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THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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The Expectations of the Islamic World from the Arab World

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Because of its characteristics, its situation, and its political importance the Arab World has the right and the necessary competence to shoulder the responsibilities of the mission of Islam. It can easily take up the leadership of the entire Muslim World, strengthen itself to look at Europe in the face, and, by the grace of God and the strength of its faith, acquire supremacy over it, and lead the world once again from darkness to light, from wretchedness to grace, from destruction and ruin to peace and prosperity. In the words of the Muslim messenger to the court of Xerxes it could once again "lead men from the worship of Man to the worship of God, from the narrowing trivialities of life to the expanse of faith, from the injustices of creeds to the justice and equality of Islam."

The whole world is looking towards the Muslims as its saviour and the Muslim World to the Arabs for guidance and leadership. Can the Muslim world fulfil the expectations of the world? Can the Arab World rise to the occasion? For long a bruised and maimed humanity has been crying, in the words of Iqbal, for succour, still believing that the hands that built the Ka'ba can build humanity again. ●

(Islam and the World)

Wisdom of Qur'an

Veriely, squanderers are brothers of the Satans; and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord." (Surah al-Isra -27)

Commentary:

That is, to spend on wrong causes, or excessively on right causes when there is no need is to be ungrateful to the Lord (Thanwi). ●

"And even if you have to turn away from them, seeking your Lord's mercy which you expect (to come by), then say to them gentle words." (-Al-Isra-28)

Commentary:

Such as, to say, "I am hoping for something to come my way. When that happens maybe I will be able to help you" (Ibn Jarir).

A commentator of the Holy Qur'an elaborates on the spirit behind the injunction to spend: "The contents of (verses 26 and 27) above require that man should not consider his wealth to be exclusively meant for himself. Instead, after moderately meeting with his own needs he must spend it on his relatives, neighbours, and other human beings who are in need of it. Man's social life should also be permeated with a spirit of sympathy and recognition of the rights of others and a spirit of mutual co-operation. Relatives should be especially helpful towards each other. The 'haves' should extend to the 'have-nots' whatever aid they may be in a position to provide. If a traveler arrives in a city, town or village, he should find himself in the midst of hospitable people who are ready to act as his host and entertain him, the concept of the rights of others should be so pervasive that a person should consider those among whom he lives to have claims "If a person helps others, he should do so with a feeling that he is merely discharging the obligations he owes them rather than burdening them with a debt of gratitude. And whenever a person is unable to be of any service to someone who is in need of it, he should seek the latter's indulgence at his inability to do so, and should pray to God to bless him with the means that will enable him to serve him." ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is related by Abu Moosa Ash'ari that the Apostle of God said: "The connection between one Muslim and another is like that of a strong building, one part of which strengthens the other." The Prophet, then, showed, by interlocking the fingers of one hand with those of the other (that the Muslims should combine and coalesce with one another like it).

-Bukhari and Muslim

Commentary:

It shows that just as the bricks of a building become a strong fortress by uniting with one another, the Ummat, too, is a fortress of which every Muslim is a brick and there should be the same closeness and coherence among the Muslims as was found in the bricks of a building. The holy Prophet, further, demonstrated by interlocking the fingers of both hands that the Muslims ought to stick together and blend into a single body like that. ●

It is related by Noman bin Bashir that the Apostle of God said: "All Muslims are like (the limbs of) a man. If the eye hurts, the whole body feels the pain, and in the same way, if anyone has a headache, the whole body joins in the suffering."

-Muslim

Commentary:

What it seeks to emphasise is the organic unity of the Muslim Millet, "All for one, and one for all" should be the motto of the Muslims. They should be ready to share the sorrow and suffering of each other. ●

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The Politics of Language: The Significance of Arabic

Language is a method of human communication. In both its spoken and written form it insists on the use of words in a structured and conventional way. In fact it is language, which distinguishes man from other living beings. The newly born baby learns to speak from mother. As he or she grows up and starts speaking we say he is talking in mother tongue.

The issue of language has sadly been much politicized. It is unfortunate that often a language is associated with a particular religion and its followers. English, the widely spoken language in the world is linked with Christians and it is popular in UK and USA and in the anglophile world. Sanskrit is known as the language of Hindus. Arabic is considered to be the language of Arabs and Muslims in the Islamic world. This concept associating languages with particular groups or religion is not only illogical but also misleading. The issue needs some discussion, and we hope to come back to it in our later issues. The ever-increasing popularity of the Arabic language in lands where Islam spread is the subject matter of our consideration in this column.

Arabic as its name suggests is related to Arabs. It is the language, which is written from right to left, in contrast to other languages, which start from the left to right. The classical or literary language is based largely on that of the holy Quran. This was to be expected. Prophet Muhammad (PBH), the last prophet of Islam, was born and brought up in Arabia

and the holy Quran was revealed to him in the language he understood-Arabic. After Islam spread to Syria and Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa and Spain, different forms of contact between members of the two faiths sparked the polemical debate between Muslims and Christians. And this contact made Arabic-the language of the conquering Arabs-the spoken language of the Christian dimmis of the urban centres.

There is no denying the fact that Islam helped Arabic in becoming one of the most popular languages of the word. It acquired sophistication and helped in the social and cultural development as well of Islamic civilization. The Arab historian Ibn-i-Khaldun (1332-1406) has aptly remarked that inquisitiveness to learn science is not restricted to any particular religious group. Science in Islamic societies was international; it inherited all the earlier scientific traditions and fused them into one new whole. The most important factor contributing to the universality of the Islamic scientific culture was the Arabic as the universal language of communication. It may be noted that many of the scientists who wrote in Arabic were not themselves Arabs. Yet, so much was the lingua franca status of Arabic that between 9th and 16th centuries most of the scientific works were written in Arabic.

Of late, the Arabic language is assuming greater importance because lack of its knowledge is considered a big hurdle in developing cordial relations between Arabs and non-Arab nations.

Moreso, according to an Indian Social Scientist, Dr, Satish Sharma of Sagar University, after every two weeks one language of the world is eliminated. If this process is continued then by the end of this century only English, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu and Arabic will survive.

Realising the importance of Arabic in developing cordiality with the Arab world the government of USA is showing keen interest that Americans in good number should learn Arabic. Before 1998 only two percent students were taking lessons in Arabic but during 1998-2002 the percentage has risen to 92 and about 10,600 students are taking tuitions in Arabic. The American Center for Applied Languages in its survey found that Arabic is taught in 70 primary and secondary schools. Though Muslims run most of these schools, the US government is quite liberal to assist any institution, which imparts knowledge of Arabic. Apart from according all facilities in America, Americans are encouraged to go to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Tunis to learn Arabic. Presently 480 American students are on the rolls of Egyptian Universities to learn. In Journalism too Arabic Journals and newspapers are no less than of other languages.

In India we have a better infrastructure to promote the Arabic language. With little interest and proper

patronage the famous Islamic seminaries like Darul Uloom Deoband, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema, Mazahirul Uloom Saharanpur, Jamia Salfia, Varanasi and other reputed centres can help in the popularising of Arabic learning. Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema is playing a pivotal role in promotion of Arabic. The Arabic language and literature occupy prominent place in its curriculum. It has produced eminent Arabic litterateur and scholars. The Arabic language is not confined to only Islamic works but it helps in establishing cordial relations with Arabic speaking countries. It has a rich treasure of art, literature and culture. Now modern subjects too are being translated and assimilated in this language. In countries where Arabic is the medium of instruction books on science, medicine, philosophy, psychology and social sciences are being translated in Arabic from other languages. The importance of Arabic can be gauged by the simple fact that in international conferences Arabic knowing interpreters are engaged and automatic translation facilities are provided to delegates. Government of India, realizing the importance of Arabic has also established centers for the promotion of the language. A good number of Nadwa educated persons are proving quite helpful in this task. ○

S.A

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Characteristics of Islam

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Every living thing in this world has certain distinctive traits of its own, some identifying marks of its personality which are known as its characteristics. This is true of everything whether it be an individual, group, community, nation, religion or a school of thought. All these have their typical characteristics and therefore the question arises what are the distinctive features and specific lineaments of Islam. Before we go into the details of its teachings, injunctions and directions, we ought to know about its characteristics for this is the only natural way to our complete acceptance of Islam.

We have first to realize the fact that this faith has not reached us through sages and wiseheads, jurists and moralists, conquerors and kings, philosophers and theorists or politicians and national leaders. It has been communicated to us by the prophets of God who used to receive divine revelations, of whom the last was Muhammad (PBUH), and this is alluded to in the verse revealed to him on the day of Arafat during his Farewell Pilgrimage:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you ISLAM as religion." (5:3)

And, as for the holy Prophet, the Qur'an testifies:

"Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire; It is naught save a Revelation revealed." (53:3-4)

1- The emphasis placed primarily in this religion is on the creed of

monotheism; from Adam to Muhammad (PBUH) every Prophet demanded faith in this creed; they were averse to making any compromise in this regard or to give up the least part of it. To them virtuous living and ethical conduct, moderation, goodness, worthy social set up and righteous form of government had no worth or merit unless one also subscribed to the creed preached by them. This creed was the end and purpose of life for each prophet. Their endeavour throughout their lives was to propagate and establish this basic creed. In fact, it constituted the dividing line between the thought, character and labours of the prophets of God, on the one hand, and national leaders, politicians and revolutionaries, on the other.

Qur'an is the only scripture free from every interpolation; the only revelation from God faithfully depicting the characters of the prophets. It is the only Book on which complete reliance can be placed, whether we look at it from historical or a rational view-point, for showing us the right path in every time and clime. It contains numerous illustrations throwing light on the issue under discussion.

The verses describing forbearance and long-suffering nature of Abraham are the most prominent in delineating the characteristic features of the prophets of God.

"Abraham was mild, imploring, penitent." (11:75)

And this is how a righteous community follows in the footsteps of

Abraham.

