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THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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Islamic Culture

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Prophets of Allah do not only call people to the religion of Islam by presenting tenets of the Islamic Faith and its codes of law; they also pioneer a new culture, a new civilization, and a new way of life. Such a culture can aptly be called "Ibrahimi Culture". This culture has certain fundamental principles and characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures based on ignorance. This distinction may be seen in its spirit and principles as well as in its outward manifestations and details.

The first distinctive characteristic of the Islamic culture is the authentic religious beliefs, social ethics, and moral values on which it is based. This factor is commonly shared by Muslims all over the world, irrespective of their nationality, language, and dressing style. Due to this common feature of a family, easily identifiable as representatives of the same culture. Thus, the Muslims of the world have a specific culture of their own which could be best called the "Ibrahimi Culture". ●

CONTENTS

1- Alliance Between Religion and Knowledge	S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi	7
2- Global Language		13
3- Monotheism in Hindu Scriptures	M. Khurshid Akhtar	17
4- An Islamic Approach to Environmental Protection	Fazlun Khalid	29
5- Science and Technology In Islamic Perspective	Muhammad Shahabuddin Nadwi	32
6- Demonisation Through Demography	Ram Puniyani	35
7- Human Rights In Islam	Badarul Islam	37
8- Around the World		39

Wisdom of Qur' an

There! Neither they had the power to scale it, nor able to drill through. He said, 'This is by the mercy of my Lord. But when my Lord's promise comes to pass. He will make it level. Surely, my Lord's promise is ever true. (Surah-al-Kahf, 97)

Commentary:

"When my Lord's promise comes to pass" - when will that be? The prevailing opinion is that, "when the Lord's command to release Ya'juj and Ma'juj is pronounced.

Ibn Mas'ud reported the Prophet: "I met Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa the night I was raised up. They were discussing the Hour. Ibrahim was asked about it. He said, 'I know nothing about it.' Then Musa was asked. He too said he knew nothing about it. Then 'Isa was asked. He said, 'No one knows when the Hour will be struck, But my Lord has told me about thing that will happen without telling me when. He told me that Dajjal will appear. He will send me down to him, When he sees me, he will start dissolving like lead. Until, even rocks and trees will call out, "O Muslim, here is an unbeliever. Come and kill him." Thus they will be destroyed and the people will return to their native lands. But then Ya'juj and Ma'juj will confront them, descending from every elevation. They will not pass by anything but eat it off and will not pass by any water but drink it off. So the people will come to me complaining of them. I will supplicate to Allah. He will destroy them until the earth will stink because of them. Then rains will come down and floods will carry their bodies to the seas. Then the mountains will be brought down, until the earth will be like a piece of leather spread out. This is my Lord's promise to me. At that moment the world will be like a pregnant female that has completed the period of pregnancy so that people do not know when it will give birth, by evening or morning" (Ibn Jarir). ●

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is related by Sa'ad bin Obadah that "I went to the Apostle of God and said to him taht my mother had died. (I wanted to give something as charity on her behalf). So, what charity would be the best and most rewarding for her? The apostle of God replied: 'Water. (Construct a well and dedicate it for public use so that everyone can profit by its water).' I, consequently, built a well and declared that is was for my mother, Umm-iSa'ad. (The divine reward on it may keep on reaching her)."

-Abu Dawood and Nissai

Commentary:

In some other versions of the same Tradition it is stated that Sa'ad bin Obadah was in a journey when his mother died. On his return, he reported himself to the only prophet and said that his mother had died during his absence. He felt that if he was present at that time, she would have made a will regarding charity etc., which could be of advantage to her in After-life. The Prophet advised him to build a well. Sa'ad bin Obadah, thus had a well built at a suitable place and dedicated it to his mother's name, causing the Divine reward, on it, to be carried to her.

The dedication of an orchard, too, is mentioned in some narratives. It is possible that the well was built in the orchard.

It was the second instance of a Waqf being created during the life-time of the holy Prophet, and on his advice.

It, further shows the soundness and validity of performing a virtues dead on behalf of a deceased person and gifting, the Divine reward, on It, to him. The technical term for it is Isaal-i-Sawaab, upon which there is found an agreement, in principle, among the legist-doctors of Ahl-i-Sunnah (People of the Sunnah and the way of the Companions.) ●



Turmoil In Arab

The unrest in Muslims dominant countries which began decades ago in Afghanistan was not yet over when Iraq became the target of Allied forces. A well established and prosperous country was reduced to ashes. Those sitting on the treasure of Nuclear power want to make others subservient to them and bow before them for alms. Islam dose not teach submission to anyone but God. Their faith and ideology help them successfully in establishing great empires. The Ottaman Empire is the one to be mentioned.

After creating chaos and unrest in Iraq and threatening Iran to fall in line with them the so called Great Powers Rave started

stoking other Muslim countries. Syria, Libiya, Yemen and Bahrain are now in their sight.

Syria under the Presidentship of Bashar al-Assad is facing nation wide protest. At least 850 people are reported to have been killed in the crackdown unleashed by the regime. People are unhappy with the administration and though a 48 year state of emergency law has been lifted still voice of the common men is chocked.

Libya under Colonel Muammar Gaddafi is in turmoil because Gaddafi stands accused of unleashing heavy weaponry and air strikes against his own citizen in an attempt to suppress an armed uprising against his

rule. the US being cautious of its reputation in the Muslim world, asked Britain, Italy and France to lead the Military push. However, US has made it clear that they would prefer a solution which help in dethroning Gaddafi.

Yemen under the presidentship of Ali Abdullah Saleh is facing opposition mainly from student groups. 33 years old Saleh's regime, they feel it has become dormant. So far 150 people have been killed by state forces to contain the unrest. The present regime relies heavily on US and is a key ally in the battle against terrorism.

It fears that after Saleh's removal Muslim activists may take over the

power.

Bahrain under king Hamad binlsa Al Khalifa is engulfed in sectarian conflict. Shia population rose up against the ruling Sunni monarchy. Here king Hamad seems to have succeeded in bringing the situation under control. Here US concern is quite prominent because its Navy's Fifth Fleet is stationed in Bahrain and is also on a crucial oil Supply route.

A critical view of the over all situation in above mentioned countries proves that efforts, are afoot to destabilise the governments there and establish that system which may fall in line with so called "Super Power". ●

(S. A.)

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Alliance Between Religion and Knowledge

One of the distinctive features of the teachings of Muhammad (PBUH) was that he forged a close and pious link between religion and knowledge, made them dependent on one another and added such a lusture to the latter that it brought forth an stupendous intellectual and literary movement unparalleled in any other religion or divine inspiration during the earlier ages.

The very first revelation to the holy Prophet demonstrates the fact that the Lord of this Universe has done a great favour to mankind by bestowing knowledge on it from His presence. This initial revelation also mentions one of the greatest means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge from one individual to another, from an earlier generation to the succeeding one. The pen has always been the most widespread means for diffusion of learning since it is through it that knowledge has passed on in time and space, from one nation to another as well as from the past to the present. It is through the pen that all literary creations and libraries have come into existence.

In so far as the circumstances of this remarkable revelation are concerned, it is inconvecable that 'knowledge' should have been mentioned in the first revelation. It was addressed to an unlettered Apostle amongst the people who were

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

backward by any standard. The pen must have been a rare commodity there for the people took pride in their illiteracy. In fact, they were known as 'ummiyin' or the illiterates. The Qur'an itself alludes to the situation then obtaining in Arabia in these words:

"It is He who has raised amidst the unlettered people an apostle from among them, to recite his revelations to them and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom though before that they were in manifest error."

The Qur'an has cited what the Jews of Madina used say about their neighbours, the Arabs: "We are not bound to keep our faith with the illiterates."

It was to these people, the nation of illiterates, that the last Prophet was sent. He was also told that:

"In this manner We have revealed unto thee a spirit of Our command: thou knewest not what the Book was, nor what the faith. Yet We have made it a light wherewith We guide whomsoever We will of Our bondmen. And verily thou guidest to a straight path."

At another place the Prophet was reminded:

"Never have you read a book before this, nor have you even transcribed one with your right hand, for then might those have doubted,

who follow falsehood."

An unexpected thing

The first revelation was a remarkable event: it was the first contact between the earth and the Heaven after six hundred years when Jesus Christ had preached the Gospel to the world. Now, these initial verses did not command obedience to God nor His glorification, nor attaining His nearness, nor even forsaking idolatry or the rites and customs of paganism. These were left for later occasions and the holy Prophet was just told that:

"Read: In the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot of blood. Read: Your Lord is the most Bounteous, Who has taught the use of the pen, has taught man, that which he did not know."

This was an event of immense significance which had an important bearing on the life of humanity. This was the beginning of an era which saw the most concerted efforts being made for the promotion of learning never attempted earlier. It was the era in which Faith and knowledge joined hands for creating a new civilization. It was an age of Faith as well as of Reason.

The command to read and acquire knowledge was to be executed under the guidance of a divine messenger and in the name of Lord so that man proceeded ahead in his journey in the light of God's knowledge and certitude of faith. The reference to the creation of man from the clot of blood was meant to point out that man should not exceed his limits. Nor feel exultant on capturing the forces of nature. Since this was this was to come about with the acquisition of knowledge.

The pen then got the honour of being mentioned in the revelation since it has always been the most important means of learning. However, little of its significance or use was known to the then Arabs. The few men versed in the arts of reading and writing were known as 'al-katib, or the writers. Thereafter the revelation referred to teaching of man by saying: God taught man that which he did not know – for God is the ultimate source of all knowledge which could enable man to know what is unknown. All the discoveries made in any field have come from this ability of man to learn and extend the horizon of his knowledge.

This was the starting point of revelation to the Prophet of Islam which had a deep impact on the subsequent course of attaining knowledge, preaching God's message and the modes of thought. It made knowledge a fellow and ally of religion that always helped man in solving new social and cultural problems. The religion, on the other hand, was thereafter never frightened and timid in the face of knowledge.

