

# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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## **The Fragrance of East**

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

***"So eat of what Allah has provided you, lawful and good, and give thanks for Allah's favors, if it is Him that you serve".(Surah al-Nahl- 114)***

#### **Commentary:**

A possible connection is that Allah (swt) is addressing the Makkan unbelievers, then passing through a phase of hunger and fear, that they could instead believe in Him and His Messenger and "eat of what Allah has provided you, lawful and good" (Razi).

***"He has only forbidden carrion, blood, swine's flesh, and what has been hallowed to other than. But whoever is driven to it, neither desiring (it) nor transgressing, then, surely, (unto such) Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Kind".(Surah al-Nahl- 115)***

#### **Commentary:**

That is, anything dedicated to, or hallowed for other than Allah whether it is an animal, a food article, or something else. For example, in some parts of the Muslim world, a goat or ram is named after a Sheikh (peer), and sacrificed at his arrival in town or village. Now, they might spell Allah's name while slaughtering the animal, but since it was dedicated to other than Allah, the jurists declare its meat unlawful to the Muslims, as well as such act of dedication (Au).•

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

***It is related by Shaddad bin Aus that he heard the Apostle of God say: "Whoever offered salah for display was guilty of Polytheism, and whoever observed fasting for display was guilty of Polytheism, and whoever practised charity for display was guilty of Polytheism ." (Masnad-Ahmad)***

#### **Commentary:**

Real Polytheism lies in associating anyone with God in His Being, Attributes and Functions, and in His Special Rights, and yielding obeisance and offering worship to anyone aside of Him. This is the 'actual', 'open' or 'major' Polytheism about which it is stated in the Qur'an and is an Article of Faith with us, the Muslims, that whoever is guilty of it shall never be admitted to Heaven, But there are some acts and morals which though they do not amount to polytheism in that sense, are related to it, one way or the other. One of these is that a person offered worship or did any other virtuous act not with the intention of propitiating God and seeking His good graces, but for impressing others so that people might say that he was a godly man and become his disciples. This is what is called Riya, and despite the fact that it is not Polytheism in the true sense it does represent a grade of it. It is a kind of Hypocrisy and a highly sinful practice. In another narrative, it has been described as 'concealed', and, in yet another as 'minor' Polytheism, We shall take up both the reports later. It should, however, be noted that Namaz, Roza and charity have been mentioned in this Tradition merely as an example or else any good deed which is performed with an eye on renown or any other worldly advantage is equivalent in significance to Polytheism and will merit severe chastisement in place of reward. •

Editor's Note:

## The first pillar of Islam

Pronouncement of faith that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger is called "*Kalima*." It is the quintessence of Islam. It consists of two parts. The first is no deity except Allah and only He deserves to be worshipped. The second affirms that Muhammad is Allah's messenger. This *Kalima* is called *Kalima e-Towheed* (The creed of oneness of Allah)

It should be kept in mind that only uttering this *Kalima* is not sufficient. Apart from it one must believe in two *Kalimas* (*Imans*) i.e. *Iman Mujmal* (*Iman* in brief) and *Iman Mufassal* (*Iman* in detail) *Iman Mujmal* is:

*Amantu bill lahi kama Huwa bi Asmaihi wa sifa tihi wa qabiltu jamia Ahkamihi.* (I affirm my faith in Allah as He is with all His names and attributes and I accept all of His Commands)

*Iman Mufassal* is:

*Amantu billahi wa malaikatihi wa kutubihi wa Rusulihi wal Youmil Akhiri wal- qadri kharihi wa shar-rihi minal lahi taala wal bathi badal maut.* (I affirm my faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Day of Judgement, in that the fate good or bad is predetermined by Allah and in coming to life after death(resurrection).

Now let us ponder over the first part of the *Kalima* "*Laillaha Illallah*". As a religion Islam stands for complete submission and reposing faith in Allah Muslims are not allowed to worship or bow before anyone or anything except Almighty Allah. Unlike other religions, Islam is a pure monotheistic one. For instance, if someone bows down before others except Allah, it would be an act of polytheism. In Islamic concept polytheism is an unforgivable sin. It is contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is a rebellion against the Creator. Allah forgiveth not that partners should be setup with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed." (S.4.A, 48)

Due to such sensitive and delicate points of Islam, Muslims raise their voice against "*Vande Mataram*", *Surya Namaskar* and other such type of polytheistic songs and acts.

As regards other religions, they can bow their heads to idols, deities, images and so on. Such kind of worship is not considered polytheism in their religious concept. Above all, the concept of polytheism is not found in other faiths except Islam. But it is unfortunate that Muslims also do not understand this sensitive issue.

It may be recalled that in late 1990s when U.P. Government made it compulsory for students that every morning they recite '*Vande Mataram*' Late S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH) strongly opposed it and ultimately Government had to withdraw the order.

No doubt, this event shows that Islam is not a bundle of dogmas and doctrines but is a complete code of life and indicates that Muslims are bound to bow only before Allah. In Islam bowing before anyone and making demands except Allah is "*Shirk*" that is a great sin. Holy Qur'an says that those who join Allah with others commit sin and will never be forgiven.

Elaborating the sensitive issues of Islam Late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes: "Islam embraces all the manifold aspects of human personality spiritual and material, moral and physical, emotional and intellectual, personal and social. It casts a man into a new mould. Whoever embraces Islam with an open heart and believing it to be the chosen faith of the Lord and the last of the Divine messenger will get into the Islamic frame. He will be transformed so radically as if he had been born a new because Islam is a complete and eternal plan of life which comprehends all aspects of change and revolution, and perfection

and beauty. Islam is not a wooden dogma or a traditional religion, but a faith that permeates through the innermost recesses of the heart and soul."

The second part of the *kalima* is "*Muhammad Rasulullah*:". One can not be a Muslim without reposing trust in it. Almighty Allah said: "say: if you do love Allah follow me: Allah will love you and forgive your sins; for Allah is oft Forgiving, Most Merciful" (S 3 A 31). Our progress and prosperity lies in carrying out the teachings and instructions of holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Hence it is imperative for us to follow the path shown by him in letter and spirit.

In his book "Muhammad the Benefactor of Humanity", Naeem Siddiqi has rightly observed." The Prophet's life is not the story of Rustam and Sohrab or the tale of a Thousand And One Nights. It is not the story of an Imaginary character and its study is not to be treated as a literary pastime! It is not the life of a person but the story of a historical force which appeared in the form of a man, It is not the story of a Darves who cut himself off from the world and sitting in seclusion had devoted himself to self purification. On the other hand, it is the biography of one who was the moving spirit of a movement. It is not the story of a man but of a man-maker. It covers the noble deeds of the builder of a new world. The achievements of a whole community, a revolutionary movement and a collective effort are comprised in it. The prophet's life from the cave of Hira to the cave of Thaur, from the sanctuary of the kaaba to the market of Taif, from the closets of the Mothers of Muslims to the battlefield, is all-embracing. His impress is the hall-mark of many lives. Abu Bakr, Omar, Usman, Ali, Ammar, Yasir, khalid, Bilal and Suhail are different chapters of one life. There is a whole garden where every flower and petal narrate the gardeners' life".

