a self-assured Edwardian gentleman, one of the first Indian Muslims to attain executive rank in the elite Indian Civil Service. The plight of the Ottomans in the Balkans or North Africa prior to the Great War did not move him in the way it did contemporaries like Muhammad Ali Jauhar or Iqbal. At first he analysed religious practices in India as a social historian, in the tradition of the officer-

scholar of the ICS pursuing an extra-curricular interest. The next decade of his life brought rude shocks to one unaccustomed to failure. The first was the infidelity of his wife Teresa Shaiders in 1911, while the second occurred around 1920 when the children of this union turned against him with a vengeance. These emotional traumas in mid-life altered Yusuf Ali's perceptions and, though he never fully went back on his Empire-Loyalism, there was a rekindling of religious sentiment. Yusuf Ali's bond with the Qur'an was forged in these times of anguish when searching for solace. This made the study deeply personal. He even cast a veil over his years of private research so that the eight pamphlets published in the 'Progressive Islam' Series between 1925 and 1933 would make no reference to a work of Qur'anic exegesis in the making. The Qur'an's message of succour and hope to the individual appealed most to Yusuf Ali. It provided his scholarship with a distinct orientation that was retained when publication in 1934 brought the results of his labour into the public domain.

Yusuf Ali's discovery of the Qur'an in times of distress is not only referred to directly in the Preface of The Holy Qur'an - text, translation and commentary, but also indirectly at various points in the commentary. There is a description of how many violent settlements of the spirit are but heralds of the refreshing showers of spiritual understanding that come in their wake. They purify our souls and produce spiritual life where there was a parched spiritual desert before. Elsewhere there is a biographical ring to a comment on children whose 'conflict with your ideals may vex your spirit,' but this behaviour 'may at the same time search out your fidelity to God'. Yusuf Ali's sense of hurt ran deep and surfaced as late as 1940 when he castigated his estranged children for maintaining an attitude of ill will and hostility 'in spite of all I have done for them'. The question raised in the commentary, 'If there were no Hereafter, how could you reconcile the inequalities of this world?' ceases to be an abstract one against the backdrop of his own sense of

betrayal and disappointment. The Book's oft-repeated reminder on the transient nature of worldly existence became all-absorbing to him. It gave his commentary a sense of detachment from the affairs of this world: 'Where is the bravery and beauty of yesterday? All that is left is dust and ashes! What more can we get from this physical material life?' In the same vein he quoted his favourite English poet Longfellow: 'All the world's a fleeting show for man's illusion given.' The story of Zulaikha and the Prophet Yusuf in which the princess 'had learnt much in sorrow, pain humiliation' took up many pages of his commentary. He could identify with Zulaikha, because as with his humiliation at the hands of Mary Teresa, the princess too 'had learnt the vanity of carnal love'. Yusuf Ali's self-revelation was not dissimilar to Zulaikha's: true love was 'pure surrender of self, which has no earthly stain on it'. Worldly life acquired a shabby quality, 'our carnal life is sustained with carnal food, and its joys and pleasures at the best are those which are projected in the screen of this material world. Their real life is sustained from the ineffable Presence and Nearness of God.'

Together with this personalised and other-worldly orientation, the second factor affecting Yusuf Ali's Qur'anic scholarship was his academic training. He lectured in Greek history immediately after graduation and retained a lifelong love of Hellenic culture. An article he wrote in 1941 depicts his undiminished enthusiasm even after completion of the commentary:

The beauty of Hellenic architecture we can see in some measure on the Acropolis today. The beauty consists not only in its forms and proportions but in its setting and in the marvellous way in which it uses the beauties of nature around it. In pottery and in the arts of daily life we are conscious of the Hellenic love of beauty and its ingrained capacity for full expression. But the beauty of the Hellenic language and the literature enshrined in it defies all analysis. It has been well said that if the gods

came to the West, they would speak the language of Plato.

Yusuf Ali's fascination with Hellenic heroes led him to dwell at length in the commentary on Zulqarnain and the possibility of this historical character being Alexander the Great. Yusuf Ali noted of his research, 'I have studied the details of Alexander's extraordinary personality in Greek historians as well as in modern writers...few readers of Qur'anic literature have had the same privilege of studying the details of his career.'