Religions frightened of knowledge

There have been religions whose victory lay in the defeat of knowledge. This is best illustrated by an allegory relating to Prophet Solomon who had been given power over the wind. Once the mosquitoes complained to Prophet Solomon that they were disturbed and made to flee by the wind. Prophet Solomon ordered the wind to present itself but when it came the mosquitoes were no more present. He thereupon remarked how he could

decide the issue in the absence of the claimants. This is true of many religions including those of ancient India. The religious leaders of old also furnish similar examples.

The struggle between the Church and knowledge in Christendom is too well-known. An American writer, W.E.H. Drapper has documented this confrontation in his famous work 'Conflict between Religion and Science. The ecclesiastical tribunals established by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, known as Courts of Inquisition, had achieved the greatest notoriety from the number of its victims and the torture to which they were subjected. The number of their victims runs into tens of thousands. All these represent the efforts made to stall the march of knowledge in the name of religion.

Among the religious scriptures of the world the Qur'an is unique in magnifying knowledge and holding scholars as next to the messengers of God in dignity.

A few of such verses read:

"God bears witness – and also the angels and those endowed with knowledge- that there is no God but He, the maintainer of equity. There is no God but He, the maintainer of equity. There is no god but He, the Mighty; the Wise.

"O my Lord, increase me in knowledge."

Are the wise and the ignorant equal?"

God will raise up in ranks those of you who believe and are endowed with knowledge."

"Even so only those of His

servants fear God who have knowledge."

The Prophet of Islam always emphasized the importance of knowledge. He is reported to have said:

"A scholar is superior to an ascetic in the same way as I am to the meanest of you."

"The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets who do not leave behind them dinars and dirhams. Knowledge is their inheritance and one who acquires it gets the largest share (of inheritance)."

The encouragement given to the pursuit of knowledge by Islam generated a popular enthusiasm which encompassed all fields of knowledge and made significant contribution to its advancement as we see it today. A European writer who has studied the culture of the Arabs says that:"

"The zeal exhibited by the Arabs in acquisition and promotion of knowledge was exceptionally admirable. Other nations can claim to have shown a similar keenness for knowledge, but none could surpass them.

Whenever they captured a city, the first thing they did was to have a mosque and a school there. Bigger cities used to have several schools. Benjamin De Towwel who died in 1173 states that he saw twenty colleges in Alexandria, Apart from these schools the bigger cities like Baghdad, Toledo, Cordova had universities fully equipped with workshops for research, observatories, magnificent libraries etc Spain had seventy public libraries.

"As the Arab historians say Al-

Hakim-II had a collection of six hundred thousand books in his library at Cordova and forty-four of its volumes contained the list of books in the library. Someone has rightly remarked that when four hundred years after that Charles the Wise established the first national library in France he could procure only nine hundred works and the books on religion were not enough to fill in a single almirah."

Integration of knowledge

More significant than extending the frontiers of knowledge and creating a zest for its cultivation was the contribution of Islam in integrating the different disciplines of learning and guiding them to play a more positive, constructive role for the service of humanity.

Before the rise of Islam the chain of knowledge was disjointed, dispersed: findings of various branches of knowledge were very often conflicting and contradictory. Philosophy and physics were at odds with religion. Even the objective sciences like mathematics and medicine at times led to negative and atheistic conclusions. The Greek philosophers of antiquity, who remained pioneers of philosophy and mathematics for several centuries, were either pagan or atheist with the result that the knowledge of the Greeks and their way of thought were deemed as dangerous by the revealed religions, Islam as the religion of Unity forged a link between all branches of knowledge in order to unite them in a common cord. This achievement of Islam was made possible since it had made the right beginning. It took its first lesson from read in the name of thy Lord who

created, which meant placing full reliance in God. More often the right beginning of a thing is a guarantee for its right conclusion. Islam thus discovered a unity with the help of the Qur'an and faith in God, which integrated all the units. This unity constituted the true knowledge of God as promised to the believers.

"And (who) reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, thou hast not created this is vain. Glory be to Thee' Guard us against the chastisement."

The phenomena of nature often appear to man as capricious and contradictory; they make him anxious and astonished; sometimes they lead man to deny the existence of any Creator whom he could hold responsible for the sufferings caused by natural calamities. But Islamic knowledge guided by the Qur'an and belief in God, solved these contradictions by pointing out to the 'Will' of God as the sole author of all happenings and events. A German philosopher-historian, Herold Hoffding, has described the effective role played by the Unity of Cause in giving a new fillip to advancement of knowledge in his History of Modern philosophy in these word:

"The theology of a monotheistic religion is based on the fundamental thought that there is one single cause of all things. Apart from the grave difficulties which this thought involves, it has the important and valuable effect of accustoming men to abstract from differences and details and of preparing them for the acceptance of an interconnecting link of all things

according to law. The Unity of Cause must lead to the unity of the law.

The Middle Ages educated man to this thought, to which the natural man overpowered by the manifoldness of phenomenon and inclined to polytheism, does not feel himself drawn."

The Qur'an changed the way of human thought by emphasizing the Unity of cause: it prompted man to strive to reduce varied phenomena to a single principle. It incessantly called attention of its readers to the splendid marvels, the mysterious phenomenon of universe and the unitary principle governing it. This was indeed a revolutionary concept which had a far-reaching impact on the development of knowledge. I will cite here an orientalist not very sympathetic to Islam, who had to acknowledge this gift of Islam. In his Introduction to the translation of the Qur'an by J.M. Rodwell, Rev.G. Margoliouth states:

"The Qur'an admittedly occupies an important position among the great books of the world. Though the youngest of the epoch-making works belonging to this class of literature, it yields hardly to any in the wonderful effect which it produced on large masses of men. It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character."

The force of this current of Quranic thought can be seen by the variety of forms in which it has found expression. Its achievements in the domain of knowledge have been acknowledged by several other western scholars also. Hartwig Hirschfeld writes in the New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qur'an:

"We must not be surprised to find the Quran the fountainhead of sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades are occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the holy book. In this way the Quran was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvelous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world This again not only affected the Arabs, but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after Arab methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilized by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed.

"Spiritual activity once aroused within Islamic bounds was not confined to theological speculations alone. Acquaintance with the philosophical, astronomical and medical writings of the Greeks led to the pursuance of these studies. In the descriptive revelations Muhammad repeatedly calls attention to the movement of the heavenly bodies, as parts of the miracles of Allah, forced in the service of man and therefore not to be worshipped. How successfully Moslem people of all races pursued the study of astronomy is shown by the fact that for centuries they were its principal supporters. Even now many Arabic names of stars and technical terms are in use. Medieval astronomers in Europe were pupils of the Arabs In the same manner the Quran gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended contemplation and study of Nature in general." ●

NIA to Investigate Malegaon Blast

Mateen Hafeez

The Union government has told the Maharashtra anti-terrorism squad (ATS) to hand over investigations into the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

"We received instructions from the Union government to hand over the case to the NIA. We are waiting for NIA officials to take custody of all the papers and the case. They will be handed over to them soon," ATS chief Rakesh Maria confirmed.

Six people were killed and 101 were injured in the September 29, 2008, Malegaon bomb blast. Twelve members of the rightwing outfits, Jai Vande Mataram and Abhinay Bharat, were arrested. All the accused, including a serving Indian Army lieutenant colonel, Prasad Shrikant Purohit, face action under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act (MCOCA).

Earlier, the government had indicated its swilling to hand over all cases, where saffron groups were allegedly involved, to the NIA. The Samjhauta Express bomb blast, in which 68 persons were killed, is being investigated by the NIA. Spiritual leader, Swami Aseemanand, is an accused in the Samjhauta case.

The Hyderabad Makkah Masjid bomb blast, in which 11 people were killed, and the Ajmer dargah bomb blast, in which three persons were killed, may also be handed to over to the NIA.

The Maharashtra ATS had arrested 11 persons for their alleged roles in the Malegaon blasts in October and November 2008, Pravin Mutalik, a member of Abhinay Bharat, was arrested on January 31, 2001. "The accused wanted to cause a lot of casualties but could not succeed in their conspiracy," an ATS officer said.

Aseemanand, arrested in October 2010, had confessed that the conspiracies of the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast, the Ajmer dargah blast, the Mecca Masjid bomb blast and the Samjhauta train blast, were hatched by the saffron groups. "All cases are interconnected and the accused are mostly commoners," said an officer who is part of the Malegaon bomb blasts case.

Earlier, the case of the Malegaon serial bomb blasts, in which 38 people were killed and 297 were injured on September 8, 2006, was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The ATS, which initially probed the case, had arrested 13 youths allegedly belonging to the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). The case was transferred to the CBI after residents of Malegaon agitated against the arrests. (EC) ●

Global Language

Arabic is the fastest-growing foreign language in the US according to a recent study

Enrollment in Arabic as a foreign language in US universities grew by 46 per cent last year compared to 2006, according to a study released late December 2010.

Besides English, Arabic leapfrogged Latin and Russian to land in eighth place on the most studied language list, which has been compiled 22 times since 1958 by the Modern Language Association (MLA).

Other language that showed double-digit percentage growth were Korean, which grew by just over 19 per cent; Chinese, up by 18.2 per cent, and Portuguese, by around 11 per cent.

But Spanish remains far and away the most popular language other English that is studied at US universities, with nearly 865,000 enrollments – a rise of 5 per cent over 2006.

Next came French, with 216,000 enrollments and German with 96,000. French was up nearly 5 per cent and German around 2 per cent compared to 2006.

The report shows that French enrollments reached an all-time high of 388,000 in 1968, the year the country was rocked by massive strikes, riots and civil unrest. By 1980, they had fallen back to 248,000.

Enrollments for Russian spiked from around 24,000 in 1980 to nearly 45,000 in 1990, when the Soviet Union was on the brink of breaking up. Five years later, they were back down to around 25,000.

The number enrolling in Arabic

courses have from 5,500 in 1998 to 10,584 in 2002 and 35,000 in 2010.

The study counts enrollments, not number of students, the MLA points out, stressing that a single student majoring in a language may be enrolled in one or more classes in that language.

Language class enrollments were collected from 2,514 US colleges and universities, representing 99 per cent of higher education institutions offering languages in the United States, the report said.

