



# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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## Great influence on Human Race

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Quranic teachings gave birth to a rationalist trend in the widest sense of the term taken etymologically and historically. It made a deep impact on arts and literature and human civilization all over the world in such a way as if a new window had been opened to let in light and fresh air. Islam broke open the lock with which human intellect had been fastened for ages by the enemies of reason, masquerading as representatives of religion. It was then that the humanity woke up after its long sleep of several centuries, removed the hurdles placed in its way and set its foot on the road to enlightenment and progress. ●

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## Wisdom of Qur'an

"We have not sent down the Qur'an upon you that you should be distressed."

(Surah Ta-Ha:2)

### Commentary:

Mujahid said that (in early Islam) the Prophet used to stand long hours in vigil as well as some of his Companions. Sometimes they stood so long that they needed to tie ropes to themselves (to prevent falling off during the prayers). It was proving very stressful so Allah revealed, "We have not sent down the Qur'an that you be distressed." In other words of the Qur'an of itself (73: 20), "So recite it (in the Prayers) what is easily possible" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report however is not wholly reliable. It was declared weak by Suyuti (Shawkani).

Another possibility is that the allusion is to the distress the prophet felt for the Makkans for not accepting his message and this verse was revealed to console him (Qurtubi).

Taking cue from this verse, Ibn Kathir quotes a hadith which should be a source of consolation for scholars. It is preserved by Tabarani which Ibn Kathir thinks is fairly reliable. The Prophet said, "On the Day of Judgment when Allah would have taken His place for judgment He will address the scholars and say, 'I did not place the knowledge from Me, nor wisdom in you except that I wished to forgive you, whatever the state in which you were, and I do not care.'"

Yet another possible reason for the revelation of this verse is that the Makkans were taunting the early Muslims that since the Revelation had begun coming down, they appeared to be in great distress, what with lengthy life (Ma'arif). Asad answers their objection. He writes, "i.e., the ethical discipline imposed upon man by the teachings of the Qur'an is not meant to narrow down his feel of life, but on the contrary to enhance it by deepening his consciousness of right and wrong." ●

## Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

"Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The year is twelve months of which four are sacred, the three consecutive months of Dhu'l-Qa'dah, Dhu'l-Hijjah and Muharram, and Rajab Mudar which comes between Jumaada and Sha'baan." -

(Reported by al-Bukhari, 2958).

### Commentary:

Muharram is so called because it is a sacred (Muharram) month and to confirm its sanctity. Allah's words (interpretation of the meaning): "so wrong not yourselves therein." mean do not wrong yourselves in these sacred months, because sin in these months is worse than in other months. It was reported that Ibn 'Abbas said that this phrase (so wrong not yourselves therein.) referred to all the months, then these four were singled out and made sacred, so that sin in these months is more serious and good deeds bring a greater reward. Qutaadah said concerning this phrase (so wrong not wrong not yourselves therein.) that wrongdoing during the sacred months is more serious and more sinful that wrongdoing at any other time. Wrongdoing at any time is a serious matter, but Allah gives more weight to whichever of His commands He will. Allah has chosen certain ones of His creation. He has chosen from among the angels Messengers and from among mankind Messengers. He chose from among speech the remembrance of Him (dhikr). He chose from among the earth the mosques, from among the months Ramadhan and the sacred months, from among the days Friday and from among the nights Layl al-Qadr; so venerate that which Allah has told us to venerate. People of understanding and wisdom venerate the things that Allah has told us to venerate. (Summarized from the Tafsir of Ibn Katheer, may Allah have mercy on him. Tafsir of Surat al-Tawbah, ayah 36) ●



## Arab Spring

The uprising of local people against their governments ruled by dictators in about half a dozen Muslim countries Western powers were quite hopeful that they would crush the Islam and friendly governments would work under their influence. They named their destructive plan as Arab Spring.

Starting from Iraq a well established progressive country was destroyed by American and allied forces. America was quite hopeful to rule there by proxy. But realising the hatred of local people against them, first British and then American military forces withdrew from Iraq. Now sectarian conflicts

have engulfed the nation and normalcy appears to be a far cry.

The Tunisia, a country of more than a crore population revolted against the Dictator Zainul Abdeen Bin Ali and dethroned him. Infact it was the beginning of a chain of unrest in Muslim Afro-Asian countries. Egyptians raised the banner of revolution against Husne Mubarak and he had to abandoned his country leaving the power in the hands of Military. Now the conflict between the Army and civil society has thrown the country in a piquant situation. After public resentment Army has agreed to hold the elections and transfer the power to civilians.

After Egypt it was the turn of Libya. Here the revolution got the active support of America and Nato forces pushed out the Col. Gaddafi's militia and Col. Gaddafi was killed by the public.

The wave of so called revolution now reached Yemen. Here the ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh realising the public fury ran away from the country entrusting the power to the Vice-President. General elections have been promised to form a democratic government there.

The condition in Syria is quite serious the Military ruler there is Bashar al Asad. He has let loose a reign of terror to crush the public uprising. So far thousands of syrians have been killed by ruling militia. Though Arab League, an organisation of 22 Arab countries suggested to

Bashar al Asad some measures to cool down the public rage but he did not listen to them. Now they have imposed various sanctions and expelled the Syria from Arab League. The Russians, Iranians and Hizbullah of Lebnon are supporting Asad. It is said Israel's backing is also there.

In all the above countries there are indications that after getting rid of dictators people want to establish pro-Islamic regime there. This has created a situation which does not suit the Western powers. Now new governments in Iraq, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libia and Syria will have to tread a carefully laid path of progress and development. A strong and public friendly establishment will certainly usher in a bright future.

S. A.



## Indo-Islamic Culture

### Two Determining Factors

The cultural structure of Muslims everywhere is determined by two major factors: (i) Islamic belief, way of life and system of ethics; and (ii) the indigenous civilization and local customs which are bound to make their influence felt as a result of living and mixing with the original elements of the population.

The first constituent-Islamic Faith, way of life and code of ethics-is the common attributing of the cultural make-up of Muslims all over the world. Wherever they may be living, and whatever their language or dress, this attribute is shared by them universally, and, by virtue of it, they impress as members of a single brotherhood in spite of the so many thing that differentiate them locally. The other component signifies that part of their culture which distinguishes them from their co-religionists living in other parts of the world and imparts to them their individual national character.

The Indian Muslims are not exempt from the general principle. Their culture, which has taken centuries to evolve itself, is a combination of both Islamic and Indian influences. This two-fold aspect has, on the one hand, endowed it with a beauty and richness which is characteristically its own, and, on the other, it holds forth the assurance that this culture will operate here not like an alien or a

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

traveler but as a natural, permanent citizen who has built his home in the light of his peculiar needs and circumstances, past traditions and new impulsions, and has also made a pleasant and enduring contribution to the native environment that surrounds him. To seek to deprive a person-or to make him revolt against-transcendental values and ethical ideals which are common between him mean an attempt to freeze his spiritual fountain-heads and destroy the universality of his outlook. In the same way, it will be utterly futile and unjust to expect him to cut himself aloof from his environment and lead a life of complete immunity from the local influences.

### Characteristics of Ibrahimi Civilization

From the point of view of Islamic belief, morality and way of life, Indian Muslims, along with Muslims of all other lands, possess a distinctive civilization for which there can be no more appropriate and comprehensive title than Ibrahimi Civilization. This Civilization has three essential attributes which have fixed their stamp on its entire spiritual, intellectual and social design and given it a flavor and a character that are manifestly its own. The three attributes are God-consciousness, Monotheism (which has been taught ceaselessly by all the Prophets belonging to the line of

Hazrat Ibrahim and a complete elaboration of which is contained in the Quran), and a permanent, natural awareness of human dignity and equality that never deserts the mind of a Muslim. It is these characteristics which lend a distinctive personality to the Ibrahimite Civilization. As far as we can say, in no other system of civilization are these features so strikingly in evidence.

### **Place of God in the Life of a Muslim**

Faith in the existence of God and a constant awareness of Him and a ready expression of this awareness in a fundamental and inalienable constituent of the life and culture of Muslims. Islamic Civilization can aptly be compared to a dress which is worn in different styles at different places according to the taste and climatic and other conditions prevailing there but its texture is the same everywhere and it is dyed in the same hue so deep that every tissue and fibre of it is totally impregnated with it. The name of God and His remembrance run like blood in the veins and arteries of Islamic Civilization. When a child is born in a Muslim home, the first ceremony it undergoes, within a few minutes of its birth, is that the Azan is spoken in its ears. Thus, the first name it becomes familiar with, even before he acquires his own name, is that of God. On the seventh day, the Aqiqah is performed, as approved by the Prophet, when an Islamic name is given to it, the choice generally falling on one which expresses the sentiment of loyalty to God or proclaims His absolute Unity and Oneness or is patterned after the

names of that most exalted group of Monotheists-the Prophets-or their pupils or immediate disciples. When the time comes for the child to begin his education and go to school, it is celebrated with the recitation of the name of God and a few verses from the holy Quran. This ceremony is known among Indian Muslims as Tasmiya Khwani or Bismillah. At marriage, permanent bond two mature and responsible persons who, also, have to take the pledge to uphold the prestige of that name throughout their lives.

The wedding sermon is delivered in the manner sanctified by the Prophet's practice, expressing gratitude to God for having created the human race in pairs of men and women and exhorting the couple to live and die in a state of faithfulness to Him. When the auspicious day of Id-ul-Fitr arrives, a Muslim is called upon to raise his voice in the affirmation of His Glory and Greatness (Allah-o-Akbar) and offer two rakats of prayers in thanksgiving, after he has bathed himself and put on a clean dress. At Id-ul-Azha, he is desired to offer up animal sacrifice in God's name. Finally when the ultimate stage of life's journey is reached, a Muslim is instructed to focus all his attention on that very name. Every Muslim, man or woman, has the ambition of dying with the sacred name of God on his or her lips. When the news of his death circulates, all educated (and even uneducated) Muslims who hear it spontaneously repeat the Quranic words, Inna Lillah-e-wa Inna Ilaih-e-Rajeoon (meaning to God we belong).



and to Him do we return). The funeral prayers, which are the last act of service to Him, reverberate with the name of God from beginning to the end. These prayers are a solemn request to the Almighty by the participants for the salvation of the soul of the departed and for themselves that they may be granted a life of loyalty in the next. As the body is lowered in the grave it is to the accompaniment of these words: "In the name of God, and according to the way of His Apostle's religion and the Millet." In the grave, the face is turned towards that universal centre of Divine worship and Monotheism which goes by the name of Ka'aba (House of God). Wherever a Muslim may be buried his face will, without exception, be in line with that one place at Mecca in Arabia. After the burial, no Muslim passer-by will, usually, fail to offer the Fateha at his grave and pray for the remission of his sins and the deliverance of his soul. In fine, the name of God and its remembrance are a constant companion of a Muslim's life from the cradle to the grave.