Yusuf Ali also identified closely with the search for the mysterious and unseen in Hellenic thought: 'Each verse is but a Sign or Symbol: what it represents is something immediately applicable, and something eternal and independent of time and space - the "Forms of Ideas" in Plato's Philosophy. The wise man will understand that there is an "essence" and an illustrative clothing given to the essence, throughout the Book;' 'The original form or Idea or pattern, according to Plato's mystic doctrine as developed in his 'Republic', may also be compared with the "names" or nature and quality of things which God taught Adam;' 'the whole phenomenal world is a symbol. The reality lies behind it, like the real light behind the Cave, in Plato's Theory of Ideas.' Such intellectual preoccupations led Yusuf Ali to a heavy-handed search for symbols in the verses of the Qur'an. The fish became a symbol of secular knowledge, the shin 'a symbol for the most hidden mystery' and the sun a mystic reference to intelligence. There are frequent elaborations on the Qur'an's references to water and light, and the abbreviated letters or muqatta'at. This esoteric approach was not unrewarding and his desire to read the Qur'an intelligently opened doorways to profound truths, for example: 'The postures in prayer are symbolical of attitudes of mind, and behaviour in life generally, and the 'movements' may refer also to vicissitudes, in which a man's soul is tried and tested just as the body is exercised in standing, bowing, kneeling and prostration in prayer.' His commentary contains



eloquent passages inviting the reader to recognise in 'the Book of Nature', the phenomenal world, 'the hand of the powerful and beneficent God'. The signs of God were many, 'in His great world, in nature, in the heart of man, in revelation'. 'If we study such signs in the right spirit, we learn the highest lessons for our spirltual life.' The conclusion would be that 'God's Creation is not without a higher serious purpose. It is not in vain, or for mere play or sport.'

While Yusuf Ali generally put his Hellenic influences to good use, it did bequeath to his scholarship a suggestion that the 'mysteries' were only accessible to the select. There is a touch of exclusiveness in the comment, 'A crowd mentality is not best for the perception of the final spiritual truths.' He has references to the select who possess 'inner knowledge' or 'mystic knowledge' and appreciate 'the inner world'. Such sentiments were in keeping with an interpretation of the Qur'an as a guide for the spiritual development of the individual. Yusuf Ali's quest for 'inner knowledge' was not to "be restricted to Qur'anic studies and his distrust of the 'crowd' would also shape his educational philosophy and political beliefs.

The third factor exerting an influence on both the style and content of his commentary was his employment as principal of Islamia College, Lahore, through the 1935-37 period which saw publication of the work in monthly instalments. By all accounts Yusuf Ali was a well-liked and conscientious headmaster, who mixed with the boys in class and on the sports field. He had an empathy with the young, whose 'glory is enthusiasm without self-interest'. There was a great display of support in his favour when he offered to resign in January 1937 in protest against a faction of the Anjumani-Himayat-ul-Islam. Yusuf Ali lectured an English Honours class three times a week, obtaining exceptional results. In such a classroom milieu his command of English literature became even more finely honed. The commentary is replete with quotations from luminaries like Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson and thelike. Occasionally a

headmaster's touch has found its way into a Qur'anic footnote: 'Sartor Resartus [a work by Carlyle]...is strong meat to the novice in literature.

Yusuf Ali's natural instincts were to wish the best moral character for Islamia's students. In this he led by personal example. During his tenure as principal, one of the teachers at Islamia College, Professor Ghulam Hussain, organised a reception in honour of Dr Taseer, a distinguished Lahore intellectual. Yusuf Ali did not attend but was offered some titbits by another member of staff designed to cast Professor Hussain in a poor light. Yusuf Ali's response was to summon Professor Hussain and ask the gossip-monger to repeat his story. Such severe treatment worked marvels and staff were henceforth careful in his presence.

The commentary reflects a principal's urge to instruct and impart: 'In all things be moderate. Do not go the pace, and do not be stationary or slow. Do not be talkative and do not be silent. Do not be loud and do not be timid or halfhearted. Do not be too confident and do not be cowed down.' Similar guidelines for good conduct are to be found in other notes: 'We must not speak unseasonably and when we do speak we must not beat about the bush, but go straight to that which is right, in deed as well as in word's and 'Islam aims at making every Muslim man or woman, however humble in station, a refined gentleman or lady.' These were uplifting sentiments inspired by the immediacy of contact with the young provided by Islamia College. The commentary reaches its most eloquent in such accounts of upright character: 'The true Muslim must be pure in body, mind and heart. His motives should always be sincere and his religion without any alloy of worldly gain.' Yusuf Ali's employment as a college principal offered him another doorway to absorb the spirit of the Qur'an.