Students at US universities can study everything from native American languages – the most popular of which was Hawaiian with more than 2,000 enrollments in 2009 – to Kurdish, which saw enrollments triple from six to 18 between 2006 and 2010.

As to why American students are turning to Arabic, there's no clear-cut answer. Most, however, agree that the teaching of Arabic is definitely increasing from year to year because people are more interested in the Middle East from an academic and practical point of view.

"On the whole, the impetus for Americans to learn the language comes from government and businesses in the countries. In line with the American position of leadership. It's necessary to have ambassadors who speak the language; and American companies abroad want more people who know the language and customs," an academic said.

But despite the strong interest, experts warn that foreign language study

on US campuses is in peril because of budget cuts and a dwindling number of graduate students who form the foundation of future college language faculties. "This is a vulnerable time for the association's executive director and a Spanish professor at the University of Buffalo. "While interest in language study remains strong and students are increasingly interested in studying a wide range of languages, opportunities to study languages may be threatened by programme cuts at many colleges and universities."

Learning languages can be difficult. And if you think learning Arabic is difficult, think again: German is harder. That is according to Arabist Leslie McLoughlin, Arabic interpreter to royalty and governments for more than 50 years.

"Don't let anyone tell you Arabic is a difficult language. You can state all the rules of Arabic grammar on one sheet of A4 paper. Arabic is purely logical ... it's very easy if you understand how this logic works. It's far easier than German," first week of February.

McLoughlin's autobiographical book *Confessions of an Arabic Interpreter – The Odyssey of an Arabist 1959-2009* has been released by Motivate Publishing. In it he details his journey from a young boy and when he first became inspired by languages, to his rise to interpreting for No. 10 Downing Street and Buckingham Palace. McLoughlin's initial interest in the Middle Eastern language stemmed from his father's return from North Africa after the Second World War.

McLoughlin starts the book by dispelling certain myths he has identified that cause problems with people learning the language. Among these are, *humourously*, "Arabic is uniquely difficult

among languages; the Arabic script is very difficult; the best Arabic is spoken in [choose a town, city, province, and village]; and Arabic has an impossibly huge vocabulary: 200 words for a lion, 400 for a camel, 600 for a sword, etc."

Learning a foreign has many advantages. One can converse with a new set of people, understand their culture and make friends from across the world. It can also give you the chance to go places and craft a better career. There is a rising demand for language specialists in the corporate sector. Many companies post their personnel on the native language will improve teamwork and communication.

Globalisation is rapidly bringing diversity to organizations. With companies having branches in multiple location, it is imperative to have language specialists who can communicate without ambiguity. Also, unless people are aware of the culture of a particular region, it is difficult to build working relationships.

Learning the native language will provide insight into the culture and values of the people. When natives can converse with foreigners without language barriers, there is greater acceptance on their part.

"No man should travel until he has learnt the language of the country he visits. Otherwise, he voluntarily makes himself a great baby – so helpless and so ridiculous," said Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Arabic language is not the only thing people all over the world are interested in. They are also giving importance to Arab culture.

At the Arab British Centre, a non-profit organization in London, the aim is to present a picture of vibrant and varied

communities and traditions with a goal of educating Londoners about the Arab world.

In the middle of London's financial district, just opposite the house once occupied by the compiler of the first English dictionary, Samuel Johnson, is a tall, thin townhouse. It is the home of the Arab British Centre.

The centre has been in London since it was opened in 1977 by the secretary general of the Arab League and the British foreign secretary.

"The idea is not be political but to use culture and art as a means of dialogue," said Noreen Abu Oun, the centre's executive director.

"People relate to each other a lot better that way. If we have a conversation about war we might disagree. We're more likely to relate to each other as human beings through things that we enjoy and have in common: food, art. When you do that, people start to empathise better."

It also has permanent resources, including a small library of fiction and non-fiction arranged by country, language books, memoirs and periodicals, such as the journal of Palestine Studies.

The permanent art collection, which decorates the main stairway winding through the building and down to the basement, includes geometric calligraphy, bold paintings of houses and palm trees, photographs and lots more.

Many of the artists are Saudi Arabian the collection was curated by Offscreen Education Programme and includes pieces from their Edge of Arabia exhibition – but others are from elsewhere. They include Gaza-born

Laila Shawa, who photographs parts of Palestine and transforms the pictures using silkscreen printing techniques; Iraqi Hassan Massoudy, who trained as a calligrapher in Baghdad before studying figurative painting at Paris's Ecole des Beaux-Arts; and Ahmed Mater Al-Zaid Aseeri, one of Saudi Arabia's most celebrated young artists.

This art collection is complemented by a changing roster of temporary exhibitions, a slot that's currently filled by Orient Street Souvenirs, a show about longing and collecting in relation to the Middle street signs whose names reflect links with Arab world, such as Gaza Street, Arabia Close, Damascene walk, Lebanon Park, Tangier Road and Palestine Grove.

They're just a few of the evocatively named streets in the exhibition by Ariane Severin, a photographer and artist who was born in Germany and now works in London, but whose work often focuses on the Middle East. The street sign shots are complemented by photos of cars shrouded in dust covers, taken in Middle Eastern countries and alluding to an Orient veiled in mystery.

The centre also plays host to other non-profit organization. Five groups are housed in the slender building: the Council for Arab-British Understanding, which works in politics, media and education; Friends of Birzeit University, which sends students on trips to Islamic countries; Edge of Arabia, which promotes contemporary Saudi Arab fiction and poetry in English translation.

Together, these groups present a picture of vibrant and varied

communities and traditions. For the past four years an annual E5,000 (Dh30,000) prize, funded championed this cause, celebrating those who have contributed most to the British public's understanding of Arab culture. It is open to candidates of any nationality, working in any field, and not just individuals – last year's winner was the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival.

Is all this tireless work actually changing anyone's perceptions? Abu Oun, who was born in London to a Palestinian father and a Moroccan mother, said that her "otherness" had been a source of conflict growing up, and thinks the answer is yes.

She says that painters and builders hired to work at the centre often took an interest and she would chat to them about the organization.

"People tend to have very stereotyped views," she says, "but when you talk to them and they see an image that they wouldn't usually connect with the Arab world it makes them think, and question their stereotypes. If I was giving a speech about how the West does this and the Arab world does that, it's not really going to get anywhere."

No wonder then that there is a huge demand for Arabic language courses for expatriates in Saudi Arabia.

The best way to understand a culture is through communication, and language is the key to this. It is not only a means to communicate thoughts and ideas, but also to forge friendship, cultural ties, and economic relationships.

For these reasons, expatriates in Saudi Arabia believe it is important to learn Arabic. According to Yasmin

Hameed, supervisor of an institute teaching Arabic language course in Riyadh, non-Arabic speaking people are hungry for Arabic courses.

Having started only two years ago, the institute now runs its night-time four level courses for 150 expatriates at a local multinational school in the capital city, according to a report in a local English language daily. Each level is about 16 weeks, with two sessions a week.

She told a local English language daily the institute is involved in teaching many professionals in the field of medicine, who have to know Arabic because it is a matter of "life and death" for them.

Hameed said Arabic courses are also offered at places such as Imam University in Riyadh, but this is not for non-Muslim expatriates. Those who attend university have to have some knowledge of Arabic.

The other difficulty with some Arabic language courses is that it is offered by non-Arab speakers, Hameed, an Egyptian, said. She said these teachers often do not know the difference in different dialects.

Two fourth level students agreed that the course was helping them at work and socially. Paul Zarba, an American engineer, who has been in the kingdom for 18 months, said the course has helped him considerably. He is now able to read and write and hold basic conversation in Arabic.

Semere Tewelde, a British MBBS doctor, echoes similar views. He said he speaks English mostly with fellow doctors, but learning Arabic was helping him to integrate. ●

Monotheism In Hindu Scriptures

M.Khurshid Akhtar

The Qur'an says: For each period there is a book (Qur'an. 13:38)

Even though Hindus are one the most dubious faiths in the world, there is no denying the fact that they too believe in some of the scriptures. Being one of the oldest civilizations. Hindus with a huge population in world mainly in India. Believe in faith, which is mired in controversies.

The term Hindusim draws from the word Hindu, which refers to a people living around the Sind or Indus River area, in the Indian subcontinent. Though often termed as Hindu religion, the word does not find any mention even in their own religious scriptures. The term has at best only a geographical significance. And it's a late phenomenon to associate Hindus majority of the people in India are called Hindus. There are approximately over 80 million Hindus in India, barring the controversy that most on them like Dalits etc. are not Hindus.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, in his book. Discovery of India, mentions that the earliest reference to the word Hindu can be traced to a tantric of the 8th century CE, where it means a people and not a follower of a particular religion.

"The word Hindu is nowhere mentioned in Indian literature or scriptures before the advent of Muslim to India", according to the Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics.

In the 19th century, the Britishers

coined Hindusim while referring to the faith of Hindus living in India. According to New Encyclopedia Britannica 20:581, the British writers in 1830 gave the word Hindusim to be used as the common name for all the beliefs of the people of India excluding the Muslims and converted Christians.

Hindusim does not owe its origin, formation or finalization to any historical person or a prophet since there are no uniformly accepted beliefs, sacraments, rituals and practices in Hinduism, there are no criteria for establishing rules in Hinduism. In short a person who calls himself a Hindu becomes a true practicing Hindu irrespective may be his beliefs and practice.

Some Hindu scholars agree that Hinduism is a misnomer and it should be called as Sanatana Dharma, meaning eternal religion, or Vedic Dharma, meaning religion of the Veda. Again, according to Swami Vivekananda, the followers of this religion are referred to as Vedantist.

Faith in Hinduism is not defined. It does not have any unified or codified set of beliefs nor has any defined set of principles, which like in Islam, could be obligatory on its followers to practice. A Hindu is free to practice anything he pleases. There is nothing compulsory or prohibited to make him a non-Hindu.

Books of Hinduism

There are two kinds of sacred writings in Hinduism: Sruti and Smrti.

Sruti is the oldest and the most sacred, which means that which has been heard, perceived, understood or revealed. It is divided into two main parts; the Vedas and the Upanishads and are considered to be of divine origin.