But these were the more important Landmarks of man's earthly sojourn. In his everyday existence, also, a Muslim is never destitute of God-remembrance. When a Muslim sits down to eat, he begins his meal with the name of God and ends it also in the same manner. Those who are particular about the observance of the Sunnah of the Prophet Carry out the minutest details of life with the name of the Lord on their lips and His thought embedded in their hearts. Take such a trifling thing as a sneeze. A Muslim is required to remember God when he lets it out, and

those who hear it, also, are instructed to send up a prayer for him. What is more, the daily conversation of a Muslim is interspersed with phrases like Masha Allah (As God willed), Insha-Allah. ( If God willeth) and La Haula-Wa La Qwwata Illa Billah (There is no power or virtue but in God). These phrases, apart from being Ideal prayer-formulas, have gained currency as terms of everyday speech not only in Arabic, but in the languages of those countries, too, where received the impress of Islamic Civilization. In truth, these phrases are in the nature of convenient aids to God-remembrance. The culture, language and the daily life of no other people will be found to be so thoroughly soaked in faith in God-existence and an all-embracing consciousness of Him. The basic ingredient of the culture and civilization Muslim, transcending the frontiers of race, nationality and geography, is this very faith and consciousness which has become the mark and symbol of their daily existence.

### **Monotheism**

The second main constituent of Muslim culture is the creed of Monotheism. Belief in the Oneness of God is manifest in all of their activities from spiritual conviction to practical conduct and from worship to festivals and ceremonies. Five times in a day it is proclaimed from the minarets of the mosques that no one is worthy of worship except One God. Their homes and studios are expected to be free from every trace of idolatry and polytheism-photographs, statues and images having been prohibited to them by their religion. The same principle

has to be followed even while making or buying toys for children. Be it a religious or a national celebration, the birthday of a spiritual leader or a political hero, or the ceremony of national flag-hoisting, it is forbidden to Muslims, and repugnant to their Monotheistic civilization, to bow before a portrait or an image or to stand reverently before it or pay it floral tributes in any form. Wherever Muslims will be earnest in their loyalty to the Islamic civilization, they will remain strictly removed from such practices. The transgression of the limits of another people or from any other motive, even in such minor matters as the giving of a name, the observation of a function or ceremony, the showing of respect to elders or the expression of one's modesty and humility is an act prejudicial to the spirit and teaching of Islam.

### **Human Dignity and Equality**

The notion of human dignity and equality has become a part of the essential nature of Muslims and a permanent attribute of Islamic character. Things like social exclusiveness or untouchability are completely foreign to Muslim society. A Muslim will have no hesitation in dining with another Muslim or any other person. Several Muslims will readily eat from the same vessel; one will freely partake of the other's left-over, or drink the water left behind in his tumbler. The master and the slave fall in the same row and offer up Namaz standing shoulder to shoulder with each other. Any person, however lowly he may be, socially or economically, can lead the prayers and the highest dignitaries and

noblemen will follow him readily.

### **Lesser Attributes**

Besides these fundamental characteristics, there are some other distinguishing features of a lesser importance of the Ibrahimi Civilization that are common to Muslims everywhere. These include habits and customs, such as, the performing of all good deeds, like eating or drinking or the passing over of something to anyone with the right hand, dress-restrictions, -the dress, for instance, must cover the garment for the lower extremities should be long enough to conceal the knees and short enough to stop above the ankles, and men are forbidden the use of silk-, and stress on cleanliness. Adherence to these regulations will generally be the rule where Islamic Civilization is present in its true, unpolluted form, and where it is not so, it will be a sign of social and moral degeneration.

### **Fine Arts**

Simplicity and sobriety is another characteristic of the Islamic Civilization. In the matter of fine arts it adopts a balanced temperate attitude. It does appreciate beauty and refinement, yet, at the same time, it frowns severely upon certain forms of self-indulgence and sensuality to which the West has given the imposing label of 'fine Arts'. Some of these are dancing, painting and photography (of living beings) and sculpture. Similarly, there are certain things in which Islam has advised caution and moderation. For instance, a Muslim is permitted to enjoy music, but within certain limits. Absorption in fine arts is, in any case, contrary to the spirit and social destiny

of Islamic Civilization and inimical to the generation of the fear of God, solicitude for the Hereafter and the high ethical standard that are expected of a Muslim. Had the check and control of the Islamic Shariat and Civilization not been there, it would not have been possible for Indian Muslims to maintain the temperateness that is their distinction, to some extent or another, in this respect in a country which has been so strongly attached to fine arts from the ancient times that some of them have become a part of popular worship.

### Islamic Morality

Among the moral attributes which have particularly influenced the Islamic culture are hospitality, liberality and openhandedness. These qualities, again, are a heritage from Hazrat Ibrahim about whose generous reception of guests there occurs the following verse in the Quran:

Has the story reached thee of the honoured guest of Abraham?  
(LI:24)

Pilgrims and foreign chroniclers who had the occasion to live, for any length of time, among communities tracing their descent from him either racially or spiritually have recorded most pleasant memories of their stay in this respect. They have, invariably, been impressed by their warm hospitality and friendly feeling towards guests and strangers. One can still notice in the countries of the Middle East, which have not yet been swept off their feet by the mounting tide of Western Civilization, glimpses of the hospitality that had enabled globe-trotters like Ibn-e-Batuta and Ibn-e-

Jubair to enjoy the comfort and warmth of home during travel. The Indian Muslims in spite of their being placed so far away from the natural seat of Islamic Civilization and the fact that Islam had reached their country long after it had passed the peak of its glory, also are conspicuous for their cordial treatment of the guests. Hospitality is a part of the tradition of Muslim homes, and although modern economic conditions have put a curb on it, Muslims still feel happy on the arrival of a guest and consider it a source of good fortune and an Islamic virtue to entertain him open-heartedly.

### Indian Influences

One of the most valuable fruits of Indo-Islamic fusion is the Urdu language. Refined and progressive to the very core, this language represents what is best in the Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit languages. The dress of the upper and urbane sections of Indian Muslims is another noteworthy example of the inter-mingling of India and Islamic cultures. It reflects refinement of taste and polished living in good measure. Further, there is the graceful, easy and well-mannered mode of life which grew up in Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad and the other important centres of Muslim influence towards the end of the Mughal rule. Excessive respect of parents, and correctness of behavior in their presence, and the exaggerated purdah of women along with certain other special regulations governing their conduct are features which are, generally, not found among Muslims belonging to other lands. In their evolution the peculiar conditions of life

in India, the needs and interests of Muslims as the ruling race and indigenous customs and traditions have obviously taken a hand.

The practice so commonly observed among Indian Muslims of marrying only in the family or in their own particular group of families or in a family of an equal genealogical status is, also, typically India and influenced wholly by the caste and other permanent distinctions of birth obtaining in the country. Muslims living outside India look upon such customs with curiosity. They are not bound down by them and give thought only to social and economic considerations—apart from personal inclination, of course,—while contracting matrimony. Similarly, the custom of making too much fuss over occasions of joy or grief, of spending beyond means on them and going in for unnecessary ostentation is a speciality of the Indian society which has made its way among Muslims, otherwise the Islamic mode of carrying out such ceremonies is one of simplicity and quiet dignity.

The disgraceful treatment meted out to servants by their masters, which is sometimes so outrageous as to reduce the servants to the level of untouchables, is, again, a product of the social impulses received from India together with being a mark of the general degeneration that had set in among the Muslims during the declining years of their power.

All said and done, it is an incontrovertible fact that Muslims have benefited immensely from the ancient cultural heritage of India. It has

enriched them in a number of ways. The successful manner of their meeting the onslaught of the Western Civilization and preserving their cultural identity unmaimed—a thing which has not been possible in the so-called Islamic countries—, the depth and profundity evident in their thought, and mysticism (Tasawwuf) are due largely to the operation of the social, cultural and intellectual processes native to India. These processes have, in conjunction with the basic impulses of Islamic thought and way of life, given shape to a composite Indo-Islamic Culture representing at once the supranational Civilization of Islam and the local philosophy and social design of India.

With all this, Islamic values and ethical standards have also suffered a distinct transfiguration in India. Though it is much less as compared to what has been the experience of other people who, like Muslims, came from alien lands to make India their home, it is still profound enough to have moved a sensitive and well-meaning Muslim poet of the nineteenth century, Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali, to make a friendly complaint about it to the motherland. When two civilizations meet, the transmission of cultural effects and impulses between them is always a two-way process. It cannot be that one exercises its influence on the other without being simultaneously influenced by it. Such a thing would be wrong and unnatural. Human existence is based essentially on the noble principle of give-and-take. In it lies its strength and glory. ●

## The Message of Muhammad (SAW)

**S. Sulaiman Nadwi**

We have seen how of all the prophets and founders of religions Muhammad (s) alone has left eternal and shining models of virtuous behavior for the guidance of humanity. These are, in truth, exemplifications of fondness and godliness upheld by reason and proved by history. Now, the question arises: What are the teachings of this universal Guide? Are they ever-abiding and so they constitute an improvement on the divine message received aforetime through the earlier messengers of God? For in the ages past apostles of God did bring guidance and light; it was only that their messages perished since they were not meant to live on for every and ever. And, since, the chain ended with Muhammad (S) his teachings must remain alive to the end of time'

The prophets of yore were messengers of truth, but only to the people among whom they were born, or for a particular age. Their teachings were short-termed, for God had not undertaken to hold them on for years on end, the original teachings of all the earlier prophets were, thus, either lost, or imperfectly compiled many years after their death, or interpolations were made in their scriptures, or they were even changed out of recognition by their scribes. Translators and annotators, Sometimes, these scriptures were mutilates within a few years of the death of apostles bringing them and, what is more, there way never maintained any

authentic and reliable record of how these scriptures and teachings were handed down by their followers. Now if everything is governed by the Will and Wisdom of God Almighty, this in itself constitutes a sufficient testimony to the ephemeral character of the earlier scriptures and teachings of their prophets. Then came the everlasting message of God through Muhammad (SAW) which has remained ever-new since the day it was brought by him. It shall ever remain fresh for no other messages are to come from God again. Of a fact, God never told any other messenger is that the message vouchsafed to him was complete and erect of that He intended to preserve it from oblivion. The earlier scriptures were lost because their potentiality was not guaranteed by God. They vanished like dreams. For God had willed them to be so. Actually, far from container any reference to the permanence or perfection to these scriptures one finds, in whatever portions of them that are extant today, passages indicating their transitory character and reason for their ultimate extinction.

