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The Fragrance of East

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Wisdom of Qur'an

And when We substitute a verse in place of another verse and Allah knows what He should reveal- they say, 'You are but a forger.' Rather, most of them know not. (Surah al-Nahl- 101)

Commentary:

The reference is to abrogation, either of the text, or the meaning. That is, either a verse is taken away from memory so that people cannot recall it anymore, after having known it, or, its meaning is declared abrogated and replaced by another verse.

That is, Allah (SWT) knew the wisdom behind abrogation.

There were several points of wisdom behind abrogation in early Islam. One e.g., was to try out the earliest followers, and see if they remained true to their faith or, were they betaken by doubts when abrogation came. In this manner, a band of tested and purified men and women was created who submitted to everything that Allah and His Messenger commanded. By virtue of that they became a body that could be followed as ideal by the later generation Muslims. They can be emulated, but never overtaken in piety and obedience. Another reason was that for centuries human societies lived a certain kind of life: the most beastly kind. Their situation could only be changed gradually. That required allowing certain things in the early stages of change and development, to be disallowed later. Later generations would not need the same measures because, the individuals of later generations would open their eyes, or enter as new Muslims, into an already transformed society, in which they would not need to struggle against the rest of the world to follow Islam (Au.). It is stated in "*Kashf*" that Allah (SWT) brought this verse immediately after instruction to seek refuge from Satan for the reason that to many readers of the Qura'n abrogation in early Islam is a source of grave doubts (Alusi).

Pearls From the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is related by Zaid bin Talha; he relates that the Apostle of God said: "Every religion has a distinctive quality, and the distinctive quality of Islam is modesty."

-Muwatta, Ibn-i-Maja and Baihaqi

Commentary:

It shows that in every faith or canonic law, some particular aspect of moral behaviour receives paramount attention and an extraordinary emphasis is laid on it. Thus, compassion and forbearance from the cardinal point of the teachings of Jesus. In Islam, in the same way, modesty is of fundamental significance.

It needs however, be emphasized that the word 'modesty' is used in a very wide sense in the special terminology of the Quran and Traditions. In the common usage, what it signifies, simply, is that a man avoided lewdness and kept away from lustful and indecent acts. But, in Islam, it appears that it stands for a state of feeling which is intolerant of everything that is not desirable and produces a reaction of disgust and agony within anyone who, knowingly or unknowingly, falls into an error or behaves in a manner having a semblance of sinfulness.

We learn, further, from the Quran and the Traditions that modesty is not in relation merely to our own species, but the greatest claim, on it, is of the Supreme Being who created man and is sustaining him, from moment to moment, and from whom nothing is hidden. Or, let us take it this way. A modest man is, generally, inclined to feel shy in the presence of his parents and other elders and benefactors, and God being the King of Kings and the Benefactor of Benefactors, the bondsman should, naturally, be modest and humble, in the highest degree, in respect of Him, the primary requirement of which will be that he felt pain and therefore, abstained from it.

Editor's Note:

Subservience

It is our every day observation that a faithful, obedient and loyal servant always remain attentive and keep his master in good mood. The relationship between the two remains cordial and reciprocal. On the other hand a mischievous subordinate gets the wrath and suffers.

Applying this analogy to our relationship with the Creator of the world we find that those who follow the way of those on whom Though has bestowed Thy grace. Those whose (portion) is not wrath, And who go not astray enjoy the fruits of a pious life. In this context one has to go deep into the study of Islam because it is the religion which has been preserved in its pristine form. Prophets whose list is long and some of them were favoured with Divine books did their best to create a serene and loveable environment but after their passing away their followers again gone astray, made changes in the Divine books. The credit of spreading peace and message of God in its original form goes to the last prophet. While the Creator bestowed the honour of making Mohammad (PBUH) "*Khatim un-Nabeen*" also favoured him by entrusting the gospel of Islam, the Holy Quran. It is a book revealed by Allah. Its words as well as their intended meaning are all from Him. It is complete and safe from interpolation and change.