That is why prophet Muhammad (SAW) is loved by all Muslims and not a single absurd word against him can be tolerated by them. He is dearer to their own lives.

Hussein Haykal wrote in his book "The life of Muhammad," Muhammad, God's peace and blessing be upon him! This noble name has been on the lips of countless million of men. For almost fourteen centuries, millions of hearts have palpitated with deep emotion at the pronouncement of it. Many more millions of people for a period as long as time will pronounce it and will be deeply moved thereby," (An Encounter with Islam, P, 16)

In short Islam is summed up in *Kalima*. After uttering this *Kalima*, one enters into the fold of Islam and becomes a Muslim. Who is Muslim? Prophet says: "A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims feel secure and a believer is one from whom the life and property of others remain unthreatened. "The holy Prophet further said: "The excellence of Islam is that a man gives up every frivolity."

We should introspect ourselves. Are we really good Muslims? If we are not so as the Prophet described about believers. We should try to become like them. After *iman*, it is improper to involve in anti-social activities and unholy acts. Almighty Allah says: " O ye who believe! enter into Islam wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy." (S. 2.A 208). •

OR Nadwi

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# Mankind's debt to the Prophet Muhammad II\*

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Now let us refer to the compliments paid to the greatest benefactor of humanity by a few eminent men of letters of this part of the world where I am speaking. One of these candid men Lamartine of France, says in his tribute to the prophet-hood of Muhammad (pbuh):

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls. On the basis of a Book, every race. He has left us as the indelible characteristic of his Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods and the passion for the one and immaterial God. This avenging patriotism of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Mohammad; the conquest of one-third of the earth to this dogma was his miracle; rather it was not the miracle of man but that of reason. The idea of the unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogonies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world.

John William Draper, the reputed author of A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe, Writes:

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\* A public lecture given on Tuesday 22, August 1989 at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born at Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised that the greatest influence upon the human race.

He says further:

Muhammad possessed that combination of qualities which more than once has decided the fate of empires..... Asserting that everlasting truth, he did not engage in vain metaphysics, but applied himself to improving the social condition of the people by regulations respecting personal cleanliness. Sobriety, fasting and prayer.

The great historian-philosopher of this century, A.J. Toynbee, is on record that:

The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue.

It is a strange coincidence that over a hundred years ago. Thomas Carlyle chose Muhammad (pbuh) as the supreme hero, and now, in the closing decades of the twentieth century, Michael H. Hart of the United States of America has prepared a list of the most influential persons in history and placed the Prophet at the top of that list.

The Prophet of Islam and his followers conferred favours on humanity which have played an unforgettable role in the promotion and development of culture and civilization. We will mention here only two of these, amply supported by historical evidence.

Students of history are aware that in the thirteenth century the civilized world, divided by the two great religions, Christianity and Islam, was suddenly confronted with a situation which threatened to engulf all the accomplishments of mankind and reduce them once more to barbarism. It was brought about by the



sudden rise of Genghis Khan (Tamuchin), a chieftain of nomadic Mongol tribes, who possessed remarkable qualities of leadership and was able to carry all that came in his way. In 619/1219 Genghis Khan turned towards the western and northern civilized countries and ravaged them with fire and sword. How severe a blow the Mongol invasion dealt to all social and cultural progress in the field of religion and learning, arts and crafts and industrial development in these civilized countries, can be gauged by a few graphic description of Mongol rapine and slaughter given by Harold Lamb, the biographer of Genghis Khan:

.....cities in his path were often obliterated, and rivers diverted from their courses; deserts were peopled with the fleeing and dying, and when he had passed, wolves and ravens often were the sole living things in once populated lands.

And consternation filled all Christendom, a generation after the death of Genghis Khan, when the terrible Mongol horsemen were riding over western Europe, when Boleslas of Poland and Bela of Hungary fled from stricken lands, and Henry, Duke of Silesia, died under the arrows with his Teutonic Knights at Liegnitz sharing the fate of the Grand-Duke George of Russia.

Such details are too horrible to dwell upon today. It was a war carried to its utmost extent-an extent that was very nearly approached in the last European War. It was the slaughter of human beings without hatred-simply to make an end of them.

Unchecked by human valour, they were able to overcome the terrors of vast deserts, the barriers of mountains and seas, the severities of climate, and the ravages of famine and pestilence. No danger could appal them, no stronghold could resist them, no prayer for mercy could move them.

His achievement is recorded for the most part by his enemies. So devastating was his impact upon civilization that virtually a new beginning had to be made in half the world. The

empires of Chathay, of Prester John, of Black Cathay, of Kharesem, and-after his death-the Caliphate of Baghdad, of Russia and for a while the principalities of Poland, ceased to be. When this indomitable barbarian conquered a nation all other warfare come to an end. The whole scheme of things, whether sorry or otherwise, was altered, and among the survivors of a Mongol conquest peace endured for a long time.

Harold Lamb correctly says that impact of the Mongols, brought about by Genghis Khan, has been well summed up by the authors of the Cambridge Medieval History in these words:

This new power in history-the ability of one man to alter human civilization kublai, when the Mangol empire tended to break up. It has not reappeared since.

The terror of the Mongol invasion was not confined to Turkistan, Iran and Iraq alone. The Mongol atrocities provoked trembling even in far-off corners of the world where the Mongols could have hardly been expected to carry their arms. Edward Gibbon writes in His History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

The Latin world was darkened by this cloud of savage hostility; a Russian fugitive carried the alarm to Sweden; and the remote nations of the Baltic and the ocean trembled at the approach of the Tartars, whom their fear and ignorance were inclined to separate from the human species.

The Mongols first attacked Bukhara and razed it to dust. Not a single soul was spared by them. Thereafter, they laid Samarkand in ruins and massacred the entire population. The same was the fate of other urban centers in the then Islamic world. The Tartars would have most probably devastated the whole of Christendom (then divided politically and suffering from numerous social evils, already mentioned earlier), as stated by H G Wells:

A prophetic amateur of history surveying the world in the opening of the seventh century might have concluded very reasonably that it was only a question of a few centuries before the whole of Europe and Asia fell under Mongolian domination.

Harold Lamb also writes:

We only know that the German and Polish forces broke before the onset of the Mongol standard, and were almost exterminated; Henry and his barons died to a man, as did the Hospitable..... In less than two months they had overrun Europe from the headwaters of the Elbe to the sea, had defeated three great armies and a dozen smaller ones and had taken by assault all the towns excepting Olmutz.