Moses says in the Torah:

"The Lord the God will raise up unto thee a prophet the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall harkens ..... I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth: and he shall speak unto all that I shall command him"

"The blessing Moses invoked for children of Israel, before his death was:

"The lord came from Sinai,  
And rose up from Seir unto them:  
He shined forth from mount Paran,

And he came with ten thousands of saints;

From his right hand went a fiery law for them."

Torah declares, unequivocally, in the passage cited above, that another prophet like Moses would be raised by God who would speak only what God would bid him to say. Does it not show that the message and the guidance and the law brought by Moses was not for ever?

Another Prophet of the old Testament, Isaiah, foreteller about the advent of the servant of God who "shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

The new Prophet " shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the Isles shall wait for his law. Malachi, yet another Prophet , makes the prediction, "Behold , I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Psalms and other books of the old Testament contain similar prophecies about the prophet to come in due time. These divinations afford a conclusive proof against the abiding nature of the Jewish scriptures.

Let us now turn to the New Testament. It quotes Jesus as saying "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."

Jesus further says:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your

remembrance. whatsoever I have said unto you."

Explaining why the last and abiding guide would be sent by the Father, he says:

"I have many things to say unto you, but you can not bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.

These verses of the Gospel affirm that the Christian is also not the last word of God nor is it perfect. It announces the coming of another man of God in order to carry through the work left incomplete by Jesus Christ. But the revelation received by Muhammad (SAW) neither speaks of any new messenger of God to give any new message nor it alludes to its being incomplete. On the contrary, it declares:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you."

The Qur'an goes on even further to proclaim Mohammad (SAW) as "the Seal of prophecy", while Muhammad (SAW), on his part, asserts that "there would be no apostle after me." Several other traditions of the prophet elucidate the point further. "I am the last brick of the edifice of prophecy," says a tradition handed down from the Prophet. In fact, not a single verse of the Qur'an alludes to the advent of any new prophet after Muhammad (SAW). Thus, if we were to go by the internal evidence contained in the scriptures of different religions, that is, their own claims in regard to being the last and final message sent by God for the guidance of human race, only

the revelation vouchsafed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) would stand the test of perfection and finality, and would be found destined to be preserved in its purity to the end of time. God has, accordingly, undertaken the responsibility to preserve it unchanged; for He assure: We verily are its Guardian."

Another question that ought to be given thought is: Has any other divine communication, besides that received through Muhammad (SAW), a universal character? So far as the Jews are concerned, the world is all the same to them as Bani Israel. Hebrew prophets never preached their faith among non-Israelites: Bani Israel are the 'Chosen race' and their God is the god of their own tribe. Jesus Christ, too, emphatically denied that he had been sent to any people save "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He even refused to preach the Gospel to the gentiles for he did not consider it "meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." Vedas were, likewise, not permitted to reach the ears of non-Aryans as all other races were unclean in the eyes of ancient Aryans. Molten zinc was to be poured in the ears of unclean sutras if they happened to hear the sacred Vedas.

The message of Islam was, thus, the first and the only divine gospel of glad tidings preached by Muhammad (SAW) to all, to the blacks and the whites, to the Arabs and the non-Arabs, to the Turks and the Tatars, to the Indians and the Chinese and to the Africans and the Europeans. Just as Islam called its God as the Lord of the Worlds. It also declared its prophet as the "Mercy for the World. Its message

was for one and all, universal and worldwide. The Qur'an says:

"Lo! It is naught but a reminder to (His) creatures." "Blessed is He who hath revealed unto His slave the criterion (of right wrong), that he may be a Warner to the peoples. He unto whom belonged the sovereignty of the heavens and earth."

Muhammad (SAW) was sent as a Warner for all the peoples and his ministry extended to the entire world encompassed by the Kingdom of God.

"Say (O Muhammad) (SAW): O Mankind! I am the messenger of Allah to you all- (the messenger of) Him unto whom belong theth Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.

His message recognized no distinctions of race and country. He was bidden to declare that-

"This Qur'an has been inspired in me, that I may warn therewith you and whomsoever it may reach.

And, Muhammad (SAW) was told by God:

"And we have not sent thee (O Muhammad (WAS) save as a bringer of good tidings and Warner unto all mankind,

Islam is, thus, the only religion which claims to be the last, final and universal message of God for the entire humanity, A tradition related in the Sahih of Muslim quotes the prophet as saying: "The prophet before me were sent to their people, while I have been raised for all the nations of the world. "The claim made by the prophet of Islam is fully corroborated by history. In truth and reality, the religion preached by the last prophet is as much perfect, ever-abiding and universal as are his own life and character perfect models of

goodness and virtue for all the people and for all times to come.

Now, the searchlight needs to be turned to find out what actually constitutes this universal, perfect and perpetual principle of human guidance which supplemented and completed the previous religions and perfected the blessing of God on His creatures.

The precepts of every religion can be divided into two parts; one that which fulfils the innermost urge of human heart, and the other, that which relates to his terrestrial existence. The first, satisfying the soul, is known as iman or faith, and the second, governing the body, as 'amal or action. The latter can further be sub-divided into devotions to God or ibadat, dealings between the people or mu'amalat, and lastly, the morals or akhlaq, these four, the beliefs, devotions, transactions and the morals comprise the fundamental teachings of every religion, and in presenting a perfect concept of each of these Islam excels all religions.

The creeds of humanism and Christianity as enunciated in the Old and New Testaments are rather vague. Old Testament does mention of the existence and Unity of God, but is hardly satisfying to the head and heart. The attributes of God constitute the wherewithal for spiritual perfection and are a means to attain the gnosis and love of God, but neither the Old nor the New Testament contains anything about it. Next to the concept to that of Islam, woefully fail in describing the nature and purpose of prophecy and revelation. The worth and merit of divine apostles, their appearance in all the countries and nations for the guidance of human beings, and their impeccability, moral

rectitude and the great task performed by them. We find some faint traces of such concepts as retribution in the after-life, hell and heaven, Day of Judgment and similar other matters in the Old Testament while the Gospels contain only a few sketchy answers given by Jesus Christ in reply to a question posed by a certain Jew about these matters. There are one or two sentences about the heaven and the hell in the New Testament. This is all that these matters, there are one or two sentences about the heaven and the hell in the New Testament; This is all that these two scriptures have to offer about what is known as the creed of revealed religions. But one can find detailed answered to each of these questions in the Qur'an and the teachings of Muhammad (SAW).

The conception in regard to angels presented in the Old Testament is again quite hazy: it is rather difficult to distinguish between God and the angels as described in the Jewish Scriptures. Christian Gospels mention a few angels, but one of them, known as Holy Ghost, so resembles the Divine Being that one may call him both God and an angel or neither of the two. Islam, on the other hand, clearly defines their nature, status and functions and the relationship they bear to God, and His apostles and to other creatures of God. This is how Islam has given a most perfect creed among all the religions.

We can now turn to human actions in relation to God and their fellow beings, Worship occupies the first place, in every religion, amongst all the actions of human beings. The Old Testament speaks of oblation in some



detail and prescribes the rituals conditions for the offering of sacrifices. It also makes a few references to fasting, supplications and even to the Beit il or the House of God, but all these are referred only casually or accorded such an insignificant place in its narrations that one is very often apt to miss them altogether. It neither describes the method and the rules for offering prayers nor says anything about the timings of worship. The Book of Psalms does contain a number of litanies and adorations, but it is again silent about how to perform the divine service. Worship occupies a still more negligible place in the New Testament. At one place it speaks of the forty days' fast of Jesus Christ when he is reported to have been ahungered, The Gospels record even the objection raised by the Jews: 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast of, but thy disciples fast not? The prayer offered by Jesus is also mentioned. During the night before crucifixion when the Master is reported to have taught a prayer to his disciples. This is the only occasion when Jesus teaches something about paying homage to God, but what about other devotions and the way of offering them? None at all! In Islam, however, everything is lucid and well-defined: prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, the method and the conditions necessary for their observance; remembrance of God, devotional exercises, hours of prayer, the days and timings for keeping and the termination of fasts; the time, rules and rituals for performing the Hajj; supplications and invocations, contrition, thanksgiving and glorifications, in short, everything about lifting up of the heart and perfection of spirit and attaining the love and

fellowship of God is to be found here, described in a perfect and soul stirring manner.

Dealings concerned with the mutual relations of men and the laws of government, as stated earlier, comprise the rest of human actions. This is fine, is the social behavior comprising individual, social and administrative norms of society. The Law brought by Moses is sufficiently detailed on this subject and Islam has preserved the Mosaic Law to a large extent, although it mitigates its severity. In doing so, Islam has transformed the law of Moses from a tribal code to the law of nations. It has not only supplemented but also perfected the Mosaic Law by making suitable alterations and additions. The Book of Psalms and the gospels contain hardly anything by way of social laws save a few sketchy rules relating to such matters as divorce.

A universal religion, set forth as the abiding principle of human guidance, must needs have a body of laws capable of maintaining an orderly society and the management of its public affairs. For Christianity had nothing of the kind, it had to make free with the laws of the pagan Romans and the Greeks. Islam, on the other hand, formulated its own laws and presented such principles of legislation which could be amplified for developing new legislations capable of meeting the ever-changing needs of human society. Islam has since held sway over the world, at least for a thousand years and during this period hundreds of kingdoms have adopted its law as the law of the land. They were all not only able to sustain civilized societies and viable governments with the help of the

Law of Islam, but none has yet able to improve upon them.

Morals constitute the third part of human action. Torah contains a few moral principles. The famous Ten Commandments of Moses really include seven of these moral principles of which only one, that is, 'thou shalt honour thy father and mother' can be deemed to be a positive norm while the remaining six are negative in character. These are: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his house, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor this maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is they neighbour's. Now, coveting one's neighbour's wife being identical to committing adultery, and the malicious desire to get hold of another man's property being much the same as stealing, there are in fact only four commandments of negative character instead of six. The New Testament merely repeats these commandments with one addition which is to love one's neighbor. Islam has, on the other hand, amplified these five moral norms into twelve fundamental principles of ethical behavior, as mentioned in the chapter of Isra, which was revealed by God on the occasion of Muhammad's (SAW) ascension. One of these twelve relates to the Unity of God and the remaining eleven pertain to the moral behavior. Five of these are negative, five are of a positive character and the last is a combination of both. These are:

1. Honour your parents.
2. Render unto others what is due to them.
3. Deal kindly with the

orphans.