Smrti means memory or remembered and is not as sacred, but is yet considered to be important, and is popular. This Hindu literature is easier to understand because it speaks about the truths of the Universe through symbolism and mythology. Not considered to be of divine origin, Smriti are human composition, which regulates and guides individuals in their daily conduct and lists rules governing the actions of the individual, the community and the society. Also known as Dharma Shastra, Smritis consist of many writings including the Puranas and Itihas.

Vedas: It is derived from Vid. To know, means knowledge par excellence, sacred wisdom. There are 4 principal divisions of the Vedas: Rigveda, Atharvaveda, Yajurveda and Samveda. According to Maha Bhashya of Patanjali there are 21 branches of Rigveda, 9 types of Atharvaved, 101 branches of Yajurveda and 1000 of Samveda.

Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samveda are considered to be more ancient books and are known as Treya Vidya or the Tripple Sciences. The Rigveda is the oldest and has been compiled in 3 long and different periods of time. Atharvaveda is of a later date.

There is no unanimous opinion regarding the date of compilation or revelation of these Vedas. According to

Swami Dayanand, who is the founder of the Arya Samaj, the Vedas were revealed 1,310 millions of years ago and according to other scholars they are not more than 4,000 years old.

Similarly there is an difference of opinion regarding the places where these books were revealed and the Rishis (sages) to whom these Scriptures were given. Yet, the Vedas are the most authentic of the Hindu Scriptures and the real foundations of the Hindu Dharma.

Upanishads

The word Upanishads is derived from 'Upa' meaning near, 'ni' which means down and 'shad' means to sit, therefore Upanishads means sitting down near groups of pupils sit near the teacher to learn from him the secret doctrines.

According to Samkara, Upanishad is derived from the root word 'Sad' which means 'to loosen', 'to reach' to 'destroy', with 'Upa' and 'ni' as prefix, therefore Upanishad means Brahma-knowledge by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed.

The number of Upanishads exceeds 200, though the Indian tradition puts it at 108. There are 10 principal Upanishads. However, some consider them to be more than 10, while other 18.

The Vedanta meant originally the Upanishads, though the word is now used for the system of philosophy based on the Upanishad. Literally, Vedanta means the end of the Veda, Vedasya-antah, the conclusion as well as the goal of Vedas. The Upanishads are the concluding portion of the Vedas and chronologically they come at the

end Vedic period. Some Pandits consider the Upanishad to be the Vedas.

Puranas

The Puranas comes next in order of authenticity, and which are the most widely read scriptures. They contain history of the creation of the universe, history of the early Aryan tribes and life stones of the divines, and deities of the Hindus. The Puranas are revealed books like the Vedas, which were revealed simultaneously with the Vedas or somewhere close to it.

Maharishi Vyasa has divided the Puranas into 18 voluminous parts. He has also arranged the Vedas under various heads. The Gita and Mahabharata were productions of his masterly pen.

Chief among the Puranas is a book known as Bhavishya Purana. It is called so because it gives an account of future event. The Hindus consider it to be the word of God. Maharishi Vyasa was just the compiler of the book. The real author being God himself.

Concept of God

The concept of God varies from the faith to the followers. The scriptures are filled with concept of just one God, but the Hindus will be found believing in from thirty-three Gods to 330 million Gods. They believe in philosophy of pantheism i.e. everything is god: the tree, the sun, the moon, snake, monkey, human being and so on. This is against the concept of God in Islam where Muslims believe that everything is God's.

It's a difference of an 's' i.e. god with an apostrophe 's'. In Islam, everything is God's, while according to

Hindus, everything is God.

Bhagvad Geeta, one of the most popular Hindu scriptures, says: "Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires worship demigods." (Bhagwad Geeta 7:20 In other words. Those who are materialistic. They worship demigods i.e. besides the true God.

In another sacred Hindu scripture Upanishads, is mentioned: Ekam evaditiyam (He is one only without a second). [Chandogya Upanishad, Chapter 6, Section 2, Verse 1]

Says the Holy Qur'an: "Say he is Allah one and only." (112:1)

Similar verses galore in the Hindu scriptures that betray their innovated beliefs, and which would be found familiar to a Muslim belief: "Na casya kascij janita na cadhipah" (Of him there is neither parents nor lord); na tasya kascit patir asti loke, na karanam karanadhipadhipo na casya kascij janita na cadhipah." (Of him there is no master in the world, no ruler, nor is there cause; the lord of the lords of the neither progenitor nor lord). [Svetasvatara Upanishad, Chapter 6, Verse 9]

Similar to a message in the Holy Qur'an that He begets not nor is he begotten, (112-3), there is a verse in Svetasvatara Upanishad: Na tasya pratima asti (There is no likeness of him) [Chapter 4, Verse 19]

Also, nainam urdhavam na tiryancam na madhye na parijagrabhat na tasya pratima asti yasya nama mahad yasah (There is no likeness of him whose name is great glory. [The principal Upanishad by

S.Radhakrishnan page 737 and in sacred books of the east Volume 15, the Upanishad, part 11, page 253]

Similar messages abound in the Holy Qur'an like in 112:4, 42: 11, and 42: 11.

There are verses in the Hindu scriptures that conform to the Islamic concept of One God like *na sandrse tisha ti rupam asya, na Pasyati kas canainam* (His form is not to be seen; no one sees Him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know Him as abiding in the heart become immortal). [The Principal Upanishd by S.Radhakrishnan page 737 and in sacred books of the east Volume 15, the Upanishad part 11, page 253]

We can compare the above verses with those of the Holy Qur'an: "No vision can grasp him. But his grasp is over all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things." (6:103)

Monotheism in Hindu Scriptures

It is mentioned in Yajurved: "*na tasya pratima asti*" (There is no image of Him). [Chapter 12, Verse 3] It further says: "He is unborn. He deserves our worship" and "There is no image of him whose glory verily is great. "He sustains within Himself: all luminous objects like the sun etc, may not harm Me. This is my prayer. As He is unborn, He deserves our worship. (The Yajurveda by Devi Chand M.A. page 377)

Yajurved says: He is bodiless and pure. (Chapter 40, Verse 8) He hath attained unto the bright, bodiless, woundless, sinless, the pure which evil hath not pierced. Far-sighted wise, encompassing, he self existent hath prescribed aims as propriety demands

unto the everlasting years (Yajurveda Samhita Ralph I.H.Griffith page 538)

It is also mentioned: "*Andhatma pravishanti ye asambhuti mupaste*" (They enter darkness, those who worship natural things, for example air, water, fire etc. [Yajurved, Chapter 40, Verse 9] It further says: "They sink deeper in darkness those who worship Sambhuti i.e. created things," For example table, chair idol etc.; "Deep into shade of blinding gloom fall asambhuti's worshippers. They sink to darkness deeper yet who on sambhuti are intent." (Yajurveda Samhita by Ralph T.H. Griffith page 538)

Atharvaveda (Book 20,Hymn (Chapter) 58, Verse 3: "*Dev maha osi*" (God is verily great) Verily, surya, thou art great; truly, aditya, thou art great. As thou art great indeed thy greatness is admired: yea, verily, great art thou, O God". (Atharvaveda Samhiti Volume 2, William Dwight Whitney page 910)

The Qur'an says in Surah Rad: "He is the Great, the most High." (13:9)

Rigveda, the most oldest and sacred amongst all the Vedas, says: "They (sages) have styled (Him, God or the sun) Indra (the respendent), Mitra (the surveyor), Varuna (the venerable), Agni (the adorable), and He is the celestial, well-winged Garutmat (the great), for learned priests call one by many names as they speak of the adorable as yama (ordainer) and matarisvan (cosmic breath)," [Book No. 164,Verse 46]

Rigveda gives no less than 33 different attributes to Almighty God, mostly mentioned in Book 2, Hyman 1. Brahma is one such attribute, which means Creator. In Arabic, it means

Khaliq. Muslims too call Allah a khaliq, Creator or Brahma.

So, Hinduism the faith gives a clear concept of God, which no monotheistic religion can have any disagreement. But they degenerated the concept by reducing Him to an image of a deity with four heads and four hands. And, by doing this, they go against their own religious edicts, which says: "Na tasya pratima asti" Three is no image of Him (Yajurveda, Chapter 32, Verse 3)

The concept of Vishnu, which means the Sustainer, holds the same argument. In Arabic, it means Rabb. Hindus have again reduced the concept of Rabb to an image of a person with four arms. This goes against their own scripture, which says in Yajurveda (Chapter 40, Verse 8). Rigveda, Book 8, Hymn 1, Verse 1: Ma Chidanyadia Shansata (Do not worship anybody but Him, the divine one Praise Him alone)

Book 5, Hymn 81, Verse 1: Verily great is the glory of the divine creator (Rigveda Samhiti, Volume 6, page 1802 and 1803 by Swami Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidhyalanka)

The Qur'an says: Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds. (1:2)

Rigveda (Book 3, Hymn 34, Verse 1): The bounteous giver (Hymns of Rigveda, Volume 2, page 377, by Ralph T.H. Griffith) is same as in Qur'an (surah Fatiha): Most Gracious, most merciful. [1:3]

Yajurveda (Chapter 40: Verse 160): Lead us to the good path and remove the sin that makes us stray and wonder. By goodly path lead us to riches, Agni, thou God who knowest all

our works and wisdom. Remove the sin that makes us astray and wonder: most ample adoration will we bring thee (The Yajurveda Samhiti by Ralph T.H Griffith page 541).

Similar message is given in Surah Fatiha: Show us the straightway, the way of those on whom thou has bestowed thy grace, those (portion) is not wrath. And who go not astray, (1:6-7)

Rigveda (Book No VI, Hymn 45, Verse 16): Ya eka ittamushtuhii praise Him who is the matchless and alone. (Hymns of Rigveda by Ralph T.H. Griffith page 648)

Brahma Sutra of Hindu Vedanta: Ekam Brahm, dvitiya naste nen ma naste kinchan (There is only one God, not the second, not at all, not in the least bit).

