

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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## **The Fragrance of East**

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### **Wisdom of Qur' an**

*Commeth Allah's command, so seek not to hasten it. Glorified is He above that which they associate (with Him).*

*(Surah-Al-Nahal-1)*

#### **Commentary:**

Jalaluddin Suyuti has said: Consider how the previous chapter is connected with this one. The previous chapter ended with the word, "And worship your Lord until death comes to you," while this one starts with, "Commeth Allah's commandment" (Alusi).

As regards immediate context, this verse addressed the Makkans who often demanded to know when the Hour would strike. Nadr b. al - Harith in fact said(8:32)"O Allah, If this be true from You, then rain down stones upon us "(Au.).

In Yusuf Ali's tender words, "This is an answer to the taunts of the pagans, who said, 'If there is a god the One true God, as you say, with unified control, nontrol, why does He not punish the wrong doers at once? The answer is: 'The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

According to some of the Salaf, the "amr" of the text alludes to " the two events being so close, also to the raising of the Final Messenger. Ibn ' Abbas said that when Jibril was went with the first message to the prophet, he remarked, "Allah is Great. The Hour has arrived"(Qurtubi).

### **Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

*Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet of Allah blessings and peace be upon him said "If a person said Subhanallahi Wa bihmdih one hundred times a day, his sins would be forgiven even if they were like scum of the sea.*

#### **Commentary:**

The meaning of Subhanallahi wa bihamdihi is the same as the meaning of subhanallahi walhamdulillah: to know Allah as free of attributes unmatching His magnificence, or having even the slightest reference to any fault of limitation and also to believe in all distinctive Attributes of Allah as originally belonging to Him on the basis of which He alone deserves all praise and glory. Thus this short sentence encompasses all that can be said in praise of Allah, referring either to His promotive attributes or coercive ones. It is mentioned in this Tradition, as in Tradition (16), that all sins of a Muslim who says the above sentence one hundred times a day, will be forgiven even if they are countless like foam bits in the ocean. As bright light at once dispels darkness and scorching heat dries up moisture. God-remembrance and other virtuous deeds clean the ill-effects of sins. But, as mentioned before in other volumes of Meaning and Message of the Traditions at several places, some Quranic verses and Traditions suggest that only minor sins are forgiven seek forgiveness of Allah. Allah alone knows the correct interpretation.

## Editor's Note:

# Our Voice

With this issue of The Fragrance of East we are entering the year 11<sup>th</sup> of our publication. Late S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (Rah) had a long cherished desire that Nadwa should have an organ in English as well. In late 1998 we started The Fragrance of East as a quarterly magazine. Maulana appreciated our efforts and we continued to have his blessing as long he lived. The Fragrance of East is now coming out as monthly magazine since January 2007.

It is encouraging to note that our decision to take out 'The Fragrance', an English quarterly magazine, has been well received. Even before its formal publication hundreds of subscribers got themselves registered and good number of suggestions were also made to make the magazine more attractive, objective and effective. We incorporated these ideas so as to satisfy our readers. Our message is to observe nothing more than adherence to the minimum obligations of our faith; a way of life reflecting a deep love of God as well as observing the tenets of a system established for worshipping the Almighty. With His blessings we hope to march ahead and be productive.

Even though Fragrance has completed more than a decade, writers and intellectuals have yet to show an interest to help us in fulfilling the task. This cold shouldering by the intelligentsia of the community is depressing. We do not want to be reduced to mere copy-holder of other magazines and journals by lifting articles from there. We wish to be pioneer in publishing and propagating the ideals of a pious, evil-free society in context of the present day developments. It is, therefore, earnestly requested that intellectuals and writers should favour us in building up a regular source of publication material. Howsoever, efficient and aesthetic an architect may be but he can give only attractive structural designs; the execution of his plan depends on skilled masons and good material. By the grace of God we have launched the magazine but its effectiveness rests on the active co-operation of our writers, scholars, intellectuals and academicians. We also seek co-operation from those who can help us in translating the existing Urdu, Persian and Arabic material into English. Nadwatul Ulema true to its traditions of effecting healthy reforms in educational and social behaviour of Muslims, has come out again to help reach the message of righteousness to all and sundry. Now it is our duty to carry out the mission further.

A biased media always remains watchful to pick up issues through which it can malign those ideologies which are not palatable to it. For instance, the enforcement of Shariah in certain Muslim countries is a burning issue these days. A report making rounds in the Press says that a young Muslim woman, who went to a shopping complex wearing a sleeveless dress, was attacked in day light by two men. They brushed past her bare arm with a razor to get the message home. Similarly sometime back a strong acid was sprinkled on the body of a girl student, who was not properly dressed. New York Times News Service in its international release has once spread another canard that in Afghanistan according to Taliban interpretation of the Qur'an, an adult male is obliged not only to grow a beard but also to leave the hairy underbrush unmolested by scissors. Scruffiness is required by law.

Sometimes frolicsome elements themselves engineer such incidents and attribute them to their dissentients. Similarly fallacious interpretation of "HUDUD" is put forward to create doubts about their implementation, violation of human rights is attributed to the punishment of guilty. In absence of the proper projection of the positive aspects of the Shariah Laws reprehensible stories get currency. We therefore invite articles on Shariah Laws and their implementation to counter misgivings and present the correct picture in proper perspective.

SA

We solicit articles for publication in The Fragrance of East. Suitable remuneration will be paid to writers. We prefer receipt of articles on  
e-mail: [shariq\\_alavi@yahoo.com](mailto:shariq_alavi@yahoo.com)

## My Acquaintance With Iqbal And His Art

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Before I attained the age of adolescence Iqbal had established himself as a poet of distinction. Many of his verses had become household phrases. He was already a vogue. Perhaps no poet has captured the imagination of his generation so powerfully as Iqbal did. He had a tremendous impact on his age and it is not surprising, therefore, that I was drawn to his poetry while still young and remained attached to it ever-after.

There can be many reasons why people like great poetry. The most important and common of these, perhaps, is that people find in it an experience similar to their own hopes and ideals. And man being basically egocentric he is attracted by all that reflects his inner urges and speaks the language of his heart. I do not exclude myself from the application of this maxim. I admired Iqbal because I found him very close to my ideas and feelings. I felt that through his verses he gave expression to what really was passing in my own mind. What attracted me most to his poetry was the message of love, high aspiration and faith it carried, a message that was rare in the works of contemporary poets. My own emotional make-up is such that these three attributes can be said to form its nucleus. I feel instinctively drawn to any movement or literature which upholds the virtues of magnanimity and deep heartedness and gives the call of Islamic revival, and which stimulates the desire for the development of Self-hood and the conquest of 'the inner and the outer worlds', and promotes the feelings of love and fidelity, fosters religious consciousness and encourages a deep faith in God and in the greatness of Prophet Muhammad and the universality and eternity of the message he brought. I found all this in Iqbal's poetry. I admired him particularly as a champion of human equality and brotherhood, as envisaged in Islam, and a believer in the essential nobility of the Muslim. I also admired him as a fearless critic of the Western materialistic civilization and valiant fighter against narrow nationalism and crude parochialism.

I began reading his poetry while still a child and as I grew up I tried to translate some of his verses into Arabic. I had not read anything of his poetry except the Urdu poems contained in his collection called *Bang-i-*

*Dara* (The Caravan Bell). Meanwhile, there had appeared two of his collections in Persian but I had not yet learnt to appreciate that language.