4. Fill the measure when you measure and weigh with right balance.

5. Fulfil your promise.

6. Slay not your children fearing a fall to poverty.

7. Slay not the life of which Allah has forbidden save with right.

8. Come not near unto adultery.

9. Follow not that whereof you have no knowledge.

10. Walk not in the earth exultant.

11. Squander not your wealth in wantonness but take the middle path.

These fundamental principles of morality show how Islam has perfected the Mosaic Law and brought it to completion. These laws lay bare the voice of conscience, point out the fount whence virtue springs and show us the failings of our desires. They bring to light the devil within our nature and tell us how to conquer it.

This is how Islam shapes human action.

If we want to sum up Islamic teachings in a two-fold principle, it could be called as faith in God and righteous action. These two cover the entire teachings of the holy Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam, and on them depends salvation of man in the hereafter. The Qur'an addresses the believers, at scores of places, as those who believe and do right and presents success and salvation as the fruits of these two. It would not be possible to go here into the details of the Islamic concepts of faith and righteous action, and hence let us confine ourselves to those aspects of

Muhammad's (SAW) message which have set right the misconceptions about these two perpetrated by the earlier religions. These were the mistakes of a fundamental nature which had kept humanity bound to grossness and corruption for ages.

The first of these fundamental issues, as held up to the view of humanity by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), was the place occupied by man in the universe, particularly, in comparison to other created beings. This really constitutes the base of the doctrine of Divine Unity. Man regarded himself, before the advent of Islam, as inferior to most of the beings and objects. A mortal fear of the rocks, high mountains, running streams, verdant trees, raining clouds, blazing fires, dense forests, viperous snakes, rising sun, luminous stars, starry dark nights, roaring lions, milch cows and ugly old women; in short, everything that could do him harm or good scared him to death. He bowed his head in reverence before very conceivable thing or phantom but Muhammad (SAW) told him, for the first time, that none of these was his Lord and Master. Man was, explained Muhammad (SAW), the paragon of creation for everything had been created by God for his service. It was the holy Prophet who told him that man being the vicegerent of God on earth was the ruler to whom every other created being bowed in obeisance. Man had not been created to serve the world, but the world was created for his service. Declared the Qur'an:

"And when the Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy on the earth."

"He it is who hath placed you as viceroys of the earth."

The new message from God, appointing man as the deputy of God on earth, bestowed on him a unique and undreamt of honour.

"Hast thou not seen how Allah hath made all that is in the earth subservient unto you."

"Verily We have honoured the children of Adam."

"He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth."

And, the cattle were his servitors, rather than claimants of obeisance from him.

"And the cattle hath He created, whence you have warm clothing and uses, and whereof you eat."

The rain and the vegetation growing there from is for the benefit of mans.

"He it is who sendeth down water from the sky, whence ye have drink, and whence are trees on which ye send your beasts to pasture. Therewith He causes crops to grow for you, and the olive and date-palm and grapes and all kinds of fruit."

Even the day and the night, the sun and the moon and the stars are all for the service of man.

"He covert the night with day, which is in haste to follow it, and hath made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by His command."

The rivers flow, not to be revered by man, but to be pressed into his service.

"And He it is who hath constrained the sea to be of service that ye eat fresh meat from thence, and bring forth from thence ornaments

which ye wear. And thou seest the ships ploughing it that ye may seek of His bounty, and that haply ye may give thanks."

The Qur'an has many more verses emphasizing the importance of man in the scheme of creation. A gnostic poet of Persia has very well summed up the whole idea in a verse which says-

The clouds and wind the sun the moon and the sky keep busy.

That ye lay your hands on the bread and eat not carelessly.

This was the message, brought by Muhammad (SAW), lifting the man up as the deputy of God, placing the crown of honour on his head and assigning him a central place in God's creation. To bow his head before any of these creatures became below his dignity: it rather meant demeaning his honour and prestige.

Man had been used to prostrate himself before the kings and the saints. The Pharaohs and the Nimrods, the Popes and the pontiffs and the monks and the friars had always hood-winked the simple-minded amongst men by lying a claim to a superior honour as the shadows of God and partakers in His divinity. This was an affront to human dignity which was rooted out by Muhammad (SAW). He proclaimed the divine writ that one should "worship none but Allah" and "ascribe no partner unto Him."

The writ of God commanded the prophets to proclaim:

"None of us shall take others for lords besides Allah."

The celestial beings, among the creations invisible to man, and the

prophets, among the creations of their own species, were certainly venerable but none could now claim the obeisance due to God.

"And He commanded you not that ye should take the angels and Prophets for lords."

Muhammad (SAW) lifted up man so high that he could not now throw himself on his knees before anybody save God; nor could he even ask anyone for a favour except the Lord and Master. He told man that God alone had the power to give and take away whatever He liked.

"And He it is Who in the heaven is God, as in the earth God."

"His verily is all creation and commandment."

"The decision is for Allah only."

"Who hath no partner in His Sovereignty?"

The message of Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet had, besides raising the status of man, another far-reaching consequence. Exclusive allegiance to the One and only God meant that nothing was Caesar's; all was God's. For the sovereignty and the kingdom and the command in heavens and earth belong to God, there is no king or emperor to demand anything that ought to be rendered to God. A man believing in this sublime concept of God's sovereignty would never agree to bow his head before any created being-the day and the night, the heavens and the earth, the rulers and the ruled, the forests and the deserts and the hills and the rivers. He would not stand in awe of anything, nor could an earthly power strike terror in his heart. The consequences of this

spiritual principle and its significance for the worth and dignity of mankind are in reality so trench and, so unbounded that it would be difficult to explain them.

The next principle of the fundamental teachings of Muhammad (SAW) is that man has been created guiltless, free of all stains of previous sins. He is born with an upright nature. It is his action that makes an angel or devil of him. Iniquity degenerates man's primordial nature and blackens his character. It was the greatest glad tidings man had ever received, for, he had always been told to hang his head in shame. In China, Burma and India, the eastern religions had preached, and the doctrine had been accepted by some philosophers of Greece also, that the fate of man is pre-determined by the deeds of his previous life. The belief in rebirth had, in consequence of the previous sins, condemned man to become indolent as well as indifferent to righteousness. It was a heavy stone placed on him which could neither be removed by his goodness nor moral rectitude. Actually, the birth in the world was itself a sign of one's sinfulness. Christianity marked no improvement, however. Instead of presenting a saner principle of life and morality, it joined its faith to the belief in the original sin of the old Adam. It preached that every man born in the world was evil in nature because he inherited the sin of his first forefather. And, this burden of guilt needed a sinless divine redeemer who could atone for the sins of human beings by sacrificing his own life. These were the beliefs which had made man said and melancholy when Muhammad (SAW) came to proclaim that man was

born blameless. It was a message of faith and hope for it told man that his actions alone were accountable in shaping his destiny ahead. He called upon all men to keep in the right and shun the ways of evil.

"By the fig and the Olive,  
By Mount Sinai,  
And by this land made safe;  
Surely We created man of the best stature,

Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low,

Save those who believe and do good works,

And theirs is a reward unfailing."

A message of hope, indeed, it was, for the humanity was threatened by the besetting sin of previous life and the original sin of a distant forefather. It declared man to be born of best stature, innocent and guiltless. Now he had power to make or mar his future through his own efforts.

"By the soul and Him who perfected it,

And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it.

He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow,

And he is indeed a failure who stunteth it."

Far from being of an evil nature, man is always born with an upright nature.

"Lo! We create man from a drop of thickened fluid to test him;

So We make him bearing, knowing, Lo! We have shown him the way,

Whether he be grateful or disbelieving."

The Qur'an also calls attention of man to his responsibility.

O man! What hath made thee careless concerning thy Lord, the Bountiful?

Who Created thee, then fashioned, then proportioned thee?

Into whatever from He will, He casteth thee."

Muhammad (SAW) explained that religion was the demand of human nature or rather the two were identical. Vice was nothing but a sickness, not inherent in man's nature, but an extraneous growth.

"So set they purpose for religion as a man by nature upright-the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not-"

The message contained in this verse of the Qur'an was admirably explained by the Prophet when he said that "no infant is born who has not an uncorrupted soul, but it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magi. Every beast gives birth to a wholesome cub. Do you see them being born with deformed ears?"

It is not difficult to imagine what a news of goodness and cheer would have been the message of Muhammad (SAW). How it gave hope to the humanity condemned for the sins never committed by it and how it instilled the sense of responsibility and freedom into every man who was given power to work his way to everlasting salvation!

Before the advent of Islam, the world was divided into different tribes, clans and families, each one of them keeping aloof and being indifferent to

one another. To the sages of ancient India the voice of God could be heard nowhere save their own sacred land. Their God was the god of their own country whose blessings were limited to a few selected castes and clans of the rulers and priests of the Aryaverta. Zoroaster listened to the message from on High, but only for the people of the blessed Iran. Bani Israel believed in the voice of prophecy, but the prophet of peace, whom they awaited, could not come from any people except from the lineage of David. No country and no people were willing to share even God's grace and blessings with a people not their own. It was then that Muhammad (SAW) came with a message for all the lands and countries. He told the world that divine guidance admitted of no distinction of race and language, colour or country; Palestine and Iran, India and Arabia were all equal in the sight of God. The world was told, for the first time, that God had sent His apostles to every country and nation for the guidance of man.

"And there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them."

"And for every folk a guide."

"Verily We sent before thee (Muhammad (SAW)) messengers to their own folk."

The Jew does not recognise a non-Israelite prophet. For the Christian it is not at all necessary to accept the apostleship of Hebrew prophet or one born among another people; he is not bound by his faith to acknowledge any messenger of God save Jesus Christ. To the Zoroastrian no country of the world except Iran was illuminated by

light-divine. But Muhammad (SAW) proclaimed that the entire human race living in any country of the world, was the creation of One God, and all the peoples and races were equally blest by the Lord. Whether it was Iran or India, China or Greece, Arabia or Assyria, God had sent the light of His guidance to every nook and corner of the world. His apostles came to show the much emphasis on the universal character of divine guidance that no Muslim could claim to be a believer unless he acknowledged all the messengers of God and all the scriptures or messages brought by them to the people of old. A Muslim has thus to affirm the apostleship of all the prophets of God whether enumerated in the Qur'an or not, for all of them came with the same message of truth to their own people.

