

THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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The Fragrance of East

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Editors Note:

It was the immense love for the country and deep rooted sense of patriotism which made all Indians, cutting across caste and religion to pick up cudgels against British Raj and eventually obtain independence. In a remarkable show of unity, sans any communal regional and caste distinction Indians faced the challenges of colonial regime. Unfortunately this unity was soon threatened by divisive forces organised around caste and communal lines. Seeds of discontent were sown. Muslim League came into existence in 1906 and in reaction Hindus formed Hindu Mahasabha. A handful of misguided and short-sighted Hindus and Muslims started promoting these communal outfits. A sense of nationalism and feeling of unity which the Congress Party had been able to infuse amongst the Indians was badly shattered. In 1947 India did get independence but it was not the India that Gandhi, Maulana Azad and Nehru had envisaged.

The creation of a separate Muslim state in the shape of Pakistan as subsequent events show did not help either Hindus or Muslims. Instead it created further mistrust and animosity between Hindus and Muslims. Muslim dominated states or parts of the states of united India were severed from the main body which did not mean that those Muslims who opted to continue living in India, born and brought up here whose forefathers are buried here, whose generations have toiled the Indian soil should be accused of having divided loyalty. Their patriotism, their love for the country where they were born is unassailable. They are Indian both by birth and by conviction.

Of late, a small group of politicians intoxicated with their newly acquired power have started demanding certificate of patriotism from Muslims. At a time

when nation is fighting aggression in Kargil area this coterie got further activated to make Muslims feel as if they are isolated from the main stream and the poor community afraid of the harassment, started issuing statements from Dargahs, Madrasah's, their intellectual forums and associations reaffirming their "loyalty" to the nation and condemning the aggressor. Why Sikhs, Parsis and Christians did not feel the need to publicly announce their love for the country? How ridiculous it is to ask Muslims to declare their allegiance to India from their house-tops. This is ironical since it was local Muslims in Kargil who have been giving tough resistance all these years to intruders.

These self styled patriots did not spare even Maulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi, (Ali Mian) Rector of Darul-uloom Nadwatul Ulema, a prestigious seminary in Lucknow. A fictitious news item with provocative caption was planted on the front page of a national Hindi daily of Delhi in its June 29, 1999 issue by its Lucknow correspondent stating that Maulana Ali Mian during a religious congregation held at Lucknow refused to pray for the Jawans fighting at Kargil. This news item was lifted next day by a number of Hindi dailies published from different parts of the country. Authorities of Nadwa on instruction from Maulana Ali Mian denied the baseless charge. They called the report a blatant lie and a figment of the reporters imagination. The paper published the contradiction on July 2, 1999 on the back page at an obscure place. But the indecent vilification campaign against Maulana and Nadwa continued unabated.

Maulana Ali Mian has always kept himself away from politics. A doyen of Islamic history and theology and recognised scholar of international repute he guides his community to mould themselves as the most truthful, honest and upright Indians and thus established their identity. Through his organisation of "Payame Insaniyat" (Message of Humanity) he has been emphasising fellow citizens to promote brother-

hod, co-operation and sense of service amongst themselves irrespective of caste, community and region.

Maulana's extensive writings bear testimony to his commitment to our democratic and secular polity. About four decades back he wrote: "The Muslims are not only citizens of an equal status with anybody in India; they are also among its chief builders and architects, and hold position second to none among the people of the world for selfless service to the motherland". Maulana re-emphasised same feelings to the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and also to the President of the Congress Mrs. Sonia Gandhi when recently they called on him.

If such vilification campaigns against respected Ulama and Muslim scholars is not contained it will have far reaching effects and may soon tear apart the synthetic social fabric of the nation.

S.A.

We reproduce the very first speech delivered by Hazrat Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, Rector of Nadwatul Ulama, since his serious illness in April last. It was delivered on June 13, 1999 at a gathering of about 3-4 lakh people assembled for the 'Tableeghi' congregation.

While the 'Fragrance' management and the Editorial Board are pleased to treat its readers with the English rendering of this speech, they bow their heads in gratitude to the Almighty Allah for granting speedy recovery to Maulana to the extent that he was able to deliver this speech. - Editor

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF MUSLIMS

S. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi

**O ye who believe!
If ye fear Allah,
He will grant you a criterion
(To judge between right and wrong)
Remove from you (all) evil deeds
And forgive you;
For Allah is The Lord
of grace unbounded,**

Al-Anfal-29

My dear friends, the guests who have come here from far off places and my dear and honourable brethren!

The Quranic verse quoted above that has just been recited, I, too, was to recite the same and it was I who requested to have it recited. First of all, I congratulate you and congratulate the Muslim public, in general, the service volunteers, the functionaries, the Muslim missionaries who are here for having such a large gathering assembled here which is unanimous on one word, one slogan, the *Kalima*, one faith and creed, one goal and one way of life. It is one such gathering a like of which is hardly ever, at least in India, seen. If not deemed an affront and insolence, I would say, it reminds one of the *Arafat Day*, the gathering assembled at *Mina* and *Arafat*. It reminds, I would say, of the egalitarianism (though not mentioned of). There cannot

be a greater thing than *Arafat*, and *Mina* to be likened to. It is such a gathering which is assembled here.

I would now make this submission before you that it is not some casual incident or event. If there is such a large gathering assembled with a particular goal, with one faith and creed, having one objective and one practice, it would bring about a revolution in the world. I am a student of history. History had been my subject of study. For instance, I have studied history in many languages. I have studied it in English, in Arabic and Persian and in Urdu. Not only studied but written also. I am saying, if such a large gathering were of one aim and objective, one faith and creed and were assembled with integrity, it could cause a revolution in the world.

The Quranic verse that I have just recited and was also recited by Maulana Maaz, too:- O ye who believe, Allah says. Very few may have pondered over it that it is a sensational and alarming verse, a verse making one get jolted, a verse which can bring about revolutions. It is a verse from Allah who is the Lord of all the worlds, the object of worship of all the worlds, the Creator of the ginn and human beings alike. Events cannot take place without His order. It is He who makes the empires changed, makes the conditions changed, makes the bondsmen freed and the freed ones bondsmen. It is He who has said it. Sometimes, a thing that is read and recited very often, little ponderance is lent to it. The glorious Quran is, in fact, something that could render the nights sleepless. It is something which nourishes not the body but the soul. The Almighty Allah who knows all that is seen and unseen, who has absolute power and authority, who is, by right, all powerful, all alone worthy of being worshipped, it is He who says: O ye who believe! If ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong)

This fear (the *Taqwa*) is not a simple word. Usually, one who takes little food is said to be God-fearing; one who wears simple dress is called by people God-fearing, one who abstains from back-biting, slan-

der-mongering is said to be God-fearing. Nevertheless, the word *Taqwa*, in the Quranic parlance and the Quranic terminology is much more comprehensive and revolutionising. It is a word that could make the world changed altogether. Allah Says: O ye believers! If ye fear Allah,, and mind you, the word used for fear is not the Arabic or Urdu *khawf*, it is *taqwa*. It covers creeds and doctrines. It covers deeds and practices. It covers aims and objectives. It covers the way of life, morals and manners and what not. If you have the dread of God, the God would bestow a distinctive characteristic upon you. A distinctive characteristic for good and for ever. Wherever a Muslim passes by, a Muslim who is God fearing a Muslim who abides by the Shariat, a Muslim who obeys the dictates of Allah and his Prophet, a Muslim who wishes well of the humanity, a human being who is the disseminator of the Guidance, a human being who is virtuous, who keeps his eyes lowered, his tongue guarded, his heart empty of mundane gains and the greed, his mind pure of evil plots and schemes -- such a man, such a Muslim wherever would he pass by, fingers would be raised to point him out. Look, there is a Muslim going; There is a man of God, Allah's bondsman going. That would be your distinction, your distinctive feature. Allah says: He will create within you a distinctive characteristic. I am constrained to translate the word *Furqan* with distinctive characteristic. But, the fact is the, *Furqan*, is so eloquent and so extensive that I feel, despite that Urdu is my mother-tongue and I belong to non-Arab schools of learning, it is not easy to translate the word *Furqan*. The words, the expression that can be intelligible to the general public is being used by me. And that is Allah would bestow upon you a distinctive characteristic. Whereupon, the fingers would be raised to point you out, the eyes would be lifted to look at you. People would point at you. People would have, sometimes, sleepless nights and would, sometimes, wake up out of slumber saying: Look, there is a Muslim going. Look how virtuous Muslims are. See for yourself, he does

not let his eyes fall on Non-Mahram. In case there is something on the road that might hurt the wayfarer, something that one could stumble at, he removes it. He is not the one who would push and elbow the people. He walks with conscience, with dignity, with goodwill and compassion for others. One who serves. It was this very state of earlier Muslims. One Muslim family, one Muslim tribe, one Muslim who spoke one language -- and such Muslim individuals could be counted on fingers -- if reached anywhere, the history is witness to the fact that the cities in their entirety embraced Islam and became Muslims. And thus Islam spread. Like a wind blows, the wind of Islam blew. Just by looking at Muslims people embraced Islam. How so ever far people may be in ignorance and slumber, whatsoever craze and greed there might be for wealth, or for fair sex, howsoever strong might be longing for the dignity or for the beauty, or anything whatsoever, a human being is gifted by Almighty Allah with the talent of reproducing the effect of the influence. And this world which is still on the move - and be mindful that I am saying in my capacity of a student of History, in the capacity of one who is aware of human psychology, in the capacity of a counsellor - this world which is still on the move, despite such an intense fanaticism today, and has not been destroyed even as a result of heinous and ghastly crimes and sins, the ploy-theism and idolatry, the egoisticism, the mammon-worshipping, the tyranny and brutality, it is only because of this very characteristic being still extant and survived among the people which is the instinct of being influenced and impressed, the capacity to become righteous and pious. So, I say it and let me say it with rather condour. Who knows whether there will be another opportunity or not and if there would be another, would it be to speak to such a large gathering and such an impressionable gathering which has converged here from far flung corners in order to listen to the talk of Allah and His Prophet that is to be talked in this evangelist assembly. So, what better occasion there can be than this to say that the world

is yet not deprived of the instinct and aptitude to be influenced and impressed and in it only lies the secret of the world's survival that the world is still allowed to exist and remain extant by Allah, the Creator of the Worlds, who knows that the man still has the will to learn lesson, be benefited, be warned, and become virtuous, may be more or may be less, but he has. Here you are. You would Insha-Allah (God-willing), be doing the dissemination service, performing the Tableeghi mission, abiding by the principles, forming teams to be itinerant throughout the country. Please listen to me! I am saying just one thing which no one else would, perhaps say. I am not being distrustful. Yet, I am afraid others would not say it, human as they are. In this country where you do live, you have to live like one who has a distinctive characteristic that is called *Furqan*. This distinctive characteristic should be such as would make the people change their creeds, their mores and manners, their views and outlooks, their precepts and perceptions, their relations and connections. There are Muslims in such a large number in our country and are not able to make an impact! How is it possible!

Allah who is Omniscient and knows each and everything, Seen and Unseen, who is the creator of the instinct and the human nature, is saying: If you fear Allah, He would grant you a criterion (a catalytic feature). If you have the fear of Allah, He would bestow on you a grandeur of distinction; He would give birth to an entirely novel situation. What would that be? It would be that peoples convictions would be changed, ethics be changed, relations be improved, people would have fear of Allah developed in themselves. There are Muslims in such a large number in this country, yet no revolution has taken place, no change is effected. It shows that we have not acted upon 'If you fear Allah...' in toto. If the injunction 'If you fear Allah....' is acted upon as called upon, so that we fear Allah, we act according to the injunctions of His Prophet and the *Shariat* which he has brought us and the Qur'an and all this makes a marked distinction not only in convictions and

beliefs, even in passions and perceptions, in relations and behaviours, in each and every thing, the result would then be 'Ye would be granted a criterion', you would be made a catalyst. It would then create a distinctive grandeur in you. You would catch sight of people. Fingers would be raised to point you out. Not only fingers but the feet would proceed towards you. The direction of peoples lives would be turned towards you. You may perhaps find it difficult to contain them, to contain yourself even. That is to say that, Islam would get spread among the people. The lives would be changed. And all this mammon worshipping, libido worshipping, glory and grandeur worshipping, the politics worshipping etc. that are rampant today like epidemics would be suppressed and subdued. It would then be difficult for the people to retain their persuasions, their interests, their privileges, their advantages. If there are Muslims and they are pursuing the path of Islam and have Islamic character, Islamic convictions, it would then be difficult for the people to remain unchanged. Their disposition would be tilted towards Islam to the extent that great politicians, leaders, men of letters, orators and great speakers would be found difficult to be restrained. So, why does that not happen?

You may now observe that it does not happen because our lives are not fully cast in the mould of Islam. That is why it is necessary that our creeds are correct, our conducts are correct, our morals are correct. Our aims and objectives in life should also be correct. They should be different and distinctive from those of others. 'There is nothing here on the road for the people to stumble at. That was there some time back, we had seen. It appears that some Muslim had passed this way', people should say. There was someone in distress and no one bothered about him. And if found that someone had paid attention to him and he is no more in distress, people should say: it appears that some Muslim has passed his way. The passion for wealth, for possessions, should be much less in them than in others. In respect of the latent desires, certain latent

weaknesses that are there, sometimes, they should be very pronouncedly and conspicuously different from others. It should be enough to explain that to say that he is a Muslim. If you read history, you will find countries en masse have undergone a revolution in the wake of Muslims reaching there even though in small numbers.

Just consider how far is the Arabian Peninsula where-from Islam spread to Spain in Europe where lakhs of people, innumerable in fact, embraced Islam. How far is the Arabian Peninsula from this very country. How far is the Arabian Peninsula from Turkey, from Algiers, Morocco and the far west regions of Africa... etc. I have had the privilege to visit most of these countries. Except for Spain where a systematic effort was made to wipe out Islam therefrom and to exterminate their language for which even more errors were committed by Muslims are also responsible to some extent, Islam is till date extant in the rest of all these countries. So, if you look at the distances, in terms of space, in terms of time, the differences in languages, the differences in thoughts and precepts, the differences in upbringings you will find them poles apart. Notwithstanding, the entire countries to their last men embraced Islam. That was because of mores and morals of Muslims, because of dissemination of and Call to Islam. That was because of their character cast in the mould of that of the Prophet (SAW) That was because of the practical paragon that they placed before them. Now at present you see what is the state of Muslims. There are so many Muslims here. I would say just about this very gathering that if we become true Muslims and act upon Islam in toto and represent what is described by Allah in "If you fear Allah..." and "That day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". and "O Ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy".

Allah says: "O you Muslims, those who have confessed the faith, get yourself fully covered by Islam by surrendering yourselves totally before Allah the Almighty. "*Kaffatan*" (in toto), i.e. totally and entirely. This word "*Kaffatan*" covers every thing. *Kaffatan* that is totally morally, as well as conventionally, practically as well as ethically, socially as well as legally. Those who are conversant with Arabic know and understand how much intensive as well as extensive is the word *Kaffatan*. How much comprehensive it is. It comprehends those who are entering, or have entered, Islam as well as what they are entering, or have entered into, that is Islam. That is cent-per-cent Muslims have to enter into the cent-per-cent Islam. There is no proportion here. Neither in the number of Muslims; it is not said for instance, seventy percent of you Muslims enter the Islam. Nor, is there proportion in Islam. That is, it is not said that enter, say, into eighty percent of Islam. Instead, what is meant is that all of Muslims have to enter into the total and entire Islam.

It demands that the inheritance, the distribution of the bequest, should be done correctly. The dues and obligations should be settled duly and properly. The obligations one owes towards his parents, towards his wife, or her husband (as the case may be), towards brothers, towards relatives, towards co-citizens, towards compatriots should all be fully fulfilled. [O ye believers! Enter into Islam whole heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Satan for he is to you an avowed enemy.]

