

# THE FRAGRANCE

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July - September 1998

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## Editor's Note

*This issue of the Fragrance is the first of a series which we propose to produce periodically. The idea for such a publication derived from the need to bring together existing literature concerning the ill effects of modernisation on our society. Such a concern has been expressed by a number of institutions and organisations in a desperate way. We thought it would be useful to collate these concerns and also have new ideas and fresh views compiled together so that their fragrance may reach far and wide.*

*We are aware that the fast development of science and technology has revolutionised the pattern of living in literate societies. Developments in the field of electronics have brought the world closer and TV, e-Mail and Internet systems have reduced the importance of the print media. Even though the communication revolution has created two classes of readers one who have an access to latest computer techniques and the other who still bank on books and periodicals, the latter constitutes a majority. The Fragrance is an humble attempt to cater to the needs of this class.*

*While we have made tremendous scientific strides ranging from nuclear explosions to cloning of living beings our moral and cultural values appear to be fast receding. Historians will agree that since the inception of this world it has always been the endeavour of man to establish his superiority over others. In this process humankind has often lost its balance. Whereas on the one hand it aims to habitate the moon on the other it craves for scientific progress towards assembling devices of mass destruction.*

*The qualities which distinguish man from other living beings are increasingly getting lost in this fast drive towards scientific oneness. Man forgets that he has been sent in the world to spread peace and tranquility and not to create chaos and unrest. Great men were born from time to time to help mankind regulate their lives and lead a pure and pious life. Their areas of operations may have been confined to certain parts of the world but the message they propagated knew no physical or geographical barriers. Judaism and Christianity in their unpolluted form are not far from Islam. Coming closer to our country founders of Jainism and Buddhism too spent their lives in search of 'Truth' and spread the message of peace, friendliness and brotherhood amongst mankind. Indeed religion is a vital factor which leads one to follow the Heavenly ordain 'Do good and refrain from evils'. Through this periodical our efforts will be to spread the message of peace through the dissemination of relevant literature.*

*In this first issue we have selected articles of learned litterateurs and intellectuals published elsewhere but in our coming issues we would like to include original articles in consonance with modern themes. Writers are requested to help us in presenting the 'blooming flowers' the fragrance of which may travel extensively and have the desired effect.*

S. A.

July 1, 1998

# Few Words About The Journal

*S. M. Rabey Nadwi\**

One always endeavours to disseminate ones ideas and feelings to others who may be ignorant of them through the most preferred language of communication. Thus the language which is popular and has been adopted by a particular society has always been the best mean of communication. The Almighty God has said in the holy Quran that He sent His message in the language of the prophets so that they could properly explain it to the people. In this way the holy Quran guided us to carry the message of God to others in the language known to them. Thus it is always better to communicate with Urdu knowing poeple in Urdu; Hindi knowing persons in Hindi and make use of English for benefit of those who understand only this language.

Nadwatul-Ulema which is an educational institution has been involved for a long time in disseminating literary and divine ideas in society. It publishes Journals in Arabic and Urdu carrying the articles of illustrious writers on different subjects. These journals are quite popular in their respective circles. Still in India and abroad there are a good number of people who prefer to read and write in the English language only. To cater to the needs of this section of society it is necessary that we should have an English organ also. There are a good number of publications in some of the countries of South Asia, Europe and Africa, engaged in propagating the

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message of peace and humanity as has been bestowed to us through the Prophet (PBH). They are quite popular also but their circulation is confined most amongst the so called 'elite' section of the society. Often their language is also of high literary standard and beyond the comprehension of ordinary readers. Moreover, they have a limited circulation. The three Journals 'Tameere Hayat' in Urdu and 'Al-Ba's' and 'Al-Rayed' in Arabic which are published by Nadwatul Ulema cater to only Urdu and Arabic knowing readers and do not fulfil the requirements of English knowing persons in the society. No doubt these Journals have their own merits and play an important role in carrying the message of goodwill in the society. They avoid controversial issues and discussions which may cause rift in different sections of the society. Important issues having bearing with Islamic sanction are normally published in these Journals for the general benefit of Muslims and those who care to understand the message of Islam.

We have been longing for quite sometime to take out a Journal in English to propagate the ideals and thinking for which Nadwatul Ulema is committed. Those who have some experience of dealing with the intricacies of taking out a Journal/magazine that too for some specific purpose will appreciate our hesitation to plunge into this gigantic exercise. But seeing the speed with which our society is cloaking itself with English and shedding its mother tongue we feel that a beginning must be made to keep pace with the times otherwise we will be left behind. To obtain articles from writers or to get the valuable ones translated from other languages is no doubt a Herculean's job. Luckily, one of our friend who is also imbued with the spirit of service, Mr. Shariq Alavi, has come forward to help us in maturing this idea. The task is challenging, no doubt, but knowing the capabilities and sense of devotion of Mr. Alavi we hope to succeed in our mission and be able to take out a regular publication in English in course of time.

We pray that God may grant us strength to carry out His message through this venture.

# Concept of Human Unity and Equality

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi\*

## *Historic Declaration of Man's Brotherhood*

The great favour conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was the concept of equality and brotherhood of mankind. The world before him was divided by manifold divisions of castes and creeds, tribes and nations; some claiming the ranks of nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of serfs and chattels.

The differences were by no means less sharp than those existing between the free-born and the slaves or between the worshipper and the worshipped. It was for the first time, amidst the gloom overshadowing the world for centuries, that the world heard the clarion call of human equality from the Prophet of Islam.

*"O Mankind, Your God is One and you have but one father. You are all progeny of Adam, and Adam was made of clay, Lo! the noblest among you, in the sight of God, is one who is best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab save by his piety."*<sup>1</sup>

His announcement was in fact a twin declaration of Unity of God and Unity of mankind. These are the two natural foundations for raising the edifice of peace and progress,

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1. Kinz-ul'Ammāl.

\* Rector, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema

friendship and co-operation between different peoples and nations. It created a twin relationship between human beings - that of One Lord of all mankind and the other of one father of all of them. Oneness of God was the spiritual principle of human equality just as a common lineage placed them on the same plane of humanity.

*"Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women; and fear God by whom you demand one another, and the wombs, surely God ever watches over you." 1*

*"Oh Mankind, We have created you male and female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you, God is All-knowing, All-aware." 2*

The Prophet of Islam simultaneously announced :

*"God has put an end to the convention of pagan past taking pride in your fathers; now there will be pious believers or unbelieving wrongdoers. All are sons of Adam and Adam was made of clay. No Arab excels a non-Arab but by his piety." 3*

These were the teachings which made Islam, consisting of widely different tribes, races and nations, a commonwealth of the believers hailing from many countries and regions. It conferred no privileges at all : no Bani Lavis and Brahmins of Judaism and Hinduism. No tribe or race could claim any preference over another nor any blood or lineage could lay a claim to nobility for its own sake. The only criterion recognised for preference over others was an individual's endeavour to improve his morals and character. *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad reports the Prophet as saying : "Iranians" would attain knowledge even if it were to be found in Venus."

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1. Q. 4:1
  2. Q. 49:13
  3. Tirmidhi



Arabs have always shown highest marks of respect to those non-Arab scholars who have excelled them in religious disciplines and taken them as their teachers and guides. Strange though it may seem, they have not conferred such titles of honour on Arabs as they have on certain non-Arab. Imām Muhammad bin Ismail-al-Bukhari (d. 256 A. H.) was called by them as *Amir-ul-Muminin fil Hadith* (Commander of the faithful in hadith) and his *Al-Jami-al-Sahih* was regarded as the most authentic book next only to the Quran. Imam Abul Ma'ali 'Abdul Malik al-Juwaini of Nishapur (d. 268 A. H.) was known as *Imam-ul-Haramayn* (Leader of the two sacred cities) and Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ghazzali (d. 505 A. H.) as *Hujjat-ul-Islam* (Proof of Islam).

By the end of the first century of Islamic era non-Arabs had attained distinction in almost every branch of learning and attained prominence even in such sciences as *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) and *Hadith* (Traditions). Any work on literary history of the Arabs or biographies will bear witness to this development. All this happened in the golden era of Islam when the Arabs held political power in their hands.

An eminent Arab scholar Abdul Rahman b. Khaldun (d. 808 A. H.) expresses surprised over it. He says :

*"It is a strange historical fact that most of the scholars of religious and intellectual sciences were non-Arabs. The contribution of the Arabs was extremely meagre although it was an Arab civilization and its founder was also an Arab. Saibuyah held the most prominent position in Arabic Syntax, then it was Bu'Ali Farsi and then Az-Zajaj, and all these were non-Arabs. Same is the case with the experts in the field of Hadith (Traditions) usul Fiqh (Principles of jurisprudence) and ilm kalam (theological dialectic)." <sup>1</sup>*

The announcement made by the Prophet of Islam, cited in the beginning, was made on the historic occasion of his last Hajj. When this announcement was made, perhaps, it would have been difficult for the world to fully appreciate its

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1. Muqaddamah Ibn Khaldun, Matb'a Bahiya, Egypt. p. 404

practical significance. It was a revolutionary call signifying release of man from the current pressures of society, its values, standards, traditions and practices.

Man always accepts any change gradually and indirectly. We can touch a covered electric wire but not a naked one since it would give a shock which may even cause our death. And, this declaration was then more appalling than an electric shock.

The long journey of knowledge, thought and culture has now made this revolutionary call so acceptable to us that today every political and social organization swears by the Charter of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. Now nobody is taken aback by it, but was it the same when the Prophet proclaimed it ?

### ***Humanity before Islam***

There was a time when superiority of blood and clan was accepted as a matter of fact. There are still people who trace the descent of their forefathers from the sun or the moon.

The Quran quotes the belief then held by the Jews and Christians in these words : "The Jews and the Christians say : We are the children of God, His loved ones." <sup>1</sup> The Pharaohs of Egypt claimed themselves to be incarnation of Ra, the Sungod, while India had several ruling families who arrogated themselves as the progeny of the sun (*suryavanshi*) or the moon (*chandraravanshi*). The emperors of Iran called themselves *Kesra* or *Chosroes* which meant that Divine blood flowed in their veins. Chosroes II (*Khosrau Parvez*) had levished himself with this grandiose title : "The Immortal soul among the gods and peerless God among human beings; glorious is whose name; dawning with the sun-rise and light of the dark-eyed night." <sup>2</sup>

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The Caesars of Rome were called 'Augustus' which

1. Q. 5 : 18

2. A. Christensen, L' Iran Sous Les Sassanides, Paris, 1944 (Urdu translation by Prof. Mohd. Iqbal, Iran ba 'ahd-i-Sasaniyan), p 64.

meant majestic, venerable, since they were entitled to receive divine honours. The Chinese rulers deemed themselves to be the sons of Heavens. They believed that the Heaven was their God, who, with his spouse, the goddess earth, had given birth to the human beings and *Pau Ku*, the Chinese Emperor, was the first born son of Heaven enjoying supernatural powers.<sup>1</sup> The Arabs were so proud of their language that every nation besides their own was an '*ajami*' or dumb to them. Likewise, the Quraysh of Mecca being conscious of maintaining their superiority claimed a privileged position even during the Hajj. They never went to the plain of 'Arafat' with others. They stayed in the Mosque at Mecca or went to Muzdalifa claiming that privilege on the ground that they belonged to the House of God. They also claimed themselves to be the elites of Arab.<sup>2</sup>

The most glaring peculiarity of the religio-social structure of India of the olden days was the all-powerful caste system. This rigid social order having the sanction of religion behind it allowed no inter-mixing of races for it was meant to protect the privileged position of Brahmins. It classified the population of India into four classes with reference to the vocation followed by a particular family in which an individual was born. The system which covered the whole gamut of social life in India divided the people into four castes, namely, (I) the *Brahmin* or the learned and priestly class, (II) the *Kshatriyas* or the fighting and ruling class, (III) the *Vaisyas* or trading and agricultural people, and (IV) the *Sudras* or the lowest caste, created from the foot of God, in order to serve the above three classes.

This law of caste distinctions gave to the Brahmin the distinction, superiority and sanctity not enjoyed by any other caste. He was sinless and the saved even if he destroyed the three worlds; no impost could be levied on him; he could not be punished for any crime; while the *Sudra* could not accumulate wealth or touch a *Brahmin* or a sacred scripture.<sup>3</sup>

The *Vaisyas*, or the working classes like weavers,

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1. James Carcam, History of China.
  2. Bukhari, on the authority of 'Ayesha.
  3. For detailed information see Manu Smriti, Chap, 1, 2, 8-11.

The *Vaisyas*, or the working classes like weavers, boatmen, butchers etc., and *Sudras* like scavengers were not allowed to live in a city. They came into the town after the daybreak and left it before the sun-set. Not allowed to enjoy the amenities of urban life, they lived in the rural slums.<sup>1</sup>

The most precious gift that Muslims brought to India was the concept of human equality which was completely unknown to India. The Muslim society was not divided into castes and no trade was allocated to any particular class. The Muslims mixed freely, lived and dined together, all were free to read or write and carry on any occupation. The Muslim social order posed a challenge to that obtaining in India, but it also proved a blessing for it. The rigour of caste distinction was weakened and movements of social reform were able to concentrate on the shortcomings of Hindu society and consequently untouchability was removed to a large extent.

Jawahar Lal Nehru, the ex-Prime Minister of India, has acknowledged the debt India owes to Islam, He writes in the *Discovery of India* :

*"The impact of the invaders from the north-west and of Islam on India had been considerable. It had pointed out and shown up the abuses that had crept into Hindu society-the patrification of caste, untouchability, exclusiveness carried to fantastic lengths. The idea of the brotherhood of Islam and of the theoretical equality of its adherents made a powerful appeal, especially to those in the Hindu fold who were denied any semblance of equal treatment."* <sup>2</sup>

Impact of Islam on Hinduism can be seen in the movement of *Bhakti* (love and devotion) which began in South India during Muslim rule and spread to the whole country. Describing this movement Dr. Tara Chand writes:

*"..... along with them marched a goodly company of*

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1. Ibid.

2. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, 1946, p. 225.

*saintly men who addressed themselves to the common people. They spoke the common people's dialects and in the main imparted their message through word of mouth. Many of them were endowed with the gift of poetry and their homely memorable verse went direct into the heart of their listeners. Their avoidance of the learned jargon, their simple teachings stressing the love of God and of man, their denunciation of idolatry and caste of hypocrisy, inequality and the externalia of religion, their sincerity, purity and dedicated life appealed to wide circles among the masses.*

*"Their utterances gave shape to the modern Indian languages. Their enthusiasm stirred the springs of life and moved men to high endeavour and unselfish behaviour. There is a strange exaltation in society in every region during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which can not be accounted for without taking into consideration this sudden outburst of spiritual energy. These centuries are filled with voices -at once warning and encouraging- of truly noble and large-hearted men in surprisingly large numbrs. yet most of them were of humble origin and they destroyed the myth of aristocracy based on birth." <sup>1</sup>*

The spirit of human brotherhood built up by Islam is not hampered by concepts of racialism or sectarianism, be it linguistic, historic, traditionalistic or even of dogmatic nature. Its power to unite different races and nations in one brotherhood has always been recognised. A noted orientalist H. A. R. Gibb says :

*"But Islam has yet a further service to render to the cause of humanity .... No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of staats, of opportunity and of endeavour so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India,*

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1. Dr. Tara Chand, Society and State in the Mughal Period, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961, pp. 88-89.

*of Japan, show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition."* <sup>1</sup>

The British historian A. J. Toyanbee agrees with Gibb that Islam alone can efface race consciousness.

*"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 .....*"

*Though in certain other respects the triumph of the English-speaking peoples may be judged, in retrospect, to have been a blessing to mankind, in this perilous matter of race feeling it can hardly be denied that it has been a misfortune."* <sup>2</sup>

Islam was the first religion which preached and practised democracy. The well-known Indian freedom fighter and poetess Mrs. Sarojini Naidu witnessed and affirmed this quality of Islam.

*"It was the first religion that preached and practised democracy; for, in the mosque when the call from the Minaret is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, "God alone is great." I have been struck over and over again this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man distinctly a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian an Indian and a Turk in London, what matters that Egypt was the motherland of one and India the motherland of another."* <sup>3</sup>

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1. H. A. R. Gibb, *Whither Islam?* London, 1932, p. 379.
  2. A.J. Toyanbee, *Civilization on Trial*, New York, 1948, p. 205.
  3. *The Ideals of Islam in Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, Madras, 1918, p. 169.

