

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

vol. I No.2

January to March 1999

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of East

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## CONTENTS

1. Editor's Note	5
2. Saum	9
S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi	
3. Animal's Rights in Islam	23
Ashraf Ali Thanvi	
4. Significance of Zakat	33
M. Asghar Qureshi	
5. The Hajj Pilgrimage	41
Q.M. Saeed	
6. The Unparalleled Beauty of Qur'aan	49
S.K. Olade Jo	
7. Education in Islam	65
Syed Hussain Pasha	
8. A Study of Dynamics of Militancy in Islamic World	73
Riyaz Hassan	
9. Divine Revelation and the Status of Qur'an	79
John Sahadat	

The Holy Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty three years. The revelation of each portion is circumstantial. They are always revealed according to the requirement of the situation.

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New York 11598
- Annual Subscription Rs. 100 (per copy Rs. 30) in India  
\$ 25 (U.S.A., U.K., Asia, Africa and  
European countries)

Cheques and Drafts may be marked to:  
"The Secretary, Majlise Sahafat wa Nashriat"  
and sent to Nadwatul Ulema, P.O. Box 93, Tagore Marg, Lucknow 226 007 U.P.  
India

Out station cheques should include Rs. 15.00 service charges

## Editor's note

The January- March 1999 issue of the Fragrance is in your hand. By the grace of God this venture has been well received in the circles where it could make its way. Our basic aim is to counter the anti-Islam hysteria built by the western dominated media and also the Indian right wing influenced press that generates erroneous ideas about Islam. Indeed our mission is to combat the onslaught on Islam and project the correct picture of the religion. The dissemination of specious information and propagation of fallacious stories about Muslima and Islam are to be nip in the bud which is why we decided to start this magazine in English. However, the task is gigantic and very challenging and needs patience and persistence. The active cooperation of intellectuals, scholars, academicians, literati and writers is needed to run this magazine. Our efforts to motivate them to write for us have so far drawn blank but we have not lost hope and expect a good response from them.

The importance of having an English magazine or medium to put forward the Muslim perspective was realised particularly when intricate matters concerning Islam crop up and persons not well-versed with the relevant issues venture to express their views. For instance the recent controversy over compulsory recitation of 'Vandanas' in educational institutions. The English/Hindi papers as well as the electronic media highlighted only a particular view and those who opposed the official promotion of the Vandana were either ignored or distorted version of their arguments was projected so as to trivialise the issue and brand them anti-national. When the situation reached a saturation point the Muslim clergy considered it desirable to issue clear and firm directives and give proper advice to the community. The most revered Islamic scholar of the day, Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi who keeps himself aloof from controversial and political issues, was ap-

proached by some mediemen to seek his opinion on the subject. He graciously explained the reasons for not accepting this uncalled for directive of the government. Since Vande Matram and Saraswati Vandana contradict the basic tenets of Islam Muslim were asked not to recite them. The Maulana without undermining the importance of the motherland and glory of the nation, was well within his domain to warn the community not to commit 'shirk' (associating someone with Allah) He did not issue any 'Fatwa' (religious decree) because that was neither sought nor needed. He simply advised that parents should withdraw their wards from those institutions where they are forced to recite these hymns and bow before any deity. The Maulana's advice did not undermine the faith of non-Muslims nor did it hurt their feelings. But an intolerant group was so enraged by the Maulana's dictat that they staged demonstrations and made disperaging remarks against him.

Saraswati- according to Hindu mythology is the goddess of learning. Her pictures/statues may be a source of inspiration to those who believe in idol worship; but a Muslim is forbidden to bow before anyone except Allah. What to say of Muslims even staunch Hindu reformers and Vedic scholars like Swami Dayanand were of the firm view that unless the evil practice of idol worship was given up there was no hope for Hindu society.

Vande Matram, a Sanskrit-Bengali mixed poem composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterji in 1875, begins with the salutation to mother, then the poet evocates the bounteous, lovely land that generously nurtures its children. The bounty and physical richness turn into an image of a motherland with latent strength derived from the image of Durga, the demon slaying goddess, Bankim Chandra Chatterji ascribes to the motherland the status of goddess, within the Hindu pantheon; "it is your image that we worship in all temples."

In 1882 Bankim Chandra Chatterji wrote his famous novel 'Anand Math' and introduced Vande Matram in it. Here a mob shouting verses from the poem begins to articu-

late an agenda that goes beyond simple loot-'Unless we throw these bastards (that is the Muslims) out, Hindus will be ruined.'...'When shall we raise the mosques down to the ground and erect Radhamadhaws temples in their place?' Today Muslim boys are urged to recite this poem every morning. This not only amounts to 'shirk' but also is a plea for their own destruction.

It is unfortunate that in a plural society like ours where we swear by secularism day in and day out, such contentious issues get priority over efforts to build a peaceful society. The need of the hour is to provide education to our children eradicate illitracy and benightment. A sense of brotherhood which may lead to strengthening of the national unity is to be inculcated among them rather than get involved in such emotive issues.

S.A.

Opinions expressed in the articles appearing in this magazine are those of the writers and are not necessarily of the Institution.

---Editor

## **ALI MIAN IS 'ISLAMIC PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR'**

Renowned Islamic scholar and rector of Darul Uloom Ndwat-ul Ulama, Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, has been conferred the prestigious 'Islamic Personality of the year' award. The award, which carries a cash prize of 1 million dirhams (approximately Rs.1 crore), was presented by the Crown Prince of Dubai, General Sheikh Mohammad Bin-Rashid Al-Maktoum, at a glittering ceremony held at the World Trade Centre in Dubai on Thursday. This is the first time someone from Asia has been chosen for the award.

A 370-page book sketching the life of the Maulana and his contributions towards Islam was also distributed on the occasion. The book features articles penned by 20 eminent scholars of the United Arab Emirates. Ali Mian was also conferred the Shah Faisal Award, instituted by Saudi Arabia, in 1980.

The Maulana was flown to Dubai from the Amausi airport in a private plane sent by the Crown Prince on Wednesday. Prince Maktoum is also the Defence Minister of the U.A.E. Ali Mian was accompanied by the U.A.E. Minister of Education and the personal secretary to the Crown Prince, who had come here to take the Maulana to the U.A.E.

Besides a doctor and an attendant, the plane also carried the crew of a U.A.E. based news agency which had come to the city to cover the event.

Hindustan Times, Jan. 9, 1999



# SAUM

## The Fourth Pillar of Islam

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Out of many sublime considerations and for the realisation of the lofty aims, spiritual as well as temporal, which are beyond human comprehension, as also for the emancipation of the soul from the domination of fleshly appetites and the fulfilment of the Divine mission of Vicegerency, for which the qualities of moderation, thmperateness and fortitude are indispensable, Allah has enjoined foasting upon Muslims. But it was done after Migration when the clouds of gloom had lifted and the period of poverty and privation ended and the Muslims were leading a life of peace and contentment probably, because, if the command of fasting had been sent down during the days of distress, it could be interpreted as an act of desperation and people would have thought that it was related to conditions of oppression and despondency and was, therefore, binding only on the poor and the distressed, while the privileged and well-to-do members of the community were excluded from its application.

Besides, the verse enjoining fasting upon Muslims was revealed when they had attained firmness and maturity of faith and Salat had become an integral part of their being and the had arrived at a stage when it was easy for them to submit willingly to what they were commanded to by Allah and His Apostle. To quote from Allama Ib-i-Qaiyyim:

"Since to liberate man from the clutches of sensuality is a most difficult task and it takes a lot of time, the command of the obligatoriness of fasting was not revealed till such time after Migration as it had become clear that the creed of Monotheism and the duty of Salat had sunk deep into their consciousness and they had become thoroughly oriented to the injunctions of the Qur'an. The command of fasting, was, thus, revealed in the second year of Migration and the Noble Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam) kept the fasts of Ramadhan for nine years before he departed from the world."

The Qur'anic verses containing the command of fasting are as follows:

*O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may ward off evil: Fast a certain number of days; and for him who is sick among you, or on a journey, the same number of other days; and for those who can do it (with hardship) (2) is a ransom; the feeding of a man in need---But who doeth good willingly; it is better for him; and the ye fast is better for you if ye did but know. The month of Ramadhan, in which was revealed the Qur'an a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present (i.e.. alive in the month of Ramadhan), let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick, or on a journey, let him fast the same number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He Desireth not hardship for you; and He desireth that ye should complete the prescribed period; and that ye should glorify Allah for having guided you: and perchance ye shall be grateful. (Q:183-185)*

The above verses, through which fasting was enjoined for the first time, do not belong to the category of prosaic and unimaginative laws that are enacted on the strength of the social and political relationship between the State and the individual. These verses appeal immediately to one's faith, conscience and intellect and show a due regard to all the various aspect of the human personality. They not only enforce a commandment, but also prepare the ground for its willing acceptance and, in all respects, bear an eloquent testimony to the excellence of the Qur'anic method of teaching, exhortation and legislation.

*Falsehood can not approach it (the Qur'an) from before it or behind it. It is a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise. (Q:x1i:42)*

*To begin with, Allah addresses those to whom fasting is prescribed in these words: O ye who believe! The believers are, thus, made ready beforehand for the fulfilment of the command that is going to be sent down, how-*

*ever hard it may be, for it is a primary requirement of faith that, once a person has affirmed his belief in Allah as the Lord and Creator, the Worshipped One and the Arbiter of what is lawful and what is forbidden, and surrendered the control and management of his affairs to Him, he should, faithfully and without reluctance, submit to all the laws and regulation Allah may be pleased to proclaim.*

*The saying of (all true) believers when they appeal unto Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is only that they say: We hear and We obey. And such are the successful. (Q:xxiv:51)*

*And it becometh not a believing man and a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair for them, that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair. (Q:xxxiii:36)*

*O ye who believe! Obey Allah and the Messenger when he (the Messenger) calleth you to that which quickeneth you. (Q:viii:24)*

The Qur'aan, then, declares that fasting is enjoined upon Muslims and adds that it is not unique event in the history of religions. It was the same with the adherents of revealed faiths and possessors of the Divine Law before them. In this way, it lessens the degree of depression, which is usually caused by the thought of isolation. If a person knows that, what he is called upon to do, is nothing new and so many people and communities have done it already, he takes heart from it and the task begins to look easier.

The believers, again are assured that the purpose of fasting is not to put them to unnecessary hardship, but it is for their own betterment and purification. It is a moral discipline which makes a man perfect. After going through it he begins to rule over his evil desires instead of being ruled by them. If a believer can forgo clean and legitimate things, including fresh water and wholesome food, at the behest of Allah, will he not do his best to keep away from what is impure and forbidden? This is precisely what the verse, that ye may ward off evil signifies.

Later, the believers are told not to consider the period

of one month excessive, since it is only a matter of a limited number of days which follow one another in regular order and come to an end quickly. Moreover, what relation does a month (in which testing is done only during the day) bear to the days and nights of a whole year that are spent in ease and enjoyment? The old, the sick, the travellers and other persons specially circumstanced are further exempted from fasting.

And, finally, while dwelling upon the significance of the month, in which fasting is prescribed, it is emphasised that it is the month in which the Glorious Qur'an was revealed and a new message of faith and hope was vouchsafed to mankind, What could be more fitting and beneficial for a Muslim than that he quickened himself with new life through fasting and prayers during the blessed month of Ramadhan?

This is brief in the Islamic fast or spiritual fare, which is endued with every kind of virtue and free from any hardship or severity that may be beyond the endurance of man.

*Allah desireth for your ease: He desireth not hardship for you; and He desireth that ye should complete the prescribed period (of fasting), and that ye should glorify Allah for having guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (Q:ii, 185)*

### **Characteristics**

The plan of fasting presented by Islam is perfect both as regards objectives and regulation. It holds the greatest assurance of goodness and, in it, the glory and excellence of Divine Wisdom is also supremely manifest. As the Qur'an says:

*Should He not know what He created? And He is the Subtle, the Aware, (Qlxvii:14).*

Allah has chosen the month of Ramadhan (in which the Glorious Qur'aan was revealed) for fasting. In it, a Muslim is enjoined to go without food and drink during the day but not at night. This method of fasting was prevalent among the Arabs of those days and in the Islamic Shariah,

too, it is the established rule and confirmed practice.

Writes Shah Waliullah: (3) "In fasting the day extends from sunrise to sunset because it was in this way that days were measured in Arabia and the fast of ' Ashura was kept during the same hours. The month begins with the appearance of the new moon for the Arab calendar is not based on the solar months."

### **Fasting & the Month of Ramadhan**

Allah has prescribed fasting in the month of Ramadhan and declared the two to be inseparable. The joining together of these two blessings is an act of great significance, primarily because it was in this month that the Qur'aan was revealed and the joyful tidings of a new dawn were given to the ailing humanity. It was, therefore, appropriate that just as the rising of the sun was linked with the commencement of the fast, the month of Ramadhan, too, in which the whole of mankind emerged from a long spell of darkness, should be marked out for fasting, more so when it was also superior to all other months in effulgence and propitiousness and deserved that its days should be adorned with fasting and nights with prayers. (4)

A most intimate association exists between fasting and the Qur'aan. The Noble Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) used to pay the greatest attention to the recitation of the Qur'aan in Ramadhan. It is related by Ibn-i-Abbas that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam) was the most generous of all men but in the month of Ramadhan, when the Archangel Gabriel used to come to him, his generosity knew no bounds. In Ramadhan, Gabriel came to him, every night and joined in the recitation of the Qur'aan. During those days, the Prophet appeared to be faster than the wind in acts of charity and benevolence. (5)

Shaikh Mujaddid Alf-Thani (6) says in one of his letters that "this month bears a special relationship with the Qur'aan and, hence, it was revealed. It is endowed with every kind of virtue and blessedness. The blessings, which fall to the lot of a man in a whole year are as insignificant, when compared to the blessings of Ramadhan as a drop of water

is before an ocean. The attainment of inner peace and tranquility in this months suffices for the entire year, while mental disquiet and unease during it takes the whole of the year in its grasp. Blessed, indeed, are they from whom this auspicious month departs in good pleasure, while those, who deprive themselves of goodness and filicity by displeasing it, are, for sure, doomed and accursed." (7)

The great Mujaddid, in another letter, writes: "If a person if fortunate enough to perform a good deed in the month of Ramadhan, the blessedness of it will not depart from him the whole year and if this monts is spent in distress and frustration, the danger is that the whole of the year will pass for him in the same way." (8)

#### Season of Prayers, Festival of Virtue

All these beneficial qualities have combined to make Ramadhan a season of prayer and good deeds in which all Muslims, to whatever group, class, race or country they belong, join and fraternize with each other. The month of fasting comes to every town and village at the same time and sheds its lustre on the cottage and the castle alike, It makes no distinction and allows for no discrimination. There is, therefore no reason for anyone to be proud or arrogant about it, nor any room for a dispute of controversy to arise over the selection of the days of fasting Its glory and radiance is spread all over the Muslim world anyone to see.

When the month of Ramadhan comes, it appears that a huge canopy of effulgence and serenity has been stretched over the lands of Islam. Even the indolent and the faint-hearted feel themselves compelled to fast for fear of being isolated from the general body of Muslim, and if for some reason they do not keep fast they refrain from eating in public, excepting, of course, the handful of perverts and renegades for whom there is no feeling of shame in the defiance or violation of a Divine injunction, and the sick and the travellers, who are exempted from fasting by the Shariah. It is a mass movement, a collective event, which is thoroughly compulsive in nature. The spiritual respons it evokes

among the Muslims, is so spontaneous that fasting becomes easy for them and their hearts melt and they are drawn inwardly to various acts of prayer, aboration, compassion and kindness.

Commenting on the Tradition that "when the month of Ramadhan comes the gates of Heaven are throw open," Shah Waliullah observes:

"Since fasting is in the nature of a popular event, it is protected against encroachment by ritualism. For the community, which observes in faithfully, the Devil is put behind the bars, the gates of the heaven are thrown open and the gates of the Hell are shut.

".....The accord and convergence of Muslims on a particular thing, at a particular time, with all the people seeing one another, lends encouragement to them and makes fasting easy.

".....Likewise this concord and unity of purpose is the cause of the descent of celestial blessings on both the high and the low and it is quite likely that when the rays of Divine Splendour fall on his venerable slaves they spread also to those, that are inferior to them (in religion) and their prayers and invocation cover such of His servants as well, who are lagging behind."9

### **Virtue**

Life is another name for the struggle between the urges of the self and the dictates of the mind. But in this struggle it is not the carnal desires that always triumph as some people imagine. Such a notion does little credit to those, who expound it for it betrays a melacholic mistrus of human nature and a cynical denial of truth.

What lends dynamism to life and keeps the world humming with activity is the incentive of profit. It is this inducement, which awakens the farmer in the biting cold of a wintry morning and sends him off to the field before the day has dawned or persuades the businessman to geve up the comfort of home for the sake of trade or inspires the soldier to lay down his life for the glory of the motherland. The whole mechanism of life and active effort revolves around it. The

assurance of gain or the expectation of it in the future, is the falling point in the struggle for existence.

There is, however, another assurance or expectation, the impelling force of which is much greater. It is of the virtues and benefits, the glad tidings were brought by the Divine Apostles and are contained in the sacred Scriptures. We can describe it as the incentive of the Divine good pleasure and requital of one's deeds in both the worlds.