It can be said only by Allah, the Supreme and the Sublime, who is in the know of the Unseen even, that is He made His command "Enter into Islam whole heartedly" precede what He made to follow, that is: "and follow not the footsteps of Satan". Apparently it was not necessary to say that. But, no; He said that along with getting entered into the Islam, in toto, you have to be careful that you do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, the Devil, and do not obey him. You have to refrain yourselves from following in Shatan's footsteps. In-

stead, you have to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet (SAW). [Ye have indeed in the messenger of Allah an excellent exemplary for him who hopes in Allah and the Final Day. And who remember Allah much]. You have perfect paragon in the life of the Prophet (SAW).

Dear brethren! Notwithstanding my ill-health, I say it with candour and candidness: Do go from here with this pledge that you (all of us) would act according to Islam and adopt such a life that would make its impact on the whole environment, on the neighbourhood and the vicinity, on all the people all-around, the entire city, each and every one. People should say that the life of the Muslim is something different. Where the people stagger and fall flat stumbled, these Muslims stand there firm and rooted. Where the man puts his conscience on the sale, these Muslims are unpurchasable and not-for-sale there. Neither Governments can buy them, not the political institutions. Neither the rich can buy them, nor the beauty and charm. Neither position of glory, nor attainment can buy them. Nothing can buy them. It is Allah who has created them and it is Allah who has bestowed upon them the boons of religion. No power in the world, no empire, no authority, no wealth, no benefits can now buy them. This should be the character of Muslims.

Had we had the character different from what we have, the entire country would have been today admiring and appreciative of Islam and would have benefited from Islam. And wherever it had been so, exactly that was the result that the people, and even the adversaries have admitted that their religion is a true one. They are men of principles, men with dread of God in them, men who recognised the hereafter, who recognised the reality. It all has been corroborated by them.

And whatever Islam exists today, not only here but everywhere in the world, it is this role-model of Islam that has gone far, to large extent, into it. Just look how the great men individually went to different parts of the world and did wonders. Look at this very country, the India itself. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti came to

Ajmer and lakhs and lakhs of people embraced Islam. In Lakhs, there is no exaggeration in it. Similarly Hazrat Syed Ali Hamadani came to Kashmir and the majority embraced Islam. The number of such people is countless. Just one or two people from among their pupils or disciples went somewhere and made the Islam reach each and every house, each and every locality and Mohallah. Not Mohallah but each and every house. All that we and you have to do is to make our lives such as would represent what Allah describes in 'would grant you....' He will, he said, create in you a distinctive characteristic that would make the fingers lifted towards you, make their ears wide-open for you, their eyes glued towards you, they will point at you. Further than this they will fall on your feet saying that these are Muslims. These are their creeds. These are their deeds. These are their mores and manners. These are their passions and wishes. All these should be their criteria. It is this message that I wish and want you to go with from here. On any further topic and on the principles of the Tableeghi Jamat I do not feel any need to dilate upon and say anything being sure that it must have exhaustively been expatiated upon and whatever might have been left out would be covered, too, in the ensuing time, Insha-Allah. We, too, have learnt them from there. And you, too, would learn them likewise. But, again to remind you and please do never forget that your lives must have a mark of distinction for which there can be no other word more eloquent than in the Qur'an, the "*Furqan*".

There should be a *Furqan*, a distinctive mark in your lives, a catalytic character. Whoever looks at it must say: here is a Muslim. He cannot do such-a-such thing and such-a-such thing can be done only by a Muslim. There are not only hundreds but thousands of instances in history that Muslim did what can never be thought of by anyone in the world. Such a sacrifice one can make! Such a courage one can show! Such an altruism one can display! Yes, no doubt, Muslims have done it. These are recorded in history. It is all re-

corded. It is recorded that the Muslims with their exemplary and extra-ordinary, rather ideal, manner of action made thousands of people get into the fold of Islam. Read the history. See how after having attained the victory Muslims treated the vanquished with mercy and humanitarian compassion. That made the people, hordes after hordes, enter the fold of Islam. Those who had come to fight them fell on their feet. Fell on their feet and embraced Islam. Today in India, it is not only Islam and our religion that we have obligations due to them but have obligations due to our homeland, too. It is, our homeland, at all events. Allah has made us born in this country. He has selected this country for us. One loves his home. It is our home. In it we have to adopt such a course of action as would make the people get themselves rectified, have their lives, rather revolutionised. These tyrannies that are being perpetrated should stop. It is, sometimes, perpetrated through politics, sometimes through domination. It is sometimes in regard with the goal and objectives. All this should stop. Let there be justice and equity prevalent everywhere. Let the fear of God be prevalent everywhere and in everyone. Let the people be generally God fearing. With the fear of God, the respect for the humanity should get cultivated and promoted. It is the respect for the humanity which is needed today. It is exactly this much that I want to ask you that you should go from here with this pledge and commitment, make up your mind before you leave this place, make your hearts fully resolved on that you have to make your lives such as would make the people take notice of it, as would attract their ears and eyes, their fingers are raised first to point out at, and then their feet proceed towards, you. They tell each other to walk up to you and learn your way of life from you, to be benefited from you. It would be then and thereafter that this congregation of ours would in all respects be considered revolutionising. It is, in any case blessed. It is, even otherwise, extremely blessed. It is not a simple or insignificant thing that in the name of Allah and on the call to the religion such a

large number of people get assembled. We offer our gratitude to Allah for, and are proud of it. The souls of founders of Daru-Uloom Nadwatul Ulama would also be pleased and rejoicing today that such a large gathering is assembled here. Notwithstanding, it is also necessary that your lives are revolutionised. They undergo a revolution. A revolution that is not confined to yourself but gets transmitted to whoever comes in contact with you. One which makes impact on others makes an impact in regard with creeds, in regard with conducts and behaviours in regard with intentions as well as efforts. In all respects, your lives should serve as beacons for others and serve the mission of Islam's propagation. It should become a sort of magnet. And what worth is the magnet? If it attracts, it attracts only the iron. If a magnet can do that, can a Muslim not attract a nation, a colony of people, a city, towards him? Is he void of the power to attract? Have it from me that hundreds of magnets may be sacrificed at the alter of the faith of a Muslim. If the Muslim does not have this power, it means he lacks in his magnetic power. He must have in him this magnetic power also.

May Allah, the Supreme and the Sublime, grant us as well as you His favours to be able to become in all respects, in respect of our wishes, our actions, our morals, our pursuits, our resolves and plans true Muslims.

Amin! □

Translated by S. Ehsanul Haque Nadvi

MUHAMMAD - THE LAST PROPHET

S Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi

Finality of Prophethood - A Boon to Humanity.

Divine wisdom decided to terminate Prophethood when humanity came of age. From the confined limits of ignorance, in which mankind had been detained for several hundred years, for reasons more than one, it was now crossing over to the wide, open world of knowledge, intellectual development and universal solidarity, and was ready to plumb the secrets of nature. For the notions of family, tribe, race, colour and country were then giving place to the concepts of cosmic transcendentalism, one-ness of mankind, heavenly guidance and the benefits of joint endeavour enlightenment and edification, man could be expected to overcome all the dark, divisive forces hampering his well-being. Now at that crucial stage, man had to build his life on the revelation vouchsafed to the last of prophets, on his faith in him and follow the law promulgated by the Book which testifies, completes and guards the truth of the earlier revelations. Thenceforth advancement of humanity was to depend on his own endeavour, thinking and working, and, also march forward in the light of this very Book of Books.

The times past bear witness to the chaos and tumult which man had had to face in ascertaining the claims of soothsayers and false prophets who professed to possess miraculous powers and revelations from God. Often times the whole communities were plunged in disorder and wasted their energies in trying to shield themselves from the menace of these pretenders.

Advent of a truthful Messenger of God was, on the other hand, not something insignificant like the appearance of a political leader, or a ruler, or a reformer. for the rejection of the latter has never meant provoking divine condemnation and chastisement. Unlike other people claiming leadership of a country or community whose call for obedience is not backed by pleasure or displeasure of God, the prophets come as a criterion of truth and justice and the rejection of their call amounts to aligning oneself with falsehood and evil; the prophets constitute the determinant of divine dispensation for their peoples. The nations of the bygone times were not destroyed, as the Qur'an tells us, by their blasphemy and irreligious, or else by their mortal corruption and prodigality but because of their contemptuous rejection and derision of the prophets and insolent behaviour towards them. The Qur'an narrates the appalling behaviour of evil-minded people to their prophets in innumerable verses, some of which are given here.

"And every nation purposed to seize their messenger and argued falsely. (thinking) thereby to refute the Truth. Then I seized them, and how (awful) was My punishment."

"Whenever its messenger came unto a nation they denied him; so We caused them to follow one another (to disaster) and We made them bywords. A far removal for folk who believe not:"

"He said: My Lord! Help me because they deny me

"He said: In a little while they surely will become repentant

"So the (Awful) Cry overtook them rightfully, and We made them like as wreckage (that a torrent hurleth). A far removal for wrongdoing folk."

"Messengers of Allah have been derided before thee, but that whereat they scoffed surrounded such of them as did deride."

"And verily messengers (of Allah) were mocked before thee, but long I bore with those who disbelieved.

At length I seized them, and how (awful) was my punishment!"

"Not one of them but did deny the messengers, therefore My doom was justified."

"And We destroyed no township but it had its warners."

Termination of Prophethood has saved mankind from the ordeal to which it was exposed every now and then. For a true prophet constitutes the saving principal for the entire humanity, man had to put off all his business and ascertain the truthfulness or falsehood of every new messenger of God. Termination of this process, in the past, always proved to be onerous. Had the prophets been still coming, every new claimant to Prophethood, coming forward time and again, would have demanded the obedience of his fellowmen; each would have condemned his detractors as infidels and fought them to the end; carved out a separate community out of the existing followers of different religions; and the world would have still been engaged in a war of attrition. Many of those pretending to be apostles of God sent from On High, would have, surely, been eccentrics, or tricksters, or else crafty persons seeking power or pelf, or tools of the powers that be; even among the simple hearted claimants to Prophethood one would have found men misled by their own ignorance or thrown off the scent by misdirected meditations and travails or a false sense of piety. World has come across impostors of all these categories during the times past. Their fallaciousness can now be easily discerned by us with our widened experience and knowledge, greater insight into human psychology and better understanding of the concealed aims of political intrigues.

Confusion Created by False Prophets

The Old Testament shows that a great number of false pretenders to revelation and prophecy, basing their claims in omens and dreams, had cut loose the

Jewish society during the ancient times. The Scriptures of Bani Israel are replete with warnings against these sham forecasters.

"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD."

"Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, not to your enchanters, not to your sorcerers, which speak unto you; saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy all lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish."

"And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tabri'ah and Sanbal'lat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me."

"And the word of the LORD, came unto me, saying Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of your own hearts. Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith LORD GOD; woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing."

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely; and the priest bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD."

History of the Jews shows that prophets continued to appear after the Old Testament had been compiled. A large number of these diviners turned up after

Jews became victims of overwhelming circumstances, when in the face of disasters and repeated devastation's, the Jews saw the glimmerings of a Messiah who would some day redeem his people, defeat their enemies and restore their lost power and prestige. The messianic hope of the people, which had helped to keep alive the hope and confidence of the Jewish people during the age of terrible adversity, was turned to their advantage by selfish diviners and soothsayers. Many of them laid a claim to Prophethood to improve the occasion by creating new factions; they mislead the people to ever increasing way-wardness and corruption, and, above all, corrupted the true faith by their immorality and worship of old pagan divinities. This, naturally caused a great concern to the well meaning scribes and priests among the Jews. Albert M. Hyamson, a member of the American and English Jewish Historical Societies, gives an account of these pseudo-Messiahs:

"From the final loss of independence of the Jewish State until within a few generations ago, Jewish history had known the frequent advent and passing of self-styled Messiahs, prophets of hope in the darkest periods of the Diaspora, self-appointed leaders of the Jewish race in the return to the land from which their ancestors were exiled. The appearance of a Messiah was often, especially in the case of the earlier ones, accompanied by revolts and uprisings, and these almost invariably occurred at times when , and in localities where, anti-Jewish persecution was prevalent. Moreover, these Messianic movements were frequently, especially in the later cases, of a political nature. The religious aspect of this rising was, however, seldom absent, and in many instances the new teacher, anxious to signalise his activity and to secure his influence by religious innovations, endeavoured to subvert the basic teachings of Judaism, to which, in consequence, considerable harm sometimes occurred. New sects were created on some occasions; on others wholesale adoption of Mohammadanism or Christianity took place."

Opening of the Christian era saw, owing to personal, political, economic or factional interests of these pretenders, frequent appearance of such pseudo-prophets. Several passages of the New Testament advert to these false prophets and their evil courses.

“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Anti-och. And there stood up one of them named Ag’bus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great pass in the days of Cladius Caesar.”

“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Ag’abus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this gridle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

“Beware of the false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

“But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion: that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”

Behold, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed from the power of God.”

“And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus.”

“And Jesus answered and said unto them. Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and you shall deceive many.”

Jesus also warned his disciples on another occasion that :-

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.”

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

During the first two centuries after Christ the number of impostors who claimed to work miracles and deluded the ignorant by their visions and alleged prophecies was so great that the Christian church found it hard to maintain its unity and creed. The threat posed to the existence of the unity and creed. The threat posed to the existence of the Church in the initial period of its history by the large number of false prophets has been described by Edwin Knox Mitchell, Professor of Grace-Roman and Eastern Church history in the Hartford Theological Seminary in an article on prophecy in Christianity.

“The appearance of these false prophets, pretending superior wisdom, ere long created distrust and aroused the churches and their leaders to the dangers that threatened their welfare. But as yet there was no recognised ‘form of discipline’ adequate for the suppression of those would-be spokesmen and pretentious revalers of the secret counsels of God. There were no specific standards by which to test and try those ‘spirits’. Standards, however, were sure to be found, and if not found, then created, by the churches for their protection from vagaries in doctrine and aberrations of life. The apostles, whether in common councils or as individuals, were the first court of appeal. They based their judgements on the words of the Lord and the mind of Christ.... The rise and development of the monarchical episcopate was here and there favoured and fostered in the interest of sound doctrine and as a restraint against new-fangled notions, foreign to the faith. Hermas Pastor and Ignatius are full of warnings and admonitions against false prophets and teachers; and Ig-

natus specially exhorts to obedience of the bishop. This was his hope for maintenance of sound doctrine. Clement likewise relies upon the bishops (i.e. presbyters) for the preservation of the unity and purity of the Church. Prophecy, however, was not yet suppressed, but only repressed and somewhat regulated by the rising officials in the churches. The Didache informs us that prophecy was still free and in good repute in Syria although often counterfeited and condemned. Its days, however, were numbered, for it was soon to share the general distrust and opposition towards all extravagant claims to divine wisdom. The Gnostics and Marcion had prophets as well as the churches, and they were sometimes indistinguishable from each other. The rise of Monatism was in some respects but a resurgence of prophetism. It was an effort to revive primitive Christian conditions where each believer was free to exercise his God given gift.

"The Churches were now put on the defensive and they soon sought to co-operate in the maintenance of their apostolic heritage. Joint action in councils was the most effective means at hand. This brought the bishops together and greatly increased their prestige and power. The appeal to the words of Christ was enlarged to include an appeal to the teachings and writings of the apostles and the use of the Old Testament as a book of discipline and standard of doctrine grew in favour. The Law and the Prophets had sufficed for Israel, and the Old Covenant needed only to be supplemented by the New with its apostolic guarantees. Prophecy was thus placed under the restraint of written records, and it was considered more important to interpret the old prophecies than to utter new ones. All the unstable, intermittent spiritual gifts shared the fate of the prophetic. Tongues, miracles, healing's waned; and by the end of the 2nd century they were all, including prophecy, under restraint of the regular officials of the respective churches and subordinates to them."