According to the Qur'an, only they are Muslims,

"Who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad (SAW)) and that which was revealed before thee."

Again, at another place, the Qur'an says:

"But righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scriptures and the Prophets."

The same Surah of the Qur'an amplifies the doctrine for the third time:

"Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His Scriptures and His messengers- We make no distinction between any of His messengers."

No Muslim is permitted to discriminate against any apostle of God.

"O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger and the Scripture which He revealed unto His messenger, and the Scripture which He revealed aforetime."

Is there any other religion showing the same large-heartedness, teaching equal reverence to all the prophets, all the men of God and founders of religions? Was such a universal message taught to humanity by anyone before Muhammad (SAW)? Such was the tolerance, love and mercy of Adam. Last Prophet which encompassed every household and every son of Adam.

The religions of yore set up intermediaries between man and God. Kahins and priests were mediators in the temples of ancient deities, Jews had entrusted the office to the sons of Lavi who led the liturgical prayers and performed oblations, while Christians had accepted the claim of certain disciples of Jesus and the popes that whatever they would divest would be removed by God. The popes and pontiffs exercised the power to remit the sins of their followers. Brahmins, among the Hindus, believed that they had been created out of the right hand of God. They had thus the right to form the link between man and his deity and to perform the sacred rites on their behalf. But Islam abolished priesthood and with it the evils of priestcraft, the abuse of priestly power and the priestly distortion of religion. It recognized no priests, not rabbis, no popes and no prerogatives to bind and unbind, for God alone had the power over His creatures. It allowed none to intrude between God and his

bondsmen. Any believer could lead the prayers. Offer sacrifices, solemnize marriages and perform the religious ceremonies. It blazoned the message of God to every human being: "Pray unto Me and I will hear your prayer, "and allowed every man to call and speak and send up his prayer to the Lord with a respectful familiarity. This was yet another freedom granted to the human race from the tyranny of priesthood.

The primitive and pure faith of man has always been led astray by undue adoration of the holy men of god charged to show him the right path. Whenever man has wanted to show his admiration of these pious souls, he has raised them to he pedestal of God, or His like, or His incarnation. The kahins of ancient Babylon, Egypt and Assyria had all the earmarks of the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Hindus. The Buddhas and the Mahaviras were accepted as gods by their followers almost in the same way as Christians had transformed Jesus into the Son of God. But, the ways of man are queer, indeed. Sometimes he showed such a lack of respect for his revered guides and teachers that, like Bani Israel, he gave the name of prophet to every soothsayer and divine. Foretelling of events, irrespective of one's moral character and spiritual attainments, was enough for the Israelites to call anyone a prophet. This is why we find shameful stories of illicit love and deceit related about Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament.

Islam correctly defined of the Prophets. It explained that the prophets were neither God, nor His likeness, nor

His son, nor ye His kinsmen, for they were mortals like all other men. So very astounding was this concept that the pagans of Mecca could hardly believe their ears. They used to ask the prophet in amazement: "What, a prophet and a man?" And, the Prophet's candid reply to these men was:

"Say (Muhammad (SAW): My Lord be glorified! Am I naught save a mortal messenger?"

Islam denied that the prophets possessed supernatural powers or had any say in the affairs of God. Even the miracles worked by them were brought about with the permission of God were not like ordinary mortals since they enjoyed the privilege of conversing with God, were recipients of divine revelations and were free of all sins. As perfect guides of humanity they were a witness to these realities of the celestial realm which are beyond the ken of human perception. They are the assured ones, having wisdom and faith and guidance from the Lord of the world. Every man is thus duty-bound to obey and pay his regards to these truthful souls who are raise to preach the message of God to their fellow beings.

This was the path of moderation- the path avoiding the excesses of undue veneration and denial of the respect due to the prophets and founders of religions- that Islam showed to the world as a necessary adjunct to its higher concept of the Unity of God. ●



# Islamic Movement and Pre-Islamic Scenario

M.Abdul Hai\*

Islam or the message of Muhammad (S) is the magnificent reformatory movement of the world. The same movement that has been launched by several other prophets in all times and every part of the world. This movement reformed not only the spiritual but all aspect of human life which has no parallel. This is a holistic movement encompassing simultaneously the spiritual, moral, social, economic and political aspects of human life, and no aspect of human life is out of the purview of this movement.

**Importance of Islamic Movement:** There has been innumerable reformatory and revolutionary movements in the world. But Islamic movement is the most distinguished amongst them, due to its vastness and some other distinctive features. How this movement emerged? How was it presented? What reactions did it evoke? Such questions arise to every one who is introduced to the movement. That has the capacity to resolve the issues that still confront the humanity. This movement makes one realize the actual meaning of loss and profit and the realities of the eternal life that is the ultimate destination of a man.

The movement gives a complete code of worldly life that adorns not only the eternal life but shapes worldly life in a manner that one gets rid of all the complexities of life that had always bothered the mankind

This is the distinction of Islamic movement that has drawn the attention of every student with a view to observe and understand the movement and the claim that it makes about itself.

A large number of books has been written and shall continue to be written and with their help a clear introduction of Islamic movement is available. But as the perception of light can not be separated from the lamp and the feeling of fragrance can not be separated from the flowers, the understanding of such a magnificent movement cannot go without the prime mover of the movement. As such whenever there is a reference to this movement people demand to know the life and events of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) They also demand the meaning and the interpretation of Holy Qur'an the real source of this movement, which is quite natural

**Distinctive Features of Islamic Movement:**

The greatest service to humanity is to instill values and moral training. To eradicate evils and to present before them a complete code of life by following that one could succeed in life in its true sense, many people have worked for it in their own way. But most of them chose a specific field of reformers for this purpose and dedicated themselves in their chosen area. Some adopted morality and spirituality while others tried to adorn the civilization. Some entered the vast meadows of politics. But those reformers who decided to reform the whole life of the human beings where none other than prophets (s) of God.

It is the greatest favour of the Creator of this universe that the teachings and message of the last prophet and details of his life has been protected and preserved in an unparallel manner. The

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biography of prophet Muhammad(s) was penned in a way that no other historical records could get such authenticity. Moreover, the coverage and comprehensiveness of it is such that every event of his life, his dealings, the manners of his sitting, walking, eating habits, style of sleeping and getting up and the style of smiling and speaking are minutely described. In short, the details that are not available about the greatmen of past one or two centuries are available about prophet Muhammad (S) even after 1500 years of time.

Before we study the events of prophet's life we should keep one thing more in our minds that every work is valued with reference to that every work is valued with reference to the circumstances in which it was done. Favourable circumstances soon lead a movement to flourish. It takes sufficient time for an ordinary movement to gain ground and when someone rises for a cause, the masses show sympathy for the momentum. For instance, take any freedom movement, people are against the atrocities of the foreign oppressors and develop a hatred towards them and if a man of courage rises and gives a call for freedom people join the movement is small due to fear, but the sympathy and support of all countrymen is with the movement. Same is the situation in case of economic movements. Economic exploitation compels the people to fight the exploiters and black marketers. In short, every movement needs favorable conditions and the support of masses for its success. But the movements that are launched in unfavorable conditions soon get into the rough weathers. For example if a person, in a free land, invites his countrymen to accept, the slavery of a mighty nation, then, think about his fate and sufferings that the person is going to face.

Nobody can gange the real

importance and the greatness of the task entrusted to the inviter to Islam i.e. prophet Muhammad (S) unless he glances the then prevailing conditions in Arabian Peninsula as well as in the rest of the world.

Global Condition at the Time the Call to Islam was given: The essence of Islam is Taw heed (Oneness of God). But this was the very light that the Arabs and the whole world was deprived of. The human mind was devoid of the true concept of Taw heed.

It is a fact that thousands of prophets (peace be upon them) before Prophet Muhammad (S) illuminated every corner of the world with the message of unity of God.

But to the misfortune of humanity it had forgotten the true message and has started including the moon, sun, stars, jinn's, angels, gods and goddesses, mountains, rivers, animals other human being into the folds of divinity. Thus he entangled himself in worshipping innumerable mortal objects and deprived hir self of the calm of worshipping one God.

There were two super powers on the face of the earth at that time. They were Persia and Rome. Persians were following Zoroastrianism which had its effect from Iraq to India. Romans had faith in Christianity. They whole Europe and African continent were under the impact of Christianity. Hindus and jews were also two important religious sects. Everyone used to claim to be on the right path.

Worshipping of star was common in Iran. The kings and elites also had religious status and they were prostrated before. The people used to sing songs in their praise. In short Persia was bereft of the concept of Taw heed.

**Roman Empire:** After the cessation of Greek empire. Romans were considered to be the super power of the

word but by the end of 6th century A. D. this empire had reached at the brink of its downfall, mal-administration, fear of foes, restlessness within the country, utmost degradation of moral values, limitless leisure had become their identity. Some people were worshipping stars and idols. But those who embraced Christianity were also bereft of the concept of Taw heed. They believed in the divinity of son and father, Ruhul Quds (Holy Spirit) and Mary. Hundreds of religious sects had cropped up and they used to fight amongst themselves. Worshipping of graves was a common practice. The popes were prostrated before. Popes and subsequently other religious leaders had adopted imperial as well as divine powers. They used to decide the lawful and unlawful. Their words were considered divine by the masses. The concept of religiosity was to denounce the world and to keep the human body devoid of all worldly comforts.

**India.** India was passing through puranic age. This was considered as the darkest period in Indian history. Brahmanism was once again gaining ground and Buddhist were almost perished. polytheism had crossed all bounds. The number of deities was touching 33 crore mark. It is said that in Vedic ages, idol worship was not in practice, but it had become in temples. The priests were the personification of moral degradation. Masses were vulnerable targets for these priests. Castes had ruined the whole society. In the beginning there was no such social discrimination but the casteism had distorted the entire social fabric in a manner that defied all senses of judgment. The gentry was given privileges on hereditary and family grounds. Consuming liquor was very common. Monastic life was considered essential part of religion. Superstitions and fantasies

were on their peak. Innumerable ritual and faith in spirits had made the human life as blind. Every extraordinary thing for them was god. To prostrate before every mighty or strange thing was their religion. There were innumerable deities and goddesses. Women priest and devdasis (woman slaves) were submerged in the mire of moral degradation. All these heinous acts were going on in the name of religion. Women were put at stake in gambling. Polygamy was a common practice. Widows were deprived of all worldly comforts. This inhuman attitude of society used to compel a woman to lay on the pyre of her husband. Female genocide was common due to fear of defeat and insult and this inhuman act was a matter of boasting for them. Naked women and men were worshipped. They used to loose sense after consuming liquor. In short, from moral religious and social point of views, this land of Allah was a hotbed of satanic activities.