"There is a goodly pattern for you in Abraham and those with him, when they told their folk; Lo! We are guiltless of you and all that ye worship beside Allah. We have done with you. And there hath arisen between us and you hostility and hate for ever until ye believe in Allah only save that which Abraham promised his father (when he said); I will ask forgiveness for thee, though I own nothing for thee from Allah Our Lord! In Thee we put our trust, and unto Thee we turn repentant, and unto Thee is the journeying." (60:4)

The importance attached to the creed as a principle governing friendship and enmity of the believers is adequately demonstrated by the *Surat-al-Kafirun*. This *surah* was revealed at the time when the obtaining situation demanded milder attitude towards the Quraysh of Mecca, at least till such time as Islam had gained strength and the tempest of persecution against Muslims had cooled down; yet the Qur'an makes the holy Prophet declare openly to all:

"Say: O disbelievers! I worship not that which ye worship; Nor worship ye that which I worship; and I shall not worship what ye worship; Nor will ye worship what I worship; Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion." (109:1-6)

If the difference of creed merited to be ignored for anyone it was Abu Talib who had heroically defended the Prophet throughout his life. The biographers of the Prophet are agreed that when the Meccan pagans began persecuting the holy Prophet, Abu Talib who happened to be the head of the family, took the side of the Prophet despite repeated protests by the Meccans, and did not agree to relinquish his parental duty. However,

authentic reports have it on record that when Abu Talib was breathing his last, the Prophet went to him and found Abu Jahl and Abdullah b. Abi Umayya sitting by his side. The Prophet implored Abu Talib, "O my uncle! Say: There is no god save Allah and I shall be a witness to thee unto Allah." Abu Jahl and Ibn Abi Ummiya intervened to say: "Abu Talib, would you abjure the faith of your father 'Abdul Muttalib?" At last Abu Talib died with the words on his lips: "I believe in the faith of 'Abdul Muttalib." Once 'Abbas asked the Prophet whether Abu Talib's sacrifices in defending him with scant regard to the displeasure of his kinsmen would be of any benefit to him. The Prophet replied, "I found him in the blazing fire and bought him to the sweltering heat."

Muslim relates on the authority of 'Ayesha that once she asked the Prophet, "O Apostle of God! Will Ibn Jud'an be recompensed for their virtuous deeds like feeding the poor and the needy in the days of pagan past?" The Prophet replied, "No. The benefits won't accrue to him since he never said: Lord! Forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgement."

Another incident related by 'Ayesha clarifies the issue still further. She says, "The Prophet set out for Badr and when he had reached Harratul Wabrah, a man known for his courage and intrepidity called upon him. The companions were glad to see him since the Muslim army consisted of only 313 troops and the induction of such an experienced soldier within their ranks would have been invaluable at that juncture. The man, however, told the Prophet that he wanted to join the Muslim force in order to get some booty of war. The Prophet asked him if he had faith in Allah and His Prophet. The man who replied in negative was asked by the

Prophet to go back since he did not want any help from a pagan. 'Ayesha further relates that the newcomer went back but returned when the Muslim army had reached Shajarah. He repeated his earlier request and got the previous reply from the Prophet once again at Baida'. One being asked again about his faith, he replied in affirmative and then he was allowed to accompany the Muslim army."

2- All the missionary activities including even armed struggles launched by every prophet, of whom the last Prophet was the most distinguished, were guided by one and the same objective to gain pleasure of God Almighty. This was their ruling passion and the only end in sight which never allowed any worldly consideration to deflect them from their chosen path. They never fought for power or authority, dominion or riches, affinity or vendetta or for any other worldly objective.

The prayer of the Prophet at Taif after the brutal reception accorded to him by the people there, reflects the end and purpose of prophethood. He had not succeeded in his mission; not a single soul in Ta'if had given faith to him; and he was extremely disheartened. It was in these gloomy circumstances that he raised his hands to implore God:

"O Allah! To Thee I complain of my weakness, resourcelessness and humiliation before these people. Thou art Master. To whom wilt Thou entrust me? To one estranged, bearing ill-will, or, an enemy given power over me?"

But the prophetic character groomed and caressed by the Providence did not allow him to go on complaining in this manner. He continued his prayer to say:

"If Thou art not wroth on me, I care

not, for Thy favour is abundant for me."

Let us now turn to Noah, one of the great prophets, who continued his mission for a pretty long time. The Qur'an says about him:

"And he continued with them for a thousand save fifty years." (29:14)

The Qur'an also tells us that Noah had been preaching the true doctrine of monotheism to his people without sparing any pains. He is reported to have said:

"He said: my Lord! Verily I have called my people night and day." (71:5)

He also says:

"Then verily I have called unto them publicly: then, verily I spoke unto them openly and secretly (also) I addressed them." (71:8-9)

But what was the result of his life-long labour?

"And these had not believed with him save a few." (11:40)

Noah was, however, not broken-hearted at it nor considered his labour to be fruitless. Nor yet Noah's failure meant any difference in his status as a great Prophet or his propinquity to God; he had completed his mission, disseminated the message of God to the people and fulfilled the obligation with which he had been charged. This is how he was rewarded by God.

"And left for him among the later folk (the salutation); peace be unto Noah among the peoples! Lo! Thus do We reward the good. Lo! He is one of Our bondmen believing." (37: 78-81)

Addressing those engaged in the task of propagating the message of God, the Qur'an says:

"As for that Abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who

are God-fearing." (28:83)

This does not mean that a Muslim should abandon the means necessary for successful preaching and delivery of his message or for removing the obstacles in his way, or weakening the forces of corruption and oppression on earth. There is nothing to discourage him from striving to bring about a spiritual moral society so very essential for acceptance of the truth by the people. Monasticism has no place in Islam; actually, the believers and the virtuous toilers are promised to be ultimately blessed with power and authority.

"Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which he hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety for their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe no thing as partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants." (24:55)

The Qur'an urges the believers to fight in the way of God:

"And fight until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah." (8:39)

It also says:

"Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish worship and pay the poor due and enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity And Allah's is the sequel of events." (22:41)

God has undoubtedly promised power and authority to the believers but on the condition that they become the very embodiment of virtue and godliness. Their aim should be the pleasure of God and not attainment of authority, for power and prestige are the reward and not the

means to achieve righteousness. This is why the Qur'an tells the believers:

"Faint not nor grieve, for ye will overcome them if ye are (indeed) believers." (3:39)

The point is made abundantly clear by the Qur'an's repeated exhortations to attain a whole heart which alone merits the pleasure of God:

"The day when wealth and sons avail not (any man), save him who bringeth unto Allah a whole heart." (26:88-89)

Abraham is praised by God for his heart which was free from all taints of vice: *"When he came unto his Lord with a whole heart"* (37:84). For everything embedded in a heart that lacks that quality is more often raised to the level of God, it becomes an object of adoration and a partner in the love and regard that befits God alone. One has to be ever careful of it. Warning the believers against this human failing, the Qur'an says:

"Hast thou seen him who chooseth for his god his own lust?" (25:43).

The holy Prophet is reported to have said, "Satan percolates in the veins of Adam's sons like the blood."

3- The third characteristic of this religion is that the prophets of God who are vouchsafed the monotheistic creed, the divine message and the law are extremely sensitive in regard to them. Whatever be the circumstances or demands of strategy, they never agree to the least amendment or change in the message preached by them. There is never any room for compromise on this issue. God commands the last of the prophets:

"Promulgate thou what thou art

commanded, and turn away from the associators." (15:94)

Another time the Prophet is told:

"O Messenger! Preach thou whatever has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; and if thou dost not, then thou hast not preached His message. Allah shall protect thee from men. Allah does not guide a disbelieving people." (5: 67)

The Prophet is also informed of the aims of disbelievers:

"Fain would they that thou shouldest be pliant, so that they will be pliant." (68:9)

The holy Prophet never conceived of any compromise in the matter of *tauhid*, the Oneness of God, nor he made any concession even in the case of duties and obligations imposed by faith. His indignant repudiation of all such suggestions marks a departure from the usual compromising attitude of political leaders for achieving their ends in every age. What these leaders consider to be practical wisdom has no place in the disposition of the prophets. After Ta'if was captured a deputation of the Thaqif, the second most important tribe of Arabia after Quraysh, came to Medina and requested the Prophet that their chief deity, the idol of al-Lat, should not be destroyed for three years since its existence consecrated the city and made it a place of pilgrimage for the pagan Arabs. The Apostle refused; then they reduced the period of its continued existence to two, and then to one year; and at last asked to let the idol remain untouched for a month after their return to Ta'if. But the Prophet rejected their request and ordered Abu Sufyan, who had his relatives in Taif, and another resident of the city, Moghira b. Shu'eba,

to destroy the idol forthwith. Thereafter the Thaqif delegation requested the Prophet to exempt them from the obligation of offering prayers. To this the Prophet replied, "Nothing remains of a religion which has no prayer." Abu Sufyan and Moghira b. Shu'eba accompanied the deputation of Ta'if when it returned to its home, smote al-Lat with a pickaxe and broke it into pieces. Thereupon the people of Ta'if accepted Islam; not one of them remained attached to paganism.

The prophets of God always employ the metaphor that is in consonance with their message. They demand unquestioning conviction in the hereafter, give the glad tidings of Paradise and warn of the horrors of Hell. They always speak of Heaven and Hell as if both are within their sight. Instead of advancing reasons for the acceptance of their call, they simply ask to give faith to these mute realities beyond the ken of Human perception.

The times when the prophets were sent by God, the people were not devoid of abstruse thoughts and philosophies: their ideas and ideals were more often materialistic in nature, though peculiar to the particular age and circumstances. The fact is that every era coins its own idioms and phraseologies for the cherished thoughts and concepts of the people. The prophets not only possessed an understanding of such verbalism but they also knew that these were no more than popular jargons. They did not employ them for preaching their message; they rather explained the nature and attributes of God and persuaded the people to find credence in the angels, the will of God, the life-after-death and similar other matters. Their call was never apologetic; it boldly proclaimed that the acceptance of their

call was the only way to attain the pleasure of God and salvation in the hereafter.

The method adopted by the Prophets is fully illustrated by the second pledge of "Aqabah when 73 persons from Yathrib came to Mecca for performing the hajj and met the Prophet at Aqabah. The Prophet was accompanied by his uncle 'Abbas who had still not accepted Islam. The Prophet recited some verses of the Qur'an, asked the congregation to have faith in One God and invited them to accept Islam. Thereafter he said, "I ask for your allegiance with an assurance that you would protect me in the same way as you would protect your own women and children." The Ansar, on their part, demanded to give the word that the Prophet would not return to his own clan. The Ansar were, however, not simpletons: they knew that what was being demanded of them meant provoking enmity of entire Arabia. One of the Ansars, Abbas b. Ubadah, pointed out the perils of the venture to his comrades, but they unanimously replied that they would give refuge to the Prophet even at the cost of sacrificing their all, their family members and leaders. At the same time they asked the Prophet: "O Apostle of Allah, what will we get in return for redeeming our pledge?"

This was the most crucial moment. Had there been a political leader or a worldly-wise man in place of the Prophet, he would have surely replied that they would be united and made a power to reckon with, their importance will be felt by all the tribes and they would have a place of honour in the country. And, all this could have been easily foreseen; rather, there were reasons to predict the possibility of such an assertion. One of those coming from

Yathrib to meet the Prophet had already hinted at the likely consequence when he had said, "When we came to you our tribes were more disunited than any other people. We hope that God would unite us through you. Now we shall go back and present your message to them; invite them to accept the faith we have been convinced. If God unites them under your leadership, nobody would be more respected and more influential than you."

But the only reply given by the Messenger of God to the question; "What will we get in return?" was simply: "Paradise." And it was on this promise that they asked the Prophet to extend his hand for taking the oath of allegiance from them.