Everyone knows that fasting is beneficial for health and, from the medical point of view, it is advisable that we fasted occasionally. But if a survey was undertaken of those, who fasted solely for reasons of physical well-being, even during the cold weather, when it is easier to abstain from food, wholly or partly, their number would not be much, although such a fast is far less difficult than what is prescribed in Islam.

On the contrary, if a count is made of the people, who observe fasting as a religious obligation and in fulfilment of the covenant of the Lord, it will run into millions in spite of the ascendancy of materialism and the decline of moral and religious values in the modern world. These are the people, who brave the intense heat of the summer and the sharp pangs of hunger and thirst and observe fasting and, also devote their nights to prayer, simply in response to the spiritual urge and in the hope of the reward of the Hereafter. This is so because in the sight of men of faith spiritual benefits and advantages (the knowledge of which has come down to us through the sacred Apostles) are far more valuable than the medical or economic gains the physicians or economists advocate.

It is related that the Prophet once said, ' There is a fixed principle for rewarding all the good deeds of men, and every good deed will be rewarded according to it. But the fast is an exception. The standing command of the Lord is that since a man forgoes food and drink and subdues his passions solely for His sake, He will recompense him directly for it. :''<sup>10</sup>

One more Tradition of the prophet reads: "There are



two moments of special joy for a person who fasts: one is when he breaks the fast, and this he experiences in his earthly existence, and the other will come in the Hereafter when he be presented before the Lord. "11

To take two other Traditions: "the bad odour emanating from the mouth of a person who is fasting (which is generally produced due to an empty stomach), is more pleasant in the judgement of Allah than the sweet smell of musk. "12 and: "There is a gate of Paradise which is known as al-Rayyan. Only those who fast will be permitted to enter through it. One who will enter through it shall never be thirsty. "13

### Safeguarding the Spirit of Fasting

Owing to the institutional nature of fasting and its widespread popularity, it was quite possible that it degenerated into a lifeless ritual with people taking to fasting out of habit or for fear of social censure. It was not inconceivable that the Muslim lost sight of its intrinsic significance and began to fast only because of material benefits or medical advantages. The Noble prophet had foreseen this possibility and to safeguard against it, he had made it known, at the very first step, that only that fast was acceptable to Allah, which was observed in the spirit of faith and trust in Divine recompence. Thus, a Tradition of his says, "He who fasted with Iman (faith) and Intisab (trust in Divine Recompence) all his previous sins will be forgiven."14

For those who are not cognizant of the weaknesses of the human nature, it may be hard to appreciate the relevance of this stipulation. They may argue that since it was only the Muslim, who observed fasting and they did it wholly for propitiating Allah and earning His rewards, the requirement of faith and trust was unnecessary. But if one cared to enquire into the peculiar make-up of human personality and the working of social and moral incentives, one was bound to submit to the wisdom of the far reaching provision and to bow down before the depth and profundity of knowledge which has its roots not in human preception but Divine revelation:

Nor doth he speak of his own desire. It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired, (Q:Liii:34) -

In a Tradition of the Noble Prophet, the state of Iman and Intisab has been defined as one in which a person performs good and virtuous deeds in the hope of Divine recompense and with faith in the promise of Divine good pleasure and forgiveness.

It is related by Abdullah bin Amr bin al A'as that the Prophet once said, "There are forty deeds among which the best is the fig of a goat. If any of these is performed in the hope of Divine recompense and with faith in the reward promised for it, Allah will allow such a person to enter Paradise, "15

The Islamic Shariah does not rest content with prescribing the outward form and ceremony of fasting but also lays stress on its inner content and significance. It prohibits not only food and drink and sexual gratification during a fast, but everything that is detrimental to its basic purpose and objective. It has encompassed fasting, on all sides, with piety, reverence and cleanliness, The Prophet has said, " When any one of you keeps fast he should not utter a filthy or indecent word or engage in a noisy scene, and were anyone to quarrel with him and call him names, he should simply say, "I am keeping fast," 16 On another occasion, he said, "Allah has no need for him to go without food and drink who can not shun evil and falsehood even during a fast, "17

A fast, which is devoid of the spirit of piety and purity is like a body without a soul. The prophet, again is reported to have said, " Many are there among you who fast and yet gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst, and many are there who pray (throughout the night) and yet gain nothing from it except wakefulness, "18

It is related by Abu Haraira that the Noble Prophet once said, "Fasting is a shield until it is ripped, "19

Fasting in Islam does not merely denote certain negative acts like the shunning of food and drink and abstaining from falsehood and backbiting and from wrangling

and uttering a foul or profane word, but it also includes a number of positive deeds, such as, prayer, Zikr, compassion and charity. The prophet has said, "If in it (i.e., the month of Ramadhan) a person will seek the propitiation of Allah by doing anything, it will be treated as equal (in recompense) to the fulfilment of an obligatory duty in the other days of the year, and if he will fulfil an obligatory duty in it, it will be treated as equal (in recompense) to the fulfilment of seventy obligatory duties in the other days of the year, It is the month of patient perseverance and the reward for patient perseverance is Paradise, and it is month of compassion,"(20)

It is related by Zaid bin Khalid al-Johani that the Prophet once remarked, "He who will invite a person, who is fasting to break the fast with him, will get the same rewards as the one who was fasting and there will be no reduction in the reward of the latter either,"(21)

Allah has also blessed the Muslim Ummah with the prudence and keenness to preserve the tradition of Traweeh, 22 The celebration of the prayer-service of Traweeh dates back from the time of the Noble Prophet, but he had abandoned it after offering it for three days, lest it was made compulsory for Muslims and became a burden for them. It is related by Ibn Shahab that he had heard it from Urwah who, in his turn, had heard it from Ayesha, that, "Once the Prophet went out in the night (after the Isha prayers) and offered Salat in the mosque and some other persons also joined him in it."

When the morning came people began to talk about it and a crowd collected. On the next day, when he offered the prayer, they all offered it with him and it was again talked about on the following morning. On the third night the number of the devotees was even greater. The Prophet came out and offered up the prayer with them, when the fourth night, came, the rush was so great that the whole of the mosque was filled until the Prophet came for the Fajr prayers. After he had completed it, he turned towards the people and said, I was not unaware of your presence (in the mosque last night), but I feared that the service

(Traweeh) might be made obligatory and then you might get tired of it. Then came the death of the Prophet and the position remained the same. "(23)

After the passing away of the Prophet, his Companions conducted themselves similarly and so enthusiastically did the Muslim everywhere keep up the tradition of Traweeh that it came to be regarded as a sign and symbol of Ahl-i-Sunnah (24) and a mark of devoutness. In addition, the institution of Traweeh has proved extremely helpful in the learning of the whole of the Qur'aan by heart. More and more people were drawn to it, and the Qur'aan thus came to be preserved in many a breast. 25

Another priceless advantage is that a large section of the community is thus enabled to devote itself to nightly worship in the blessed month of Ramadhan, Ramadhan is a festival of worship, a season of Tilawat 26 and a spring time fervour or the devout. The religious fervour of the Muslim Ummah, its genuine, solid and unshakeable attachment to faith and enthusiasm for worship acquires a new warmth and sublimity in it. 27 During this hallowed month, the urge for excelling others in acts of worship, piety, warmth, charity, doing good deeds and repentance is at the peak among the Muslims.

*(From the author's book "Three Pillars of Islam.")*

References:

1. Zaad-al-Maad, Vol. 1, p.152
  2. The word, Taqah, Meaning Strength' ) or Qudrah, meaning power) is used in many senses in the Arabic language. In the first grade, it is used to convey the meaning of Istitaat (Capacity), and, in the last grade, of Itaqat (i.e. to endure with difficulty) In the later sense, it will be used to convey the impression that such and such a task was so difficult that it broke one's back or left him thoroughly exhausted. Thus if person were to say that he could lift a heavy stone or observe fasting continuously or offer Salat throughout the night he will use the word Utiq for it. Now, the phrase Alal-lazina Utiqoonahu, occurring in above verse, denotes those who can fast with serious difficulty or hardship, i.e. such aged men, women or sick person who can venture to fast only at the risk of their life or health.
- Ibn Abbas had drawn the same inference. It is related from him in Bukhari, Abu Daud and Sehah that the verse, is intended for very old men and women, it is stated in Bukhari, in relation to Ibn Abbas, that he recited the verse, Alal-azina Utiqoonahu and said that it denoted such people, who could fast only with severe hardship and applied to men and women, who were very old and feeble. In the light of this observation, it is not at all necessary to treat the verse as void, as many people do, or to seek an ingenious interpretation of it. The same view has also been expressed by Ali Abu Huraira and many other Companions.

The Command of Kutiba Alai-kumus Siyamu(Fasting is prescribed to you) is therefore addressed to three kinds of people. Firstly, those who are healthy and not on a journey: for them fasting is compulsory: secondly, those who are sick or on a journey: for them it is permissible not to keep fast, but they must make amends for it by fasting at some other time, for as many days as they had omitted: and, thirdly, those who are too old and feeble (or afflicted with an incurable disease) to bear the hardship of fasting, but they will have to feed a poor and needy Muslim in lieu of every fasting day. The same is the case with a woman in the family way or one who is nursing a baby.

For a more detailed discussion the readers are referred to the original Arabic Edition of the book or its urdu translation.

3. Hujjat, vol II, p37.

4. Shah Waliullah remarks that when a month was, after all, to be set aside for fasting, no other month could make a better choice than Ramadhan in which the Qur'aan was revealed and the foundation of the Muslim Ummah were made secure, and the possibility of the occurrence Of the Night of Power is also the greatest in it (Hujjat, Vol. II, p37).

5. Bukhar and Muslim

6. Shaikh Ahmed Farooqi of Sarhind. India(971-1034A.H.)

7. Muktubat Imam-i-Rabbanī. Vol I, p8.

8. Ibid., p4.

9. Hujjat, Vol II, p37.

10. Sihah-i-Sitta.

11. Ibid.

12. Sheikhaīn.

13. Sheikhaīn.

14. Ibid.

15. Bukhari.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. In Nissi it is added the Prophet was, thereupon, asked, "With falsehood and backbiting," he replied.

20. Baihaqi.

21. Tirmidhi.

22. Extra prayers offered in the night during the fast of Ramadhan.

23. Bukhair.

24. Followers of the traditional as well as the written law of Islam.

25. In this respect there is a special favour of the Lord on some countries though they are far removed from the cradle of Islam. In India and Pakistan, for instance, there is witnessed a unique enthusiasm for Traweeh and the completion of one recitation of the Qur'aan, from the beginning to the end, in Ramadhan. Here, the arrangement for Traweeh is made even in smaller mosques of various localities, where atleast one recitation of the whole of the Qur'aan is completed, while in the bigger ones two or three (or even more) recitations are done. The preservation of this tradition has definitely led to a marked increase in the number of Huffaz(plural of Hafiz, meaning one who has learnt the whole of the Qur'aan by heart) With many people it has become a regular practice to keep up the recitation of the Qur'aan from memory throughout the year so that they can lead the Traweeh prayer-service correctly in Ramadhan and Huffaz of such a high standard have been produced that they are the marvel of the world.

26. Meaning the recitation of the Qur'aan.

27. The eagerness to devote as much time as possible to prayer, Zikr and Tilawat and to outdo others in virtue and righteousness during the month of Ramadhan has been a standing tradition among the Muslims, and the blessed servants of Allah have attained unbelievable degrees of excellence in it. So marvelous are their achieve-

ments that they can be explained only as the fruits of the powerful spirituality and devotion of men of faith. We, ourselves, have been spiritual mentors and theological scholars are used to complete the recitation of the whole of the Qur'aan every day in the month of Ramadhan and spend almost the whole of other nights in prayer and mediation. Their meals were so frugal that one wondered how could they exert themselves to such lengths. They regarded every moment of the blessed month to be precious and did not want to waste it. On seeing them, one could obtain an idea of the importance of Ramadhan and of the worth and significance of life, and it became apparent that the accounts of the superhuman deeds of devoutness, piety and lofty spirituality performed by the forerunners and pious precursors, one reads about in history books, were not at all false or exaggerated.

### AN INVOCATION

When the people of Islam let the thread of  
Unity go from their hands,  
They fall into a hundred mazes.  
We are dispersed like stars in the world;  
Though of the same family, we are  
Strange to one another.  
Bind again these scattered leaves,  
Revive the law of love!  
Take us back to serve Thee as of old,  
Commit Thy cause to them that love Thee!  
We are travellers: Give us resignation as our goal!  
Give us the strong faith of Ibrahim!  
Make us know the meaning of "there is no god",  
Make us acquainted with the mystery of "except Allah"!

-Allama Iqbal (Secrets of the self)

# ANIMALS' RIGHTS IN ISLAM

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi

Abu Hurairah reports that the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: when you pass through pasture during your journey, let the camels have their due (i.e. let the graze for a short while and when you travel during famine and do not find any pasture, accomplish your journey fast.(Muslim).

The Muslims are advised not to overstay so that a camel may get fodder on reaching an inn as these provisions are available at inns. During famine one should try to reach his destination at the earliest. They are instructed not to prolong journey or to subject the camels to extra burden which might enervate them.

The above Hadith contains directives about using animal for transport properly. What is said about the camels is equally valid for horses of carriage. All such animals deserve a break, which may refresh them. As soon as they appear tired and exhausted, they should be allowed to take some rest. It would be better, if an extra animal is used for a long journey. One should not try to stop on his way, which might delay reaching the destination, especially if there is no provision for fodder. Animals of transport should be used only for the real need and on reaching home, one should attend to the animal first by providing for its fodder, for people are apt to forget about their animals.

According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Do not use your animals of transport as pulpit. One should not keep sitting on them, while one meets a friend on the way and gets engaged in a long conversation. Allah has put these animals at your service so that you may reach a place without exerting yourself physically.(Abu Dawood)

Since riding an animal without a proper need-amounts to putting animals to extra inconvenience, the above practice is disapproved. One should better dismount the animals and carry on conversation while standing on the ground. Some people are apt to keep mounting the animal,

while engaged in conversation for long. This is obviously unnecessary. For some people it was a matter of pride, hence it is an all the more reprehensible act.

Anas says that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: When we reached our destination, we did not perform prayers, unless we had relieved our camels.

It points to the utmost concern for animals on the part of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. They would not burden the animals unnecessarily even for a short time.

Shaddad bin Aws says that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saying Allah made it binding to treat everyone kindly and gently. Even while executing a convict, it should be done properly. Likewise, while slaughtering animals, the person should use a sharp knife and provide every possible relief to the animal. (Muslim)

One should not put animals to uncalled- for inconvenience. Even harmful animals or insects should not be killed callously. Nor should a blunt knife be used for slaughtering. Nor should the animal be denied food or water before slaughtering. And animal should not be slaughtered in the presence of another animal. Allah has allowed slaughtering animals in the larger interests of mankind. One should not mistake it for an inhuman act. In the same vein, capital punishment for a convict of certain categories has been prescribed in that it ensures the wellbeing of human society at large. Both slaughtering and capital punishment are to be taken in the same spirit.

It is recorded on the authority of Ibn Umar that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saying : Do not tie up an animal or a fellow human being for killing.(Bukhari and Muslim)

The above Hadith deals with the practice of using animals as a target for flinging arrows. This prohibition applies in the case of using a scapegoat for the big game or using worms as a bait for fishing. Some unscrupulous persons kill live insects for fun which is act of sheer injustice, Islam forbids it in very strong terms.



Jabir reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade hitting the animals on the face. (Muslim)

Jabir reports that once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) came across a donkey with a scar on its face. Seeing it, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) exclaimed: Cursed be the person who has disfigured it. (Muslim)

According to Abdullah ibn Umar, The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: One who kills a bird or an animal without a just cause, Allah would take him to account. He was asked to clarify it further. In reply he said: A bird or animal should be killed for food and its head should not be thrown away. (Ahmad and Nasai)

This Hadith emphasizes that animals or birds should not be killed as a sport. Only such an animal, which is intended to be used for food, may be killed and properly slaughtered. As to the animals, whose flesh is unlawful, they may be killed if they are harmful and pose a threat. Thwarting such a danger is perfectly justified. However, to kill an animal or bird, which does not belong to any of the above two categories, is not allowed, for it spells a mere sport. After slaughtering an animal, its head should also be utilized, rather be thrown away.

On the authority of Abu Waqid al-Layth, it is narrated that when the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) migrated to Madina, it was the usual practice that the humps of the camels and fat of the sheep would be removed before slaughtering them, i.e. when they were alive. On observing it, the Prophet ruled: Anything removed from an alive animal is forbidden and is not to be consumed. (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood)

Obviously, the Prophet (peace be on him) condemned this practice, for it put the animal to unnecessary inconvenience and pain. These parts of the body could be obtained even after slaughtering them, hence their removal before slaughter amounted to hurting the animal. Most probably people used to do so in that these parts removed

from a live animal tasted better. However, Islam disallowed it in view of animal welfare.

Ibn Abbas reports that the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) forbade animal fight. (Trimizhi and Abu Dawood)

Cock fighting and all other forms of animal fights are covered by this prohibition. It is because of the pain that it inflicts, rather an unnecessary pain on animals. The same holds true for the drivers of horse carriages in that they should not make the horses run faster for no valid reason.

Zayd ibn Khalid narrates that the Prophet (peace be and blessings be upon him) Said: Do not speak ill of the cock, for it wakes you up at the morning. (Abu Dawood)

Once again, the prohibition is general in that it covers all such animals, which are not harmful, are not to be cursed or abused.