Malcolm X was a racist for whom 'devil white man' was Satan. He shed all his prejudices on coming in contact with the Muslims. He recounts his own experience :

*"During the past eleven days here in the Muslim World, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed or on the same rug) - while praying to the same God - with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were bluest of the blue, whose hair was blondest of the blond, and whose skin was the whitest of the white. And in the works and in the actions and in the deeds of the 'white' Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan, and Ghana.*

*"We were truly all the same (brothers) - because their belief in one God had removed the 'white' from their minds, the 'white' from their behaviour, and the 'white' from their attitude.*

*"I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, they too could accept in reality the Oneness of Man - and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their 'differences' in colour." <sup>1</sup>*

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1. The Autobiography of Malcolm X (ed. Alex Haley) Essex, 1965, pp. 419-20.

Wherever the lamp is placed, it will create its pool of light. The bouquet of flowers even if thrown in the trash, still spreads its fragrance. The peacock said, my garden is in me; wherever I spread my feathers a flower-bed will unroll. This is exactly the case with a *momin-e-kamil* (perfect believer) and *sahib-e-ilm-o-haq* (master of knowledge and truth). He is not dependent on time and space. His presence will brighten space and the scented breeze will be proof that he has just passed by:

*Abhi is rah sey koi gaya hai;*

*Kahe deti hai shokhi naqshe pa ki.*

(Someone has just gone by this way; The playfulness of the footfall says.)\*

- Abul Kalam Azad -



# THE REACTION OF ARAB SCHOLARS TO THE DARWINIAN REVOLUTION

Aly Remtulla \*

Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882)<sup>1</sup> is the 'Newton' of biology. After his extensive voyages on the HMS Beagle which ended in 1836<sup>2</sup>, Darwin began to formulate his theory of natural selection, which stated that the average composition of a species' physical characteristics underwent gradual change to better adapt to the environment.<sup>3</sup> In addition this evolutionary change could lead to speciation - the creation of a new species through natural selection. This theory and its corollaries were detailed in Darwin's, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859).<sup>4</sup> Later, in 1871, Darwin published another book entitled, *The Descent of Man*.<sup>5</sup> These works changed our concept of nature and our position in it. To this day, Darwin's theories are controversial, especially with regards to theology and the idea of creation by a supernatural force.

There has been an enormous amount of literature produced in the Western world with regard to Darwin and his theories. Numerous works account for the Darwinian Revolution and the role it has played in shaping modern thought.<sup>6</sup> As a result of the Eurocentrism of writers on Darwin, little recognition has been given to the Arab thinkers who have discussed these theories with comparable logic, fervour and rationale.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of Western science into the Arab world

has had a deep impact on the public mind, especially when it touches the central beliefs, values and ideas of the people. As in the West, the theory of evolution created intense debate among Arab scholars during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Although the work of Darwin was discussed in the 1870's, it was not until the Arabic translation of Buckner's work had been presented to Arab readers,<sup>9</sup> that the discussion became a substantial polemic.<sup>10</sup> Buchner's work was translated into Arabic by Christian physician Shibli Shumayyil (1850-1917).

At this time, there were two groups of thinkers in the Arab World - then stretching from the Balkans to the Sudan, and Persia to the Atlas mountains - Christians and Muslims<sup>11</sup>. This thesis will examine, at length, the reaction of the Muslim Arab scholars - both secularists and traditionalists<sup>12</sup> - to the Darwinian Revolution, natural selection and the theory of evolution.

Muslim theologians and scholars have, over the years, continued the discussion of the content and form of their faith in light of scientific developments. In the Middle Ages, Muslim thinkers responded to Greek philosophy and science in a variety of ways. Some rejected classical thought altogether, while others acceded to it and Islamicized the ideas.<sup>13</sup>

In modern times, some Muslims rejected everything foreign and returned to an early Islamic culture and way of life<sup>14</sup>. Others adapted Islam to the modern techniques of the West. Still others advocated the complete adoption of Western ideas for the progress of their society. The Muslim thinkers detailed in this analysis advocated the second and third of these positions.

Some Muslim scholars had an illogical and irrational reaction towards Darwinism. The thinkers used modern science as a tool to reinforce traditional faith and beliefs. At a time when there were signs of acceptance of Darwin's theory, Arab religious leaders demanded that any explanation of the origin of man in contradiction to the holy word revealed by Allah,

was to be refuted.<sup>15</sup>

The conflict between Darwinism and revelation, as treated by the Muslim thinkers al-Afghani and al-Jisr, will be examined at length. The ideas of Hussein, al-Isfahani, Mazhar and al-Mansuri will also be explored. While some scholars approved of Darwinism conditioned by the belief that all events happen by the will of Allah, others better explained the acceptance of Darwinian doctrine.

Syed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897),<sup>16</sup> a non-Arab philosopher, was the first Muslim to refute Darwin's theory.<sup>17</sup> He was the most important political thinker of his era in the entire Muslim world,<sup>18</sup> and his anti-Darwinist polemics were couched in extreme violence and derisive rhetoric. His major work on the subject, published in Persia in 1881, was entitled, *Al-Radd 'ala Dahriyyin (The Refutation of Materialists)*.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Afghani's work was, for the most part, an attempt to awaken the Muslim world to the threats of Europe. The main objective of his writing was political. He wanted to forge a pan-Islamic solidarity against the West.<sup>20</sup>

*The Refutation of Materialists* was presented with simplistic questions, which al-Afghani claimed would have left Darwin flabbergasted.<sup>21</sup> Al-Afghani had never read Darwin's work. He argued his position based on misinterpretations from secondary sources.<sup>22</sup> He had a twisted definition of evolution:

*One Group of materialists decided that the germs of all species, especially animals, are identical, that there is no difference between them and that the species also have no essential distinction. Therefore, they said, those germs transferred from one species to another and changed from one form to another through the demands of time and place, according to need and moved by external forces.*<sup>23</sup>

He has also misinterpreted Darwin's views on the origin of man :

*He (Darwin) wrote a book stating that man descends*

*from ape and that in the course of successive centuries as a result of external impulses, he changed until he reached the stage of the orangutan. From that form he rose to the earliest human degree, which was the race of cannibals and other Negroes. Then some men rose and reached a position of a higher plane of Caucasian man.<sup>24</sup>*

According to his view, al-Afghani argued :

*It would be possible that after the passage of centuries a mosquito could become an elephant, and an elephant a mosquito.<sup>25</sup>*

We see that al-Afghani was misinformed in regards to the theory of evolution. In another case study, he cited Darwin's illustration of how the continuous cutting of dog's tails for several centuries would produce a generation of dogs without tails,<sup>26</sup> and he related this to the Semitic practices of circumcision :

*Is this wretch deaf to the fact that the Arabs and Jews for several thousand years have practised circumcision, and despite this until now not one of them has been born circumcised?<sup>27</sup>*

Here we see that al-Afghani was also unclear on the concept of acquired characteristics. It is impossible to transfer an acquired characteristic to one's offspring. Only those traits which are genetically determined will be passed on. Darwin's explanation for the dogs without tails was that as time went on, dogs with shorter tails would be selected to breed with each other. Eventually, a dog with no tail would be naturally produced. Al-Afghani was also incorrect in that Darwin had stated that the practice of cutting dog tails would not produce tailless dogs.

These are absurd opinions from one held to be champion of reason and enlightenment. Muhammad Abduh, a close friend and disciple,<sup>28</sup> stated that al-Afghani wrote *The Refutation of Materialists* while he was intensely distressed with the advocates of comprehensive Westernization.<sup>29</sup>

This seems a logical explanation, for only a few years later, al-Afghani came back to the subject to discuss it more systematically. In *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (The Ideas of al-Afghani)*, we find a chapter devoted to the 'struggle for existence'. Natural selection was a principle he conceded; not only in plants and animals, but also in thought.<sup>30</sup> He states :

*That the principle of natural selection was known and made use of long before Darwin in the pre-Islamic and Islamic culture either in selecting wines or in eugenics.*<sup>31</sup>

He now accepted the theory of evolution with the argument that Muslim scholar preceded Darwin in advocating it.<sup>32</sup> He backed up his position with quotations from poets and alchemists. Al-Afghani claimed that ancient works, including Islamic writings on philosophy and natural science were equivalent, if not superior, to those of the West.<sup>33</sup> Although he was prepared to accept the evolution of inorganic material into vegetation, and vegetation into animal matter, he continued to disagree that man evolved from ape.<sup>34</sup> His refutation centred on the idea of the 'breath' of life, which was given by Allah.<sup>35</sup>

Through untenable refutation based on misconceptions, al-Afghani hoped to prevent the Westernization of Arab society, and to keep the unity of Muslim Ummah. When he finally accepted the theories of evolution, he claimed that Darwin eventually admitted that all living things on this earth come from one primary species into which the Creator breathed life.<sup>36</sup>

Hussein al-Jisr (1845-1909)<sup>37</sup> was a Shi'ite Muslim who performed a meticulous analysis of Darwinian ideas. Instead of attacking personalities (he did not even mention Darwin's name in his discussion), he was concerned with defending Islam against atheism and restoring the idea that Allah was the sole creator of the universe.<sup>38</sup> In *Al-Risala al-Hamidiyya Fi Haqiqat al-Diana al-Islamiyyah wa Haqiqat al-Shari'a al-Muhamadiyya*, published in 1887<sup>39</sup>, al-Jisr was convinced that the Qur'an contained all scientific knowledge<sup>40</sup> and this

emphasis led him to accept evolutionary as well as some materialistic<sup>41</sup> concepts..

In al-Jisr's view, materialism was unable to explain all natural phenomena. Scientists encouraged people to believe that everything was explainable using material theories.<sup>42</sup> He refuted materialism with this metaphor. Imagine that someone made the parts of a steam engine, and later it was found in operation. Is it more acceptable that the engine was put together by its maker; or that with time, the parts assembled and became operational by themselves?<sup>43</sup> Allah, in his view, was the great mechanic. In this way, al-Jisr demonstrated that the unexplainable must be known to someone -that id Allah.

Al-Jisr attributed the growth of populations among animals and plants to four natural laws.<sup>44</sup> He continued that :

*Man, himself is considered not more than an animal. Man's resemblance to ape did not prevent him and the ape from coming from the same origin.<sup>45</sup> ... Man's mind and intellect is part of the many forms of the action and reaction of his matter and its movable components. Since the origin of matter and motion is without mind and intellect, man's mind does not differ essentially from the mind of other animals, except in quantity.<sup>46</sup>*

Al-Jisr believed that in light of new scientific ideas, the Qur'an should be interpreted to suit modern realities.<sup>47</sup> He made every attempt to show that if Qur'anic verses were interpreted in the proper manner, they could provide similar explanations of the theory of evolution.<sup>48</sup> To this end he quoted from the Holy Qur'an:

*We made every living thing from water. Will they not then believe? (21:30)<sup>49</sup>. Allah hath created every animal from water (24:45)<sup>50</sup>. He created the two spouses, the male and the female from a drop (of seed) poured forth. (53:45-46).<sup>51</sup> We created man from a product of wet earth; then place him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging; then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump bones, then*

clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced it as another creation. (23:12-14)<sup>52</sup>

Al-Jisr argued that the two verses provided that life originated in water and was congruent with the theory of evolution.<sup>53</sup> The other verses denote special creation for every species, and it is nowhere stated whether all species were created at once or gradually.<sup>54</sup>

Abu al-Majid Muhammad Rida al-Isfahani was another prominent Muslim thinker whose major work *Naqd Fa.safar Darwin* (critique of Darwin's Philosophy) was published in 1914.<sup>55</sup> He wanted to defend all religions against atheistic evidence contradicting belief in Allah.<sup>56</sup> As negligent leader, al-Isfahani adopted the scientific method of inquiry in his work on Darwinism.<sup>57</sup> He would not dilute his religious convictions with a materialistic creed. He wanted to install religious convictions with a materialistic creed. He wanted to install religion as the sole arbiter of Knowledge. Al-Isfahani believed that religion was not contrary to science, rather it followed what science taught.

Mustafa Hasanayn al-Mansuri, a scholar from Egypt, published a book, *Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Ishtirakiyah* (the History of Socialist Doctrine) in 1914.<sup>58</sup> The central thesis of his work was that the theories of Darwin validated the natural laws which govern all organisms.<sup>59</sup> Al-Mansuri exhibited strong faith in the laws of evolution and he applied them to criticize Egyptian society. He was certain that science would support traditional religion. A devout socialist who believed that socialist promoted equality, al-Mansuri attempted to marry Darwinism and religion.<sup>60</sup>

Hassan Hussein translated into Arabic, Ernst Haeckel's book on evolution. The book appeared as *Fasil al-Maqal fi Falsafar al-Nushu'wa-al-Irtiqa'* (On the Philosophy of Evolution and Progress) in 1924.<sup>61</sup> The work was discursively introduced with Hussein's philosophies. He translated the atheistic work, although he was a strong believer in Allah and religion.<sup>62</sup> Hussein, who had religious motives<sup>63</sup> in writing his introduction,

claimed that Islam was a tolerant and rational religion.

The final thinker in this group is Ismail Mazhar (1891-1962).<sup>64</sup> Mazhar can be considered the Muslim apostle of evolution.<sup>65</sup> He was the first Arab to translate Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*<sup>66</sup> and in 1924 wrote *Malqa al-Sabil Fi Madhhab al-Nushu/wa al-Irtiqa'* (The Doctrine of Evolution and Progress).<sup>67</sup> He was very adamant in his distinction between materialism and evolution. He stated that the materialistic claim of spontaneous generation was based on assumptions rather than empirical evidence. Mazhar was generally in favour of the development of both literary and scientific branches of Knowledge.<sup>68</sup>

Although the Muslim Arabs did not conduct their own scientific research, nor did they introduce their philosophies on evolution and creation, they did manage to refute and adapt Darwinian ideas.

The scholars hoped to undermine Ottoman rule by introducing scientific ideas, which could have brought about an Arab 'awakening'. The obvious difference between Muslim and Christian reactions is that the Muslims, al-Mansuri and Mazhar in particular, saw Darwinian ideas in accord with religion. On the other hand, the Christians aimed to destroy all religious establishments.<sup>69</sup> Although they presented Biblical evidence of evolution, it was much weaker than the 'rational' verses found in the Qur'an.<sup>70</sup>

The secularists assimilated Darwin's ideas and viewed them as the mechanism for Arab progress and development. The theologians, who debated on purely religious grounds, stated that religion was not a set of rules, but an evolving dogma reacting to scientific advancement. The debate over Darwinism was part of the Arab intellectual revival, reflecting a quest for order and authority in an Arab society that was increasingly influenced by Western thought.<sup>71</sup>

The Muslim thinkers, save Al-Afghani, were not against evolution. Al-Isfahani, al-Jisr and Hussein in particular, warned against uncritical acceptance of Darwin's ideas. They



attempted to read into Islam some non-theistic and non-Islamic ideas, which they thought, could be sufficiently supported with evidence from the Qur'an.

The major effect of Darwinism on Islamic thought was to reinforce old beliefs rather than to develop new ones. Arab thinkers drew heavily on Western scholars because they did not have the institutions found in the West, due to the nature of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>72</sup> Many of the Muslim writers explained that the evolutionary ideas could be found in ancient Islamic literature and philosophy, and that the Muslims preceded Darwin in documenting and developing evolutionary thought. The Muslims asserted that the Qur'an was the fountainhead of knowledge, and al-Isfahani and al-Jisr both concluded that evolution was not an anti-religious teaching.

Secularists debated with religious groups. The lasting secular contribution can be seen in the light of having made available to the public, the methods and results of European writers. The secularists helped to provide the intellectual stimulus and framework, essential for the average reader to formulate his own appreciation for the importance of modern scientific ideas. The Muslim investigation of the ancient writers also made the average Muslim more aware of his scientific history.<sup>73</sup>

Outside the domain of religion, Darwin had little influence. *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was not available in Arabic until the later half of the twentieth century, and was never widely discussed. The ideas of Comte, Mill and Spencer were sweeping the educated Islamic world. They were more convenient for the Muslim reformers than the ideas of the evolutionaries.<sup>74</sup>

The theological impetus behind the interest in Darwin toward the end of the nineteenth century waned, and with the advent of the twentieth century, more recent ideas began to capture the imagination of the Muslim scholars. The new interest in such philosophers as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Spencer overshadowed and cut short interest in Darwin and

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\* Indicates information which is missing.