Notes on Prophet (peace be upon him)

According to Bhavishya Purana, A malechha (belonging to a foreign country and speaking foreign language) spiritual teacher will appear with this companions. His name will be Muhammad. Raja (Bhoj) after giving this Maha Dev Arab (of angelic disposition) a both in the panchgavya and the Ganges water (i.e. purging him of all time) offered him the presents of his sincere devotion and showing him all reverence said. I make obeisance to thee. Oye! The pride of mankind, the dweller in Arabia, Ye have collected a great force to kill the Devil and you yourself have been protected from the malechha opponents. (Prati Sarage Parv III Khand 3, Adhyaya 3, Shloka 1 to 8)

The Prophecy clearly states:

1. Name of the Prophet as Muhammad
2. He will belong to Arabia. The Sanskrit word Marusthal means a sandy track of land or a desert.
3. About the Companions of the Prophet No other Prophet had as many Companions as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had.
4. He is referred to as the pride of mankind (Parbatishath). The Holy Qur'an reconfirms this in Surah Al-Qalam (68:4): And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character; and in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21). Ye have indeed in the messenger of Allah, a beautiful pattern (of conduct).
5. He will kill the devil i.e. abolish idol worship and all sorts of vices.
6. The Prophet will be given the protection against his enemy. Some people may argue that Raja Bhoj mentioned in the prophecy lived in the 11th century CE, 500 years after the advent of Prophet Muhammad. But there was not only one Raja in the name of Bhoj. It was a title like pharaoh for the Egyptian Monarchs and Caesars for the Roman kings. There were several kings with the title of Raja

Bhoj who had come earlier.

The Prophet did not physically take a bath in Panchgvyā and the water of Ganges. Since the water of Ganges is considered holy, taking bath in the Ganges is an idiom meaning washing away or making immune from all sorts of sins. Here the prophecy implies that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sinless i.e. Masoom.

Bhavishya Purana

According to Bhavishya Purana, Maharishi Vyas has prophesized: The Malecha have spoiled the well known land of the Arabs. Arya Dharma is not to be found in the country. Before also there appeared a misguided friend whom I had killed; he has now again appeared being sent by a powerful enemy. To show these enemies the right path and to give them guidance the well-known Muhammad, who has been given by me the epithet of Brahma, is busy in bringing the Pishachas to the right path. O Raja, you need not go to the land of the foolish Pishachas, you will be purified through my kindness even where you are at night, he of the angelic disposition, the shrewd man, in the guise of a Pischacah said to Raja Bhoj, O Raja! Your Arya Dharma has been made to prevail over all religions, but according to the commandment of Ishwar Parmatma (God), I shall enforce the strong need of the meat eaters. My follower will be a man circumcised, without a tail (on his head), keeping beard, creating a revolution announcing Adhan (call for prayer) and will be eating all lawful things. He will eat all sorts of animals except swine. They will not seek purification from the

holy shrubs, but will be purified through warfare. On account of their fighting the irreligious nations, they will be known as Musalmans. I shall be the originator of the religion of the meat-eating nation. (The Pratisarage, Parv III, Khand 3, Shloka 10 to 27)

The Prophecy states that:

1. The evil doers have corrupted the Arab land. Arya Dharma is not found in that land.
2. The present enemies will be destroyed just as the previous enemies like Abraha had perished. Qur'an speaks about these sort of previous enemies is Surah Al-Feel (105: 1-5): Seest thou not how thy word dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did we not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them flights of Birds sticking them with stones of baked day then did He make them like an empty field of stalk and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.
3. Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him has been given the title Brahma to guide the opponents of truth.
4. The Indian Raja need not go to Arab land since his purification will take place in India after the Musalman will arrive in India.
5. The coming Prophet will at least the truth of the Aryan faith i.e. Monotheism and will

reform the misguided people.

6. The Prophet's followers will be circumcised without a tail on the head being a beard and will create a great revolution.
7. Will announce the Adhan i.e. call for prayer.
8. He will only eat lawful things and animals but will not eat pork. (Qur'an confirms this is in not less than four different places: 2: 173; 5:3; 6: 145; 16: 115. Forbidden for you for food are dead meat, blood, flesh of swine, and that on which had been invoked the name of other than Allah.)
9. They will not purify with grass. Like the Hindus but by means of sword they will fight their irreligious people.
10. They will be called as Musalman.
11. They will be a meat eating nation. Qur'an confirms the eating of herbivorous animals in 5: and 23:21.

Commentary

According to Bhavishya Purana, Parv III, Khand 1, Aday 3 shloka 21-23, corruption and persecution are in seven sacred cities of Kashi etc. India is inhabited by Rakshas, Shabar, Bhil and other foolish people. In the land of Malechhas, the followers of the Malechha dharma (Islam) are wise and brave people. All good qualities are

found in Musalmans and all sorts of vices have accumulated in the land of the Aryas. Islam will rule in India and its islands. Having known these facts O Muni, glorify the name of thy Lord.

Qur'an conforms this is, Surah Taukah, Chapter 9, Verse 33 & Surah Al-Saf, Chapter 61, Verse 9, It is He who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagan may detect (it) and a similar message is given in, Surah Fatah Chapter 48, Verse 28, Ending with And enough is Allah as a witness.

In the 20th Book of Atharvaveda, Hymn 127. Some Suktas (Chapters) are known as Kuntap Sukt. Kuntap means the consumer of misery and troubles. Thus meaning the message of peace and safety and if translated in Arabic means Islam.

Kuntap alos means hidden gland in the abdomen, These mantras are called so probably because their true meaning was hidden and was to be revealed in future. Its hidden meaning is also connected with the navel or the middle point of this earth. Makkah is called the Ummul Qura the mother of towns or the navel of the earth. In many revealed books, it was the first house of divine worship where God Almighty gave spiritual nourishment to the world. The Holy Qur'an says in Surah Ale-Imran, Chapter 3, Verse 95.

The first house (of worship) appointed for men that at Bakka (Makkah) full of blessings and of guidance and for all kinds of beings.

Another name for Makkah is Becca. Thus kuntap stands for Makkah or Becca. Several people have

translated these Kuntap Suktas like M. Blomfield, Prof. Ralph Griffith, Pandith Rajaram, Pandit Kherm Karan, etc.

The main points mentioned in the Kuntap Suktas that is Atharvaved, Book XX, Hyman 127, Verses 1-13 are:

Mantra 1: He is Kaurama, or he praised one (Muhammad).

Mantra 2: He is Kaurama - the prince of peace or the emigrant, who is safe, even amongst a host of 60,090 enemies.

Mantra 2: He is a camel-riding Rishi, whose chariot touches the heaven.

Mantra 3: He is Mamah Risha who is given a hundred gold coins, ten chaklets (necklaces), three hundred good steeds and ten thousand cows.

Mantra 4: Vachyesv rebh, Oh! Ye who glorifies

Mantra 5: The praying ones with their prayers hurry on like powerful bulls.

Mantra 6: O you who praises hold fast the wisdom which earns cows and good things.

Disseminate this among the divine.

Mantra 7: He is the king of he worlds, the best of men and guide for the entire mankind.

Mantra 8-9: He has procured a secure dwelling for the people, gives protection to everybody and has spread peace in the world.

Mantra 10: People thrive happily end prospers under his rule and from the depth of degradation they rise to the height of glory.

Mantra 11: He is asked to wake up and warn the world.

Mantra 12: He is extremely

bountiful and very generous.

Mantra 13: (His followers) have been saved from the hostility and robbery of the enemy and

May the Master not be harmed.

Mantra 14: We Glorify and praise the great hero with a song of praise and a prayer, please accept this praise so that evil may not befall us.

The Sanskrit word Narashansah means the praised one which is the literal translation of the Arabic word Muhammad (PBUH). The Sanskrit word Kaurama means one who spreads and promotes peace holy Prophet was the Prince of Peace and the preached equality of human kind and universal brotherhood. Kaurama also means an emigrant. The Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah and was thus also an Emigrant. He will be protected from 60,090 enemies which was the population of Makkah.

The Prophet would ride a camel, this clearly indicates that, it cannot be an Indian Rsihi since, it is forbidden for a Brahman to ride a camel, sacred Books of the east, Volume 25, Laws of Manu page 472 according to Manu Smriti, Chapter 11, Verse 202.

This Mantra gave the Rishis name as Mamah. No rishi in India or any other Prophet had this name Mamah is derived from Mah which means to esteem highly, on a revere, to exalt, etc. Some Sanskrit books give the Prophet name as Muhammad, but this word according to Sanskrit grammar can also be used in the bad sense. It is incorrect to apply grammar to an Arabic word. Actually Mamah has the some meaning pronunciation as the word Muhammad (PBUH).

He is given 100 gold coins, which refers to the believers and the earlier Companions of the Prophet during his turbulent Makkah life. Later on due to persecution they migrated from Makkah to Abyssinia later when prophet migrated to Madinah all of them joined him in Madinah.

The 10 chapters or necklaces were the 10 best Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) known as Ashra Mubbashshira (10 bestowed with good news). These were foretold in this world of their salvation in the Hereafter i.e. they were given the good news of entering paradise by Prophetis own lips and after naming each one, they were Abu Baker, Omar, Othman, Ali, Talha, Zubair, Abdur Rahman Ibne Auf, Saad bin Abi Waqqar, Saad bin Zaid and Abu Obeidah (May Allah be well-pleased with them).

The third gift was 300 good steeds. These horses belonged to the Arab breed. The Sanskrit word Arvah means swift Arab horse, The 300 steeds refers to the 300 Companions of the Holy Prophet, who fought at the battle of Badar and came back victorious even though the enemies were thrice the number.

The Sanskrit word Go is derived from Gaw which means to go to war. A cow is also called Go and is a symbol of war as well as peace. The 10,000 cows refer to the 10,000 Companions, who accompanied the Prophet(PBUH) when he entered Makkah during Conquest of Makkah, which was a unique victory in the history of mankind in which there was no bloodshed. The 10,000 Companions were pious and

compassionate like a cow and were at the same time strong and fierce and are described in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Fatah, Chapter 48, Verse 29, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers. (but) compassionate amongst each other.