But then a miraculous event changed the course of history. It not only allowed the civilized world to have a sigh of relief but also permitted culture and civilization to be built afresh. The hearts of the indomitable Mongols were captured by the faith of their subjects who had lost all power and prestige. Arnold writes in *The Preaching of Islam*:

In spite of all difficulties, however, the Mongols and savage tribes that followed in their wake were at length brought to submit to the faith of those Muslim peoples whom had crushed beneath their feet.

The name of only a few dedicated servants of Islam who won the savage Tartars to their faith are known to the world. But their venture was no less daring not the achievement less significant than a great and successful reform movement. Their memory shall always be cherished as much by the Muslims, as By Christendom, or rather by all mankind, since they rescued the world from the barbarism of a savage race, the insecurity of widespread upheaval, and allowed it to again devote its energies to the establishment of social and political stability. The normalcy thus restored once again allowed the world to resume its journey of cultural development

and promotion of arts and crafts, learning and teaching, preaching and writing.

After the death of Genghis khan, his vast conquests were divided into four dominions headed by his sons' children. The message of Islam then began to spread among all these four sections of the Mongols who were before long converted to Islam.

The Tartars not only accepted Islam a number of great scholars, writers, poets, mystics and fighters in the way of God, rose from amongst them. Their conversion to Islam completely changed their outlook and civilization, which benefited not only the Islamic East but also Christendom and even India. The Tartars made nine or ten attempts to capture India during the thirteenth century but the Sultans of Turkish descent, among whom Alauddin khilji (d 716/13124) and his commander Ghiyathuddin Tughluq (d. 725/1324) were the more prominent, repelled them on each occasion. It was on account of them that the cultural and intellectual heritage of this ancient and prosperous country was saved from destruction and the two great religions, Islam and Hinduism, continued to flourish there.

This achievement of Islam, the transformation of the Tartars into a civilized people, was a service of a defensive nature rendered to humanity in general, and to the West in particular.

Another accomplishment of Islam, in contrast to the one just described, was to introduce a new method of thought and learning. It was like a flash of light in the Dark Ages of Europe and paved the way for its Renaissance. It transformed not only Europe but helped the entire human race to be benefited by new researches and discoveries. A new era of empirical sciences was inaugurated which has changed the face of the earth. The intellectual patrimony of the ancients (consisting of philosophy, mathematics and medicine) found its way to Europe through Muslim Spain. This intellectual gift consisted of observation and experiment, and

inductive logic which replaced deductive logic, and completely changed Europe's way of thought. Science and technology were the fruits of this new way of thought. All the discoveries made by European an scientific exploration in short, whatever success has so far been achieved in harnessing the forces of nature are directly related to inductive reasoning, not known to Europe until it was bequeathed to it by Muslim Spain. The noted French historian, Gustave le Bon, writes of the Arab contribution to Modern Europe:

Observation, experimentation and inductive logic which from the fundamentals of knowledge are attributed to Roger Bacon but it needs to be acknowledged that this process of reasoning was entirely an Arab discovery.

Robert Briffault has also reached the same conclusion, for he says:

There is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic civilization is not traceable.

He further says:

It is not science only which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life.

Those who have studied the history of the Catholic Church and the Reformation are aware of the profound effect of Islamic teachings on the minds of those who initiated reform in Christendom. We can see the influence of Islam reflected in the thought of Martin Luther's (1483-1546) Reformation movement. The revolt against autocratic leadership in the Catholic Church in medieval Europe also reveals the influence of Islam, which had no organized church.

It is our moral duty to acknowledge both these great favours conferred by Islam which have had a revolutionary significance for the world. When we speak of those who conferred these gifts or reassess their achievements we must at least keep in view the rules

of courtesy which have been accepted by all nations and cultured peoples and schools of thought.

We should not abandon the norms of politeness, moderation, dignity and truthfulness, for these have been commended by the scriptures of all religions, moral treatises, by great writers and critics. It is on such civilized behavior that good relations between different religions, communities and peoples depend such behavior alone makes possible a purposeful dialogue between persons holding different views. In its absence all serious writings, critiques and review must degenerate into obscene and sensational novels, vulgar and outrageous parodies. Such writing can unleash negative and disruptive forces. Not only contemptible in themselves and harmful to serious intellectual Endeavour, but also likely to embitter relations between different nations and countries.

The argument that any restraint placed on freedom of expression amounts to coercion, restriction of personal freedom, or interference in the rights of individuals under the constitution of an independent country, is simply untenable. Obscene and offensive description of the benefactors of mankind, prophets and reformers, particularly if such narration is against the established facts of history, hurts the feelings of millions who respect and revere them and is also likely to cause disharmony between different groups within a country or even between countries. It is an intolerable infringement of moral values. An offence against humanity, that should not be overlooked by any peace-loving nation upholding the value of harmonious co-existence between its different ethnic and religious communities. Western political thinkers, too, do not subscribe to such an unlimited right of freedom of expression. They have argued that such unlimited liberty would be even more harmful than the limits placed on freedom of expression. The subject might be treated at great length, but I will cite here only two authorities who have explained why

limitations on freedom of expression are essential for the maintenance of public order.

Isaiah Berlin explains the two concepts of liberty in these words:

To protest against the laws governing censorship or personal morals as intolerable infringements of personal liberty presupposes a belief that activities which such laws forbid are fundamental needs of men as men, in a good (or, indeed, any) society. To defend such laws is to hold that these needs are not essential, or that they cannot be satisfied without sacrificing other values which come higher satisfy deeper needs than individual freedom, determined by some standard that is not merely subjective, a standard for which some objective status in principle or a priori is claimed.

The extent of man's or a peoples' liberty to choose to live as they desire must be weighed against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or happiness, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples. For this reason it cannot be unlimited.

The speech delivered in the American Senate by Blackstone in 1897 which forms the basis of American law on the subject, says about freedom of expression:

Every free man has an undoubted right in law to air what sentiment he pleases before the public; to forbid this is to destroy the freedom of the press: but if he publishes what is improper, mischievous or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity. To subject the press to the restrictive power of a licencer.....is to subject all freedom of sentiment to the prejudices of one man, and make him the arbitrary and infallible judge of all controversial points in learning, religion and Government. But to punish....any dangerous or offensive writings which when published, shall on fair and impartial trial be adjudged of pernicious tendency, is necessary for the preservation of peace and good order, of Government and religion, the only solid foundations of civil liberty. Thus, the will of individuals is still left free; the abuse only of that free will is the object of legal punishment.

I would like to conclude my talk with an exhilarating poem by Dr. Iqbal, the poet of the East, as he is known in the Muslim world, in which he enchantingly depicts the great favours conferred on humanity by the prophethood of Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of God) which are unique and unparalleled.