**Jews:** Being the bearer of the Allah's deen (religion) Jews were the ones to bring about some reformations but they too, were submerged in the quagmire of sins. Their long history was replete with heinous acts. They were too sinful to bring about any reforms. They martyred a number of prophets sent by Allah for their reformation. They were of the view that they had a special relationship with Allah and He will not chastise them due to this relation. They used to regard all heavenly blessings as their fundamental rights. For them, prophesy was their inherited legacy. The jew scholars were worldly people and they were enjoying its delicacies. They used to amend the religious laws day in and day out to please the elites and rulers. They used to follow only those divine laws which they found easy and abandoned the rest. They use to engage in bickering. Greed had overpowered them so much that they never used to do anything that

may have any adverse effect on their wealth or lives. Their moral condition was worse. Polytheistic idolatry had made inroads among their beliefs. Witchcraft, superstitions, amulet, sorcery and evil practices had tarnished the real concept of Thawed. When the Holy Prophet presented before them the clear concept of Taw-head, the Jews crossed all limits and said "the polytheists of Arabia were better than these Muslims."

**Condition of Arabian Peninsula:**

Let's have a glance over Arabia, the land from where the Holy prophet launched his movement and underwent all Kinds of miseries and hardships.

A major part of Arabia, i. e., Valley of Qura, Khaiber and Fadk were inhabited by the jews. They were at the helm of power in polytheistic activities. They used to worship trees, idols, stones stars, angels and jinns, even though concept of one God was there and they used to regard Him as faint that they continues worshipping the "smaller gods". They were of the view that their day-to-day problems were solved by these deities., so, they were mostly engaged in offering sacrifices and votive offerings before these deities. They used to take solemn pledges in the names of these deities. They used to think that they can please Allah by pleasing these "smaller gods".

These people used to regard the angels as the "daughters of Allah "and the jinns as close relative of Allah and partner in divinity. They used to seek their help. They had carved out idols of these "partners "in divinity and used to worship them. Idolatry had taken its roots inside their hearts. They were so fond of idol worship that if they found a beautiful stone, they would start worshipping it, if they don't get anything they would make a mound of clay, sprinkle goat milk over it and an idol was ready, these were innumerable idols in Arabia. They used to worship stars as

well. Among stars, they used to prefer sun and moon. Jinns and ghosts were also worshipped. Several 'tales were prevalent about them. All polytheistic superstitions were there in Arabia.

Along with these religious distortions, infightings were also common. Trifle issues used to result into wars among tribes that used to last for generations. No other nation could come at par with them in gambling and consuming liquor. Their poetry was nothing but praise of wine and the consequent obscene activities. They were beasts in human form due to their obsession for usury, plunder, cold bloodedness, shed ding blood, fornication and other dirty acts. They used to bury their daughters alive. Exposure was so common that naked men and women used to make rounds of K'aba in the name of religion. In short Arabs had touched the bottom of mire of sins. They had submerged their religion, morality, social values, politics and their all in this mire.

**Arabian traits for Islamic**

**Movement:** Not only Arabia rather the whole world was engulfed in such a darkness of misguidance. Then the world desperately needed the guiding light which could dispel this darkness and show the right path to Allah's deviated slaves. Why was Arabia chosen by Allah Almighty to dispel this darkness? Needs a serious thinking:

Allah Almighty had chosen Prophet Muhammad (S) as the last messenger for guidance and light and the message of invitation (to Islam) was to spread in the whole world. It is apparent that this gigantic task could not be completed by an individual so; it was a must that the Holy prophet organizes a group of reformers who could carry this mission on even after the prophet leaves the world. The qualities required for this

grand task were commonly found in Arabs. In addition to it, the geographical location of Arabia is such that it lies in the central part of inhabited world, so. it was easy to convey this message (of Islam) to the surrounding regions. Another cogent reason was required for the vastness of topic. In this way, Arabic language had an upper hand over other languages. The greatest virtue of Arabs was that they had never been under any foreign rule. They were not acquainted with the evils of slavery. They had Persian and Roman empires around them, but these empires could not make them bow to them. They were extremely chivalrous and fearless people, they used to pay no heed to dangers. Wars were third favorite pastime; they were full of fervor and strong will power. They were free of malice. They had sharp memory, had the ability to learn the finer things fast. They were generous and had self esteem and self respect, the difficult desert life style had made them practical in their approach and if once accepted a thing it was difficult for them to confine themselves to its appreciation from a distance. Rather they used to rise and involve their life in third chosen task.

**Difficulties in Reforming Arabs:**

The above mentioned qualities made Arabs a nation, due to which Allah decide to entrust them with the responsibility of spreading the true message. On the other hand the miseries that Holy prophet faced in reforming these people were no less. As stated earlier that to evaluate a work it is essential to look into the circumstances in which it had been done . So, the flourishing of Islamic movement is the greatest achievement in terms of circumstances in which this movement was launched. So, the way the Holy prophet prepared this nation for Islamic cause is nothing but a miracle.

Without putting froth these adverse situations one can not guess the real

greatness of this grand reformatory task accomplished by Prophet Muhammad (S) the obstacles that hindered the Holy prophets are mentioned here:

Arabs were an illiterate nation. They had no concept of Allah's qualities, importance of the message, meaning of revelation, understanding Allah's Book, concept of life hereafter and the real meaning of Ibadat (worshipping). These people were blind followers of their ancestral customs and rituals. Islam brought the true concept of Tawheed which was contrary to their beliefs. All polytheistic evils had taken roots in them. Superstition had taken away their wits. Infightings were their prominent features; They had lost the power of reasoning and thinking seriously. Their thinking was limited to wars and revenges. Their main occupation was loot and plunder. So, when the Holy prophet invited them to Islam they became amazed and exasperated. This invitation (Islam) was against their ancestral religion and beliefs. Islam demanded them to abandon blood shedding and instructed them to lead a peaceful life; it proclaimed that loot is unlawful. It further demanded them to give up negative thinking, bad habits and unlawful activities to gain livelihood. So, it was an uphill task to persuade for centuries. In short, the prevailing conditions in Arabia and rest of the world, Arabs and their habit and tendencies apparently nothing was favorable for the movement. But when the result came, it appeared that the Islam like a tornado took over the entire Arab. And this is the miracle that generates a desire to know each and every aspect of the Holy prophet's life ●

**Continued from page 38**

may hear the Word of Allah: and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge." (Sura 9: verse 6)

### **Freedom of Thought & Expression**

True science is not in conflict with the Islamic faith and no scientist has been tortured for discovering or announcing a scientific fact in Islam, as did the church, Islam calls on people to study space, earth and all creations of Allah. A Muslim has the right to question the Muslim ruler on any matter touching the affairs of the State and he must appear, as did Caliphs Omar and Ali, before a subordinate Judge appointed by them to answer charges against them.

All Muslims are entitled to voice their opposition against the ruler and express their viewpoints without being censored. Bilal, son of Rabah, argued with Caliph Omar bin al-khattab over the problem of fay (conquered lands) and Omar could not silence his opposition. Likewise, a woman argued with Omar concerning the dower and Omar reversed his decision in her favour.

The ruler has to take into consideration the public opinion before taking any decision. Consultation is one of the main characteristics of true Muslims in the Holy Qur'an "who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation." (Sura 42:verse 38)

Caliph Omar addressed the Muslims saying: "Put me right if you discover any crookedness in me." A member of the audience retorted: "By God Almighty if we had found any crookedness in you would have put you right with our swords." This man expressed such a harsh viewpoint to the

ruler publicly without being afraid of any kind of punishment.

One beduin roughly asked Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to give him some alms. The Prophet (PBUH) gave him what he wanted and prevented his companions from punishing this man for the impolite language with which he addressed the Noble Prophet (PBUH). Every person in Islam can enjoy the freedom of speech unless his statements are obscene or defamatory, or blasphemous.

### **Conclusion**

In Islam man's duty to God embraces both his duty to society and to every other individual, and consequently the rights of each are protected by the obligations of all under the divine law. As the state itself is equally subject to this same law, it is compelled to protect the rights of the individual.

By stressing the equality of all men before God, by emphasizing his dignity and freedom from submission to all save God alone, by making the State answerable before God, and thus protecting the individual from oppression, Islam set a high standard in human rights to which the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 can be seen as a basic corollary or extension of the programme laid down in the Qur'an.

There is a disparity between words and deeds in the behavior of the so-called advanced nations regarding human rights. They are silent about rights violations in the Arab lands occupied by the Zionist entity and in other pro-Western countries, and are crying because the Islamic Hudud punishments in some Islamic countries are being enforced. ●

# Importance of Ethical Values in Islam

This is an undeniable fact that the ethics is the essence of all the religions of the world. English has borrowed the term ethics from Greek, 'ethos' which means character. No doubt, ethical values and norms are the greatest asset of human beings.

Syed Ameer Ali has rightly said: "The essence of the ethical principles involved and embodied in Islam is summarised in the second chapter of the Quran:" There is no doubt in this book - a guidance to the pious, who believe in the Unseen, who observe the prayers, and distribute (charity) out of what we have bestowed on them; and who believe in that which we have commissioned thee with, and in that we commissioned others with before thee, and who have assurance in the life to come.: - these have received the direction of their Lord". (S.11A1-6) He further said: "The principal bases on which the Islamic system is founded are (1) a belief in the unity, immateriality, power, mercy and supreme love of the Creator; (2) Charity and brotherhood among mankind, (3) subjugation of the passions; (4) the outpouring of a grateful heart to the Giver of all good, and (5) accountability for human actions in another existence" (The Spirit of Islam, P.138).