I met him for the first time in 1929 when I was sixteen years old. I happened to visit Lahore which at that time was a great center of learning and culture. It was on a hot summer day that Dr. Abdullah Chughtai, professor of Islamic studies in the Punjab University, took me to Iqbal and introduced me to him as a fervent admirer of his poetry. Dr. Chughtai also mentioned my father, the late Maulana Hakim Syed Abdul Hai Hasani, whom Iqbal knew well through his valuable book *Gul-i-Rana* which had just been published and become immensely popular in literary circles all over the country. In that meeting I presented to him a copy of my rendering of his poem *Chand* (The Moon) into Arabic. Iqbal was pleased to read it and then he asked me a few questions about some Arab poets probably to assess the extent of my scholarship. I came away greatly impressed by his simplicity, sincerity and humility.

During the period between 1929 and 1937 I often visited Lahore stayed there for months but did not feel like disturbing the great poet, believing that there was no need to hurry as he would remain for long among us. Besides, I am rather shy of meeting great men and my own preoccupation with studies was, also, partly responsible for putting off the visit.

His two other collections of Urdu poems were published during those days. They appeared quite some time after the poet had stopped writing in Urdu and taken to Persian. Both of these volumes were richly representative of Iqbal's poetic genius and erudite scholarship. At that time I liked *Zarb-i- Kalim* (The Stroke of the Rod of Moses) more but later *Bal-i-Gibril* (The wing of Gabriel) became the favourite with me.

I was then a teacher in Nadwatul Ulema of Lucknow and used to share my room with the late Maulana Masood Alam Nadwi who was a distinguished scholar of Arabic and the Editor of *Al-Zia* brought out by the same institution in that language. We used to read Iqbal together. My late lamented friend was an ardent admirer of Iqbal and we both did not feel happy over the fact that Tagore was better known in the Arab World than him. Tagore had found many admirers among men of letters in Syria and Egypt. We used to hold ourselves responsible for it. We had done nothing



to introduce Iqbal to the Arabic speaking peoples. Whenever we saw an Arabic journal praising Tagore and his poetry (and we used to read these journals regularly) our resolve to translate Iqbal's poems into it grew stronger. We began to regard it a duty and a trust.

It so happened that I had another meeting with the illustrious poet a few months before his death. It was a long meeting, worthy of being remembered. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1937 I visited Iqbal with my uncle, Syed Talha Al-Hasani. The poet was confined to his house owing to a long and protracted illness which ultimately proved fatal. In spite of it he received us with great warmth and we stayed with him for over three hours. His old and devoted servant, Ali Bux, fearing that the strain might prove too much for his ailing master, came in a number of times and tried to stop him from over-exerting himself but the Allama ignored his advice and went on talking to us. His heart seemed to have opened up and he freely expressed his views on various subjects. Speaking of the pre-Islamic Arab poetry the poet remarked that he admired its realism and vitality and the spirit of chivalry and heroism it breathed and also recited a few verses of Hamasa. He said Islam enjoined upon its followers resolute action and love of reality and added that positive sciences were nearer to Islam in their rejection of philosophical speculation. For two centuries the Muslims kept alive this tradition and remained steadfast in faith, morality and active endeavour till under the impact of alien thought, mainly Hellenistic, the whole of the East was intellectually crippled. It became a 'sick man'. Iqbal remarked that the renaissance of Europe was possible only when it had thrown off the yoke of Greek metaphysics and turned its attention to useful and more productive branches of learning, but in the present age problems arose which set Europe also on the path of reaction. The Arab temperament, he went on, was most suitable Islam but Hellenistic thought, unfortunately, did the same to Islam what it had done to Christianity in Europe. It overpowered both the religions.

With regard to Sufism (Islamic mysticism) Iqbal deplored the ideological intemperateness of the Muslim mystics and observed that while the Companions of the sacred Prophet took delight in horsemanship and martyrdom, the Sufis revelled in Sama, (music) and wajd (ecstasy). Talking of the resurgence of Islam in India he praised the efforts of Sheikh Ahmad

Sarhindi, Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Emperor Aurangzeb. But for them and their endeavours, he said, Islam would have been swamped by Indian philosophy and culture.

He spoke of the demand of Pakistan (it should be noted that Pakistsan was originally his idea which materialized in 1947 after his death) and remarked that a people without a homeland could neither preserve their faith nor develop their culture. The preservation of religion and culture was dependent on political power. Hence, Pakistan was the only solution to the problem of Indian Muslim including their economic difficulties. In this connection he also referred to the Islamic institutions he also referred to the Islamic institutions of Zakat (regular charity) and Baitul Mal.

About the immediate future of Muslim in India he told us that he had drawn the attention of some Muslims Princes to the need of the preaching and propagation of Islam among non-Muslim. He had also been laying stress on the religious reform and uplift of Muslims, the promotion of Arabic language and establishment of the world (Muslim) Bank. It was, further, necessary to have a first-class daily English newspaper of Muslims for supporting their cause and lending strength to their voice. But, he sorrowfully added, the Princes paid no heed to his advice. They did not appreciate the gravity of the situation and the significance of the changes that were taking place in the world. They were selfish, petty and shortsighted.

The poet wanted to go on with the conversation but we felt that in view of his illness it would be better to depart. So we said good-bye to him and left. We came away from Lahore within a few days. This was our last meeting.

I distinctly remember that when I asked his permission to translate some of his poems into Arabic he expressed his pleasure and readily acceded to my request. I read to him some of my Arabic renderings of verses from *Zarb-I-Kalaim*. He told me that Dr. Abdul Wahab Azzam (of Egypt) also was thinking of translation some of his works. Six months later when I heard of his death, on April 21, 1938, my resolve to undertake a study of his life and art became firmer. I wrote about it to my friend, Maulana Masood Alam, who was then at Patna.

We exchanged condolences on the death of the magnificent poet and decided to combine our efforts in the execution of the task. He offered to write on the personality and message of Iqbal (for, as he said, he was not very good at translating) and left the translating of his poems into Arabic to me. The work, thus began. Maulana Masood Alam wrote a stimulating article on Iqbal which appeared in Al-Fatah of Cairo, a journal edited by my old friend, the late Mohibuddin khatib. I also wrote an article on Iqbal's life which was broadcast after sometime by the Saudi Arab Radio. But after this, owing to various reasons the work remained suspended for ten years.

In 1950, I visited Arabia, Syria and Egypt. During my stay there, which extended for over a year, I wrote a few papers on Iqbal, his thought and art, and read them at Darul Uloom and the University of Fuad (now known as the University of Cairo). I wrote, in 1956, in Syria another article entitled, Mohammad Iqbal in the Medina of the Prophet, which was broadcast by the Damascus Radio. But somehow, I could not persuade myself to take up the translation of Iqbal's poems. One of the reasons, perhaps, was that Dr. Abdul Wahab Azzam had already begun it. Owing to his mastery of both the Persian and Arabic languages and intellectual rapport with Iqbal he was most suited for the job. But, as a couple of collections of his translations saw the light of day, some of my friends said that they lacked the moving quality of Iqbal, his warmth and sparkle, and did not adequately convey his thought and message. They were not worthy of Iqbal's tremendous poetry. When I myself read them I felt that they did not suffer from any technical fault of prosody nor betrayed a lack of understanding of Iqbal. They were also a convincing example of the command Dr. Azzam enjoyed over Arabic expression. The main drawback with them was that by attempting a versified translation of Iqbal Dr. Azzam had failed to do justice both to himself and to the great poet. A good deal of the force, vitality and effectiveness of Iqbal's poetry was lost in the process. To add to it, there had crept into the translation a kind of vagueness and tortuosity which created a barrier between the reader and his response to poetry. It would have been better if Dr. Azzam, who was a noted Arabic scholar

and possessed a thorough knowledge of the Persian language as well, had first delved deep into the art and thought of Iqbal and then translated his work in the form of prose as he had preferred for articles published in the well-known Egyptian journals, Ar-Risala and As-Siqafa.