Like Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan before him, Yusuf Ali did not consider his lack of training in the formal Islamic disciplines any bar to writing a Qur'anic commentary. If the traditional scholars had not risen to the challenge of

explaining the message of Islam to the new educated classes, 'the younger generation that is pressing in upon us well demand that our interpretation is consonant with the best knowledge that we possess.' Yusuf Ali responded to the challenge in a practical way, deploying his erudition and command of English to great effect. It was good that 'qualified Muslims should attempt to present the picture which their own mental and spiritual vision presents to themselves.' However, he was also careful to note that this re-interpretation must proceed 'in a spirit of reverence and fidelity to the real and original traditions of the best period of our history'. Yusuf Ali bypassed the traditional ulema but retained at all times an in-herent conservatism, so that his commentary would never be unduly provocative or earn the type of odium which befell Sir Sayyid's work. The furthest Yusuf Ali would venture in criticism of traditional scholarship was in warnings of 'deadening formalism' and 'excesses in doctrine'. The publication of the commentary passed without much comment from ulema circles because too few were conversant with English. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi's glowing testimony may have silenced any doubters: 'The Muslim litterateurs have with unanimity spoken very highly of the beauty, eloquence and grandeur of the Translation.' Questions were raised on Yusuf Ali's reliance on secondary sources, but the quality of the commentary and obvious sincerity disarmed criticism. Yusuf Ali possessed a grasp of the written Arabic and its grammar and had passed an Indian Civil Service examination in the language in 1895 with a mark of 340 out of 400. He made no attempt to disguise the fact that his command of Arabic was grammatical rather than conversational."

Yusuf Ali's close contact with students, both in Lahore and at meetings of the Progressive Islam Association in London, led to an awareness of the doubts and sense of scepticism that coloured the new generation's attitudes towards religion. He was aware that Indian Muslim youth were in intellectual crisis, unsure where they stood on great

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questions - whether religion was holding them back from 'progress', or if religious faith could be reconciled with science. He was prepared to engage in the debate between religion and modern attitudes, unlike many of the traditional "Ulema who were hopelessly out of touch. In his own lifetime he had witnessed a scientific and technological revolution in the west and understood perfectly the new hope that Indian society too should move with the times: 'The scientist now holds in his hands the key to every kind of future advance in human culture.' The publication of his commentary was a boon to educated Indian Muslims because it assured them Islam had nothing to fear from science. In Yusuf Ali they had a scholar who not only quoted from scientific textbooks but was able to relate the latest scientific observations to verses in the Qur'an with enthralling brilliance:

As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in God's wonderful Universe. Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sun-spots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on this earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is a sun.

The students of Islamia College had before them a religious man not baffled by physics. Yusuf Ali's reassuring message was that science offered a path to faith. Though the languages of science and religion were different, the two domains of knowledge did not belong to separate, watertight compartments. 'I believe in progressive interpretation [of the Qur'an],' he wrote in an introductory note to his translation, 'in the need for understanding and explaining spiritual matters from different angles.' Islam welcomed scientific enquiry: 'In the application of spiritual

truths to our own times and our own lives, we must use every kind of knowledge, science, and experience which we possess.' His was an important and positive contribution through which a generation of college-going Indian Muslims was able to reconcile science and religion. Though Yusuf Ali believed that scientific discoveries could help in arriving at religious truths, he was no crude rationalist. Unlike Sir Sayyid, he did not feel compelled to explain away miracles mentioned in the Qur'an through some scientific explanation. For example the light which Moses saw on the mountain was a spiritual light, not one caused by a traveller's fire, as Sir Sayyid proposed. Yusuf Ali was above this sort of apologia.

His creative impulses were fired not just by a sense of public service but by the need to make Muslims good citizens of the Empire and less susceptible to the siren song of the anti-British freedom movements. In retrospect the one aspect of Yusuf Ali's interpretation of the Qur'an that was, and remains, deeply controversial has to do with his ambivalence towards the socio-political role of Islam in contemporary society. His Qur'anic commentary shows an awareness that Islam 'makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs'. It acknowledges that religion 'takes account of very just and legitimate interest without separating spiritual from temporal affairs'. The appreciation of Islam as a comprehensive way of life can be found in Yusuf Ali's other writings: 'The Muslim concept of state was theocratic'; 'The Muslim state never acknowledged that finance was not part of morals.'