S.Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH) has rightly said that Islam-the religion propagated by the Prophet (PBUH) means surrendering oneself totally and unconditionally to God. The rules of religion, in Islam, are applicable to life in total. To appreciate this fact one has to duly comprehend the relationship of man with God as enunciated in Islam. Every Muslim, according to the teachings of Islam, is a faithful bondsman of God. His relationship with Him is permanent and comprehensive. The Holy Quran says:

O, ye who believe! enter into Islam wholeheartedly: and follow not the footsteps of the Evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy. (11: 208)

So the Islam demands complete subservience to God, any deviation may lead to disaster. Man's misdeeds inevitably call forth the operation

of Divine's law. The result of man's willful disobedience is described in the Holy Quran in a series of metaphors. (1) Refusal of God's light means less and less freedom of action for man: the yoke of sin is fastened round man's neck, and it gets more and more tightened, right upto the chin. (2) The head is forced up and kept in a stiff position, so that the mind becomes befogged. Moral obliquity traits the intellect. The iniquity not only is fully, but leads deeper and deeper into folly, narrowness of vision and blindness to the finer things of life. (3) This state of deprivation of Grace leads to such a decline in spiritual vitality that the victim can neither progress nor turn back.

However, for those who completely submit themselves to the mercy of God there are promises as well. In S 61 A12 Quran says. He will forgive you your sins and admit you to Gardens beneath which river flows and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity that is indeed the supreme Triumph . •

SA

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Islam

Meaning, Nature and Scope

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Islam means surrendering oneself totally and unconditionally to Allah. In Islam the rules of religion are applicable to life in total. This fact can not be fully appreciated unless one duly comprehends the relationship of man with God as enunciated in Islam. According to the teachings of Islam, every Muslim is a faithful bondsman of Allah. His relationship with Allah is permanent and comprehensive. It is deep as well as wide, personal as well as general. It is related in the Quran:

*O ye who believe! enter into Islam
wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil
one, for he is to you an avowed enemy.*

{II: 208}

In Islam there is no division of loyalty, or reservation of any kind. It does not entertain any division such as "this is mine and that is thine"; or "one share for the state, the other for God, and the third for the family and tribe"; or "one part for religion and one for politics". In Islam all belongs to Allah. In it all endeavours of a Muslim are essentially worship. A Muslim stands in front of his Lord as a bondsman totally dependent on His mercy. The teachings of Islam cover life in totality. Nobody is allowed to introduce any change in them. Even the greatest scholar or Islamic leader of time has no right to introduce a change in an Islamic injunction if it is explicitly laid down in the Quran as final.

Allah requires from believers that they practice Islam fully, not partially as they do now-a-days. Unfortunately, Muslims in general have now moved quite far away from the teachings of Islam in, for example, codes of culture, customs of marriage, and traditions of inheritance. There are Muslims whose understanding of the tenets of the Islamic faith is clear and correct, but they are negligent toward practicing even obligatory deeds of worship. There are, on the other hand, others who observe Islamic injunctions both in matters of faith and worship, but they remain highly untrustworthy in morals and

dealings. They do not miss an opportunity to deceive: they dishonestly measure and weigh their goods less while selling, cheat their business partners, and cause trouble to their neighbours. The true teachings of Islam are, nevertheless, clearly related in the following traditions of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him:

*"A Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue
other Muslims are safe."*

and

*"None of you is a true believer unless his
neighbour is safe from his mischief".*

Unfortunately, there are some Muslims who have wrongly excluded dealings and morals from religion. They think that Islam as a religion comprises only the tenets of belief and rituals of worship. They, thus, remain heedless, for example, to the value of honesty in dealings. Fulfillment of a promise, carefulness in dealing with a trust, and honesty in giving due share to the rightful, which are essential teachings of Islam, have no meaning for them. They feel free in disregarding others' just claims on them, do not observe religious rules in dealings, and do whatever suits their mundane interest.

The companions of the Prophet of Allah who were groomed under the special disciplinary care of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, observed the teachings of Islam in total and emerged as true living models of Islam. Their lives-belief, worship, morals, celebrations, earnings, and ways of governing a state fully corresponded to the injunctions of the Islamic Shari'a

Value of Faith in Islam

The value of man's bondsmanship to his Lord is based on the correctness of his faith. If a person's faith is incorrect, his deeds, even his worship, are not acceptable to Allah. But if his faith is correct, even a small number of good deeds may suffice for his eternal salvation. Thus, the most important obligation of a Muslim is to learn about things in which he has to believe and which he has to practise. These tenets of faith are fundamental in order for a person to qualify as a Muslim. They

are commonly shared by Muslims throughout the world and are as follows.