Finality of Prophethood - A Logical Culmination

It was perfectly logical as well as inevitable, too, that after the complete and final guidance had been vouchsafed to the Prophet of Islam, the chain of prophecy should come to an end with him. The creed and the law, the individual and the social norms of behaviour, all were finally and fully established by the Last Prophet on principles so complete and appropriate that a healthy and progressive society could be raised and sustained on its bases in any country or age. At the same time, the society to be so established allowed full scope to the individual without applying any coercion or curbs on him. The development of individual's personality and the perfection of his spirituality goes hand ahead in such a social order jointly with the advancement of the entire social group. The individual finds nothing wanting, nothing against his natural, inborn dispositions in this social order, since, he is fully equipped to keep pace with the society evolving to a higher plane of its growth and development. This is brought about by the law given by Islam which is always ahead of time - a superb example of divine wisdom for it allows both the society and the individual to blossom, without allowing one to impair the growth of the other.

The vast universe, the law sustaining its existence and the knowledge of the past and present conditions of man all the world over, leave no doubt that God has created every thing in a just and balanced measure. There is nothing superfluous or wanting in it. The disbalance or inconsistency, if we observe anywhere, is really an indication of our faulty perception or imperfect knowledge of the natural phenomena and its secrets. But, the law governing human behaviour needs a far keener perception and finer sensibility to apprehend it correctly than that required to understand the outward, physical manifestations of this universe. This is because the law of human behaviour has a bearing on the intrinsic essence or quintessence of the world spirit

which forms the objective of its existence. The externality of the world is merely an expression of its inwardness. And, since Muhammad's Prophethood had laid bare the innermost recesses of human heart - the essential nature of man - it did not require any other evidence to prove the culmination of divine guidance. For this was the ultimate end of divine guidance, and was, in reality, fully achieved through Prophethood of Muhammad, the appearance of a new apostle of God would have been against His own law besides putting humanity to yet another but unnecessary trial.

Vitality of Islam

~~Now~~ in the sunshine of Muhammad's guidance no man can pretend to say that he cannot attain spiritual perfection or fellowship of God nor can he plead his inability to move forward on the path of steadfast conviction, perfection of the self and purification of the morals. But, if he does so his failure can be attributed to his own irresoluteness or cowardice, greed for material welfare or ignorance of the Divine Scripture and prophetic teachings. If a man is sincere and diligent Islam can lead him to the pinnacle of virtues next only to the exalted stage of Prophethood.

The sign and mark of Islam's potentiality in this regard is demonstrated by the marvellous Book of God which is fadeless, ever-blooming and with wonders without end; as well as by the Salat, brimming with life and vigour, as sure, infallible means for attaining propinquity to God. Each of these bears out the untarnished truth of Islam. People have gone ahead with the help of these two, in every age, to attain sublimity of spirit beyond the reach of the most wise and sapient. And their numbers have always been ever so many in Islam. These purer souls have made plain, by their own example of vitreous living and sincere love of man and God, that the followers of Islam no longer stand in need of any new guide form On High. They have been reinvigorating the Muslim society by guiding it on the path

of virtue and goodness in compliance with the divine command which calls upon all the Muslims to seek the help of God through submission to Him and prayer and striving in His way.

“And strive in the path of Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship; the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He hath named you Muslims of old time and in this (Scripture), that the Messenger may be a witness against you, and that ye may be witness against mankind. So establish worship, pay the poor-due, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper.”

Another ingrained quality of this religion is its propensity to revolt against everything that is repugnant to its own essence and spirit. This is the inherent power of Islam which strives against forwardness and perversion hurtful to the grace and merit of human values; fights with the forces of evil, apostasy and tyranny; maintains and promotes the standard of Islamic morality; speaks out truth in the face of tyrants and kings, urges to get away from the deception of one's own greed and passing fancy and helps to reject all vagaries of innovations and deviations from true faith even at the cost of one's reputation, personal injury or even life. The book of God always exhorts the believers to be steadfast on truth and justice, to depose truthfully even against their own parents and relations, to co-operate with goodness and piety and to keep away from guilt and misconduct, to strive in the way of God, to enjoin the right and to forbid the wrong, to seek the good graces of the Lord and those who love Him, to be at odds with the devil and its team-mates and to prefer the Hereafter over the world and all that it stands for. Cast in the same mould are the *ahadith*, the saying and doings of the Prophet, which call upon every man to keep in the right path and hold aloof from transgression and perversion; appeal to combat the sinister and the peccant with one's ability and strength; and threaten those who join hands with the enemies of God and saboteurs

of true faith with chastisement. Such Traditions are very many and well-known and they have always given heart to reformers, in every age and at every critical juncture of the history of Islam, to fight to the last drop of their blood for the preservation of Islamic principles

“Some of them have paid their vow by death (in battle), and some of them still are waiting, and they have not altered in the least.”

Such is the Book of God, keeping the followers of Islam away from evil and ignorance, animating their hearts with unbounded zeal for truth and virtue and infusing courage and faith in the indolent and the weak for upholding the cause of righteousness.

The Secret of Islam's Perennial Freshness

“History bears a testimony to the fact that there has never been a spell, however brief, during the past one and a half thousand years when the message of Islam was eclipsed or its teachings were engulfed by heresy, and the Islamic consciousness became dormant enough to accept a contaminated faith. Whenever an effort was made from any quarter whatsoever to distort the tenets of Islam, pervert or falsify its teachings, or it was attacked by sensist-materialism, some one invariably came forward to accept the challenge and fought it out to the grief of Islam's adversary. History records many a powerful movement which had once posed danger to Islam but now it is difficult to find out even the true impact of its thought. Only a few persons know today what *Qadriyah* (Rationalists believing in free will), *Jahmiyah* (Determinists), *Itizal* (Dissenters), Creations of the Qur'an, existentialist Monism, Din-ilahi etc. exactly mean, although these represented, at one time or the other, very important school of thought and with the most powerful imperialist powers of their day and some extremely learned and able persons at their back, they had threatened to stifle Islam. Finally, however, it was Islam which gained ascendancy over these contending forces. These powerful movements

are known today as simply different schools of thought and are to be found now in philosophical and dialectical treatises. This tradition of struggle against un-Islam, the spirit to preserve and renovate the pristine teachings of the and the effort to infuse people with a revolutionary spirit to re-assert the divine message are as old as Islam itself."

Finality^o of Prophethood - A Defence against Heresy

The strong, unbroken tradition of revivalist endeavour in Islam, seeking to restore the faith in its original purity, and the continuous struggle against the tyrants for restoring what is due to the poor and lowly stems from general Islamic consciousness. It holds the more learned in the community responsible for upholding truth and justice, maintaining the standards of candour and fair play, commanding the right and forbidding the wrong and spreading the original creed unencumbered by later accretions. The existence of this awareness and the consequential efforts show, by the same token, that Muslims have never looked forward to the appearance of a redeemer or a new prophet, nor have they ever suspended their efforts in the hope of a new Messiah descending from the heavens to lead them on in the reformation and renovation of their faith and the community.

But, the followers of other religions or even those sects among Muslims which have placed reliance in a contrary principle, have never been inclined to take the responsibility of fighting the evil and restoring virtue and goodness. Airy hopes have been the parents of their faith. Lying for ages inactive, dreaming of a saviour and a prophet of hope, and, consequently compromising with the worst situations, they never gave rise to any reformatory or revivalist movement of a fundamentalist character. Their voice of conscience to restore true faith has gradually languished and wasted away. Historians have failed to find the reason for it, but it has

certainly been due to their belief in the appearance of a Messiah as promised in their traditions. This has also been the result of a similar belief of certain sects in Islam who have placed undue reliance on certain holy personages, possessing supernatural powers, having access to divine secrets and affiliated with the prophetic spirit, who would make their appearance in the last days of stress and difficulty.

There is not the least doubt that the apocalyptic doctrines asserting appearance of new apostles, pretending superior wisdom to prove the continuance of divine revelation, and the obscure arguments advanced in their support, create distrust in the durability of divine guidance itself and shake the confidence of man in his own ability to strive for holding up truth and virtue. These dogmas, thus, degenerate into senseless tricks and juggling and encourage unworthy pretenders to delude the ignorant by their visions and alleged wonders. They create new schisms which drift into hostility and hatred of the original faith.

Finality of Prophethood - A Boon for Muslims

Proclamation of God that the Prophethood had come to its end, made even before the Prophet left this fleeting world, was a godsend blessing for Muslims. The declaration that no new Prophet would come after Muhammad, nor would there be a new revelation, not a new religious order after him, was a bounty from God envied by the learned and earnest Rabbis of the Jews who were aware of the stimulus given to eschatological speculations, confusion of thought and religious schisms brought about by the pseudo Messiahs during the long periods of distress undergone by the Jewish people. An authentic Tradition records that "Once a Rabbi said to Caliph Umar: "You have a verse in your Holy Book, which if it had been revealed to us we would have celebrated the day of its revelation as a festival." Caliph Umar asked: "Which is that verse?" The Rabbi replied: "It is: This day have I perfected your religion for

you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM." Caliph Umar then said: "I fully remember the day and the date and the time when this verse was revealed to the Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings. It was Friday, the evening of Arafa."

The incident illustrates the great honour bestowed on Muslims and also the feeling of jealousy it aroused in the learned among the Jews. The Tradition also speaks of the omission of this great guarantee for other religions and the cause of their lack of confidence which is, contrarily, so very conspicuous in the followers of Islam. There is, however, nothing strange in it, for, the earlier religions were sent down at a time when the human race as well as its religious consciousness were passing through different stages of development. The mantle of final Prophethood, like a robe of honour, was meant for the last of the Prophets. Only the followers of the last Prophet, the best of people among the human race deserved that honour.

Protection against Confusion of Thought

The belief in the termination of Prophethood has ever protected this religion from the credulity of its own simple minded adherents and the pseudo-prophets, and stood guard over its followers against running into intellectual confusion and anarchy of creeds to which earlier religions had slided back time and again. This was the doctrine which has helped this religion and its followers to guard themselves against foul play to the hypocrites and masqueraders and enabled Islam to preserve its original creed and fundamental beliefs over the past several hundred years. Had this principle not been there to guide the Muslims, each of their numerous sects would have evolved a different creed, a different spiritual and intellectual ideal, a different religious centre and a different history of its own.

Finality of Prophethood - A Boon to Civilisation

The belief in the finality of Prophethood has rendered a great service to man by ministering to his intellectual development, for it has taught him to rely in his knowledge, experiences and mature judgement. In as much as it tells man that he need not look to the heavens for further guidance, it fastens his eyes upon this world about which he need now think and harness its resources to his benefit. In a like manner, man now needs to exercise his mind and think out how to build up a healthy and progressive society, on the bases of spiritual and moral foundations. Finality of Prophethood, thus, asks man to be courageous and take risk for his betterment and progress, teaches him to place reliance on his own capacities and lays open the vast field of further progress which can be achieved through his own efforts and struggles.

Had this creed of the termination of Prophethood been denied to man, he would have lost confidence in his own self; he would have hanged in doubt, still looking toward the heavens instead of fixing his gaze to the world. He would have still been in a state of suspense, uncertain about his future, like an easy-believing soul who could be easily hoodwinked by every prevaricator. Whenever such a believer was told by a false claimant to Prophethood that he had come to give finishing touches to the imperfect garden of humanity, he would have been forced to think whether the impairment of human nature could ever be imparted acme of perfection?

And, in this way, man would have looked forward, at every stage, to the promised Messiah to come and finish off the job left incomplete by his predecessor. Man would have always been marking time, sitting idle, unable to utilise his own resources and intellectual capacities either for improving, refining himself or the world entrusted on his charge. This is what Iqbal ex-

plains in the 'Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam' in these words:

"In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an, and the emphasis it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge are all different aspects of the same idea of finality".

Menace of False Prophets

Muslims have never come across, in their long history, a menace more perilous than the threat of the false Prophets, but more often than not these pretenders had little success in misleading them. The stir caused by them was always short lived like a bubble, but the danger to which the muslim community was laid open by the latest claimant of prophethood, Mirza Ghulam Qadiani (1840-1908), in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, became more dangerous owing to the then obtaining political situation.

Danger Posed by Gnostic Imagery and Illumination

All those who have studied the development of mysticism in Islam and other religions have reached the conclusion that intuitive religious perception culminating into gnostic imagery, beatific visions and illuminations and the ascetic-mystical attitudes claiming a theosophical link with the Unknown, which very often lead to make the apocalyptic a characteristic form of such intuitive experiences, open the gates of dubious claims and antinomian tendencies. For the source of such intuitive perceptions is oftentimes the predilection of the mystic, or his circumstances, or even devilish illusion, those who lay a claim to these illuminations sometimes be-

come, consciously or unconsciously, impious ministers of evil. The habits and customs, subconscious delusions, distorted impressions, traditional beliefs, mythological conceptions and the circumstances under which a mystic undertakes the journey of spirit, all combine to shape the pattern of his mystical experiences. Several of those masters who have had a practical experience of beatific visions and illuminations assert that it is virtually not possible for the mystical experiences to be completely free from the beliefs and traditions of the mystic or even the circumstances attending these perceptions.

Therefore if anybody considers theophanic vision or divine inspiration to be indispensable for salvation or perfection of faith, he commends the optional to be obligatory. The prescripts of this type obviously mistreat the simplicity of faith, injure universal principles of Islam and open the door to confusion and intellectual anarchy as was done by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani. The latter had also set up mystical experiences, spiritual visions and intuition as a necessary outcome of meditations and travails and as an evidence of true faith. He had expressed the view that a religion which denied such intuition was dead or rather develish, and led its followers to the Hell. If the puritans and ascetics of any religion, he claimed, were not rewarded with transports and illuminations, then they were wayward and blind

Such a proposition of religious truth is so manifestly wrong that it need not be discussed in any detail. The companions of the Prophet of Islam were trained and guided under prophetic care; they had absorbed the teachings of the Qur'an as no other generation of Muslims ever did after them as the best exemplars of virtue and goodness; for it was through their efforts that the message of Islam was carried to the four corners of the world. Yet none of them ever claimed gnostic vision of reality nor did anyone of them demand conformity with the content of a deep and spiritual experience. No companion of the Prophet ever laid claim to the com-

munion with On High, nor we find them in competition in the ways of mystical-ascetic disciplines, nor yet history records any incident that anyone of them had expressed regrets for not being raised to a higher plane of spiritual consciousness. How, then, can any Muslim deem it necessary to seek or stress intuitive perception of the inner content of faith?

It has happened several times in the past, as history of religion tells us, that separatist movements based on an individual's experiences or claims develop into extremist factions which gradually cut themselves adrift from the parent community. Such schisms very soon declare the rest of the Muslims as apostates, diverge into a new religion and give rise to intricate problems which defy solution even by the combined effort of the whole community, their leaders and religious mentors.

Collective Intuition of Muslims

Islam has been favoured by the infinite mercy and grace of the Lord, with a collective intuition which is free from all dangers inherent in taking to a new course or following the decision of any individual.

Whenever the Muslims are faced with any intricate or difficult problem or the march of time throws up a new question which cannot be solved by the ordinary process, God invariably inclines the hearts of a group among the deeply-learned, pious and sincere Muslims, who apply themselves whole-heartedly and find out the correct answer to that question. They feel so determined to get to the bottom of the problem that one might say that they have been commanded by God or driven by some force beyond them to set the matter at rest. Such is the combined endeavour of the community in the hour of every crisis to which we have given the name of 'collective intuition' - and numerous examples of this nature can be found in the history of Islam.

But, there are also times when some of the pure and elevated souls have an immediate apprehension of

the right course. An example of the intuition of this nature can be found in *Adhan*, the call to prayer, which was prescribed by the Prophet after 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Abdullah bin Zaid were simultaneously communicated the words of the call heard by them in their dreams. *Lailatul Qadr* or the night of Power furnishes another example of similar nature. It has been related on the authority of 'Abdullah Bin Umar that "a few companions of the Prophet who had the vision of *Lailatul Qadr* in the last seven nights of the month of Ramadhan in their dreams came to the Apostle of God and told him about what they had seen. The Prophet thereupon said, "I find that all of you have similar visions about the last seven nights, therefore, whoever desires to find it should seek it in these seven nights".