This mantra calls the Prophet as Rebh which means one who praises. Translated into Arabic, it is Ahmed, which is another name for the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

He and his followers are always mindful of their prayers even in the battlefield. The Holy Qur'an says in Surah Baqarah, Chapter 2, Verse 45, 'Do not seek (Allah's) help with patience, perseverance and prayer.'

The Holy Qur'an says in Surah Alisa, Chapter 4, Verse 102, 'When thou (O Messenger) act with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, taking their arms with them. When they finish their prostrations, let them take their position in the rear. And let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed and let them pray with thee, taking all precautions, and bearing arms.'

The wisdom mentioned in this mantra refers to the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an earns good not only in this world but also in the hereafter. The Prophet (PBUH) is asked to propagate amongst his companions. Many of whom memorized the Qur'an.

All the attributes in this mantra apply to the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

In Surah Al-Anbiya, Chapter 21, Verse 107, [We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures. In Surah Saba,

Chapter 34, Verse 28, We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not. In Surah Al-Qalam, Chapter 68, Verse 4, And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character. In Surah Al-Ahzab, Chapter 33, Verse 21, We have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct).

During reconstruction of Ka'aba, the prophet (PBUH) through his wisdom prevented a war between the Arab tribes. Even during the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet established peace without shedding a single drop of blood. He gave peace, shelter to the bitterest enemies and let them go by saying, 'There shall be no reproof against you this day.'

The Prophet not only gave peace to the Arab land but also to the whole world.

The Arabs were the most ignorant people 1400 years ago and it was referred to as Youmul Jahiliya. The Prophet with his message brought prosperity and raised these ignorant people and made them the torchbearers.

This Mantra gives the translation of the Holy Qur'an Surah Al-Mudaththir (74:1-3): 'O thou wrapped up (in a mantle)! Arise and deliver thy people and glorified the Lord.'

The Holy Qur'an says in Surah Ale-Imran (3:159): 'it is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou don't deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh hearted. They would have broken away from about thee. It was due to the Prophet (PBUH) kind -

An Islamic Approach to Environmental Protection

Fazlun Khalid*

The whole of creation - being the work of one Originator - works within one stable pattern, however complex it may be. Another verse in the Qur'an refers to the heavens and the Earth as extensions of God's throne, thus conveying the idea that creation was designed to function as a whole. Each of its complimentary parts, including humankind, plays its own self-preserving role, and in so doing supports the rest.

The Fitra describes the primordial nature of creation itself and locates humankind in it.

The Qur'an says:

So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith – God's original upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion; but most men know it not [30:29]

God originates humankind within His creation, which He also originated. Humanity is then inescapably subject to God's immutable laws, as is the rest of creation. Creation cannot be changed: global warming can be seen, in this light, as the Earth's endeavour to maintain a balance in the face of the human assault against it.

The Mizan is the principle of the middle path. In one of its most eloquent passages the Qur'an describes

creation thus:

In our eagerness to 'progress' and 'develop' we have lost sight of the finite and delicate nature of planet Earth and of humanity's place in it. Islamic teaching offers an opportunity to understand the natural order and to define human responsibility. It could be said that the limits of the human condition are set within four principles – Tawheed, Fitra, Mizan and Khalifa.

Tawheed is the fundamental statement of the oneness of the Creator, from which everything else follows. It is the primordial testimony to the unity of all creation and to the interlocking grid of the natural order of which humanity is an intrinsic part. God says of Himself in the Qur'an:

Say: He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge [112: 1-2]

And about creation:

To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, all obey his will And it is He who originates creation.... [30:25]

The All-Merciful has taught the Qur'an. He created man and He taught him the explanation.

The sun and the moon to a reckoning, and the stars and trees bow themselves; and heaven – He raised it up and set the balance.

Transgress not in the balance, and weigh with justice, and skimp not

* (Fazlun Khalid is Founder Director of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences.)

in the balance. And earth – He set it down for all beings, there in fruits and palm trees with sheaths, and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs. Of which your Lord's bounties will you and you deny? (55: 1-12)

God has singled out humans and taught them reason – the capacity to understand. All creation has an order and a purpose. If the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees and the rest of creation did not conform to the natural laws – bow themselves' – it would be impossible for life to function on Earth. So we have a responsibility not to deny the 'Lord's bounties' and actively to recognize the order that is around us, for ourselves. As much as for the rest of creation.

Khalifa – or the role of stewardship - is the sacred duty God has ascribed to the human race. There are many verses in the Qur'an that describe human duties and responsibilities, such as the following which aptly summarizes humanity's role:

It is He who appointed you viceroys in the earth. [6: 165]

Humankind has a special place in God's scheme. We are more than friends of the Earth – we are its guardians. Although we are equal partners with everything else in the natural world we have added responsibilities. We are decidedly not lords and masters.

We may deduce from these four principles that creation, although quite complex and yet finite, only works because each of its component parts does what is expected of it – in the language of the Qur'an, submits to the

Creator. Humanity is inextricably part of this pattern. The role of humans – who uniquely have wills of their own and are thus capable of interfering with the pattern of creation – is of guardianship. This added responsibility imposes limits on their behavior and should lead to conscious recognition of their own fragility. They achieve this by submitting themselves to the divine law.

Until quite recently the human race – both rebels and conformists, the ignorant and the enlightened, whether in small self-governing communities or vast empires, barbarian tribes or points of high civilization – functioned unconsciously within natural, unwritten boundaries. It had an intuitive disposition to live within the Fitra, though this was only achieved by conscious recognition of the existence of a superior force, the divine. This was an existential reality, neither idyllic nor utopian.

We are clearly no longer functioning within these limits. Two events in 16th and 17th century Europe allowed the human species to break free from the natural pattering of which it had always been part. One was the appearance of the Cartesian world view, which propounded a dualism that separated mind and matter and allowed for the development of science on purely mechanistic lines. Cartesian skepticism brushed aside the accumulated wisdom of the ages and sowed the seeds of doubt. From then on humanity began to worship itself: in Descartes' own words humans were 'lords and masters of creation'. They now had reason on

heartedness, mercy and generosity that people flocked around him otherwise the stubborn Arabs could never have been won.

This Mantra is a prayer of the Rishi for the Prophet (PBUH) a similar prayer is found in the last Chapter of the Holy Qur'an i.e. Surah Nas (114:1-3). Say, I seek refuge with Lord and Chapter of mankind. The king (or Ruler) of mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind from the mischief of the Whisperer (of Evil). Who withdraws (after his whisper) – (the same) who whispers into the hearths of mankind Among Jinns and among Men.

In this Mantra, the Rishi of the Veda makes it compulsory for the followers of the Veda to praise the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and follow him so that they will be saved from the evil of this world.

Battle of the Allies described in the Vedas.

It is mentioned in Atharvaveda (Book XX. Hymn 21, Verse 6): Lord of the truthful! These libatrous drinks these feats of bravery and the inspiring songs gladdened thee in field of battle. When thou renders vanquished without fight the ten thousand opponents of the praying one, the adoring one.

This Prophecy of the Veda describes the well-known battle of Ahzab or the battle of the Allies during the time of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet was victorious without an actual conflict which is mentioned in the Qur'an (Surah Ahzab): When the believers saw the confederate forces they said.

This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us and Allah

and His Messenger told us what was true. (33:22)

And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience. The Sanskrit word karo in the Mantra means the praying one which when translated into Arabic means Ahmed the second name of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The 10,000 opponents mentioned in the mantra were the enemies of the Prophet and the Muslims were only 3000 in numbers. The last words of the Mantra aprati n bashayah means the defeat was given to the enemies without an actual fight.

The enemies defeat in the conquest of Makkah

It is mentioned in Atharvaveda (Book 20, Hymn 21, Verse No, 7): You have O India, overthrown 20 Kings and 60,099 men with an outstripping Chariot wheel who came to fight the praised one or far famed (Muhammad) orphan.

The Population of Makkah at the time of Prophet advent was nearly 60,000. There were several clans in Makkah each having its own chief. Totally there were about 20 chiefs to rule the population of Makkah.

An Abandhu meaning a helpless man who was far famed and Praised one Muhammad (PBUH) overcame his enemies with the help of God. A similar prophecy is also found in Rigveda (Book 1, Hymn 53, Verse 9). The Sanskrit word used is Susharana which means praise worthy or well praised which in Arabic means Muhammad (PBUH).

In Samveda

The Prophet (PBUH) finds mentioned in Samveda (Book 11

Hymn 6, Verse 8): Ahmed acquired from his Lord the knowledge of eternal law I received light from him just as from the Sun. The Prophecy confirms.

The name of the Prophet as Ahmed since Ahmed is an Arabic name; many translators misunderstood it to be Ahmat and translated the mantra as I alone have acquired the real wisdom of my father. Prophet was given external law i.e. Shariah. The Rishi was enlightened by the Shariah of Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Qur'an says in Surah Saba (34:28)

We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not. ●

Muslim Identity is Impossible Without Shariah:

S.M.Rabey Nadwi

Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi, President All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), and Rector Nadwat-ul-Ulema, Lucknow, said it is a matter of concern that in spite of constitutional guaranties of freedom in the country efforts are made from time to time to create obstacle for Muslims to follow Islamic Shari'ah. He stressed that the Muslims should try to find out a peaceful solution to tackle the situation.

He was delivering his speech at the end of the two-day meeting of the executive council of AIMPLB at Hyderabad on April 26. He said that from long times Muslims have been integral part of the Indian society and like other citizens they also have civil and religious rights. ●

Continued from page No 38

this.

All-Inclusive, Comprehensive Rights

Human rights in Islam are comprehensive to the extent that they start from the conception of baby in her mother's womb, and do not end even at the death of an individual. Even the dead bodies also enjoy certain rights, because of their humanness.

These human rights cover all possible human relations, e.g. social, economical, political, etc. Apart from the Qur'an, books of Hadith and Fiq are filled with these details.

To conclude, we see that:

Islam gives importance to human rights to such an extent that there are various concessions to persons not able to perform any of the obligatory Ibadah (Prayers).