Ibn Abbas reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) disallowed the killing of the following: ants, honeybee and hoopes. (Abu Dawood and Darimi)

The above mentioned insects and birds are by way of illustration, What it signifies is that such birds, insects or animals, which are not to be used for food or which are harmless, should not be killed. It should serve as warning for trigger-happy hunters who shoot at any bird or animal which they come across. Islam strictly forbids unnecessary killing of animals.

It is reported by Abd Al-Rahman ibn Uthman that a physician sought the Prophet's permission to kill a frog for medicinal purpose. The Prophet, however, refused him the permission. In the Hadith recorded by Nasai. it is narrated on the authority for Ibn Umar that frogs should not be killed in that they glorify Allah.

It brings out the point that a thing, which is regarded as unlawful for consumption by Shariah, is not fit even as a medicine.

Anas reports that the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) felt at home in his house. He would tell his younger brother: 'O Abu Umair! Where is your bird? He had

a bird which was his pet and it had died. (Bukhari and Muslim)

One thus learns that it is perfectly alright to have a pet bird, provided it is treated well. This permission is subject to the general condition that animal and bird be not put to inconvenience and pain.

It is narrated by Amir Rami that once while they were in Prophet's company, someone came covered in a blanket and it appeared that he had been carrying something in his hand. He said: 'O Messenger of Allah! While passing through a bush, I heard the chirping of some baby birds. I picked them up and covered them up in my blanket. Then the mother bird appeared and she started hovering over my head. I opened the blanket revealing its babies. She was so much overwhelmed that she fell on her babies and I caught her, too, under my blanket. All of them are here.' The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) directed him to put them away. Then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Do you feel amazed at the love and affection of the mother bird? By the one who sent me with the truth! Allah is more kind and affectionate towards His servants than the mother bird is towards her babies. 'Then he asked the man to put both the babies and mother bird back in the bush and that man followed the Prophet's instruction.

According to a variant report of the same incident the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) rebuked the man for putting the mother bird into trouble and asked him to restore to her the babies. It is abundantly clear from the above Hadith that it is prohibited to trouble a bird or an animal. The Prophet's command for putting back the mother bird and its babies serve as a general ruling for all times. Only peculiar circumstance may be an exception to this rule. By the same token of logic, it is not desirable that birds be imprisoned in cage. In the opinion of some jurists, it is forbidden to encage pigeons and parrots while it is perfectly all right to rear poultry by ensuring them constant food supply. It is not desirable that a bird,

for example, nightingale, be put into a cage, though it may be properly fed. For it amounts to taking away its freedom. However, such birds which are free to fly away, such as pigeons, may be taken as pet animals. Again it is lawful to keep birds and animals in sanctuaries and zoological gardens which guarantee some freedom and constant food supply for birds and animals. It is worth clarifying that in the case of the bird taken as a pet by Anas's brother as noted in the above quoted Hadith, it was not confined into a cage.

According to Yaali ibn Marrah. Thaqafi, he came across some amazing incidents about the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Of these, one is as follows. Once while he was accompanying the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), they came across a camel doing some irrigation work. On seeing the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) the camel started crying and it towered its neck as a mark of respect and submission. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) drew closer to the camel and inquired about its owner. When he appeared, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) asked him to sell the camel to him. He, however requested the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) to take it as gift. Then he added that he did not have any source of income other than that camel. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: If this is the case. I would not take it. However, it has complained of overwork and little food, You should treat it better.

Many farmers and carriage drivers are prone to this weakness. The above Hadith is for their serious attention and consideration. It is prescribed by the jurists that animals, used for farming, should not be beaten up, for it is a serious thing to treat an animal unjustly and unkindly. An animal should not be put to work beyond its capacity. Nor should it be hit on its face and head. Imam Abu Hanifa forbids punishment to animals altogether, even though one may be its master. Should it harm, it should be punished only as much as is necessary.

Abu Hurairah reports that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) told that a woman of loose character attained

salvation. Once she came across a dog beside a well who was about to die of thirst. Taking pity on the dog, she removed her socks, tied them with her scarf and drew water from the well and offered it to the dog. For this act of kindness on her part, she was pardoned for her sins and achieved salvation. Someone asked whether there is reward for feeding or offering water to animals. In reply, the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) affirmed saying that there was reward for helping every animal. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Excluded from the category are harmful insects and animals, such as snakes. Yet even they should not be tortured. The above Hadith does not, however recommend that one may take dogs as pets. There is a world of difference between helping a dog and take it as a pet, Such animals that serve man deserve a good treatment.

On the authority of Ibn Uman and Abu Harairah it is recorded that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: A woman was punished by Allah on account of her pet cat. She confined it to her house which led to its death. She did not feed it. Nor did she release it so that it could get food on its own. (Bukhari and Muslim)

The above should serve a lesson for all Muslims, warning them against ill-treatments of animals. There is a similar report in the Hadith collection by the Nasai that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: I saw a woman in hell, who was punished for her ill treatment of a cat. I saw the cat scratching her all over, May Allah save us from hurting animals!

It is reported by Abi Jari that he requested the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) to give him some piece of advice. In response the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) told him: Do not speak ill of anyone. Abu Jari says that then onwards he never spoke ill of anyone, including animals. (Abu Dawood).

Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdullah narrates on the authority of his father that they once accompanied the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) on a journey. We came

across a mother bird and we caught the babies which greatly upset the mother bird. When the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) noticed that, he asked: 'Who has troubled it? Restore its babies,' He then observed a colony of ants which we had set on fire, He then said, "No one other than the Lord of fire is entitled to punish someone by fire. (Abu Dawood)

As is evident the above Hadith brings home the following points:

It is not lawful to catch babies of birds or animals for it upsets their parents. The prophet's command in the above Hadith to restore the babies indicates that it is not allowed to catch and possess the baby birds.

Also, it is not permitted to burn insects or animals alive, even though they be the harmful ones. The same holds true for leaving scar as a mark on animals.

Should there be a pressing need for getting rid of harmful insects or animals, burning them alive should be the last resort. Generally speaking, however, such a method is not approved.

Sahal ibn Hanzaliyh tells that once the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) came across an emaciated, starving camel. On noting this the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: "Fear Allah regarding these speechless animals: treat them suitably, feed them properly and relieve them before they are exhausted," (Abu Dawood).

Since animals cannot express their feelings, man should be all the more careful in treating them. They should be fed properly and given suitable rest, as is the message of the above Hadith.

Ibn Abbas relates that he was in the company of the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) on the day of Arafat during Hajj when the prophet heard someone beating and harshly treating camels. He turned to them and told: "O people! Restrain yourself. It is no good to make animals race unnecessarily." (Bukhari).

Abu Bashir Ansari reports that he was with the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) in a journey. The

Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) directed the person responsible for announcements to announce that no one should tie its camel in a way that hurt the animal. (Bukhari and Muslim).

Umm-e-Karz says that she heard the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) saying: Let the birds stay in their nests. This directive is aimed at putting an end to this practice of then unbelieving Arabs that they would make birds fly from their nests in order to draw an omen, while they were to embark upon something. If the birds flew in the right direction, they interpreted it as a sign of good luck, hence the above prohibition.

Anas says that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: if a Muslims plants saplings or sows the seeds for farming, and a fellows human being or bird or animal eats of its produce, it ammounts to charity on the owner's part. (Bukhari and Muslim).

That feeding others is an act of charity it is all the more important that one should look after one's pets.

Hazrat Al-Harith Al-Ash'ari (Razi Allahu anhu) reported that the Messenger of Allah said: I bid you to do five things: to remain attached to the main body (of Muslim), Listen to your ruler and obey him, and migrate (to the other land when the need arises), and fight in the way of Allah. And he who detaches himself from the main-body of the Muslims to the extent of one span of hand, he in fact throws off the yoke of Islam from his neck, and he who calls with the call of ignorance, he is one from the denizens of Hell beyond doubt, even if he observes fast and says prayers and considers himself as a Muslims.

(Musnad Ahmad).



# VANDE MATRAM AND MUSLIMS

S.M. Rabey Nadwi

God is known as One and the Greatest in Islam. Nobody is taken as a partner or co-equal in His attributes and actions. It has been clarified in Surah Ikhhlās in the glorious Qur'an:

*"Say: He is Allah, the One; Allah the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."*

*Surah Ikhhlās: 1-4*

It is the basis and foundation of Islam and it is compulsory for every Muslim to have firm faith in it and whoever does not believe in it cannot be a 'believer' according to Islam. The recitation of the Opening Chapter is obligatory for every Muslim. It is recited in every prayer (namaz) several times. Its translation runs as under:

*"Praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds: Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou has bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath. And who go not astray."*

*Opening Chapter: 1-7*

These two verses cover the basic religious tenets of Islam and it is not proper (jaiz) for a Muslim to worship anything else besides God or say such words or supplicate before anybody else in the manner which is exclusively meant for God. To do so is to go against the fundamental beliefs of Islam. In this content the recitation of 'Vande Matram' or 'Saraswati Vandana' by Muslims is against the tenets of Islam. These hymns may be sacred to non-Muslims it is their way of life and they have every right to recite them. But amongst the Muslims worship of anything or adoption of any way of life antithetical to Islam is prohibited. Forcing the Muslim to violate Islamic norms is also against the constitution of India which allows "freedom of worship" to every citizen and nobody can be forced

purifies those who own it. Just as a seed of paddy, if sown in a well cultivated field, grows a number of sprouts where from hundreds of paddy seeds come forth, so a coin given in charity will bring hundreds of coins in return, and it is as the Holy Qur'an says:

"The likeness of those who opened their wealth in Allahs way is as the likeness of a grain which groweth seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains, Allah giveth increase manifold to whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing. All-Knowing. "Further:

"Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterwards make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve, "(2:261,262)

The Qur'an also tells us that it is not a man's wealth or position but his God consciousness which determines his ultimate desting in the Hereafter. "Lo the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. "(49:13).

Islam does not absolve a wealthy Muslim from all other social responsibilities just by his act of paying two and a half percent Zakat on his wealth. It also stresses on voluntary contribution and donation called "Sadaqaat" to meet the multi farious requirements of the Islamic social organ-ism. The holy Qur'an has therefore, disapproved the practice of keeping more wealth than one needs. The holy Quran says:

"By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spent out of what you love" (3"92) and the holy Prophet said that the miser shall never enter Paradise, the worst of what is in man is miserliness and cowardice, and there are two main traits of character which do not unite in a believer---miserliness and bad conduct. Still another class of volunatry charity is Sadqah-i-Jaria or the perennial charity which brings continunig rewards even after the death of the charitable person, as long as the charitable object subsists.

The holy Qur'an has unreservedly codemned the hoarding and accumulation of wealh and with holding it from

social and religious purposes. "And for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah (for helping the deserving ones) announce for them a painful chastisement (Al-Taubah:33).

Zakat is compulsory on cash cattle and crop etc. The regulation differ for each category for cash, the minimum rate is two and a one-half percent (2/1/2%). Zakat should be given only on the net balance after all lawful expenses have been met at the end of the year. because the payment of Zakat is a duty to Allah. no one should ever think of it as a favour done to the person who receives it. In fact it is his right to receive it and the obligation of the giver is to give it. Like any other act of worship in Islam, in giving Zakat it is necessary that the intention of the giver and receiver be pure and honest.

The moral and material benefits of Zakat, as explained above are obvious. Giving Zakat purifies the heart of the giver from selfishness and greed for wealth and develops in him sympathy for the poor and the needy. And receiving Zakat purifies the heart of the recipient from envy and hatred of the rich and prosperous, and fosters in him a sense of goodwill toward his brother Muslim.

After the death of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him), a number of wealthy new converts refused to pay Zakat, As the political conditions had become highly disturbed and dangerous after the holy Prophet's demise some of the companions of the Prophet were inclined to allow this concession, though temporarily as a matter of expediency. The first Caliph, Abu Bakr (R.A.) did not agree with them and took an oath that he would fight against those who made a distinction between Salat and Zakat and would make war on them if they refused to pay even the string of a camel due in Zakat.

Beggary, poverty and unemployment are the three major causes of many anti-social activities including theft, adultery and murder. These social evils can at least be minimised within a short time if Zakat is collected by the state compulsorily and utilised honestly on the welfare and proper

## UNITY OF MANKIND

All mankind has been created as one nation and differences between them are according to divine will and pattern.

*Mankind was but one nation  
But differed (later). Had it not  
Been for a word  
That went forth before  
Fore thy Lord, Their difference  
Would have been sittled  
Between them.*

(Q:10:19)

*Mankind was but one nation.  
And Allah sent Messengers  
With glad tidings and warnings,  
And with them He sent  
The Book in truth,  
To judge between people  
In matters wherein  
They differed.*

(Q:2:213)

### And again

*O mankind! We created  
You from a single (pair)  
Of a male and female.  
And made you into  
Nations and tribes, that  
Ye may know each other.  
(Not that ye may despise  
Each other). Verity  
The most honoured of you  
In the sight of Allah  
Is (he who is) the most  
Righteous of you.  
And Allah has full knowledge  
And is well acquainted  
(With all things).*

(Q: 49:13)

# SIGNIFICANCE OF ZAKAT

Muhammad Asghar Qureshi

One of the fundamental pillars upon which rests the majestic edifice of Islam is Zakat or the obligatory poor-due which is that part of their wealth which well-endowed materially give to the poor and needy to seek the pleasure of Allah. It is utilised for the benefit of the poor in accordance with the injunctions specified in verse 60 Surah Taubah of the holy Quran.

"The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah; and (for) the wayfarers; a duty imposed by Allah. Allah is knower, Wise." (9:60).

Zakat is the pivot and hub of the Islamic finance. It covers moral, social and economic spheres. In the moral sphere, Zakat washes away greed and selfishness of the rich. In social sphere it acts as a unique measure to abolish poverty from the society by making the rich alive to the social responsibilities they have.

In economic sphere Zakat prevents the accumulation of wealth in a few hands, and diffuses it before it assumes threatening proportions in the hands of its possessors. Allah enumerates countless blessings for the Muslims both in this world and the Hereafter who pay Zakat, but for those people who do not pay Zakat, there are horrible torments of fire.

In most of the chapters of the Quran we read: "And observe the prayer and pay the Zakat."

"Surely those who believe and do good deeds and establish Salat shall have their reward from their Rabb, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they have any grief," (Al-Quran).

The word Zakat has been derived from the word *zakat* which means 'it grew' or 'it purified' and the title is appropriate because Zakat not only protects one's wealth but also

to give up his religion. The Muslims are citizens of India and they have been guaranteed their religious rights. They cannot be forced to adopt any such thing from other religion(s) which deprives them of the fundamental rights. Indeed Muslims do not worship even their own Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who is considered the greatest after God by them. Then how can they be expected to worship Hindu gods and goddesses.

The Muslim objection to recite 'Vande Matram' or 'Saraswati Vandana' does not amount to any disrespect to Hindu religion. Hindus may compose good songs because there is not much difference in their concept of 'respect', 'love' or 'holy'. Muslims can bow before their elders out of respect and consider them holy but they can not adopt the Hindu mode(s) of worship for love and respect - neither in deeds nor in words. Non recitation of 'Vande Matram' is not against the love of the land. A Muslim loves the country of his birth and he makes sacrifices as it has been proved beyond any shadow of doubt in the past and he is always prepared to do it. Muslims have laid down their lives for the cause of the country in the wars with China and Pakistan. If these martyrs who have made the supreme sacrifice would have been asked to worship or say such words which smack of idol worship they would have never agreed to do so. Because they bow only before God. So for the love of the country Muslims do not lag behind their Hindu brethren. It has been proved umpteen times and another proof of it is the anthem of Dr. Iqbal in which love of India has been immortalised. Muslims express their love and respect in the manner which their religion permits and not in the manner prescribed by other religions in which love and concern is expressed as a way of worship or akin to it.

It is, therefore, necessary that Muslims be exempted from the recitation of these songs and not be forced. These hymns should not be enforced in those schools which are run by the government or aided by it, this would be against our secular constitution. The constitution of India does not allow anything which aids or abets promotion or propagation

of any particular religion. It is against justice and fairplay that the parents send their children for education (arts and sciences) and they may be taught the practices of other than their own religion. It is a serious matter and concerned citizens should ponder over.

### NO COMPULSION IN RELIGION

In many places in the Qur'an, the Prophet is reminded that it is not a part of his mission to compel people to become Muslims. He is repeatedly reminded that he has no control or authority over the minds and hearts of men. His mission is that of a caller, a reminder, a warner.

*Let there be no compulsion  
In religion. Truth stands out  
Clear from error.*

(Q.2:256)

*Upto you your religion,  
And unto me my religion.*

(Q: 109:6)

training of the economically poor class of the society. In Islam it is considered the duty of the state that no citizen should be deprived of fundamental needs of life. During the reign of second caliph Umar, a register was kept for all citizens of the state and every poor child used to receive a sustenance allowance immediately after his birth. The institution of Zakat plays a vital role in promoting the spirit of service before self and bridging the social gulf between the classes of the rich and the poor. Thus Zakat fulfils to a great extent the requirements of economic Justice in society, which is a necessary condition of peace and order.