The prayer of *Tarawih*, offered during Ramadhan, furnishes yet another example of somewhat analogous nature. The Prophet started to offer this prayer but abandoned it after three days lest it should become a burdensome obligation for his followers. The Muslims, however continued to offer it individually until Caliph 'Umar decided to perform the prayer in congregation. Obviously the decision of Caliph 'Umar was guided by divine intuition, for, it proved to be immensely beneficial to the community. The prayer of *Tarawih* not only created the zeal for spending the nights of Ramadhan in vigils and adoration of God but also led to the memorising of the Qur'an. The earnestness of the *Ahl-i-Sunnat* in learning the Qur'an by heart and its recital as compared to the absence of similar fervour in other sects of Islam, who do not offer *Tarawih* prayer, is a manifest sign of 'Umar's right guided intuition.

And, oftentimes, this 'collective intuition' takes the shape of unanimous consent of a vast majority of Muslims on a certain issue which cannot, by any means, be treated as the result of fortuitous circumstances or conspiracy by a section amongst them. Such a consensus of opinion of the majority of learned Muslims is either advantageous to Islam and the Muslims, provides a solution to certain important problem

affecting their community life and puts an end to certain menace or dangerous situation, or helps to achieve certain desired objectives.

The instances of the 'collective intuition' of this category are very many: collection of the Qur'an during the caliphate of Abu Bakar, collection and critical examination of the Traditions during the first two centuries of Islamic era, deduction of laws and principles of Islamic jurisprudence by the learned doctors of religion, and the amplification and development of all those branches of learning which have helped in preserving the original text of the Qur'an and its study and propagation of Islam are befitting examples of such a collective intuition.

The system of spiritual purification which later on developed into an elaborate discipline designed to identify the machinations of the devil with man and its suppression through spiritual realisation and communion with God is the inner dimension of the Islamic *Shar'iah*, recognised by it as *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) and *ihsan* (devotion). Known as *tasawwuf* (mysticism) to later generations, it furnished yet another manifestation of 'collective intuition'. It was refined and developed by the noble masters of spirit into the greatest act of devotion to God and as a means for striving against the burden of one's own carnal self. God made it a medium of revivifying listless hearts and cool spirits and it was then utilised by the great saints and their disciples to spread the message of Islam in far off lands like India, Far East and Africa. Innumerable people were guided through it while many amongst them imparted faith and righteousness to the Muslim society of their times. They were not ascetics embodying the quiescent spirit of inactivity, since many of them fought like heroes in the battlefields. Nobody who has not closed his eyes to the history of Islam can deny the great service rendered by these travellers of the path of spirit to the cause of faith.

Another shining example of this 'collective intuition' can be found in the great endeavour made from time to time to discredit and confute the misguided

sects, irreligious philosophies, skeptic patterns of thought and blasphemous movements inviting people to profanity and inaction. It was the 'collective intuition' of Islam which produced master spirits of the age, and at the appropriate moment they were needed, who unravelled wickedness of these bad influences and saved the Muslims from their pernicious effects. All these are the achievements of divine inspiration granted by the Lord to a section of Muslims in every age and place, for they are not only the last of the right-guided people but also the star of hope for entire mankind. This is, undoubtedly, the sign of this *ummat* being the chosen community while its 'collective intuition' is a testimony of the termination of revelation after the last Apostle of God. We do not find such a continuous and marked example of 'collective intuition' in the followers of earlier prophets who were not blessed with it because the prophethood was not to be terminated in their times.

Seeds of Strife

The intellectual confusion and disruption in the Muslim society brought about by the false prophets are matters of grave concern to every follower of Islam. In these days of materialism and godlessness, people are little inclined to prefer claims of higher spirituality: but were the people infatuated with the craze to put forward their claims to prophethood like Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani and his zealous followers, condemning every other Muslim, rejecting his as an apostate and an unbeliever, the resulting confusion and anarchy, strife and struggle in the world of Islam could be very well visualised by all of us. Would not, then, the community raised by God to make Islamic brotherhood a living reality by effacing the prejudice of colour, race, nationality and tongue turn into small, warring religious factions, condemning one another to the point of heresy?

The danger posed by the continuance of prophethood in Islam was realised by Maulvi Muhammad Ali Lahori, a prominent follower of the Mirza, who

raised his voice against it, but he could not go to the root of the menace for he still continued to hold the Mirza as a revivalist and Promised Messiah. Appealing to the good sense of his co-religionists, Maulivi Muhammad Ali says:

“Reflect, for the sake of God, that if the belief of Mian Sahib is accepted that the prophets will continue to come, and that thousands of prophets will come, as he has written explicitly in *Anwar-i-Khilafat*, will not these thousands of groups denounce one another as *Kafirs*? And so, what will happen to Islamic unity? Let us assume that all those prophets will be confined to the Ahmadi group alone. Then, how many factions will there be in the Ahmadi group? After all you are aware of what is happened in the past, how one of these groups became favourable to and another opposed to the Prophet after his advent. Then, will that very God who has expressed the will to unify all the peoples of the world at the hands of Muhammed (peace and blessings of God be upon him), now divide Mulsims into numerous factions, each one of them calling the other *Kafir*, having no Islamic relationship and unity among themselves? Remember that if the promise to make Islam predominant over all religions in the future is true, then, that tragic day when thousands of prophets will go about with their own separate exclusive mosques, each with its own group of mentors of true belief and salvation, denouncing all other Mulsims as infidels, will never dawn in the history of Islam”.

In short, the termination of prophethood and revelation signifying the need of the probationary period of human race with the advent of the last prophet, Muhammad, the Shining Light and Leader of all Humanity (on whom be peace and blessings), is without doubt the greatest of divine blessings on man. This is the spiritual principle for unity of mankind and a means to divert the energies of human beings to fruitful channels. It protects the identity of Muslims and their vigour and power for it gives them confidence in themselves as well as in the ever abiding nature of their religion,

places responsibility of universal leadership on their shoulders and urges them to strive in the way of God to the Last Day. This is the foundation on which the edifice of Islam has been raised.

Worst Enemies of Islam

Whoever lays a claim to any new prophethood in any shape or form or helps or abets such a pretender is the worst enemy of Islam and Muslims and a tool in the hands of Islam's bitterest foes. Islam can never forgive the guilt of such wrongdoers. Verily, the pronouncement of Lord God is absolutely correct.

"Who is guilty of more wrong than he who forgeth a lie against Allah, or saith: I am inspired, when he is not inspired in aught; and who saith: I will reveal the like of that which Allah hath revealed? If thou couldst and the angels stretch their hands out saying: Deliver up your souls. This day are ye awarded doom of degradation for that ye spake concerning Allah other than the truth, and used to scorn His portents".

"Now have ye come unto Us solitary as We did create you at the first, and ye have left behind you all that we bestowed upon you, and We behold not with you those your intercessors, of whom ye claimed that they possessed a share in you. Now is the bond between you severed, and that which ye presumed hath failed you". □

THE MYTH OF THE JEWISH ORIGIN OF COLUMBUS

Sayyid Rizwan Ali Nadvi

It is generally believed that America was discovered solely by Christopher Columbus. But as we shall see that is not the whole truth.

In addition to this myth some scholars maintain that Columbus was a Jew or a Jew converted to Christianity. This myth is perpetuated by Jewish writers in modern times.

A few years ago, questions were raised by the Minister of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia as to the identity of Columbus and the unknown sailor who accompanied him on his famous voyage for the discovery of America. These questions were referred to me when I was working as Professor of Islamic History and Civilisation in the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University of Riyadh. For the benefit of the English readers I reproduce here, with some revision, my unpublished view on the questions:

- was Columbus really a Jew?
- was he in fact a Spanish by birth?
- who was or were the unknown sailor(s) who accompanied him as guide on his famous voyage?

It seems that the idea of Columbus's Jewish origin became popular due to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in which he is stated to be a Jew. Contrary to this, the writer of the article *Christopher Columbus* in *Encyclopaedia America* is not sure of his origins and merely mentions the difference of opinion among scholars as to his origin.

Two modern scholars (most probably Jews) namely Salvador de Moxiga and Simon Weisenthal

consider Columbus a Jew. However, their views are refuted most convincingly by two scholars; J.S. Collis of England and S.E. Morrison of America in their books *Christopher Columbus*, London, 1977 and *The Great Explorers, The European Discovery of America*, New York, 1978 respectively. In addition to this, they have discussed the question of his birthplace.

Collis in his book *Christopher Columbus* says that until 1930 seven cities in Italy, France, Corsica and Spain claimed to be his birthplace. But it was accepted by all later on that he was born in the city of Genoa, Italy.

Now as to the question of his alleged Jewish origin, it must be recalled that the most voluminous biography of Columbus in English was written by Washington Irving (1783-1859) who spent some years in Spain as ambassador of America. His book entitled "*The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*" in three volumes was published in New York in 1889 (reprinted in London, 1973) does not speak of Jewish origin at all.

Salvador de Medriga in his biography of Columbus has represented a new theory that he was a Jew and embraced Christianity during the period of the Inquisition in Spain. Discussing this question, Collis in his above mentioned book says: this might seem probable, but all the events in the life of Columbus disapproved this claim. He further asserts that in the light of published documents concerning Columbus's life displayed in a Genoa exhibition 1950-51, which were not seen by Medriga when he published his book in 1940, it is impossible to believe that Columbus was a Jew from Catalonia in Spain. He finally concludes that he was a Genoan and not Spanish. Similarly, it is a mere presumption by Medriga that he was a convert Christian.

As for the claims of Simon Weisenthal:

- 1) that the financiers of the voyage of Columbus were the Spanish Jews converted to Christianity and not the Catholic King of Spain, Ferdinand,

2) that Columbus' voyage was, in fact, a secret expedition to find out a refuge for Jews in Asia, Collis considers them ridiculous. According to him Weisenthal has not offered the flimsiest of proofs for his queer theories. Therefore, his claims are a mere production of his imagination and fancy.

Elaborating further, Collis remarks that the Jewish race is well known to possess the traits of practicality, sharpness in arithmetic and computation; they are neither easily cheated nor do they cheat themselves, but none of these qualities were to be found in Columbus. He concludes by saying that no doubt Columbus was a zealous Catholic.

The same is the considered opinion of S.E. Morrison in his book *The Great Explorers*. He further emphasises that none of the contemporaries of Columbus and four of his earliest biographers are of the opinion that he was a Jew, and all the relevant documents confirm that he was a Catholic. The forged documents to prove his Jewish origin have no validity compared to the old and original documents.

We might add to the cogent evidences advanced by Collis and Morrison to disprove the alleged Jewish origin of Columbus what Washington Irving has copied from the diaries of Columbus himself. One of the entries in his diaries confirms the Christian faith of Columbus. On the eve of his departure on his first voyage, he writes of the fanatic Christian King Ferdinand by saying "I saw this King expel the King of Grenada (i.e. Abu Abdullah) and how the latter kissed his hand. Then he expelled all the Jews from his kingdom."

It is obvious that a Jew or a Jew converted to Christianity cannot pronounce such a thing.

As far as the case of the unknown sailors who accompanied Columbus on his voyage, their names, races, duties and their distribution in the three ships which sailed in his first voyage in 1492. At the end of this description, he has mentioned, among the sailors, "three persons whose names were unknown".

Most probably these were Spanish Muslims whose homeland, Grenada, had fallen in the same year to Ferdinand and Isabella.

In addition to this, we read in Colli's former book that "Columbus discussed the subject of his intended voyage with Arabs as well as Greeks, Latins and Jews".

Further Morrison in his aforementioned book reveals that "there were three young men with Columbus who had been chained in prison for helping one of the prisoners in his attempt to escape. They were condemned to life imprisonment. But they were released on the condition that they would accompany Columbus on his voyage.

Now it is my firm belief and anybody can guess it that they must have been among the Muslims who in spite of the formal fall of Grenada, were resisting the Christian victors, and they must have been sailors of repute whom Columbus wanted to take with him in his venture to discover the route to India and China. They must have been released by Ferdinand to make sure of his share of the booty expected on Columbus's journey to the eastern lands of gold and riches.

I must point out here that the Arab historians and geographers mention three youths by their description as *Al Fitayan Al Mughamarin* (the young adventurers) who sailed from the Island of Khalidat (canary Island) facing the coast of Morocco to the unknown destination in the Atlantic ocean. Perhaps these were the same young men.

Finally, it is to be noted that Ferdinand had promised, according to historians of Columbus's voyage, that the first person to spot land in this adventurous voyage would be given a life allowance of money as reward. And that first person was a certain Rodrigo. But Columbus claimed this first sight for himself.

Rodrigo was enraged at this false claim by Columbus. In his rage at this deceit, he embraced Islam and joined the Arab army in Morocco.

In my view this unknown sailor who led Columbus in his successful voyage was one by the name of

Abu Abdallah with some other Spanish or Moroccan Muslims with him. A very convincing piece of evidence is inadvertently furnished by the western biographers of Columbus themselves. Benjamin Keen in his article *Christopher Columbus* in *Collier's Encyclopaedia* (vol.7) copies from a very reliable source, Columbus's son Ferdinand, the event of a terrible storm in the Caribbean Sea near modern Haiti in which twenty Spanish ships were destroyed because of the Spanish governor not heeding the warnings of Columbus. Ferdinand records. "That is why the Admiral's enemies charged that by his magic arts he has raised that storm to take revenge on BoBadilla and his other enemies".

Who might be this BoBadilla (certainly a distortion of Abu Abdallah) and other enemies of the "Admiral" other than the Muslims of Spain whose country was conquered by Ferdinand just before his voyage?

I conclude with certainty that Columbus was neither a Spanish Jew nor the sole discoverer of America. The Arabs of Spain undoubtedly played a leading role in this discovery, for they knew the Atlantic and Canary Islands in it to the west of Tangier, Morocco. The Spanish geographer Abu Ubaid al Bakri of the eleventh century A.D. has described it well in his famous book on geography.

Another piece of evidence to support this view is the statement of Fra Mauro who produced a descriptive atlas in 1457. He says that "an Arab sailor sailed in 1420 from the Indian Ocean around the African continent and appeared in the Atlantic. (*History of the Arabic Geographic Literature* by Karachkovski in Russian, 1957, translated into Arabic by Salahuddin Uthman Hashim, Cairo 1965, Col.2 p. 562).

Through this piece of valuable historical information by Fra Mauro and endorsed by the great Russian Orientalist, Karachkovski explodes the fallacy perpetuated by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and other western historians that the sea route to the East via Cape of Good Hope was discovered by Bartholomeu Dias de Novaes (commonly known as Daiz) of Portugal in 1488.

The Fragrance of East

everyone must know now that sixty-eight years before Diaz, an Arab sailor who sailed through this route from the Indian ocean to the Atlantic had discovered this route.

In fact, Europe owes much to the geographical knowledge of the world to the Muslims for they were the masters of this branch of learning in the Middle Ages. The publication of the old Arabic works in a series of several volumes entitled *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* by Dr. Goje of Holland in the late 19th century is a testimony to this Arabic knowledge. □

EDUCATING MUSLIMS - SOME PROBLEMS

S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadvi

Education is a necessity for the civilised man just as food is for health of the body. The concern of the Western nations for education and better management of the educational system, the progress made by them in this field and the far reaching benefits achieved by them is common knowledge. Inspired by their example Eastern countries too were attracted to improve the system of education and management of their educational institutions. They established institutions for imparting current subjects of study. This process requires immense resources, great skill and dedication to the cause. Unfortunately Muslims are lacking in these qualities and have not yet realised their importance well enough. How to collect the resources and meet the demands of establishing educational institutions and remove impediments in the implementation of the programmes? These questions call for special attention of Muslim intellectuals for sincere deliberations.

Among the Muslim educational institutions one set consists of these institutions which are exclusively devoted to and concerned with the teaching of religious knowledge, preservation and propagation of faith. These institutions meet their financial needs from public contributions. Muslims who have the means and are motivated by religious fervour make generous contributions according to their means. Small amounts contributed by common men are no less valuable. These institutions produce doctors of religious learning who guide the Ummah in matters of faith. Their role in preserving the faith and making the Ummah true followers

of the religious teachings is important and they do perform their duties well in their own way.