The world does not conceal its nature,  
Each atom on self-revelation is bent.

The business of life seems entirely different,  
If the eye be blessed with the vision of love.

With it the sons of enslaved nation,  
Have risen in the world to rule and govern.

With this eye my frenzy is teaching,  
To every dust-particle ways of desert-trotting.

If you do not possess the vision of love,  
Your existence is a disgrace to heart and eye.

- Sir Mohammad Iqbal -

# TAWHID: THE AFFIRMATION OF AFFIRMATIONS AND THE NEGATION OF AFFIRMATIONS

*John Sahadat\**

## *Introduction*

The twentieth century has not only ushered in great strides in science and technology and thus provided human beings with a greater sense of confidence and comfort in their inventive and creative skills; but it has also increased their scepticism with regard to the existence of One, Supreme God and His revelation in scripture. Methodological techniques, professional skills, advancement in medical sciences, and confidence in empirical verification are only some of the alternatives to faith in God and the relevance of revealed scripture of contemporary society. Today, idols are much more than graven images. One may very well be a worshipper of idols in the conventional usage of that term as well as a worshipper of ideas, modern inventions, self-confidence, etc. The subtleties of idolatry are much more complex in our modern day; and if ever humanity needed guidance to the path of Divine Truth and Righteousness, it is today.

Islam does not reject the strides of science and technology, nor does it object to sound scholarship in the various disciplines; but it does have a fundamental concern

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for the full development of human beings. It favours a philosophy of education that provides for an adequate development of all the faculties that constitute the human being; hence the spiritual and moral faculties should not be neglected as a result of too much emphasis on the rational and physical. The Islamic balanced philosophy of education has its roots in the holy Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Shariah. Pivotal to this system of education is precisely what constitutes the "Muslim Identity" and the uniqueness of Islam, namely, the *Shahada* and what it evokes from all believers, that is, a response to the call of God to acknowledge Him as the only true and living God, to acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad as His messenger, and to live in accordance with His will as it is revealed in the Qur'an. From this perspective the Islamic community is a witnessing organism to all humanity; and it is most appropriate in these days of renewed interest in humanism, scepticism and materialism to focus on the notion of Tawhid as the sine qua non of Islam and as the centripetal force that will draw all peoples to their ontological centre.

It was not until the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) that the Arabs truly felt the full impact of an inspired Prophet, Reformer, Law-giver and Teacher, who profoundly changed their lives and elevated their vision beyond the horizons of polytheism and tribal communalism to monotheism and the brotherhood of all believers. The task of the Prophet demanded more than human wisdom and courage. It was a task that would be accomplished only by divine intervention as God Himself took the initiative to call the Prophet and to entrust him with the fullest and final revelation, and thus commissioned him to go forth and to proclaim it to his countrymen and to all humanity. The nucleus of that revelation is succinctly summarized in the *Shahada: La ilaha illa Allah Muhammad rasul Allah*. There are two parts to the *Shahada*. The first states that, "There is no god but God"; and the second, "Muhammad is His Messenger". The proclamation of the first part of the *Shahada* is the affirmation of all affirmations concerning idols and the association of partners with God.

The holy Qur'an (22:78-79) makes it clear that Abraham was the first Muslim in so far as he was the first to submit himself to the only true and living God beside whom there is no other. The Prophet was commissioned to proclaim and continue the faith of Abraham whom the Qur'an (16:123) depicts as an illuminating model of true religion. The Prophet did not teach a new religion, nor did he negate the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> He was the corrector of the Jewish and the Christian understanding and application of monotheism and the proclaimer of the Islam of Abraham in its pristine purity with all its religious, social, political and ethical obligations and ramifications. In this vein of commissioned declaration the Prophet warned that *shirk* is the unpardonable sin.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the fact that Jews and Christians are people of the Book, the Qur'an tells us that they have deviated from the pristine monotheism of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob. The Qur'an makes this abundantly clear in several *suras*, Take for example the following verses:

*Say, O ye who have received the scripture, come to a just determination between us and you; that we may worship not except God, and associate no creature with Him; and that the one of us take not the other for lords, beside God (3:64). They take their rabbis and their monks for their lords, besides God, and Christ the son of Mary; although they are commanded to worship one God only; there is no God but He; far be that from Him which they associate with Him! (9:31).*

The critique here is that Jews and Christians over-indulge in paying reverence to their religious leaders. With regard to Christians they go so far as to worship Jesus in the same manner as they worship God. The Prophet does not intend to subtract nor add anything to the status of Jesus; but he pleads with the People of the Book not to exceed 'the just bounds' in their religion (4:171). On the one hand the Prophet appeals to Jews that they should not go beyond the teachings of their scriptures to justify a rejection and condemnations of Jesus; and on the other, he appeals to Christians not to go to the

extreme of elevating Jesus to the status of God. What then is the status of Jesus? Taking the exegesis of 4:171 further, the answer to the question is that Jesus is an apostle of God. The text concludes:

*The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the messenger of God..... Believe therefore in God and his apostles. And say not, there are three Gods; forbear this; it will be better for you. God is but one God (4;171).*

It is not only the doctrine of the incarnation that is questioned as an undermining factor to the exclusive unity and divinity of God; but is also the doctrine of the trinity. Regardless of the great Christian apologists of the ages, Islam refuses to accommodate these doctrines, for monotheism etymologically contradicts one in three or three in one. But as we shall see below, for Islam this is much more than a contradiction in terms. It is a contradiction made by divine revelation itself in the very essence of the first part of the *Shahada: la ilaha illa allah* - There is no god but God. This is the indisputable divine and self-verifying assertion of Islam, which is pivotal to its history, theology and philosophy, its ethical, social and political activism, as well as its sense of ultimate destiny. The holy Qur'an declares:

They are infidels who say, Verify God is Christ the son of Mary; since Christ said, O children of Israel, serve God, my Lord and your Lord, (5:72) They are certainly infidels who say, God is the third of the three; for there is no God besides God; ..... (5:73)

It is interesting to note that what the Qur'an records as the saying of Christ in the first part of verse 72 in the above quotation is precisely what the Prophet of Islam taught.<sup>3</sup> The main issue to contend with is the exclusive worship of God in His exclusive unity and divinity, and the warning of the consequences upon those who deviate from 'the straight path' (5:77). Prior to the coming of the Prophet many erred and went astray from the straight path. The Prophet is commissioned to rise and warn, to correct and call mankind to



return 'unto God and ask pardon of Him', for He is compassionate and merciful (5:74). God is One. He is not one of three. His exclusive unity and divinity are ontologically prior to all His creations and they are not shared with anything or anyone. Not even the Prophet, the last and greatest of all prophets, shares in the unity and divinity of God. In the Qur'an 18:110 and 41:6 the Prophet describes himself as a mortal being, a man, as any one of us.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet's humanity is explicitly expressed leaving no scope for ambiguity or speculation.

In his day, the Prophet was the first from among his people to practise Islam and as such he was the first Muslim, followed by his beloved wife, Khadija. But he tells us in the Qur'an 16:120 that Abraham was "orthodox", "obedient", and he abstained from idolatry. Hence the religion that the Prophet proclaimed was an ancestral Islam devoid of error and ambiguity concerning the unity and divinity of God. It is the Islam of Abraham, the faithful. But who was Abraham? The Qur'an says:

*No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one of pure faith; certainly he was never of the idolaters (3:67).<sup>5</sup>*

Whosoever confesses that there is no god but God becomes a participant in, and partaker of, the faith of Abraham and the community of believers (umma). The confession of such faith supersedes ethnic, social and economic differences in the establishment of brotherhood of all Muslims. Race, colour and status give way to a common faith in the true and Living God.

### ***The Prophet's Proclamation***

The theory of Wilhelm Schmidt<sup>6</sup> and his colleagues that the idea of a supreme being was present in most primitive civilization with uniquely distinct monotheistic features cannot be substantiated from an objective analysis of the data available through the history of religion. Distinct monotheism is best exemplified in the great Semitic traditions, but most

particularly in Islam. The following is generally regarded as the Prophet's first revelation and as such the first utterance of the entire Qur'an. It is acclaimed as God's Call of Muhammad to be His Prophet, and it reads as follows:

*Recite: In the name of thy Lord who created, created  
Man of a blood-clot.*

*Recite: and the Lord is the Most Generous, who taught  
by the Pen Man that he knew not (96:1-5).*

The first word in this revelation is recite. The Qur'an is the recitation of God's will to the Arabs and to all mankind. As Prophet and messenger of God, Muhammad was the conscience of society and consequently he was commissioned by God to rise and warn sinful humanity. He proclaimed the message of repentance and the Day of Judgment which was at hand. The rewards for those who heed the call of the Prophet, and the punishment for those who reject it are well documented in the Qur'an.<sup>7</sup> Those who are committed to the will of God will make it their primary duty to magnify and glorify His Holy Name. The testimony of God's Supreme power and goodness are manifested throughout the vast universe and He alone is worthy of praise (30:17-18). Given to the Prophet in divine revelation is the article of faith, which is to become mankind's first obligation to uphold in all sincerity and fidelity:

*Say: He is God, one God, the Everlasting Refuge, who  
has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal  
to Him is not any one (Sura 112).*

It is generally accepted that this revelation occurred during the early period of the Prophet's call and it spells out the quintessential nature of Islamic monotheism. In its assertion, the Prophet makes the ultimate negation of all isms that either implicitly or explicitly contradicts the absolute unity and divinity of God. To this revelation may be compared the highly acclaimed Throne Verse which was given to the Prophet much later in his ministry as re-emphasis of the Unity of Almighty God:

*God! there is no god but He, the living and the everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? he knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as he wills. His throne comprises the heavens and the earth! the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious (2:255).*

In this revelation God's divine majesty and splendour, His omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience are declared with utter clarity, thus further emphasizing His uniqueness. His throne is considered by Muslims to be His justice seat. It is symbolic of His absolute providence 'which sustains and governs the heaven and the earth', and which supersedes human comprehension.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly this is one of the most majestic texts in the holy Qur'an which establishes the supremacy of God. To such a revelation it is mankind's duty to respond, but it is to be a response of more than an intellectual acceptance for the reasonableness of monotheism. It is to be accepted on the grounds of faith with an existential commitment to the religious, social, ethical and political obligations that such a monotheism evokes. Islamic monotheism is not philosophical abstraction devoid of existential content. It is the Absolute Reality, the One, True, Compassionate and Merciful God that is calling humanity to return to His way through appropriate *faith* and *action*. In Islam *faith* without action is dead. In other words, the proclamation of God's absolute Creatorhood evokes a response of man's brotherhood to man. Herein lies the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Islam. One can not seek to be vertically right with God by declaring the *Shahada* without being committed to the welfare and well-being of one's fellowmen.

### ***A Critique of Some Critics of Islamic Monotheism***

In his book entitled: *Comparative Religion*,<sup>9</sup> E.O. James makes some observations about Islamic monotheism which

appear, in some instances, to have negative connotations. For example, James refers to the message of the Prophet as 'rigid monotheism'. The tone of this critique is comparable to that of Theodore M. Ludwig who writes as follows:

Islam puts forth a *radical monotheism* in insisting on the utter transcendence and sovereignty of God.....<sup>10</sup>

The use of such terms as "rigid" and "radical" by James and Ludwig, respectively, to describe Islamic monotheism makes a value judgment about Islam that can not be substantiated. Monotheism is the belief in one God without associates. This is the primary and foundational article of faith in Islam, and if the Qur'an and the Islamic community emphasize this primary tenet, it was neither intended to be rigid nor radical, but uncompromising in the face of henotheistic and polytheistic antagonists. The call to prayer: *Allahu Akbar*, "God is the greatest", from the minaret of the mosque is not only an announcement to the community and the world that the hour of prayer has come, but more profoundly it is an affirmation that all beliefs and values are inferior to Him who is always the greatest. The first part of the *Shahada: La ilaha illa allah*, "There is no god but God", and the Muezzin's proclamation: *Allahu Akbar* - 'God is the greatest', comprise the ultimate affirmation of all affirmations about the Supreme Being and they simultaneously comprise the ultimate negation of all affirmations about all forms of idolatry and associates ascribed to God.

Ludwig's comment that Islam's monotheism insists upon the utter transcendence of God is one sided. Whereas it is accurate to say that Islam stresses the transcendence of God, it is also true to say that it teaches His immanence. For example, the Qur'an declares His immanence in no uncertain terms for we read as follows:

And when My servants question thee concerning Me - I am near to answer the call of the caller, when he calls to Me; ..... (2:186).

Allah's transcendence does not make Him aloof from His

creation. Muslims know that when they call upon Him. He is near to answer. How near is He? He is nearer to them than 'the jugular vein' (50:16). Moreover, signs of God's divine power can be seen throughout the earth by men of good faith and understanding (51:20-21). Allah is transcendent by virtue of His divinity, power, wisdom, etc.; but He is also immanent. In *Sura* 6:59 it is written:

He knows what is in land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a Book Manifest.

And again in *Sura* 8:24 we read:

..... and know that God stands between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be mustered.

In these quotations God's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence are very clearly depicted, and there remains no doubt concerning His sovereign rule over the vast universe and over the innermost thought of man's heart. He is not only the Creator of the universe and all that is within it; but He is also the Absolute Ruler and Controller, The Immanence of God has to be understood in terms of a mysterious presence with regard to His closeness, which is associated with His *omnipotence* and *omnipresence*. But His immanence is not comparable to anything known, nor does it have any point of similarity with anything that God has made. To understand the immanence of God in these terms is to keep His transcendence intact. In more practical terms the living, empirical evidence of God's love and mercy for mankind is the Qur'an which is His revelation given as a perfect guide to humanity. He transcends every concept, speech and category of thought, but yet nearer to us than our very 'pulse beat'. Wherever we turn we are confronted by the creative power of God as the *ontological basis* of all that is in the heavens and the earth (*Suras* 55 and 57). The use of terms such as *radical* and *rigid* by Ludwig and James, respectively, to describe Islam's monotheism is misleading.

E.O. James' critique goes further to state that the God

of Islam 'is not fundamentally righteous, and such morality as is enjoined is based on an appeal through fear'.<sup>11</sup> This critique cannot be supported on the basis of the holy Qur'an. James is contradicted by the Qur'an in the first instance with regard to his critique that Allah is not fundamentally righteous. The Qur'an declares:

*He is God: there is no god but He. he is the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable, the All-faithful, ..... (59:23)*

And again:

*All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies God, the King, The All-holy, the All-mighty, the All-wise (62:1).*

These passages are clear about the holiness of God. The holiness and righteousness of God do not negate his justice, nor does his administration of divine justice imply that he enforces morality through fear. It is interesting to note that the Prophet's call of mankind to either repent and return to the way of God or face the judgment of God is in consonance with the style of the Semitic Prophets who preceded him. His intention was not to instil fear, but to warn and call his fellowmen to the path of righteousness as he was commissioned by God to do. It is only a *righteous, compassionate and merciful* God who will give such a commission. A close examination of the Qur'an reveals that references to God as compassionate and merciful are far greater in number compared to those that portray him as fearful.<sup>12</sup> The Qur'an speaks about the justice of God in no uncertain terms, and one should expect that where there is justice there will be reward as well as punishment. But God as 'the best of Judges' (10:109) is "all-forgiving" to those who repent and do 'righteousness' (20:82).

The Prophet proclaims an ethical monotheism and the Qur'an offers guidelines for the well-being of humanity. It is only reasonable that the Prophet should emphasize the consequence that would befall those who deviate from the path prescribed by God. This should not be interpreted to mean that the morality taught by the holy Qur'an is based on fear, hence James' critique is untenable, especially when we read

that 'God is All-pardoning and All-forgiving' (4:43). the only sin that is unpardonable is the giving of associates to God (4:48). The Qur'an establishes that those who obey God and His Prophet and demonstrate reverence and do righteous deeds will prosper and triumph, but unbelievers will be punished (24:52-57). True believers in God follow His path not because of fear but as the Qur'an says - 'those that believe love God more ardently' (2:165). It is love, then, rather fear that characterizes the free and loyal believer.

*Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* - 'In the name of God, the compassionate and merciful'. This is the great invocation with which every chapter of the holy Quran is introduced, except chapter nine. God is compassionate and merciful towards mankind. His compassion and mercy comprise the foundational pillar with regard to His dealing with humanity. They are most predominant in the Qur'an and they spell out to humanity that God's dealings with His creation are not those of a tyrannical, austere and merciless sovereign. The compassionate and merciful God sent his Prophet to warn and to call mankind from the path of idolatry and unrighteousness. If this instills fear, then such fear has to be understood in terms of human conscience, for when the unrighteousness of human beings encounters the righteousness and justice of God, then fear becomes an inevitable response either as dread or as *reverential awe*. Islam teaches the cultivation of the latter.

Finally, James concludes that 'Islam is little more than a belief in the absolute sovereign Ruler ... whose demands hardly exceed those of ritual holiness'<sup>13</sup>. James tends to exaggerate the ritualistic aspect of Islam and to brand it as 'a legalistic system'.<sup>14</sup> But Muhammad Khalifa makes the following relevant observation when he writes:

*The scope of the Qur'anic morality is all-encompassing and integrative because it combines at once faith in Allah, religious rites, spiritual observance, social conduct, intellectual pursuits, eating habits, manner of speech and all other aspects of human life.*<sup>15</sup>

And Fazlur Rahman writes:

*..... the substantive .... teaching of the Prophet and the Qur'an is undoubtedly for action in this world, since it provides guidance for man concerning his behaviour on earth in relation to other men.<sup>16</sup>*

Whereas it is a fact that Islam emphasizes belief in God as the Supreme Ruler, it is false to argue that what is required of man is merely ritualistic holiness. We read in the holy Qur'an that:

*It is not righteousness that you turn your faces in prayer towards the east and the west, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the last day and the angels, and the scriptures, and the prophets: who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger, and those who ask, and for redemption of captives; who is constant at prayer, and giveth aims and of those who perform their covenant, when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity, and hardships, and in time of violence; these are they who are true, and these who fear God (2:177).*

This text clearly explains what is meant by *peity* and *righteousness* and in doing so it makes a clear distinction between theoretical/ritualistic religion and practical/charitable religion. In ritualistic religion one may simply go through the motions to the letter of law without any existential commitment to the spirit of the law. In such instances religion may simply be a legalistic system, but existentially hollow. This kind of religion is mechanical and superficial, and even through it may manifest some of the observable sociological functions, it falls short of what religion means in the holy Qur'an. Taking the exegetical analysis of this text further, we are given the essential core of religion in two fold. First, religion is an uncompromising belief in the true and living God; and second, it is the expression of loving kindness to one's fellowmen without anticipation for recognition. It is to be an unconditional



expression of charity and love. The text offers a brief summary of doctrine to be accepted on the basis of faith, as well as some essential precepts to be followed. It is God who has taken the initiative to reveal to mankind what to believe as true and what to do as a corollary of what is believed. Whereas action gives life to faith, faith gives ultimate meaning, purpose and direction to action.

The true Muslim is not one who simply declares that there is no god but God. Declaration of one's faith must be followed by appropriate action. The true believer is a faithful doer. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy must go hand in hand. This is succinctly stated in the *five pillars* of Islam: *shahada*, *salat*, *zakat*, *sawm* and *hajj*. God has communicated his moral code to mankind, hence He has shown to mankind what is right and what is required. These teachings transmitted to the Prophet and recorded in the Qur'an describe a path that offers to mankind a passage from a life of disobedience and unrighteousness to a life of obedience and righteousness. Genuine belief in God requires *ikhlas*, that is, total and absolute commitment to Him, it is a commitment in thought, speech and action which must exemplify a twofold attitude of the believer - one through the worship of God in unquestionable surrender to Him - and the other through charitable service to one's fellowmen. Faith and action summarize the nature of this attitude, and as such James' critique that the demands of Islam 'hardly exceed those of ritual holiness' can not be substantiated on the basis of Qur'anic teachings, and on the basis of the praxiological exemplification of the faithful believers.

## **Conclusion**

Islam is uncompromisingly a monotheistic religion which was first proclaimed by the first man and first Prophet Adam. This primordial religion was rejuvenated and reasserted by the great patriarch Abraham. The Prophet Muhammad was called by God to be the instrument for its final form, which is Islam. This function he performed with great courage and dedication in response to God's call and in the well-being of

humanity. The faith of Abraham and the Prophet presents to the world the quintessential common denominator of true religion, which is the belief in one God and submission to Him. It is no wonder, therefore, that this is the religion sanctioned by God Himself in the holy Qur'an (5:3).

The first part the *Shahada* which states: *La ilaha illa allah*, 'there is no god but God', is an article of faith which bears witness to the only preexistent and eternal, ontological Truth. If one examines this sentence as a proposition one finds that it makes a firm affirmation via a firm negation. Negating all so-called gods (idols), it affirms the only True and Living God. The second part of the *Shahada*: *Muhammad rasul Allah*, 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God', suggests that the central role of the Prophet of Islam is to proclaim this basic Message given in divine revelation. Today the Islamic community around the world testifies that there is no God but God and Muhammad is His Messenger. The emphatic assertion that there is no god but God is an unceasing testimony and Muslims, in the tradition of the Prophet, will always, be relevant in bearing witness to an uncompromising ethical monotheism especially in the modern world where science, technology and materialism present a form of idolatry that captures the attention and imagination of many. The Islamic philosophy of education is a reflection of what God requires of humanity; and through various educational institutions around the world, Islam spells out in detail such requirements that are originally contained in the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and the *Shariah*. In our modern age when the world has evolved into a global community and when humanity is confronted by various alternatives as promising passages to a life of the highest Good, it is most timely and of paramount importance that Islam continues to emphasize its Alternative as it is divinely ordained. The underlying, pivotal tenet of the Islamic comprehensive philosophy of education and of the Islamic Alternative is the declaration of faith that there is no god but God. It is in the proclamation of this faith that all believers will find meaning, purpose and direction.

**Note :**

1. Islam believes in scriptures as the revealed Word of God and in Prophets as God's Messengers. To Moses God revealed the (*Tawra't*) Torah, to David the (*Zabu'r*) Psalms and to Jesus He gave the (*Injil*) the Gospel. The scriptures of Judaism and Christianity are the revelations of God prior to the advent of the Prophet of Islam. The content of the Qur'an given to the Prophet is God's fullest and final revelation that has been preserved for humankind, because it has been protected from all forms of corruption. It was entrusted to the Prophet as the most reliable path leading back to the religion of Abraham. In the Qur'an we read about the status of Islam in relation to idolatry and about the Qur'an itself in relation to the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity:

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for your religion (5:3). People of Book, now there has come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book, and effacing many things. There has come to you from God a light, and a book Manifest whereby God guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the ways of peace, and brings them forth from the shadows into the light by His leave; and He guides them to a straight path (5:15-16)

It is out of the abundance of God's compassion and mercy for humanity that He gave this final revelation so that all may be guided in His Light and Truth.

2. The following explains the comparative severity of *shirk*: 'Injustice is of three kinds, the injustice that will not be forgiven, the injustice that will not be overlooked, and the injustice that will be forgiven, it is ascribing partners to God... As to the injustice that will be forgiven, it is one that a person commits himself in minor acts of sinfulness. As to the injustice that will not be overlooked, is that which is perpetuated by one against others.' (Al-Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Khutbah 176, inside cover of *Al-Tawhid*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, November 1990 January 1991). Whosoever comes under the influence of the Qur'an and still chooses to be a *Mushrik* brings condemnation upon himself/herself.
3. As Christ called upon all to serve God, so did the Prophet of Islam throughout his ministry. The matter of the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the trinity did not attain liturgical and doctrinal authenticity in Christianity until the Nicene Council, which was held in 325 of the Christian era.
4. Islam consistently makes the point that the Prophet has died as all mortals must; but God who is immortal is Sovereign Ruler, all-powerful, all compassionate and all-merciful. The holy Qur'an declares: 'Put the trust in the Living God the Undying, and proclaim His praise' (25:58). In contrast to all that is created, God, the Creator, is the only Absolute Reality as the Qur'an declares: 'All that is upon the earth passes away; Eternal is the Face of thy Lord in majesty and splendor'. (55:26-27)
5. Quotations from the holy Qur'an are taken from Arthur J. Arberry's and

George Sale's translations, but with regard to the enumeration of the verses, most popular system has been used. This system has been used in the copies of the Qur'an published in most Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, and also followed by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall and Muhammad Asad.

6. See Ugo Bianchi, *The History of Religions*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975.) pp. 88-89.
7. See Qur'an, Sura 77:1-37 and Sura 55.
8. George Sale and E.M. Wherry, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qur'an*, Vol.1 (New York: AMS Press, 1975.) p.383.
9. E.O. James, *Comparative Religion*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961.) pp. 203-207.
10. Theodore M. Ludwig, "Monotheism" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade (ed.), Vol. 10 (New York: Macmillan 1987,) p. 74.
11. James, op. cit. p. 205.
12. Louis Gardet observes that the term *al'Qahhar* (the fearsome) is mentioned four times (it actually occurs six times) in the Qur'an with reference to God, who is once called *al'Jabbar*, which means "the terrible, the awesome", 'for this is how he would appear to the impious and the hypocrite. In these cases we are almost always dealing with an admonition against sinners that is followed by the wish "may be he will return (unto God)" since God is both "Lord of majesty and of generosity" (55:78)' see Mircea Eliade (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan. 1987), p. 29.
13. James, op. cit., p. 205.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
15. Muhammad Khalifa, *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism*, (London: Longman, 1983), p. 168.
16. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1982), p. 14.

# A Solution to the Crisis of Educational Dichotomy \*

Yasien Mohamed \*

## *Islamic Revivalism*

Historically, Muslims have called for socio-moral reconstruction on the basis of a return to Qur'an and Sunna particularly since the 18th century. Westerners have inappropriately referred to this process as 'Islamic fundamentalism'. There are Arabic terms for 'reform', 'revival', 'renewal' but not 'fundamentalism' which is derived from the American Protestant tradition.<sup>1</sup> We are not in favour of using this term because of its restricted meaning. Christian fundamentalism is distinguished by its belief in the 'inerrancy' of scripture. This does not apply to so-called Islamic fundamentalism because all Muslims, whether of the modernist, traditionalist or the revivalist school, believe in the inerrancy of the Qur'an as the direct literal word of God in a way not claimed by Christian fundamentalists. However, a common factor between protestant fundamentalism and 'Islamic Fundamentalism' is their opposition to 'modernism'. The difference is that in the protestant case modernism is part of the fundamentalist culture, whereas in the Muslim case modernism has come from outside Muslim culture. Modernity for the Muslim 'fundamentalist' is therefore a culturally alien phenomenon; and represents a serious break with Muslim tradition. Apart from these differences, 'fundamentalism' is a term, which when applied to Muslims by westerners, particularly in the mass media, is used with a pejorative connotation. Westerners in particular are tempted to suggest that the Islamic world is inhabited by fanatical Muslims. They

\* An analysis of the process of Islamization as exposed by Ismail al-Faruqi.

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that the Islamic world is inhabited by fanatical Muslims. They fail to appreciate the religious fervour among Muslims who attempt to carry out Islamic practices meticulously. This is to a certain extent understandable because large groups in contemporary western society have long lost this sense of religious fervour within their own religious tradition, and many of them have even become indifferent to Christianity itself. Westerners therefore can not imagine how Islam can still remain a source of moral and spiritual guidance and inspiration on a scale which many of them have not experienced. The fact that Islam is able to inspire a political movement is precisely because its adherents experience it as a living reality. To categorize Muslim as 'fundamentalists', and to think of them as fanatics is to have a biased view of what Muslims truly are. Thus, we use the term 'Islamic revivalism', which expresses more accurately and appropriately what is commonly labelled as 'Islamic fundamentalism'.<sup>2</sup>

In defining Islamic 'fundamentalism' or what we prefer to call Islamic resurgence or Islamic revivalism. William Shepard has the following to say:

*'In relation to the Muslim world, the term 'fundamentalist' has been used, mainly by Western observers, to designate a number of movements and tendencies in the present century calling for a strict implementation of Islamic norms and values (the Shariah) throughout all areas of Muslim society. This has included the call for an 'Islamic state' which would bring all public law into the shariah, and somewhat more recently a concern for such matters as the 'Islamicizing' of economics, education and dress codes. It has also involved a very strong opposition to the wholesale adoption of western ways in Muslim society, and somewhat less markedly, opposition to the corruption of traditional Muslim society'.<sup>3</sup>*

Central to modernity has been the development of technology and modern education. This central phenomenon has affected the Muslim world with its specific moral and

intellectual dilemma. A characteristic of the revivalist scholars is their reaction to modernity. Some revivalists responded to the West by challenging the power of the West through Jihad, while others focussed their attention to responding to the knowledge of the West by advocating *Ijtihad* and Islamization. The emphasis of this paper will be on the broader issues of the revivalist attempt to have the *Shariah* implemented, or such as the call for an Islamic state, but specifically upon the revivalist call for the Islamization of education. Among contemporary revivalists few had given such sustained attention to, and, moving beyond the Islamization rhetoric, sought to present as detailed and systematic a plan to indicate how the process could be undertaken.

### ***The Early Revivalist Reformers***

A common characteristic of the early revivalist movements of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries was to stress the socio-moral reconstruction of Muslim society, against the sufi ideal which emphasised individual change to the detriment of a social ethic. Most of these early movements such as the Wahabi movements consequently rejected sufism, particularly the world-negating attitude of sufism. The principles for moral activism and social reconstruction was to be *Jihad* and *Ijtihad*. It was the social degeneration of the Muslim society that gave impetus to these reformist movements. The inability of the Muslim world to combat western expansionism proved to the reformers that the decadence that had crept into Islam must be removed and Islam restored to its pristine purity.<sup>4</sup>

Initial reactions of Muslim leaders toward the West was both political as well as intellectual. For example, Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1897) not only called upon Muslims to unite in resistance to western domination, but also to cultivate modern scientific and philosophical knowledge. The 20th century revivalists continued in this tradition. But some of them made greater contributions to the political arena while others devoted their energies to educational revivalism and reform. As already mentioned, the revivalist movements were more concerned with socio-moral reconstruction in the empirical world.

According to Ismail al-Faruqi:

*"Tawhid commits man to an ethic of action; that is, to an ethic where worth and unworth are measured by the degree of success the moral subject achieves in disturbing the flow of time space, in his body as well as around him".<sup>5</sup>*

*"Islam is not possible without the Shariah, without a state and courts of law to administer it, because Islam is a religion of action, and action is public and societal whereas an ethic of intent is personal and has no need to go outside of conscience".<sup>6</sup>*

The revivalist emphasis on social transformation rather than personal transformation which dominates the sufi ideal finds an echo in Faruqi's devastating critique of sufism.

*"Soon, while the sultans reigned without challenge, the greatest mental energy of the umma were channelled toward the spiritual, personal and subjective values contemplated by tasawwuf ..... For a spirituality that does not concern itself with the empirical welfare of the masses, which does not seek to actualize justice in the rough and tumble of the market places of the world; must be subjectively bent upon the religious interest of the adherent alone. Such a spirituality is egotistic even when it calls for altruistic acts; for its prime concern is the state of consciousness of the practitioner".<sup>7</sup>*

It is clear from these statements that Faruqi had a strong activist tendency and an indifference to the contemplative inward dimensions of Islam. These tendencies are characteristic of many of the Islamic revivalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Thus' Faruqi always identified with the early revivalist salafiyyah (revivalist) movements, but he was also critical of their educational strategy. The Salafiyyah reforms in Arabia, North and West Africa and the Indian Subcontinent, were more successful, according to Faruqi, 'because they attacked *Tasawwuf*, but failed because they were not adequately prepared to face the outside world'. And the followers of Hasan



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al-Banna did not rise to fill the task of elaborating Islamic principles for a 'modern and viable existence'.<sup>8</sup> Faruqi's book, *Tawhid* is therefore intended for genuine self reform, bringing up to date 'the early ideational insights' of the great revivalist reformers of the salafiyah movement, by showing in his work the 'relevance of Islam to the various fields of human thought and activity'.<sup>9</sup>

His societal approach was complementary to the other movements such as the Jama'at al-Islami in Pakistan and Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin in Egypt. His revivalist attitude is also manifested in the way he seeks to articulate Islam in modern terms as a universal ideology. It is this universal societal approach which is to inevitably blossom forth in the context of the social sciences. Islam has its social dimension and as an 'ideology' it could only be captured by studying people through the disciplines of the social sciences.<sup>10</sup> But these disciplines need to be Islamized if Muslim lands want to be liberated from the dominance of a bifurcated educational system. Furthermore, the Islamization must be consistent with the revivalist tradition of Islam as the ideological base for social change.