Zakat is a motive force to the operation of broad Islamic principles of equality, brotherhood, social Justice and human welfare. Our present economic and social set-up is highly iniquitous and unbalanced that can hardly be termed Islamic. There are few who are fabulously rich, enjoying the amenities and luxuries of life and a multitude are wallowing in want, poverty and misery.

The holy Prophet visualised a society in which there should be no invidious disparity nor any exploitation by one section on the other. Since Islam stands for equality we should build our social order in tune with the egalitarian principles of Islam towards which the institution of Zakat can largely contribute.

"EVERY" soul shall have a taste of death"  
, says the Quran, "and we test you by evil (sharr)  
and by good (khayr) by way of trial: to Us ye must  
return" . (21:35)



the resultant anger when he beholds the scene of the Hajj".

The spirit of Hajj can be explored to exist in every nation because every nation do have in their creed certain manifest signs of Allah which they are inclined to respect. Followers of every creed do have the traditions (handed down from their forefathers) of sacrifice and devotion by vow to God's service. Repeated performance of the action handed down by virtuous forefathers keeps them fresh in memory. And, out of all signs on the face of this earth, the sacred Baitullah is the really one place which must remain the venue of Hajj for the human beings. It has clear signs of Allah. Under Divine orders, Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) built this House of Allah on a holy piece of land. No other place of pilgrimage is free from the dirt of polytheism and baseless stories circulated by the whimsical fancies of man.

The purification of the human self and the human spirit demand sojourn in a place which has always been respected and held in highest esteem by really virtuous people since the dawn of humanity and which has always remained filled with the glorification and the remembrance of Allah with perfect unity and monotheism which is His eternal right. The Order of Angels who have been assigned duties on the earth are attentive and busy in and around the Holy places which the pilgrims visit and the prayers descend from the Heavens of the Higher Orders of the Angels whose duties are confined to the most high regions. The pilgrims, by virtue of their stay in the Holy Kaabah and other holy places, become the sure recipients of these prayers of the Angels of the Higher Order. Another important gain which accrues to the spiritual self of man is the love and the desire to see Allah., our Great Creator, Lover, Sustainer and Benefactor. The eagerness to get closer to Allah and to see glimpses of His Eternal Beauties, is created only by Hajj pilgrimage. Just as every earthly monarch holds an audience periodically to receive his selected loyal subjects in his presence, so does Almighty Allah holds His High audience during the Hajj days

by Qusai bin Kilab, a great grandfather of Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) who also put a black curtain on the Holy Kaabah. The building of Kaabah was reconstructed by Hujjaj bin Yusuf in the year 74 A.H. In 1040 A.H. Sultan Morad of Turkey reconstructed the Kaabah in the same old pattern with marble for the inwards walls and the floor of the room of Kaabah. The outer walls were built with solid stone without any covering polish. The black curtain of the Kaabah was traditionally been donated every year by the Egyptian Government and the people.

The ground around the Holy Kaabah is all built of marble on which the pilgrims and the visitors circumambulate day and night during twelve months of the year. This round about ground goes by the name of "Mataf. Beyond the 'Mataf', the ground is filled with black pebbles, large and small, which cover the entire compound, around the Kaabah till the precincts of the big Mosque built around the Holy Kaabah. This great Mosque which can accomodate lacs of people, goes by the name of Haram-e-Ka'abah. This was built for the first time by Sultan Morad of Turkey.

Certain limits have been fixed around the Holy City of Makkah where every intending pilgrim or visitor has to undress himself to wear the "Ehram" which comprises of two unstitched sheets of cloth, one around the waist and the second above the shoulder with the head kept naked. Every pilgrim or visitor will continue to wear Ehram till he has circumambulated the Holy Kaabah, has run between the Safa and the Marva, and has shaved his head (in the case of Males) or cut a little part of the hair (in the case of Females) to complete the Umrah, which is a brief rehearsal for the Hajj.

**The Rituals:** On the 8th of the month of Zulhijjah, the intending pilgrims put on the "Ehram" and, after performance of Tawaf (circumambulation) around the Holy Ka'abah and the Sai (running between the Safa and Marva), they leave for the valley of Mina where Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) prepared under Divine command, to slaughter

his dear son Ismael (peace be on him). But the actual act was prevented by Allah who replaced Ismael with a beast of sacrifice without the knowledge of Abraham. The pilgrims spend the day and the night in tents in the valley of Mina. In the morning of the 9th of Zulhijjah, they leave in thousands for the valley of Arafat, about 7 miles from Makkah. The essence of the Hajj pilgrimage consists in staying in the valley of Arafat, praying in humility and glorifying Allah with utmost love and piety, till the sunset. At sun-set the usual evening prayer is not offered because this is the order of Allah. When he says "Pray", the prayer becomes obligatory. When he says: "do not pray", the omission of Prayers become obligatory. The spirit of obedience does not reason why. It consists only in carrying out orders without questioning the why and the how.

When the shades of the night fall, the pilgrims in caravans of thousands and thousands embark on the return journey, reaching Muzthalfah about 4 miles from Arafat where they offer their evening prayers and the night prayers together. This night between the 9th and 10th of Zulhijjah is a most precious night in that it attracts the choicest blessings and benedictions of Al-mighty Allah which descend from the Heavens like torrential rains. This night is even more precious than the Lailatul Qadar (the Night of Determination), the mention of which has been made in the Holy Qur'an in a complete Surah.

From Muzthalfa, pilgrims start leaving at about dawn to reach the valley of Mina back into their own tents by the morning prayer time. Today is the 10th of Zulhijjah and the day of great sacrifices by all pilgrims who go out to the great and specious slaughter houses of Mina to commemorate the great sacrifice offered by Prophet Abraham and his great son Prophet Ismael (peace be on both). Cows, bullocks, goats, lambs and camels are slaughtered in thousands by the pilgrims who glorify the name of Allah. After this important performance, the pilgrims stone the Satan in the valley of Mina where the Devil made an attempt to dissuade Prophet Abraham (peace be on

## INFIDELS UNDER MUSLIM RULERS

*Ziauddin Barni writes:*

"The desire for overthrowing infidels and knocking down idolaters does not fill the hearts of the Muslim kings (of India). On the other hand, out of consideration for the fact that infidels and polythesists are payers of taxes and protected persons, these infidels are honoured, distinguished, favoured and made eminent; the kings bestow drums, banners, ornaments, cloaks of brocade and caparisoned horses upon them and appoint them to governorship, high posts and offices, And in their capital (Delhi), owing to the status of which the status of all other Muslim cities is raised, Muslim kings not only allow but are pleased with the fact that infidels, polythesists, idol-worshippers and cowdung worshippers build houses like palaces, wear clothes of brocade and ride Arab horses caparisoned with gold and silver ornaments. They are equipped with a hundred thousand sources of strength. They live in delights and comforts. They take Musalmans into their service and make them run before their horses, poor Musalmans beg at their door; and in the capital of Islam owing to which edifice of Islam is elevated, they are called rais (great rulers), mehtas (clerks, officials) and pandits (priests);" (*Ms. in India Office Library-I.O.1149*); *English trans by Prof. Habib and Dr. Afzal-ud-din, The Political Theory of Delhy Sultanate, Aligarh, 1960*).

# THE HAJJ PILGRIMAGE

Q.M.Saeed

**The Holy Ka'aba:** The first House built by man on the face of this Earth was Baituallah (the House of Allah) in the heart of the City of Makkah. When Adam (peace be on him) the father of all mankind, descended from the Heaven to the Earth, he had a feeling of loneliness and anxiety. He prayed to God for peace of mind. He got the devine orders to build the first house of God for worship by the mankind. The Angel Gabriel pointed out the exact spot on which the first House of Allah was to be built up. In the great Deluge which swept away the bulk of existing humanity during the time of Prophet Noah (peace be on him) the first building of the Ka'aba also disappeared leaving behind a reddish mound on which the Kaabah was built for the second time by Prophet Abraham with the assistance of Prophet Ismael (peace be on both). A few years before the construction of the Kaabah Prophet Abraham left his small son, Prophet Ismael and his mother Hajra near the sight of Kaabah under Divine orders. The exact spot where Prophet Ismael was placed by his mother is now the well known well of "Zamzam". There was a tree near the "Zam-Zam" well. Prophet Ismael was thirsty and his mother lady Hajra ran across the two hillocks of Safa and Marva in quest of water. Her efforts to find water beyond the hills of Safa and Marva failed but a miracle happened when she went back to find the condition of her thirsty son. A spring of water was oozing out just beneath the heels of Ismael. Water went on increasing quickly till lady Hajra uttered the words "Zam-zam i.e., stop stop". The Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) said: "May Allah have mercy on Hajra. Had she not uttered these words, the water would have flown into a big canal". With her utterance, the spring assumed the shape of a well which continues to yield unlimited quantities of water and will continue to do so for all time.

The Holy Kaabah was constructed for the third time

to receive His selected loyal servants in His august presence in order that He may shower His unique blessings on them which are exclusively intended to be showered only on this occasion. The Hajj affords an occasion for the discernment of loyal from the disloyal and the obedient from the disobedient among the teeming millions who claim devotion to Islam, to Allah and to His Holy Prophet (peace be on him). The toilsome journeys undertaken for the performance of Hajj assume the character of devoted worship of Allah who readily forgives the life's sins of a pilgrim.

**PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS** The writer of this Article had the good fortune to perform the Hajj pilgrimage during the year 1975 A.D. corresponding with 1395 A.H. The personal impressions of the writer during the Hajj performance are reproduced below:-

It is the cult of our father Abraham, the respected father of all Muslims. I undertook the journey, the journey of love and toil, the toil which breeds love; the love which increased inch by inch and yard by yard as I got closer and closer to the Holy Ka'abah. As I reached there, it transcended all measures. The love changed into adoration. I circumambulated the House of my Lord with exceeding love and adoration. The Angels saw me weep with joy and ecstasy. The highest seraphic order of celestial beings jubilated and exulted to see my circumambulation around the House of Allah which stands like a cubical pearl of light in the midst of the earth. My circumambulation was indeed a dance without self, without body. My I-amness disappeared in the dazzling light of my Lord Creator who created and chiselled me, who built and ornamented me, who perfected and loved me. The Angels saw my selfless body fly high above the heavens. I crossed the moon. I crossed the planets. I crossed the galaxies. I crossed the dizzy heights where seraphs circumambulate even like the love-stricken human beings. Just above the Ka'abah at heights immeasurable, stands the Baitul Mamoor, the Ka'abah of Angels like a cubical pearl of light, circumambulated by soulful Angels who see

beneath with wistful eyes the tears, the sobs, the trembling, the melting and thrilling of human lovers.

Like a helpless, small child, I fell down on the threshold of the Holy Ka'abah, known as "Multazam". I wept, I screamed, I beseeched, I embraced, the "Multazam". I saw with the eyes of imagination all my brothers and all my sisters belonging to Islam, all the nations of Islam. All the lovers of Allah and His Holy Prophet (peace be on him). I saw them in humiliation, in oppression, in hunger, in want, in trouble, in torture, in exploitation, in physical, spiritual and cultural slavery. I wept and wept in front of the great door of Allah. I prayed and prayed and prayed near the sacred feet of Abraham, our father, who taught the lofty name of one Allah. I prayed for all my brothers and all my sisters belonging to Islam in every corner of the world. I begged the Lord of Ka'abah for the glory of Islam, for the political and spiritual up-lift of the Muslims throughout the world. An inner voice assured me "Your prayer is granted because nobody goes disappointed from this Great House of Allah.

him) from performance of the great sacrifice ordered by Allah. The pilgrims then leave for the Holy City of Makkah the same day to perform "Tawaf" of the Holy Ka'abah and the "Sai" between the Safa and the Marva. This is called Tawafeziarat. They return to the valley of Mina the same day. Three days more are to be spent in the valley of Mina to stone the Devil at three fixed places known by the names of Jamra-e-Ula, Jamra-e-Wusta and Jamra-e-Uqba where the Devil again and again dissuaded the Prophet Abraham and his great son Prophet Ismael (peace be on both) not to go in sacrifice of the human life as ordered by Allah. This completes the rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage after which the pilgrims return to the Holy city of Makkah where they remain till they undertake their backward journey to their native lands.

**The Philosophy and the Spirit of Hajj:** The spirit behind all the rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage is that Allah Almighty has desired in His eternal wisdom that a large gathering of good people should get together at a specified time to commemorate and to recollect the soul-stirring actions performed by the Prophets of Allah, His truthful men who dedicated their lives to His cause, His martyrs who laid down their lives in His path and His obedient servants who took pains to follow the paths of life revealed through the Prophets who have been the real leaders of mankind through centuries. The practice had continued that large sections of the leading Muslims undertook the performance of Hajj with the dedicated aim of paying respect to the great signs of Allah and homage to the memory of great Prophets who were the founders and the builders of those great signs. The love, the utmost humility and the dedication displayed by millions of Muslims on days specified by Allah do succeed in winning the forgiveness and the large blessings and benediction of Allah for His servants. This spirit is precisely behind the famous saying of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him): "On the Day of Arafah (i.e. the 9th of Zilhijjah when pilgrims sojourn in the valley of Arafat), the Satan suffers from worst humiliation, insult and



# THE UNPARALLELED BEAUTY OF THE QUR'AAN

Sharofdeen Kola Oladejo

One of the articles of faith preached by the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) is the belief in the Books of God. These Books are sent to humanity through the Prophets from time to time as occasion demanded. The Almighty Allah says, *'O ye who believe! Believe in God and His apostles, and scriptures which He has sent to His apostle. And the scriptures which He has sent to those before (him). Anyone who denies God, His angels, His books, His Apostles and the Day of Judgement, has gone far astray.'* (Qur'aan 4:136)

Notable among the earlier revealed books are the divine inspiration given to Moses, known as Torah, the Zabur to David, known as the Psalms, and the one given to Jesus the Injil, known as the Bible. There are, however, some other Prophets who had their messages orally delivered and undocumented. Each of the Prophets who brought these divine messages was raised among and sent to a particular nation or tribe. For instance, Moses, who was given the Torah, was sent to liberate the Israelites from bondage, while Jesus Christ was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, "as recorded in Mathew.(15:24)

Neither the Prophets, to whom documented messages were given during their time, made efforts to get them preserved. The state of affairs in the pre-Islamic era did not please Allah, as a tradition says: "The Lord cast a glance at the dwellers of the earth, and felt highly displeased with them, whether Arabs or non-Arabs." To this end, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was raised upto head a new community of Muslims. This community has been set up for the task of reforming the society: to enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency, as stated in the Qur'aan (3:10)

It is obvious that such a universal message needs Divine inspiration as source of guidance. That is why when

Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was once meditating in seclusion in the cave of Hira, he was entrusted with the Prophetic mission, and the first verses of the holy Qur'aan were revealed to him through the Arch-angel (Gabriel). It has since remained the Sacred Book of Muslims. It is absolutely superior to the aforementioned books revealed to the earlier Prophets and is considered the eternal miracle of Islam.

The Holy Qur'aan was sent to humanity to recapitulate the earlier revelations, which had been corrupted through human machinations. The Qur'aan means: what is to be read. Among other names to which the Holy Qur'aan is referred to include: Al-Kitab, the book, as in (Q;2:2), Al-Furqan, that which separates truth from falsehood and wrong from right as in (25:1), Al-Zikr the reminder as in (15:9), Al-Tanzil, the revelation (26:192) and Al-Hukm the Judgement. (13:37)

**COMPILATION OF QUR'AAN** The revelation of the Holy Qur'aan began in the month of Ramadhan in the Grand Night, Lailatul Qadr. Qur'aan 2:185, 97:15. It was revealed piecemeal over a period of twenty three years. The revelation of each piece was circumstantial, i.e., an event must have taken place before a certain verse or Surah was revealed.

No sooner was a passage of the Qur'aan revealed than it was recorded on the leaves of, datepalm, on the bark of trees, or on bones etc., at the dictation of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). All these collected verses were put in a bag. Almighty Allah says: "If we had sent unto thee a written (Message) on parchment, so that they could touch it with their hands, the unbelievers would have been sure to say: This is nothing but obvious magic!" (6:7)

Moreover, some of the Prophet's Companions wrote the Verses for their own use and memorized the passages for recitation during Salah as it is incumbent on all Muslims to do so. The Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) himself used to recite it to Angel Gabriel once a year and

twice in the last year. No sooner had the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) left the mortal world than the need to collect Qur'aan into a single volume arose, because many of the Prophet's companions were killed in the battle of Yamamah. Then, in order to safeguard the Qur'aan from any form of manipulation or interpolation, Hadhrat Umar thought it wise to have it compiled into a single volume, as he deemed it dangerous to rely solely on those who had committed it to memory. He approached Caliph Abu Bakr and Hadhrat Zaid bin Thabit (the Prophet's scribe), who both initially hesitated, complaining that they were not commanded by the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) to do so. They eventually agreed having realized the logic of such a plan. The work of compilation was entrusted to Thabit (Razi Allahu anhu), the Prophet's scribe who had committed the Qur'aan to memory. He was also privileged to be with the Holy Prophet on one of the occasions when he recited the whole of the Qur'aan to the Archangel Gabriel.

All the pieces were gathered with the assistance of the companions who had committed either a part or whole of the Holy Book to memory (Hafiz). These written pieces were thoroughly verified and compared with each other. The sources of collection were also tallied with each other. This was how the Qur'aan was compiled. This authentic, compiled copy was kept with Abu Bakr till his death. Then it was kept in the care of Umar (Razi Allahu anhu), the second Caliph and from there it came to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar bin al-Khattab and a widow of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). It eventually came down to the third Caliph, Uthman, (Razi Allahu anhu) without any alteration in wordings of arrangement. He prepared several other copies and circulated to the various Muslim territories. Since then, Uthman's edition is the only one in use in the Islamic world.