Some people find fault with the exclusive concern of these institutions in teaching of religious learning. But the objection is not valid. Even in the institutions of current educational disciplines, some are exclusively meant for specific subjects. For example, some institutions are exclusively meant of vocational and technical education, some others with medical education, yet some others with engineering and so on. So there is nothing wrong with some institutions concerning themselves exclusively in producing specialists in religious learning, Fiqh (Islamic law) and preaching of faith and providing guidance in religious matters. In fact such educational institutions of specialist religious learning are very much needed for Muslim Ummah. It is worth noting that these institutions are run at low cost and they raise their funds from public contributions made by people of their free will, the sole motivation being religious fervour and pleasure of God. On the other hand, those institutions which cater to the current subjects are costly affair, they need more funds, technical and special equipment, and more elaborate management. They call for greater attention and more deliberation.

One of the important problems of such institutions is the question of their recognition by the Government and after recognition, running them within the constraints of Government rules while at the same time preserving the distinctive character of the Ummah and maintaining their independence. Collection of funds for these institutions is also a great problem, for large amounts of money are required for the equipment and maintenance of these institutions. Muslim population is dispersed throughout the country and not concentrated at a few places, such institutions are needed in large numbers at many places to meet the needs of the large population of Muslims. These can be established with the help of the government and the rich persons of the Ummah. Government grants and assistance carry

strings with it and there is a great risk that the institutions may lose their special character of the Millat. The Millat itself has therefore to rise to the occasion and make the arrangements on its own. Government grants and assistance may be availed of but cautiously, guarding against the risks and ensuring that the purpose of establishing the institution and special features of the Millat are not lost.

India being a secular country the rights of minorities guaranteed by the constitution make it possible that the educational institutions of Muslims imparting current subjects may be run under their own management and according to Muslim precepts. The financial assistance that may be given by the government could be of great help for running these institutions. But it depends on the will and ability of the Muslim management of these institutions to determine the policy of their respective institutions and implement these policies and streamline the performance. The management has to be constantly vigilant and attentive. But all the attention and endeavour by the management can be fruitful only if the persons on the managing committee are aware of the problems of educational institutions and are conscious of the need of the Millat for maintaining the distinctive identity of the Muslims while expanding education. They have no answer to the question why is a Muslim institution required when other institutions are already there in the locality and in the country? Is it only to add to the number of institutions? Or the proposed institution will be run on different lines and, if so, what is the different line, its distinctive features and purpose?

The establishment of a Muslim institution is not merely to add to the number of institutions. It is for the preservation of its culture and language and for educating the children of the Millat so that they take a distinguished place in society. The management has to grasp this basic concept. Then alone they will be able to fulfil the purpose of the institutions and run them well.

It is a fact that when the government gives any grant to any institution, it imposes certain rules which

have to be complied with by the management and prescribes the syllabus. Within these limitations the Minority institutions have the freedom to run the institutions as they deem proper. This right stems from the secular constitution of the country. The minority character of these institutions gives an opportunity, in spite of the limitations just stated above, to run them according to the special identity of the Millat and educate Muslim students and develop their talent preserving their cultural identity. The prime responsibility, therefore, rests with the managing committee to avail of the opportunity in the best possible manner. If the management does not avail of this opportunity with care and attention then it would be of no significance whether the management committee consists of Muslims or other.

As for the difficulties facing the Muslim's educational institutions, there are two difficulties worth special mention; first is that the members of the managing committee sometimes find it difficult to mould their personal opinions and perceptions in harmony with each other and to work together in pursuit of the common goal, the greater cause and larger interests of education and progress. The difference of opinion among the members sometimes turns into personal animosity, the primary interests of the institution are damaged and the objectives are lost sight of. The institution recedes far away from achieving its goal. The other problem is that care is not taken to preserve the distinctive temper of the Millat and exercise foresight. The institutions are not able to develop among the students those qualities which may qualify them to be the true example of the sons and daughters of Islam.

Besides, the problem arising from the weakness and negligence of the management; like those mentioned above, there are other problems arising from want of resources, specially financial resources. Being minority institution they do not get government grants in adequate measure. They have to fall back upon the donations from well-to-do persons among their community. Unfortunately these well-to-do persons are not

motivated enough to realise the extent and intensity of the needs of the Millat so as to rise to the occasion and meet the demands of the financial requirements of the modern educational institutions. It is necessary to create an awareness and motivation among the well-to-do of the community. For this purpose the management of the institutions need to develop contact and rapport with those who have the capacity to lend a helping hand. There are men in the community who have the capacity to donate large amounts of money. What is needed is that they may be made aware of the immense good that their little help can bring to the Millat and they be get interested in the task.

The educational system deserves to be deliberated by the intellectuals who are responsible for organising and running the educational institutions. It should be so modelled that the teachers may be constantly aware of their responsibility to make special efforts to build up their young pupils to be fit for competing with their compatriots. Children of minorities need to work harder than others for excelling them in the competition. They have to devote themselves exclusively to studies.

Syllabus to be adopted in Muslim institutions is a matter of great importance. The current syllabus commonly in use in all institutions of modern education is a legacy from the colonial days. In spite of superficial and peace meal reforms it has not been replaced even after fifty years of independence. It was designed to serve the purpose of the foreign masters. It produced clerks or officers for manning government offices or earning and making material gains for themselves. It did not address the problems of developing in the young minds right-thinking and a sense of belonging to the rich cultural heritage and of producing from amongst them capable leaders and protectors of the Islamic identity. There do appear on the social scene men who distinguish themselves in society. But their achievements are rooted in their grooming at home where they imbibe the high values that take roots before coming to the educational institutions. The institutions and the

syllabus do not make much contribution in their growth and development. The syllabus is void of all such ingredients as are needed for a young Muslim boy or girl for developing his/her personality as a Muslim. To meet this demand of the hour it is necessary to prepare a syllabus, specially for language, literature, social sciences and general subjects which are categorised as humanities, and to write books in these subjects according to the syllabus. Until this is done let the educationists screen the book in vogue and point out the spots where these contain anything incompatible with the faith and values of the Millat so that the impressionable young minds may not be polluted and are guarded against any harm from wrong indoctrination. Educationists who do the screening have to be men or women who are knowledgeable and committed to the right perception of Islamic faith and Muslim cultural heritage. We have many educationists eminently qualified for this work and they are conscious of the task. Some co-ordination among them is needed to bring forth results.

Our educational institutions must keep themselves abreast of times and well informed of the progress in various fields of knowledge. Knowledge is expanding and leading humanity to multi-dimensional progress. Our institutions need to have an awareness of these developments all over the globe, so that we do not lag behind others. A new spirit and enthusiasm has to be infused in the Millat and the rich persons have to be motivated to provide resources for these activities.

The institutions run under Muslim management have the responsibility of producing such persons who may lead the Muslims in all walks of life, raise their standard and quality of life in their thinking and deeds. History bears witness to the glorious days in the past. When Europe was passing through darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, Muslim world was producing scholars, thinkers, educationists and eminent masters of physical and social sciences. European writers have quite often acknowledged that for six hundred years

Europe learnt and benefited from the researches and treasures of knowledge of the Muslims before commencing on their march to progress. Our educationists and educational institutions need to keep this glorious past before them and to inform the younger generation about it so that they develop confidence and a zest for progress. It would not be surprising if Muslim young men and women not only compete well but excel others.

The younger generation should also be made conscious of the fact that Europe and the West have only materialistic progress as their goal and they have given a licence to their mind for the pleasure of the temporary and superficial life of this world. On the other hand, Muslim culture lays great stress on inculcating human wealth and preserving moral values while making progress on the materialistic side and that the source of knowledge is the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith and the example of the holy Prophet's life. These teachings guide Muslims to play a leading role in all walks of life as their ancestors did.□

40,000 - strong Muslim Community in South Korea

There are more than 40,000 Muslims, out of the total national population of 42 million, living in the southern part of the divided Korean peninsula. It shares a common land border with China and the Russian federation.

Though, Korea has been having cultural and commercial links with Muslims from the earliest period, Islam as a religion, reached the Korean shores fairly recently. The modern Muslim community in Korea was formed after the Korean war, which ended in 1953. There are no proven records of Muslims surviving in the northern Communist part of the peninsula.

Prior to that date, Arab Muslim merchants made contact with the Korean people around the 10th century.

Qur'an and Arab historians provide a fairly detailed account of these commercial relations, later a highly prosperous and influential Muslim community settled in the country during the Muslim Moghul empire, which controlled the region from 1270-1368.

Historical records reveal that Islam came to the country through peaceful means, and not as Christian historian claim by the sword. In 1427, the Muslim community were persecuted by the xenophobic Chosen dynasty (1392-1910). By the end of the 15th century, the 150 year old Islamic community was literally obliterated.

A moderate resurgence of Islamic life occurred in 1920's, when Muslims from Central Asia arrived in Korea to escape the oppressive Soviet system. But these Muslims were forced to escape after the onset of the bitter civil war between the North and South. The majority found refuge in North America and Australia.

The modern Muslim community in Korea owes its early beginning to the Turkish soldiers who fought on the side of the allies during the civil war. Turkish Imams assigned to their forces in the country undertook commendable Dawah work whose fruits can be witnessed today.

Later, Dawah activities were shouldered by the commendable Korean Islamic Society, which in addition to Dawah work, cares for Muslim orphans. Currently, Muslim organisations activities are co-ordinated by the Korean Islamic Federation. This government-recognised body supervises several bodies, such as the Students Association, Youth Association, Women's Association and Foreign Muslim Associations.

WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Prof. Abdur Rahman I Doi*

The Family

The family in Islam is a unit in which a man and woman unite to share life together according to the rules and regulations laid down by the Shariah. They become as close to each other as a garment is to the body. The husband's honour becomes an integral part of the his wife's honour, and vice versa. They share each others prosperity and adversity. Thus in Islam the bridal couple are united as husband and wife in the presence of witness seeking Allah's blessings to increase in mutual love and compassion and agreeing to care for each other in sickness and adversity. This fundamental principle of Islamic marriage, understood and observed by the spouses, is the basis of the institution of Muslim marriage. In the family the man is charged with the duty of being the leader of the family and the woman is assigned the duty of looking after the household. Even if the man has more responsibility than the woman and thereby has a degree over her, it does not make a husband inherently better than his wife. The Qur'an contains a verse which says:

And in no wise covet those things in which Allah has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn... (4:32)

Commenting on this verse Sheikh Muhammad Abduh says that it does not imply that every man is

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better than every woman or vice versa, but it emphasises that: *“each sex, in general, has some preferential advantage over the other, though men have a degree over women”*. What is this “degree”? There are different views about it. One view is that it means the qualities of leadership, surveillance and maintenance which are bestowed on men. Another view is that *it signifies the tolerance with which men must treat their wives even in extremely bad moods*. Yet another view is that *it is man’s natural gift from Allah for judging matters pertaining to his family and managing the problems affecting it*. However, the consensus of the scholars is that the “degree” comprises the principle of guardianship and nothing more.

Muhammad Abduh feels that guardianship has four elements: *protection, surveillance, custody, and maintenance*. Abad al Ati considers that over and above these four elements is the element of obedience. According to Abad al Ati obedience consists of the following aspects:

1. A wife must neither receive male strangers nor accept gifts from them without her husband’s approval.
2. A husband has the legal right to restrict his wife’s freedom of movement. He may prevent her from leaving her home without his permission unless there is a necessity or legitimate reason for her to do otherwise. However, it is his religious obligation to be compassionate and not to unreasonably restrict her freedom of movement. If there arises a conflict between this right of the husband and the rights of the wife’s parents to visit her and be visited by her, the husband’s right prevails in the wider interest of the family. Yet the Shariah recommends that he be considerate enough to waive his rights to avoid shame within the family.
3. A refractory wife has no legal right to object to her husband exercising his disciplinary authority. Islamic law in common with most other systems of law

recognises the husband's right to discipline his wife for disobedience.

4. The wife may not legally object to the husband's right to divorce. The marital contract establishes her implicit consent to these rights. However, if she wishes to restrict his freedom in this regard or to have similar rights, she is legally allowed to do so. She may stipulate in the marital agreement that she too will have the right to divorce or that she will keep the marriage bond only so long as she remains the only wife. Should he take a second wife, she will have the right to seek a divorce in accordance with the marriage agreement.

Modesty

Modesty is a virtue which Islam demands of Muslim men and women. The most powerful verses commanding the believers to be modest occur in Surah al-Noor and begin with the words:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard modesty; that will make far greater purity for them: and Allah is well aware of what they do. (24:31)

The rule of modesty is equally applicable to men and women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman or another man is a breach of correct behaviours. The rule is meant not only to guard women, but is also meant to guard the spiritual good of men. Looking at the sexual anarchy that prevails in many parts of the world, and which Islam came to check, the need for modesty both in men and women is abundantly clear. However it is on account of the difference between men and women in nature, temperament, and social life, that a greater amount of veiling is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress. A complete code of modesty is laid down in the Qur'an as follows:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty save to their husbands, or their fathers or their husbands, fathers, or their sons or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brothers son, or their sister's sons, or their women or the slaves whom their right hand possess, or male servants free of physical desire, or small children who have no sense of sex; and that they should not stamp their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O believers! Turn all together towards Allah, that you may attain bliss. (24:31)

A key term in the above verse is **zinat**. It means *both natural beauty and artificial ornaments*. The word used in the above verse seems to include both meanings. Women are asked not to make a display of their figures, not to wear tight clothing that reveal their shapeliness, not to appear in such dress except to:

- their husbands
- their relatives living in the same house with whom a certain amount of informality is permissible.
- their women, that is, in the strict sense, their maid servants who are constantly in attendance on them, but in more liberal sense, all believing women.
- old or infirm men-servants, and
- infants or small children who have not yet got a sense of sex

While Muslim men are required to cover the body between the navel and the knee, every Muslim woman is asked to cover her whole body excluding the face and hands from all men except her husband. The following traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) given us further guidance in the matter:

"It is not lawful for any woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day that she should uncover her hand more than this and then he placed his hand on his wrist joint.

When a woman reaches puberty no part of her body should remain uncovered except her face and the hand up to the wrist joint."

'A'isha reports that once she appeared in finery before her nephew, Abdullah ibn al-Tufail. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not approve of it. "I said, 'O Apostle of Allah, he is my nephew'. The Prophet replied, 'When a woman reaches puberty it is not lawful for her to uncover any part of her body except the face and this and then he put his hand on the wrist joint as to leave only a little space between the place he gripped and the palm."

Asma, the sister of 'A'isha and daughter of Abu Bakar, came before the Prophet in a thin dress that showed her body. The Prophet turned his eyes away and said, "O Asma! when a woman reaches puberty, it is not lawful that any part of her body be seen, except this and this" - and then he pointed to his face and the palms of his hands. Hafsa, daughter of Abdur-Rahman, once came before 'A'isha wearing a thin shawl over her head and shoulders. 'A'isha tore it up and put a thick shawl over her. The messenger of Allah also said, "Allah has cursed those women who wear clothes yet still remain naked." The Caliph, Umar, once said, "Do not clothe your women in clothes that are tight-fitting and reveal the shapeliness of the body." The above mentioned traditions make it explicitly clear that the dress of Muslim women must cover the whole body, except for the face and hands, whether in the house or outside, even with her nearest relatives. She must not expose her body to anybody except her husband and must not wear a dress that shows the curves of her body. Some scholars, like Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani, are of the opinion that, because modern times are particularly full of *fitnah* (mischief), women should go as far as to cover their faces because even the face may attract sexual glances from men. Shaikh al-Albani says, "We admit that the face is not one of the parts of the body to be covered, but it is not permissible for us to hold to this taking into consideration the corruption of

the modern age and the need to stop the menace for further corruption.”

It is respectfully submitted, however that *in the light of Prophetic traditions it suffices to cover the body, leaving out the face and hands up to the wrist joints, since this is the specified Islamic covering and it may sometimes be essential for a woman to go about her lawful engagements with her face uncovered.* However if a woman prefers to put on the veil, she should not be discouraged as this may be a sign of piety and God consciousness (taqwah). The rules on dress are slightly relaxed when a women reaches old age and her sexual attractions have faded. The Qur'an says:

“Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty; but it is best for them to be modest and Allah is the One who sees and knows all things”. (24:60)

However if a woman is old but still has sexual desires, it is not lawful for her to take off her over garments. Women at whom people are not possibly going to cast sexual glances but rather look at with respect and veneration are entitled to make use of the relaxation and go about in their houses wearing an over-garment.