Touched by the breath of the unlettered one,  
The sands of Arabia began to sprout tulips.  
Freedom under his care was reared 'Today' of nations comes  
from his 'yesterday'.  
He put heart in the body of man.  
And from his face the veil he lifted.  
Every god of old he destroyed.  
Every withered branch by his moisture bloomed.  
The heat of the battle of Badr and Hunain.  
Haider and Siddiq, Farooq and Hussain.  
In the thick of battle the majesty of Azan,  
The recitation of As-Saffat at the point of sword.  
The scimitar of Ayub, the glance of Bayazid.  
Key to the treasures of this world and the next.  
Ecstasy of heart and mind from the same goblet,  
Fusion of Rumi's rapture and Razi's thought.  
Knowledge and wisdom. Faith and law, polity and rule.  
Yearnings hidden within the restless hearts.  
Al-Hamara and Taj of beauty breath-taking.  
To which even angels pay tribute.  
These. Too, a fragment of his priceless bequest,  
Of his glimpses just one glimpse.  
His glimpses just one glimpse.  
His exterior these enthralling sights.  
Of his interior even the knowledge unaware.  
Boundless praise be to the Apostle blessed.  
Who imparted faith to elevate a handful of dust. •



## **Role of Ulema Vis-a-Vis Imperialism**

**S. M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi\***

All praise to the Almighty, peace upon the holy prophet, upon his kin and venerable companions.

Basic concept of Islamic message, manifest in all walks of life of a believer, is freedom, entirely different from the one propounded by the western intelligentsia and practiced by their society, for whom freedom is equated mainly to liberty from religious and moral norms. The subtle distinction between "freedom" and "liberty" has been totally ignored by the so-called modern society. Islam conceives freedom as obeisance to one and the only God, liberating human kind from all other bondages. All worldly possessions, cravings, even the life itself, are endowments from the Almighty and instruments for acting upon his will. Sacrificing ones life for any noble cause like self-defence, defence of ones country, and above all for promulgation of His writ, bestow upon a person the rank of a martyr.

Saeed bin Zaid related, as having heard from the holy prophet (pbuh): Who dies in defence of his belongings, of his religion, of his kith and kin, his own life, is a martyr.

God delivers His creatures from subservience of their fellow beings and directs them to serve one and the only God; (delivers them) from excesses from multifarious religions towards Islamic justice.

Prior to emergence of Islam, religions and military despotism held sway. Islam ushered religious, political, economic and social justice and stressed upon dignity and respect for fellow humans. A single unjustified murder is rated not only as a sin but as tantamount to murder of a whole community. Explicit, cogent regulations on the subject have been formulated.

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Muslims, despite being a numerical minority, ruled in India over a long period, not facing any major revolt, the under lying reason being the promulgation of a dignified way of life, quality culture with healthy moral standards, and literacy. The frontiers of the country were adequately guarded and the dominions unified. They rid the society of the lesion of mutual subservience. Poet Iqbal has deftly summed up the scenario in one of his couplets:

*Mahmood and Ayaz fell in the same row  
There remained no distinction of a master and servant*

With the decline of Muslim rule, weakening of Islamic concept among masses, the phenomenon of mutual discord, exploitation of weak by the strong took hold, values of justice and fair play deteriorated. Internal and external threats led to the collapse of a system which had, by then, lost sight of its noble cause and had gone awry.

The conscientious Ulema (persons of great wisdom, experts, mainly on religious subject), went all out to stem the rot and redeem system which had once been the guiding light for moral standards, culture, education and economic uplift, with injustice and fair play forming the foundation. With masses from sections of the society falling in line, they took up cudgels against the ingress of alien ingress, sacrificing even their lives for the freedom of their country. Movement led by Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shaheed was the foremost in this struggle, as a result of which, they were the targets for brutalities inflicted by the new regime, which did ultimately over power the uprising. Historians, including the British, acknowledge these facts, the western writers going all out to distort the history, presenting Ulema and their followers as the worst enemies of their country.

The struggle for regaining freedom foreign rule peaked in 1857 CE and once again it was Muslims to the forefront. Upon the uprising being ultimately crushed by the British, the brunt of oppression was borne, again, by the Muslims, mainly. Over a considerable period Muslims had to confine and devote themselves to bringing about

educational and cultural renaissance rather than going after the lost political supremacy. Outcome is discernable in the form of educational institutions, which despite a not too favourable environment, brought home to the masses the balanced Islamic values, correct perceptions on mode of living, realities of life and death. An unshakable belief in all events being controlled by the one and only God, forms the foundation of entire life and the doorway towards supremacy over worldly powers.

Lives and deeds of Muslims present examples hardly matched by other communities. A Muslim, ideally, is a conqueror, teacher, founder of a quality culture, pioneer in the field of investigations and quest for truth, with freedom of thought as the guide. The great Caliph Hazrat Omar Farooq once reprimanded the son of Hazrat Amr bin al Aas, governor of Egypt, as to how he could even think of enslaving those whom God created free.

When the imperialistic powers of West attempted to dominate the world, specially Muslim countries, it was from India that the strongest opposition originated, which in fact, proved to be the harbinger of similar endeavour elsewhere also, and ultimately for our country's own struggle.

This day a finger of suspicion is directed towards Darul Uloom Deoband and its men of wisdom, whereas, it was really from there that most ardent prominent freedom fighters emerged. A majority of Ulema were active in the fight against foreign dominance, and were entirely oblivious of their personal gains. No rewards, even when by the authorities, could entice them. The two outstanding examples are the personalities like Sheikhul-Islam Hazrat Maulana Syed Husain Ahmad Madani and philosopher of Islam Hazrat Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. Refrain from British way of life and abhorrence to imperialism are still ingrained in the character of Ulema. It is a glaring fact that the historians blatantly obscure the names and deeds of such noble persons also whom may not be in the category of Ulama yet as patriotic Muslims, sacrificed everything for the country and humanity. •

## Understanding the Spirit of Islam

Muhammad Mujeeb

Maulana Azad (1888-1958), the other religious thinker of our age who, as we have said, had the chance of defining *amal-i-salih*, was a person of an entirely different stamp. He was born in an extremely orthodox family of Sufis and divines, and was brought up to lead a religious life. But he was intellectual and sensitive and responsive to influences. Even before his education had been completed, he became restive under the restrictions imposed on him by the opinion of his family and its large circle of followers. We have in his Tazkirah an almost allegorical account of his doubts, his spiritual agony, his return, like the prodigal son, to the bosom of his faith. He hints at having tasted forbidden fruit, but mentions only music. However, once he was firm on his feet, the pent-up forces of his personality were released. He took educated Indian Muslims by storm with his eloquence and fervour, when he began the publication of Al-Hilal in 1912, and remained in public life till his death. We have dealt separately with his political ideas and activities. What we need to note here is that his political ideas were the expression of his innermost belief. This took time to mature, but he had begun of his commentary on the Quran in 1916, and the vicissitudes of his career served only to confirm him all the more in his faith.