### ***The Impact of Modernity***

It was only towards the end of the 19th century, as the products of European technology and industry became more readily available, that Muslim rulers sought to modernize their countries. As modern educated Muslims grew in numbers and in affluence, they were more eager to share in western comforts and luxuries.<sup>11</sup> The early Muslim scholars failed to realize that western technology would eventually lead to great social upheavals. According to Watt;

*"Social discontent is undoubtedly an important part of the seed-bed for the Islamic resurgence. The ulema also failed to realize this link between social change and the acceptance of western technology, and while strenuously keeping aloof from any possibility of being corrupted by western thought, were perfectly ready to take advantage*

By the 20th century all Muslim countries had adopted modern educational institutions in the form of secular universities, colleges and schools. These developments brought about radical social change. Muslims originally hoped that modern secular education would enable them to adopt modern technology and share its benefits and comforts. They also felt that through modern technology they would regain their power and prestige in the world. Early revivalist such as Muhammad 'Abdu reacted to modernity which had begun to affect the life-style of Muslims. But underlying this reactionary trend is an inherent acceptance of something from modernity, which is notably its technology. The basic line of reasoning behind this response is that by learning science from the West, Muslims would regain their lost glory and fulfil the commandments of God. Muhammad 'Abdu was representative of this kind of thinking. He argues that the new sciences are essential to life in this age and that it is a defence against aggression and humiliation; and it is also 'the basis of our happiness, wealth and strength.'<sup>13</sup>

The two systems of education, the traditional and the secular had already produced in 'Abdu's time two different educated classes in Egypt, each with a spirit and outlook of its own. 'Abdu was concerned about this division and sought to bridge the gulf between the two. He was unhappy with the educational degeneration of the al-Azhar, the bastion of Islamic traditionalism. Thus he called for urgent reform. he proposed that systematic Islamic studies be introduced in the secular schools. But this process can be facilitated if the graduates of the al-Azhar can be in touch with the realities of the modern world. It was therefore not surprising that he sought to modernize the al-Azhar by the introduction of the modern disciplines alongside the traditional sciences. He argues that even great scholars such as al-Ghazzali considered the study of logic and other related disciplines obligatory for the defence of Islam.<sup>14</sup> This juxtaposition of the modern and the secular was intended to bring about integration of the modern and

traditional disciplines, and therefore unity in the society, but instead it amounted to an educational dichotomy. Little did 'Abdu realize the epistemological incompatibility of the modern sciences with that of the Islamic sciences. In fact there is no evidence of his awareness of the 'erosion of the Islamic world view by western thought'.

'Abdu's basic reform was an attempt at a rationalistic explication of Islamic belief as reflected in his theological treatise, *Risalat al-Tawhid*.<sup>15</sup> In this treatise he tried to demonstrate that Islam is a religion of reason; but it is also a response to modernity in so far as he has attempted a rational explication of Islamic theology.<sup>16</sup> However, the effects of his reform was more in the field of educational reorganization, examinations and the introduction of new subjects than in the contents of the nuclear Islamic sciences.<sup>17</sup> His attempt to reform the al-Azhar eventually led to the mere juxtaposition of modern disciplines with the traditional Islamic sciences, that is, to the perpetuation of educational dichotomy in 19th century Egypt.

### *The Crisis of Educational Dichotomy*

Since then, we have witnessed two conflicting system of education in the Muslim world; namely, the western secular and the Islamic traditional system. These systems have produced graduates of different outlooks who could not understand one another; and, in competing for influence in society, they contributed to its tension and division. The reforms of 'Abdu and Syed Ahmad Khan (in India) amounted to an educational dichotomy rather than genuine Islamic integration. The problems of division and dichotomy seem to have sharpened, and most scholars today define the crises of education in terms of this dichotomy. According to Rahman, for example, the dichotomy that existed during the days of 'Abdu is still as real today.

*"The dilemma that characterised education in the days of Shibli and Abdu in the 'forward' land of Islam - land that had a highly developed traditional education as well*

*sometimes deep consciousness of the dichotomy of education .....<sup>18</sup>*

Before long the traditional system of education shrunk in size and in importance, and most Muslims were schooled in western systems of education in order to function efficiently in the modern world. We should now be aware of the fallacy of 19th century thinking that useful technology may be introduced into a society without affecting the traditional integrity of that society. Yet, this idea continues to be the standard response of many Muslims up till today. The early argument for useful technology is replaced by the Qur'anic call to cultivate science. By so doing the *umma* would not only rediscover its lost heritage, but will also obey the commandments of God.

By the end of the 20th century most ulema were aware of the extent of the problems caused by western thought, but had little notion of the depth of these problems. At the First World Conference of Muslim Education (1977) the scholars identified the problems as one of educational dichotomy. There is the admission that Muslim countries had adopted the western system of education along with the modern life-style it has introduced, conflicts with the Islamic thought and traditional life-style. Furthermore, this western way of life is encouraged by the radio, television and the mass media. A cultural duality has come to exist in the Muslim world. On the one hand, the traditional Islamic education still persists, supporting the traditional society; and on the other, the modern secular education is creating secularists who care little about the Islamic tradition. Muslim thinkers are concerned that the secular system is dominant and the Muslim world is in danger of losing its identity. They feel that the solution to the problem is a true Islamic education. But this can only come about if Muslim scholars can produce Islamic concepts for all branches of knowledge.<sup>19</sup> The following quotation highlights the conflict between Islamic traditionalism and modernity. It defines the problem of a dichotomous education which was the primary concern of the scholars at the First World Conference on Muslim

## Education.

*"There are at present two systems of education. The first, traditional, which has confined itself to classical knowledge, has not shown any keen interest in new branches of knowledge that have emerged in the West nor in new methods of acquiring knowledge in the western system of education. This system is valuable for classical theological knowledge but even the classical theologians produced by this system are not equipped with either intellectual knowledge or a method of meeting the challenges of a modern godless technological civilization. The second system of education imported into Muslim countries, fully subscribed to and supported by all governmental authorities, is borrowed from the West. At the head of this system is the modern University which is totally secular and hence non religious in its approach to knowledge. Unfortunately, these people educated by this new system of education, known as modern education, are generally unaware of their own tradition and classical heritage. It is not possible for this group to provide such leadership as we have envisaged in the earlier section.*

*The creation of a third system embracing an integrated system of education, is necessary but integration is not an easy process. Nor is it justifiable when integration might lead to a total elimination of the traditional system of education.... all that we want to emphasise is the fact that the western system of modern education is a secularized form which needs immediate reform.*

*Though there have been attempts to make religious education compulsory there has been no attempt so far to teach literature and fine arts, social sciences and natural sciences from the Islamic point of view. As a result what children have been learning from religion has been contradicted by what is given to them through the humanities or social sciences and natural sciences. Unless an attempt is made now to Islamicize the humanities, social and natural sciences by producing basic*

*Unless an attempt is made now to Islamicize the humanities, social and natural sciences by producing basic concepts and by changing the methodology of approaching them or teaching them, it will not be possible to create a viable group intellectually capable of resisting the onslaught of secularist teaching'.<sup>20</sup>*

Faruqi's vision of the crisis of Muslim society is in principle consistent with what is expressed in the above quotation. For him, the source of the crises is in the bifurcation of the educational system into the modern and the Islamic; and that the problem can be addressed through the Islamization of the humanities and the social sciences. Faruqi contends that the *umma* is suffering from a 'threateningly dangerous malaise'. Despite the global Islamic awareness, and segments of the Muslim *umma* attaining self-liberation and independence' Muslims are still imitating alien civilization. This has caused the 'de-islamization' of the elite of Muslim society and the demoralization of the Muslim masses. The 'alien vision' of the colonial invaders has survived, and is evident everywhere; in imported institutions, 'in the design of home and cities, in economic and political life-styles, and in the concepts of man, nature and society. And the primary vehicle of disseminating the alien view is the educational system which is the main locus and core of the malaise.<sup>21</sup> It is the breeding ground of the disease of self-estrangement from Islam, and where the consciousness of the youth is moulded into the caricature of the West, Islamic education remains a private affair and funds are directed at secularization in the name of progress. This consists of bifurcating the curriculum into the contrasting or opposing sections, modern and Islamic (eg. al-Azhar). The Islamic part of the curriculum remains unchanged to keep it out of touch with the reality of modernity.<sup>22</sup>

The early reformers were so overwhelmed by western civilization that their educational reforms uncritically incorporated western education but neglected the inner dynamics of a genuine Islamic education. Abdu and Ahmad Khan did not realize the inherent intellectual dangers of a



modern education. Their reforms only perpetuated a dichotomous education. Faruqi was critical to their reform efforts, although, it must be admitted, that he was at a distinct advantage in having witnessed the pernicious effects of western secular education system almost a century after Ahmad Khan.

*"..... many great Muslims have attempted to reform Islamic education by adding to its curriculum the subjects constitutive of an alien view. Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad 'Abdu were champions of this cause. All their efforts..... rested on the assumption that the so-called 'modern' subjects are harmless and can only lend strength to Muslim. Little did they realize that the alien humanities, social sciences, and indeed the natural sciences as well, were facets of an integral view of reality, of life and the world, of history, that is equally alien to that of Islam..... That is why their reforms bore no fruit."<sup>23</sup>*

Thus Faruqi also identified the cause of the malaise of the Muslim *Umma* in the prevalent dichotomous educational system. But unlike the early reformers who assumed that modern knowledge is value free, Faruqi adopted a more critical approach to modern knowledge. This he did in his call for the Islamization of knowledge.

### ***Islamization : A response to Educational Modernity***

Islamization is a revivalist response to the educational crisis brought about by modernity. Although Faruqi may not have been the first to introduce the idea of Islamization, his Islamization of Knowledge is the most eloquent expression of the crises of educational bifurcation and its solution in the form of Islamization.

Faruqi's Islamization of knowledge is the outcome of the international seminar which was held in Islamabad in 1982. The main concern of the scholars was the problem of the dichotomy of education, and the split personality which it engenders in the Muslim youth. Although the heart is Islamic because of parental socialization, the mind is transformed by

these disciplines, reconstruct the theory and methodology of these disciplines to be in harmony with Islamic principles and values.<sup>24</sup> Faruqi is particularly concerned with the pernicious influences of the university education on the Muslim student whose sentimental commitment to Islam can not withstand the onslaught of scientific truth. Students enter the university with little knowledge of Islam - with sentiments but not with ideas - hence he is not equipped to confront the ideas presented to him at the university level. If he does not graduate as an atheist or a secularist, his view of Islam becomes a cultural affair within a family context; having no sense of Islam as a 'vibrant ideology' with relevance to any problem.<sup>25</sup> Sentimental attachment to Islam cannot counter the onslaught of objectivity; thus the Muslim student succumbs to the secular claim. 'and after four years of alienating influence coupled with the influence of the mass media, peers, society - his Islamic consciousness is revaged.'<sup>26</sup> A counter presentation of the Islamic claims with the same form of 'objectivity' and 'scientificity', and the same rational appeal of modernity therefore becomes necessary.<sup>27</sup>

This solution to the malaise which is rooted in the educational dichotomy is in the Islamization of knowledge. So what constitutes Islamization for Faruqi? The humanities, social and natural sciences must be 'reconceived' and 'rebuilt' by giving it an Islamic basis consistent with the objective of Islam. Every discipline must be 'recast' to embody the principles of Islam, and remoulded to incorporate the 'relevance' of Islam, along a triple axis constitutive of Tawhid. And because Islam is relevant to all thinking and living, the textbook of this discipline must reflect its relevance as an integral part of the vision of reality. And Muslim teachers have to be trained in these new textbooks.<sup>28</sup> Islamization, therefore, involves producing university level text books for each discipline to be Islamized. Unlike the early reformers, Faruqi provides a practical blue-print for overcoming the educational dichotomy. 'Basically the relevance of Islam to each area of modern thought ought to be established, and this presupposes the mastery of the modern and the Islamic disciplines. Having mastered the disciplines, creative synthesis can be established

by integrating the new knowledge into the corpus of Islamic legacy by eliminating, amending, reinterpreting and adapting its components as the world view of Islam and its values dictate'.<sup>29</sup> In this way the relevance of Islam must be determined. Faruqi developed a twelve-step work plan for Islamization, each step involving a critical assessment of the modern disciplines from an Islamic point of view. Faruqi seems to be aware that his workplan is pioneering this respect, and that it is cognizant of conflicting epistemologies between modern and the Islamic legacy:

*"The task of Islamization of knowledge... is also the most difficult. No Muslim has yet contemplated it enough to discern its prerequisites, or to articulate its constitutive steps and measures. All that our previous reformers have done was to acquire the knowledge and power of the West. They were not even aware of the conflict of western knowledge with the vision of Islam."<sup>30</sup>*

*"The tasks of Assessing the Islamic legacy's contribution in each field of human activity must therefore fall upon the shoulders of the experts in that activity. They are the monitors of Muslim needs in that field and they are the masters of the modern discipline studying that activity. Certainly they should be assisted by the experts in the legacy in order to guarantee the most adequate and correct understanding of it possible."<sup>31</sup>*

The view that Faruqi was essentially concerned about the Muslim social scientists, and therefore the modern educated scholars, is further confirmed by Davies in the following statement.

*"While the International Institute for Islamic Thought is involved and concerned with all fields of intellectual endeavour they have sought to avoid duplication. They have identified their own priority to social and behavioral sciences. Far from being a case of taking those intellectual spheres which are left over, their interest in psychology, sociology, anthropology and political science is essential*

choice for solidifying the enterprise for the Islamization of knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

According to Ilyas Ba-Yunus the concept of Islamization of knowledge along with the concept of the Islamic social sciences, became the 'driving force in Ismail's activist career, particularly in the formation of the Association of Muslim Social Sciences (AMSS).<sup>33</sup> AMSS not only represented, for Faruqi, an organization of the Muslim social scientists in North America, but it was the beginning of a world wide Islamic movement, aimed at bringing a 'new strain of social science in the world of modern academia'.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Faruqi was not just suggesting a juxtaposition of the two systems of education as the previous reformers have done. He wanted a creative synthesis of these two systems through the Islamization of knowledge. Faruqi did not only give expression to the idea of Islamization but also to a conscious, deliberate, and practical work plan.

Unlike Faruqi, contemporary revivalist scholars have also not done much with regard to educational reform, although there has been much sloganizing with regard to *Ijtihad* and lately of Islamization. Fazlur Rahman, particularly, has been rather devastating in his criticism of what he calls the 'neo-revivalists' whom he considers to be ignorant of 'traditional intellectual culture'. Furthermore, they have produced 'no Islamic educational institution' of any worth. The traditional system which the revivalist scholars criticized for its stagnation and lack of originality, was far more sophisticated and superior in content than the system of the neo-revivalists. In their reformist zeal they over-simplified the educational system to the extent that they became intellectually improvised and hence stifled the very spirit of *Ijtihad* which they themselves advocated.<sup>35</sup> His criticism in *Islam and Modernity* is directed specifically at Mawdudi who is supposedly representative of the neo-revivalist tradition. He founded no educational institution and 'never suggested any syllabus for a reformed Islamic education... not one of Mawdudi's followers ever became a serious student of Islam'.<sup>36</sup>

Although Faruqi's intellectual contribution is complementary to the political contribution of the neo-revivalists, such criticism of Rahman would be out of place with reference to a serious scholar such as Faruqi. Far from being anti-intellectual Faruqi was a philosopher in his own right and he left behind him a legacy of Educational institutions in the form of universities, colleges and schools whose aim is the Islamization of knowledge. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences is evidence of the continued Islamization efforts. It is published jointly by AMSS and IIIT, organizations which have emerged through Faruqi's efforts. All these are evidence of the Faruqi's legacy, not to speak of Faruqi's own intellectual contribution. According to Parvez Manzoor, Faruqi's contribution lies precisely in his practical workplan for Islamization.