Lowering The Eyes

Islam requires its male and female adherents to avoid sexual relations at all costs. Because the desire to have sexual relationships originates with the look that one person gives another, Islam prohibits a person from casting amorous glances towards another. This is the principle of *ghadd al-basar* (lowering the eyes). Since it is impossible for people to have their eye fixed constantly to the ground and inconceivable that a man will never see a woman or a woman will never see a man, Islam absolves from blame the first chance look, but

prohibits one from casting a second look or continuing to stare at a face which one finds attractive at first sight.

The following tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) offers us guidance in this regard: Jarir says: "I asked the prophet what should I do if I happened to cast a look (at a woman) by chance. The Prophet replied, Turn your eyes away. According to Buraidah, the Prophet told the future fourth Chalif, Ali, not to cast a second look, for the first look was pardonable but the second was prohibited."

However there are certain circumstances in which it is permissible for a man to look at another woman. Such circumstances may arise when a woman is obliged to be treated by a male doctor, or has to appear before a judge as a witness, or when a woman is trapped inside a burning house, or is drowning or when a woman's life or honour is in danger. In such cases, even the prohibited parts of the body of the woman may be seen or touched, and it is not only lawful but obligatory on a man to rescue her from danger, whatever physical contact it may entail. What is required by Islam in such a situation is that as far as possible the man should keep his intentions pure. But if in spite of that his emotions are a little excited naturally, it not blameworthy for him to have looked at such a woman, since having contact with her body was not intentional but was necessitated by circumstances, and it is not possible for a man to suppress his natural urges completely.

The Shariah also allows a man to look at a woman with the object of reaching a decision about whether he should marry her or not. The following traditions explain the matter further: Mughirah ibn Shu'bah says:

"I sent a message to a woman asking for her hand. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to me, 'Have a look at her for that will enhance love and mutual regard between you.'"

Abu Hurairah says that he was sitting with the Prophet (peace be upon him) when a man came and said that he intended to marry a woman from among the

Ansar (Helpers). The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him if he had seen her. He replied in the negative. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him to go and have a look at her because the Ansar often had defect in their eyes. According to Jabir ibn Abdullah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that when a man sent a request to a woman for her hand in marriage, he should have a look at her to see if there was anything in her which made him inclined to marry her.

It is thus clear that no man is prohibited from having a look at a woman as such, but that the real idea behind the prohibition is to prevent the evil of illicit intercourse. Therefore what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has prohibited is only such casting of the eyes as is not essential, as does not serve any social purpose, and as is loaded with sexual motive. This command applies to both Muslim men and Muslim Women and is not confined to only one sex.

Maulana Abu'l A'la Maududi has made a fine psychological distinction, however, between women looking at men and men looking at women. The man, he says, "...is by nature aggressive. If a thing appeals to him, he is urged from within to acquire it. On the other hand, the woman by nature is one of inhibition and escape. Unless her nature is totally corrupted, she can never become so aggressive, bold and fearless, as to make the first advance towards the male who has attracted her. In view of this distinction, the Legislator [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] does not regard a woman's looking at other men to be as harmful as a man's looking at other women. In several traditions it has been reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) let 'A'isha see a performance given by Negroes on the occasion of I'd. This shows that there is no absolute prohibition on women looking at other men. What is prohibited is for women to sit in the same gathering together with men and stare at them, or look at them in a manner which may lead to evil results."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Fatimah, daughter of Qais, to pass her 'iddah (waiting term), in

the house of Ibn Maktum, the same blind Companion from whom Umm Salamah had been instructed to observe purdah. Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi has related in his Ahkam al-Qur'an that Fatimah, daughter of Qais, wanted to pass her waiting term in the house of Umm Sharik. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not approve of this for the reason that the house was visited by many people. Therefore he told her to stay in the house of Ibn Maktum who was blind, where she could stay without observing purdah

This shows that the real object of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was to reduce the chance of any mischief occurring. That is why the lady was not allowed to stay in a house where the chances of possible mischief were greater but allowed to stay in a house where they were less. On the other hand, where there was no such need, women were prohibited from sitting in the same place face to face with other men.

The real object of ghadd al-basar (lowering the eyes) is to stop people with evil intention from casting lewd looks at others. It is common knowledge that a person turns their eyes towards another person innocently in the beginning. If the latter is attractive, the former may go on casting glances and thus drift towards the precipice of sexual attraction and ultimately fornication or adultery. Islam encourages regulated love in order to build up happy family lives since it is healthy families that provide the blocks to construct a healthy society; but it abhors promiscuity which ruins people's family lives and seriously damages people through the ultimate disaster of illicit sexual relationships developing between its adherents. Islam blocks the path that finally leads to active temptation by prohibiting the casting of looks by one person at another except when they do so by chance.

Social Behaviour

The Shariah has placed restrictions on men meeting strange women privately. Similarly no man

other than her husband is allowed to touch any part of a woman's body. The following traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are worth noting in this connection:

"Beware that you do not call on women who are alone," said the Messenger of Allah. One of the companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what about the younger or the elder brother of the husband?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "He is death." (Tirmidhi, Bukhari and Muslim)

"Do not call on women in the absence of their husbands, because Satan might be circulating in any of you like blood." (Tirmidhi)

According to Amr ibn al-As, the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade men to call on women without the permission of their husbands. (Tirmidhi)

"From this day no man is allowed to call on woman in the absence of her husband unless he is accompanied by one or two other men." (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The one who touches the hand of a woman without having a lawful relationship with her, will have an ember placed on his palm on the day of Judgement." (Takmalah, Fath al Qadir)

'A'ishah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted the oath of allegiance from women only verbally, without taking their hands into his own hand. He never touched the hand of a woman who was not married to him (Bukhari). Umaimah, daughter of Ruqaiqah, said that she went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the company of some other women to take the oath of allegiance. He made them promise that they would abstain from idolatry, stealing, adultery, slander and disobedience to the Prophet (peace be upon him). When they had taken the oath, they requested that he take their hands as a mark of allegiance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "*I do not take the hands of women. Verbal affirmation is enough*".

It is most unfortunate, however, that in spite of this guidance from the Prophet (peace be upon him) many Muslims have adopted the Western system of shaking hands with women, using some solitary traditions in respect of old women as a justification. This is clearly an unreasonable extension of the permission. It is, therefore, submitted that the Muslims the world over, and 'ulama in particular, must pause to reflect and stop this un-Islamic practice which has crept into our society. There cannot be a better form of greeting than uttering 'as-salamu 'alaikum' (peace be upon you) and greeting back with 'wa alaikum as-salam' (peace be upon you too).

The Shariah wants people to live in their houses in peace and privacy. It therefore commands a Muslim, when visiting friends, relatives or strangers not to enter their houses without seeking their permission. The Qur'an particularly forbids him to enter their houses without alerting the women of the house so that he does not surprise them in a condition in which he would not normally see them. However children do not have to seek such permission until they reach the age of puberty and sexual awareness stirs them:

When your children attain puberty, they should ask for leave before entering the house, just as their children asked it before them ..(24:58)

The holy Qur'an also gives categories of people who should not enter anybody else's house without permission:

O believers! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have taken permission; and when you enter a house, greet the people therein with salutation. (33:33)

At the beginning of Islam the Arabs could not grasp the real significance of these commands. Therefore they used to peep into houses from outside. Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) was in his room,

a person peeped through the lattice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "If I had known that you are peeping, I would have poked something into your eye. The command to ask permission has been given to safeguard people against the evil look." (Bukhari) Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) publicly announced: "If a person peeps into somebody else's house without permission the people of the house will be justified if they injure his eye." (Muslim)

No matter how urgent the need is, no one is allowed to enter anyone's else's house without permission. The Qur'an says:

...and when you ask women for an article, ask for it from behind a curtain; this is a purer way for your heart and theirs. (33:53)

These restrictions also apply to household servants. Once Bilal or Anas asked Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to hand him her child. She handed it to him by stretching her hand from behind a curtain. It is noteworthy that both these men were the personal attendants of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he used to affectionately address them as "Ya Bunayya" (O my son). The real purpose behind those restrictions is to safeguard men and women against evil inclinations. By keeping a safe distance between them, the Shariah ensures that they do not grow too familiar and free with one another which may make them drift towards sexual intimacy.

Beautification And Adornment

The Qur'an lays down the code of conduct in following words:

And play your role by being in your houses and do not keep exhibiting your beauty and decorations like what used to happen in the Jahiliyyah period (before Islam). (33:33)

Abu Bakr al-Jassas says in explaining this verse: "This verse points out the fact that women are ordered to play their role in the house and are forbidden from loitering outside their houses".

It was revealed when the Muslim Ummah was being formed in Madina as an example for the coming generation of Muslims. It sought to put an end to the Jahiliyyah practices of the pagan Arabs. The Calif 'Umar remarked: "By Allah, we did not give any position to women in the Jahiliyyah period until such time that Allah sent His command in respect of them and apportioned to them that was to be theirs". (Muslim)

Under this apportionment women were given the role of making their homes the centres of their attention rather than going about exhibiting their physical charms and worldly possessions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the following type of women constitute one of the categories of the dwellers of Hell:

"Those women who seem naked even when dressed and those who talk flirtingly and those who plait their heads like the humps of camels, thus inviting people's attention, will not enter Paradise nor will they smell its fragrance even though its fragrance can be smelt from a very long distance". (Muslim)

Islam, however, does not prohibit beautification (zinat) on the part of women as long as it is not done in a way that injuriously interferes with the limbs or the body. In ancient times there were many kinds of defacement practised on the bodies of men and animals, partly on account of superstition or pagan customs and partly on account of the craze for fashion and display. Examples of this were tattooing, sharpening or spacing the teeth, shaving or plucking the hair, wearing hair pieces, etc. Many of these practices still survive and are, in fact, getting more and more refined.

Since all these practices change or seriously interfere with the natural creation of Allah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) cursed those who indulged in them for the purpose of mere beautification. One report says, "The messenger of Allah cursed women who tat-

toed, and those who got themselves tattooed, those who engaged in sharpening the teeth (as a mark of beauty) and those who had their teeth sharpened". (Bukhari and Muslim)

The messenger of Allah cursed women who had spaces made between their teeth in order to increase their beauty, thus changing the creation of Allah. A third report says: "The messenger of Allah cursed the women who plucked hair and those who were employed to pluck the eyebrows." (Abu Dawud)

This method of beautification would include the modern practice of shaving the eyebrows and then painting on new ones, or shaving certain hair and leaving the eyebrows to look like two inverted crescents.

However, if a woman has some obtrusive hairs on her face which are a problem and embarrassment for her, she may remove them. When 'A'isha was approached by the young wife of Abu Is'haq who wished to remove her facial hairs in order of look more beautiful for her husband, she advised her to do so. (Reported by At Tabarani) On this basis some Hanafi jurists are of the opinion that there is no harm in removing the hairs from a woman's face and applying cosmetics if it is done with the permission of the husband, in order to please him and with a good intention. But Imam al Nawawi opposes even removing the hairs on a woman's face because he considers the practice similar to the plucking hair.

A fourth report says: "A'isha reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) cursed women who wore hair pieces and the women who aided in this practise". (Bukhari)

This method of beautification would include the modern practice of wearing wigs. It consists of using a plait of one women's hair or artificial hair and joining it to another woman's hair with the object of making the woman's hair appear very long and beautiful. Mu'awiyah, while holding a plait of such hair in his hands during his address to the Muslims, castigated the 'ulama: "Where are you learned men gone? (meaning

why did they not stop women from using such hair) I heard the Messenger of Allah stop them from using this". He also said, "Undoubtedly the Israelites destroyed themselves when their women adopted such things". (Bukhari)

The Shariah also requires women to abstain from displaying their decorations except to a restricted circle of people. The Qur'an says:

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty save to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brothers son, or their sisters son, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hand possess, or male servants free of physical desire, or small children who have no sense of sex; and that they should not stamp their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O believers! Turn all together towards Allah, that you may attain bliss (24:31)

Thus the following people fall in the exceptional category to whom decorations can be displayed by a woman:

- Her husband
- Her father, including maternal and paternal grandfathers
- Her husband's father. He is also like her own father.
- Her son, including grandsons from her son's side or her daughter's side.
- Her husband's son by another woman, provided that he is staying with her, and she is looking after him as her son.
- Her brother, whether full, consanguine, or uterine (that is to say, real or step)
- Her brother's son.
- Her sister's son.
- Muslim women and other women of good character.

- Her female slaves or servants. However, some 'ulama even include male slaves or servants in the excepted category.
- Men who have no sexual desire (e.g. eunuchs)
- Children who have not yet developed sexual feelings.
- Her Uncle, whether paternal or maternal.

It is noteworthy that the above verse of the Noble Qur'an does not mention uncle, but uncle is included in the exceptional category on the basis of a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him), said, "The uncle (maternal or Paternal) is of the same degree as one's father." (Muslim)

Let us here give a little more consideration to the women to whom another woman is permitted to display her finery. These are the women with whom she has blood or family relations. It should be borne in mind that the foregoing Qur'anic verse implies only women of good character. Other women who may not be well known to her or who are notorious for their evil ways or who may be of doubtful character are excluded from this permission, because contact with them might easily lead to disastrous results. That is why the Caliph 'Umar wrote to Abu "Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah, the Governor of Syria, to prohibit the Muslim women from going to the baths with the women of Ahl al-Kitab (the people of the Book). (At-Tabari, Ibn Jazir) According to Ibn 'Abbas too: "... a Muslim woman is not allowed to display herself before the women of the unbelievers and non-Muslim poll-tax payers (Ahl al-Dhimmah) any more than she can display herself before other men". (At-Tabari)

This distinction between women on grounds of character and religion is intended to safeguard Muslim women against the influence of women whose moral and cultural background is either not known or is objectionable from the Islamic point of view. However, the Shariah allows Muslim women to mix freely with non-Muslim women who are of good character. It is important to note that permission to display zinat does not include permission to display those parts of the body

which fall within the female *satr*. Thus zinat covers decorations, ornaments, clothing, hair-dos, etc., that women are by nature fond of showing in their houses. But tight jeans, short blouses, sleeveless dresses are not counted as zinat for they also reveal that *satr*.

The Shariah further requires a woman not to stamp on the ground while walking, lest her hidden decorations should be revealed by their jingle, and thus attract the attention of passers-by. However, be claimed that a display of fineries will not turn every woman into a prostitute, not that every man who sees her will become an adulterer. But, at the same time, nobody can deny that if women go about in full make-up and mix freely with men, it is likely to result in countless open secret, moral and material disadvantages for society.