We also see after analyzing the commandments of the Qur'an that, in its social, economic and moral teachings, they all lead to fulfil one or the other human rights, and the needy are guaranteed due concessions.

The second part of the Qur'anic commands which bar man from certain things, are also, helpful in upholding human rights or checking their exploitation e.g. prohibition of beer, pork, gambling, lottery, backbiting, faultfinding, etc. This guarantees the sanctity of human dignity and protects his private life. So is the case with the prevention of murder, theft, dacoity, fraud, scandals, etc. This guarantees the protection of life and property. ●

their side to support them in their acts of predication.

This period also saw the laying of the foundations of the banking system to which we are all now in thrall. Bankers have, in Islamic terms, sabotaged the Mizan of creation by not only charging interest but by doing so on money which they create endlessly out of nothing. This explosion of artificial wealth provides the illusion of economic dynamism: but in reality it is parasitic. Endless credit devours the finite Fitra. If kept up, this would eventually result in the Earth looking like the surface of the moon.

People who lived in the pre-Cartesian dimension, that was before we were told that nature was there to be plundered, were basically no different from us. They had the same positive and negative human attributes, but the results of human profligacy were contained by the natural order of things, which transcended technological and political sophistication and even religious disposition. Excess in the natural order was contained because it was biodegradable. When old civilizations, however opulent, profligate, greedy, or brutal died, the forest just grew over them. They left no pollutants, damaging poisons or nuclear waste. By contrast, and assuming we survive as a species, archaeologists excavating our present rampant civilization are going to have one or two problems...

The Qur'anic references are from the Koran Interpreted by A.J. Arberry, 1983. The World Classics Series, Oxford University Press. ●

Continued from page No 36
family planning. One has to 'complement' the Gobbelsian methods of Hindu right, which has concocted this offensive slogan, far removed from the truth.

What about the propagation that Muslims do not practice family planning? In Islamic countries like Turkey and Indonesia family planning methods are quite popular. In Turkey for example 63 percent of the population in the reproductive age group uses contraception and in Indonesia the figure is 48 percent. In India the number of Muslim couples in the child bearing age practicing family planning in 1980, 22.5 percent (Hindus 36.1percent) Operation Research Group, Baroda 1981).

Thus the number of additional Muslims taking to family planning is keeping pace with the number of Hindus doing the same. Like all other social programmes family planning is also linked with socio-economic status, level of general social awareness etc. We will be repeatedly encountering this fact that a large number of Muslims being in the low socio-economic strata share these statistics more with other socially disadvantaged sections of society.

Narendra Modi's use of abusive and abrasive language to distort the demographic facts in a way does not come as a surprise as it has been the major fodder on which the communalism has been feeding itself. Whatever be the implications of such statements, it is sure that the communal politics will keep resorting to such myths to strengthen itself. ●

Science And Technology In Islamic Perspective

Islam is the only religion which comprehensively deals with both spiritual as well as material aspects of life and calls upon man to reap the benefits of both the worlds alike. No other religion provides such a comprehensive concept of life. Viewed objectively, some religions like Judaism advocates only the temporal benefits and neglect the spiritual aspects completely. Thus there is no clear concept of the hereafter in Judaism.

Contrary to this, certain other religions condemn this world and its mundane aspects, and plead only for the spiritual achievements. Christianity is one such religion, according to which this is the original sin that started life on the earth. For this, man is condemned perennially. Indian religions also lack the concept of veneration of man and his vicegerency on the earth. Buddhism presents a negative ideology of life. Thus, supporting civilization and enveloping it apart, these religions either ideas of condemnation, Islam is the only religion which elevates man to his real status and considers him as the most revered creation of this earth. It bode and stresses the importance of seeking worldly benefits along with the spiritual ones. The Qur'an asserts:

"And now have We given honour to the children of Adam: by land and by sea do We carry them: We provide food for them of goodly things and have made them to excel many of those whom we have created." (Qur'an 17-70)

Muhammad Shahabuddin Nadwi

According to Islam, man is the crown of the creation and is the leader in this world. The whole universe with all its manifestations has been created for his benefit alone.

"It is He Who created for you all things that are there on earth." (Qur'an. 2:29)

Islam and Science

Man has not been created as an accursed being, as reprobate or as a slave. Blessed with the freedom of will and choice, he has been bestowed a central and responsible position on earth. This concept has been expressed in the Qur'an through the term 'vicegerency of earth'. This is the reason why when Adam was created as the vicegerent on earth, was acquainted according to the Divine Plan with all the beings of universe immediately after his creation so that he should not remain ignorant with any of the natural Phenomena.

The celebrated commentators of the Quran have rightly pointed out, while explaining the verse "And He taught Adam the names of all things." (Qur'an,2:31) that Almighty Allah had taught Adam with the names and characteristic of all the things present on earth. To quote a few of them, Ibn Kathir states that Allah had taught Adam all the things and their characteristics.

According to Imam Zamakhshari, besides the names, Adam was even taught the connected

things as well as their spiritual and mundane worth.

And according to Imam Razi, Adam was taught the names of all things including their characteristics and definitions.

To sum up, 'the science of names was bestowed with what was the first knowledge the human race was conferred with through the First Man. The significance of this science is more vivid and prominent in the present days rather than in the first days of creation, What are called as the Natural Sciences these days are nothing but the 'Science of Name' in the Qur'anic terminology which was imparted to man immediately after his creation. The main purpose of this dissipation of knowledge was to enable man to accomplish the task of vicegerency on earth and establish a just and honourable rule in accordance with the Will of the Almighty. Addressing Prophet Dawood (peace be on him) Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an.

"O Dawood! We have made you our vicegerent on earth. Judge, therefore, aright between men and yield not to any inclination of your own lest it cause you to turn aside from the way of Allah." (Qur'an 38:26)

Man's Vicegerency

It is thus the fundamental concept of Islam that man is the most respectable and dignified creation of this universe and that after his appointment as the vicegerent on earth, he was bestowed with the Science of Name so that he comprehend the true value and status of every being and behave with it accordingly and establish divine justice by eliminating suppression, cruelty, internecine rivalry and rebellion from

among the nations and individuals and ensure a peaceful atmosphere for the fuller growth of the whole mankind.

Respectably citing the death and destruction of the previous nations due to their disobedience, the Qur'an has warned man to keep in view in any case the basic object of his creation and vicegerency on earth and not to deviate from the divine will. Accordingly, Allah warns man in the Qur'an:

"How many generations of people before you did We not cause to perish when they had acted wickedly, despite the fact that their apostles had come to them with clear proofs (of their mission), and they would not even them believe (in the truth advanced)? Thus do We deal out to the wicked what they deserved in return. It is then that We have caused you to succeed them in the land that We might see how you will act." (Qur'an 10:13-14)

Let us examine the Islamic concept of technology. In simple words Technology means knowledge about industry, arts and crafts. The difference between science and technology is that while the former makes a study of the materials in the universe with reference to their composition, structure, properties and materials in the universe with reference to their composition, structure, properties and changes, the latter utilizes this knowledge to practical ends. Thus, it makes use of the inherent utilitarian values of the materials.

Viewed objectively, there are two stages of deriving benefits. First is the true recognition of the materials. Second is the stages where this

knowledge is put to practical purpose to derive benefit and safeguard one self from its damaging characteristics. As far as the first stage is concerned, Islam accepts the concept of acquiring knowledge about things keeping in view the vicegerency factor. In fact, it encourages the human beings to strive to secure detailed knowledge about everything under the sky. It is evident from many verses in the Qur'an:

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and in the alteration and of night and day are sings for those gifted with understanding." (Qur'an, 3: 19) "Cannot they mark the working of the heavens and the earth, and the life everything that Allah has created." (Qur'an, 7: 185)

These and similar verses were revealed basically supporting divinity and contradicting. It is very much apparent that they encourage the study of the nature and scientific developments in the first pace. Even the second level of learning has been advocated in Qur'an:

"Do you not notice how Allah has pressed to your service all that is in the skies (in the space) and all that is the earth and has been bounteous to you of His favours so as to benefit you) both seen and unseen." (Qur'an, 30: 20)

Different exegeses of the Qur'an have attributed different meanings to the 'seen' and 'unseen' favours here. "But a comparatively better explanation has been provided by Imam Zamakhshari. He says: By 'seen' meant every favour that could be observed, and by 'unseen' is meant any favour or blessing that could be realized through inference or that which need not be understood at all. Even the human body

is blessed with innumerable such favours which man does not know."

The above explanation about the seen and unseen blessings is one perspective. However, taken as a whole, the possible right meaning of the seen favours that have been known understood right from Adam to the present times; and the unseen favours would include all such benefits that lays hidden in the material things.

From this point of view, the unseen favours include the hidden, mysteries of matter and energy and the benefits that could be drawn from them as a result of advancement in science which the present-day man in science which as various chemical compounds that are artificial foods, medicines, fertilizers and other things.

It has become amply clear that Islam stands for the advancement in science and technology and developing culture. Viewed objectively, it is the only religion that has not only established the true relationship between religion and civilization, but has also drawn attention towards the study of theoretical and practical sciences alike urging the Muslims to explore and subjugate the universe. As an example consider the following verse:

"Allah it is Who has subjected the sea to you that ships may traverse it at His command (or in accordance with the laws of movements on water fixed by Him); and that you may seek His bounty and be thankful (to Him). And He has subjected to you all that there is in the heavens and all that there is in the earth. Everything is from Him. (Qur'an, 45: 12-13). ●

Demonisation Through Demography

Ram Puniyani

One of the major factors in perpetuation of communal violence is the doctrine of the mass consciousness. The social common sense is manufactured in such a way that the targeted community is made to appear as the culprit. The classic case of 'Victim as Culprit'. And that's how so many myths percolate about the minorities. Apart from the historical myths the ones related to demographics are playing a dangerous role in the demonization of Muslims in particular. In a way what Mr. Modi said is nothing new as far as social common sense is concerned. Modi's statement during his Gaurav Yatra about Muslims: "We are five and we will have 25 off springs... For this, we have to teach a lesson to those who are increasing the population at an alarming rate.", has invited serious criticism from all the quarters.