S.Sulaiman Nadwi says: "If we want to sum up Islamic teachings in a two-fold principle, it could be called as faith in God and righteous action. These two cover the entire teachings of the holy Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam, and on them depends salvation of man in the hereafter. The Qur'an addresses the believers, at scores of places, as those

**Obaidur Rahman Nadwi** who believe and do right and presents success and salvation as the fruits of these two.

He further says: Islam amplified twelve fundamental principles of ethical behaviour. These are:

1. The unity of God.
2. Honour your parents.
3. Render unto others what is due to them.
4. Deal kindly with the orphans.
5. Fill the measure when you measure and weigh with right balance.
6. Fulfil your promise.
7. Slay not your children fearing a fall to poverty.
8. Slay not the life of which Allah has forbidden save with right.
9. Come not near unto adultery.
10. Follow not that whereof you have no knowledge.
11. Walk not in the earth exultant.
12. Squander not your wealth in wantonness but take the middle path". (Muhammad the Ideal Prophet, p.104-105)

It should be kept in mind that Prophets and reformers laid great stress on moral concepts. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "I have been sent to teach perfect good manners. The following verses of the holy Quran clarify the view point of ethical values of Islam. "You shall never attain goodness till you share with other (the poor or the needy) what you cherish (particularly your wealth. And Whatsoever you give away, God surely will know it. Serve your God and join not aught with Him. And be good to parents, and to kinsfolk, and to orphans, and to the needy and to the neighbour who is of kin and to the neighbour who is not of kin, and to the fellow traveler and to the wayfarer and to

those under your care and control (the slaves). Verily, God loveth not the proud, the boastful, who, themselves being niggardly, bid others to be niggardly and abstain from disclosing that God of His bounty hath given them. For the ungrateful we have prepared a humiliating chastisement.”

Needless to add that Islamic ethics does not limit with these few “do's and don'ts”, on the contrary it encompasses whole gamut of human beings lives. The following verses are quite relevant in this regard: “And if two groups of the believers are at war, then ye make peace between them. And if one of the two continue to wrong till they yield to the ordinance of God: And when they yield ye make peace between them with fairness and act equitably. God indeed loveth the equitable. The believers are after all brethren unto one another. Therefore, make peace between your brethren and fear God, that ye may receive mercy. O believers! let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the latter are better than the former. Let none defame another, nor give bad names to each other. It is a sin for a man to give a bad name to anyone. And mark ! those who repent not for wrong done to others are wicked indeed. O believers! Avoid excessive indulgence in suspicions, for in some cases suspicion is a sin. Let none spy on anothers, and let none indulge in backbiting among them. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely, ye would abhor it. And be mindful of God. Surely, God is Oft-indulgent, the Merciful.” (S.49,A.9-13)

In this context, it would be apt to mention some more sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). “When a man dies, his works also stop, except three: acts of charity which continue, knowledge by which all profit, and a religious issue which prays for him.” Verily, God is Pure, and loves the pure,

is Cleanly and loves the cleanly, is Beneficent and loves beneficent, is Generous and loves the generous.” The most perfect Muslim, in point of faith, is he who is the best among them in manners, and the best among them to his wife. “A true Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands the people are safe.” “He is not a true believer who eats his fill while his neighbour lies hungry by his side.” “The pleasure of God is in the pleasure of the parents and the displeasure of God is in the displeasure of the parents.” “Send presents to one another, for verily presents take away the grudge of the heart; and let no neighbour despise the present of his neighbour be it even so little.”

Swami Vivekananda Says: “Coming to ethics, we find a tremendous departure. It is, perhaps, the only science which makes a bold departure from this fight. For ethics is unity; its basis is love.” (Teachings of Swami Vivekananda, P,57-58.)

Maulana Abul A'la Maududi has rightly said: "Moral sense is inborn in man and through the ages it has served as the common man's standard of moral behaviour, approving certain qualities and disapproving others. While this instinctive faculty may vary from person to person, human conscience has given a more or less uniform verdict in favour of certain moral qualities as being good and declared certain others as bad. On the side of moral virtues, justice, courage, bravery and truthfulness have always elicited praise and history does not record any period worth the name in which falsehood, injustice, dishonesty and breach of trust may have been upheld; fellow-feeling, compassion, fidelity, and magnanimity have always been valued while selfishness, cruelty, miserliness and bigotry have never received the approbation of the human society; men have always appreciated perseverance, determination and courage and have never approved of



impatience, fick leminedness, cowardice and imbecility. Dignity, restraint, politeness and amiability have throughout the ages been counted among virtues, whereas haughtiness, misbehaviour and rudeness have never found recognition as good moral qualities. Persons having a sense of responsibility and devotion to duty have always won the highest regard of men: never have people who are incompetent, slothful and lacking in sens of duty been looking upon with approval. Similarly in respect of the standard of good and bad in the collective behaviour of society as a whole, the verdict has always been almost unanimous. Only that society has been looked upon as worthy of honour and respect which possesses the virtues of organization, discipline, mutual affection and fellow-feeling and has established a social order based on justice, freedom and equality of men. As opposed to this, disorganization, indiscipline, disunity, injustice and social imbalance have always been considered manifestations of decay and disintegration. Robbery, murder, larceny, adultery fraud and graft have always been condemned. Slandering, scandalmongering and blackmailing have never been considered wholesome social activities. Contrary to this, service and care of the aged, help of one's kith and kin, regard for neighbours, loyalty to friends, assistance to the weak, the destitute and the orphans, and nursing the sick are qualities which have always been highly valued ever since the dawn of civilization. Virtuous, polite, mild and sincere persons have always been welcomed. Individuals who are upright, honest, sincere, outspoken and dependable, whose deeds conform to their words, who are content with their own rightful possessions, who are prompt in the discharge of their obligations to others, who live in peace and let others live in peace and from whom nothing but good can be expected, have always formed the core of

every healthy human society.

This shows that human moral standards are in fact universal and have been well-known to mankind throughout the ages. Good and evil are not myths to be hunted out. They are well-known realities and are equally understood by all. The sense of good and evil is inherent in the very nature of man. Hence, in the terminology of the Qur'an, virtue is called "Ma'ruf" (a well-known thing) and evil is designated as "Munkar" (an unknown thing); that is to say virtue is known to be desirable for every one and evil is not known to commend itself in any way. This fact is mentioned by the Qur'an when it says: "God has revealed to human nature the conspicuousness and cognition of good and evil." (Al-Qur'an, LxLJ:8) (Ethical Viewpoint of Islam, P. 37-38)

It should be noted the conversation of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam. Ali asked the Prophet one day about the principles governing his general behaviour, and he replied: "Knowledge is my capital, reason is the basis of my religion, love is my foundation, desire is my mount for riding, remembrance of God is my comrade, anxiety is my companion, science is my arm, patience is my mantle, contentment is my booty, modesty is my pride, renunciation of pleasure is my profession, certitude is my food, truth is my intercessor, obedience is my sufficiency, struggle is my habitude and the delight of my heart is in the service of worship." (Introduction to Islam, P.76)

Keeping in view the prevailing moral decay in our social milieu, it is imperative that we should cultivate good qualities and sublime norms. We should impart our children moral teachings and good manners in a sober and decent way from the very outset. An excellent and disciplined society may come up only if we follow these rules. ●

## Human Rights in Islam

**Siddiq Ali Abdallah**

A propaganda campaign is being launched against Islam by the new crusaders in the global mass media and international forums as well. Amnesty International, posing as a custodian of human right worldwide, referred to the Islamic Hudud punishments as cruel, inhuman and degrading.

The UN Commission of Human Rights called for abolition of laws contravening the International legislation, specifically those of Hudud ( fixed punishments ) and Qisas ( retribution ). They insist on the universality of human rights based on Western standards.

Therefore, as true Muslims we have to shed light on the perfect and eternal concept of human rights, evolved by Islam 14 centuries ago, and challenge the false allegations by the Western colonialist that they are founders and advocates of human rights.

In the first place, the severity of penalties ( hudud ) prescribed in Islamic law for crimes is acting as a deterrent to the potential offenders who may intend to encroach upon the rights of other members of society . The Hadd punishment for theft, for instance, is to preserve the right of the owner to enjoy the ownership of his property.

The penalty of Qadhif (false accusations of unchastity) is a deterrent to those who may go beyond the limits of exercising the freedom of speech. The retribution of Qisas, which is the punishment for homicide and injury, is a deterrent to the murderer or assailant, who deny the victims the right to lead their lives in peace and security.

It is to be mentioned that Islam took into consideration various mitigating factors to all the punishments it has prescribed. The accused may enjoy the benefit of doubt and get acquittal. Omar bin al-Khattab, the second caliph, did not carry out the punishment prescribed for theft during the year of famine, when there was some doubt that people might be compelled to commit theft by hunger.

Islam seeks remedial measures to prevent adultery; it advocates early marriage and provides aid from Public Treasury for those, who wish to get married, yet cannot afford to pay the dower. On the other hand, the moral discipline purifies the society from temptation, which excites the passions of both sexes. Islam does not inflict the punishment on the adulterer unless he committed his crime so openly that he could be seen by four eye witness. If sexual offence is committed in private, it is not punishable unless the accused admits his guilty.

The fact that the punishment for theft has been executed only six times over a period of 400 years is clear evidence that such Hudud punishments were primarily meant to be a deterrent to prevent crime. In succeeding paragraph, I would like to highlight the freedoms and rights guaranteed by Islam to all members of the society, irrespective of their religion, race, sex, or social status.

### **Equal Rights for All**

In his famous oration, which he delivered on the occasion of his Farewell Pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) reaffirmed the principle of

equality and brotherhood of man in Islam. He is quoted as saying; All men are equal in Islam. The Arabs has no superiority over the non-Arab, nor does the non-Arab has superiority over the Arab, save in piety (fear of God).

On the other hand, the social rank or high office did not bestow upon the bearer special privileges before law and certainty did not entitle him to ill-treat others. Jabbala, the king of the Ghassanides, embraced Islam and it happened that he ill-treated a poor man. The man complained to Caliph Omar bin al-Khattab. Omar sent for Jabbala and asked him why he had so ill-treated a brother Muslim. When Jabbala refused to do as he was hidden, because he was a king and the other person only a common man. Omar replied, 'King or no king, both of you Muslims and both of you are equal in the eye of law'.

When Abu Dharr, the companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him), referred to Bilal, the Absynian ex-slave, as the son of a black woman, the Prophet (peace be upon him) severely rebuked Abu Dharr for this racist remark and Abu Dharr hurried to apologize to Bilal. Under Islam Bilal, the black slave, Salman, the Persian, and Suhaib, the Roman all were highly respected in the Arab community, at a time when the jews were believing that the Semite Hebrews are the selected people of God.

When Islam came slavery was prevalent throughout the Roman, Persian and Indian Empires as well as in Arabia, and it was acknowledged as a fact of socio-economic existence. Therefore, its total abolition required a gradual process. The advent of Islam heralded the restoration of human dignity to the slaves. The holy Qur'an commanded the Muslim: 'And be good to the parents and the near of kin and those whom your right hands

possess (slaves); surely Allah loves not him who is proud and boastful." (Sura 4: verse 36).