As against this view, the Egyptian scholars, notably 'Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, are of the view that these restrictions were only imposed on the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and other Muslim women were not bound by them. 'Aqqad says, "We should discuss this point in the light of the fact that the command to stay at home was merely addressed to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with particular reference to them without referring it to Muslim women in general. It is for this reason that the verse begins with the statement of Allah:

O women of the Prophet, you are not like other women.
(33:32)

It is respectfully submitted that this view of Al-Aqqad needs reconsideration. There are a number of verses in the Qur'an which, though apparently laying down do's and don'ts for our Prophet (peace be upon him) and for the other Prophets preceding him, contain clear messages for Muslims in general, nay for all mankind. And Al-Aqqad contradicts himself when he quotes the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

O you believers! do not enter the Prophet's house until leave is given you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation; but when you are invited, enter; and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet. He is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when you ask his womenfolk for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen; that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that you should annoy Allah's Apostle, or that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is an enormity in Allah's sight. (33:53)

This verse apparently lays down a code of manners for the believers when entering the house of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and taking food there. After quoting this verse, Al-Aqqad says: "And this is part of the etiquette of visiting people with which all visitors should be well disciplined. In other words, he agrees that this ayat, which is specific to the house of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and taking food there, in reality contains rules applicable to all believers who want to enter somebody else's house. If from this special case a rule of general application can be deduced by Al-Aqqad, there seems no reason why he should refuse to deduce a rule of general application for Muslim women from the verse addressed to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Moreover, this view seems to get support from a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in which he said: "..... a women who freely mixes with other people and shows off her decoration is without light and virtue" (At-Tirmidhi)

Hence we may conclude that no Muslim woman should display her zinat (decoration) before others intentionally, but she is not held responsible for something which cannot be helped e.g. her stature, physical build, gait, etc. nor for uncovering her hand or face when there is a genuine need to do so and without intention of attracting men. In such cases it is the re-

sponsibility of Muslim men not to cast evil glances at women with the intention of drawing pleasure from them. The Qur'an ordains:

Say to believing men to lower their eyes. (24:30)

Guests

Very often a man may receive male visitors and guests in his house. In such a situation the question may arise whether the wife of the host can come forward to serve food and drink to them. If a woman's husband is not present when his guests arrive, she should not serve them. However, if her husband is present and the guests are known friends, relatives and well wishers, a woman may come forward to serve them with food and drink provided that she is properly dressed and her manners, movements and method of talking are such that they are not likely to encourage evil in them or arouse their passion and thereby become a source of fitnah (mischief).

We have a very good example in the following: "When Abdur Rashid al-Saadi got married, he invited the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions. His wife, Umm Asyad, prepared the food alone and served it herself. She soaked some dates in a stone bowl overnight. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) finished eating, she offered him water, after stirring well, as a present." (At-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

If a woman is not properly dressed, it is better that she does not come forward to serve guests. In this case she could pass out the food and drinks to her husband and he should entertain the guests and visitors on his own.

Public Baths and Swimming Pools

A Muslim woman should not use public baths (hammam) or swimming pools because these places

are likely to be a cause of her exposing herself to evil influences. The following tradition treats this point:

"Some women from Homs or from Sham (now the area of Damascus) came to 'A'isha. She asked, 'Do you enter the public baths? I heard the Messenger of Allah saying that a woman who undresses anywhere else other than her own house tears off the *satr* which lies between her and her lord". (At-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

If the public baths and swimming pools are mixed, with both men and women using them, it is all the more objectionable. At one stage the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade both men and women to enter public bath-houses but latter allowed men to use them on the condition that they were never naked. "The Prophet (peace be upon him), forbade all men to enter public baths but latter allowed them to enter them wearing waist-wrappers."

If a wealthy man builds a private pool in his own property there is no harm in him and his wife using it together. However, if he has more than one wife, he should not bathe with more than one at a time, and, if he has grown-up sons, they should not bathe together with their mothers or step-mothers.

Dance-Halls and Gymnasiums

Places in which men and women dance together are totally at odds with the ethos of Muslim society and the Shariah does not tolerate the participation of Muslim men and women in this activity because it may so easily prove the first step towards greater evil such as adultery and fornication. Dancing is most certainly not compatible with the simple, purposeful lives that all Muslims should lead. Mixed gymnasiums where women remove their clothes and wear skin-tight costumes for doing physical exercise are also against the dictates of the Shariah.

The Mosque

The Prophet (peace be upon him) granted permission to Muslim women to attend the mosque and pray standing behind the rows of men. He even advised the Companions: *"Do not prevent female servants of Allah from going to the mosque". And husbands were specifically told by him: "When your womenfolk ask you for permission to attend the mosque, do not prevent them"*.

Of course this permission to attend the mosques was on the condition that women strictly observed the various restrictions imposed upon them by the Shariah regarding dress, etc., and it is known that the Prophet (peace be upon him) considered it preferable for women to pray in their own houses rather than attend the mosques. This is borne out by the following incident: Once the wife of Abu Hamid Sa'adi pleaded with the Prophet (peace be upon him) to be allowed to attend his mosque (the Mosque in Madina) as she was very fond of offering prayers behind him. He told her, "What you say is right, but it is better for you to offer prayer in a closed room than in a courtyard. Your prayer in a courtyard is better than on a veranda, and your offering prayer in the mosque of your own locality is better than your coming to our mosque for it." Therefore she appointed a room for offering prayers and continued offering prayers there till her death, never once going to the mosque.

There is a clear tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraging women to offer their prayers inside their houses: *"The best mosques for women are the inner parts of their homes"*.

Since the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not forbidden the women to attend the mosques, they continued to come to the mosques. But after his death it became increasingly clear that it was not in keeping with the dignity and honour of Muslim Women to come to the mosques for prayers, especially at night, because

men, being what they were, would tease them. Therefore the Caliph 'Umar told women not to come to the mosques, but to offer their prayers inside their own houses. The women of Madina resented this prohibition and complained to 'A'isha. But they received a fitting reply from her: "If the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew what Umar knows, he would not have granted you permission to go out (to the mosque).

'A'isha also prevented women from going to the mosques. When she was told that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had permitted them to attend the mosques, she replied: "Had the customs and manners which women have adopted since the Prophet's death been there in his lifetime, he too would have not permitted them."

Now, that 'A'isha said by way of admonition was in the context of what happened immediately after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). But what is happening today 1350 years after his death is much more serious in the context of modern fashions and manners. It would probably have shocked 'A'isha beyond measure and she would have reinforced her admonition. Be that as it may, the fact remains that our Prophet (peace be upon him) did grant permission to women to attend the mosques. In the modern world a new situation has arisen. There are many Muslims living in the Western countries, and Western culture and fashions have affected women, even in the East. In addition, the economic tyranny of today has forced many women to work in factories and offices to earn their living. These developments have largely contributed to making many Muslims neglectful of their prayers. We Muslims have to find ways and means of encouraging Muslim women to be particular about their prayers. With due respect to what the Caliph, 'Umar, and the Mother of the Believers, 'A'isha, said, it appears to this humble writer that such a way can be found by reverting to the original Prophetic tradition, that is to say, permitting Muslim women to attend the mosques to offer their prayers, subject to all the restrictions laid

down by the Prophet (peace be upon him) about their dress etc

People generally learn by example. Therefore the chances are that, if women started coming to the mosque for prayer, a social pressure would start building up that would make Muslim women feel the urge to come to the mosque to offer their prayers and give up their neglectful attitude. However it goes without saying that proper arrangements would have to be made for Muslim women to attend the mosques. They must not be allowed to mingle with the men, and their rows must be kept separate from those of the men, preferably behind them, because this is what was approved by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

It is reported by Abu Hurairah that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The best row for men is the first, and the worst for them is the last. The best row for the woman is the last, and the worst is the first". (Muslim)

It is well known that, in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), women were permitted to attend the mosques subject to the condition that they satisfied the various restrictions imposed on them by the Shariah, such as putting on a jalbab (a large sheet used for covering the entire body), wearing simple and dignified clothes, not using any perfume, avoiding ostentatious display of ornaments, etc. Therefore, if the suggestion of this writer is accepted, efforts will have to be made to persuade Muslim women who want to attend the mosques to start complying with the traditional restrictions on dress, etc. But what has been suggested above should in no way be taken to mean that all women should be required to attend the mosque and indeed those who feel that their houses are as good as the mosque should be encouraged to offer their prayers there. □

BOY AWARDED FOR COPYING QUR'AN IN CALLIGRAPHIC STYLE

Srinagar, July 4. A teenaged boy, Irfan-ul-Haque who has copied Quranic verses in a beautiful style when he was five years old, was felicitated by scholars at a special function here yesterday.

"This is a miracle and Allah has promised that he would protect his book himself and so these are the signs," said Maulana Syed Qasim Shah Bukhari, renowned scholar and widely respected religious personality of Kashmir.

Son of a teacher, Irfan completed his work within eleven months to join the select band of Qur'an calligraphers - the work usually takes three years for an expert



SET YOUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER

Syed Wazeh Rasheed Nadvi

It is generally believed and Western writers give the impression also that the west is free from religious influence, the progress and glamour of the West is the result of freedom from religion, that the Western people do not deal with their problems and their relations with other nations on the basis of religion. Experience shows that the Westerners whether they are political leaders, social activists, media people or organisations working in the fields of human rights, education etc., are invariably influenced by religious considerations and their thoughts and deeds are rooted in religious considerations. Any one who has met an European politician, thinker, man of letters, art or science can vouchsafe for their bias. To be influenced by or attached to religion is not a matter of surprise either. Not to be influenced by religion would be rather surprising, Western claim of freedom from religion is a myth which so-called intellectuals believed for quite a long.

It is an established fact, supported by experience that freedom from religion is a false notion and to wean people away from religion would always remain a futile effort.

A recent survey conducted to find out the number of followers of religion and of atheists showed that there were only a handful of persons who did not believe in any religion at all. The wide-spread efforts of propagating the Christian religion throughout the world are clear proof of Europe's devotion to religion. Innumerable organisations are engaged in spreading the religious message and organising religious groups all over the

world. They draw their financial support from the so called advanced and self styled secular countries. They spend huge amount of money on building Churches, establishing missionary institutions and maintaining the clergy for propagating Christianity. They have no hesitations in expressing their solidarity with their Christian brethren. Europe uses all the resources in the propagation of Christianity and also takes advantage of the economic and social system which are under its influence. These facts are common knowledge and no one can hide them.

When communism gained ascendancy then ideas of divorcing religion from life became a fashion of the day, specially because the leaders of the communist world declared that religion was the first enemy of communism and they were the enemies of religion. But all this tirade against religion was in fact aimed at Islam and the Muslims. Communism targeted only Muslims in their brute persecution. The very same protagonist of communism and opponents of religion (read Islam) extended protection to Christianity. They were supporters and sympathisers of the ethnic European Christians, while they were enemies of Islam and Muslims. They took brutal action to uproot Muslims. They exiled Muslims, curtailed religious liberty, occupied mosques and educational institutions, banned all religious (Islamic) literature. They made life difficult for Muslims. It is clearly established that the communists and their supporters are enemies only of Islam and not of other religions. The surprising thing is that these conditions prevailed not only during the communist regime, even after the collapse of communism oppression continues in the Muslim States which are under the Russian control.

In many countries this selective treatment take the form of persecution against Islam while the same time full protection, support and encouragement is extended to other religions in the name of liberalism and liberty or faith. Europeans have a sentimental affinity with Christianity and a soft corner for Churches and Christian clergy. It grants them full liberty and provides

them all facilities. The Christian organisations and institutions freely use religious symbols like the Cross and pictures of Mary and other saints, the European governments patronise these institutions and provide them abundant funds. Missionary schools and colleges and institutions of publication and publicity are running all through these countries. Even in Arab countries, where we find Churches existing without any prejudice against them, in spite of the clear injunction of *Shariah* expelling the two communities from Arabia.

Anti-Islamic movements are encouraged in the name of liberalism. On the other hand Islamic movements are suppressed in Muslim countries too. So the Christian Missionary, Zionist and licentious activities are freely engaged in Anti-Islamic propaganda spreading hatred against Islam and Muslims.

It is a general practice in Islamic countries to ban Islamic movements and religious organisations while the criminal elements go scot-free and have free play for mischief and crime. Obscene and exciting magazines are freely imported in those countries while Islamic literature and Muslim Ulema's writings are not allowed, since in their myopic view these instigate terrorism; these writings and movement are viewed as opposed to Western culture.

It appears that in all these countries religion means only Islâm, for these governments give full liberty to to their religions, revival of their old and obsolete doctrines and concepts, languages and culture which have long since become extinct. Such moves are not decried as retrograde or backward, not are they termed as terrorist or racist, narrow-minded organisations and institutions of other religions are granted full liberty to propagate their views and beliefs and to establish educational institutions. All this in the name of freedom of faith and religion. But these very governments are not willing to grant similar liberty to Islamic organisations.

Islam is an eternal faith, since the beginning of human life. It is progressive in nature. It encompasses the wide expanse of human mind and expanding intel-

lectual activity and respects humanity. It has stood the test of times for being more rational and more practical in solving the problems of life, than other religions. And yet it is kept aside from life even in Islamic countries. Preaching and propagation of Islamic teachings is not permitted in these countries and religious assemblies, even meetings of exponents of the faith for consultations, are legally banned. These are viewed as terrorist activities, and are regarded as fundamentalism, Islam is a stranger in its own home, subjected to injustice and oppression. How can we complain against others? We do not expect that non-Muslims would permit propagation of Islam. The Problem is that even those who call themselves Muslims and proclaim their commitment to Islam, they too look at preaching of Islam with suspicion and when they are heads of governments or at the helm of affairs, try to suppress every effort of spreading Islam. They ban all Islamic movements and think that in this way they are serving the interest of their country. It is surprising that they consider the exponents of the teachings of reform and true guidance as making mischief. It is for such persons that Qur'an says:

"of a surety, they are the ones who make the mischief, but they realise it not" II 12

The fact is that by creating such hindrances in the path of Islam they are only helping to prolong the days of imperialism and its control on Islamic countries. They weaken Muslim thinkers, demoralise Muslim youths and squander national wealth. They are still under the spell of the fraud which Europe had spread during Imperial ascendancy. Although imperialism has collapsed these people have not been able to liberate themselves from mental slavery of the West.

Religious, faith, is a basic need of human beings. It is the fountain head of peace and tranquillity for humanity. Societies which have eschewed religion are deprived of spiritual peace and are passing through turmoil and unrest. That is why we find that religious movements gain popularity quickly while political and economic movements do not catch people's imagination

so fast. Today there are movements all over the world for spreading the Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist religions and the governments of the non-Muslim countries are extending to them patronage and full support in spite of their loud proclamation for being not sectarian and not religious. There is a revival of interest in religion in all the countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. In India too, revivalism is gaining popularity. The organisations who dream of turning the country into sectarian State of a particular faith are gaining ascendancy. The government is effecting changes in the system of education and syllabus in a planned manner to achieve that objective. Government machinery extends full support to these organisations and they are working without any restrictions or restraint within the country. They are extending their activities in other countries all over the world. Unlimited funds are being placed at their disposal from within the country and from external sources.

In contrast to this scenario the rulers of Islamic countries are in clash with the popular sentiments, and are taking steps to nullify and suppress all religious (Islamic) activity which is against the people's natural and legitimate wishes. The rulers oppress their own people but make friends with the real enemies of their respective countries.□

SAYINGS OF PROPHET (SAS)

1. God says "Man by abusing time offends me, for I am the time, and the regulation of the world is in my hand and it is I who change the night and the day.
2. I had been sent with the mission of elevating good manners to the level of perfection.
3. There is no obedience for any of His creatures in displeasure of God.
4. One who remembers GOD and one who does not are like the living and the dead, respectively.
5. Surely, some times, man is deprived of his sustenance because of sin.
6. GOD does not consider your faces or your wealth but looks to your hearts and actions.
7. Wherever you are and in what ever condition, you should fear GOD and do a virtuous act after every sinful one (committed, unfortunately) as the former will efface the latter and treat people kindly.
8. It is ruinous for any one who tells lies to make others laugh.
9. The man who has no trust has no faith and the man who is not true to his promise has no religion.
10. The strong man was really not one who over came his opponent in wrestling but one who controlled himself at the time of anger, that is, refrained from doing any thing disliked by GOD and His Prophet.

Compiled by Ibne Ghouri



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

John M. Hull

It is estimated that there are about 450,000 Muslim children in the schools of England and Wales. All school children are required by law to receive regular religious education, unless their parents withdraw them, and Muslim children are no exception. Moreover all children are required by law to attend and take part in a daily act of collective worship, unless their parents withdraw them. Thus religious education syllabuses, produced by the Local Education Authorities, are generally based upon a world religions approach, and usually include the study of Islam amongst other religions, particularly Christianity.

These arrangements worked quite well until the early 1990's, when problems began to arise. IN 1988, the Conservative government of Mrs. Thatcher had created important new educational legislation. The Education Reform Act (1988) not only initiated the National Curriculum but considerably strengthened the position of religious education and collective worship. For the first time, the content of the agreed syllabuses, although continuing to be constructed at the local level, was required to conform to a legal prescription namely that they should "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain" (ERA 1988 Section 8.3). Similarly, collective worship, previously undefined, was now to be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". (Section 7).