Such is the ardent faith of the prophets that they never allow the least deviation in the Law promulgated by them: no recommendation can ever make them to defer or exempt anybody; whether a friend or foe, from its obligations. A woman of Bani Makhzum was apprehended on the charge of theft. Usamah b. Zayd, to whom the Prophet was well-disposed, approached the Prophet to intercede on her behalf but he got the reply: "Do you speak to me about the bounds placed by God?" Thereafter the Prophet addressed a gathering, saying. "The people before you were destroyed because they used to overlook when a highborn or a man of substance among them committed a theft but when the poor or the weak did the same; they chastised him as ordained in the Law. I swear by Him who holds my life that if Fatimah *bint* Muhammad had committed theft I would have amputated her hands."

The same spirit and ardour for faith was inherited by the Prophet's companions and their descendants who enforced the Quranic injunctions and

provisions of the Law with complete disregard to consequences or momentary gains and losses. A prominent example of maintaining the supremacy of the Law is furnished by the decision of the second Caliph. Umar in the case of Jablah b. Ayham, a prince of Ghassan. He came to Medina with an entourage of five hundred persons belonging to the tribes of Akk and Ghassan, with a pomp and show that even the purdah observing ladies came out to witness his flamboyant procession and gaudy attire. When Caliph Umar proceeded for Hajj Jablah b. Ayham also accompanied the Caliph. While Jablah was circumambulating the K'aba, a man of Bani Fazarah happened to step on his suspenders dragging the ground which fell down. Jablah slapped the man on his nose and thereafter a complaint was made to the Caliph. On being asked about the dispute Jablah replied that the complainant had tried to undress him and had this not occurred in the vicinity of the K'aba he would have cracked down on his face with the sword. Caliph Umar ordered him to compromise with the complainant through payment of a compensation, or else he would have to undergo the punishment. On being asked about the nature of punishment, Caliph Umar told Jablah that the complainant would be allowed to slap him on his nose. Jablah was astounded; he pleaded how could it be so; for, the complainant was a commoner while he was the chief and ruler of his tribe. Caliph Umar replied that Islam had made them equals and now there was nothing to distinguish him except the awe of God and good-doing. Jablah replied that he hoped to gain more respect by accepting Islam but it looked as if he had a greater honour in paganism. Caliph Umar,

however, insisted that he should make a compromise failing which he should be ready to bear the consequences.

Finding the Caliph adamant, Jablah requested to be given some more time to think over the matter and then he decamped in the dead of night with his men and beasts. He went away to Syria leaving no trace of his camp by the time morning dawned in Mecca. After a long time Juthamah b. Mushiqa Kanani told the Caliph about Jablah's impressive court in Syria but Caliph Umar remarked: "He was a loser. He exchanged the world for hereafter; he sustained loss in his bargain."

This is not to say that the prophets of God are indifferent to the demands of prudence in their missionary work or that their exhortations are not appealing to the intellect. Neither the teachings of the Qur'an nor the lives of the prophets support this view. God has said:

"And We sent not a messenger but with the speech of his people that he might expound the (message) to them." (14:4)

The word 'speech' in this verse does not signify merely language but includes style, manner and mode of expression as well as logical reasoning which are demonstrated by the way Prophet Joseph preached to his fellow prisoners and the conversation Abraham and Moses had with their kings and the peoples. The Qur'an has, in fact, instructed every believer through the last and final Prophet of God to be nice in exhortation of the divine message.

"Call thou them to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them with what is best." (16:125)

Whenever the holy Prophet

deputed his companions to a preaching mission, he always instructed them to be kind and considerate, to make the religion easy for the people and give them glad tidings. When he sent Ma'ad b. Jabal and Abu Musa Ash'ari to Yemen, he told them to make the things easy and not difficult, and to give the people glad tidings instead of making them frightened. The direction given by God to the Prophet in the holy Qur'an reads:

"It was by the mercy of Allah that thou wast lenient with them (O Muhammad), for if thou hast been stern and fierce of heart they would have dispersed from around thee." (3:159)

The Prophet often used to tell his companions: "You have been raised to make things easy and not difficult."

The instances and directions pointing to this way of comportment are too numerous to be cited here." Good and nice behavior has been a distinguishing feature of all the prophets of God. The Qur'an says after mentioning a number of prophets: "Those are they unto whom We gave the Scripture and command and prophethood."

All this talk about making things easy, however, pertains to teaching and preaching and not to the fundamental creed and the obligatory duties. The prophets are always firm and uncompromising in regard to the latter.

4- A prominent feature of prophethood and teachings of the apostles of God is that they place maximum emphasis on the hereafter, success in the afterlife and its blessings. They talk of it so frequently as if it were the core of their message. Anyone trying to study their lives without any pre-conceived notion would reach the conclusion that the end and purpose of

their teachings is nothing but the hereafter, as if it were a living reality for them. This concept seems to be so dominant in their minds and thoughts that the divine blessings promised to the virtuous and forebodings of perdition to the wrongdoers keep them ever worried. It urges them to invite their fellow beings to accept the true faith and reform their morals just for the sake of success in the life to come.

It can be easily discerned from the lives of the prophets that their call to monotheism and forebodings of the hereafter are not meant merely as a moral imperative or a device for building a virtuous society which is undoubtedly a must for an Islamic or rather any healthy society. Howsoever important this may be, the method adopted by the messengers of God and their followers differs from other reformers. The faith of the prophets is an inborn, heartfelt spiritual apprehension of the divine truth which runs through their thoughts and feelings, character and conduct while advocacy of certain principles by the reformers is no more than mere acceptance of a doctrine for the social and moral good of the people. The difference between the two is self-evident requiring no further elucidation.

5- The fifth point is that Allah is undoubtedly the absolute and only Lord and Master of the universe and it is only He who is the Law Giver. Says the Qur'an:

"The decision rests with Allah only." (12:40)

"Or have they partners (of Allah) who have made lawful for them in religion that which Allah allowed not." (42:21)

But the relationship between the Creator and the creature, the Deity and

the worshipper is much more wider and deeper as well as closer and captivating than what can be expressed by the words like Lord and Master. The way Qur'an speaks of the names, and attributes of God and the detailed and fascinating description it gives, demonstrate that it does not require Allah to be accepted merely as the sole Ruler and Sovereign without any associates; rather, the names and attributes of God oftener repeated in the Qur'an clearly seem to invite man to create a living awareness, a heartfelt love and regard and demand absolute submission to him. The purpose clearly is that one should love God with one's heart and soul; sing His praise on every occasion, day and night; never lose the awareness of His presence; inculcate an ever-present aware to guide one at every step; direct one's supplications to Him alone; and, be prepared to sacrifice one's all for His sake.

6- Another important feature determining the characteristics of the religion, which needs to be emphasized here, is that the messengers of God, in general, and the Last Prophet and the leader for the earlier apostles, in particular, are not to be regarded just as couriers to their people to whom they were sent simply for delivering the message. They were not dispatch-bearers whose only business was to deliver the message without anything to do with their affairs, faith and morals or the individual and social life of the people to whom they conveyed their message. This misconception once prevailed among the people not aware of the worth and merit of prophethood and has now been revived again by those who deny the importance of *hadith* or are unduly impressed by Christian thoughts and western concepts.

Far from it, the messengers of God are the guides and exemplars for the entire humanity in all matters pertaining to morals, behavior, gracefulness, discretion and discernment. They are accepted and approved by God. The prophets enjoy such a divine favour that their way of life, habits and behaviours became a model or standard to be followed by others. It is for this reason that to follow the example of the prophets, to take after their habits and behaviours and to act in accordance with the precedents set by them becomes the means to gain propinquity to God. One who is friends to them becomes an elect of God and one bearing ill-will to them is condemned as an enemy of God. This is the ordinance of God proclaimed by the Prophet of Islam.

"Say (O Mohammad, to mankind): If you love Allah, follow me; Allah is forgiving, Merciful." (3:31)

Just the opposite are the bearings of tyrants and misbelievers, their modes and manners, which make man distant from God and invite God's displeasure.

"And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the Fire touch you; and ye have no protecting friends against Allah, and afterward ye would not be helped." (11:113)

The ways and manners of the prophets are recognized by the *shariah* as *khisal-e-firat* or natural dispositions and *sunan-ul-huda*, that is, the way of guidance. Divine law upholds prophetic practices as favoured observances and asks the believers to follow them. The usages and practices of the prophets exalt and elevate the character of man, for the reason that these enjoy the approval of God.

"(This is the) colour of Allah, and who is better than Allah in colouring! We are His worshippers." (2: 138)

And this is why God prefers a certain mode, behavior or practice over another style, manner or usage. The modes and behaviours acceptable to God are, thus, recommended by the *shari'ah* as the traits of the believers and natural disposition of man. Any habit that is at variance with the prophetic practice is looked down upon by the Law as an impress of the ignorant, a custom of the stupid and a way of the unbelievers. Both these are bearings and deportment of men possessing wisdom and intelligence, culture and refinement, but the one is the way of the prophets informed by divine guidance and the other of those denied that blessing. This principle regulates customs and conventions manner of eating and drinking, mode of dressing and living, in short, everything that goes by the name of prophetic culture. In Islamic terminology this is known as the *sunnah*, the way of the holy Prophet, and covers a greater part of Islamic jurisprudence.

What has been stated here is true of all the messengers of God, but it assumes the greatest importance in the case of the last Prophet. A formal relationship, though valid in the eyes of law, is not enough. One has to have an emotional and spiritual affinity with him which transcends all other affiliations of kinship or rather the liking for one's own life and self. A *hadith* of the Prophet says:

"None of you shall be a believer unless I am dearer to him than his own progeny and parents and all other persons."

In another *hadith* the Prophet is reported to have said:

"None of you shall be a believer until I am dearer to him than his own self."

One needs to be extremely

cautious of all those pulls and predilections to the opposite direction which benumb the feelings of love and respect for the Prophet as the last and winsome guide of humanity, create an indifference to the study of his life and character, or, dissuade one to act on his precepts. An study of the Qur'anic *surahs* like *Ahzab*, *Hujarat* and *Fath* and reflection over the inclusion of *darud* or benedictions for the Prophet in the daily prayers and supplications for the dead, its repeated commendation in the Qur'an and the great number of *ahadith* explaining the merit of invoking blessings on him make it plain that a Muslim is required to create a closer relationship with him than just a formal, perfunctory obedience to him. What is required is a spontaneous, deep and heartfelt love and regard for the holy Prophet as commanded by God: "*That ye may believe in Allah and His apostle, and may assist and honour Him.*"

We can find some shining examples of such love in the behaviour of Khubayb b. Adiy and Zayd b. Dathinna in the expedition of a Raj, reckless courage shown by Abu Dujana and Talha in defending the Prophet in the battle of Uhad, the reply given by a woman of Bani Dinar on coming to know that the Prophet was safe and sound in the same battle and the highest marks of respect paid to the Prophet by his companions at Hudaibiya. It was this flame of love for the Prophet which had made Abu Sufyan, then still a pagan, to remark that he had never seen any man so much loved and adored as Muhammad (PBUH) was by his companions. Another chief of the Quraysh, Urwah b. Mas'ud Thaqaffi, who had called upon the Prophet to negotiate a treaty of peace reported back to his people, "I have been to the courts of the

kings and have seen the splendor of the Caesar and the Chosroes and the Negus, but never have I seen any king so revered as Muhammad (PBUH) by his Companions."