Maulana Azad's writings, except for his India Wins Freedom and two collections of letters, had a deeply religious colour. Indeed, he seemed always to be talking the Quran. The difference between him and others who establish their arguments in a similar fashion is that he considered the Quran as the real basis of the faith, and it inspired all his thinking. He did not limit his horizon by accepting traditional interpretations, by deriving his opinions from other sources, and using the Quranic text as formal proof. He

could therefore, think more freely and independently than others, and warn and guide with complete self-confidence. As early as 1913, Maulana Azad had arrived at definite conclusions of some fundamental issues.

The purpose for which Islam came into the world was to command what is (recognized as) good and forbid what is (recognized as) evil; and commanding what is (recognized as) good and jihad are two forms of the same injunction. Therefore, every effort devoted to what is right, every expenditure of resources that serves the cause of truth and goodness, every labour and burden undertaken to promote justice, all pain and suffering endured in the body and the mind while striving in the way of God, all the fetters and shackles of the dungeon that bind hands and feet in punishment for proclaiming the truth, every scaffold to which the beauty of truth and the love of justice leads, in short, every sacrifice of life and property, every service with tongue and pen, performed in the cause of truth and justice, is jihad in the way of Allah, and is comprehended in the meaning of jihad.

This is the reason why the command of jihad follows inevitably from (belief in) Islam, and no one can be a Muslim and a believer in the one God unless he undertakes jihad.

Islam does not commend narrow mindedness and racial and religious prejudice. It does not make the recognition of merit and virtue, of human benevolence, mercy and love, dependent upon and subject to distinctions of religion and race. It teaches us to respect every man who is good, whatever be his religion, to let ourselves be drawn towards merits and virtues, whatever the religion or the race of the person who possesses them... But above and beyond this law of universal goodwill, and I do not hesitate to own it even in this age of hypothetical impartiality, is the jihad of helping the cause of justice, worshipping Allah and establishing rightmindedness and justice. Islam teaches us that the purpose of

the creation of man is that he should represent God on earth, and keep burning the torch of truth and light.

Muslims today do not need to lay new foundations or to exercise ingenuity. They have only to revive and reaffirm what has been commanded. (There is no reason why we should feel distraught over the new houses to be built; we need only to settle down in the dwelling we have forsaken.) This is the difference in principle between my conviction as regards what is to be done and the methods of my contemporaries.

These were not academic opinions. Maulana Azad could warn with all the fire and fevour of the traditional preacher. One of the articles in the *Al-Balagh* may be taken as an illustration of his particular method. In the actual context, the reference is to the Israelites, but it is also obvious from Maulana Azad's paraphrase of the verses that he is challenging the Indian Muslims to consider whether the statements do not apply to them also.

Now their condition is such that whether they are threatened or not threatened, it is all the same to them; whether you warn them of the consequences of their actions or not, they will never listen; because of the falsehood in them God has sealed their hearts, closed up their ears, and thrown over their eyes a veil so that they have become ignorant and hard-hearted. No matter how many lamps are lighted in front of a blind man, he can not see the light, and without doubt this is an utterly wretched condition.

The real reason for this is that to call upon a person to break the chains forged by centuries of custom and habit, belief and practice, and adopt a new line of thought and action; to step all at once out of an environment of particular beliefs and practices in which his mind has developed from childhood to old age; to call upon him to do this is to ask him to acquire a new body, a new mind, a new imagination, new senses; to turn away for ever from, or rather sever all relations with everything that was near and dear

to him; to wipe his mind clean of all that he liked and was habituated to; in brief, to be born again, to go through a mental renaissance. To achieve this is one of the most difficult tasks human resolution could set itself.

In the Tazkirah, Maulana Azad went further. He made it clear that the major influence responsible for breeding among the Muslims the mentality of the Israelites was the juristic view of Islam, in which the criterion was not the Quran but legal opinion, not the life which the Quran asks us to lead, but conduct-whether intrinsically good or bad-that could be proved correct under the law. He condemned this attitude, and with a moving eloquence praised those who rebelled against it. But in the Tazkirah his thinking- and also his writing-is not systematic. His appeal to the Quran and Hadith give only a vague idea of what he had in mind, and do not indicate what he considered to be correct belief and practice. But we shall be accepting much if we accept Maulana Azad's view that the juristic interpretation of Islam, which had been passively acknowledged by the Muslim community or had been forced upon it, was in fact a misinterpretation that obscured from the eyes of the Muslims many of the highest moral and spiritual values of Islam.

Maulana Azad's maturest thought appears in the Tarjuman-ul-Quran, the first volume of which was published in 1931. The Tarjuman is a commentary, and is technically concerned only with what is stated in the Quranic text, which has been closely followed. But the questions which Maulana Azad has raised are all relevant to life, his range of thought is wide and comprehensive, his conclusions clear, reasonable and satisfying. The Tarjuman is free from any tendency towards apologetics, and from any attempts to read into the Quran what is really not there. This is because Maulana Azad's thought, in fact, does spring out of the Quran and from no other source, and he has brought to the understanding of

the Quran and from no other source, and he has brought to the understanding of the Quran a rich and varied experience and an intensity of suffering along with the necessary knowledge. He has not written with an eye on the Western, or even the Indian Muslim readers. The Tarjuman is the product of deep personal conviction, of belief unpolluted by any extraneous considerations. It is, perhaps, the finest example of the constructive thinking enjoined on the Muslims.

There may be much in Maulana Azad's interpretation of details that is new, but discussion of these would take us far afield. The most significant characteristic of the Tarjuman is its approach, and this is fully explained in the commentary on the Sura-e-Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran. A discussion of this would enable us to indicate what Maulana Azad himself considered fundamental.

In this introduction, Maulana Azad gives an outline of the historical development of belief in God, but he does not concern himself with the philosophical or scientific proofs of the existence of God. He begins with an exposition of what the attributes of God as given in the Sura-e-Fatiha imply. The first is Rabbul-alamin. God is Rabb, And Rububiyah, or being Rabb, means "to develop a thing from stage to stage, in accordance with its inherent aptitudes and needs, in order that it might fulfill itself". Rububiyah has an external aspect, which is nature and all that occurs in nature to make life possible. It has an equally significant, an, for human beings, perhaps even more important inward aspect, which is seen in Taqdir and Hidayah. Taqdir is the assignment of a particular role to everything, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the universal order, the means to fulfill the assigned role are provided and the role is, in fact, fulfilled. Hidayah is guidance, most obvious in the form of



instinct. The assignment of a proper function and the guidance towards its performance, together, constitute proof that creation has a purpose and an end, that it is not without meaning and significance. It is this evidence that leads us on the belief in the Oneness of God. In revelation, in prophethood, in life after death. They are fundamental to the universal order, to its purpose and its meaning.