*'Al-Faruqi's contribution lies in the practicality of his vision and of having provided a workplan as well as a general theory. More than that, he has been successful in soliciting support from a number of Muslim institutions for translating his visionary ideas into practical realities. In fact not only his own Internaitonal Institute of Islamic Thought, but the new Islamic University in Islambad, Pakistan, have been pursuing the 'Islamization of knowledge' option with determination and devotional zeal. Even some revision of university textbooks is already on its way.<sup>37</sup>*

Although, however, Merryl Wyn Davies observes that Islamization has not really gone beyond the level of sloganization,<sup>38</sup> the idea of Islamization is now widespread, and many Muslim universities, colleges and schools have been inspired by it, making it their object. It is in the domain of contemporary educational reform that the enterprise of Islamization of knowledge must be squarely situated.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of Faruqi cannot be denied. His *Islamization of Knowledge* is a timeliest gift to the first decade of the 15th

century Hijra, but it is not a closed agenda. The gift can only be realized by challenging it and in engaging Muslim scholars in debate concerning it. By so doing, we can widen our horizons and thus be able to refine the workplan for Islamization. The International Institute of Islamic Thought have encouraged critical discussion by their consistent insistence that it is open to ideas, advice and collaboration. It is in the spirit of this openness that a critical analysis of Faruqi's Islamization needs to be presented. Such an analysis, however, will require separate treatment. The purpose of this paper was only to situate Faruqi within the revivalist tradition, and within the context of contemporary educational reform. There is a need also to consider alternative approaches to modernity in order to develop an authentic Islamic response which is comprehensive, uncompromising and comprehensible.

**Note :**

1. Richard T. Antoun *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 236.
2. William E. Shepard, 'Fundamentalism', *Christian and Islamic' in Religion*, (Academic Press Limited, 1987), pp. 356-360.
3. *ibid*, p. 357.
4. Fazlur Rahman, 'Revival and Reform' in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, eds. P.M. Holt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) Vol 2B, P. 64.
5. Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi, *Tawhid and its Implications*, (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982) p. 196.
6. *ibid*, pp. 197-198 see also P. Manzoor's statement of Faruqi's activism in *Afkar* (vol 3, No. 7), 1986, p. 34.
7. *ibid*, p. 21.
8. *ibid*, pp. i-iv.
9. *ibid*, pp. iii-iv.
10. *ibid*, pp. iii-iv, cf. Ilyas Ba-Yunus, 'AlFaruqi and Beyond: Future Directions in Islamization of Knowledge' in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, eds. Mushtaqur Rahman et al., (Hemdon, The Association of Muslim Social Scientists & The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1988), Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 14-23.
11. W.M. Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*, (London and New

- York: Routledge: 1988) pp. 45-46.
12. *ibid*, p. 47 cf. F. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 47.
  13. Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt* (London: The Muslim Institute, 1985), p. 65.  
cf. A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 140-144.
  14. *ibid*, p. 65.
  15. Watt, *op cit*, p. 52.
  16. *ibid*, p. 55.
  17. Rahman, *op cit*, p. 99.  
cf. M. H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, (California, University of California Press, 1966), p. 1111.
  18. Rahman, *op cit*, p. 130.
  19. S. S. Hussain and S. A. Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education* (Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton & King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), p. 3.  
cf. Watt, *op cit*, pp. 78-79 and Rahman, *op cit*, pp. 45-50.
  20. *ibid*, p. 17. See also the other volumes in the Islamic Education Series ( 6 Volumes) of which Syed Ali Ashraf is the general editor. For the Islamization of the Social Sciences, see specifically, Isma'il Ragi al-Faruqi, 'Islamizing the Social Sciences' in *Social and Natural Sciences*, Eds. I. R. al Faruqi and A.O. Naseef. Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton & King Abdul Aziz University, 1981.
  21. Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge*, (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982). pp. iv-v.
  22. *ibid*, p. 6.
  23. *ibid*, p. v.
  24. *ibid*, p. 49.
  25. *ibid*, pp. 6-8, and p. 53.
  26. *ibid*, pp. 10-11.
  27. *ibid*, p. 11.
  28. *ibid*, p. iv and p. 6.
  29. *ibid*, p. 14.
  30. *ibid*, p. 30 cf. F. Rahman, 'Roots of Islamic Neo-fundamentalism' in *Change and the Muslim World*. eds P.H. Stoddard et al., (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 27; see also, S.H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, (London/New York, KPI, 1987), p. 84.
  31. I. R. al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge*, *op cit*, p. 41.
  32. M. W. Davies, *op cit*, p. 54.
  33. Ilyas Ba-Yunus, 'Faruqi and Beyond: Future Directions in Islamization of Knowledge' in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science*, ed. M. Rahman et al., *op cit*, p. 15.
  34. *ibid*, p. 116.
  35. F. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, *op cit*, p. 137.  
cf. S. H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*.
  36. *ibid*, p. 116.

*The Fragrance*

37. P. Manzoor's article in Afkar (Vol. 3. No. 7), 1986, p. 39.
38. M. W. Davies' article in Afkar (Vol. 3. No. 7), 1986, p. 54.



# Human Rights in Islam

Siddiq Ali Abdallah

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

The UN Commission of Human Rights called for the abolition of laws contravening the international legislation, specifically those of *Hudud* (fixed punishments) and *Qisas* (retribution).<sup>1</sup> They insist on the universality of human rights based on Western standards.

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

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

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

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

Islam seeks remedial measures to prevent the commission of the offences beforehand. In order to prevent adultery, it advocates early marriage and provides aid from Public Treasury for those, who wish to get married, yet cannot afford to pay the dower. On the other hand, the moral discipline purifies the society from temptations, which excite the passions of both sexes. Islam does not inflict the punishment on the adulterer unless he committed his crime so openly that he could be seen by four eye witnesses.<sup>2</sup> If a sexual offence is committed in private, it is not punishable unless the accused admits his guilt voluntarily.

The fact that the punishment for theft has been executed only six times over a period of 400 years is a clear evidence, that such *Hudud* punishments were primarily meant to be a deterrent to prevent crime.<sup>3</sup> In the succeeding paragraphs, I would like to highlight the freedoms and rights guaranteed by Islam to all members of the society, irrespective of their religion, race, sex or social status.

### ***Equal Rights for All***

In his famous oration, which he delivered on the occasion of his Farewell Pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) reaffirmed the principle of equality and brotherhood of man in Islam. He is quoted as saying, 'All men are equal in Islam. The Arabs has no superiority over the non-Arab, nor does the non-Arab has superiority over the Arab, save in piety (fear of God).

On the other hand, the social rank or high office did not bestow upon the bearer special privileges before law and certainly did not entitle him to ill-treat others. Jabbala, the king

of the Ghassanides, embraced Islam and it happened that he ill-treated a poor man. The man complained to Caliph Omar bin al-Khattab. Omar sent for Jabbala and asked him why he had so ill-treated a brother Muslim. When Jabbala refused to do as he was bidden, because he was a king and the other person only a common man. Omar replied, 'King or no king, both of you are Muslims and both of you are equal in the eye of law'.

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

When Islam came slavery was prevalent throughout the Roman, Persian and Indian Empires as well as in Arabia, and it was acknowledged as a fact of socio-economic existence. Therefore, its total abolition required a gradual process. The advent of Islam heralded the restoration of human dignity to the slaves. The holy Qur'an commanded the Muslims:<sup>5</sup> *"And be good to the parents and the near of kin and those whom your right hands possess (slaves); surely Allah loves not him who is proud and boastful."* (Sura 4:verse 36).

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

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) established

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

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be on him) married his cousin, Zainab, the daughter of Jahsh, to his freed slave Zaid. The Prophet (peace be on him) also appointed Osama, the son of his ex-slave Zaid, as the commander of the army consisting of such illustrious men, as Abu Bakr and Omar.<sup>6</sup> Thus, even a slave could aspire to the highest office in the Islamic state.

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

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

The Prophet (peace be on him) applied the rules of justice and equality even to himself and to his family where necessary, demonstrating the truth of the concept that there is no distinction of class or status in Islam and thus he set a lofty example to be followed by all the Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

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

According to the Holy Qur'an, men and women are quite equal to each other in their origin, their abode as well as in their place of return and were as such entitled to similar and equal rights. "O people! Be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of

*the same kind and spread from these too many men and women".* (Sura 4: verse 1)

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

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

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

No woman could be given in marriage without her consent. The Noble Prophet (peace be on him) says: "No widow should be married without consulting her, and no virgin be married without her consent and her consent is her silence," (Bukhari & Muslim) The Muslim woman has the right to propose her marriage to any man she liked to marry.<sup>8</sup> The European woman obtained this right only in the eighteenth century.

Scientific research proved that a difference exists in the mechanism of the brain of each sex and, therefore, each sex has to discharge the duty for which he is biologically well equipped.<sup>9</sup> The emotional character of a woman is suitable for motherhood, whereas the physical and intellectual disposition of a man helps him in planning his tough practical life.

Thus, Islam effects equality between the two sexes, where there is a natural ground for it, and differentiates between these where such differentiation is but natural. Islam gives to the man the equivalent of the portion of two females in inheritance, because the man alone is charged with shouldering all the financial obligations of the whole family. The woman gets one third of the inherited property to spend it on her own person. If a woman possesses a property of her own, her husband cannot take it away from her, and even then he has to bear her financial burden as if she had nothing in her possession to support herself with.<sup>10</sup>

The man is under a legal obligation for the maintenance of his family. The Qur'an says: "*Men are maintainers of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on some of them than on others, and with what they may spend out of their possessions.*" (Sura 4: verse 34)

Therefore, as the man is equipped with rational qualities and has strong physical body he is more fit to shoulder the responsibility of headship of the family. It is scientifically proved that women in the premenstrual days are suffering from severe mood disturbances, and tend to take irrational decisions.<sup>11</sup> This may be the reason why Islam makes the evidence of two women equivalent to that of one man.

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

Kind treatment of wives is a part of the religion of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has said. "The best among you are those who are kindest to their wives." Islam requires the same high standard of moral conduct from both sexes and has imposed the same legal penalties on them for the violation of the moral laws.<sup>12</sup> If the wife hates her husband and can no longer live with him, she has the right to get separated provided that the court is convinced of the grounds for separation. Non-Muslims women do not enjoy this right,

as their marriage is a perpetual bond.

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

Polygamy also offers the solution to the problem of having a sterile wife or a wife suffering from a chronic disease and she does not want to deprive her husband of children of his own. Islam does not deprive the woman of the right to work outside her home when there is a genuine need for her to work, but not at the cost of her primary functions at home.<sup>13</sup>

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

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

### ***Right to Private Ownership***

Islam does not rate human nature so low as to take it for granted that private ownership will always inevitably lead to injustice and oppression as believed by the Communists. As for refining and educating human nature Islam achieved an

unmatched success. Some Muslims owned property yet *"they entertained no desire in their hearts for that which has been given them but gave preference to others over themselves though poverty became their lot."* (Sura 59: 7) Muslims willingly shared their own property with others.

Islam took the necessary precautions by enacting economic and social legislations, which precluded feudalism and capitalism and ensured a respectful standard of living even for those who did not own any land or factories.

It has not abolished private ownership but made the necessary guarantees for a fair distribution of wealth. Such guarantees bridge the gap between the classes, prohibiting luxury and ending deprivation.<sup>14</sup> Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) urged all Muslims to work for a living, even going to jungle to cut wood so as to earn a decent living, and asked the employers to give their employees wages proportionate to their work immediately.

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

Thus Islam combines the merits of both capitalism and Communism. It permits private ownership in principle but subjects it to reasonable restrictions. It vests the community with the power to organise ownership, rather than abolish it.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Freedom of Religion***

Religious tolerance is provided for in the Qur'anic texts and thereby no one is compelled to embrace Islam. *"Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands out clear from Error."* (Sura 11: verse 256) The essence of the attitude of Islam towards adherents of other faiths is to be found in the charter,



which was granted to the Jews by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) after his arrival in Madina and to the Christian of Najran, a town in Southern Arabia after Islam had fully established itself in the Arabian Peninsula.

It was the first charter of freedom of conscience given to all individuals of all religions, offering them equal rights.<sup>16</sup> Sir. T.W. Arnold in his book *"The Preaching of Islam"* is quoted as saying "Muhammad (peace be on him) had entered into treaty with several Christian tribes, promising them his protection and guaranteeing them the free exercise of their religion and to their clergy undisturbed enjoyment of their old rights and authority. Religious toleration was extended towards the Christian Arabs by the victorious Muslims of the first century of Hijrah and continued by succeeding generations."

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

When Spain was re-conquered by King Ferdinand, innumerable Jews left their country for Muslim lands, preferring a life in exile under Muslim rule to life in their homeland.<sup>17</sup> The Holy Qur'an also emphasised the need to establish inter-religious dialogue. "Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say ye; 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims bowing to Allah's Will.'" (Sura 3: verse 65)

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an asked the Muslims to give protection even to the non-Muslim enemies, who defect and seek asylum in the Islamic State. "If one amongst the pagans ask you for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the Word of Allah: and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge." (Sura 9: verse 6)

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

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

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

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

Caliph Omar addressed the Muslims saying: "Put me right if you discover any crookedness in me." a member of the audience retorted: "By God Almighty if we had found any crookedness in you we would have put you right with our swords." This man expressed such a harsh viewpoint to the ruler publicly without being afraid of any kind of punishment.

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

## ***Conclusion***

In Islam man's duty to God embraces both his duty to

society and to every other individual, and consequently the rights of each are protected by the obligations of all under the divine law. As the state itself is equally subject to this same law, it is compelled to protect the rights of the individual.

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

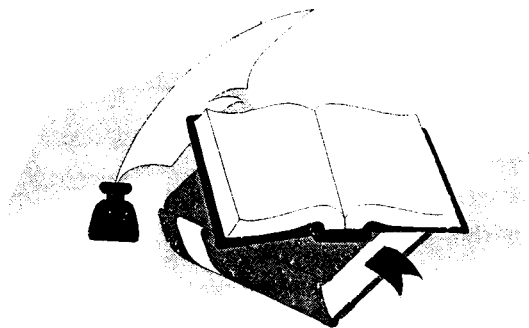
There is a disparity between words and deeds in the behaviour of the so-called advanced nations regarding human rights. They are silent about rights violations in the Arab lands occupied by the Zionist entity and in other pro-Western countries, and are crying because the Islamic *Hudud* punishments in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

### Note :

1. For further details see *Sudan Focus Newsletter*, March, 95.
2. *Islam: The Musunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 251.
3. *Ibid*, p. 251 English edition.
4. "*Islam & the Racial Problem*", an article by M. A. Hobohm.
5. *Islam: The Musunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 69.
6. *Ibid*, p. 86.
7. "*Islamic Concept of Social Justice*," an essay by Mouloud Kassim.
8. *Islam: The Musunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 187.
9. *Brain Sex*, a book by Ann Moire.
10. *Islam: The Musunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 197.
11. *Brain Sex*, by Ann Moire.
12. *Women in Islam*, an essay by Aisha Lemu.
13. *Islam: The Musunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 227.
14. *Ibid*, p. 153.
15. *Ibid*, p. 155.
16. *Islam & the Racial Problem*, an essay by M. A. Hobohm

*The Fragrance*

17. Ibid.
18. *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*, by M. Qutb, p. 288.
19. Ibid, p. 87.
20. *Islam & Human Rights*, an essay by A. K. Brohi.