All those men of God, the scholars and reformers of old, were pure of heart and sincere and honest, who held the ring of truth. The regeneration of the Muslim community brought about by them was due to an abundant degree of their love and regard for the holy Prophet. Similar ardent devotion to the Prophet and willingness to follow his example and that of his companions is a must for an enthusiastic compliance with the demands of the *shari'ah*. It is also necessary for self-introspection if one desires to find out one's own shortcomings for it constitutes the only way to cure oneself of all spiritual and moral evils, to purify one's self and to attain the perfection of spirit.

Such was the love for the Prophet which once ran like blood in the veins of the Muslims but now these tender feelings and sensitiveness have been deadened making them cold and dull.

Alas! The fire of love has fizzled out. The Muslim is not but a heap of dust!

7- A unique characteristic of this religion is its perfection and abiding *nature*. It is apparent from the divine declaration made in the clearest terms, cited here, that the guidance pertaining to the creed and law and the things to which human salvation is anchored has been given its final shape in Islam. The Divine Writ declares:

"Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets, and Allah is Aware of all things." (32:40)

The Qur'an has left no doubt; it has proclaimed in a plain language that the religion of God has reached the state where it can meet all the demands of human life to the end of time.

"This day have I completed your religion for you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-ISLAM." (5:3)

This verse was revealed on the day of Arafah in 10 A. H. when the holy Prophet had gone to perform the Farewell Pilgrimage. Certain intelligent and learned rabbis having an insight into the history of religions had no difficulty in realizing that it was a divine blessing and the greatest gift to the Muslims community; they knew that it was a privilege not enjoyed by earlier religions. One of them said to Caliph Umar: "You have a verse in your holy Book, which, if it had been revealed to us we would have celebrated the day of its revelation as a festival."

Termination of prophethood after the holy Prophet was an indication of the completion of divine favour on man. It meant that humanity had now come to the age of maturity, crossed the period of adolescence in which it had been languishing for centuries. It taught man to rely on his own knowledge and experience and go ahead to forge unity of human race, unfold the secrets of nature and lay the foundations of a universal culture. It promised man the possibility of overcoming all the divisive forces like local and national patriotisms and physical and geographical hindrances by entering into a new era with the concepts of universal brotherhood of man and ushering a commonwealth of mankind based on cooperative endeavour and universal norms of morality for creating a new and better world to live in.

The times past bear witness to the

chaos and tumult which the followers of revealed religions have had to face. These religions had run into intellectual confusion and anarchy of creeds because of their claim to theosophical link with the Unknown through Gnostic imagery, beatific vision and illumination of heart. This had led to the division of these communities into orthodox and heterodox sects on the basis of individual spiritual perceptions. Among the older religions Judaism and Christianity had oftener to face this problem which had diverted their energies to combat this menace instead of applying themselves to the good of humanity at large. The confusion and chaos produced by appearance of false prophets had, in fact, sapped the energy of these religions.

The belief in the finality of prophethood rendered a great service to man by saving him from the futile effect of looking forward, every now and then, to the promised Messiah to come and finish the job left incomplete by his predecessor. And, at the appearance of every such contender, man had to turn his attention from every thing else to find out the truth or otherwise of the new claimant. The human energy was thus conserved by finality of prophethood for being applied to the affairs of this world for solving his earthly problems and for unraveling the secrets of nature. The protection thus afforded against ever-recurring intellectual confusion ensured unity of human race.

It was because of this creed of the finality of prophethood that the Muslim community was enabled to successfully combat all the disintegrative forces and conspiracies and to maintain the uniformity of its creed along a single spiritual center; to give itself a universal cultural and intellectual base and a

homogeneity to its identity, which will help to unify the *ummat* at anytime in future. It imparted a strong sense of cohesion and the urge to fight the divisive forces, to command the good and forbid the wrong and, above all, to organize missionary activities for spreading its message. Now the community neither requires a new prophet nor else an Imam to complete the task left unfinished by the prophets. Islamic renaissance does not stand in need of any surreptitious personality or activity or an alleged superior wisdom, beyond the understanding of common man, which can easily be exploited by any pretender for his ulterior motives.

8- It is also a characteristic of this religion that it has maintained its original teachings unchanged and in their original shape. Its Scripture is safe and has been studied and understood correctly in every age. The followers of this religion have thus been protected against falling a prey to any conspiracy or waywardness as had been the case with several religions, communities, particularly the Christians, who deviated from the teachings of its founders in the earliest phase of their history. It is one of the miracles of the Qur'an that the *surah Fatiha* containing the most oft-repeated verses of the divine scripture, alludes to the Christians as those who go astray in contradistinction to the Jews who are described as those who earn Thine anger. The secret of this distinction can be fully appreciated by a close study of the history of Christianity which deviated from the teachings of Jesus Christ in the very beginning of its career and adopted a creed entirely different from that preached by Jesus Christ. I need cite here only one Christian scholar Ernest D. Bunsen, who writes in *the Islam or True Christianity*:

"The doctrinal system recorded in

the New Testament is not that which Jesus Christ has solemnly preached by word or deed. Not in Jesus, but in Paul, the Jewish and Christian dissenter, with his hidden wisdom, with his figurative interpretation of the Scripture as being full of types and prophecies of future things, lies the principal reason for the existing dissension between Christians on the one side, and Jews and Mahomedans on the other. Following Stephen, the promulgator and developer of Essenic doctrines, Paul has brought the author of Christianity in connection with the Buddhist tradition. Paul has laid the foundation to the amalgamation of antagonistic traditions which can be traced in the New Testament Scriptures, and which has presented the world an essentially non-historical image of Christ. Not Jesus, but Paul, and the later Gnostics, have framed the principal doctrines which during eighteen centuries have been recognized as the foundation of orthodox Christianity."

In the surah al-Hijr God says about the Qur'an:

"Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian." (15:9)

This verse speaks of a great divine favour. Besides protection of its text not only verbally and literally against all accretions and mutilations it also promises its correct understanding for guidance of those who would follow it. It would virtually be meaningless to keep the text of a scripture pure and unadulterated if it were to become unintelligible and its teachings impracticable. How significant are the words, "We verily are its Guardians," which can be understood from the explicit promise made by God in this regard in a

few more verses which read:

Lo! Upon Us (resteth) the putting together thereof and reading thereof. And when We read it: follow thou the reading; Then Lo! Upon us (resteth) the explanation thereof." (75:17-19)

A religion cannot be relied upon if it has remained practicable only during short periods separated by the darkness of long stretches of time. Nor the Quranic allegory likening Islam to a tree yielding fruits at all moments by the will of God, can be deemed as correct if this had been the state of affairs. The followers of this religion are not merely the recipients of this Divine Scripture, but are also charged with the responsibility of studying and acting upon it, exemplifying its teachings in their lives and morals and disseminating its message to the four corners of the world. And this responsibility devolves more on those who can understand and speak the language of the Scripture.

9- Lastly, Islam requires an atmosphere congenial to its genius, or, if I can say so, an agreeable climate and a harmonious surrounding. It is a living religion, a way of life and not an intellectual concept or philosophical thought to be kept in memory or written in a book. It is a creed, a practice, a moral principle, a character, a stream of consciousness and societal attitude all blended in a system designed to re-create man with a new life-pattern. This is why God also calls Islam as the *sibghatu'llah* which means a distinctive divine colour, trait and characteristic. Islam is much more sensitive than any other religion, having well-defined lineaments which cannot be overstepped by

any Muslim. That is why apostasy has a connotation in Islam which is peculiar to it, and not found in any other religion.

The congenial atmosphere providing proper nourishment to all the facets of Muslim's life, his creed, worship, morals, behavior, emotions and religious precepts get nourishment from the holy Prophet's noble life, his sayings, instructions and practical examples. Islam is after all a way of life, living and growing like a plant, and therefore it cannot be kept alive without leaning on the feelings and emotions and precedents of the holy Prophet. All these are to be found in the compilations of *ahadith* which provide a precedent for the most virtuous life one can hope to lead. God has also protected, like the Qur'an, the biographical details of the holy personage who had brought that Scripture. The continuity in following the Prophet's example has been a source of inspiration to the doctors of religion who have had no difficulty in making a distinction between the *maruf* (right conduct) and *munkar* (disapproved), Islam and the *jahiliyah* (ignorance) and the *sunnah* (the prophet's example) and the *bid'ah* (innovation) at any time. With this criterion for measuring the conformity and deviation of the Muslim societies of their times from the right path, the savants of religion have ever continued to undertake the task of religious appraisal of the community's life and restated the rational and moral imperatives of Islam throughout the ages past. The compilations of *ahadith*, in which the *sihah sittah* have occupied the most prominent place, have always been studied and taught by scholars as the

source to which they have returned again and again for refreshing the spiritual vision of the Muslim society. It was with the help of the *hadith* that the revivalists and reformers have interdicted innovations, called the people back to adopt the *sunnah*, and fought the evil of paganish usages to the last ditch. History bears a witness that all the movements of reform and regeneration of the Muslim society have been directly related to the study of *hadith* literature and the zeal to propagate its teachings. The reformatory efforts have always suffered a setback when Muslim scholars have neglected the study of *hadith* in favour of other branches of learning; it was always a time when the Muslim society had absorbed extraneous influences and adopted unvirtuous innovations, came closer to pagan societies and taken up polytheistic customs and usages. Often-times, in such instances, it had laid itself open to losing its own distinctive mark and becoming the part of an alien, pagan society.

These are the distinctive characteristics and lineaments of the true faith which give it a personality of its own and distinguish it from all other religions and philosophies of life. A Muslim should not only be aware of these but should also possess the zeal to keep an eye upon them. The intermixing of the truth with falsehood, which is at times more dangerous than a headlong confrontation of the two, has to be avoided, at all costs for keeping the faith pure and unadulterated. This is the only way to find the right path and to save and protect our faith. *Allah guides whom He will on the right path.* ●



The Last Message of God and the Last Scripture

S. M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

God sent His messenger on this earth to guide human beings in believing their Creator and to thank Him for his bounties. Also to mould their lives according to His dictates. These messengers were deputed to convey His orders and the scriptures were also meant for the same. The last of these apostles is Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the last scripture is Qur'an Majeed. Both have the unique characteristic that up-till the Day of Judgement the sayings of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, and the book would keep guiding all on the path of truth and virtue. He was the greatest of the Prophets who were sent to provide guidance to all the classes, ranks and grades.