These ideas would not have needed such a detailed statement if they had not formed the basis of Maulana Azad's exposition of the other attributes of God mentioned in the Surah-Fatiha, His graciousness, His mercy, His justice. Reflection on the evidence we see of these attributes, leads Maulana Azad to the view that the basis of devotion to God should be the belief, which the Quran definitely inculcates, that human thought and activity should reflect these attributes. It should be man's function to help in the development of the society to which he belongs from stage to stage, in accordance with its needs and aptitudes, in order that it might fulfill itself. He should be gracious, merciful and righteous, he should not passively accept what is wrong, but strive actively for the justice, the balance, which is seen in the works of God, with the realization that patient waiting for results is a part of faith in God and His universal order. There are, of course, in every society those who refuse to believe. This refusal can either be passive and due to lack of understanding, or desire to follow the ancestral faith (of polytheism and idolatry) or the refusal can take an active and aggressive form. Both kinds of refusal amount to kufr. In regard to the first, the injunction of the Quran is to accept disagreement: "To you your faith and to us ours". Against kufr of the second

kind, a struggle may be unavoidable and may even become obligatory, depending on the degree of the aggressiveness.

The Quran bases belief in God on an inherent and universal urge in human nature. Anything over and above this is left to personal thinking and experience, and the Quranic concept is thus comprehensive enough to include all forms of monotheism. Islam, the universal faith (din) revealed in the Quran, is a confirmation of all monotheistic religions. It is against Islam to discriminate among the prophets, to follow some and to reject others; they must either all be accepted as having preached the universal faith, or all be denied; to deny even one of them is to deny all. But what of religions like Hinduism? Maulana Azad rejects its polytheistic and idolatrous elements; he believes that definition of the Absolute by a process of negation, as in Upanishads, denies man the possibility of positive belief; and though it may promote a philosophic outlook, it cannot create an active, living faith. But as din consists essentially in devotion to God and balanced, righteous action, it follows by inference, that it is for the Hindus themselves, and not for the followers of Islam, to declare whether they do or do not believe in the universal faith. Maulana Azad regrets the fact that Hindus who knew better have, throughout history, been willing to make compromises with, or take for granted as the fate of the ignorant, forms of belief that were polytheistic or idolatrous. This is a kind of tolerance which he does not consider virtuous or even morally justifiable. There will, of course, be those who just profess the faith and observe its basic injunctions, as there will be those whose faith draws sustenance from an absolute conviction and those who, as it were, live in the sight of

God. But this does not permit us to recognize any distinction between the masses and the elite, the worldly and the religious.

"The Quran does not ask followers of other religions to accept Islam as an altogether new faith. On the contrary, it asks them to return to the true form of their own religion. One of the reasons for the opposition by Jews, Christians and the idolaters of Mecca to Quranic teaching was that it did not make any compromise with the spirit of exclusiveness. The Jews disliked its recognition of Christianity, the Christians its recognition of Judaism, the Meccans its recognition of non-Arab peoples. "The Quran says, if you do not deny that there is one Creator who has created this universe, with all that goes on in it, that there is one Providence which nurtures all alike, then why do you deny that there is only one Law, one spiritual truth, which has been revealed in the same way to all mankind?..... You have one Father (Rabb), you all repeat the name of the same God, all spiritual leaders have shown you one and the same path. Is it not, then, the extremity of misguides, the murder of common sense, that every group is the enemy of every other group, and every man hates every other man, when there is one basic relationship, one purpose, one path? In whose name and for whose sake is all this dissension and war? Is it not in the name of the one God, and of the religions revealed by this one God, which have made all bow at the same threshold, and united all in the same bond of brotherhood."

One cannot say whether Maulana Azad realized the full implications of this doctrine. If the one God whom all worship revealed all the religions that centre round belief in Him, His providence, His graciousness, His mercy and His guidance, and the mission of Islam was to make believers in one God realize

that there was a spiritual bond uniting them all, then the fact of the Muslims regarding themselves as a separate community must be considered a historical accident and not a doctrine of Islam. Maulana Azad emphasizes the difference between *din* and *shariah*, and holds that while the *din* is essentially one, there must be variety of *shariahs* in view of the diversity of circumstances in which human groups have developed. These *shariahs* need not be exclusive or antagonistic; if they are, they need to be reformed in the light of the fundamental principles of the *din*. The *shariah* of Islam, however highly one may think of it, is also the result of a historical development. It ought not to be exclusive in spirit when the *din* is inclusive; and if, in any instance, we find that it divides where it should unite, the validity of the relevant injunctions should be examined. This would not be anything new, as juristic interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith have been continuously called into question. But if we adopt the attributes of God and the universal quality of *din* as our criterion, the results might be explosive enough to destroy the distinctions created between Muslims and monotheists professing other religions. The Muslims would then have no justification for confining their thoughts and activities to their particular community. They would have to be as universal in spirit as Islam. During the days of the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements, Maulana Azad made his own position perfectly clear. He asserted that any form of association with the British government in India was a repudiation of Islam, and that the Prophet Muhammad used these very terms in an agreement with non-Muslim tribes settled around Medina, but, in fact, his view was based on the deep conviction that such friendship and co-operation was a fundamental injunction of

Islam and presented its true spirit. This view is diametrically opposed to the fiqh and has not been even regarded worthy of consideration by the most liberal interpreters of the shariah. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in holding this view Maulana Azad stood absolutely alone, for Indian Muslims and non-Muslims all disagreed with him in principle. But his faith was so deeprooted that he could stand alone. And perhaps some day it will be acknowledged by the Indian Muslims that he had, in fact, discovered a new world of religious thought to redress the balance of the old.

Azad has given in his *India Wins Freedom* a purely secular colour to his ideas and his whole career, and it is indeed undeniable that he could eliminate irrelevant religious considerations when thinking of or discussing purely political issues. This detachment was possible because of the sincerity and strength of his religious belief. For a time he was inclined towards the revolutionaries of Bengal; for a number of years he was an eloquent Pan-Islamist. When under Mahatma Gandhi's Maulana Azad realized that Indian freedom was an all-important prerequisite for any form of effective co-operation between Indians and the outside world. The disappearance of the Khilafat brought despair to many and made them lose their balance. But Maulana Azad, though he had no followers, had already been recognized as a person gifted with political insight and moral courage and, therefore, a person to be consulted and respected in his own right. We cannot here give the details of his career, or give examples of how his views influenced Congress policy. But just as he smoked freely and continuously in Mahatma Gandhi's presence, in spite of its being known that Mahatma Gandhi was strongly opposed to such indulgence, he