**QUR'AAN'S AUTHENTICITY** In the pre Islamic era, the different races of mankind in the universe lived in isolation. There was in these days no means of communication whatsoever between one nation and another. Messages

of divinity were then sent through Prophets to different nations. For instance, Jesus Christ was sent to the lost sheep of Israel: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." (Math. 15:24).

Prophet Moses was also sent to free the Children of Israel from bondage. The same thing happened to other earlier Prophets, but the Noble Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was sent to the entire universe. Almighty Allah says: "We have sent thee not (O Muhammad) but as a mercy for all creatures." (21:107)

Thus the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) is the only Prophet who came to deliver an eternal universal message, which not other religion ever did. The coming of the final and complete divine message is also foretold by Jesus Christ: "I have yet many things to say unto you cannot hear them now. Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you unto truth." (Jhon:16:12-13)

Yet, in another verse of the Holy Qur'aan, Jesus son of Mary, said: O children of Israel! I am the Apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming that (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an Apostle Ahmad. But when he came to them with clear signs, they said, this is evident sorcery!"(61:6)

It is pertinent that when an army is going to war, arms and ammunition are needed in order to get peace restored. The purpose of sending the Seal of the Prophets is to erase the social vices, bring an end to ignorance, reform the society and get it unified. In so doing, there is need for a criterion to look to as a source of guidance. Therefore, the instrument of reformation given to the Prophet was the Qur'aan. It is this evidence (Qur'aan), which they say is sorcery, as earlier prophesied by Jesus Christ, whom the Noble Prophet succeeded, as quoted above.

The Holy Qur'an has, however, defended itself against critics who doubt its authenticity. Some scholars assert that the Holy Prophet(Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was

the author of the Qur'an. This is humanly impossible. The contents of the Holy Qur'an are quite beyond human ability to compose the like of it. It is for this reason that Allah challenges both man and jinn to produce the like of it. Almighty Allah says: "Say: If the whole of the mankind and jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'aan they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other." (17:88) "Or they may say, He forged it. Say, bring you then ten suras forged, like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than God: If ye speak the truth." (11:13) Other verses where Allah challenges man on the same issue can be referred to in the Qur'aan 2:23 and 52:22.

It would be recalled that Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was raised up amongst the unlettered. In an era of ignorance, the typical question that is to agitate a discerning mind is: how could a man, raised up in the midst of such unlettered people, utter such statements replete with so many scientific truths as contained in the Holy Qur'an? What is more, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was known for his honesty, uprightnes, trustworthyness and integrity. These qualities won him admiration from all (both Muslims and non Muslims) and, hence, he bagged the title Al-Ameen and Assadiq respectively. It is, therefore, quite unjustifiable to hold the belief that the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) had been the author of such an inspiration that was sent to humanity to guide them to the right path. Moreover Almighty Allah says: "Do they consider the Qur'aan (With care)? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy." (4:82) The revelation of each chapter of the Holy Qur'an was circumstantial.

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) who was given the Qur'an was not a learned man nor a philosopher. But he was raised up among the unlettered in an era of darkness. This book teaches brotherhood and addresses all grades of mankind. Each of the revelations was

in accordance with the needs and requirements that matched the stages through which each phase of the Islamic movement passed. Undoubtedly, if the Qur'aan was the work of someone other than Allah, it would have contained many incongruities.

To summarise, the Holy Qur'an is devoid of errors, incoherence and inaccuracies. It contains the whole truth and nothing but the truth. No falsehood can approach it from the front or behind. It is fully guarded on all sides as expressed in the Qur'aan (41:42)

A non Muslim scholars Sir William Muir says: "There is probably in the world no other book which has remained for twelve centuries with so pure a text."

Howsoever often we turn to it (the Qur'an) at first draws us to it each time afresh, it soon attracts, astounds, and in the end forces our reverence. Its style in accordance with its contents and theme is stern, grand, terrible ever and anon, truly sublime. Thus this Diven Book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence.

### **BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM**

The Holy Qur'an is both a book of knowledge and wisdom. It was with these two attributes that Prophet Muhammad (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) had been able to get the universal message thoroughly and faithfully delivered. Knowledge people say is power Holy Qur'aan emphazises the fact that knowledge transcends power. This can be seen in the Qur'an verse 30:33 Here, in contest between the Angel and the vicegerent of Allah (Adam), Adam defeated the Angels and they were asked to bow down to him. Power is here seen as bowing down to knowledge, and knowledge is here seen as a fundamental requirement which, once acquired, becomes an everlasting asset. Hence, the need to search for it is indispensable. Considering their significance in human life, both wisdom and knowledge have been highly prasiad in the Qur'an He grants wisdom to whom he pleaseth: And he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing: But none will grasp the Message but men of

undersatding. (2:269) And such are the parables set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have knowledge." (29:43)

In the Qur'aan (3:18) those who are endowed with knowledge, the learned, are the third party called to attest to God's Oneness. The learned men are, therefore, highly placed before God. Knowledge is acquired while wisdom is implanted by nature. It is an innate endowment. It is with wisdom that one will be able to make use of knowledge to achieve the desired goal. Knowledge and wisdom are, hence, jointly or complementarily, demanded. Wisdom is observed in man through his manners, saying, deeds and how he conducts him self among his equals. With the endowment of wisdom and knowledge given to the Holy Prophet, he saved humanity from the state of insecurity and ignorance in which it was placed earlier before Islam arrived. With this Divine Book of wisdom, he erased social vices and inculcated the belief that there is no diety worthy of worshipping beside Allah.

In all aspects of life, the Noble Prophet himself is the most distinguished asset to the society. Imagine the Noble Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) who had never been to a military school and had handled weapons, yet he proved himself an incomparable general in war. He became not only the pride of the Arabs, but that of humanity and Islam at large.

### **ARRANGEMENT OF SURAHS**

Chapters: The Glorious Qur'aan is subdivided into 114 Chapters. Each of these chapter is called Surah, as expressed in the Holy Qur'an in 9:86 and 2:23. As the revelation of each Surah is circumastantial, each of the chapter derives its name from what occurs in the chapter or from the subject matter treated therein. Al-Baqara (the cow), Al-Imran (the family of Imran) and Nisa'a (Women) etc. obviously the subject matters discussed in each of these verses and other, are related to the name of each Surah.

Names of many of these chapters are known through the first phrases. The theme which a Surah deals whith or

the position it occupies may also determine its name, for instance, the Unity (Al-Ikhlās), the Surah describes the absolute Unity of God. Another example is "The Opening of the Book" or The Mother of the Book," All describing the first chapter or the " Al-Fatihah." The chapters are of varying lengths, the largest comprising fully one twelfth of the entire book and has 286 verses. Most of the Surah were revealed to the Prophet when he was living in Makkah. 93 of the 114 Surah were revealed in Makkah, while the remaining 21 were revealed in Madina.

### **VERSES OF THE QUR'AAN.**

There are different views concerning the total number of verses in the Qur'aan. The reason for diverse views on the number of verses is related to the method of delineation and separation of verses and letters. However, it is said, the Qur'aan contains about 6666 verses.

To make the recitation of the Holy Qur'aan easy the whole of it is divided into thirty equal parts called Juz. This is equivalent to the number of days in the month of Ramdhan. Each of the thirty parts is further subsided into two equal parts called Hizb. The division into parts is just to make its recitation easy. It has got nothing to do with its contents.

### **MAKKI SURAHS**

The Prophet's missionary work started at Makkah where he was raised. The revelation of Surahs in both Makkah and Madina are circumstantial, i.e. certain event must have occurred before a passage was revealed to the Noble Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) Obviously, the purpose of raising him up as a Prophet was to reform and erase the prevailing social vices, and hence set up and head a new community of Muslims.

With this end in view, Allah chose to send down instructions that would guide and train him towards the great task he was entrusted with. These early Makki surahs consisted of short and concise sentences and were couched in very fluent and effective language to suit the taste of people to whom they were first addressed. These are full of



eloquence, poetical rhythm, rich in lofty and brilliant ideas. They are expressed in a fluent and effective language to suit the taste of the people to whom they were addressed. The Makkan Surahs describe the Unity and Majesty of Allah and the horrors of the Day of Judgement, They denounce idol worship and promise bounteous rewards (paradise) for those who do good. They are rich in eloquence, full of illustrative references to nature, with most of them beginning with one or a number of oaths.

### **MADANI SURAHS**

When the Quraishi efforts to get rid of the Holy Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) and his few followers became intense and more aggressive, the need arose for them to leave Makkah for Madinah, after being there for thirteen years, The Muslim community now found itself in a new environment in Madinah. It is obvious that each of the discourses revealed here is in accordance with the occurrences there. These Surahs were revealed after the Hijrah. The Madani Surahs are long ones, and narrate events in greater detail. They train the Muslim community in the methodology and supply necessary steps in organizing a community and a good civilization and in the conduct of different affairs of life. They also call to the right path the people of the Book, the hypocrites and the unbelievers. They outline moral regulations and social reforms as well.

### **STYLE**

The Holy Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty three years. The revelation of each portion is circumstantial. They are always revealed according to the requirement of the situation. Obviously, a book like this cannot have the kind of uniformity of style which is followed in the formal books on religion and the like.

The contents of the Holy Qur'an are meant for the Islamic Da'wah work. They guide people to the right path and forbid indecency. They were not meant for publication in the form of leaflets or pamphlets at the time they were revealed. The Holy Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) discharged the Da'wah activities he was entrusted with and

dealt with people of different ideologies. In the course of disseminating the divine message, he had to cope with different situations and gathered different experiences during the period.

It is equally obvious that in heading such a new community and reforming the society, the Noble Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) had to impress the people with his messages. Such a message had to appeal primarily to the feelings and emotions that would enable the messenger to counter the force of his enemies. Also needed to get his followers well-trained and, hence, he inspired them with courage, endurance and perseverance the qualities which enabled them to subdue their opponents. In this regard, the style of such revelation needed to suit the requirements of each phase of the movement.

#### **ORDER**

The fact that the Holy Qur'aan is not arranged in the sequence in which it was revealed, has been an object of attack from the enemies of Islam. They hold the view that it was compiled by the Holy Prophet and that, in their view, is why the Surahs are not in a chronological order in which they were revealed. The longer Surahs are put before the shorter ones.

Circumstances leading to the revelation of both Madani and Makki Surahs are enough to answer the question. The revelation of each of the passages of the Qur'an is circumstantial. The Book was revealed in a period of twenty three years in accordance with the needs and requirements that suited each of the stages through which the Islamic movement passed. In the early stage of Islamic movement the Qur'an addressed the people, who were totally ignorant of Islam, and, therefore, naturally it had first of all to teach them the basic articles of faith.

The subsequent revelation addressed those, who had accepted this universal message and were entrusted with the work of forming a new community that was to guide the people to the right path. Hence, it is obvious that the order of the complete book had to be different from its chrono-

logical order of arrangements to suit the need of each phase of Islamic movement.

How to Recite the Qur'an?

"And recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tone....." (Q 73:14) Recitation is an act in which a whole person, with his soul; heart, mind, tongue and body should participate.

### **CLEANLINESS**

Islam lays stress on cleanliness more than other religions, It highly emphasizes the importance of cleanliness and purity. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an. "This is indeed a Qur'an most honourable, which none shall touch but those who are clean." (Q56:77-79)

"And thy lord do thou magnify. And thy garment keep free from stain.

And all abomination shun." (Q:74:3-5)

In reciting the Qur'an the reciter must ensure that his body, dress and the place, where the recitation is to be done, is clean and devoid of uncleanlines. We should make sure that we are free from any kind of impurity before recitation takes place. The Qur'an too, when not in use, must be kept away from all desecrating agent. Since it is above all other books, it must be kept over any other one. It is not a book to be kept under one's pillow as people in other religions use to do with their holy books. Cleanliness, they say, is next to Godliness.

### **ATTENTIVENESS**

Almighty Allah says: "When the Qur'an is read listen to it with attention, and hold your peace that ye may receive mercy." (Qur'aan: 7:204)

When reciting, or wherever we hear the Qur'an being recited, perfect respect and tranquility should be maintained. We should bear it in mind that we are in the presence of Almighty Allah. Allah says: "In whatever business thou mayest be, and whatever portion though mayest be reciting from the Qur'aan and whatever deed ye (mankind) may be doing we are witness there of." (10:6)

It is reported in a tradition that when God's Book is

being recited calmness descends on the reciter, mercy covers the listeners and Angels surround him.

### **CARE**

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'aan: *"Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for us to collect it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated), nay more, it is for us to explain it (and make it clear)." (75 16-19)*

During the recitation the reciter should remain with the Qur'an with all his heart, and attention. One should be conversant with it by reading regularly. The Qur'aan should be read with full attentiveness and understanding. It should not be read hastily, because by so doing, error may be committed. It should also be read in a melodious and humble voice. While reciting, observe Tarteel (clear and distinct) style in recitation. Do not recite rapidly and utter each and every word clearly and make a slight interval after reciting an Ayah and stretch out the word bearing the sign of the Maddah. This is the manner in which, a Tradition says, the Holy Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) used to recite the Qur'aan.

Umm-e-Salmah relates that the Prophet (Shallallahu alaihi wasallam) would recite each Ayah distinctly and separately. The Qur'aan could be recited either loudly or silently as circumstances demand. Almighty Allah says: *When thou dost read the Qur'an seek God's protection from Satan, the rejected one. (16:98)*

Before recitation commences, the reciter should not forget to say A'uzu billahi. Once this is done evil forces will not have any authority over the reciter and get his mind polluted and create doubts in him.

### **AYATUS SAJDAH**

This is the Sajdah (Prostration) which is to be observed during recitation, as it was the habit of the Holy Prophet (Sallahallahu alaihi wasallam) whenever he came to an Ayah where Sajdah was indicated. He would say Takbir and make prostration. Subhana Rabbi Al-a'laa should be recited three times before the head is raised up.

Viewing from all the aforementioned requirements demanded by the Qur'aan towards its recitation, one sees the Holy Qur'aan as a unique book demanding unique condition. No book in the world ever possessed a quality that is like it. The Qur'an is a perpetual miracle that possesses a living quality like that of the universe. Obviously, the key towards understanding the Book thoroughly lies in appreciating its unique qualities.

### **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE QUR'AAN AND OTHER BOOKS**

The Holy Qur'aan is the last Divine Book sent to humanity by Allah almighty. It is the only Divine Book that is still existing today in its original form. Unlike other Divine Books that came before it, and which got lost, and whose existing translated versions have been corrupted through human machinations, the Holy Qur'an remained as it was revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet (Sallahallahu alaihi wasallam) uncorrupted and will be like that forever. Allah, Who revealed it, has promised to guard it.

Besides, the former Divine books were sent down in antiquated languages which none of the existing nations or races of today understand. Had these books been still in existence, their language would have appeared archaic and inaccessible to the present generation, and hence it would have been difficult to understand the contents and interpret the injunctions therein.

The Holy Qur'an has been revealed in a language that is alive, i.e., Arabic which is taught in nearly all academic institutions in the world, a language which millions in the world speak. Moreover former Divine Books are addressed to certain nations or people. For instance, the Injil, given to Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ), was addressed to the Israelites, and the Torah of Moses to his people. These books were meant to provide for the needs which the people of those times felt. A few essential parts from them have been mentioned in the Qur'an also.

In contrast, the Holy Qur'an is a universal message

it is addressed to all nations of the world, irrespective of colour, tribe or race. All the injunctions therein are directed to humanity at large. The Holy Qur'an is also the direct speech of Allah Ta'ala. Other existing corrupted versions of sacred books are written in a narrative or descriptive style.

In conclusion, in view of what I have discussed above so far, the Holy Qur'an is seen as an unassailable scripture, so marvellous, coherent, accurate, unedited and unpolluted, the only existing unique scripture in the world.

In reciting the Qur'aan, the reciter must ensure that his body, dress and the place, where the recitation is to be done, is clean and devoid of uncleanness. We should make sure that we are free from any kind of impurity before recitation takes place.

## **COURT ALLOWS ISLAMIC TEACHINGS IN GERMAN SCHOOLS**

**BERLIN:** For the first time in Germany, an Islamic association has contested and won in court the right to hold religion classes in a public school.

A Berlin court has acknowledged that the Islamic Federation in Berlin -- an apex group of 25 Islamic bodies -- is a religious community which had a fundamental claim to impart Islamic instruction in Berlin's public schools.

The court, effectively overturning a ruling to the contrary by a lower court, has asked the Berlin School Administration office to examine how the teaching of Islam can be made compatible outside regular school classes.

Apart from Bremen and Brandenburg, the state of Berlin, does not have religion as a regular teaching subject in schools, although churches or religious communities do offer religion as a teaching subject on a voluntary basis.

The demand of the school administration that the Association should decide upon one particular religious orientation, would run counter to the neutrality of the state, the court observed.

But it emphasised that the teaching of Islam should not run counter to Germany's constitutional tenets, although the state of Berlin did not maintain so far that the Federation was pursuing any goals that were unconstitutional.

The court did not accept the Berlin administration's argument that the Federation did not qualify as a religious community.