Such occasional references, however, are peripheral in comparison with the dominant themes in the commentary a philosophy of other-worldliness, significance of an 'inner world' and pursuit of moral excellence. Yusuf Ali was far more in his elements presenting the message of the Qur'an as a message of individual hope rather than a source of guidance for the governance and management of society. Piety was personal worship rather than seeking to apply the spirit of

Islam to address sociopolitical issues. Islam was comprehensive - 'spiritual and temporal' -but Yusuf Ali offered the reader of his commentary a number of arguments to lessen the practical implications of such a belief. The only social movement in the name of religion he could consider feasible was some form of ecumenical association of spiritual fellowship.

Yusuf Ali's first justification for the separation of Islam from day-to-day matters of governance was that politics had become an activity demeaning for pious and religious men: 'The seeking of worldly Power, even if intended to be used for God's service, has a little of Self in it.' Politics involved 'log-rolling' or betrayals, making it no better than sin and wickedness. This comment is to be found in the instalment published in January 1937, the time of the bitter controversy with Barkat Ali, the anti-Unionist politician. Though Yusuf Ali had been sufficiently inter-ested in politics to stand as candidate in two election campaigns, the experience had clearly been a distasteful one. He gained only a long-standing distrust of politics. His attack on Indian Wahabism in 1906 included a warning that nothing could be more damaging than 'the thoughtless admission of the foul and tainted exhalations of rough-and-tumble politics to what should be the pure and serene atmosphere of religious peace and freedom'. Yusuf Ali's attitude to religion and politics were formed at the turn of the century when many Indian Muslims, keen to demonstrate their loyalty to Empire, associated politics with agitation and anti-British sentiment.

A second strand to his thinking on the subject was support for the view that Muslims must obey, as a religious duty, the ruler of the day. The commentary contains a careful statement of this position:

All ultimate authority rests in God. Men of God derive their authority from Him. As Islam makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it expects ordinary governments to be imbued with righteousness and stand in the place

of the righteous Imam, and we must respect and obey such authority; otherwise there will be no order and discipline. Where, in actual fact, there is a sharp division between law and morality, between secular and religious affairs, as is the case in most countries at the present day, Islam still expects secular authority to be exercised in righteousness, and on that condition, enjoins obedience to such authority.

This too was a long-established opinion in Indian Muslim circles, and was invoked at the outset of World War I to justify continued loyalty to Britain when she declared war against Turkey. Yusuf Ali's Empire-Loyalism led him to accept British rule as righteous: 'British civilisation presents an object lesson of incalculable value to the Muslims. Not only is there unity, but there is dogged perseverance.' Such a point of view deemed political struggle to establish the *shariah* as an irrelevance. Islamic institutions to do with governance and management of society could be held in abeyance. Jihad in particular was relegated to theory because 'a most important condition' was that it should be sanctioned by a 'righteous Imam', 'such as Muhammad was par excellence.'

Yusuf Ali's third justification for distancing Islam from the political realm can be found in a theory of history based on the evolution of society. This process of evolution possessed an inevitability, 'The Western Church has since [the eighth century] worked on definitely new lines, and its offshoots among the Protestant Churches, have, consciously or unconsciously, been influenced by the broad principles of Islam. What the course of future religions may be and how God will unfold His All-Wise Plan it is not given to us mortals to know.' Ideas from one society diffused to another and processes of assimilation were at work. His mind worked off a broad tableau in which 'culture must assimilate culture or human evolution would be stopped for ever'. In *Religious Polity of Islam*, a book referred to in the

commentary, he observes that it is setting 'too narrow bounds to Islam to identify it with any particular set of concrete customs or institutions, however wise and reasonable they may have been in origin'. The suggestion is that Muslims may be marching against the tide of history by insisting on implementing Islam in sociopolitical terms. The Righteous State, like the Righteous Imam, was an ideal to which Muslims could attach the greatest spiritual value, but on practical issues, 'the trend has decidedly set, in circles that count, in the direction of the usages of the West.' In response to the apprehension that the best Islamic ideals might be lost in this truncation, Yusuf Ali offered this assurance: 'Many modern institutions follow logically from them, even though they seem so new.' Perhaps he could be so sanguine because of the conviction that the twentieth century had irrevocably altered the world. It was not possible for Muslims to unhitch themselves from the West and in calling for a return to the pristine Islam of the first Muslims the Islamic revivalist movements were being dangerously simplistic.