# Surface and Deep Structures: An Essay on Cultural Unity and Diversity<sup>1</sup>

*Hans Buhler*

## *Introduction*

The Question whether the diversity of cultures is sufficient to explain and understand individual differences in behaviour has preoccupied scholars for a long time. It is common sense that there are deep-seated differences between various cultures which to a large extent could explain the differences in behaviour of people from various cultures. Yet, experience has shown that everywhere there are people who are curious and lethargic, friendly and sullen, industrious and lazy, committed and subser-vient, profligate and parsimonious, reticent and eloquent, quick and slow and so on. Differences between persons seem to be more significant than differences between cultures, and one is led to the supposition that beneath the superficially observable cultural diversity there exists a common cultural base.<sup>2</sup>

Enculturalization has been hitherto described as one of the basic learning processes through which human beings learn to act like other members of the culture they belong to. But worldwide migrations are leading more and more to multicultural societies. Today, we have reached a stage at which the emerging fundamen-talisms<sup>3</sup> are demanding satisfaction of the individual need for unambiguity and for a

home by wanting to establish, if necessary by force, their right to the diversity of cultures combined with the ethnocentric mania of the superiority of their own culture. This one-sided position however must be expanded and thus corrected through "global" learning as an educational principle which brings the idea of cultural unity amongst humans to our attention again.

Traditional Western thought has been determined to a large extent by the search for differences, for specific differences. However, recently one can discern that the traditional East Asian search for unity<sup>4</sup> is finding intermittent expression worldwide in academic essays in the form of concepts such as "system" or "chaos"<sup>5</sup>. The search for ecological evidence is the most important proof of this tendency.

Racism - at least in Europe - is on the increase again. The brutal instances of arson directed at new, especially Turkish citizens are sad evidence of this fact. It would be trite and dangerously false to claim that the sole responsibility for all this lies with a few deranged individuals. Rather the intellectually disguised philosophy of the "New Right"<sup>6</sup> is gaining more and more social acceptance. The "New Right" is no longer based on a banal racism which asserts itself on the basis of phenotypically observable differences between humans, for example skin colour, or educational or economic backwardness and this legitimizes their exploitation and suppression. It propagates rather a cultural racism which assumes that the difference between ethnic groups are determined above all by these cultural differences and are unchangeable.

The current public-political discussion in the Federal Republic of Germany is being dominated by conservative scaremongering whereby "the foreigners" are to be feared and this is necessary in order to justify the ideology of separation of the wealthy North from the poor South. Positive daily experiences between people from various cultures, for example at work, are in the face of this underlying xenophobic current not generalized by many but rather declared as exceptional and expressed in such phrases as "Yes, Turan,

he's a good sort but the rest of them..."

To counter balance this political game with people's xenophyobia we suggest an academic model which belongs to all of us. Perhaps this will not suffice in preventing individual prejudices pitting natives against foreigners nor will it take the wind out of the sails of conservative political interests. nevertheless, we need to widen our perspective and to refer to both sides of the issue while seaching for unity in the diversity of cultures.

### ***Culture Defined***

Nowadays "culture" is being understood increasingly from the perspective of the Anglo-saxon tradition as an everyday culture, as was formulated more than 100 years ago by E. B. Tylor. According to Tylor culture is "that complex whole which comprises of knowledge, religious belief, arts, customs, the law, habits and every form of ability and lasting activity which a human being as a member of a society acquires".<sup>7</sup> This definition is helpful in providing us with a notion of the elements which make up an everyday culture. However, it is no longer sufficient for our modern times because it presupposes clearly definable cultural frontiers. In a time of worldwide migration this is no longer possible. The usual imprecise defintions of culture used today are a consequence of the fact that they merely concentrate on the diversity which is surface-structurally obsevable yet allow for no deep structural precision.

Evidence for intercultural deep structure in everyday cultures may be seen in the universal concern to satisfy basic needs, such as food, clothing, accomodation, health care, but also ideals such as education or economic needs such as work. At the same time each culture contains the tension between a basic need for unambiguity (home) and change (mobility, nomadism). Other psycho-social basic needs, such as the need for recogni-tion, respect, honour, happiness, etc., are likewise part of this evidence, Finally one should not forget the custom of hospitality present in all everday cultures and -

in this same context - the respect for human dignity. Comparisons of "honour" in Turkish and German families, for example, are only possible when one accepts in addition an intercultural deep-structure on the basis of which a Turk and German could agree that a concept of "honour" existed which is not exclusively German or Turkish but a concept of "honour" is to be understood as an element of the meta-level, the intercultural deep structure. This deep structure must be constantly tested and redefined.

### ***The Components of Culture***

Each culture has developed institutions with which help establishes for the long term important areas for the functioning of day to day life in order to protect itself from the arbitrariness (despotism) of individuals. By "institution" I am not expressing hastily a concept -like for instance the institution "school"<sup>8</sup> - which is being used world-wide mainly according to Northern criteria. I rather mean a relevant area which is secured in a scene which has been established by society within which behavioural rules, participants and the aim are exactly defined so that the individual has no authority to make his/her own spontaneous decisions. The following areas<sup>9</sup> are institutionalised in all cultures: religion, administration of justice, education, healing, economy, production, traffic.

Each culture has its everyday rituals through which it provides unambiguity and consequently behavioral security in everyday reactions.<sup>10</sup> The diversity of daily rituals ensures that the individual has the opportunity to gain a sense of belonging through adherence to the rules which are established at a certain time by a certain social group.<sup>11</sup> The basic needs for eating, clothing, accommodation, sexuality, social groupings<sup>12</sup> are likewise secured in rituals and for this reason established on a long-term basis. Behind these rituals there are specified norms which establish the diversity between various cultures.<sup>13</sup>

### ***A Fundamental Proposition***

The idea that in addition to clearly observable cultural



diversity between ethnic groups there exists a common cultural base for all humans, has a long history. For Westerners it is most easily verifiable through an examination of Western history<sup>14</sup> and we assume that it is verifiable in other cultures as well.<sup>15</sup>

Cultural unity finds expression in concepts such as: "Common cultural heritage of humanity", "world citizenship", and most recently "Unity through diversity", "world society", or "One world". As these expressions are underpinned by various yet mostly Western facets of meaning, I have gone in search of terminology which may be less burdened with Western thought. For this reason I have taken a pair of concepts from generative grammar<sup>16</sup> which will do justice to my current cultural proposition.

### ***Surface Structure and Deep Structure***

In Generative grammar the distinction is made between "surface structure" and "deep structure" of a language. The surface structure includes the empirically observable (audible, legible) part of language in its phonetic and graphic representation. Deep structure has to be accepted additionally as a theoretical construct because there is no unequivocal and final classification of a sign observable in the surface structure and its (depending on the context) variously classifiable meanings and nuances of meaning.<sup>17</sup>

I consider the distinction between surface and deep structure helpful for my cultural proposition. Cultures in general as well as languages (as the most important component) display no unequivocal and immutable classification of observable elements (surface structure) and of the diversity of meaning conveyed through these (deep structure). All cultures possess the "ambivalence-factor": "Despite all the acts of force perpetrated by humans against humans over the centuries there is no proven general predestination for the "damnation" of whole cultures and life patterns. Therefore will to live in the yearning for death, the ambivalences within the prevailing unambiguity.<sup>18</sup> When, as in the fascist phase of

German history, there was the attempt to assert unambiguity alone this led in the final analysis to just chaos, force, suffering and genocide.

### ***Sources of Unity and Diversity***

The differences between cultures are to be observed in the diversity of cultural surface structures; they can, however, only be understood in their full meaning when one accepts that every cultural surface structure has an intracultural deep structure. Similarities between various cultures can be found in the inter-cultural deep structure. Fundamental questions posed by more recent cultural theories are aimed at investigating how cultures as vehicles of ideologies can contribute to the stabilisation of socio-economic contexts which are to be observed in the surface structure. Ideologies which are supposed to hold a society together are to be observed in the intracultural deep structure. So the intracultural deep structure represents what is described in well-known theories as "culture". However, a distinction must be made between the intracultural deep structure and an intercultural deep structure. The former provide the diversity of human cultures with meaning and the latter the unity of human cultures. Here is an example: In all cultures there are funeral rituals. However, the elements which constitute the funeral scene vary from one culture to the next. Nevertheless, the norm that a human being is mourned for and buried can be found in all cultures.<sup>19</sup>

In the intracultural deep structure one can find the meanings of the individual elements of the burial rites, in other words the meaning of the scenic arrangement, of the funeral repast and the mourning colours in the respective culture. The intercultural deep structure is the meta-level of all intra-cultural deep structures. In our example this means that here the general norm is to be found which is the ritual 'burying of humans when they have died'.

It is necessary to distinguish between intracultural and intercultural deep structure so that intercultural communication may function as reciprocal understanding - which should be

satisfactory and constructive for all those involved. "Comparing" is a basic operation which lies behind intercultural communication. Comparing, however, requires a third party in order to be transposed from the banal discovery of differences between two cultures into understanding. This third element is provided by the meta-level of the intercultural deep structure.

The surface structures of the individual cultures are observable in human behaviour, the deep structures impose their meanings on behavioural acts, they first provide a way to an understanding of these acts. The intracultural deep structure contains the necessary elements which determine how the surface structure of the individual culture is to be understood. The intercultural deep structure contains as a meta-level the elements of all cultures which ensure that one can understand between some, eventually between all human cultures the differences which will appear at the surface structure.

### *The Dialogue*

Intercultural competence arises through intercultural dialogue.<sup>20</sup> This dialogue would be much more wearisome if one were to deny an intercultural deep structure, almost as a bridge to understanding. This is in itself differentiated: there are large cultural areas which are based on mixtures on inter- and intra-cultural deep structures. And each cultural area is in itself subdivided into subcultures with their own intracultural deep structures. In this respect one should think of a continuum which is not stable but rather like every individual culture is subject to continual process-oriented change. This change does not take place from within the culture itself, but rather is changed individually all the time. One can best observe this through the pressure to adapt culturally which migrants are subjected to. The change, however, is also the subject and aim of political debate. Furthermore, it is becoming clear in our modern age how, with the political dimension economically and ecologically determined, transformations are taking place

which are of fundamental importance for the determination of the relationship between cultural unity and cultural diversity. As the history of colonialism and imperialism has taught us<sup>21</sup>, this relationship is not an example of arbitrary and free forces in play but rather a matter of the expansion of power by hegemonies. It would, however, be wrong to reduce this conflict merely to a matter of competition between various systems of production. It is cultural domination which is rather both the subject and aim of the struggle for power.<sup>22</sup> Intercultural deep structure is therefore no glorified concept of cultural unity among humans but rather a central category of worldwide political hegemony.

All cultures possess the hope for ( a more equitable and peaceful) future. For this reason "learning" is understood everywhere "as the consciously changed and changing relationship to one's own historical reality."<sup>23</sup> The preservation of nature as a condition for the survival of humanity belonged to the culture of ancient peoples. This was superseded in the last century by the fascination for industrialization and technology yet in recent years has been promoted again as a subject worthy of study and learning.

In the increasing diversity of contemporary societies one can observe that all cultures share something in common, and that is, the strength to change things and the strength for cultural self-determination.<sup>24</sup> I am aware that the ensuing particularism itself can generate in political suppression, and even war and annihilation - which we can see from the example of former Yugoslavia. Will it be viable in the future to provide a counterbalance to the predominantly intraculturally justified particularist and fundamentalist movements which will give way to a comprehensive intercultural conviction? Will it also be viable to complete the necessary "ambivalence-work" in order not to become the victims of a deceptive and dangerous unambiguity?

Montesquieu expressed this tension 250 years ago in classical way: " If I knew of something which was useful to me yet harmful to my family I would banish this from my thoughts.

If I knew of something which was beneficial for my family but not for my country I would try to forget it. If I knew of something which was beneficial for my country yet detrimental for Europe or of something which was useful for Europe yet harmful for human race I would consider this to be criminal.<sup>25</sup>

## *Language*

Language as the central part of any culture is the most obvious indicator for the diversity of human cultures. yet within this diversity there are elements which point to the unity of human culture. Structural linguistics has evolved a distinct number of sounds which occurs as an inventory of sounds in all human languages and which are tested out by a small child in his pre-language development stage. The inventory of sounds which is typical for the diversity of the individual languages is smaller than the proportion of the common human sound inventory. The same applies to syntactical structures.<sup>26</sup>

What is more difficult to evaluate yet is more important for my proposition are the research findings in the area of semantics and pragmatics it appears to me that the most instructive area (because it is symptomatic for my line of inquiry) is the hermeneutics of translation. It can be gleaned from the discussion that in translating, all relationship between two languages is inconceivable. Weinman distinguishes between four groups of factors which influences the translation of a text from A to B, two of them being directly dependent on the two languages; the third reflecting "general tendencies in the body of texts translated from source language A into target language B, a subset of which is the body of texts translated from source language A into target language B. (Fourth) General tendencies observed in translation processes per se."<sup>27</sup> These general tendencies are to be found in the intercultural deep structure. With their help a sufficient overlapping of common characteristics can be observed so that the translation can achieve the proper identification of what is meant in the respective linguistic surface structure exceptions confirm the rule. Finally, a reference to universal

languages. Without the acceptance of an intercultural deep structure they simply would not function.<sup>28</sup> The theories advanced by Kohiberg<sup>29</sup>, Piaget<sup>30</sup> and Wallerstein<sup>31</sup> argue for the cultural unity of the human race. Ten years ago there was the debate on "universalism versus relativism".<sup>32</sup> Both positions can be applied to our model: the relativist position belongs to the intercultural and the universalist position to the intercultural deep structure. If the connection claimed here between both deep structures is plausible then one should no longer talk about a dilemma, it is then a case of both aspects belonging inextricably to the same cultural line of inquiry, in other words they are two sides of the same coin.

We need to pay attention to the obviously emerging world society flooded with the flow of products and information, of tourism of people and garbage, the fruits of Western technology and capitalism. Will these things bring about new cultural unity? I see this world culture as one culture among many, albeit the one which is probably the most aggressive at the present time. It is a culture which is reserved for the rich and power-ful. The poor masses only have access via the mass media. Should they attempt to gain direct access to this paradise they are quickly rejected as parasites and economic refugees and are forced back into their misery again. "The world hardly possesses idylls any more. The "idyllic" life in small towns and in "peaceful villages has been eradicated all over the world by the dynamics of industrial civilization. Since the formation of a few centres of power within European absolutism and the delirium of the bourgeois revolution, starting from Europe the world has changed irreversibly and at such an increased rate. Power has been centralized and in the process has created many peripheries in total conflict with each other."<sup>33</sup>

Does the model proposed here anticipate a development where by one day the diversity of intracultural deep structures will have disappeared completely and in which only a single cultural deep structure remains which will possibly by mainly of Western origin?

## *The World Society*

My cultural proposition is obviously influenced by current political changes. The strongest influence in the background is the world society. It does not only provide many people with a fascinating playground of technological innovation. It is providing or rather it is forcing into existence through the unprecedented volume of migration new intercultural meeting points which in their possibilities but also in their power potential are causing a considerable overburdening for most people. What strikes one first and what also one looks for in order to organize one's own perception are differences, cultural differences. Security arises through the perception of differences combined with comparing and evaluating. In this respect it is vital for our survival to keep and cultivate cultural diversity. However, diversity and unity are very closely linked and have to be left undisturbed in their tense relationship with one another and should not be sacrificed for an ethnocentric narrowness in search of an even greater one-dimensional unambiguity.

Currently, however, cultural diversity is threatened by a second danger, namely that of the mono-culture of the world society. Were this mono-culture of "go west" to assert itself worldwide, I would be able to understand the fear of many fellow human beings of impending cultural changes. It would mean an all-consuming and therefore a "Pure" culture. A cultural paradox emerges clearly: This mono-culture would be easier to understand than the current diversity. However, it would have destroyed this diversity which is so vital for our survival for total cultural unity would therefore be at the same time the end of all human culture.

In Europe the preliminary stage to this mono-culture, "a fortress of Europe" is being constructed (incidentally, the expression was used by the fascist Minister for Propaganda Goebbels). We Europeans are always being made apprehensive of the consequences of sharing with poorer peoples and we are told it is not viable. Furthermore, the new

cultural racism is stirring up fears of cultural alienation, just because the memory of inter-cultural deep structures between all humans does not fit into the political concept. In this way deep-structured, cultural unity is relegated to a position of unimportance when people from different cultures encounter each other. Surface structural differences between people from different cultures are over-accentuated in order to divert attention away from more fundamental political motives in a society. Here the well-known mechanism of the formation of prejudices through projections onto scapegoats takes its course.