With the Prophet, (PBUH), the religion was perfected and completed. The faith and truth would guard against any interpolation and mutation, addition and deletion in the Holy Book. The directives of Qur'an, the teachings and deeds of the Prophet, (PBUH), would act as source of light up-till the Last Day.

The Qur'an has taken the place of all scriptures. This is the base of the religious jurisprudence (*Shariah*) and to abide by it would make Allah happy and satisfied.

For the faithful it should be kept in his mind that to draw maximum benefit out of it, he should have complete faith that these are the words of Allah and each letter is leading towards virtue and truth. He should have complete faith that these are the holy diction from God and he is honoured and blessed by its study.

God's greatest gift to the mankind is the Qur'an and His last Messenger. He was chosen for the good of the whole mankind

and God had created in his person an embodiment of love and truth.

He has no parallel in the whole history of mankind. It should be noted that the devotion to him does not lie in just reading about him but to love him, to carry out his directions and to follow him in all aspects of life.

God told the believers about the exalted status of the apostle and bade him to draw inspiration from the Prophet and to glorify him.

The Prophet has said, "No body among you can be true believer if he does not love me more than his parents, children and all human beings." The Holy Qur'an says:

"By the name of your God those people can not be true believers unless they come to you for the settlement of all their disputes and feel not a bit of annoyance with your judgement."

Then again Qur'an says:

"We have indeed, in the messenger of God, a good example (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day."

People who believe in God would find the Prophet a true ideal and an excellent example for them to follow.

These orders clearly indicate that every Muslim should have such a perception of the love grandeur and piety of the holy Prophet that he should make these qualities as an ideal believer in all the ups and downs of his life. He should see in the person of the holy Prophet a man superior to all the outstanding persons in the world.

God has sent His blessings on holy Prophet. He says, "Allah and His angles send blessings on the Prophet O you that

believe! Send your blessings on him and salute him with all respects."

If the name of Holy Prophet is mentioned in any talk it is obligatory to send blessings on him. If a Muslim does not do it he is acting against the directions of the Prophet.

The Holy Prophet was born in a clan of Arabia and his life span was that of sixty three years. The early forty years of his age were spent in making him perfect to bear the burden of Prophethood and the remaining twenty three years were spent in the application and transmission of the prophetic mission.

Allah would have made these sixty three years of life a period of rest and comfort and would have saved him from all the ordeals and difficulties. He was beloved of Allah and nothing could have stopped Him to bestow all the pleasures of life on him but the world allotted to him required that he should be well-versed in performing his job and bear the burden of extreme responsibility.

In forty years a man becomes fully matured and his physical and mental qualities come to the top. His personality takes its full shape. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was blessed with the Prophethood at this age and was made a guide for the whole world and a grand teacher for humanity. He was a symbol of gracefulness, courtesy and mannerly behavior. His supplication to God was exemplary. God put him to the strong experiences of self abnegation and unearthly dispositions.

He was born an orphan, the mother parted in his childhood. The kind grandfather died before he came to age, then only the uncle was left and the Prophet (PBUH) got his whole-hearted support in the early ten years of the Prophethood. His pious and loving wife Khadeja gave him all her love and attention. She was a companion and helper. She knew and

acknowledged his qualities and gave him all the help. Both the uncle and wife died in the tenth year of his Prophethood. Now there was no one left to treat him with love and kindness. Only the devotion to God was his comfort. He endured all the persecutions, the indifference of relatives, the insolence and threats of the outsiders. He bore it with dignity and honour. He treated his worst enemy with kindness and never abandoned hope.

When the kind uncle and the loving wife expired and the apostle was persecuted by all, he left for the neighbourly city of Taif. He expected to find some chieftain there whose help might have been a relief from the tortures of Mecca. He met the Chiefs and leaders and invited them to Islam. They proved very cruel and rude. They stirred up some rubble of the town to harass him. These ruffians followed the prophet abusing and throwing stones on him. The feet of the prophet were injured and smeared with blood. He could not get a cup of water to drink. He left the city and took refuge in an orchard. The oppression was so great that a prayer complaining about his helplessness and pitiable condition and seeking the succor of God came to his lips, "O Allah"! said the Prophet, "to Thee I complain of my weakness, resourcelessness and humiliation before the people. Thou art the most Merciful, the Lord of the weak and my Master. To whom wilt thou confide me? To one estranged, bearing ill will, or, an enemy given power on me? If Thou are not wroth on me, I care not, for Thy favour in abundant for me. I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and next is set right, lest Thy anger should descend upon me or Thy displeasure light on me. I need only Thy pleasure and satisfaction for only Thou enablest me to do good and evade the evil. There is no power and no might save in Thee.

He had taken the job of spreading Islam in pursuance to the commands of God. The omnipotent God would have checked these cruel deeds and given solace to the Prophet. In spite of extreme disappointment the prophet did not complain. He only referred to his helplessness and pitiable condition. He was afraid lest the God might not feel annoyed. He repeats his determination to keep the Almighty pleased and satisfied.

The mercy of God was touched by the prayer he sent the angel of mountains who sought the prophet's permission to join together the two hills between Taif was located but the Prophet replied, "No I hope God will bring forth from their loins who will worship God alone, associating nothing with Him."

The quality of pity and mercy was absorbed in his soul. Compassion was the special favour granted to him by Allah. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And we sent thee not save as a mercy for the worlds."

Again he says:

"Now hath come unto you a messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you shall suffer, ardently anxious is he over you, to the believers is he kind is he most merciful."

The holy Prophet, (PBUH) has passed from ordeals and very adverse circumstances he understood the miseries of the downtrodden and aggrieved. Also it had given him the strong determination to face hardships and bear responsibility. He had to announce and declare and apply the mission of Prophethood in extreme difficulties. This he did with perfection and after the expiry of twenty three years when the time came for his parting from this mortal world he asked his companions at the end of the sermon on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage. "And you would be asked by God about me so what you would say"? The companions replied, "We testify

that you conveyed the message and fulfilled your mission." Then he said, "O God be witness."

God made the Prophet to undergo in a variety of conditions and state of affairs only to become an excellent example for the believers.

You indeed in the messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct).

The Prophet had to deal with hypocrites and hidden enemies. He underwent both adversity and prosperity. He had the pleasure of having children and also faced the grief of his son who died in infancy. In his deep sorrow over the infant's death the apostle of God said, "The eyes weep and the heart grieves, but we say nothing that displeases God and we are grieved on being separated from you, Ibrahim.

There was a solar eclipse on the day Ibrahim died. Some of the Companions attributed the eclipse to Ibrahim's death, but the Prophet corrected them in a speech wherein he said, "The sun and the moon are the two of the signs of God; they are not eclipsed on account of anyone's death." He instructed to remember God and offer prayers at such occasions.

Here is the difference between the prophet and a worldly leader. No such a man would have rejected this observation of the people and used it for his glorification.

The Prophet was always solicitous for the pleasures of God and was always apprehensive of His displeasure. When the wind blew he thought that it might be a token of His displeasure. This was when the God said that He would not punish the pagans of Mecca because the Prophet lived between them. He always remained engaged in thought to find ways to create passion among the people for the worship of God. The narrators have described him to be always pondering and in a mid of slight gloom. Often he would remain silent

but this mood prevailed only when he was alone, otherwise when with Companions he was always happy and polite. His tolerance, forbearance, sympathy and wide-heartedness was beyond limits.

He was of cheerful disposition. Sometimes he shared some light joke with his companions. He laughed but his laugh was always manifested in smile, never he laughed loudly.

If anybody asked him for something, he gave it. If it was not possible he comforted him with kind and sweet words. Never gave him any stern reply. He did never strike anybody. He was angry only when the honour of God was concerned or the limit set by Him was transgressed. For youngsters he was like a father, for equals he was companion and friend, for elders he showed due honour.

The Prophet used to say, "Whoever leaves some property as a legacy, it belongs to his heirs, but his unpaid debts are my responsibility. At the time of danger he was foremost. In any gain he shared it with all. He paid such attention to everyone attending his meetings that everybody thought that none attracted his notice like himself.

God had endowed the Prophet with and impressive personality. His features displayed grace and splendour. This automatically attracted a new comer and he recognized him immediately though he never cared to occupy any special place in any sitting. Anybody who saw him for the first time was overawed but when he kept his company he became attached to him with all the warmth of his heart. They used to say that they never saw a man like him either before or after him.

This cheerful disposition and kind behavior does not mean that he should be called a miraculous personality. This God's gift throws light on his exalted position. He

was an ideal for the believers and they are instructed to follow him in every walk of life. He was the favourite of God but he had to undergo all the hardships for twenty years.

He wished good to everybody, he always sought God's pleasure, he always thought of the Day of the Judgement and weighed his noble deeds for that Day. He always expressed his humility before God. This he did for all his life.

God had forgiven his all sins, past or future, yet he was most eager and earnest in paying homage to Him. Once in a night he stood praying for such a long time that his feet got swollen. He said, why should not I be grateful servant. He never indulged in exacting retribution for any offence or excess to himself. He was angry only when the honour of God was trifled.

The life of the Prophet is described by the most trustworthy narrators, his truthful and pious companions. Its knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. This should act as a guide line for all.

The Holy Qur'an says, "There was indeed for them an excellent example for you to follow, for those whose hope is in Allah and in the last Day."

Qur'an Majeed, the Book of Allah, and the sayings and deeds of the holy Prophet, *Hadith* and *Sunnah*, are the grand sources of the religion of Islam. To be true believer one is to follow these sources and to mould oneself according to the directions. The holy Prophet has said, "I leave for you the two things of grand magnitude. If you clutch them strongly you would never be misled. One is the book of Allah and the other is to adopt my conduct of life."

In the words of his wife, the mother of all Muslims, Hazrat Aisha "The Qur'an was his life sketch. ●

Vande Mataram

Kancha liaiah

With the other students in my small village school, I used to sing the first two stanzas of *Vande Mataram* as a boy. Though I did not understand what it meant, I used to like the song at the time. Now after 45 years, as I witness the raging debate over the song, I have to think about what the song means to Dalit-Bahujans and in what context its author, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, wrote it.

To my shock, I discover that the song was written to instigate Hindu Sanyasis to make a communal attack against Muslims in the novel *Anandamath*. As is well known, *maths* are Hindu spiritual shrines where only Brahmin sanyasis are allowed to live. Tribals, Dalits and Sudars have no place in these hallowed *maths* even today. Shankara *maths*, the epicenters of Hinduism, are the best examples of this Brahminic Hindu culture. In the mid-and late- 19th century, when Bankim lived and wrote his books, even Sudars could not enter these *maths*, leave alone Dalits.