Berlin's Commissioner for Foreigners, Barbara John, and the apex Islamic Council welcomed the decision.

John said the ruling had paved the way for getting Muslim children in Qur'an schools to attend public schools. However, she made it clear that the classes should be held in such a manner that the teachings are acceptable to all Muslims.

It would not be such a "good idea" to let the Islamist Federation have a monopoly for the teaching of Islam in

schools, she pointed out.

The Islamic Council for Germany stated there was hope that there would now be Islamic religious teaching in German schools in the foreseeable future.

Until now, it said, the biggest problem for a constructive cooperation with school authorities had been the fact that Islam in this country had been recognised as a body under public law.

Unlike the Catholics or Protestants, Muslims are not clerically organised.

The executive director of the Turkish Federation in Berlin, Kenan Kolat, said that this group would not recommend parents to accept the offer of the Federation to teach Islam in school. "Islam could be misused for political ends," he has been telling journalists.

Berlin authorities were strongly opposed to the idea of letting an Islamic group teach religion in a public school.

The resistance was driven by widespread fear and suspicion among German parents who are apprehensive about exposing their children to a religion which is perceived by large sections of this country's population as not shying away from the use of terror and violence to spread its cause.

Images of terror by Islamic fundamentalists, especially the recent bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, have not helped the cause of Islam in the eyes of the majority of the German population.

But not all Germans think so. "This notion (of Islam) is partly based on ignorance, and partly on irrational fears not every Muslim condones or approves the terror activities of a few religious extremists," said Kurt Adler, a German sociologist.

Germany has some seven million foreigners, the single largest group being that of the two million strong mainly Muslim Turks. There are also large numbers of Morrocans, Tunisians, Arabs, Iranians, Afghans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis who, although Muslims, have diverse cultures.

The majority of Indians in Germany are Hindus, although there are Christians from Kerala and a small population of Sikhs.



# EDUCATION IN ISLAM: TOWARD A NEW APPROACH

Syed Hussain Pasha

This paper highlights the importance of education and knowledge in the life of a Muslim. This paper is a call to the Muslim Ummah, particularly its scholars, leaders, thinkers and dedicated servants to treat education of the Muslim masses as a matter of utmost urgency and to revise and reorder their priorities in the next decade accordingly.

This paper arises from certain basic assumptions which believe to be self evident. They are as follows.

A. The Muslim World today is in a terrible shape. While many silver linings do meet the eye, the clouds are still too dark and too thick to promise the break of a new dawn of hope. It is true Muslims have come a long way, but still the way ahead is equally long arduous, and full of difficulties. Internally Muslims are ignorant, divided, cheerless, in most cases poor, backward, disease and hunger ridden, deficient in the understanding and upholding of Islamic principles concerning both belief and behavior. Externally, while colonialism has formally ended, and the days of political and economic exploitation are considered over (at least in the letter of the United Nations resolutions), Muslim remain beholden to the power blocs of the West and the East, a pawn in the global game of the great nations and a hapless prey to their selfish interests. The position is far from the one promised to Muslims by Allah as Khair Ummah (the best of all people.) Since Allah's promise is never untrue, this sorry state of affairs of the Muslim Ummah is brought about by failures, omissions, and commissions by the Umma itself.

## **LACK OF IMAN:**

B. In the past, lack of Iman. (convictions) has been frequently suggested as the major cause of the Muslim' failures, Those concerned with their affairs, time and again, locked their predicament and declared that they suffered from a lack of Iman, What this term precisely meant, how

this situation came about, and by what concrete measures it could be remedied was never clearly spelled out; and if it was it never quite gained the attention and currency in the thinking of the Muslims which is merited. In many cases, the lack of Iman diagnosis was more a cliché, a rhetorical device born of frustration, than a rigorous and well thought out explanation of the Muslim's malaise. In any case it was a theory hard to substantiate definitively one way or the other. Besides, despite its popularity and frequent use, it failed to produce positive changes in the thinking and behaviour of the Muslims. In fact, constant use of the theory produced guilt, depression, despair, impotence and inaction in them rather than hope, courage, initiative, dynamism, drive and an all out struggle to free themselves from its predicament.

I do not for a moment doubt that Iman is subject to fluctuations or that a great deal has indeed been wrong with the Muslims' Iman in the recent past. But I do wish to maintain that individual and collective aberrations from the ideal of Iman notwithstanding, the Iman of the Ummah as a whole has been and still remains in what we may call a "working condition". By working condition, I mean a state short of the "ideal" but still possessing the ability to produce the results it was originally meant to produce. I submit that there is enough *Imanic* potential left in the Muslims today to be able to reach the greatest heights of achievement and performance.

C. Education-knowledge- is the key to all human progress. Both logic and history bear testimony to this. Logically, knowledge produces abilities and opportunities, which lead to efforts and action, which in turn produce fruits and consequences. Historically, nations advanced to power and glory on the crest of a tide of knowledge- be it formal education, as in the case of many famous civilizations of the past and present, or formal practical expertise, as happened with the early armies of Islam, the Barbarians who sacked Rome and the Mongols and Tartars who over-ran the Muslim World, in the beginning of the Middle Ages.

## **MAJOR CAUSE OF FAILURE:**

These are my basic assumptions for the purposes of this paper. Given these assumptions, it is my submission that the major cause for the failure of the Muslim Ummah in the past as well as in the present era, is lack of education and not lack of Iman. While this is by no means the only cause, I do maintain that this indeed is the major cause and, in a sense, the root of all other evils.

This approach provides us with an alternative explanation of the Muslim problems in place of the traditional lack of Iman theory, I believe that there is an urgent and pressing need for a clear and bold exposition of this approach at this moment, I believe that such an exposition will result in a search for pragmatic alternatives to end the state of ignorance that prevails in the Muslim World today and with the end of ignorance I hope will end the problems that have reduces so many hundreds of millions of believers in Allah and His apostle to a sub human existence. It is my absolute conviction that given proper understanding and will, planning and leadership, Muslims today possess sufficient resources, human material as well as spiritual, to make ignorance a thing of the past with in a period of ten to fifteen years. The approach suggested in this paper offers a somewhat new conceptualization of the Muslim problems by shifting the emphasis from Iman to education.

According to this approach education is the key not only to human progress but also to the very Islamicity or a person. I Im (knowledge) in its most inclusive sense is a key component of a person's Islam. A person's understanding of Islam and commitment to it are greatly dependent on the level of knowledge possessed by that person. Ignorance renders one's understanding of Islam poor, inadequate and even distorted and the chances of its proper implementation remote and meagre, It produces a brand of Islam far removed from the Islam of the Qur'an and the Hadith. The resultant Islam is often one of dogmas and disputes and not of dynamism and drive. It lacks visions, discourages originality, fights change and innovation in all fields

and stands in the path of progress and advancement. As a result, the time, energy, potentialism and resources needed for generating a better and superior quality of life for the individual and the society are taken up into futile and fanatical fights over such matters whether or not the prophet's body cast a shadow, and whether it is more important to place one's feet six inches or sixteen inches apart while standing for prayers. The Muslims fought these and many other great battles of faith of the same gene not because they lacked Iman but because they had a surfeit of it. What they lacked of course was education which could have given perspective and direction to their Iman and caused it to blossom into creative action. Needless to say, for individuals such as these and for societies consisting predominantly of individuals such as these, the race for the leadership of the world is lost ever before it has begun.

#### **AN IMPEDIMENT:**

Thus according to the proposed model, ignorance seriously affects the quality of Islam, and deficient and distorted Islam becomes an impediment in the path of progress, achievement and glory. It must, however, be made clear that this approach considers education or knowledge only a necessary and a vital condition of either Islam a progress. It does not follow from this approach that every degree or diploma holder in the world will necessarily be a Muslim, but it does follow from it that ignorance or lack of education affects the quality of Islam, and seriously jeopardises the chances for progress, advancement, and leadership in this world.

Following are some of the arguments in support of this approach.

1. According to the Qur'an man's basic qualification for being the representative of Allah on earth is knowledge. When the angels question Adam's suitability for *istikhlaf* (representation) Allah cited Adam's IIm to convince them' Two conclusions flow from this. First, Adam's progeny is entitled to *Istkhla'fil ard* on the basis of IIm. Secondly those among the children of Adam are more deserving of *Istikhla'f*

who are pre eminent in Ilm. Applying these general principles to the case of the Muslim Ummah we can see that the Muslim occupied the pinnacle of power and prestige in the world so long as it retained its superiority in knowledge. But once the all-important imperative of education was thrown to the winds, intellectual darkness, and opening the floodgates of moral decay, political and economic backwardness, and military defeats, If the Ummah today wishes to regain its lost position, it has no alternative but to wipe out ignorance and set itself firmly on the path of superiority.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF IQRA:**

2. When Islam first appeared, Muhammad (PBUH) was an ummi, completely unable to read or write, and the desert city of Makkah was no intellectual heaven. Nor was the sixth century of the Christian era an age of universal literacy. Yet the very first revelation to come to Muhammad (PBUH) from Allah was: "Iqra".<sup>4</sup> What could be the significance of the amazing phenomenon except that this in all probability was a declaration from Allah to the effect that here onwards the key to human progress-nay, to the very question of human salvation-was to be the pen and treasurehouse of knowledge that the pen would unlock. In the light of this revelation, ignorance, particularly illiteracy and Islam are two very difficult concepts to reconcile a reconciliation which the Muslim Ummah has attempted in the past with disastrous consequences.

3. If Islam and ignorance are irreconcilable, knowledge becomes the pathway to piety, While in purely technical terms, it is possible for an ignorant person to condition himself into some form of religiosity, mostly of his own imagination, true and proper islamicity, can only arise from an intelligent and deep seated understanding of God's creation. As the Qur'aan puts it: A) Only those who fear Allah possess knowledge. B) These are parables which We cite for people, but only those who possess knowledge really understand them.<sup>6</sup>

4. This Umami Muhammad (PUBH) to whom the powerful and paradoxical message of IQRA was addressed was

a great man and within the span of a normal lifetime, he accomplished many great things. He was great husband, father, friend, leader, general, judge, statesman and ruler, In what role does the Qur'an itself view this man? While on the Whole, the Qur'an presents him as model for mankind<sup>7</sup>, it singles out his role as a teacher and educator<sup>8</sup> a role which earlier Prophets like Ibrahim and Ismail had envisaged for him<sup>9</sup> and indeed a role which many an apostle of Allah before him had so richly filled.

5. Looking directly at the words and deeds of this great apostle, this great teacher and educator, we find that knowledge to him was a categorical imperative. "Education is mandatory on every Muslim, male and female"<sup>10</sup> he said No obstacle, however hard and insurmountable, should deter or discourage a Muslim from the pursuit of knowledge. He admonished his followers to seek knowledge even if it were in such a far and inaccessible place as China. Reflecting on his own mission to mankind he said "God sent me as a Teacher."

#### **JIHAD AGAINST IGNORANCE:**

On the basis of these arguments I submit that Ilm and Islam, Ilm and progress, go hand in hand. Where one does not exist, the existence of the other becomes doubtful. When knowledge departs, Islam in its purity also takes leave, and with that departs power, prestige, and the god-given title to *istikhlaf fil ard*. This precisely is what happend with the Muslim Ummah. What they lacked yersterday is precisely what they lack today-"Ilm' know how, Education. A people with an illiteracy rate of over sixtey percent can be anything but the followers of a man who was coommanded by Almighty God Himself to 'READ'. The way to help the Muslims today is not to fulminate against its alleged lack of Iman but to declare an immediate and all-out Jihad (incessant struggle) to wipe out ignorance from its midst, and mobilize all resouces to that end.

In conclusion I must warn that time and tide waits for none. Given the existing conditions in the world, the Muslim cannot remain so abysmally ignorant much longer. If they

do not themselves set about acquiring education, education will be thrust upon them. Should the forces professing allegiance to Islam continue to neglect education the education of the Muslims will irrevocably pass into other hands which are by no means sympathetic to Islam that happens. The education which they would receive would take them away from their Islamic goals and destiny and not towards them. Progress and development may or may not be realized, but a synthesis of Islam and worldly progress will become an ever distant dream.

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6. Ibid: 29: 43.
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Note: Dr. Syed Hussain Pasha is from India and presently resides in New York. He is one of the pioneer Da'was leader in Trinidad.

*"Who is better in speech than one who calls  
(men) to God, works righteousness, and  
says, I am of those who bow in Islam"*

Qur'an (41:33)

## HUMAN DIGNITY

The third great gift bestowed by the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, is the concept of human dignity. During the age of darkness when Islam made its appearance, none was more ignoble and humiliated than man. Without realisation of his worth, he had no sense of human dignity. A sacred tree or animal, dedicated to some religious belief or practice, enjoyed a more coveted place than man himself. Human sacrifice on the altars of countless deities was a common spectacle. It was solely through Muhammad the Prophet, peace be upon him, that men came to appreciate the fact that human beings, the glorious creation of God, were entitled to much more loving regard, respect and honour than any other creature. The rank accorded to man was next only to God, for God had Himself heralded the purpose of man's creation in words of lasting beauty:

*He it is who created for you all that is in the earth.*

*-(al-Baqara, 2:29)*



# A STUDY OF DYNAMICS OF MILITANCY IN ISLAMIC WORLD

Riyaz Hassan\*

In the heartlands of the Islamic world from Indonesia to Egypt a spiritual and religious renaissance is taking place. A recently concluded study shows that some men and women from the elite of society as well as the masses are observing religion with increasing devotion.

In this study over 3,400 people were interviewed in Indonesia, Pakistan and Egypt about religious practice and social and political attitudes. Religious devotion is most pronounced in Indonesia and Egypt where over ninety percent of respondents regularly performed their daily prayers. Sixty percent of the respondents in Pakistan did the same. In all the three countries over 50 percent of the interviewees read the Qu'ran everyday and claimed to be following the teachings in conducting their daily lives.

The religious practice is accompanied deeply held beliefs about the sanctity of sacred texts, universalism of Islam and strong support for Islamic social and economic values. If the term religious fundamentalism is defined to mean a high degree of devotional religiosity, then these heartlands of Islam are becoming fundamentalist.

The anecdotal evidence from other Islamic countries indicates that they are also experiencing a religious revival. What are the implications of this for Islamic radicalism? Does this mean increasing support for the militant Islamic movements that are agitating to establish their versions of Islamic state by discrediting and overthrowing the existing political structures? Would this increase militancy against those groups or countries they regard as the enemy of Islam.

## **MARKED DECLINE**

The evidence shows that devotional religiosity interestingly appears to be associated with a marked decline

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in the support of militant and radical Islamic movements. A large majority of those interviewed were not members of any radical Islamic group or offered any support to the activities of any such groups in society. In fact, most of the people who were interviewed approved of moderate political leaders who were leading political and social movements for democratic, fair and tolerant societies and political cultures.

A large majority of the respondents support multi-party democratic political structures. The attitudes towards major western countries such as the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany are formed on the basis of their assessment of their policies towards the Muslim communities and countries such as Palestine, Bosnia Herzegovina and Chechnya. In general, the attitudes towards the western countries are based on rational political and social calculations and not on the intensity of religiosity.

The lack of support for the militant Islamic movements among the religiously active is having a consequential impact on the shape and structures of these movements. The declining supports for the Islamic radical and militant movements is paradoxically further radicalizing these movements and transforming them into more violent and secretive movement. The nature and ruthlessness of violence reflect their desire to gain public attention and was often described by the respondents as symptomatic of their evidence that religious and spiritual renaissance now occurring in the heartlands of Islam was supportive of Islamic radicalism and militancy.

The new form of violence is different from the earlier one that was carried out by organizations often with some type of tacit support from the political structures. The new militancy appears to be fuelled by a sense of desperation and humiliation caused by globalization and increasing economic, cultural, technological and military hegemony of the West.

**NEW PATTERN:** This new pattern a kind of paradigm shift

in the nature, causes and targets of terrorism carried out by the new militant groups. The old form of militancy was aimed at establishing the legitimacy of the political goals; the new form is guided by religious fanaticism, destruction and revenge. The old form of militancy had identified enemies: the new enemies are ephemeral global conspiracies.

These developments require a reassessment of how to deal with the new militancy. This is a new challenge which government of the Islamic countries as well as the larger international community must address. The old policies aimed that punishing and destroying it by military actions may not work because of the secretive nature of the new militant organizations and also because of the massive logistical problems military action may entail as demonstrated by the recent American response to attacks on American embassies in East Africa. Perhaps the most important reason for not adopting such policies is that they will mobilize public opinion in Muslim countries against such attacks if they are seen to be killing innocent people.

The evidence from the study shows that a majority of the people in the heartlands of Islamic world regard major western countries as anti-Islam. The primary reasons for the presence of these attitudes are not religious but the perceived indifference and inaction of the western countries in protecting the Muslim populations of Bosnia Herzegovina, Palestine and Chechnya from random destruction which is being perpetrated against them. Such views are widely held among the elites.

The findings of the study show that those who trust the religious institutions also tend to trust the governments. This means that the government of the Muslim countries need to be aware that if they are seen as attacking Islam this may undermine their own legitimacy in the public mind. Similarly, military attacks on targets that kill innocent people will further reinforce the widely held belief that western countries are anti-Islam. This may galvanize support for the new militant groups among the masses and create

new political problems and instabilities in these countries.