As such what are the facts behind the Ham Panch Hamare Pachis, (Aderogatory reference to Muslims' attitude towards family Planning etc.- We are five, one husband-four wives, twenty Children) Does demographic data support Modi's claim, which comes in handy especially before the riots to build up the atmosphere. The census surveys by religion totally negate this firmly held popular belief. Religion is one of the markers used in these surveys. As

per 1971 survey Hindus constituted 82.7 percent and Muslims 11.2 percent of the population. The corresponding figures for 1991 census are Hindus 82.6 percent and Muslims 11.4 percent (Malayalam Manorama, 1992). The marginal difference in the growth pattern as we will see a bit later has more to do with socioeconomic factors rather than the religious ones. Over all, this statistics shows a reasonably 'stable' (religion wise) population. The detailed analysis shows that the rise in population is more amongst the poor and illiterate sections of society.

Similarly what about Muslims having, four wives. Is it possible at all? On first count it is immaterial whether a man is having one or more wives as the total number of children depends on the number of women, which does not get influenced by polygamy. The prevalent male/female ratio cannot permit the 'luxury' of four wives to the Muslim males unless three-fourth (75percent) of them go without marriage. As per 1981 census the male/female ratio for Muslims was 1.068 and for Hindus 1.072 i.e. for every 1000 Muslim females there are 1068 Muslim males. One has to conceive of gigantic mental acrobatics, in the light of these statistics, to believe that all Muslim

males can have four wives.

As such a slightly earlier but relevant statistics of polygamy (1961 census report) totally smashes the myth of Muslim polygamy; unless the social trends have worsened drastically, which obviously have not. As per this the incidence of polygamy is highest among the Adivasis (1.525) followed by Buddhists (7.9), Jains (6.72) Hindus 5.80) and to behold, followed by Muslims (5.70). Research carried out by Mallika B.Mistry of Gokhle Institute of Pune, concludes "there is no evidence that the percentage of polygamous marriage (among Muslims) is larger than for Hindus". A comparison of nuptiality patterns for Hindus and Muslims shows great similarity, the incidence of polygamy has been declining among both Hindus and Muslims.

From the above it will be interesting to draw the religion based fertility patterns. These patterns differ within Muslim community itself, they vary from region to region as per the socio-economic and educational levels of the community concerned. Those in the better socio-economic and educational ladder have lesser population increase, while those on the lower rungs of socio-economic educational ladder have higher rate of population growth. This conforms to regional, urban and rural distribution as well. Birth rates in Malabar region of Kerala, whose Muslim population is 40 percent, is significantly lower than those in Uttar Pradesh with a Muslim population of Kashmir, a Muslim

majority state. Here the fertility rate of Hindus almost twice that of Muslims. Here again the birth rate was lower 31.4 (per thousand) than in U.P (36.5), MP 36.4, Bihar 34.8 and Rajasthan 33.4.

We have to realize that the overall rate of population increase in educationally and socially advanced states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka is lower, both for Muslims and Hindus, compared to the rest of the country.

Also let us have look at urban rural divide. More than one third of the Muslims community is concentrated in the peripheral and decaying areas of urban economic life. Incidence of urban poverty is higher among them by 17 percent (vis-à-vis Hindus). The number of Muslims living below poverty line is close to 65 percent. They are generally living in older areas of modern cities, which are well known for poor sanitation, lack of health facilities and basic amenities. On the top of this is 'ghettoising' them with the result that improvement in their lot is becoming more and more difficult.

Overall one observes that there are multiple factors determining the rate of population growth, religion being very low on weigh-tage scale, if it counts at all. Socio-economic betterment and education are the foremost factors helping in the control of population growth. Feeling of insecurity and poor socio-economic status counter the efforts to promote

Continued on page No 31

Human Rights in Islam

Badarul Islam

The Qur'an says that man is created in the best of moulds. God gave man best and purest nature. Hence it is the duty of man to preserve it. By making man vicegerent of Allah, his position is elevated above all creatures. With this man is given another honour by subjugating other creatures to him.

This honoured position of man coupled with the concept of Tauheed (Oneness of God) gives man the desired freedom, which guarantees his dignified position. The Qur'an strongly condemns those who after having been given such an elevated and honoured position coupled with best nature and for whom all other creatures have been subjugated, violate his position in any way.

It is not possible to understand nature and importance of human rights unless we understand the exalted position of man whose life, property, dignity and honour, etc 'all are protected.

Another aspect the Qur'an deals in detail is the humble origin of man. By this and the concept of man's trusteeship, all things belong to God and all matters return to Him. The Qur'an wants that man should not become arrogant and hauteur. Egoism should not creep into his self by which he dares to violate the rights of others.

Perfect Equality

As far as the protection and

discharging human rights are concerned the Qur'an establishes a perfect equality among all men. No partiality or excuse has a way in it. When the matters of protection of human life, property, dignity and honour security of personal / private life social and economic rights are concerned there is on scope for differentiation among men. It is the case where the freedom of speech equality and justice is concerned. The Qur'an commands its followers not to discriminate men in matters of human rights on the basis of colour, caste, creed, religion, geographical area rich, or poor, strong or weak Muslim or non-Muslim supporter and opponents etc.

Justice: A fundamental Right

To get justice is a fundamental right particularly it becomes more important when it becomes the last means to protect human rights. The Qur'an at various places enjoins Muslims to behave with all people in a just manner even when the near and dear ones may come under the scanner of justice. An Islamic Government is bound to establish justice for all citizens without any discrimination. Really speaking establishment of justice should be the fundamental duty and purpose of the Islamic government

Muslims were strictly enjoined that no enmity or hostility whatsoever it may be should come in the way of

justice. They have to do justice even with their enemies. The verses 5:8; 57:25 support the above contentions.

Duties and Rights

The Qur'anic outlook about human rights is that everyone should honestly discharge his duties regarding others, which of course are their rights. Thus if everyone discharges his duties in the social setup then there will be no need of demanding rights. This does not mean that struggle for getting fundamental rights. But the point is that the Qur'an moulds a mental and positive set up and wants to establish a society wherein there is no need to cry for rights since one's duty is other's right.

The Qur'an reminds the rich personas:

And in their wealth and possessions (was remembered) the right of the (needy) him who asked and him who (for some reason) was prevented (from asking),

Legal Aspect of Human Rights

In Islam human rights are neither defensive nor protective in nature to save the poor citizens from powerful rulers. According to Islamic view both the rulers and subjects are bound by an agreement of obedience to God. Here God Himself fixes the rights and duties and both of them are supposed to obey these commandments in their respective circles. Human rights in Islam are part of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Tradition of prophet Muhammad). That is why they are "irrevocable". The rights and duties never clash with each other. Thus the human rights become divine and eternal

In case of their violation an individual is free to seek intervention by the competent court. They become fundamental rights of man which not only include right to protection of life but right to equality and justice freedom of speech and freedom of faith. They also include the rights of gene, the right of newborn to sucking, the right of women to her dower (Meher) etc. These commands are termed hudud-ullah (limits set by God).

Special Protection to Non-Muslims

Thus it is evident that in the matter of human rights, Islam does not discriminate between believers and non-believers. It would be better to see in brief the special treatment non-Muslims enjoy in Islam about their fundamental rights.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Be aware, whoever exploits the non-Muslim subjects of Islamic government, violates their rights, or something from them without their consent, on the Day of Judgment I will plead their case."

Such strong warnings were not given even for Muslims, whereas in case of violation of non-Muslims' rights, Prophet Muhammad will fight for them. In the light of such serious remarks, who can dare to violate the rights of non-Muslims? Similar instructions are reported from the righteous caliphs also.

Non-Muslim writers noticed the effect of these teachings also. We see the testimony also. We see the testimony of Montgomery Watt about

Continued on page No 28

Around the World

French Police Fine Woman For Wearing Full Face Veil

French police fined a woman for wearing a full-face Islamic veil, the first reported enforcement of a ban on the garment on the day it came into effect, a police source said.

The young woman, born in 1983, was fined 150 euros "without incident" in a shopping centre in Mureaux, north-west of Paris, the source said, without elaborating on exactly what she was wearing.

France became the first country in Europe to apply a ban on the wearing of full-face coverings, including the Islamic niqab.

At least two niqab-wearing women were arrested the same day for protesting the ban.

French police have voiced fears the law will be impossible to enforce, since they have not been empowered to use force to remove head coverings, and could face resistance in already tense immigrant districts.

But Interior Minister Claude Gueant insisted that the ban would be fully applied, in the name of "secularism and equality between men and women..."

"The police and the gendarmerie are there to apply the law and they will apply the law," he said. ●

Israel Freezes Transfer of Funds to PA

The Israeli Minister Yuval Steinitz on May 1 announced that the treasury has frozen the routine transfer of taxes and fees it collects for the Palestinian Authority (PA) until Israel knows that the money will not end up in the hands of Hamas. Steinitz

told Israel Army Radio that some 300 million Israeli shekel (\$88 million) that were to have been transferred this week to PA will now stay in Israeli hands until it becomes clear the funds will not reach the coffers of "the Hamas terrorist organisation." Under the Oslo Accords, Israel collects tax and customs duties worth more than \$1 billion a year on behalf of the PA, making up some two-thirds of the entity's annual budget.

At the beginning of 2001, during the second intifada, Israel withheld more than \$50 million in taxes it owed the Palestinians in order to force the PA to crack down on Palestinian armed groups.

Meanwhile, Deputy Parliament speaker of Palestine Ahmad Bahar has condemned Israel's lobbying against a Palestinian unity pact and called on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah movement to dismiss all "Israeli threats." "Israel's threats and the US President Barack Obama administration's policy will not stand in the way of the Palestinians' interest or their cause," Bahar said in a statement stressing the need to oppose such behaviour in the interest of unity. ●

40,000 Hike In Hajj Quota

India is hoping to send around 20,000 pilgrims for this year's Hajj, the country's highest number ever for the annual pilgrimage. However, it depends on the Ministry of Hajj approving a request for an increased quota of 40,000. If the quota request is approved, India will rank second after Indonesia in terms of the number of Hajj pilgrims. ●

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