Bankim was a contemporary of Mahatma Jotirao Phule whose book *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) on abolition of caste was published in the 1850s. In Kerala, even in those days, the festival Onam as being celebrated in praise of Bali Chakravarthi, a victim of the Brahmin Vamana, considered one of the avatars of Vishnu.

Even in Bengal, William Carey, the creative evangelist, had started working among tribals and lower castes by having the Bible translated into the people's Bengali language, and not the Brahminical Bengali of Bankim.

When Bankim wrote *Anandamath*, which was published as a full-length novel in 1882 (it was earlier serialized in his journal) he had already witnessed the 1857 sepoy rebellion, in which Hindu (mainly upper caste) and Muslim soldiers participated.

Those were the times when preparations were being made to launch the Indian National Congress.

In this atmosphere of national reforms and anti-colonial struggle, why did Bankim write a novel with Brahmin sanyasis as protagonists revolting against the Muslims and not the British? The reason could be that quite a lot of Dalit Bahujan castes and tribals must have been moving into Islam. As M. J. Akbar noted in his recent book *Blood Brothers*, conversion of masses of people into Islam had made Hindus as minority in East Bengal.

Caste oppression and the control of Brahminism over Hinduism was the main reason for the productive masses moving into Islam.

Brahmin intellectuals like

Bankim were obviously more worried about the exodus into Islam than colonial rule. It was probably as a representative of the Brahminic social force that Bankim wrote that novel.

Vande Mataram is a song that instigates. It is not a liberting song. There is no reformative appeal in it. The weapon-wielding Durga is the prime metaphor around which the song was woven. It was written to embolden the *sanyasis* to rebel against the Muslims. Who were these Muslims? The majority of them were SCs, STs and OBCs who moved into Islam because of the cast oppression within Hinduism. Did Bankim ask only the *sanyasis* to salute Mother Durga or did he address the entire nation including SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities to build a socially harmonious and egalitarian nation? There is no reference to the social mass and its productive ethics in the song.

In Aurobindo's translation of the song it reads:

"Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen, With her hands that strike and sword of sheen, Thou art Lakshmi Lotus-throned."

From the above stanza there is no doubt that the song was meant to instigate violence.

It invokes Goddess Durga, whose iconic form shows her holding a *trishul* and wearing a garland of human heads. This cannot be taken as a symbol of a woman's revolt against patriarchy. We know that

Bengal is one of the most patriarchal regions in India. The openly displayed violent Goddess or God images were essentially meant to protect and perpetuate the system of Varnadharma. Bengali nationalist writers used the violent Durga image to fortify Bhadrakal Brahminism.

What is the relation ship of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati with the SCs, STs and OBC masses? In Bengal, Surdas and Namsudras have no right to priesthood. The situation is the same all over India. Spiritual untouchability is an existential reality. Neither Marxist rule of the last 25 years nor the general democratic rule of last 60 years has changed caste cultural relations in Bengal and India.

When Vande Mataram was adopted as a national song it was done with deeply internalized Brahminic view. It was only after Muslim scholars objected that two stanzas, which do not make direct reference to Durga, were adopted. But the repeatedly uttered "mother" does refer to Durga, with whom the Dalit Bahujan masses cannot mediate as dignified human beings.

The song stands against the annihilation of caste and untouchability and that was why the sangh Parivar adopted it. It essentially represents Hindu Brahminism.

As an OBC I would never sing Vande Mataram as it represents Bhadrakal Brahminism and not the nations as whole. ● (AsianAge)



People can't be forced to sing

Sanjay Singh

Zeroing in on the concept of tolerance as the hallmark of our traditions, philosophy and Constitutions, the Supreme Court had in a landmark verdict in 1986 ruled that there is no provision in the law which obliges anyone to sing the national anthem *Jana Gana Mana*. Not joining in the singing of the national anthem does not amount to showing disrespect to it, the court had said, a ruling which assumes significance in the backdrop of the current controversy over the singing of the national song *Vande Matram*. "There is no provision of law which obliges anyone to sing the national anthem, nor do we think that it is disrespectful to the national anthem if a person who stands respectfully when the same is sung does not join in the singing," Justice Chinnappa Reddy had written on behalf of the Supreme Court bench two decades ago.

Directing the authorities to readmit three school children belonging to the Jehovah's Witnesses, a worldwide sect of Christians, who were expelled from the school for not singing the national anthem, the bench said compelling them to sing the anthem would infringe on the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution, particularly the freedom of religion.

"The expulsion of the three children from the school for the reason

that because of their conscientiously held religious faith they do not join the singing of national anthem in the morning assembly, though they do stand up respectfully when the national anthem is sung, it is violation of their fundamental right to freedom of conscience and to freely profess, practice and propagate religion," the bench said. The court also stated that the three appellant schoolchildren who refused to sing the national anthem could not be robbed of their fundamental religious rights guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution on the plea that they belonged to a religious denomination and not a separate religion. Setting aside a judgement of the Kerala high court, the bench went on to state that to compel each and every pupil in the singing of the national anthem despite his/her genuine, clearly contravene the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19 (1) of the Constitution.

If each and every person was compelled to sing the national anthem it would go against our tradition, philosophy and Constitution. The court delivered its verdict on an appeal by the three schoolchildren, Bijoe, Binu Mol and Bindu Emmanuel, adherents of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were expelled from their school on July 26, 1985, for not singing the national anthem..○

'Id-ul-Azha'

It is related by Anas that when the Prophet (PBUH) arrived in Madinah, two special days were observed there for feasting and celebration. On enquiry about these festivals, he was told that the people of Madinah had been celebrating them as occasions of social entertainment since the days of Ignorance. The Prophet, (PBUH) thereupon, remarked, "God has provided you with better festivals in their place, 'Idul Fitr and 'Idul Adha'. ●

It is related on the authority of Zaid ibn Arqam that some Companions asked the Prophet, (PBUH) what was the history and significance of Sacrifice. Upon it, he, (PBUH) replied: "It is Sunnah of your (spiritual) progenitor, Ibrahim, (PBUH), (i.e. First of all, it was enjoined upon him by God and he used to perform it). (It has been commanded to me and my followers, also, to emulate the example and act of Sacrifice of Ibrahim, PBUH)." The Companions, then, said: "O Prophet! What is the recompense for us on these offerings?" "A virtue in return for every hair of the slaughtered animal", replied the Prophet, PBUH. The Companions, again, asked: "Does it apply to wool also (meaning will the sacrificial offering of animals like sheep and camel which have wool instead of hair fetch the reward in the same proportion)?" "Yes" replied the Prophet, peace be upon him, "In the same proportion. A virtue in return for every hair." ●

Buraidah narrates that the custom of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was to eat something before proceeding for Prayer on the day of 'Idul Fitr but on the day of 'Idul Adha he refrained from eating anything until he had celebrated the service. ●



Justice and Ideal Society in Islam

Jamil Farooqui

Justice is the basis of human life and the cardinal principle along with human society operates. Shah Waliullah considers it as an essential moral trait of human being as well as an outstanding and instinctive characteristic of human society. It encompasses all the aspects of human life and enables one to live in peace and harmony with other fellow beings. According to him "when justice is expressed in dress, manners and mores, it is *adab* i.e. etiquette. When it is maintained in matters relating to income and expenditure it is 'economy'. Its observance in the affairs of the state is called 'politics'."

Justice is a balance or harmony in thought, action, and relation with others as well as in the entire human operation in the world. It refers to rectilinear just, well balanced and applies both to beings and things. In the Mu'tazilite doctrine '*adl*', the justice of God constitutes one of the five dogmas (*usuls*) of the system. Al Muwardi describes the quality of '*adl*' as a state of moral and religious perfection. According to Ibn Rushd it consists in not committing major sins and also avoiding minor ones. In the broad sense it simply describes the state of a person who in general obeys the moral and religious law. In the middle of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire when the law was codified it was defined that the '*aadil*' is one in whom good impulses prevail over bad. In nutshell justice indicates that a person should adopt a balanced view to lead life on earth and make it more meaningful and beneficial for himself as well as for

other living and non living beings.

Islam always lays great emphasis on justice because it facilitates the establishment of a social order that enables humans to develop their humane qualities, live in peace and harmony and make this world worth living. Peaceful life is only possible when we would be just in our thinking and action, understand ourselves, and the universe and the Creator. Islam impresses upon humans to comprehend the Lord Who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and who makes it work and operate in a systematic and meaningful way. This is the reason that Islam preaches total submission to the will of God because the establishment of peaceful and just society is not at all possible without strengthening the relations of human beings with the Creator. The Qur'an mentions ninety nine names of Allah which signify his distinctive attributes. One of His attributes is '*adl*', the just. Allah is, in fact, the source and the Dispenser of justice. The Qur'an expounds that "*the word of thy Lord doth find its fulfillment in truth and in justice: none can change His words: for He is the one Who heareth and knowth all*" (Qur'an, 6:115). The Qur'an, further, explains that "*Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition*" (Qur'an, 16:90). It indicates that besides other virtues good deeds are also included in justice.

The concept of justice in Islam is

related to its worldview based on the unity of God and the unity of mankind. The unity of God means oneness and omnipotence of Absolute Reality which is none but Allah. It indicates that God is one and the Most Powerful, Most Exalted, Most Compassionate and Most Merciful. He is the Creator of the universe and things that lie between the heaven and the earth. He is the Master and the Lord of the world. All things are under His control. The Qur'an describes His attributes as follows:

Allah! There is no god but He the living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heaven and on earth.

Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as he willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory) Qur'an, 2:255)

Allah created man, bestowed upon him unlimited bounties and endowed many superior qualities including the faculties of thinking and understanding. Further, He appointed the human being as His vicegerent and, as such He thrust a covenant on him which he has to discharge in this world and on the basis of which he will be rewarded or punished in the Hereafter. Human beings can be relieved of that covenant when they completely submit themselves to the will and order of Allah. Islam conveys this message and impresses upon humans to follow and manifest it in true sense both in faith and deed. Humans, in fact, can do justice for themselves and maintain it in

their lives when they understand God as the Highest Truth and the Ultimate Reality, realize their positions as His servants, completely submit themselves to His will and operate in this world according to His command and order. This is the most just act and this is the only way by which humans can lead a life of peace, harmony, contentment and prosperity. If they do so they seek the pleasure of Allah and adopt the course of righteousness, otherwise they will do injustice to their own existence and will be lost in falsehood and go astray.