At first, the Muslim community tended to approve of the new legislation, but as the implications became clearer, there were signs of discontent. This article will outline two of the many incidents which have taken

place in recent months and years, and will comment upon the significance of these developments, but for the participation of Muslims in religious education and for the character and rationale of the religious education enterprise as a whole in England.

I chose these two incidents, not because they are necessarily typical, but because they give rise to interesting questions. I could have described other cases where Muslims have worked very happily with the agreed syllabus arrangements. This article is not a comprehensive review of Muslims in British religious education.

The Kirkless Incident: Withdrawal

The first of these incidents took place in an administrative area of Yorkshire in Northern England known as Kirkless. This western part of Yorkshire includes such towns as Huddersfield, Dewsbury, and Batley. It is an area with significant Muslim population, people from the Indian subcontinent having been attracted here in earlier decades because of the textile industry for which Yorkshire was famous.

Late in 1995 hundreds of Muslim children were withdrawn from both the primary and secondary schools in Kirkless. The main issue was the content of the new agreed syllabus, which had just been published. It contained a good deal of teaching about Islam, having been prepared in consultation with representative of the Muslim community. This withdrawal was not uniform over the area, Batley being the most seriously affected. To some extent, the level of withdrawal seemed to depend upon the attitude of the leaders of the local mosques. The impact of withdrawals was significant. In one of the most affected secondary schools, about one third of all the children in years 7, 8 and 9 (aged 11-13) were withdrawn. In practice, this means that for purposes of their religious education class, the children in these year groups are divided into three classes, two of which receive the normal agreed syllabus education

while the third consists of Muslim children who have been withdrawn. These children do not receive religious education at all, but are given work in various other subjects. In the primary schools which feed this particular secondary school, about half of the children are Muslims and there is a similar, perhaps even, more pronounced pattern of withdrawal.

However in years 10 and 11 (children aged approximately 14-15) students, may not opt for a short GCSE course of public examination in religious studies, with a syllabus comprising the study of Islam and Christianity. Far from being depleted through withdrawal, these courses are oversubscribed by Muslim students. The teachers in the religious education department of the school are concerned that a tradition is being created wherein it is taken for granted that Muslim pupils entering upon their secondary education at this school do not take part in religious education until the GCSE years, when the study yields them a significant qualification, and in any case they are older and ready for this kind of study. Late in 1997, Kirkless published its Agreed Syllabus Handbook for Religious Education. Very little additional information or assistance in the teaching of the Islamic sections of the Agreed Syllabus was provided.

The Birmingham Incident: Adaptation

The second situation arose in one of the primary schools in the inner ring area of Birmingham. In May of 1993 a dispute broke out on the governing body of the school. Some of the more militant Muslim parents demanded that their children should receive separate collective worship. Their objection was not to the actual content of the existing acts of collective worship but the fact that in law their children were regarded as participating in worship which was "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" (ERA Section 7). The 1988 legislation provides for local schools to make application to the Standing Advisory Council on religious Edu-

cation (SACRE) of their Local Education Authority in cases where such collective worship is deemed to be unsuitable for some or all of the children. At first, the governing body and the head teacher were reluctant to apply for such a determination, on the grounds that the school would be divided along religious lines. However, later in 1993 an application was made to the LEA and was accepted. This meant that there were two kinds of collective worship taking place in the school every day. One was for most of the Muslim children, while the other one continued to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. At this time, about 70% of the children in attendance at the school were Muslims, but not all the Muslim children attended the Muslim collective worship. Some remained in the general act of collective worship, which in spite of its legal status as being broadly Christian, was in fact carried out in a multi-cultural principle, seeking to draw upon all the spiritual traditions represented in the school.

This being settled, attention then turned to the arrangements for religious education in the classroom. It was decided that the parents would not withdraw their children from the agreed syllabus, as had happened in Kirkless, but that Muslim children would be gathered together from their various classes and taught the agreed syllabus by a teacher especially appointed for that task, who is himself a Muslim. This appointment took place in September 1994. The situation then was that two forms of the local agreed syllabus were being taught. One was the Islamic form taught by the Muslim teacher to most of the Muslim children, and the other was the ordinary form of the same syllabus, taught by the normal class teacher to the remaining children, who came from various religious traditions, and included a few Muslim children whose parents did not wish them to take part in the Muslim classes.

These arrangements proved to be very popular with the Muslim community and the percentage of Muslim children at the school has steadily increased from 70% in 1994 to 96% in early 1998. The result of this

increase is that almost all the children in the school take part in the special Muslim teaching of the agreed syllabus, while in each classroom there are perhaps two or three children who are taught by the regular class teacher from the same agreed syllabus but not from a specifically Muslim point of view. Rather than saying that this arrangement has divided the school along religious lines, it would be more correct to say that the special needs of the small number of children who are not Muslims are being catered for. We will now discuss the significance of these incidents.

Muslim Withdrawal from Religious Education Classes

What the Muslim parents did in Kirkless was perfectly legal. The law offers to parents the right to withdraw their children from religious education, and even allows alternative religious education in accordance with the wishes of the parents to be available on the school. The right to withdraw, however, has not been widely exercised in recent years. Parents who withdraw their children are usually members of the Christian movements such as the Jehovah's Witness and the Exclusive Brethren, groups for whom such withdrawal is part of a general policy of social separation. Children from religions other than Christianity have not often been withdrawn from religious education classes, and the Kirkless incident was significant not only in that Muslims were involved but in that a substantial group of parents and not just one or two decided to withdraw their children.

The action of the parents of the Muslim children was not only legal; it was understandable. Although the Christian right wing had claimed in 1988 that Muslims were happy to accept the proposed legislation, in spite of the special position which this gave to Christianity and to Christian worship, it soon became clear to the Muslim communities that the law had created a situation which was going to marginalise the teaching of Islam in

schools, and which would inevitably compromise the position of Muslim children in collective worship. In the classroom, Muslim children would apparently have to accept a religious education which emphasised a faith not their own, and even more seriously would be faced with the choice of participating in a worship of which they could not approve, or becoming separated from the main stream of the school, either through withdrawal or through the appeals procedure described above. Protests and criticisms from Muslim educators become quite frequent.

The pity of it is that the 1988 legislation was really quite flexible, much more so than the spin given to it by the press indicated. Section 8.3 requires new agreed syllabuses to "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in the Great Britain". The advice offered to the then Department for Education by its own legal branch in 1990 emphasised the vagueness of this form of words and that it would be compatible with a wide range of syllabuses. Soon after the passing of the Bill, it was pointed out that in schools where the majority of pupils were Muslims it would be appropriate to have a religious education curriculum which was weighted in favour of the teaching of Islam. The fact that the principal religious traditions in Great Britain remain Christian would be reflected by the fact that even in a mainly Muslim school Christianity would occupy a significant but subsidiary place. The legislation does not claim that the Christian traditions are always and everywhere the principal one in Great Britain, but only that this is so 'in the main'. The legislation implies that there will be parts of the country where Christian faith is not the main religion, and the legislation is tolerant towards such situations. This also must be reflected in an appropriate agreed syllabus. Clearly, every new agreed syllabus must include Islam under the requirement of the latter part of the famous clause, since Islam is undoubtedly one of the principal religions

represented in Great Britain and hence its teachings and practices must be taught.

It is clear that the legislation does not require that Muslims should always receive a religious education which is predominantly Christian, but permits variations from one religion and / or to another. Moreover, it would be consistent with the English tradition that a local agreed syllabus should be adapted for the needs of each particular school, and there is no reason why in a school where a majority of pupils were Muslim, the local agreed syllabus which contains materials about Islam anyway should not be emphasised.

In assessing the significance of the Kirkless incident we must distinguish not only between what is legal and what is understandable, we must also ask what is justifiable and what is desirable. We have seen that the action of the Muslim parents was legal. We have also seen that it was rather understandable, in view of the misunderstanding of the legislation which the then Government and the media encouraged. However, whether the withdrawal was a justifiable action is less clear. As has been already pointed out, the legislation does permit agreed syllabus teaching to be substantially Islamic, in areas where this would be appropriate, and these aspects of the syllabus could be further emphasised in particular schools where necessary. In order to determine whether a mass withdrawal of their children by parents was justifiable or not, one would need to examine the Kirkless agreed syllabus, and to find out whether the flexibility of the law had been fully explained to the local Muslim community. We would also need to find out whether the Local Education Authority had emphasised the freedom available to each school in considering the needs of its particular population.

However, objections to the agreed syllabus were only part of the reasons which led some Muslim parents to withdraw their children. Some did not want their children to receive information and understanding about other religions. Although the legislation permits an agreed syllabus or the adaptation of it by particular

schools so as to emphasise Islam, the legislation would not permit any agreed syllabus or any school to teach nothing but Islam. In the same way, it would not be possible to teach nothing but Christianity. No pupil educated under the requirements of the 1988 Act can receive only his or her own religion. That is one of the features which make it an education Act rather than a religious nurture Act. This brings us to the point where we must discuss the purposes of religious education in Britain.

The Purposes of Religious Education

At this point, we come to a principle of fundamental importance for religious education. The purpose of religious education as it is understood in Britain is to educate pupils concerning religions, so as to enable them to understand both religion and various religions, and thus to be encouraged in their general educational development, particularly their spiritual, moral and cultural development. This has implications for the method of teaching and for the content of the syllabuses. As far as the method goes, religious education must be taught so as to stimulate a thoughtful response to religion. Religious education can never be taught in a merely instructional manner. Moreover, we must distinguish the educational task of the county school from the faith nurturing task of the mosque and church. These two functions are compatible, but not identical. This does not imply that the faith-nurturing process in mosque and church should not also promote thoughtful criticism. This may take place; perhaps it ought to take place. In the county school, however, the critical approach is essential.

Moreover, the implications of being an educated person in the area of religion and religions is that one has some perspective beyond the confines of one's own tradition. Is such a wider perspective damaging to the faith of children? Some claim that it is damaging, but there is little or no evidence in support of this. No doubt

there is a good historical precedent for the claim that studying more than one religion is confusing to children. Christians can hardly blame Muslims for believing that young children should be securely grounded in their own faith before learning about other religions, since Christians themselves have been making this claim for many years.

As to pupils confused by the study of several religions, the research team that worked in the University of Birmingham between 1985 and 1990 on the "Gift to the Child" material found that when children encountered material from a religion other than their own, it tended to deepen their own sense of religious identity than diluting or confusing it. Similarly, the work done by Professor Robert Jackson and his colleagues in the University of Warwick found that if anything confuses children, it is not the many worlds in which they live but the confusing question of teachers, insisting that they must belong to one of the main religious traditions when in fact they may belong to a religious group which does not acknowledge differences between Sikhs and Hindu. After all, even infant children are well aware of the fact that not everyone goes to the mosques or churches, and that not all adults believe or behave in the same way. It seems likely that adults fear of confusion is as much a reflection of their own conception of religious identity as it is a forecast of what will happen to the identity of their religious children. There are both inclusive and exclusive forms of religious identity. The exclusive type of religious identity will always be fearful of contact with other religions because of its incipient tribalism. Education on the other hand must seek to strengthen inclusive religious identity.

We have been discussing whether it is understandable that some Muslim parents have withdrawn their children from religious education classes. We must now consider whether such withdrawal is desirable.

There can be no question that such withdrawal is undesirable. The parents in Kirkless came to their de-

cision after long reflection and with reluctance. British religious education is founded upon the belief that it is in the best interests of all children that they should receive religious education which will be appropriate for moral, cultural and spiritual development of all children, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack of it, and which may be taught by well-trained and competent teachers with sensitivity and an awareness of religions, regardless of their own faith or lack of it. That is the professional basis for the inclusion of religious education in the required curriculum, and without this basis it would be quite impossible to maintain it. This general outlook has received support from leading figures in all of the main religions in Britain. Moreover, it is the almost unanimous view of the teaching profession, and most of parents, including those of Humanist outlook. However, in view of the Muslim reaction in Kirkless and elsewhere, some of the major features of this approach to religious education do require fresh consideration.

Religious Education and the Local Religious Communities.

Although the religious communities have a legitimate interest in what is being taught in the schools, this interest must be qualified. The views of the local religious communities are but one factor amongst the several which must be considered when creating a religious education curriculum.

Next, the local religious communities are not necessarily typical of the world-wide religion. Islam in the British religious education school syllabus is much influenced by Muslims from the Indian subcontinent, but Islam is a world-wide movement and is not confined to the Indian sub-continent. This leads us to the point that the religions do not belong to the local religious communities in Britain; the reverse is the case - the communities belong to the religion. The religion is wider and larger than the local community. Every great modern religion has within it a universal self-understanding.

It would be a loss if this universal vision were to become not much more than an expression of the self-interest and the self image of the communities in Britain. In other words, Islam is not merely for Muslim children. Islam is for everyone. All children have something to learn from the spirituality of Islam.

When the religious communities are encouraged to believe that they are the sponsors of religious education in schools, the purpose of religious education is made more narrow. Its major concern then becomes the accuracy of the representation to the pupil of the self-understanding of the religious community. Important though it is, accuracy is not enough. Religious education must contribute to the personal, moral and spiritual development of the pupil, and cannot be satisfied merely with accurate understanding. The accurate information must be conveyed in a way which is relevant to the developing needs of the child. This is the heart of the educational task. This is why it is called religious education and not merely religious studies.

The local religious community tends to think of itself as the unique expression of religion. Indeed, this tends to be more true locally than it is in the international circles representing the religious leadership of the faith. At the higher level, collaboration between religions is becoming more significant. This means that when religious education gets too preoccupied with the problems of an accurate representation of the local religious community, the study of religion itself tends to be diminished. Religion then becomes a series of religions, and the dialogical model of religious education gives way to the communication model. It then becomes more difficult for religious education to be the leader of the spiritual and moral development of the entire school. □

Courtesy: Muslim Education

When Islam Struck Root In Australian Outback

A quirk of history has made the Australian Outback town of Alice Springs a possible magnet for immigrants from around the world. To most, 'the Alice' is the quintessential all Australian town, with its old telegraph station, Flying Doctor air base and Outback radio college, the School of the Air.

But to the Australian Muslims, Alice Springs has another claim to fame. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was home to the "Afghans" though, solitary camel drivers brought from the wildest corners of the British Empire to provide desert transport in the days before railways. If Abdul Khan, the head of the tiny Islamic community and acting imam of its mosque, is correct, then Alice Spring's Islamic heritage will soon lure other Muslim immigrants. A century after the first pioneers brought cattle to the region, Khan plans for a new wave of farmers, many of them Turkish, who will plant market gardens in the sand and make the desert bloom.

Camel drivers came to Australia in the 1860's. For almost 60 years, as white men struck out into the Red Centre, they relied on about 3,000 of the drivers from Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sind, the Punjab and Kashmir - all lumped together as "Afghans". They were not universally welcomed. Newspapers gave warnings of the Muslim propensity for "fanaticism". *The Coolgardie Miner* of 1897 said: "The presence of the saddle-coloured aliens in our won midst is a matter of deep regret". But their skills were prized, as were their teetotal habits - although their refusal to carry pork or hard spirits caused some problems. They have given their names to roads like Khalick Street, Sadadeen Road and Mahomed Street. The last was named after one of the greatest local camel drivers, Peer Mahomed, whose son, Gool, was still running camels when the railways reached Alice Springs in August 1929. The town's famous rail link with Adelaide, the Ghan, is an abbreviation of Afghan. Indeed, having put out of business by trains, many camel drivers worked on the railways, after releasing their camels into the desert.

Some 50,000 feral descendants of those animals now roam the Outback, with prize specimens regularly exported to Saudi Arabia. Abul Khan came to Alice Springs in 1988, 20 years after the death of the town's last old style camel driver. He found 12 to 13 Islamic families, most of them Afghan and many married to local Aborigines.

"There was very little understanding of basic Islamic principles," he said. "There were probably five or six families seriously interested in Islam."

The existence of the mosque, together with the town's history, is a powerful lure to Muslim immigrants, he said. The Islamic community has already grown to 36 families. □