Every language has its mood and flavour, its own idiom and way of expression, the roots of which can be traced back to history and culture. If this basic truth is lost sight of in translation much of the charm and fire of the original text will be destroyed. Nevertheless, by translating some of Iqbal's poems into Arabic verse Dr. Azzam has rendered a great service to Islam and to the Muslim literary world for which he deserves a rich measure of praise and the eternal gratitude of the scholars of Islamic thought and literature. The translation bears an eloquent testimony to his deep hearing and earnestness. There is no doubt that the soul of Iqbal will be happy over this labour of love.

My multifarious activities and preoccupations overshadowed the desire of translating Iqbal till it was stirred by an event. I read an open letter addressed to me by the renowned Arab scholar, Dr. Ali Tantawi, in the pages of Al-Muslimoon in which he had asked me to introduce Iqbal to the Arab World. It read: "Will you translate some selected poems of Iqbal into Arabic so that we can appreciate properly the greatness of his poetry and message?..... The few Arabic translations that are available have not succeeded in giving us a correct picture of Iqbal, his structure of thought and the grandeur of his poetry. Will you, therefore, include this service among the tasks you have set before yourself and convey to the Arab world the freshness and fragrance of Iqbal's poetry to which upto now it has remained a stranger and open the gate of this delightful garden for us also, thus, enrich the Islamic literature?"

I could not but respond to this appeal with enthusiasm. The translation of the poem, Masjid-I-Qartaba (the Mosque of Cordova), was completed in one sitting and I felt a renewed urge to go ahead with the job which it was not possible to ignore. This set the process and soon a number of articles were written and many other poems translated.

I must make it clear that I do not regard Iqbal to be a great religious leader, a doctor of divinity or a man of unquestionable piety and dutifulness to God nor am I inclined to be hyperbolic in the appreciation of his poetry as the case is with some of his more enthusiastic admirers. I believe that Hakim Sunai, Fariduddin Attar and Jalaludin Rumi, the Seer, were far ahead of him in these respects. In his *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought* in Islamic concepts with which I do not agree. I do not hold the view that none had understood Islam better than him and reached its true spirit. What I have felt throughout my life is that he was an earnest student of Islamic theology, culture and philosophy who regularly kept in touch with the better known Muslim theologians of his time and sought their advice. His letters to Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi and Maulana Masood Alam Nadwi are illustrative of his humility and keenness for knowledge.

There are certain aspects of Iqbal's unique personality which do not go well with the profundity of his art and learning and the magnificence of his message. Perhaps he did not get an opportunity to overcome these failings. All the same, I believe Iqbal was a poet whom God had inspired to lend articulation to certain truths and doctrines, in relation to current times, that had not been set forth by any other contemporary poet or thinker. He was a staunch believer in the permanence of the call of Prophet Mahammad, in the inherent strength and capacity for leadership of the Muslim community and in the insolvency of modern ideologies and political, social and economic systems and this had imparted lucidity and maturity to his thought and led to the growth and development of his individuality. In this respect he was even better than the doctors of Islamic theology who are ignorant of Western thought and culture and possess little awareness of its real aim and purpose.

I must admit that I find Iqbal a poet of faith, love and deep-heartedness. Whenever I read him I am stirred to the depths of my being. His poetry opens a new vista to my imagination and fills me up

with an intense ardour and enthusiasm for Islam. This, I think, is the real worth and significance of Iqbal's poetry.

Another incentive to translate Iqbal into Arabic was provided by the abject surrender made by the Arabs to the materialistic civilization of the West. I had seen how the Islamic World was standing at the crossroads of ancient and modern Paganism. On one side of it was exaggerated nationalism and, on the other, godless Communism, and the baneful effects of both could be felt in its literature, thought and behaviour. Writers who could understand the significance of the message the Arabs gave to the world and devote their mental capabilities for launching a ceaseless war against the enveloping darkness and the intellectual apostasy that was strengthening its hold on the educated classes were becoming scarce among the Muslims.

Viewed against this background the importance of Iqbal became greater. Far away from the cradle of Islam he was born in a newly converted Brahmin family and in a country that was under the political and cultural domination of the West. He received education at some of the most outstanding centers of Western learning and yet his faith in the message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) grew deeper. He came to believe more fervently in the high destiny of the Muslim Millet. The vindication of Islam and repugnance for the Western thought and civilization became a second nature with him. He utilized freely his enormous gifts of heart and intellect in that direction and became a symbol of the poetry of faith, vision and reflection. His ideas produced a tumult in the stagnant waters of the subcontinent and waves of thought and feeling rising from here swept the shores of Arabia and the entire Islamic World.

I, therefore, felt that the rendering of Iqbal's poems into Arabic was the best intellectual offering we could make to the rising generation of Islam and the up-and-coming Arab youth. In presenting the book, 'Glory of Iqbal' I trust that it will be helpful in breaking the mental apathy and listlessness of Muslims and setting a new trend of thought among them. •

# Diversity In Jurisprudence Munificence & Endowment

S.M.Rabey Hasani Nadwi

The varying lines of jurisprudence as developed and preached mainly by the four important Imams viz: Shafei, Hanbali, (or its subsidiary line known as salafi), have their genesis in the holy book and elucidation by the holy prophet (pbuh). Yet it is a matter of common observation that the followers of these jurisprudence are almost at daggers drawn with each others, to the extent of dubbing those professing a line other than theirs as infidels. Things have come to a pass where a person following one jurisprudence would not join in prayers behind one of another jurisprudence. This is despite the fact that holy Quran is explicitly eloquent: [Verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and none else).....21:92/]

About the prophets who propagate and preached the word of God through the ages, it is averred thus:

We make no difference between one and another of His messengers ...  
... 2: 285

Traditions of the holy Prophet (pbuh) are also explicit on the subject of oneness of religion with utmost emphasis on all believers remaining united. Variations in modalities and details between the teaching conclusions. All these are to be given credence, having been the result of sincere and honest endeavour for truth. Minor errors of omission and commission are attributable to distinct individual perception, as was the wont of the earliest persons of wisdom and knowledge.

The great Caliph, Umar bin Abdul Aziz surmised: " I would not be too pleased had there been no differences (of opinion) among the venerable companions of the prophet (pbuh), since in that case any person, during subsequent era, coming up with a different opinion, would be treated as an errant. Leeway afforded by the option to go along an opinion of any of the companions of the prophet (pbuh) is a boon.

There are innumerable cases of wise and learned persons, through in their knowledge of Islamic word and deed, having opined differently on particular issues, yet all amicable to one another, steadfast in the basic belief in Islam. The lives and actions of great experts in jurisprudence, like Imam

Shafei, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and some others, are shining examples of unity in diversity.

A panoramic view of the Islamic message and tenets clearly brings out its innate wisdom, irrefutable evidence of its divine sources, its validity till eternity and being all pervading for the whole. In order that the followers are not put to undue hardship, what with vastly different geographical conditions in various regions, the rules are convenient to follow. The holy prophet (pbuh) himself adopted varying methods under different circumstances and also forbore differences in the methods of his followers. The attitude provides for suitable deviations, within the prescribed limits.