Justice is important in social order of Islam because it helps to maintain and preserve the unity of mankind. Islam treats all human beings at equal levels as the progeny of the same father and mother. It exhorts him to establish harmonious relations with all fellow beings. It can be possible when we are just in dealing with others, take their problems and interests into consideration and give them all rights and privileges which we want for ourselves. The difficulty is that man, by and large, is more concerned with his own benefit and pleasure. He tries his best to obtain them even at the cost of others. In this endeavor he does not hesitate even to deprive others of their due share. This situation damages the whole fabric of social relations and initiates the exploitation and oppression of humans by humans themselves. Society, thus, faces severe type of conflict, tension and turmoil that fracture the unity of mankind. Islam checks this tendency by creating God consciousness among human beings and making them aware of what is right and wrong and just and unjust. God-consciousness enables them to know how they have to live in peace and tranquility with their fellow beings, how

they have to utilize their life span to get maximum comfort and benefit in this world as well as in the Hereafter and how they have to operate in this world according to the Divine instructions. The Qur'an lays down an important principle as how to live with others and exhorts that one should be firm in justice as a witness to truth and implement it without fear and favour. It explicates:


O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor. For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do (Qur'an 4:135).

The verse points out that we should stand firm for justice as it is the attribute of Allah, and to be a witness to Allah, as He is the Ultimate Truth, is the highest form of justice. Further, we should not submit to our ego by distorting justice or declining it but adopt the righteous path which is just. Thus, the Islamic concept of justice is derived from Allah (swt) who is the Most Just, and whatever He commands and proclaims are highest form of justice. All other ideas and things contrary to His commandment and proclamations are injustice. If we follow this principle we can establish a just society in the world in the true sense. Man made principles of justice are relative as they often favour a section or group and fail to maintain neutrality and impartiality. Further, there is greater chance of distortion because people generally interpret them according to their own interest or the interest of their group. The reason is that they lack God-consciousness and act on the lust of their

heart. There is an axiom in Roman Law: "Let justice be done though heaven should fall". But there are many ifs and buts in implementation of this dictum. Islamic justice according to Abdullah Yusuf Ali is "something higher than the formal justice of Roman Law or any other human law. It is even more penetrative than the subtle justice in the speculations of Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things, acts and motives are known".

The other feature of Islamic justice is fair dealing. It is the essential attribute of a believer who is instructed time and again to be fair in dealing with other beings and objects. Human beings should be just and fair whenever they interact with living and non living beings. They should not harm and humiliate others or damage their prestige by calling them by bad names or exposing their weaknesses. They should not treat others inferior but consider them as important as they themselves are. Islam treats all human beings as equals and the servants of Allah and, as such, they have the same status, and are governed by and dealt with the same principles. Similarly when we use natural resources we should be fair and just. We should not, in any way, destroy or damage them or restrict them to our own use only. Islam rejects this tendency by which people adopt antagonistic attitude in dealing with those whom they dislike. Fair dealing is so vital and notable for living together in peace and harmony that Islam considers it next to piety. The Qur'an clearly explains:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from

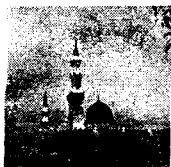


justice. Be just that is next to piety: and fear Allah. Far Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do (Qur'an 5:8)

One cardinal principle of social life is that the natural rights of individuals which are necessary for survival must be made available to them. A society is just if it develops adequate mechanism to fairly distribute its benefits and privileges among all its members. Individuals should be particular not to grab all or most of the privileges of society to themselves or to their group and deprive others of their due shares. Justice demands that we should be considerate and take care of our brethren particularly those who are weak and downtrodden. We should give them their due share and provide adequate opportunity to avail of the privileges of society. It requires a distinct condition where human relations are based on justice and individuals are encouraged to do that Islam motivates people to do justice to their fellow beings, give their due share and base their relations on justice. It is proclaimed that "Allah doth command you to render back your trust to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He who heareth and seeth all things" (Qur'an, 4:58). At another place Allah commands people to act justly because He loves those who are just (Qur'an, 49:9). The Prophet (PBUH) also warned people of injustice. He said: "People, beware of injustice, for injustice shall be darkness on the Day of Judgment."

The principles of justice when augmented on the collective plane lay the foundation of society. Islam, in fact, establishes a moral and altruistic society based on high level of God-

consciousness. It is a society that is humane in true sense. It transcends selfish nature of human being and creates an atmosphere where people do not respond only to their desires and ambitions but act upon the Divine Will. Islam liberates man from the domination of his own ego and makes him a true servant of Allah. It creates a situation where the entire mankind completely surrenders itself to the Divine Will and enters into a permanent bond of love and affection. In Islamic society the human being struggles to seek the pleasure of Allah and, as such, establishes close relations based on mutual trust, help, and cooperation with his fellow beings. In this human collectivity people do justice to themselves and to their lives when they activate their faculty of understanding and comprehend the authority of the Creator. Consequently they consider it utmost beneficial to surrender to Him. Further, they do justice to the entire humanity and other animate and inanimate objects when they follow the commandments of the Lord, lead life accordingly and struggle to establish His system and implement His laws on earth. It is an ideal society because it creates a state of servitude to Allah where all stand at one level, live together in peace and harmony, cooperate with each other to implement the order and manifest the suzerainty and ascendancy of the Lord in their thought and action. Society in Islam comes into being for three sublime purposes: to witness to truth, to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong and to establish Divine order on earth. It is free from all sorts of exploitation, develops human potentiality and imbues people with righteousness and virtues, the noble ideals of humanity. ●



Islam: A Religion of Pure Monotheism

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Morals of Islam act on human nature similar to that of fire which purifies iron and melts it so that it can be moulded into an effective instrument. The credit of its goes to Prophet Muhammad who came on earth to guide people from darkness into light and lead them to path of salvation, progress and prosperity.

Needless to add that the religion that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought is based on the concept that all human beings regardless of caste, creed, colour, language, culture and origin from one community. In the words of the holy Quran: "O mankind! We have created you from a single pair of male and female, constituted into diverse peoples and nations that you know and co-operate with one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most pious, the most virtuous". (49:13)

Unlike other religions Islam is not only a religion but a complete code of life. Islam is an Arabic word which connotes submission, surrender and obedience. Its another literal meaning is "Peace" And it signifies that one can attain real peace of body as well as mind only through submission and obedience to Allah.

Noted Islamic scholar S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says: "Islam is a religion of pure Monotheism. It does not admit of any intermediaries or intercessors between man and his Creator. It frowns upon all material and visible objects which might become centres of devotion and to which people paid spiritual homage in one form or another. There is no place in it for an intervening agency, a manifestation, an image or an idol. There is also no priestly class in it nor a tribe of monks hermits.

And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My Call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright. (-ii:186)

So worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (only). Surely, pure religion is for Allah only. And those who choose protecting friends beside Him (say): we Worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah. (-xxxix:2-3)

He further says: "Islam dwells at such a high level of intellectual purity, highmindedness, honesty of purpose and sincerity of action that it is impossible to conceive of a better ideal or a nobler concept. No other faith or philosophy in the world can compare with it in these respects, nor can anyone improve upon the description given in the Qur'an of the Uniqueness and Excellence of God." (The Four Pillars of Islam, 221-222)

We may further understand the true meaning of Islam through the following thought-provoking words of Hammudah Abdalati: "The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root "SLM" which means, among other things, peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious sense the word Islam means submission to the Will of God and obedience to His Law. The connection between the original and the religious meanings of the word is strong and obvious. Only through submission to the Will of God and by obedience to His Law can one achieve true purity and enjoy lasting peace.

If our faith is classified Mohammedanism and we are called Muhammadans, it will have wrong

implications. This misnomer implies that the religion takes its name after a mortal being, but it is not so.

The implication of this misnomer is that non-Muslim might think of Muslims, worshipers of Muhammad. Further a wrong impression is formed that the religion was founded by Muhammad and therefore takes its name after the founder. Islam is not just another "ism". Nor do Muslims worship Muhammad or look upon him the same way as Christians, Jews, Hindus, Marxists, etc., look upon their respective leaders. Muslims worship God alone. Muhammad was only a mortal being commissioned by God to teach the word of God and lead an exemplary life. He stands in history as the best model for man in piety and perfection. He is a living proof of what man can be and of what he can accomplish in the realm of excellence and virtue. Moreover, Muslims do not believe that Islam was founded by Muhammad, although it was restored by him in the last stage of religious evolution. The original founder of Islam is no other than God Himself, and the date of the founding of Islam goes back to the creation of this world. Islam existed in one form or another all along from the beginning and will continue to exist.

The true name of the religion, then is Islam and those who follow it are Muslims. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Islam or submission to the Will of God, together with obedience to His Law, does not mean in any way loss of individual freedom or surrender to fatalism. Anyone who thinks or believes so has certainly failed to understand the true meaning of Islam and the concept of Islam. The concept of God in Islam describes Him as the Most Merciful and Gracious, and the Most Loving and most concerned with the well-being of man, and as Full of Wisdom and care for His Creatures. His Will,

accordingly, is a Will of Benevolence and Goodness, and whatever Law He prescribes must be in the best interest of mankind". (Islam in Focus, 7-8)

We may easily comprehend from the above connotations of Islam that in true sense entire creation of the whole world literally follows the religion of Islam. The sun, the Moon, the earth, air, water, stones, trees, animals and other innumerable things found in this cosmos are thus Muslims. For all things run on a specific course and pronounce Allah's praise and glorify Him. The holy Quran says: "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is oft-forgiving, Most-Forgiving. (S.17, A.44)

The holy book further says: "Seest thou not that to Allah prostrate all things that are in the Heavens and on earth, the Sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the trees the animals and a great number among mankind?" (S.22, A.18)

In this context it would be apt to mention that three basic concepts of Islam as laid down by prophet Muhammad and all Prophets who had been sent by Almighty Allah to this universe before him for the guidance of people are : At-thowhid (The oneness of Allah); Ar-Risalah (Prophethood); Al-Akhirah (Hereafter).

These three basic concepts are embodiment of all Quranic injunctions and the do's and don'ts prescribed by prophetic traditions.

Now come to the three basic concepts of Islam. The first and foremost tenet of Islam is oneness of Allah. For real objective of life is attainment of pleasure of Allah. Almighty Allah alone deserves worship. There is no deity except Him. If we worship except Him, it would be an act of polytheism. In Islamic concept polytheism

is an unforgivable sin. It is contumacious treason against Him. This is a rebellion against the Creator. Almighty Allah forgives all sins except polytheism. The holy Quran says: "Allah forgiveth not that partner should be set up into Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed" (.4, A.48). Abu Amr relates on the authority of Sufyan b. Abdullah that he said to prophet, 'O Apostle of Allah, tell me something about Islam that I may not require further elucidation from anybody. The Prophet replied: I have faith in Allah, and stick to it firmly" Abdullah bin Busre reports that a person said to the Prophet (PBUH), "O Apostle of God! I have known many commandments of Islam (but it is difficult for me to act on them simultaneously) therefore, tell me the one which I can make the passion of my life." The Prophet said, "Keep your tongue wet with remembrance of God."