If the logic of the Qur'an obliged him to accept that no sharp distinction existed between the 'spiritual and temporal', his political beliefs propelled him in a separate direction. He lived with this contradiction, assuaging his conscience with such prescriptions as 'His [man's] work may be on earth but his heart is in Heaven.' Religion ruled the personal, 'inner', mental realm rather than affairs of state. The only collective action in the name of religion that made sense to him was a spiritual fellowship. Yusuf Ali paid lip service to the concept of Islam as ideology and a comprehensive way of life and deemed it necessary to present it in apolitical terms. Paradoxically this was a political gesture affirming his own allegiance to Empire. By limiting religion to the spiritual 'inner' realm he was free to choose other masters for affairs of the 'outer' world. From 1936 he became a keen participant in the World Congress of Faiths. It embodied an idea, expressed in the



commentary, of an organisation in which 'persons of diverse talents may unite in the spiritual world for their own highest good and in the service of God'. World War II put an end to such dreams. The war also brought the demise of Empire and so the curtain descended on Yusuf Ali's elaborate world-view. ■

## **Nadwi's No to Talks**

The Muslim Personal Law Board is not interested in holding a fresh dialogue on the Ayodhya issue till constitution of a new Lok Sabha. The Board has taken this stand, as it does not want any political party to derive political mileage. Moreover, the Board has decided not to issue any 'fatwa' in favour of any political outfit, said its chairman Maulana Rabey Hasani Nadwi.

HT (29-3-2004)

# THEIR GUILLE; OUR NAIIVETE

Ateeq-ur-Rahman Sambhali

The scenario upon which I opened my eyes was of a Muslim world bludgeoned under the tyranny of West; the Ottoman Caliphate having being torn asunder, followed by World War I, a fierce confrontation among the Western powers, resulting in some slackening of their grip over the Muslim world. Before the end of twentieth century the areas which had remained under Soviet fiefdom were also liberated. This liberation, however was not real, coming as it did, not by their own efforts but by dint of chance. A glance into the manipulations by American villainy is all that is needed for disillusionment, the whole system still dancing to their tune. The turmoil engulfing the Muslim world beckons to all of us for contributing towards amelioration, to an extent within reach, at least.

To espy the latent hand, Zionism, that pays the piper and calls the tune, no great insight is needed. The undaunted eloquence of Mr. Mahathir Mohammad, the Malaysian Prime Minister, overcame the official trepidation on the part of most governments and rang loud and clear for all the world to sit up and listen. Presiding over the tenth conference of OIC on October 2003 he stated: "Today the Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." The Western powers, stung to the quick, lost little time in reacting adversely, realising the veracity and gravity of Mahathir's words. Lead was taken by British foreign ministry which summoned the Malaysian Ambassador to express the displeasure of their government.

A power which can make use of others for their nefarious ends, can go to any length, without any ostensible involvement of their own. This is an important aspect of the turmoil in the Muslim world which has to be kept in view all the time. In fact muslims have already been utilized in a most horrendous act - September 2002 CE. It needs no deep

insight to see through to the Zionist mastermind using Arabs as tools. The proxy man-power physically handling the aircraft comprised Saudi youth, which was ultimately accepted by the Saudi government. Arabia has ever since been the target of Western vendetta, so much so that it was selected as a site for suicidal explosions, obviously an outfall of 11/9 event. The uncontrolled ebullience in the blood of Arabs has landed them plumb into the dragnet of real enemies. The tragedy of Iraq was fuel to fire. Their wrath against their own government may have a semblance of justification but they fail to see beneath the surface and provide a pretext to the enemy for blatantly interfering and enslaving them by main force, which is more the pity.

It is relevant to recall the American action against Iraq in 1991, to which Saudi government rendered maximum support, eliciting bitter criticism from religious leaders. Even before any voice was raised from within or outside of Arabia, I had been consonant with the criticism. The pages of daily Jung, London bear a recorded testimony to my opinions. The situations as of now, calls for support to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, rather than opposing it, as it is in direct line of fire by the mercenaries.