also declared openly that for him non-violence was a matter of policy, not of creed. This basic disagreement with the Mahatma, for whom non-violence was not only a creed but the essence of Truth, did not affect the position of Maulana Azad. From 1930 onwards, when the differences between the Muslim League and the Congress became more and more definite and acute, many nationalist Muslim leaders began to waver and make compromises because of the fear that, if the Muslims disowned them, they would be isolated and lose their importance. But Maulana Azad could stand alone. The faith and courage which enabled him to do so entitles him to a high position among the great men of the world. He continued, in his own life, the glorious tradition of suffering for the sake of truth which is enshrined in his Tazkirah, though in *India Wins Freedom* there is not even a passing reference to the invective, the abuse and the gross insults heaped upon him by his Muslim opponents. The obvious inference from his being rejected by the Muslims and being accepted and honored by the Congress would be completely wrong. Maulana Azad was in the Congress and with it throughout his political career, but he never thought it a moral obligation to agree with the Congress as a party. Particularly in the years after Independence he stood out as one who could be relied upon for absolute impartiality of judgment and for an unimpeachable integrity. He was too aloof to concern himself with persons, too intellectual to relish political small, too proud to think in terms of alliance, affiliation or opposition. He was a statesman who would not accept the normal functions of a politician and he was so engrossed in principles that he could not become an efficient administrator. He had to be taken for what he was, with no credentials other than his personality.

## Promoting Arabic

**Shaikh Muhammad**

Saudi Arabia promotes education and language not only in the kingdom but globally as well.

In the latest development, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia strengthened bilateral relations through the establishment of the institute of Islamic and Arab Sciences (IIPIA) in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.

"LIPIA is an example of the good relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia that is based on Islam, which is a major religious belief in both countries. Leaders of the two nations also share similar points of view," said Dr Abdullah Bin Hudhaidh Al-Sulami, director of LIPIA, during the graduation ceremony on January 29 this year.

He said that Indonesia as a country with the biggest Muslim community in the world and Saudi Arabia as the centre and leader of the Muslim world, are brothers whose close relationships are strengthened through such Islamic activities.

"Muslims everywhere are one, united under one Holy Qur'an, which is in Arabic language," he said.

Abdullah said that in order to make the maximum number of people read and understand Arabic; the government of Saudi Arabia took the initiative to establish LIPIA under the supervision of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University.

LIPIA was established in 1980. The institution's objectives are spreading Arabic language worldwide, preparing experts in the teaching of Arabic to the non-Arabs, developing Arabic curriculum in Islamic-based universities worldwide, donating aids to universities and schools, collecting scientific writings about the language and teaching of Arabic, and conducting training for Arabic language teachers.

The campus now has five language laboratories equipped with modern technology, modern classrooms, free internet services for the lecturers and students and a website of the institution.

The campus also has the biggest Arabic library in Southeast Asia with a collection of more than 30,000 books.

"Up till now, LIPIA's alumni have reached 8,604 scattered all across Indonesia," Abdullah said.

According to Dr Abdul Aziz Altwaijri, director general of ISESCO, the Arabic language has for long achieved an international status among the six official languages of the United Nations.

Altwaijri was speaking during the opening session of the European Forum on promoting Arabic Language Teaching organised jointly by Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, and Granada Editions at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, on January 12. The two-day forum was attended by experts and researchers from Arab and European countries.

The purpose was to discuss five main theme - teaching Arabic language as a foreign language in the West, present conditions, challenges and future prospects; experiences and visions for promoting partnership and enhancing Arabic language teaching quality in the West.

It also aimed to develop textbooks, curricula, and methods as well as training teachers, the financial resources needed, and role of media in promoting Arabic language among non-native speakers.

Altwaijri explained that the increasing international demand for Arabic is motivated by the need to know more about the Arab and Islamic world, its concerns and cultural background and fathom many of the phenomena, stances, policies and conditions prevalent in the Arab countries.



He said that the teaching of Arabic to Arab and Muslim children abroad is given special attention in ISESCO's educational programmes.

"It is with this regard that we, in 2007, signed a cooperation agreement with Granada Editions, the most evident fruit of which has been the publication of a series of books on teaching of Arabic at primary levels in Arab-Islamic schools across Europe," he said "These series of books, designed to meet the highest modern educational requirements, eventually respond to the needs of students and teachers using effective communication and language teaching techniques."

"We at ISESCO set great store by spreading and promoting the Arabic language in the West as an important means to foster dialogue among cultures and civilizations and join hands with the international community in upholding the values of tolerance, mutual understanding and coexistence. These efforts, which go far beyond the conventional framework of teaching Arabic language to Arab Muslim communities in the West, are geared to strengthening bonds between the European and Arab Islamic civilizations, and furthering dialogue and between the West and the Islamic world in general," he said.

Arabic, which is spoken by more than 200 million people all over the world, especially in countries with geo-political importance, is having an unprecedented demand in the United States – from kindergarten to collage and university level.

A survey by the Modern Language Association (MLA) has shown a 92- per cent increase in Arabic enrollments between 1998 and 2002 – to 10, 600.

The US government is encouraging schools to start foreign language training sooner. "We're living in a global society," said Wilbert Bryant deputy assistant secretary for higher education in the DoE. "We must be able to speak the languages of many

countries. The only way is to start at k-12. It's the only way to remain competitive and retain our position as the superpower in the world."

The first online Arabic k-12 Teacher's Newsletter has been launched in collaboration with Georgetown and George Washington Universities. This resource offers materials support, workshop and expert lecture information in Arabic and English.

Under a government grant awarded in 2003, work is under way to develop standards for learning Arabic in the United States. Standards will be refined and implemented wherever Arabic is taught across the US.

According to a survey by the Washington, D.C.-based, Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL), students are learning Arabic at approximately 70 elementary and secondary schools across the United States. The survey indicated that most of these are private Islamic schools; however, with government funding, more public schools are adding Arabic.

Katherine Keatley of the MLA said the association is keenly aware of the need. She said teachers are asking for materials to enable them to teach Arabic successfully to American children. "In the US, we like to teach in a more participatory way to build communicative competence," she said.

Government and education leaders are intensely collaborating to foster earlier and sustained study to build Arabic language capacity and cross-cultural understanding in the United States, according to information received from the international information programmes in the US Department of State.

Designated a "strategic" language by the US government, Arabic is sought after by a broad base of learners. Some are government or contractor employees, seeking work in the Middle East; others are adult individuals challenging themselves to pursue this language; some are curious high school students.

Ralph Hines, director of international education programmes at the DoE, said a myriad of federally-funded opportunities are available for students and educators to learn Arabic in the United States and abroad typically in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria of Tunisia.

He said that to support Arabic instruction in the United States, the DoE began funding the National Middle East Language Resource Centre (NMELRC) in 2002.