**NEW INSIGHTS:** The study provides new insights into the dynamics of new Islamic militancy. It shows that contrary to the general belief, increasing religiosity in Muslim countries is associated with political liberalization and diminishing support for the diminishing Islamic groups. The impact of these developments is paradoxically making the militant movements highly secretive and more violent.

The economic and cultural globalization trends are further accentuating these trends. The globalization process in particular is creating a social and cultural hiatus which is affecting the nature and organization of Islamic militancy. The new militancy is not motivated by attitudes towards colonialism and struggles to win the hearts and minds of Muslim populations. It is fuelled by a sense of powerlessness, revenge and religious fanaticism.

The enemy is ephemeral global conspiracies. How Muslim countries and international community respond to these new developments will have a profound impact on the nature and the activities of new militancy. Given the attitudes towards the western countries a military attack resulting in innocent deaths will once again galvanize support for the new militancy among the masses in the Muslim countries thus creating new political and social problems.

The solution will require more open and stronger political structures in Muslim countries to legally and politically pursue solutions to the problems of new militancy. It will also need a change in the mind-set that increasing religiosity does not increase support for militancy but in fact does the opposite; it diminishes support for it. Similar, the larger international community would also need to handle the new militancy through international tribunals and the newly proposed international criminal court for crimes against humanity.

The old style militaristic response may indeed galvanize support among the public for the militant groups which would create more political and social volatility in Muslim

countries which they can ill afford. I think the time has come to abandon the conventional strategy of countering individual acts of terrorism by the state sponsored terrorism.

Muslims are even asked not to speak ill of those who are revered by others:

*Revile not ye  
Those whom they call upon  
Besides Allah, lest  
They out of spite  
Revile Allah  
In their ignorance  
Thus have We made  
Alluring to each people  
Its own doings.*

(Q:6:108)

## GLORY OF IQBAL

The morning breeze has conveyed the message to me:  
Kingship is the lot of those who realise themselves.  
Your life is from it and so your honour,  
If the Ego endures there is glory, or else disgrace;  
In the circle of my poetry are being raised,  
Beggars who possess the demeanour of kings;  
You are the hunter of the Phoenix; only the beginning it is,  
The world of fish and fowl has not been created in vain;  
An Arab or a Persian, your There is no God but He!  
A meaningless phrase if the heart does not affirm.

Sir Mohd. Iqbal

# DIVINE REVELATION AND THE STATUS OF THE QUR'AN

JOHN SAHADAT

Islam is the world's most eloquent religion on the rejection of idolatry and the preservation and proclamation of an uncompromising monotheism. Of all the world's religions, it is the least understood with regard to its high priority for divine revelation. Westerners particularly have misconstrued the beliefs, practices and customs of Islam, its loyalty to the holy Qur'an as divine revelation and, consequently, as the hub of all its activities. It is of paramount significance to recall the great tribute that the Catholic Church (the largest Christian denomination) bestowed upon Islam in its declaration on the question of its declaration on the question of its relation to non Christian religions:

The [Catholic] Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of the heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own.... Further, they will await the day of judgement and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright, life and worship of God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.<sup>1</sup>

This perception of the Catholic Church is based not just on its observation of the Islamic community, but on its knowledge of the holy Qur'an, which for Muslims, is the blueprint to their beliefs, manners and customs-their way of life and the order of their community (*ummah*).

Our modern world is so fascinated by science and technology that civilization and progress are determined by how much we *know* and, on the basis of that knowledge, what we can produce. The massive and sophisticated inventions from the industrial revolution to the present have demonstrated that knowledge is indeed

power; and the West has utilised it so effectively that production and materialism have become the criteria for success. Scientific knowledge has its prominence in human affairs; but it is not adequate to answer all the needs of human beings. The reason for this rests on the fact that the human is much more than a psycho-physiological being. Mankind is endowed with a soul, which is the doorway to the Transcendent, the Supra-sensual and Supra-scientific. This does not in any way imply that Islam is world-negating for mystical flights into a world of blissful contemplation. Islam is well known for its transformative role in the world and for its promotion of peace, order and justice.

Islam is also known for its reputation in the pursuit of scholarship and excellence in the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities. etc. The pursuit of scientific knowledge, however, must be balance by what S.A. Ashraf rightly calls "spiritual realization". He contends that this kind of realization controls, guides and sharpens the intellect. Moreover, it inspires a sense of awe for God and a sense of well-being for humanity.<sup>2</sup> At the first World Conference on Muslim Education, Muslim scholars concluded that one ultimate aim of Islamic education is "in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large."<sup>3</sup> This is the ultimate invitation of Islam which answers to the transcendental quest of humankind. It does not contradict the pursuit of scientific knowledge; but takes aspirants beyond the categories of reason and the limitations of the scientific knowledge; but takes aspirants beyond the categories of reason and the limitations of the science and technology. Submission of the will of Allah and what Ashraf calls "spiritual realization" have an epistemological and an ontological dimension. Epistemologically, it is the sublime knowledge that God is one and beside him there is no other. Ontologically, the being of God which is exclusively divine precedes all existences and upon him all other beings are contingent. The question is, how can hu-



man beings know what is the will of Allah?

Muslims believe that human beings cannot know the mysteries of God through their own efforts. Whereas for monistic Hinduism religion is man's ascent to the Divine through his own physical, mental and spiritual exercises, thus making yoga the supreme path, for Muslims religion is God's descent to mankind. Descent here is not to be interpreted as incarnation (avatam) as it is in theistic/devotional (bhakti) Hinduism, nor as incarnation in Christianity where Jesus is considered to be divine. In Islam God's descent is his revelation to mankind, but it is the revelation of his will embodied in the holy Book: the Qur'an. It is the spoken Word of God to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), through the angel Gabriel as the Mediator. Islam is submission of the will of God, which is revealed to the mankind through the grace of God for the salvation of all believers. It was God who sought out Muhammad to be his messenger to the rest of mankind. He was called and commissioned; and he responded in the affirmative to rise and warn in the classical Semitic sense of prophethood.

The Prophet, Muhammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him), was a highly sensitive and compassionate man. Sensitive he was to the decadent conditions in Makkah, and compassionate to those who suffered under the yoke of oppression and injustice. Introspective and inclined to solitude, he would retreat from the ordinary, daily activities to mediate pray in a cave in Mt. Hira. Like the great Patriarch, Abraham, who was a spiritually towering figure in Ur by virtue of the fact that his religious consciousness elevated his awareness to the realization that God is one and all idolatrous representations of him are false, so too was this great Prophet of Arabia who, in the footsteps of the great Patriarch, was being prepared to carry the spiritual banner of an ethical monotheism to the Arab world and to all humanity. During his retreat to the cave for the prayer and meditation, he began to encounter extraordinary experiences. There

are two visions that have very special implications. The first is revealed in the Qur'an 53:1-18. In this vision a Being of great vigour appeared to Muhammad. This Being was standing upright on the horizon, then this mighty and powerful One approached him until he was only "two bows' length or even nearer. And He revealed unto His slave that which He revealed" (53:9-10).<sup>4</sup> The account of the second vision is given in 81:15-25. It was the vision of the same mighty and glorious Being. Muhammad was convinced that he was called to be the messenger of God (81:19). W. Montgomery Watt contends that these visions are recorded in the Qur'an to confirm the assertion that the passages which Muhammad is making public and which he claims to be the revelations from God, indeed have objective validity, and are not delusions or deliberate inventions.<sup>5</sup> These visions were in the background of his memory which he recalled from time to time to inspire him and to consolidate his faith. The extraordinary nature of these visions and the impact that they made on Muhammad gave him a deep sense of self-confidence and the certainty that he had been given a Mandate by God. Although his contemporaries could not fathom the depth of his spirituality nor the mystery of his call, Muhammad kept his faith in God and loyalty to the commission given to him, in spite of opposition from the Makkans.

Muhammad belongs to a unique era in the history of prophethood and divine revelation. In the long line of twenty six prophets, he is the Prophet of "the last days" and the "seal of the prophets". To him is given the culmination of divine revelation, God's final message for humanity:

And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee(5:48).

God chose Muhammad to be this unique Prophet and Messenger at this crucial point in human history to send his final message to humanity.<sup>6</sup> Though not divine, for only God is, the Prophet Muhammad is given exclusive spiritual status among all human beings. His entire life-style is the best example for Muslims. It is a practical exemplification (*sunnah*) or Qur'anic teachings. In Makkah, his experience of a night-journey to the holy city of Jerusalem, and his brief ascension (*mi'raj*) to heaven speak of the spiritual magnitude of this chosen Vessel of God. With regard to the night-journey to Jerusalem, the holy Qur'an declares:

*Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship [Makkah] to the Far Distant Place of Worship [Jerusalem] the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer (17:1)*

The Prophet was truly human, but his humanity was in total surrender to the will of God. He is the extraordinary exemplar of the meaning of *Muslim*. He makes no special claims but only says the following about himself:

Say: I am only a mortal like you. My Lord inspireth in me that your God is only One God. And whoever hopeth for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work, and make none sharer of the worship due unto his Lord (18:111).

Similar ideas are expressed in 41:6 where the Prophet maintains that he is a mortal being, a man as anyone of us; and whose primary obligation is to acknowledge the exclusive unity and divinity of God and do his will. This is the essence of Islam. Just as Abraham submitted to God and heeded his call. So too did the Prophet in the true spirit of a *Muslim*.

It was to such a calibre of a person that God entrusted his final and culminating message for all humanity. The word for revelation is (*wahy*) which has the connota-

tion of 'inspiration'. The inspiration does not negate the verbal aspect of *wahy*. Fazlur Rahman expresses it as follows as he quotes from the Qur'an 42:51-52 with his commentary in brackets- "God speaks to no human (i.e. through sound-words) except through *wahy* (i.e. through idea-word inspiration) or from behind the veil, or he may send a messenger (an angel) who speaks through *wahy*... Even thus have We inspired you with a spirit of Our Command....<sup>7</sup> The question of objectivity and subjectivity arises from time to time with reference to the Qur'an itself Rahman reminds us that the Qur'an upholds "the 'otherness' and the verbal character of the Revelation, but had equality certainly rejected it vis-a-vis the Prophet."<sup>8</sup> Let us examine this contention in light of two passages:

And lo! it is a revelation fro the Lord of the Worlds.  
Which the True Spirit hath brought down Upon  
thy heart, that thou mayest be (one) of the warners.  
In plain Arabic speech (26:191-195)

And again we read:

Say (O Muhammad, to mankind) Who is an  
enemy of Gabriel! For he it is who hath revealed  
(this Scripture) to thy heart by Allah's leave,  
confirming that which was (revealed) before it,  
and a guidance and glad tidings to believers  
(2:97).

Both passages maintain the *objectivity* of the Qur'an in so far as it is God, who revealed it to the holy Prophet, a most outstanding exemplar of righteousness in his day and for all time to come. There is no question that the Qur'an is the absolute Word of God (*Kalam Allah*) and not the subjective production of the Prophet's reflections; however, it must be kept in mind that it was the Prophet who uttered the Word of God to mankind, but only after the Lord bestowed it upon his heart through the angel. The Qur'an is *external* and *internal* to the Prophet. It is external to the absolute extent that it is the Word of God, which is beyond reproduction, imitation and translation. It is internal to the Prophet to the extent that it came from his

heart, and he faithfully and humbly transmitted it to his hearers.

Historically speaking, the Qur'an dates back to the seventh century C.E.; but it predates its historicization because it is the *eternal, primordial* Word of God. The *Book*, as it is often called, is the phenomenalization of the metaphenomenal. It is absolute in its truth and inimitable in its perfection, universal in its message and final in its admonition and exhortation. The most that so-called '*translations*' can give, according to the reflections of Annemarie Schimmel, is some degree of explanation of what the Sacred Book *means*; and as such a 'translation' is only one interpretation among many.<sup>9</sup> In this regard it is worth noting, as examples, Mohammed Marmuduke Pickthall's translation entitled, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation*, and that of Arthur J. Arberry entitled, *The Koran Interpreted*. The intent of these works is to render as much meaning of the Qur'an as is humanly possible, but like any other 'translation' they cannot in any sense recreate the *form* or the *essence* of the Sacred Book.

In spite of the difficulties involved in the translation of the Qur'an, scholars in Europe and elsewhere could not resist the challenge because of the influence of this Sacred Book on the world stage. From 1143 C.E. to the present, the Qur'an has been translated into a wide variety of languages in Europe and around the world. The first translation was in Latin by Robertus Ketenesis in 1143. Four hundred years later Martin Luther was instrumental in getting the same translation printed in Basel by Bibliander. This edition gave rise to an Italian translation, and in 1616 Saloman Schweigger's translation appeared in German, followed shortly thereafter by a translation in Dutch.<sup>10</sup> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a few scholars were beginning to show keen interest in the Arabic language, Arabic history and the Islam itself. In theory that seemed to be quite promising for a non-preju-

diced study of Islam, Islamic history and Islamic culture, but in practice that was not to be the case as writings in prose and poetry of an anti-Islamic nature was making their appearances. By the eighteenth century, however, attitudes were beginning to change, for example, Henri de Boulainvillier's description of the Prophet Muhammad, as a preacher who proclaimed the religion of Islam as having a rationally appealing dynamism to it. Another scholar in this period of Age of Enlightenment was Herman Reimarus, who expressed something of the sublime nature of Islam by contending that only a few of Islam's critics have actually read the Qur'an; and of those few only a small number have grasped something of its meaning and beauty.<sup>11</sup> But there was no force so great to impede the translation of the Qur'an and the study of Islam outside its indigenous environment. Several English translations began to appear, for example, that of George Sale in 1734, Rodwell in 1861. Palmer in 1880 and that of the believer, Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, in 1930.

Along with these English translations, that of Arthur J. Arberry which was first published by Allen and Unwin in 1953 and subsequently by Oxford University Press, must be mentioned. In the introduction to his translation of the holy Qur'an, Arberry tells us that he is making an attempt to improve upon the translations of his predecessors and to present a version of the Qur'an that will, in one some measure, reflect something of its sublime nature. He expresses his inner feeling and his sense of reverence for this Sacred book when he writes.

I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which-apart from the message itself-constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind... This very characteristic feature-that inimitable symphony' as the believing Pickthall described his Holy Book. 'the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy-has been almost totally ignored by previous translations.....'<sup>12</sup>

The Qur'an is far more than literature. It is Living word

of the Living God, which consists of an inherent mystery and power to draw human beings, Like a centripetal force, to their ontic centre and thus inspire them to live in accordance with his will as the ultimate good and to functionally define themselves as Muslims. It enunciates in no uncertain terms the fundamentals of an uncompromising ethical monotheism, which reason seeks to comprehend and apply with the purest altruistic motivations. The primordial and carnal Word of God which is the Qur'an unmanifest, the "Mother of all Books (13:39) is phenomenalized in the Noble Qur'an (al-Qur'an al-Karim) as we know it today. This phenomenalization is a confirmation of God's previous revelations in the Torah and the Gospels. To the Prophet Muhammad who is the seal of Prophets (33:40) is given the final revelation in the Qur'an which incorporates, fulfils, protects, consummates and supersedes all previous revelations.

Like a cartographical plan it is mankind's supreme guide (hudan lil-nas) for an experience of the Divine, and for the most upright manner of living in the empirical world as a preparation for the fullness of life in the post resurrection. It was the divine structure of the Qur'an that Muhammad assumed his prophetic role, and he remained faithful to every aspect of it. Upon its authority he proclaimed an uncompromising ethical monotheism, that God is One and, as a corollary to this ontological statement, what is required of mankind. He warned the unrighteous of God's judgment and punishment, if they refused to repent and turn from their wicked ways. For the first twelve years of his prophethood, the Prophet made these daring proclamations in Makkah where polytheism, immorality and injustice were the practice of the time. The surahs of the early Meccan period comprise short admonitions in succinct and moving verses. By contrast the later surahs are more didactic, and they tell of Prophets and their societies before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. The intention of Qur'anic teachings was to establish a community on the shahadah and on exemplary conduct where morality, justice and brotherhood

would prevail.

This intent continued when the Prophet went to Medina following the *hijrah*. In addition to his prophetic proclamations for the establishment of a community under the sovereignty of God, the Prophet also exemplified himself as an outstanding law-giver and statesman. The Medina surahs, though less in number are of greater length, presenting didactic arguments, discourses and legal pronouncements.<sup>13</sup> We begin at this point to get a good picture of the Islamic comprehensive view of the sacred and the secular. These are not to be dichotomized and all therein belong to God by his mysterious act of creation. The holy Qur'an contains the remedy for the malady of disobedience and corruptions in society. The ethical monotheism that the Qur'an proclaims and the application of the Share'ah will transform the secular under the influence of a theocracy in which God, Nature and Humanity will not be taken as opposing entities, but as fundamental constituents of reality with God as the Creator who is ontologically prior to everything else and upon whom all other beings depend for their existence. Medina became a good example of such a community where there was an intimate binding between the Qur'an and the people. Several verses were revealed to the Prophet in Medina as answers to issues that arose in various situations among the "People of the Book".

*Theological and social issues involving the People, of the Book that is, Jews and Christians as scripture using communities are holy argued, and relation between the Muslim community and members of these two communities are regulated.*<sup>14</sup>

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is unquestionably the precise manifestaion of God's eternal and living Word within the temporal world. It is a glorious Qur'an on a guarded tabler" (85:21-22). It holds the solution to every conceivable problem, and it is an invitaion to mankind to ascend to God through problem, and it is an invitation to mankind to ascend to god through surrender. Surrender in this context does not imply a daprivation of human freedom.