Emergence of different jurisprudences is attributable mainly to the fact that venerable contemporary persons, having the advantage of observing modified actions and imbibing precepts from the holy prophet (pbuh), commensurate with prevailing conditions, interpreted and expounded the teachings on slightly varying lines. However the origin of each jurisprudence is in the traditions of the prophet (pbuh). It would be a sacrilege to even think of the prophet (pbuh) as liable to any mistake.

An example of minor latitudes permissible is of utmost importance of water used for consumption or ablutions being absolutely pure, in areas of abundant supply, whereas for regions faced with scarcity, a considerable tolerance in degree of cleanliness is tolerable. Another is the freedom to regions remote from the sea. All said and done, the conclusion would be:

All schools of jurisprudence originate from Quran and Traditions.

Every such jurisprudence is valid provided its development is the result of pure and honest research.

Variation in subsidiary modalities should not be the cause for disputes within Islam.

As a deterrent example, Quran has described the resembling case of Israelites (Bani Israil), who went for each other's throats for minor differences. It is indeed a blessing and gift from the Almighty that the message of Islam is for a practical, all-pervading and everlasting mode of life. It is for the believers to maintain it as such and eschew mutual discord, not indulge in internal mud-slinging, as its would be an affront of the highest for the sacred message and put to shame the entire Ummah. And thus have all researchers, exegesists and men of piety and wisdom, ever since the earliest days of Islam, preached and practised.●

(English rendering: Mashoon Ahmad)



# **Religion in the Media; the Media of Religion: Migration, the Media, and Muslim**

Jamal Malik

In connection with the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, scholars have started speaking about the new media like Internet, video and audio cassettes, as providing important means of fundamentalist network-building, activist recruitment, and communication between 'terror cells.' Globalizations thereby acquires a very negative after-taste. Muslims in the Diaspora are automatically classified as prospective Islamists and thus terrorists whenever they turn to Arabic, Islamic, and other non-Western media. Increasingly, Western governments attempt to control the content of these media and their conformity to the norms of the Western legal system. Equally, preachers in mosques in Europe are required to conduct prayers in the language of the majority population and the so-called 'hate preachers' are singled out and deported to their nations of origin.

Thus, media usage among Muslims in the Diaspora is an intensively discussed subject at the moment-although primarily from a negative point of departure. The present article is not about how Islam is portrayed in the media in industrial countries with a non-Muslim majority population, but rather gives an overview of some of the issues involved when Muslims embrace new media as well as the scope these media offer the Muslim Diaspora.

## **Traditional Media in Islam**

When the Prophet' first official muezzin, Bilal (d.20/641), a freed slave of African descent and one of the earliest Muslims, called to prayer in year one of the Muslim calendar, hardly could anyone have imagined that the same call, consisting of the same seven sentences- "Allah is most great. I testify that there is no God except Allah. I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Come to prayer. Come to success. Allah is most great. There is none worthy of worship except Allah" - would have spread to every corner of the world 1400 years later. The call to prayer, an elaborate melodious call, was the novel and powerful

medium of the Islamic religion in the oral Arab society. It was called out from the mosque rooftops five times a day. Over the centuries it was destined to be heard across the globe in a wide variety of intonations. The ritual of five compulsory prayers a day, each of which followed strict rules, supported the collective identity of the small evolving Muslim rules, supported the collective identity of the small evolving Muslim congregation of the time. Soon afterwards, the representatives of this newest world religion managed, through a variety of media, to spread their message quickly. They were flexible enough to transcend various cultural traditions and even their own culture of origin, with the result that, just like any other world religion, their religious tradition mirrors the cumulative contributions of Muslims of various backgrounds and shades of opinion.

### **Communication through Mediatization of Religion**

During the times of expansion and migration it was just as important to master the existing media as to develop new ones, for it is only possible to communicate and interact with non-Muslims by appropriating and modifying their media. These media would thus change and adapt to the cultural contest, by it through speaking, singing, writing, visualizing, playing or through coinage, clothing or other items of religious significance. Liturgies are just important as the more informal conversations of mystics, which not only he ritualize religion, but also serve as genuine sources for reconstructing Muslim social history. These religious media need spaces and institutions in the form of mosques, holy shrines, mausoleums, schools, etc., for example, tend to look just like the mosques, holy shrines, mausoleums, schools, etc., which also adapt to the surroundings. Backyard mosques in Berlin, for example, tent to Asia look just like the neighboring buildings, while many mosques in parts of Asia cannot be distinguished from the Buddhist temple next door. A number of mediators perform within these more or less sacred spaces: preachers, prayer leaders, Islamic lawyers and Sufis but also politicians and businessmen. All of these can use the same media- the Prophetic tradition, legal opinions mystical

songs, group conversations or calligraphy-while representing various religious group and thus competing with each other.

Traditionally, the media promoting religious renewal and the discourses surrounding them have been the prerogative of religious specialists. They often monopolized the communication between humans and the transcendental God, and thus enabled it in the first place. In return, they exercised social control, dogmatised religion and proclaimed other faiths heretical. The *fatawa* (legal pronouncements) were just as popular and legitimate a medium in this process of the development of Islamic knowledge as the amulet. The discourse surrounding the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)[12 Rabi' al-Awwal, 53 B.H.-12 Rabi' al Awwal, 11, A.H./December 9, 569-June 7, 634]- always of paramount importance for law, theology and mysticism-was elaborated, with the Prophet projected as the aesthetic ideal, the perfect human being. A section of scholars, however, felt exasperated with the propensity of some to exaggerate the Prophet's positions with the result that they tended to be critical those who in their opinion exceeded the appropriate limits of devotion to the Prophet (peace be on him). However, Buraq, the mythical mount carrying the Prophet (peace be on him) on his nocturnal voyage to the heavens, is still counted as one of the main creatures in Islamic mythology and is frequently used decoratively on trucks in South Asia. The oft-quoted Islamic ban on pictures (though not to be found in the Qur'an, only in the *Hadith*), was obviously pushing its limits continuously, within the rich culture of calligraphy ornamentals as well as in the religious iconography and miniature painting. Even the iconoclastic Taliban in Afghanistan did not shy away from creating feminine self-portraits. When the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and his son-in-law 'Ali, the fourth caliph, liberated the Kabah from idolaters' statues, this event was immortalized in artistic images summoned to promote monotheistic ideals. In other words, Muslim media have been used for all kinds of purposes from a very early stage.

## Migration and Religious Media

Migration, expansion and exile drastically the repertoire of religious media. Changes in communication technologies their form and content and affected the people controlling them. The revolution in communication media starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century posed an increasingly acute question regarding the power of definition of religious specialists. Following the introduction of newspapers and regular journals, above all, those in the vernacular languages, a diversified Islamic public sphere was able to evolve, which slowly emancipated itself from traditional religious authorities and becoming literate. Francis Robinson emphasized this, pointing out that "increasingly from now on any Ahmad, Mahmud or Muhammad could claim to speak for Islam." Soon the Islamic public sphere started to participate in the nationalist discourse through the printed press, imagining the nation as a political community. Although the members of the emerging nations did not all know each other, a sense of community was formed in their minds, the nation being territorially defined and sovereign while its members were seen, or more precisely, imagined, as a community of equals. Language, media and education became central vehicles for the construction and maintenance of such an imagined community.

Religious knowledge, its communication and circulation through media thus not only served liturgical purposes, but had equally important solidarity and identity-forming, revolutionizing, even anti-colonial and emancipating characteristics, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

With the recent labour migration and the subsequent technological revolution, this scenario again changed drastically. For as Muslims from the post-colonial states were recruited on a temporary basis to help rebuild Europe after World War II, they brought with them part of their media, which they started (re) producing in new, including virtual, spaces of religious knowledge. Imams, teachers and preachers, religious scholars, intellectuals, journalists, businessmen and even computer hackers were, and still are, the mediators in this process.