Islam proceeded further to bring about the actual freedom of slaves by urging the Muslims to voluntarily set their slaves at liberty. Moreover, Islam prescribed the freeing of slaves as atonement for some of the sins that one might commit. The Islamic government used to advance financial aid to the slaves to ransom their freedom. The Qur'anic verse describing the uses of alms (Zakah). Says: "Alms are only for the poor and the needy.. And the ransoming of captives," (Sura 9: verse 60).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) established brotherhood between some Arab chiefs and some freed slaves. Thus, he joined as brothers Bilal and Khalid Alkhas'ami, Ziad, the freed slave of the prophet (peace be on him) and Hamza the uncle of the prophet (peace be on him). This relationship, of brotherhood was a real bond akin to the blood-relationship, so much so that these two brothers in Islam inherited from each other.

Furthermore, the prophet (PBUH) married his cousin, Zainab, the daughter of Jahsh to his freed slave Zaid. The prophet (peace be on him) also appointed Osama, the son of his ex-slave Zaid, as the commander of the army consisting of such illustrious men, as Abu Bakr and Omar. Thus, even a slave could aspire to the highest office in the Islamic state.

Rousseau has quoted Omar bin al-khattab in his celebrated maxim "Man is born-free; yet everywhere he is in chains." When food and clothing had to be rationed in Medina, Omar received his share just as any other ordinary citizen and all the caliphs did not claim any special privileges.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) once emphatically said that if his daughter Fatima committed theft, he would have even her hand cut off. No offender of noble origin was allowed to go free without punishment for his offence.

The prophet (peace be on him) applied the rules of justice and equality even to himself and to his family where necessary, demonstrating the truth of the concept that there is no distinction of class or status in Islam and thus he set a lofty example to be followed by all the Muslims.

### **Equal Rights of Men & Women**

According to the holy Qur'an, men and women are quite equal to each other in their origin, their abode as well as in their place of return and were as such entitled to similar and equal rights. "O people! Be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created it's mate of the same kind and spread these too many men and women"(Surah 4:Verse 1)

Another Qura'nic verse reads: 'O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: nor let some women laugh at others.....' (Surah 49: verse 11) This verse includes a list of moral duties and rights enjoyed by both men and women.

The reward for both sexes for their good deeds is also similar: "And their Lord has heard them and He says: 'I will deny no man or woman among you the reward of their labours.'" (Surah 3: verse 195) Men and women are also equal in their rights to realize their material needs, including similar rights to hold property and dispose of it in any way." And unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned," (Surah 4: verse 32)

Islam granted women these rights,

which the woman in Europe was deprived of them for more than 1,100 years. Islam recognized an independent economic status of woman without any pressure of some economic circumstances or any inter-class conflict going on.

No woman could be given in marriage without her consent. The noble Prophet (peace be upon him) says: "No widow should be married without consulting her, and no virgin be married without her consent and her consent is her silence," (Bukhari & Muslim) The Muslim woman has the right to propose her marriage to any man she liked to marry. The European woman obtained this right only in the eighteenth century.

Scientific research proved that a difference exists in the mechanism of brain of each sex and, therefore each sex has to discharge the duty for which he is biologically well equipped. The emotional character of a woman is suitable for motherhood, whereas the physical and intellectual disposition of a man helps him in planning his tough practical life.

Thus, Islam effects equality between the two sexes. Where there is a natural ground for it, and differentiates between these where such differentiation is but natural. Islam gives to the man the equivalent of the portion of two females in inheritance, because the man alone is charged with shouldering all the financial obligations of the whole family. The woman gets one third of the inherited property to spend it on her own person. If a woman possesses a property of her own, her husband cannot take it away from her, and even then he has to bear her financial burden as if she had nothing in her possession to support herself with.

The man is under a legal obligation for the maintenance of his family. The Qur'an says. "Men are maintainers of woman with the bounties

which God has bestowed more abundantly on some of them than on others, and with what they may spend out of their possessions." ( Surah 4: verse 34)

Therefore, as the man is equipped with rational qualities and has strong physical body he is more fit to shoulder the responsibility of headship of the family. It is scientifically proved that woman in the premenstrual days are suffering from sever mood disturbances. And tend to take irrational decisions. This may be the reason why Islam makes the evidence of two women equivalent to that of one man.

The woman is by her very nature very impressionable and liable to digress from the real facts of the case in hand. Therefore, it is wise to have another woman along with her "so if the one errs, the other will remember."

Kind treatment of wives is a part of the religion of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has said. "The best among you are those who are kindest to their wives." Islam requires the same high standard of moral conduct from both sexes and has imposed the same legal penalties on them for the violation of the moral laws. If the wife hates her husband and can no longer live with him, she the right to get separated provided that the court is convinced of the grounds for separation. Non-Muslims women do not enjoy this right, as their marriage is a perpetual bond.

Polygamy is permissible in Islam as a solution to many social problems and it is subject to strict restrictions: "Marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only)" "The Qur'an (4:3). If a large number of men are killed in wars, then polygamy becomes a necessity to save the society from the sexual anarchy. On the other hand, some men may have greater sexual urge or sexually overactive and cannot be

content with one wife. They should be permitted to have a second wife.

Polygamy also offers the solution to the problem of having a sterile wife or a wife suffering from a chronic disease and she does not deprive the woman of the right to work outside her home when there is a genuine need for her to work, but not at the cost of her primary functions at home.

The woman has the right to travel when escorted by her husband or close relatives (Mahram). The woman in Islam keeps her independent identity and her family name cannot be changed in the identity card even after she gets married. The non-Muslim women do not enjoy this right and have to changer their names.

The women enjoy the freedom of speech and many women argued with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Omar bin al-khattab and other caliphs over different issues and their viewpoints were upheld. Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was a teacher to both men and women, which proves women are not deprived of the right to be educated in Islam.

### **Right to Private Ownership**

Islam does not rate human nature so low as to take it for granted that private ownership will always inevitably lead to injustice and oppression as believed by the Communists. As for refining and educating human nature Islam achieved an unmatched success. Some Muslims owned property yet "they entertained no desire in their hearts for that which has been given them but gave preference to others over themselves though poverty became their lot." (Sura 59: 7) Muslims willingly shared their own property with others.

Islam took the necessary precautions by enacting economic and social legislation, which precluded

feudalism and capitalism and ensured a respectful standard of living even for those who did not own any land or factories.

It has not abolished private ownership but made the necessary guarantees for a fair distribution of wealth. Such guarantees bridge the gap between the classes, prohibiting luxury and ending deprivation. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) urged all Muslims to work for a living, even going to jungle to cut wood so as to earn a decent living, and asked the employees wages proportionate to their work immediately.

In Islam, the public resources, e.g., water, food and sources of energy should not be monopolized because they are public property to be share by all the community. The Noble Prophet (PBUH) is quoted as saying: "Your lives and property are scared and inviolable amongst one another until ye appear before the Lord (Allah)..." Therefore, it is not lawful in Islam to confiscate the personal property of any person without lawful excuse, as done by the Communists.

Thus Islam combines the merits of both capitalism and Communism. It permits private ownership in principle but subjects it to reasonable restrictions. It vests the community with the power to organize ownership, rather than abolish it.

### **Freedom of Religion**

Religious tolerance is provided for in the Qur'anic texts and thereby no one is compelled to embrace Islam. "Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands out clear from Error." (Sura 11: verse 256) The essence of the attitude of Islam towards adherents of other faiths is to be found in the charter, which was granted to the Jews by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) after his arrival in Madina and to the Christian of Najran, a town in Southern Arabia after Islam had fully established itself in the

Arabian Peninsula.

It was the first charter of freedom of conscience given to all individuals of all religions, offering them equal rights. Sir. T.W. Arnold in his book "The Preaching of Islam" is quoted as saying "Muhammad (PBUH) had entered into treaty with several Christian tribes, promising them his protection and guaranteeing them the free exercise of their religion and to their clergy undisturbed enjoyment of their old rights and authority. Religious toleration was extended towards the Christian Arabs by the victorious Muslims of the first century of Hijrah and continued by succeeding generations."

The Jizyah (tributes imposed on non-Muslims) was levied on the able-bodied males in lieu of military service they would have been called upon to perform had they been Muslims." This is unbiased evidence given by a Christian scholar to the credit of Islam.

When Spain was re-conquered by king Ferdinand, innumerable Jews left their country for Muslim lands, preferring a life in exile under Muslim rule to life in their homeland. The Holy Qur'an also emphasized the need to establish interreligious dialogue. "Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say ye; 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims bowing to Allah's Will.'" (Sura 3: verse 65)

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an asked the Muslims to give protection even to the non-Muslim enemies, who defect and seek asylum in the Islamic State. "If one amongst the pagans asks you for asylum, grant it to him, so that he

**Continued on page 30**

## Around the World

### Mobile with Qur'an in 20 Languages

An Indian company has come out to offer a special mobile phone that would have a complete Holy Qur'an recitation in voice of five famous Qaris. Along with that there would be translation of the Qur'an in 29 languages including Urdu, English, Bengali, Malayalam and Tamil. Confirming the launch of ENMAC MQ3500 mobile handset Anuj Kanish, the co-founder and Chief Executive officer of TolMol.com said: "This phone is the perfect device for people desiring anytime anywhere access to Holy Qur'an – at a price they can afford".

The features of the phone include MMS GPRS WAP FM Radio Image Viewer video player voice recorder/player 2 inch colour TFT LCD screen and camera.

Priced at Rs. 5499, the phone is said to have interface in Arabic, English, Persian, Portuguese, Russian and Turkish and it will be available in the market by early December. ●

### Doha meet stresses interfaith dialogue

Making use of modern information and social media in promoting dialogue between the followers of different religious faiths and cultures was the theme of an international interfaith dialogue which was concluded in Doha recently.

Speakers emphasized the importance of dialogue saying it was essential to reinforce world peace and stability. Dialogue between people of different faiths is not just an imaginary idea. It's quite practical and can promote peaceful coexistence of people with dignity, justice, peace and security. The Doha conference, now in its eight year, has generated tremendous interest among religious leaders all over the world. The conference has given them an opportunity to know the prominent religious leaders all over the world and bring them together in a common platform.

### Tops Middle East of ultra rich

Saudi Arabia hosts the largest market of ultra high net worth individuals (UNHW) in the Middle East, representing 1, 225 people holding billion, wealth of USD227 billion, according to a global wealth intelligence reports released recently. The report from Wealth X, the global intelligence, prospecting and wealth diligence company, offers an analysis of individuals with a net worth of at least USD30 million. The UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Israel are among the top five countries in the Middle East with the highest number of UNHW individuals. The Singapore firm estimates that there are 185,795 UNHW individuals globally, with a total net worth of USD25 trillion. ●

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