On the contrary, it is way to the full realization of freedom to live the best of all possible lives as ordained by the Creator himself. To surrender means, moreover, to die to what I call the centrifugal self, that is the selfish ego which like a centrifugal force, pulls us away from God, our ontic centre. Conversely it means to live for the centripetal self, that is, the salvation of the soul which like a centripetal force, draws us to God, our ontic centre on the basis of Qur'anic teachings.

The Qur'an spells out in detail how this can be accomplished. In the Iman and the ibadat we are given the orthodox and orthopraxeological dimensions of Islam. Respectively. The Iman proclaims the fundamental doctrinal statement of Islam in the exclusive ontological claim that "there is no god but God' This is the great shahadah, the basic creed of the tradition. The Qur'an, however is not only theocentric and does not confine its teachings to the nature of the Divine. It is also anthropocentric and it has a great deal to say to mankind with reference to what God requires, hence the Ibadat comprise the duties and obligations of every believer. The shahadah in conjunction with salah, zakah, sawm and hajj make up the five pillars of Islam. These five pillars comprise the basic infrastructure of this tradition, and they reflect its ontological and functional dimensions. Islam emphasized duties before rights. If the duties that are prescribed by God in the holy Qur'an are carried out faithfully by believers then the question of right becomes redundant for the basic reason that our rights and freedom's, in the fullest meaning of these terms are not man made but are gifts from god himself. The wise choice to fulfil our duties to god as our first priority is mutually related to the appropriate meaning and experience of individual rights and freedoms.

Over the past fourteen hundred years this has been one of the major emphases of Islam. The tradition recognizes that if the theocentric and anthropocentric dimensions of the Qur'an grasped by believers, then the praxeological obligations will not be seen as an extraneous issue but as an inherent aspect of Islam that mandatory for all believers.

To perceive the Islamic faith from this perspective is to wage war against the power of evil and the prince of darkness without weapons and bloodshed, There are many in our modern world, especially Westerners, who wrongly contend that Islam gives sanction to war under the disguise of Jihad, If anyone reads the holy Qur'an carefully, it will be discovered that the revealed word of God elevates peace and downgrades wars, oppression and injustice. It has to be kept in mind that the world Islam does not only mean surrender to the will of Allah, but it also means peace. Every chapter of the Qur'an (except chapter 9) begins with the heart stirring invocations Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim in the name of God, the compassionate and the Merciful. How can peace, compassion and mercy promote war? There is no inherent contradiction in Islam. It is the promoter of, and advocate for peace, compassion, mercy justice, order etc. in the welfare of all men and women regardless of race, colour, social, educational or economical status. Islam has an outstanding record among the religions of the world, especially in relation to Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity for non-discrimination in the matter of caste, race and colour.

In considering the status of the Qur'an the great Throne Verse and details pertaining to the Last Judgement and eschatological issues are popular topics for discussion. These have been treated extensively elsewhere, but not very often is the controversial and misunderstood notion of Jihad examined for a Western audience. We have given in, so it seems, to the propaganda of the mass media on their erroneous reading of the term jihad, and by extension a biased interpretation of Islam itself.

In the Western world there are many who interpret the word jihad as meaning licence for Muslims to wage war. That, however is not the case. The world jihad means exertion or striving in the path of God, It is a holy war being waged in the hearts of men and women. It is the war, first and foremost, on the psychological and spiritual battleground of the mind against Satan and all the evils which he represents.

Jihad is the internal battle for giving God and his commands first priority and keeping out evil thoughts, speech and action. By remembering and mentioning (dhikr) the name of God, and by cultivating the right attitude (niyyah) for prayer and proper living. We are in the process of jihad, and there is no religion in the world that will deny this to be a virtuous act, and indeed one of their major tenets as well, Islam is peace, seeking neither division no war, but the return of mankind from idolatry, the misconception that science and technology are salvific, from diverse ways of temptation and corruption to the confession of One God, who alone is Absolute Truth, whose unity and divinity are exclusive and who has neither partners nor associates.

The aim of jihad is not to convert non believers by force as many Westerns have come to believe over the years. The Qur'an is explicit on this question when it proclaims, "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower" (2:256). Violence is to be avoided, for this is in keeping with the nature and character of a God who is compassionate, merciful, and just. And it is precisely for this reason that God seeks the protection of the oppressed, Whenever there is and indication of giving sanction to jihad, Islam is very specific about the objectives. In the rarest moments of jihad, it was given sanction for the termination of tyrannical oppression, for the protection of the rights and freedom of the people, and for self defence. It would be appropriate to say that jihad is the ultimate defensive course of action for the preservation of peace, order and justice, Adb-al-Rahman Azzam contends that war is not renewed or perpetuated except against a tyrant who insists on acts of tyranny,..... Persecution, forced conversion, and the deprivation of religious freedom are more distasteful of God than the taking of life"<sup>15</sup> The Qur'an is clear in its injunctions on this matter of war"...but begin not hostilities, Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors" (2:190) If aggressors disist, then let there be no hostility" (2:193).

"God is with those who ward off evil" (2:194). The Qur'an gives exhortation to all who would heed, that they should use their health and wealth in the cause of God "to do good" care for the poor, the orphans, promote peace, order, and justice in the name of God," Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent" (2:195).

Whereas in Christianity the Eternal World of God is believed to have been incarnated in Jesus Christ, in Islam that Word is revealed in a Book (al-Kitab) but it is a very special book which is acknowledged by all Muslims as the Noble/Gracious Qur'an (al-Qur'an al-Karim). To say that Islam is Quranocentric is no exaggeration, so long as we keep in mind that the Qur'an is the word of God revealed as the ultimate guidance (al-Huda) to mankind for making the passage from disobedience to obedience, unrighteousness to righteousness, punishment to reward in eternal life after the resurrection. The oral tradition of the Prophet uses a beautiful simile to explain the status of the Qur'an when it says that the Qur'an is like a rope that makes a link between heaven and earth. between God and faithful believers, This simile brings out the theocentric and anthropocentric dimensions of the Qur'an.

The rich language of the Qur'an has established the criterion for Arabic literature. Its dynamic and heart stringing expressions move men and women to tears of joy and hope. It is a revelation for all seasons and all circumstances. Appropriate selections are recited at the birth of a child, at wedding, funerals, daily prayers etc. The Qur'an permeates every aspect of a believer's life his community and his world-view. Its powerful words add to the aesthetics of mosques. Private and public buildings, covers of books etc, through the creative art of calligraphy. In life the Qur'an permeates every aspect of a believer's life his community and his world and public buildings. covers of books, etc. through the creative art of calligraphy. In life the Qur'an is our teacher, and the content of the lessons to be learned is for the cultivation of exemplary living in the readiness for the final judgement and life in the hereafter. It is the

mouthpiece of God. hence at the conclusion of every recitation, the reader will declare that god the Almighty has truly spoken. In a very special sense, reciting the Qur'an is akin to what we may call a sacrament. A sacrament is an external sign of the internal operation the physiological process of hearing arouses the psychological reaction of the emotions, by the spiritual and mysterious impact upon believers stirs up a variety of religious experiences that are beyond human comprehension. These experiences are not just the doings of the human agent who recites the Qur'an but they are the gift of God's grace. In other words, the Qur'an is the fundamental means through which we can ever hope to experience an encounter with the Divine in any of his attributes. God makes his blessings and is well available to us through the Qur'an which is a miracle based on the grace of God for humanity. The Qur'an is indeed the mediator between God and humanity.

Among the different avenues through which we come to grasp something of the nature of the Qur'an status, we must emphasize its very timely socioreligious and ethical function, which asserts its prominence in modern civilization as it has done throughout the centuries. In spite of the fact that science and technology have removed the barrier of distance and time between East and West, and thus shrunk our world into a global community mankind seems to be divided from one another due to ethnic and cultural differences. Whereas it is a fact that science and technology have been responsible for the confluence of peoples in large cities throughout the world, they have not been effective in bringing about a transformation of life or a reconciliation of peoples into a common brotherhood under the Creatorhood of God. It is indeed understood by some that though science and technology have been able to bring about the sociological phenomenon of a confluence of peoples through modern means of transportation and communication, it is beyond their powers to initiate a *metanoia*, that is, a fundamental change of heart, in the lives of men and women. There are undoubtedly many who have placed

complete faith in science and technology under the false assumption that these accomplishments of the human mind have salvific power.

The heart of the matter with regard to the basic problem of estrangement between people caused by greed and unethical conduct, thinic, economic and religious differences goes back to our estrangement from God, Throughout the centuries, the Qur'an has been calling upon the world to repent and return to God with a contrite heart, for he is merciful and compassionate to forgive and to restore humankind to himself. What science and technology cannot accomplish for our souls, the love of God will for everyone who heeds his 'voice' in the Qur'an and surrenders to his will. The great paradox of our modern world is the fact that though we have been brought closer as a sociological experience, we are a divided people in a fragmented world. We have alienated ourselves from God, from one another and from Nature. The point is, we have become irrationally involved with a false sense of rights and freedoms, and we have forgotten that duty to God must always be given first priority. Meaningful and creative rights and freedoms, are found only in God, Our false sense of rights and freedoms have driven us further into ourselves, which is a constant militant antagonist to all forms of reconciliation and a ally to alienation. Sociologically our great cities around the world display large communities with diverse ethnic and cultural differences. Though there may seem to be a sense of unity by virtue of the fact that such peoples declare allegiance to a common flag, a common constitution, national anthem and currency, their sense of harmony and unity is limited and superficial due to ethnic and cultural differences. Whatever showing of relationship, co-operation and cultural differences. Whatever showing of relationship. co-operation and cultural reciprocity there may appear to be is undermined by suspicion, fear and discrimination, The Islamic sense of community (Ummah), however is fundamentally different because, first and foremost, it acknowledges God as its creator and ultimate head; and it logically

accepts the kinship corollary that follows, namely, that all human beings share in a common brotherhood by God's act of creation, which leads to another corollary of ethical magnitude, namely, that we are under obligation to treat every other person in a manner that is becoming of brotherhood and sisterhood. The Qur'an proclaims.

O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread a broad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward Allah in whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bore you), Lo! Allah hath been a Watcher over you (4:1)

This text emphasizes the unity of the human race. Racial difference are secondary to the fact that all human beings are of "one blood", created by the same God. The Lord has made us into nations and tribes so that we may know one another; and in spite of various differences among us, the common denominator by which we are counted noble in the sight of God is *conduct* (4:13). This is one of the texts that emphasizes an uncompromising ethical monotheism. No one can really say that he/she is obedient to God and not be caring charitable in showing the best of conduct to his/her fellow human beings. Regardless of heritage and social status, the Prophet made no compromise with reference to the equality of all human beings. Nobility does not come by birth: It is not something that is inherited: Even the slave can stand as the noblest in the sight of God, if his conduct is deemed acceptable by his Creator. The call to brotherhood makes it obligatory for all believers to care for the orphans, the poor and the oppressed (89:17-26, 90:11-17).

The criterion for *good* and *successful* life is not based on what the human mind can produce through its scientific and technological abilities, but on how faithful it has been to the revelation of God as phenomenalized in the holy Qur'an. The Qur'an teaches that God has endowed mankind with the faculties to know what is *true* and *good*. It

promotes the process of learning and elevates *Truth* as the greatest challenge to reason and intuition. Islam cherishes understanding and knowledge with open-mindedness and a sense of objectivity. "The blind is not equal with the seer; Nor is darkness (tantamount to) light" (35:19-20). The Qur'an shows the way out of darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge), but it is knowledge that is directed to creativity, charity, brotherhood, and above all, the *will* of God.

Islam places all hope and faith in the Qur'an for the salvation of mankind, because *it* alone is endowed with salvific powers. Whereas it is true that science and technology have improved life to a significant extent they do not possess the salvific potency for the spiritual transformation of life. The 1914-18 war, the Bolshevik revolution of 1920, and in more recent times the Vietnam war and the Gulf war have revealed in the most dramatic manner that science and technology have the potency to destroy humanity. It is false to argue that because we have science and technology, we have wars and the destruction of lives. To pursue this path of argumentation is to make the false assumption that science and technology possess the powers of self-determinism. The fact is, however, that the human being who is endowed with a rational faculty and the freedom of choice, is the only one among all God's creatures who has the ability to determine the course of science and technology. It is the mortal and spiritual character of human agent that determines now science and technology should be used. The qualitative difference between the uses to which they are applied is determined by the quality of character behind them.

The Qur'an has elevated mankind to the noblest status among all God's creation. Human beings are God's viceroys on earth (2:30), and as such they have the moral obligation to carry out His will. In their use of science and technology mankind must be cognizant of the fact that the will of God is supreme. As the viceroys of God, they are called to seek the restoration of their fellowmen to God, to protect his creation and to foster peace and justice, equality and



fraternity. Unlike the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Islam does not portray man as an inheritor of sin. He is created pure and free from sin. It is his environment that corrupts. The Qur'an calls upon God's viceroys to transform the world. It is the culmination of God's revelation to mankind and his final exhortation to heed his call to obedience and responsibility. It enables Muslims to see life in its proper perspective. First, as a temporal being within the phenomenal world and second, as a being with a transcendental self (soul) that longs to be restored to its Creator in a metaphenomenal state of existence. The Qur'an is the ultimate *blueprint* for life in this world in preparation for life in paradise.

#### Notes

1. Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Leominster: Flower Wright Book Ltd., 1981), pp. 739-740.
2. S.A. Ashraf, *New Horizons in Muslim Education* (Cambridge: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), p.4 This book is an excellent crystallization of some fundamental issues in Islamic education.
3. Quoted in *ibid*, p.4.
4. All quotations from the Holy Qur'an are taken from *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation* by Mohammed Mramaduke Pickthall (New York: The New American Library), N.D.
5. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.15.
6. Islam makes a distinction between *prophets* and *messengers*. The role of the Prophet (*nabi*) is to communicate God's message of warning, judgement and repentance to the wicked; and blessings upon the righteous. The message is directed to a particular people in a particular time; and as such it does not "constitute a sacred law or new religious dispensation". Jonah is a good example of such a limited prophetic mandate. He was commissioned to a specific city, Nineveh, to warn people of their evil ways and to call them to repentance. On the other hand, a messenger (*rasul*) of God is also a prophet and is like wise commissioned to a specific community, but inherent in his message is a sacred law (*shari'ah*) that is universally obligatory. Classical examples are Moses and Muhammad. They both came "with a new universal dispensation" and founded a community for the implementation for the God's law. See Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "The Islamic Tradition", in Willard G. Oxtoby (ed.) *World Religions: Western Traditions*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.364.
7. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p.26.
8. *Loc. cit.*
9. Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.29. See also my "The Ontological and Functional in Islam" in *Islamic University*, vol. 2, No.2 (London: International Colleges of Islamic Science, July-September, 1995), pp.31-35.
10. *Ibid.*, p.2. There were other German translations of the Qur'an, for example, the first to be made from Arabic was by David Friedrich Meierlin in 1772 followed by that of Friedrich Eberhard Boysen in 1773. These were followed by other Islamic works, for example, Johann Jacob Reiske undertook the pioneering "task of integrating Is-

lamic history into universal history". Schimmel further observes that "The classical attitude, which concluded the West's centuries-old critical if not inimical preoccupation with Islam, is expressed in Goethe's *Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-Ostlichen Divan* (1818). Cautiously and with due justice he attempts to describe not only Muhammad's personality, but also the essence of Islamic culture as expressed in its main form, Arabic and Persian" (*ibid.*, p.3). It is interesting to note that Islamic cultural influences on Europe date back to medieval times with the occupation of Spain and Sicily, notwithstanding the tensions and suspicions arising from political and theological disagreement, and from differences in manners and customs. For a good quality study in Islam's contributions to Europe, see Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume (eds.) *The Legacy of Islam*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 108-397; also W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Surveys: The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1972), pp.2-71.

11. *Ibid.*, p.3. For a detailed and excellent study of the Qur'an and occidental scholarship see W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Surveys*, (Edinburgh: The University Press 1970) pp.173-786.

12. Arthur J. Arberry, (tr.) *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford University Press 1964), p.x. See for example something of the sublime nature of the Qur'an as expressed in The Throne Verse (*Avat al-Kursi*) which is one of the most moving verses in the Sacred Book, and which reads as follows:

Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous. (2:255)

One cannot help but be deeply touched by the tone and movement of this Verse as it describes so vividly the divine majesty and splendour. That He is One, that He is alive, that He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient evoke from a sincere reader a profound sense of awe and wonder.

As another example, see *surah* LV which is entitled The Beneficent (*Al-Rahman*). This is a psalm that sings the Praises of God For His infinite mercies. The *Surah* weaves into one composite whole the power and glory of God, the terrors of Hell, and the joys of Paradise. (Arberry, p.xii). As each *surah* of the Qur'an is analysed, one finds that there is a homogeneous message expressed with an astounding array of beauty and captivating rhythmic movement.

13. Mahmoud M Ayoub, *pp.cit.*, p.368.

14. *Loc. cit.*

15. Abd-al-Rahman 'Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad* (Toronto: The New American Library of Canada, 1964), p.130; see also the Qur'an 2:190-193 and 2:216-217; and for a more detailed study see Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Medieval and Modern Islam* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1977), pp.9-79.