## Muslims in the Diaspora and their Media Attitudes

The first wave of labour migrants was slowed down by the oil crisis of the early seventies, but those already in Europe decided for various reasons to stay on and even arranged for their families to join them. Soon there was an increase in immigrants claiming political asylum. The European majorities reacted with various legal mechanisms, and thus advanced Islam to the public stage. Political unrest in Muslim states and racist reactions in European societies also sparked restrictive immigration policies. Meanwhile, second and third generation migrants showed an increasing propensity to articulate themselves independently.

In the nineties, there was a new wave of Muslim immigrants to Europe. The tense situation in the Balkans, the collapse of the Soviet union and the intensification of the Middle East conflict all left their trails on European societies, and Islam became an ever-growing presence in the national media, not only in the receiving states, but also in the sending ones. The Rushdie Affair as well as '*l'affaire du foulard*' in France helped maintain a specific image of Islam, which had clearly negative, but functionally important pointers. The debates that followed were characterized by a conception of Islam as the other, as the enemy, a view supported and exaggerated by the media.

This background of migration signaled a marked change in the media awareness among Muslims, and led to new forms, possibilities, outlets and channels of the diasporic media, as well as new vehicles for religious leaders has since been massively undermined. Labour migration shaped a globalisation from below, so to speak. For if previously the three T's (namely telecommunication, tourism and television) had been dominating the link to the countries of origin and had kept alive the myth of the eventual return, they had now been supplemented by the Internet, which allowed for virtual communities and transnational networks in a variety of forms. The cause for this transformation, who produce migrant media cultures and transcultures in Europe.

## New Muslim Public Sphere in Time and Space

This becomes clear looking at the development of migration in light of the German media. Originally, there was the 'guest worker radio' and a nascent 'guest worker press,' which was later replaced by foreign programmes in state television, special migrant cinemas and an increase in the number of 'ethnic' publishers of journals and newspapers, i.e. Turkish and Arabic, etc. These media increasingly competed with the media from the mother countries. With the growing market for ethnically diverse videos, the number of such imported videos rose steadily (an average consumption of ten to fifteen movies per week per family). When in the late eighties cable television and local private TV stations spread, foreign TV programmes suddenly reached even the migrants' homes. With the introduction of satellite TV in the early nineties and at the same time the diversified market for an 'ethnic'-non-German-printed press, the door was open for a separate media structure for migrants in their mother tongue. The messages of these media span from integrationist positions to isolationism depending on the target group.

These various stages are obviously closely connected to the possibilities created by the information technology. Three main trends can be distinguished in today's world. Firstly, the technological revolution enables transcending spatial constraints leading to transnational and global media. Secondly, the user groups become more diverse and encompass more ethnic-i.e. minority-groups. Identities and generations. Finally, there is increasing competition between mainstream and ethnically specialized media, as well as the novel option of 'multicultural' media. These processes became dynamic with the integration of migrants in the media explained earlier. They enable us to distinguish between media segregation and media integration whenever minorities participate in the production to the media. Media integration is moreover attempted either by assimilation or by intercultural means.

According to the German 'working group for international media help,' there were more than 2500 foreign language publications in Western Europe in 2004. Since 1990, this number has increased by 40%, an increase which tallies well with the immigration increase of the same period. Young biculturally socialized Muslims seem to be the majority behind this media increase, because they still retain the cultural competency and language skills.

### **De-territorialization or New Forms of Virtual Absence**

These 'ethnic' media call anew for a debate on religious or religiously legitimized boundaries. But they can of course equally well exaggerate the exclusivity of distinguishing characteristics leading to some sort of selfexotisation. However, even these methods of self-differentiation and processes of normalization can undermine traditional views, when for instance the headscarf of young Muslim women provides them with a means of emancipation from the cultural baggage of their parents or when they resort to the headscarf as an expression of Islamic feminism. Whenever these processes of inclusion or exclusion take place, scholars speak of a society and culture, is mostly conducted in English (the language of the Internet), and transcends the classical discourses of otherness and alterity. Within this creolised discourse, the participants use explanatory strategies and argumentation taken from applied sciences and various areas of culture. It is thus an embedded discourse, based firmly in the realities of life of the 'translated' actors. This creolisation opens up new roads and transcends old boundaries. It is mostly found in the Diaspora, where repressive regimes cannot censor or ban it. Hence, new media are first and foremost tools for the 'new interpreters of Islam,' who question established agencies and thus may bring about change and development within the understating of Islam and the religious communities they are part of. These actors are not limited to activists and fundamentalists; normal' believers, that is, middle class Muslims from a variety of professions and cultural backgrounds, also participate in it.

## Interrogating Traditional Religious Authorities

Electronic media provide important venues for the formation of the Self and the Other, especially of a diasporic public sphere, which is directed towards trans-ethnicity and trans-nationality. The new media naturally also create new insecurities, as potentially anyone now has access to information previously only available to the religious specialists. They also construct an entirely new level of activity and spontaneity, of opposition and imagination. When migration and media are coupled to initiate cultural globalisation, one can speak of a veritable democratization of the imagination; new culturally mixed areas arise, which can suggest a kind of 'lack of neighbourhood' especially when culture becomes an insecure marker. The new media thus enable migrants to view themselves less and less in terms of history and territory. The media de-territorialise, they no longer consider national borders as constraints, and they are globalised in the diasporic public sphere: In other words, the semantics of the Diaspora is continuously expanding.

The Internet especially allows a comparatively open interactivity and communication between like-minded users. The relative anonymity it guarantees, enables communication (and thereby 'virtual communities') between people of different sex, social status and ethnic origin; sort of communication that is actually relatively rare 'in real life.' Active internet-users even seem to maintain particularly strong social 'off-line' relationships, be especially engaged and quick to establish contacts. The Internet can then be seen as a 'market place of ideas, identities and discourses,' as a communicative space, in which identities and the meaning and limits of the community are constantly constructed and renegotiated.

There are three stages in the use of the Internet among Muslims:

Technologically adept Muslims-mostly natural scientists-use the Internet in the 1980s to most important Islamic religious texts, such as the Qur'an and Hadith available online and start inserting their own-laypersons'-comments.



These creolised discourses are increasingly criticized or appropriated by officials and Islamists. They are eventually slightly modified and are authorized before they are propagated through various Islamic institutions and finally through the World Wide Web in the 1990s. This was an attempt to regain the monopoly of religious authority.

Since then, 'the standardizing discourse has been largely abandoned in order to make Islam compatible with modern life. The new elites now direct the Islamic content on the Internet towards the rising middle classes, channel it towards consumption and seem interested in removing institutionalised constraints.

One of the 'ethnomedia' of this third stage is al-Jazeera, the TV provider from Qatar, established in 1996 and by now well-known world-wide as an alternative news source to CNN and BBC. The new information exchange is bypassing the former elites, who increasingly feel obliged to participate in the new discourse through the new media. The old and new elites can also appropriate popular characteristics of secular and non-state media directly or in a modified format to revitalize the religious media. In this process, different, alternative conceptions of Islam and Muslim identity proliferate. Some scholars see in it an 'emerging Muslim public sphere, as if there was no public sphere in earlier Muslim contexts.