### ***Conclusion***

Every theory generates a systematic reduction of complexity. This reduction can be helpful because it is a relief for one's perception. It can also turn out to be too excessive or too one-sided and therefore in the final analysis uninteresting or false or even dangerous.

In the social sciences the position which is asserting itself more and more is that determinism as an approach to explanation is too one-sided and therefore as a rule is not suited to convey complexity.<sup>34</sup>

In inter-cultural pedagogics attempts are being made to overcome the narrowness in cultural education whereby just the total cultural adaptation process of foreign clientele in the receiving society is treated. This is being replaced in favour of a concept in which the individual cultures, within the then evolving multicultural society, are respected and receive their own rights leading to a cultural common ground and at the same time establishing multicultural societies.

Modern cultural imperialism has arisen from the dialectics of European thought itself, but especially from the reciprocal effects of its material-imperialistic intrusion into and its destruction of the most varied cultures in all parts of the world.<sup>35</sup>

My model places emphasis other than was usual in cultural-imperialistic tradition: Firstly, it is a heuristic model



which first must prove its justification in the intercultural discourse. It therefore relies on the interaction between people from various cultures. Secondly, it counteracts the imperialistically enforced mono-culture which projects a surface structural monotony of the cost of survival-securing variations of diverse deep structures. The model thus, draws attention to the under-lying cultural unity and to the need for securing of cultural diversity. This model also raises a question which perhaps now has its time, especially in view of the rampant racism in the North whose world-wide validity has to be examined against the back-cloth of colonial exploitation and discrimination and in the face of increasing injustice world-wide.

**Note :**

1. Acknowledgements: I would like to thank my colleagues in different countries in Europe and in Africa. especially Chr. Adick, A.Datta, P. Erny, W. Darcher, W. Kistner, J. Krause, M. Marz, G. Mergner, R. Murigande, R. Nestvogel, J. Nyoyo, A. Scheunpflug, D. Simo, G. Simon, as well as West-African teachers and the students who participated in the discussions for the past years. M. Payant has translated this article in an extremely short time. Therefore, I am especially grateful to him.
2. Genetic research over the last forty years has proved that each human individual possesses 85% of the entire human genetic potential. The remaining 15%, however, can not be distributed over observable ethno-cultural groups but rather over the whole humanity.  
R. C. Lewontin, St. Rose and L. J. Kamin, *Not our genes, Biology, ideology and human nature*, New York, 1984.
3. Th. Meyer, *Fundamentalism, Aufstand gegen die moderne*, Reinbek, 1989.
4. The new tradition has not yet become homogenous. However, I want to name some authors who represent this tradition: A. Einstein, *Comment je vois le monde*, Paris, 1934; F. Capra, *Le tao de la physique*, Paris 1985; and J. Thiele, *Die mystische Liebe zur Erde, Juhlen und Denken mit der Natur*, Stuttgart, 1989.
5. J. Briggs, and F. D. Preat, *Turbulent Mirror. An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness*, New York, 1989; A. C. Dahau-Dalmedicao (ed.) *Caos et determinisme*, Paris, 1992, and P.G. *Genus.Eordre du chaos*, Paris, 1989.
6. E. Balibar, and I. Wallerstein, *Race, national, classe: Les identites ambiguës*, Paris, 1990; I. Pinn, and M. Nebelung, *Vom "klassischen" zum aktuellen Russismus in Deutschland. das Menschenbild der Bevölkerungstheorie und Bevölkerungspolitik* Duisburg, 1992; S

- Reinfeldt, and R. Schwarz Biopolitische Konzepte der neuen Rechten, Duibuirg. 1992.
7. See Clyde Kluckhohn *Mirror for man*, New York: Mc. Graw Hill. 1949.
  8. Chr. Adick, "Moderne Schulentwicklungen in der sogenannten "Dritten Welt" im *spannungsfeld* von globalem Model und regionalen *Realisationsbedingungen*," in R. Nestvogel (ed.), *Interkulturelles Lernen oder verdeckte Dominanz*, Frankfurt, 1992, pp. 13-30.
  9. There is broad evidence for all these different areas, especially in ethnology. I will only quote here the evidences which I consider as the most important ones to structure every day cultures.
  10. C. Levi-Struss, *Mythologiques*. Le cruel le cuit, Paris. 1964.
  11. P. Erny. "A quoi servent les rites?". in *Lethnologie a Strasbourg*, 1991. p. 1-22.
  12. Cl. Levi-Strauss, *Mytholoques*. *Porigine des maniceres de table*, Paris. 1968
  13. For example, the stereotypical idea that we German have to hear that we all are specially "punctual hard-working, reliable and clean". It would be going too far off track if I were to show in detail how necessary these norms were as an ideology to get the process of industrialization going here in Germany. The norms, however, are changing considerably in our times of over-production and the related phenomenon of consumerism so they cannot definitely have been "typically German".
  14. J. Kristeva, *Etragers a nous-memes*, Paris, 1989.

# Islam for Salvation of Mankind

*Habibur Rahman Khan*

History of mankind makes a tragic reading. The brightest handiwork of mankind and the greatest of civilizations have seen rise, growth, decline and fall beyond redemption. The splendour and brilliance of the contemporary civilization with its unmistakable Western orientation is indeed dazzling. The glittering facade of modern times is hardly a century old; but, unfortunately, as in the past, the portents of its collapse and ruin are already visible. It is clear that human reason and its prize products, namely, science and technology, cannot help us to solve these questions.

*"The Allah that has created all the objects in the Universe has also undertaken to make them aware of their goal and guide them towards it." (Qur'an - 20:50)*

God, our Creator, knows that unless man learns to use his knowledge and will power to take decisions in accordance with the Divine guidance, he will not be able to solve all the problems faced by him in his individual or collective capacity. God's Religion is the same in essence, whether given, for example, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Jesus, or to our Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The source of Unity is the revelation from God.

Fundamental principles of devotion or duty to God and duty to fellow-beings remaining the same, suitable laws, according to the conditions prevailing at that time, were made so as to facilitate people to practise religion properly. This is

why God sent His Messengers as spiritual teachers from time to time.

*"Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes ... and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them."*

We believe in all religious scriptures and make no difference in their Message (in essentials).

As an outcome of the materialistic concept of life, mankind today faces a crisis, which perhaps has no parallel in history. This crisis, pervading all the spheres of human life, has taken the form of universal revolt against religion. A psychological analysis of this situation reveals that it is the end-product of a basic feeling of insecurity. The world today stands at the edge of destruction. The threat of atomic war hangs over our heads. This humanity, if it wants to survive, has no option but to break away from the concept of materialism and humbly look up to the Divine guidance for peace and prosperity in the world. Choice between destruction and survival must be made some day sooner the better.

Out of the religions only that religion can give peace and security, which is universal, which cares for all mankind, irrespective of their race, colour, language, religion or geographical boundaries, that religion which is based on a simple ideology and practical methods, that which does not differentiate between man and man in so far as it concerns their humanity, that which brings justice and peace to all mankind, which does not differentiate between black and white, does not differentiate between people on the basis of caste and creed, which does not permit oppressions. These qualities are found in the last Divine guidance, that is the Qur'an.

*"Let there be no compulsion in religion." (2:256) "And say that, truth is from your Lord. So let him who pleases believe and let him who pleases disbelieve." 18:29*

The Holy Qur'an declares: *"There has been no people in the world but God has raised among them a Prophet for*

# The Qur'an's Contribution to Medieval Literary Renaissance

*Zaheer M. Quraishi*

This is true that English, in both British and American versions, prevails as an international medium during the Twentieth Century in view of dominance of Anglo-Americans in international forums, including the League of Nations and United Nations. The European scramble for colonies, likewise, made Roman as the fashionable script of the world.

Some dialects of small communities certainly became literary languages by adopting Roman or Cyrillic scripts. But this was not as sporadic a process as under the impact of the Qur'anic language and script. Under the impact of printing technology, mostly developed in Euro-American environment, some literary languages, Spanish, Turkish, Swahili and Bhasha Indonesia, however, abandoned their original Arabic scripts and accepted Roman on grounds of practical needs.

In the USSR, many Central Asian languages resorted to Cyrillic script either under the Communist pressure to distinguish them from their Turkic and Persian character. However, from seventh to twelfth centuries, Arabs created and maintained a global society and had given currency to the Qur'anic script. As a result, numberless literary languages over a vast area from Spain and Portugal to Mongolia and China and from Warsaw to Dar-es-Salam, adopted the Qur'anic script. In fact, at that juncture of human history this was the civilized world. In order to appreciate the role of the Qur'anic

script in medieval literary renaissance, it is necessary to comprehend the stance the Qur'an has taken on knowledge: both its appeal on pursuit of knowledge and its epistemological theory.

## ***Quest for Knowledge***

*Tawhid* (oneness of Allah) is undoubtedly the key-note of the Qur'an. The quest for knowledge and rational investigation are only next in order of importance as its main themes. Its content analysis reveals that while Allah and His "beautiful names" abound through its text, *'ilm* (knowledge) and derivatives therefrom occur no less than 850 times, followed by *Aql* (reason) and derivatives therefrom about 53 times.

The tiding of the Revelation was announced by "*Iqra*" (recite). Allah swears, first of all, by "*pen and whatever it jots down*" and the only prayer specified for the Prophet is for augmentation of his knowledge. The names of Allah include "the Learned of the Latent," "The knower of the Latent and the Manifest" and "Perfect Knowledgeable."

From the Qur'anic vantage point, therefore, the universe is created with a purpose and its meaning and significance can be grasped through empirical probing. While the Qur'an admits miracles as proof of earlier revelations, it underlines *bayyinat* (evidences) for the Perfect Religion revealed through itself. It is a firm pronouncement of the Qur'an that reality of the universe and its purpose can be grasped by every individual person if he seeks knowledge in earnest, because the demonstrative proofs of the Lord of the Universe are scattered all over.

In the chapter entitled *al-Rahman* (the Embodiment of Creative Kindness), no less than 31 themes of investigation have been recommended as the decisive evidences of the Providence and in different parts of its text at 13 places, issues of common knowledge have been mentioned followed by "*A Fala ta'gilun*" (Can you not see it with reason?). Further, "*In Kuntum Talamun*" (If you had known it) and *Antum ta'lamun*" appear 11 and 6 times respectively in similar contexts.

Mankind is fully equipped to attain this objective. Man, as the representative of Allah on the earth, is the crown of creation, who has been bestowed upon the comprehensive conceptual framework (*Asma'ha Kullaha*) as well the art of expression (*al-bayan*) to facilitate accumulation of retrievable knowledge. With the help of the two, he can master arts and sciences of the universe that have been "subdued" for thinking among them as evidence of the Al-mighty.

### *Universe of Knowledge*

The concept of *Tawhid* has a far reaching ontological implications: the unity of the mundane and the serene. The physical existence is linked up with the spiritual (the other-worldly) domain so that the life of man is a continuum from pre-mundane through mundane to post-mundane. This continuum confers on our lives in this world a meaning and a significance which we may fail to comprehend if we have propensity to ignore it.

The universe of knowledge is therefore, comprehensive and unified. It is a sort of spectrum on which the manifest (*shahada*) and the latent (*ghayb*) are arranged. Whatever is accessible to humans is the manifest and whatever is beyond their purview is the latent. The science and the art of creation, for example, lies exclusively in the domain of the Almighty. Similarly, the total comprehension of the world hereafter lies beyond human quest for knowledge. He can at best get an inkling into it through the eyes of the soul, and that too, in terms of mundane stereotypes.

As a matter of fact, a total comprehension of the mundane world will remain outside the human capacity, for the convergence of myriad processes, the exact picture of future and perfect scientific knowledge are ideals impossible to attain. Since no individual can pretend to know the mental processes of his counterparts, total picture of reality cannot emerge in human mind.

Nevertheless, empirical investigations conducted by humans can always enable them to see the harmony prevailing

in a better perspective. They may not know reality in perfect form, though they can form a nearly exact idea about it. The empirical probing of phenomena is built in the spiritual search for salvation. The primitive conception of *haqq* is key of the epistemology of the Qur'an. The word *haqq* means simultaneously the Truth, the Real and the Right. It is not only name Allah (*al-haqq*) but also refers to empirical realities (*haqa'iq*) as well as sets out regulative principles of relationships, the system of rights and duties in relation to Allah (*hu-quq al-Allah*) and between humans inter (*hu-quq al-lbad*).

As the last point suggests, this epistemological stance is, in ultimate analysis, praxiological, for while it regulates relations, on one hand, between the Almighty and human beings, it sets out the rules of social conduct between human being themselves, on the other. It is, further, significant to note that whenever the Qur'an recommends *haqq* as a guide to action, it imposes a consideration of *sabr* (patience) in view of actual constraints of an objective situation. It is in this context that the *ummah* (community) of the articulate individuals has taken history as a serious enterprise.

The Qur'an enjoins on every one a responsibility to continually probe into nature of the physical world with a view to understanding his own understanding of the Absolute Creator. As the word of God, it is required to be read, understood and taken as guide to human conduct. A believer has to learn its verses to recite in his prayers five times a day. The Qur'an is, therefore, core of believers' life and must be read.

Attainment of knowledge is a responsibility for all and sundry, irrespective of sex, race or status and it is to be sought even if one has to undertake journey to farther lands. Theoretically, it is not possible to conceive of an illiterate Muslim. In fact, the first generation members of the community had retrievable knowledge: they could either read and write or memorize and recite. In the process of Islamic expansion, this position suffered a set-back, but did not abate a craving to



know and express.

## ***Universal Literary Renaissance***

The expansion of Islam over a large part of the eastern hemisphere in a remarkably short time was a feat of human history whose parallel is difficult to find. Its process, content and character have received close scrutiny at the hands of competent scholars. There is, therefore, no need to repeat them herein. It may, however, be useful to mention briefly the three phases through which it passed make the present argument plausible.

In the first onslaught, Islam spread out of the Peninsula arabizing all the communities that came on the way so that the cultural barriers against demographic movements were completely shattered. In its advent beyond this circle, it Islamized virtually the entire populations without abridging the local cultures. Then, it created a third circle, a zone of composite societies in which, as a result of the process of acculturation, a local non-Muslim elite grew to acquire the predominant cultural tinge of the Muslim minority.

In the first circle, of course, Arabic language in the form standardized by the Qur'an established its hegemony. The local languages with their isomorphic scripts and dialects were abandoned in favour of the Peninsular language and script. This helped the cultural and technological renaissance for which the medieval Islam is known.

In the second circle, Arabic script either substitute the established local ones for spiritual as well as temporal reason or provided one to local spoken dialects. These non-Arabs who learn Arabic language as such but read the Qur'an naturally found it convenient to write their own literary languages or spoken dialects in Arabic script. Persia, for instance, abandoned Pahlavi script in favour of Arabic alphabets for it would facilitate the cultural exchange and social mobility in the region.

Turkish, on the other hand, was spoken dialect which

acquired the status of a literary language with the help of Arabic script. The case of Aljamiado (in Arabic *al-hamidiya*) is perhaps the most interesting phenomenon: the Andalusian Muslims started writing Spanish and Portuguese in the Qur'anic script at a time when the literary traditions of the two dialects were not all established, thus, leaving upon them the influence which survived the destruction of Islam there as a result of reconquista.

In some of the compositior cultural zones, the central place that the Qur'an in Muslim education curriculum helped not only in raising many spoken dialects to literary level but also in carving new market language like *Swahili, Hausa* and *Urdu* and enriching them with literature. A list of dialects which came to be established as literary languages with help of Qur'anic script has not been compiled as yet. However, it is posible to assert that practically all the spoken dialects and lingua franca in the entire belt of Islamic influence in the eastern hemisphere proliferated with literary languages which were written in the Qur'anic script. It can be favourably compared with the current renaissance provided by mathematical symbols and computer languages.

**Acknowledgement**

*In this maiden issue of The Fragrance we have included articles already published in the past issues of "Journal of Islamic Studies" (Oxford), "The Muslim Education" (Cambridge) and "The M.W.L. Journal" (Makkah Al Mukarramah).*

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