"The centre taps into the expertise of language professionals in the United States to build the resources and capacity in Middle Eastern Languages nationwide. A number of Middle East Studies Centres and African Studies Centres at American institutions are models, offering Arabic language, culture and study abroad and community outreach programmes to students and teachers,' he said.

According to Hines, teaching the teachers is crucial to bridging the cultural divide, and the government's Fulbright Hays grants are making such field visits possible for hundreds of educators.

Meanwhile, computer scientists at the University at Buffalo's Centre for Unified Biometrics and Sensors (CUBS) are developing the first optical character recognition (OCR) software for Arabic documents.

The new software will make possible to scan Arabic documents digitally in search of specific information or keywords for intelligence-gathering and other applications, according to Venu Govindaraju, PhD, director of Centre for Unified Biometrics and Sensors and principal Biometrics and Sensors and principal investigator.

The University at Buffalo is a premier research-intensive public university, the largest and most comprehensive campus in the State University of New York.●

## **Around the World**

### **Hindu architect: Master builder of mosques**

**N Muraleedharan**

SHOWCASING SECULAR principles, a Hindu architect in Kerala has emerged as a master builder of mosques, designing 88 of them including the famous Palayam Mosque here.

Govindan Gopalakrishnan is a staunch Hindu by faith. But his religion has never come in the way of his career as an architect to build mosques and churches, for, he believes in the convenes of all religions.

In the last five decades, he has designed as many 88 mosques, including the magnificent palayam mosque in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram and continues to be the most sought-after architect for the sponsors of mosques in Kerala.

For the 72-year old diploma drop-out, working on mosques is not a mere mechanical job. He puts his heart and soul into it, drawing and redrawing the domes and minarets so as to give a distinct character and style to every structure.

It is nothing but destiny. Otherwise how did a man with no formal degree to his credit achieve such a career? How could I design and build around 88 mosques? Gopalakrishnan told PTI.

Apart from mosques, he has also designed four churches, one temple and several hospitals, schools and colleges.

My religion has never ever created any problem in my career. Muslim brothers believe me as one among them and never showed any objections to my designs, Gopalakrishnan said.

After the demolition of Babri Masjid, there had been reservation from some quarters on putting lotus petals at the base of domes or as decorative adjuncts on the walls or cornices, he said.

But I truly felt sad only once when a mosque authority declined to inscribe the meaning of Kalima (Lines from Quran) in Malayalam and English so that they could be understood by people of religions also, he said.

Gopalakrishnan joined his father as an assistant to his small building business after being forced to discontinue studies due to financial crunch in early 60s.

It was former chief Engineer in the state government, T P Kuttiyamu, who kindled the spirit in Gopalakrishnan by spotting his talent in draftsmanship. He asked the youngman to draw a sketch for the renovation of the famed Palayam Jumma Masjid here, which stands close to a Hindu temple and a catholic church, cited as a concrete symbol of communal harmony of Kerala.

Much to the delight to Gopalakrishnan, the mosque committee approved his design, though it made a total deviation from the earlier Kerala style structure. Inspired by the Safdar Jung tomb in Delhi, he had conceived a structure dominated by domes and minarets.

It was a breakthrough for me. My mentor Kuttiyamu advised me to continue the designing of mosques as he saw some talent in me for that kind of work. Since then, there has not been a single day in my life without being involved in mosque building, he said.

The renovation of Palayam Masjid in 1965 set off a trend of rebuilding old mosques across the state. The demand for the young designer also went up as his Indo-Persian Style became a real hit. One problem then was everywhere they wanted the same style as that of the Palayam Masjid. It was difficult to convince them of variety in designs, he said.

The milestones in his career included renovation of the Beema Mosque in Thiruvananthapuram, a major Muslim pilgrim centre of South India, and the Vavar mosque in Erumeli, dedicated to the Muslim disciple of Lord Ayyapa of Sabarimala.

The Beema mosque with its high minarets, aspiring dome, sprawling faade and prayer hall, walls decorated with Arabic inscriptions and calligraphy has been widely appreciated. .

According to Gopalakrishnan, the mosques in Kerala had over the decades under gone major architectural changes. For centuries, Kerala mosques were just like old fashioned homes with slanted tiled-roofs built, mostly, according to the Vastu traditions, the ancient Indian building science still followed by Keralites cutting across religious lines.

(Hindustan Times, 11-05-09).

## **Iraq: 1.3 Million Dead; Six Million Displaced**

**Souad N. AL- Azzawi\***

I pride myself in being a scientist and a researcher. I built my academic career on theories and numbers. As a teacher, I teach my students that everything is based in science everything has reason. For this reason, I am always frustrated with myself when I find I am overwhelmed with feelings on specific topic.

On such topic is the occupation of my country, Iraq. On this subject I find that I cannot always be dispassionate. I cannot be the researcher and observer and discuss it without feeling or emotion as I am sometimes expected to do. I find myself doing research on the damages caused by the war and occupation, and my head buzzes with anger, my eyes burn with tears of desperation at the state of my country.

Six years after the attack and the pain is as fresh and cutting as it was in March 2003. This year, I decided, I would view it as a scientist. I would not attack the subject with emotion. I would let the part of the analyst- the researcher- on this topic that is closest to my heart.

Six years into the occupation...

- 72 months of destruction
- \$607 Billions spent on the war
- 2 Million Barrels of oil being sold per day
- 2 Million Displaced Iraqis inside of Iraq
- 3 Million Iraqis Forced to leave the country
- 2615 Professors, scientists, and doctors killed in cold blood
- 338 dead journalists
- \$13 Billion misplaced by the current Iraqi government

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\* (Dr. Souad N. AL- Azzawi is an Associate Professor in Baghdad and a member of the Bertrand Russell Tribunal Advisory Committee).

- \$400 Billion required to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure
- 3 hours average of electricity daily
- 24 car bombs per month
- 7 major mafias running the country
- 4260 Americans dead
- 10,000 cases of cholera per year
- 50 of my friends dead
- 22 of my relatives dead
- 15 abductions of close relatives and people I know and love
- At least 1.3 million Iraqis dead since 2003.

Six years into the occupation and somehow, the numbers are not looking better. Year after dismal year, the numbers of dead and displaced grow as we continue to reap the rewards of an American occupation on our country.

So the numbers speak for themselves. Six. Six months is what it for most Iraqis to realize no good could come of this war and occupation. Six years is what it has taken the rest of the world. Six years, Six million Iraqis displaced inside and outside of Iraq- well over a million Iraqis dead of dying inside of the country.

As a scientist, as a researcher- it is a disaster that will never be sufficiently documented with numbers or words. As a researcher, the numbers are so astounding that we go back and recalculate to make sure they are real. As an Iraqi, it is enraging. The numbers and statistics fill me with a rage and shame that make my heart throb and my blood boil. It's a rage towards all who are silent and uncaring, and a shame at the little we all are doing. •

## Our Representatives Abroad

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