### **New Media Serving Exclusivism and Inclusivism**

Provisions for 'hadith-online' count among these new forms of transnational culture, as do cyber-muftis, which will not be treated here at length, however. Suffice it to mention that these services are easily accessible and do not presuppose any common knowledge of the particular context of either the question or the answer. By disregarding the context of the question posed, the issuing of the fatwa becomes an abstract action. The lack of immediate personal contact also provides for new Muslim institutions (cyber-muftis) and a virtually constituted community of Muslims. The participants can actively take part in the interpretation these de-contextualised legal opinions.

"Islami City," for example, is a fatwa-bank based in America, but dominated by and oriented towards Saudi Arabs. In contrast, the globally active fatwa-bank of Shyakh Yusuf al-Qaradawi responds specifically to legal concerns of Muslims in the Diaspora, equally through pare-religious communication. Al-Qaradawi, through the "IslamOline" portal based in Qatar, is presenting his site as an important source for Muslim normative behaviour and he has even acquired celebrity status in some milieux. It is possible to interact directly with the Shaykh in an online chat room. In this immediate experience, the traditional teacher-pupil, question-answer situation is re-enabled in electronic form.

Because of its interactivity, such societally organized technology is public and therefore prescribes public behaviour. By this token, not only does the Internet provide an unlimited source of religious knowledge and communication, but is also represents a socializing institution. Research has shown that Islamists on the Internet are moderated by the many co-interpreters. This is because they are forced to argue coherently and react to criticism by the continuous comments, corrections and critical questioning from opposing views. Within this process, they are often exposed as unable to explain themselves fully.

New media can equally serve the purpose of propagating an orthodox image of Islam, when specific normative sections of religious communication are highlighted. For example, the Muslim mystic, i.e. Sufis, who have acquired a significant popularity among migrants and converts, use the media that are equally manifold, spanning from books and pamphlets to Internet forums. Quite a few of them build their own identity on their opposition to the majority society, in terms of alterity and difference. This is especially true for converts, like the group around 'Abdal Qadir al-Murabit, alias 'Abdal Qadir al-Sufi, alias Ian Dallas (born around 1931), who was initiated to Islam by a Moroccan Sufi. This movement, called Murabitun, or 'those who stand on the outpost of the Islamic Empire,' has established branches all over Europe and America. It calls for the introduction of Islamic Law, rejects charismatic leadership and esoteric experiences and makes use of a

thoroughly anti-Western discourse, even proclaiming an Islamic reconquista of Spain and jihad against global capitalism. It also rejects all kinds of pure money in favour of the 'Islamic Dinar,' gold and silver coins coined by the movement itself. The financial journal *Gold-Eagle* already warned in 1998 that this Islamic Dinar "could indeed pose a threat to the US Dollar and the existing world order."

The project culminated in a virtual currency on the Internet, the e-Dinar, whose propagators control numerous branches worldwide. This currency is supposed to offer an alternative to Western economic interests. The theoretical underpinnings of this numismatic venture can be found in 'Abdal Qadir's books, *Tecniq of the Coup di Banque* (Mallorca: Kutubia Mayurqa, 2000). In this book, he argues that the Muslim community has to identify Western capitalism as the enemy of Islam and of life itself, and indicates that the bankers are to be stripped of their power. Since 1995, the Murabitun seem even to have a German representative, who publishes the *Islamische Zeitung*.

By circulating the message in the new media, this isolationist discourse attracts Islamists and Western intellectuals, who would like to present themselves as cultural critics. The critical discourse is well received among a section of Muslim youth, looking for a globalised discourse-community on the Internet. These youth sympathise with the de-territorialised and 'pure' Islamist discourse, as it helps them compensate for lacking the cultural capital of their parents and older migrant generations.

New media are, however, not only used in order to exercise specific Islamic authority, promote orthodox behaviour, dogmatise religion or call to jihad against capitalism. Within the discourses of alterity, there are young Muslims who, as mentioned above, search unorthodox ways and media for religious articulation, including music, clothing and TV.

Numerous Muslim musicians express their experiences as ethnic and religious minorities in their perceived hostile European or American surroundings through a fusion of Turkish, Punjabi or Arabic hip-hop rhythms, lyrics and instruments. The Dutch "Maroc-hop." For

instance, not only expresses fright and hope, but equally exposes mutual stereotypes in order to challenge the exclusion of Moroccans from the Dutch public debate on Islam. These rappers, however, do not emphasise their religious identity, as do the strictly Islamic or Islamist groups, but instead focus on the identity of the rapper or the group they belong to, which proves more prestigious. The Muslim identity thus is relegated to a secondary position, behind many other readily available identities.

It is clear that the media of the first and second generations and especially those of the groups motivated by religious convictions tend to promote ascetic behaviour and social and political segregation. The young aspiring elites, however, demand new forms of otherness and participation as alternatives to the normative and intellectualized religious knowledge of the formal institutions and media. Carried by alternative media, this inclusivistic discourse can facilitate their diffusion into the majority society as Western Muslims.

The rich Islamic symbolism can prove to be decisive in the formation of identity and solidarity in the cultural imagination of modern Muslims, for instance when traditional values are re-interpreted: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) appears as a financial and trading tycoon; Muslim missionary activity is no longer viewed simply in religious and moral terms, but becomes the display of personal success. The emigration, the hijrah, is primarily seen in an economic light, as when "Mecca Cola" migrates from France to Dubai, or when McDonalds is branded un-Islamic because of American foreign policy. Equally, when an advert emphasizes that the alms tax stipulated by the Qur'an is included in the price of an item, it appeals to traditional Muslim values. The profit of the ensuing ventures is meant to help youth, community and missionary projects for the Muslim population. Such ventures and programmes turn around the stigma of the needy and suppressed Muslims to a more positive image. In addition to attempting to re-establish the dignity of Muslim cultures, especially after 9/11, these ventures aim to reach a wide audience and conquer a large market. They encourage participation in the global culture through

'cool' and modern products. In this process they are able to orient their economic and artistic activities towards Islamic ethical ideals and at the same time be part of the global culture. 'Ethislamic' products. Including Islamic clothing, beverages, pop-idols, religious music, Muslim rappers and comedians, often strongly identifying with American aesthetic ideals, are means to this end.

Consumption and success art at the forefront of all these new ventures. Muslimhood is not central, but the emphasis is rather on competitive faculty and competency. Consequently, the formerly common Islamist vertical structures of organization are replaced by horizontal power structures. The focus of the discourse is changed from classical religious religious themes like religious purification and Muslim identity towards socio-economic disadvantages and creative solutions to overcome them. Within this positively transmitted image, economic success serves the aspiring elites as a confirmation of their religiosity. In other words, religion is instrumentals for this purpose and transforms into non-religious communication, oriented also towards non-religious institutions. Advertisement takes on religious language.

### **Between Singularization and Pluralism: Some Examples**

The garment company "Muslim Gear," founded in 1997 in Montreal in Canada, reorganised in 2002 and with a growing popularity, is an excellent example of such an innovative religious medium. According to the company, the clothes they offer are backed up by the Islamic faith itself. They thereby make Islam a competitive religion in a free religious market. Their logo reflects this attitude: 'believe in what you wear,' similar to the slogan of "Mecca Cola": "drink with commitment. "Muslim Gear" wants to support the Islamic faith with Muslim modesty. It is proud to be a Muslim company, and consciously uses this identity in the sales strategy, when its website for instance claims:

Islam touches on every aspect of a believer's life, encouraging us to be constantly aware of God, of our identities as Muslims, and of our duties to the world we live in. The desire to strengthen such qualities within the Muslim ummah is the driving force behind Muslim Gear.