The initial impression about September 11, 2002 event was that it was designed to lay blame at the door of Iraq or Afghanistan. As it turned out, involvement of fifteen out of nineteen pilots of Saudi origin made it all too obvious. That out of the Arabs residing in USA, only Saudis would embark upon the errand, of which no other American-Arab got an inkling, could hardly be construed as a coincidence. Some presentable justification was needed for targeting Saudi Arabia as till then, their relations with USA superficially, at least, were cordial. Hence the 11/9 incident was conjured up and implemented. The reasoning holds water as the attitude of USA towards Saudi Arabia changed the very next day, and is all too obvious to the entire world.

Saudi government is well aware of the genesis of the latent ploy developed by shrewd brains but have no means

for countering the American juggernaut. While eschewing "at your service" posture a la Pervez Musharraf, they have adopted a line of least resistance, i.e. compliance, in the hope of keeping bigger catastrophes at bay. The problem is to find a way out, at least for limiting the parameters of the pliant attitude and communicate with the Saudi government for a tangible solution. Would it that the agitated elements among Arabs realize: terrorism can only provide a justification for West to ingress Arab domains, aggravating the situation further.

It may be pertinent to recall the worthy remarks of Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqah on the occasion of murder of Hajar during the reign of Amir Moaviya. To those who desired a strong action, she advised: Were we not aware of a revenge by use of force culminating into a worse situation, we would definitely resort to it.

Saudi Arabia occupies a special place in the entire Arab territory in as much as being politically stable, and its status as a guardian of the holy shrines. Any internal strife could lead to a calamity, much worse than the fallout of Iraq debacle. Whether the ultimate aim of the West, a Greater Israel, with the holiest of Islamic shrines included, materializes or not, the psychological havoc caused by Israeli presence in the area already, renders their task that much simpler.

Persons of Arab and contiguous countries, residing in the western countries, particularly England, rather than developing a system by use of their profound knowledge and means, not to mention freedom of action and speech available in the West, for strengthening the hands of the governments of their native regions, resort to ostentatious, vociferous campaigns, or clamour for establishment of Islamic Caliphate. Little do they realize that despite legal freedom for such movements, the British or any Western government can hardly be oblivious of their real intentions and no reaction originating in a muslim country would escape their vigilant espionage network and not be nipped

in the bud. If the government of any Muslim country lodges an official protest to the Western government about these movements, the stereotyped reply is that the West does not curb vocal campaigns even if they were against their own government, far from clamping down on activities of groups of other nationalities inhabiting their land. The fact is that such groups do not realize that the Western powers tolerate, even nurture, them and without any noticeable involvement of their own, have already manipulated them to advantage, at the opportune moment.

A few examples of such groups would illustrate the position described in the preceding surmise.

*Hizb-ul-Tahrir*, comprises people mostly from muslim countries, settled in England since long, the present generation having been born, bred and brought up here. The misguided youth among them resort to agitation against the rulers of the land of their origin, at the slightest pretext, not seeing through to the ploy that Britain to whom such actions in muslim countries would be a danger signal, not only tolerates but latently instigates them on its own soil. For the last several years huge volume of literature has been distributed and large number of congregations arranged by this organisation, advocating an Islamic rule and voicing hatred towards Western history and culture. No hinderence, what to say of a ban, is ever imposed by the local authority. An off-shoot of this organisation, a group known as *Al-Muhajiroon*, led by a fire-brand leader, outscores even the main Hizb. The self-styled Imam of Finsbury Park Mosque, London, Abu Hamza, who acquired world-wide reputation for his blazing oratory, in public as well as on TV, all in impeccable English, headed a group *Ansar-ul-Shariah*, which later was constrained under US influence, following *Al-Qaeda* threat. Abu Hamza was a receipt of £ 200.00 stipend under British social security system, which has since been confiscated on his being deprived of British citizenship. Such stipend is not exclusive to Abu Hamza but anyone measuring up to the prescribed criterion is

benefited.

The organisations mentioned above are conglomerations of people hailing from almost every muslim country, with *Hizbul-Tahrir* and *Al-Muhajiroon* having a preponderance of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, probably because anti-Rushdie protests originated in that sub-continent. The fired-up youngsters heed no sane advice and feel sheltered adequately under the local law which affords much free hand and elbow space. They lose sight of the reality that they have played no part in formulating these laws and the British Crown whose traditional stamp is affixed upon them, commands little control over its own government. The scene is depicted accurately in the words of poet of the East:

King is an icon of clay in the British temple,  
Vulnerable to a mere hammer blow by the devotees.