The second tenet of Islam is Prophethood. The holy Quran says: "There is no nation to whom a Warner has not been sent" (35:24)". To every people we sent a Prophet to teach them to worship God and to avoid evil....(16:36)" O ye who believe, believe in God and His apostle and the Book (Quran) which He hath sent down to His apostle and scriptures which He hath sent down formerly. Whoever denieth God and His angles and His Books and His apostles and the Last Day hath strayed far from the truth (4:136) "We have sent to mankind messengers proclaiming the truth and warning that men may henceforth have no excuse for ignorance" (4:165)

It should be kept in mind that besides having reposed faith in all prophets and apostles, Muslims must also believe that Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet of Allah and there would be no Prophet after him. If anyone claims to be a Prophet of Allah after Him, he would be a liar and an imposter. Almighty Allah sent a good number of prophets for guidance of mankind but the holy

Quran has only mentioned 25 of them. The main plank of all Prophets was to emancipate the people from superstitions and uncertainties and lead them to the right path.

The third concept of Islam is Hereafter. Contrary to other faiths Islam has a unique and different concept regarding the Day of Judgement. It would not be an exaggeration to say that whole gamut of Islamic life depends on the Hereafter. The holy Quran says: "What is the life of this world but amusement and play? Man's real home is in the Hereafter, if only he knew". (29:64)

It should be noted that a Muslim whatever he does in this world is for the Hereafter. That is why the real life of believers is the life to Hereafter. A Muslim shirks in committing unholy acts for he will have to be accounted for them before Allah on the Day of Judgement. No doubt, the fear of the Hereafter baffles Muslims from perpetrating all sorts of evil acts.

Maulana Manzoor Nomani has rightly said that "Faith in the Hereafter implies, in a word, the placing of one's complete trust in the revelation made by the Prophets that, at the end of this mortal life, there is to come another life and another world in which men will be requested for the good or evil they might have done during their earthly sojourn."

The holy Quran says: "The dwellers of paradise will ask the inmates of Hell, what brought ye into Hell-fire? They will reply, "We were not of those who observed the prescribed prayers, and we were not of those who fed the poor, and we indulged in vain talk with idle thinkers, and we questioned the happening of the Day of Judgement, till death overtook us" (Q:74: 42-47)

In a nutshell, a Muslim cannot be perfect, unless he adheres to the above mentioned concepts of Islam. It is therefore a bounden duty of all Muslims to carry out the teachings of Islam and lead their lives as Almighty Allah stands for His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and asks him to say: "Lo! My worship and sacrifice and my living and my dying are meant for Allah, Sustainer of the worlds." ●



To be a Muslim in India Today

Harsh Mandar

"In so many ways, I feel reduced to a second class citizen in my own country, only because of my Muslim identity. I fear we are losing every day the India we love."

These words, with small variations, echoed in many diverse voices from far corners of the country. In Muslims in India today, organized by Anhad in Delhi from October 3 to 5, 2009, many individuals and representatives of organizations gathered from several parts of India. They spoke of negotiating life, relationships, work and the State as members of the largest religious minority in India. The predominant mood in these intense deliberations, which continue late into the evenings, was of sadness and disappointed, and of growing despair. Muslim citizens shared their mounting disillusionment with all institutions of governance, and more so with the police and judiciary, as well as with political parties and to some extent the media, and of a sense of fear that never goes away.

There is, on the one hand, the constant dread of being profiled as a terrorist, or of a loved one being so profiled, with the attendant fears of illegal and prolonged detention, denial of bail, torture, unfair and biased investigation and trial, and extra-judicial killings.

There is, on the other hand, the

lived experience of day-to-day discrimination, in education, employment, housing and public services, which entrap the community in hopeless conditions of poverty and want. This is fostered in situations of pervasive communal prejudice in all institutions of the State, especially the police, civil administration and judiciary; and also the political leadership of almost all parties; large segments of the print and visual media; and the middle classes, and the systematic manufacture of hate and divide by communal organizations.

The pervasive sense of insecurity, reported from various corners of the country, derive greatly from the prejudice, illegality and impunity with which police force across the country deal with the challenges of terror. This is a regular pattern that recurs after every terror attack, and sometimes even when there have been no actual terror episodes but the State authorities claim that there was a conspiracy which they detected and prevented.

Chilling pattern

Testimonies from many States in the country including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Rajasthan delineate this chilling pattern of

brazen police illegality. Muslim, mostly male, youth, usually with no criminal records, are illegally picked up by policemen in plain clothes, and taken blind-folded in unmarked vehicles to locations like farm houses which are not police stations. There they are tortured to coerce them to confess to terror crimes. Many men testified to brutal and terrifying forms of torture. A few are killed in extra-judicial killings or 'encounters'. The rest are ultimately produced after several days of illegal detention before magistrates, who deliberately ignore injuries that suggest torture. They are then officially remanded to extended police custody, and ultimately accused of a range of crimes of terror and treason. Many are charged with multiple crimes of terror, sometimes 20 or even 50, allegedly committed in many States, making it impossible for the youth charged with these grave crimes to defend themselves. Even if the legal justice system worked efficiently, it would take many years, sometimes decades, for these cases to be heard and concluded against each of the individuals. For all these years, the youth would continue to be held in detention. Nothing could possibly compensate for their lost years, and for the suffering of those who love them.

Almost none who bears a Muslim identity is exempt from the fear that they, or members of their families, can be subjected to the same allegations of terror links, and to similar processes of detention, torture, encounter killings or prolonged,

multiple and biased trials. No class, no profession, no part of the country, is safe, as long as you are Muslim. Completely different standards are applied in the cases of the Hindutva terror organizations which have come to light. It is almost as if being Muslim and (usually) male makes you an automatic suspect of terrorism, and it is not the burden of the State to prove your guilt but your own responsibility to prove your innocence.

Denied aspirations

But the anguish of Muslim citizens was not restricted to targeting in the name of terror. People underline also the many unmet aspirations of men and women of the community to participate as equal partners in India's development. Many spoke of the importance to them of modern and high quality schooling and higher education, for both boys and girls, and sought much higher levels of public investment in their education, in modern mainstream schools and institutions of higher education.

There was careful and thoughtful analysis of the design flaws in the schemes of the central UPA government to address the low social and economic indicators documented by the Sachar Committee. It was pointed out that the per capita levels of investment for the community are still abysmally low. The new scheme for investment in at best cover 30 per cent of the total population. These programmes, which represent the UPA government's major initiative to

address the socio-economic backwardness of the community, are for development of districts with higher minority populations rather than programmes focused actually on the minorities; therefore they prove blunt instruments, as much of the expenditure is on general infrastructure and little to directly benefit deprived people of the community. The scholarship programme for girls and boys from minorities was welcomed, but this scheme also suffers from infirmities of procedure and targets which limit its impact. Financial institutions including nationalized banks are still reluctant to extend credit to Muslims.

There were many testimonies about open prejudice and bias of public institutions towards Muslims. There were also reports of profiling against Muslims by the criminal justice system even beyond terror crimes, reflected in disproportionately high Muslim populations in jails. Many sensitive and senior positions in both central and state government departments, including in the home, education, social welfare and information departments, continue to be held by officials with sympathies with communal ideologies and organizations, and the UPA government has done little to identify and replace them.

Widely prevalent

But it was confirmed that these prejudices are equally evident outside government as well. In particular, sections of the media actively reinforce

communal stereotypes, as well as uncritically broadcast the police version in terror-related arrests and encounter killings. Textbooks often show similar bias, and this is particularly dangerous because for millions of poor and especially rural children, the textbook is the only source of the printed word which they can access. People also reported bias in private recruitment.

Muslim men and women from many parts of India confirmed difficulties in getting homes on rent or on sale in non-Muslim localities, or admissions in schools and higher education. People spoke of systematic efforts in many corners of the country to destroy and boycott the livelihoods of Muslims. Sustained decentralized hate campaigns are organized which portray Muslim men as predators against Hindu girls, and people who slaughter the cow which is sacred to the Hindu community, and vigilante groups supported tacitly by the police target Muslims violently for these alleged social violations.

These voices are not simply of victimhood or of injustice to a particular community. They testify to the massive and varied challenges that have been mounted against the basic values of the Indian Constitution, including democracy, secularism, fraternity and the rule of law. What is threatened is not just the future and well-being of a community. What is under grave assault is the idea of India itself. ●

(Courtesy: The Hindu, October 25, 2009)



AROUND THE WORLD

Rumi's Masnawi to be Published in Chinese

Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi's Masnavi will be published in Chinese, Kazakh and Greek languages. The metropolitan municipality of Konya, where Maulana's tomb is located, has announced plans to get the book translated into these languages in an effort to promote Maulana and his works, Konya Mayor Tahir Akyurek said.

Akyurek said Masnawi would be published in these languages in a month. He also said that the book would be translated into Korean and Azerbaijani languages soon. Masnawi has so far been published in 17 languages, including English, German, Spanish, French, Arabic and Dutch. Maulana was born on September 30, 1207 in Balkh in present day Afghanistan. He died in Konya on December 17, 1273. He was laid to eternal rest beside his father and over his remains in a splendid shrine that was erected in Konya. ●

Islamic Finance set for big leap

China is the next big Islamic finance market, as demand grows for ethical funds, but Asia's fastest growing economy must first sort out tax issues, a unit of British insurer Prudential said recently. A large Muslim population and growing wealth provide a ready retail Islamic banking market in China. The US dollar 1 trillion Islamic finance industry is targeting rapidly growing Asian economies such as China and India and new markets like Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka to offset slowing growth in its traditional base of Gulf Arab states. ●

Seminar on Islamic Finance in Bali

Alwashem Economic Consulting Services (AECS), Kuwait, in co-ordination with BEDA Promosindo from Indonesia is organizing an Islamic Finance Seminar to be held from December 9 to 11 this year in Bali, Indonesia. The seminar aims at raising awareness of the diverse global interests of members of the Islamic Finance industry and to promote greater participation in international dialogue and exchange of information and, by doing so aim at strengthening the finance industry systems at the national levels and globally.

The focus of the seminar will be "Islamic Finance- Outlook and Reality." Findings, conclusions and action plans resulting from the seminar - and many others being held across the region will contribute directly to a stronger financial global community.

Some topics that will be covered are as : 1- Shariah and legal frame work for Islamic financial institutions, 2- Financial accounting aspects of Islamic Institutions, 3- The role of the shariah committees in the development of the Finance Industry, 4- Marketing Strategies for Islamic Products and Services., 5- Recent development in the regulatory and supervision Issues for Islamic Finance institutions, 6- Growth and development of the Islamic Finance Industry, 7- Financial crisis impacts on the Islamic Financial institutions.

Some of the speakers from around the world who are likely to participate are: Sheikh Abdullah Bin Suleiman Al-Manea - Saudi Arabia, Dr. Muhammad al-Bashir Muhammad al-Amine - Kingdom of Bahrain, Dr. Farid Kourtel - Algeria, Bernardo Vizcaino - Singapore, Ayad al-Mutairi -Saudi Arabia, Azmat Rafique- Qatar, Lindsey Rogerson - United Kingdom. ●

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