Since 2002, "Muslim Gear" is expanding across North America to Europe and South Asia "and aims to reach every corner of the globe inshaAllah." The company no doubt wants to emphasise the positive, peaceful and socially engaged side to Islam. And "with help of Allah (swt), we pray that our common aspiration will be achieved ameen!"

In these examples, we observe Muslim youth using religious media innovatively, in order to present a positive image of the faith, rehabilitate it, and thereby aim at legitimizing their profit through Islam. This Calvinistic perspective does not please all Muslims, and dislike actually originates mainly within diasporic Muslim groups.

Young second and third generation migrants in Europe also find similar ways to express alternative cultural articulation. The popular English TV-series "Goodness Gracious Me," which has been transformed from originally being a marginal series to becoming a hit, exemplifies this other category. Also the German "was gukst du?" which has a prime time slot on SAT1, a major TV station in Germany. In this personality-show created by Kaya Yanar, born in Germany, but of Turkish-Arabic descent, the viewers are told everything they ever desired to know about foreigners: their habits, their in-group behaviour and obviously their relation to Germans. Kaya expresses the new hybrid, creolised culture; he seamlessly switches between nationalities and ethnic groups, in order to turn the German reality of foreigners and Germans living together into a caricature; as a Turkish bouncer, an Indian taxi-driver or an Italian petty criminal.

Just preceding the German parliamentary elections of 2005, on September 16<sup>th</sup>, Kaya quipped:

Some claim that it's time for somebody coming from the former East Germany to become chancellor. But actually why one of these 'Ossis' (derogatory term for Germans from the former GDR, i.e. 'Easties'; J.M.). we Turks have been here in Germany for longer than them! That's why I found the following piece of news so great: 'The Turks can decide this election: 600,000 Germans of Turkish origin now have the vote, and 77% of them will vote for the Social Democrats.' But does this not invalidate the election? It would have to count as

'Turkicised,!' (The expression 'to play a Turk' is colloquial German for 'faking it; J.M.).

And he continued:

The poll actually shows that 77% of German Turks will choose the Social Democrats while the remaining 23% prefer 'a kebab with everything on.' Also in cities like Cologne, the authorities are even setting up separate polling stations for us Muslims; the booth for men in front and one for women two meters behind.

In this way, prejudicial perception and stereotypes of both the Muslim minorities and the non-Muslim majority are exposed satirically, and such clichés are refreshing manner.

Obviously, all this is a cry from the time of Bilal and the prophet (peace be on him) when these highly complex development were not even imaginable. The distinctive call to prayer initiated Bilal-as the smallest common denominator of the diverse and contesting manifestations of Muslim cultural articulation and public presence-is still heard in all directions of the compass, precisely because of migration and the religious media that come with it. This common denominator mediates among the Muslim a sense of belonging to the more or less decentralized contemporary Muslim faith.

Migration transforms thoughts, values and styles form the country of origin to new territories, where it can innovatively and imaginatively fuse with the existing cultural expressions. Religious media among migrants create a diasporic public sphere, which is characterized by a non-spatial, deterritorialised culture. Hence diasporas are 'imagined communities' par excellence, as they have to be continuously produced and reproduced. They are heterogeneous and actual spaces, which are continuously expanding, representing bridges between the adopted homeland and the country of origin. In this process, religious media often provide a useful channel. Minorities in Western countries seem more than average to make use of new media, mainly for three purposes. These include, firstly, accessing information and enjoying entertainment form their countries of origin. Secondly,

they are used to maintain or overcome ethnic, national or religious identities, and thirdly, to raise awareness about specific minority issues.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Religion is without doubt a multimedia even: it simply exist without the media. Especially new technologies enable a virtual hybrid world, which can exist at the same time both here there, and therefore allows for the maintenance of a sense of collective identity. This can perpetuate and intensify the already existing patterns of identity safeguarding or the perennial discourses of Difference and Othering, and can thereby end in fundamentalist conceptions of identity. The new technologies, however, also clear the way for hybrid and creolised discursive spaces, thus not only opening up for new, critical perspectives on normative Islam, but equally establishing in the periphery-in the Diaspora-multt-polar centers equipped with powers of definition and of agency. The Muslim discourse is decentralized across a number of media and fed new, temporally limited and constantly changing contents. It promotes a subjectivity suggesting transparency, independence and wealth, maintained and reproduced by a vast network of businessmen and activists. This neo-liberal discourse is embedded in a global network of trade and activism, which is in turn attracted by that discourse. The dynamics of the market, together with sales strategies, are utilized fully to achieve success. The resulting networks are multi-vocal and flexible, and are grounded in a number of media forms and channels of understanding as well as mutual obligations; obligations which are often based on a framework of informal networks of trust and responsibility.

Within these multifaceted patterns of relationship, the agency of even the long established Islamic religious authorities. In addition, Muslim plurality and pluralism invite the question as to where in this de-territorialised context one is to draw the borders of the all-encompassing ummah, especially when the question of being Muslim in non-Muslim contexts is being tackled by diasporic media, and the myth of eventual return is dismantled. ●



## Significance of Moral Values in Islam

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Islam lays great stress on cultivating good manners, ethical values and performance of pious deeds. The main motto of Islam is "Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment" (Al-Quran 5,A.2). That is why after Iman (declaration of faith) that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, Islam attached more importance to righteous acts. Almighty Allah has mentioned good deeds after describing Iman instantly at several places in the Holy Quran. Infact, Islam is the name of Iman and accomplishing sacred work.

A few verses of the Holy Quran are quite relevant in this context. The glorious Book says: "Those who believe (in the Quran) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord on them shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve" (S.2,A.62). It further states: "By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have faith and do righteous deeds, and the mutual enjoining of truth, and of patience and constancy" (S.103,A.1-3). And again, "As to those who believe and work righteous deeds, they have, for their entertainment, the gardens of paradise" (S.18,A.180). And again, "On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness will the Most Gracious bestow love" (S.19,A.96).

As regards prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his advent was to disseminate good manners and ethical values in order to set up an atmosphere of peace and amity throughout the world. As he himself said, "I have been sent down by God to teach moral virtues and to evolve them highest perfection".

Needless to add that the five articles of faith of Islam lay also great emphasis on cultivating ethical values and sublime norms.

Maulana S. Sulaiman Nadwi says: "After Iman, the edifice of Islam is built on four pillars i.e. Prayer, Fast, Zakat and Hajj. It is, however, wrong to say that no space has been set apart for moral conduct and behaviour in Islamic structure. While exhorting Muslims to observe prayer, it has been said that "it forbids indecency and repugnant things" (29:45). Fast teaches us piety and selfcontrol. Similarly Zakat inculcates in us the sentiments of sympathy, cooperation with our brothers who are in need or difficulty. Hajj is also a mean of cooperation and help in building up our character by enforcing discipline in us without which the Mana sik -e-Hajj (rituals of Hajj) can not be performed accurately. It is clear that the main aim behind these fundamental articles of faith is to reform the morals in the believers and foster the sentiments of mutual love and cooperation and sense of realization for each other,s help in need" (Sirat-un-Nabi Vol-5-P 185).

Apart from it Islam has bestowed various rights and duties to perpetuate an ideal milieu. It should be kept in mind that these rights are not confined only to human beings but all things of the universe created for the benefit of mankind.

Abdullah b. Amr reported: "The messenger of Allah said to me: "I have been informed that you stand for prayer the whole night and fast during the day. I said: I do that, whereupon he said: "your wife has a right on you, your visitor has a right upon you. There is a right of your family upon you. There is a right of yourself (upon you), your body (upon you) and your eyes (upon you). Stand for prayer and sleep, observe fasts and break them".