The root cause of these misdirected, unbridled actions is traceable to over-simplistic, may be, a sick mentality, engulfing us, even the muslims in India. A probe by any sagacious muslim would unravel a deftly conjured up scenario to lull muslims into complacency, not to mention inculcate antagonism towards Saudi and other muslim governments. One of our own intellectuals summed up the fact in one couplet:

Pity, Pharoah never thought of colleges,  
Else his hands would not be stained of child-massacre.

Use of arms and ammunition supplied by the West in a combat against them would obviously be an exercise in futility. Same is the case of taking advantage of facilities and legal liberty under the laws framed without any participation of muslims. Allowing jihad to flourish on their soil and using it as an excuse for persecution of muslims, is by now a well established ploy of the Western powers. A mosque where Abu Hamza (mentioned earlier), led the prayers was closed down on reports of his links with Britons incarcerated with Taliban near Cuba. Yet he continues to

lead the congregational prayers on the roadside, right in front of the sealed mosque, without as much of an objection, even for causing traffic jams.

A glance towards the situation in India would be very much in place. Representation of muslims in the Constituent Assembly which framed the Constitution of free India and the system, which was promulgated, was next to negligible. The secular character of the Constitution was obviously an outcome of the will and choice of the majority community, and officially was not, and could not be stamped as "Made by Hindus". As a result of mass migration, muslims remaining in the country were devoid of stolidity needed for claiming equality in all walks of life, provisions to this effect in the Constitution notwithstanding. In all sincere complacency, they could not come up with any cogent course of action which could place them truly at par with the majority. They find themselves nowhere near that status and are virtually without even the sky over them. Resort to vehemance or violence is, nevertheless, no remedy.

To my way, assessment, Jews and the West have better insight into and grip over the affairs of muslims than we ourselves. The degree of intensity and incisive approach adopted by them is exemplified in the two cases describe below. Not that these are the only ones.

An American writer Barbra Mitchell, who travelled in India in 1972 came out with her findings in a book titled "Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900". For one like me, with full four years in Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband, besides ancestral links with that lofty seat of knowledge, the whole rigmarole and cobweb of details, covered elaborately by Ms. Mitchell would hardly elicit attention and would be considered irrelevant. Going through the book, a line from poet Jigar Moradabadi flashed upon my inward eye, which conveys that even a philosophical sonnet would not encompass the panorama unless there be a genuine sense of preception.



More recent is a book by Frenchman, Gilles Kepel, translated into English. A perusal of the book reveals explicitly, with incontrovertible evidence in support of each allegation, that our claim to knowledge about ourselves is a delusion. What I had alluded to in this article at the very outset is clearly supported by an event described in this book. [I construe this as Divine support in the light of a Quranic phrase.]

Sheikh Abd-ur-Rahman Omar (may the Almighty protect him), one of the architects of prevailing Jehadi trend, had as a consequence of struggle in Afghanistan, developed links with American CIA and marked as a persona-non-grata in his own country. Being denied of asylum in Sudan he reached USA, was accused of involvement in 1993 blast at World Trade Centre.

Gilles Kepel is of the view that those actually carrying out the attack were simple folks who had been fired up by the anti-American discourses of the Sheikh, used as tools through a deftly conceived conspiracy. The actual words of Gilles should make the picture clear:

The trials that followed the 1993 bombing of the WTC established identity of those directly involved, beyond any doubt. These were all close to Sheikh Abder Rahman and all had been swayed by his fiery sermons against America in particular and the West in general. On the other hand the contention made by the American Justice Department that a wide "conspiracy" had been masterminded by the Sheikh himself was still in doubt several years after the fact. Quite apart from the practical impossibility of a blind man picking out targets he had never seen and could imagine only with great difficulty, it is hard to believe that his accomplices who were anything but bright and had only the haziest idea of the nature of American society, could have imagined of an attack of such spectacular proportions without outside help. At the trial the defence stressed the role of an Egyptian informer infiltrated into the group by FBI, whose recorded conversation with the accused showed that he openly incited them to carry out the attack .....

Even prior to the event, it had already been decided to put Sheikh behind the bars and hence simpletons, fired by Sheikh's speeches, were utilized for committing a cognizable offence. Earlier Sheikh, upon landing in USA had been granted a green card promptly on applying in 1991, April. Kabul till then was under Soviet control. Upon return from a pilgrimage to Holy Kaaba, Sheikh found his green card confiscated, on the ground that in his application he had not revealed his polygamous marital status. His request for political asylum landed him in jail.

All said and done, this is another case of 'us' being used as proxy for 'them'.

The plight of Sheikh Abd-ur-Rahman is an object lesson for those who seek shelter from the West, despite their, by now, manifest treachery.

Even direct dialouge with the Almighty is bereft of a footing [for Moses] sans the rod. ■

Courtesy Nida-i-Millat, Lucknow; (December 2003)

English rendering: Mashhoon Ahmad

## SIWAK: PREVENTIVE MEDICINE FOR YOUR TEETH

One of the best ways to protect one's teeth is the *siwak*, which was mentioned in several sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). *Siwak* are the wicks that are used to rub inside the mouth, and they get their name from the Arabic word *yudlik*, which can be roughly translated to mean "massage" (i.e., massage inside of the mouth). It means more than "tooth brush."

The best type of *siwak* is that which comes from the *araak* tree. The *siwak* of the Prophet (pbuh) was from that tree. The *siwak* is the natural twig fortified with natural minerals that can help clean the teeth, other inhibitors that prevent gums from bleeding, cleaning agents that kill microbes and germs and a scent that gives breath a naturally fresh smell. The *siwak* is an ideal, natural brush that has been endowed with more than any artificial toothpaste could ever have.

Like a toothbrush, the wicks on the *siwak* clean between the teeth and do not break under any amount of pressure; rather, they are flexible and strong. The small wicks bend to the appropriate shape to get plaque and leftover food out from in between teeth while avoiding any damage to the gums.

The Prophet (pbuh) taught us more than 1,400 years ago to use the *siwak* to clean our teeth and mouth and give it a nice scent. Anas quoted the Prophet (pbuh) as saying: "Whenever the angel Gabriel would visit me, he would advise me to use the *siwak*."

The leftovers of food found between teeth provide an excellent environment for fostering of millions of bacteria, which can lead to painful and bloody gum disease and cysts. In the worst cases, there can be inflammation of the jawbones. Bacteria also produce damaging enzymes that eat away at the calcium of the teeth, which causes cavities. In severe cases, the bacteria produce gases that emit nasty stench from the

mouth. Recent studies have found that *siwak* has natural minerals that kill microbes and germs and remove plaque. The prophet (pbuh) used to rub the *siwak* over his tongue, teeth and gums. Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari said, "I visited the Prophet, (pbuh) and the *siwak* was at the edge of his tongue."

### **Chemical Breakdown of a *Siwak***

*Siwak* has 19 beneficial ingredients in it. Most important among them are:

- Antibacterial acidic inhibitors that fight decay and diarrhea. They are natural disinfectants and can be used to stop bleeding. They disinfect the gums and teeth and close any microscopic cut that may have existed in the gums. On first usage, the *siwak* will taste harsh, and may even burn, because of a mustard-like substance found in it, but this is the ingredient that fights decay in the mouth and kills germs.
- Minerals such as sodium chloride, potassium, sodium bicarbonate and calcium oxides. These clean the teeth. For instance, the *American Dental Association* considers sodium bicarbonate to be a preferred ingredient in toothpastes.
- Natural scented oils that taste and smell nice, give the mouth a nice smell. They make up about 1% of the *siwak*.
- Enzymes that prevent the buildup of plaque that causes gum disease. Plaque is also the main cause of premature loss of teeth.
- Anti-decay and anti-germ ingredients that act as a penicillin of sorts, decreasing the amount of bacteria in the mouth, which means cleaner teeth and cleaner air when breathing through the mouth.
- Some researchers have found that tooth decay is rapid when a dry brush is used, and that wetting one's toothbrush mitigates the damage. So the *siwak* should be dampened before use. If there is no alternative, one's saliva will suffice to dampen the stick. *Siwak* also has chemicals that cause the mouth to produce extra saliva, which is the mouth's organic defence and cleaning mechanism. ■

Courtesy: Islam on line (Cairo)