Once the Holy Prophet (PBUH) saw an ass which had been cauterised on the face, where upon he said: Allah has cursed one who cauterised it (on the face). If necessary to cauterise camels and goats etc, cauterise them on the part not so delicate as the face".

It may be reemphasised that Islam is not only a religion but a complete code of life. It encompasses whole gamut of human life.

Besides it has the solution of the hydra-headed problems we face in our daily life.

In short the integral part of the religion of Islam is Iman but it can be perfected only with the best conduct and good behaviour. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The best of you are those who possess the best of manners". "A moral disposition gets the same reward as he who fasts (permanently) during day and spends his nights in prayers".

Despite these instructions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), today we have sunk into deep sins, vices, crimes, corruption and in a lot of other anti-social activities. It is time we must follow the path shown by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in letter and spirit. The Prophet warned: "A man with bad manners and bad moral conduct shall not enter Paradise". "No sin is more detestable to God than bad manner". Once a companion asked the Prophet what is there that takes a Muslim to Paradise? The Prophet replied, "Fear of Allah and good manner".

Hence, it is imperative that we must amend our loose morality and life style and shun such acts that tend to create divergences amongst people. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "The miseries of the world can not be cured by physical help only. Until man's nature changes. Physical needs will arise and miseries will always be felt, and no amount of physical help will cease them completely. The only solution of this problem is to make mankind pure".

It is related by Sahl bin Sa'ad Sa'idi that the Prophet, (Peace be upon him, said: "To act in a calm and collected manner is from the side of God, while to act in haste is from the side of the Devil."

*Tirmidhi*

## **Killing One Life or Killing Humanity**

*Relate to them in all truth the story of the two sons of Adam: how each offered a sacrifice and the offer of the one was accepted while that of the other was not. (The latter) said: "I will surely kill you". (The other) replied: "Allah accepts only from the righteous. Even if you lay your hand on me to kill me, I shall not lift my hand to kill you: for I fear Allah, the Lord of all worlds. I would rather, you should add your sin against me to your other sins, and thus you will be destined to the fire; for this is the just retribution of the wrongdoers".*

*His evil soul drove him to kill his brother: he murdered him and thus he became one of the lost. Allah then sent a raven, which scratched the earth to show him how to bury the naked corpse of his brother. He cried out: "woe to me! Am I too weak to do what this raven has done and so bury my brother's naked corpse". He was then overwhelmed by remorse.*

*Because of this, we decreed to the children of Israel that whoever kills a human being, for anything other than in punishment of murder or for spreading corruption on earth, it shall be as though he killed all mankind. And that who ever saves a human life, it shall be as though he has saved all mankind. Our messengers brought them clear proofs (on the truth), but despite all this, many of them continue to commit excesses on earth.*

*(The Repast, "Al-Maidah:" 5;27-32)*

In the first part of this story of the two sons of Adam, one of them threatened to kill the other out of blind envy, after his own offering was not accepted while that of his brother was. His threats were met by a clam response of his brother who made it clear to him that he would not lift his hand to kill him in any situation because he feared.

Allah. He added a word of warning telling him that should he kill him, he would add a new sin to his old one and incur a double punishment in the life to come.

He depicted to him how loathsome to him was the very thought of committing murder in the hope that he would help him thus to resist the evil thoughts towards a peaceful brother. He explained to him that the sinful.

Burden of a murder crime was too heavy that he would do well to avoid it in order not to end up with a double.

Punishment. The only way to rid himself of it was to fear Allah. In his persuasion, he went as far as any man could go. But the example of an evil man can not be properly depicted until we know what sort of response he made in such a persuasion: "His evil soul drove him to kill his brother; he murdered him and thus he became one of the lost".

After all these admonition and persuasion, in a perfectly peaceful and gentle approach, the evil soul prevailed and crime was committed. His evil soul was able to over-ride every hindrance and made him less resistant to the thought of killing. Thus he killed his own brother, only to be doomed: "Thus he became one of the lost". He lost all as he brought himself into ruin, and lost his brother who should have been his brother who should have been his friend and support.

He also lost his world, since a murderer can never be happy in life. Most certainly he lost his future life as he added his new sin to his earlier ones.

The ghastliness of his crime was made to appear to him in its most physical shape. The dead corpse of his brother started to rot and its nakedness became intolerable. Murderer as he was, he was soon made to realize his powerlessness as he did not know how to conceal the nakedness of his brother's corpse. He was weaker than a raven among birds: "Allah then sent a raven which scratched the earth to show him how to bury the naked corpse of his brother. He cried out: "Woe to me, I am too weak to do what this raven has done and so bury my brother's naked corpse. He was then overwhelmed by remorse".

Some reports suggest that there were two ravens and one of them killed the other. Other reports suggest that the raven found a dead raven or brought the dead one with him and started to scratch the earth and then buried the dead one. The murderer expressed his

feelings in the way reported in the Quran and did like what he saw the raven do. It is clear that the murderer had never seen a dead man being buried. Otherwise he would have buried his brother. This may have been because the murdered brother was the first of Adam's children to die on earth or may be because the killer was still young and had never seen a burial before. Either case is probable. It also appears that this remorse was not one of repentance. Otherwise, Allah would have accepted it from him. It was the sort of remorse, which comes with the realization that one's action is futile and leads to nothing but trouble.

It may be that the burial of the dead raven by his brother is something that ravens do as some people suggest, it may also be something super natural which Allah wanted to show to the killer at that particular time. To us, both cases are the same. The Creator Who gives every species of His creation its nature and habits can accomplish whatever He wills through anyone of His creatures. His power is merely indicated by either course.

The surah then makes use of the profound effect of relating the story in this particular manner in order to enhance the feeling which gives a positive response to the legislation enacted to achieve the dual purpose of weakening the motive to commit a murder and to establish the just punishment done: "Because of this, we decreed for the children of Israel that whoever kills a human being, for anything other than in punishment of murder or for spreading corruption on earth, it shall be as though he had killed all mankind".

This type of person does exist and aggression is committed against peaceful and good-natured people who harbor neither grudge nor ill-feeling towards others. A reminder and a warning may achieve nothing with those who have an evil nature. Adopting a peaceful attitude may not be sufficient to prevent aggression. For all this, the ghastly crime of killing one person is considered so grave

and so sordid that it is equated with the crime of killing all mankind. On the other hand, efforts to prevent killing and to spare the life of one person is considered a great action, equal to saving all mankind. The law given to the children of Israel included this principle which equates the life of any human being with every life. The right to live is applicable to all. Hence, killing one person is an aggression against the right to live which is common to all.

It should be clarified here that this rule applies to the people in the land of Islam, whether Muslims or not, as long as they are living under the protection of the Islamic authority. As for those who are in the land which is hostile to Islam, neither their lives nor their properties are protected unless they have concluded a peace treaty with the land of Islam. This legislative rule should be well remembered. We should also remember that the land of Islam is that in which the rule of Islam prevails and the Islamic law is implemented.

Allah has decreed this principle for the children of Israel, because at that time, they were the recipients of divine revelation and as such, they represented the land of Islam as long as they implemented the law of the Torah in its fullness, without any distortion. But the children of Israel exceeded their limits after Allah's messengers came to them with clear proofs of the truth. Since the time of Prophet Muahammad (peace be upon him), numerous among them are those who commit excesses of all sorts. The Quran records against them these excesses as well as the fact that they have no argument to justify their errors after Allah's messengers have come to them: "Our messengers brought them clear proofs (of the truth) but despite all this, many of them continue to commit excesses on earth". What excess is greater than distorting or ignoring Allah's law? ●

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