Oneness of Allah (*Tawheed*)

Belief in Oneness of Allah is the first and foremost tenet of the Islamic faith. It does not leave any space for an intermediary between the worshipper and his Lord in matters of worship and supplication. It also does not allow any room for belief in the diversity of gods, or in the existence of a person as God's reflection, or in God merging with any of His creatures to become one with him. Instead, in Islam a believer clearly confesses that there is no God but Allah, the Almighty, the Independent. He has no father, no son, and no associate of any kind. He alone is the Creator of the universe, exercises complete administration of the world, and holds full control of land and the sky. He does not need help from any body.

Allah has always existed and shall exist for ever. His attributes are perfect, worthy of praise and glory. He is above all limitations and weaknesses, whatsoever. His knowledge encompasses all and everything. This whole universe came into existence at His will. He is the Living, the Hearing, the Seeing. There is none like Him. He alone deserves worship, the highest manifestation of reverence. It is He Who cures the sick, provides sustenance to creatures, and removes hardship from the suffering. To take anything except Allah as deity, to bow or prostrate in front of it in devotion, and to supplicate to it for favours which are only in Allah's power (for example, granting a baby, bringing luck, reaching a devotee for help anywhere, hearing everything from any distance, and knowing the secrets of heart) is called, in Islamic terminology, Shirk (polytheism). It is most serious sin which is not forgiven unless the person committing it offers sincere repentance.

It is related in the Quran that Allah's power is such that when He intends to do a thing, He simply says "Be", and it becomes (Yassen: 82). He does not dwell in any specific place or direction. Whatever He wills comes to pass, for nothing can ever happen against His will. He is absolutely independent. Nobody can order Him for anything or question Him about any of his actions. Wisdom is His attribute and all

His actions reflect wisdom, ultimately leading to good. None except Him is the true Lord.

Fate, good or bad, has been decreed by Allah. He knows in advance things that are to happen in the future and causes them to come to pass.

He has created the Angels, who are high in rank and close to Him in relationship. The Devils (Shayateen) are also His creatures who are a source of evil for mankind. He has also created the Jinns.

The Quran is a book revealed by Allah. Its words as well as their intended meaning are all from Allah. It is complete and safe from interpolation and change. A person who believes that an addition or deletion had taken place in it is not a Muslim.

It is true that the dead will be brought to life again on an appointed day. Accountability, reward, and punishment are true. The Heaven and the Hell exist in reality.

It is true that Allah sent prophets to mankind in the world. It is also true that Allah sent His commandments to inform and educate His bondsmen through the prophets. Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, is the last of Allah's prophets. No prophet will be sent after him. The message brought by him is for the whole world. In this exceptional privilege and on some other points of preference, he excels all other prophets. The faith of a person in Islam is not valid and complete unless he affirms faith in the prophethood of Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. No other religion is acceptable to Allah and can ensure salvation in the hereafter. Nobody is exempted on account of his piety and godliness from following the injunctions of the Islamic Shari'a.

Abu Bakr Siddique was the rightly chosen Imam and Khalifa, vicegerent, after Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. After Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Usman bin Affan, and Ali bin Abi Talib were all rightly chosen to this office. The companions of the Prophet are the leaders of the Muslims in religion. It is forbidden to mention them in a derogatory way. It is obligatory on Muslims to hold them in esteem and respect.●

Indo-Muslim Medicine

Seema Alavi*

Unani and the Dar al-Islam: Eighth-Fifteenth Centuries

In the period of the classical empires of Islam (eighth to thirteenth centuries), an integrated Islamic world system flourished that was knotted together by trade politics, and cultural contact. Scholars and traders moved with ease along trading and cultural contours that spanned the Middle East, Central Asia and China, and included the Indian Ocean area. India was thus very much part of this world. It did not fall under the political hegemony of the Islamic empires, but it was part of the trading and cultural ambit of what Muslims called the Dar al-Islam.

Dar al-Islam was important not only for trade of commodities but also for the trade in ideas. Knowledge of medicine, in particular, was of immense interest to the caliphs of the Islam empires. Medical ideas were appropriated from the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition represented by Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen. During their early contact with the Christian Byzantine empire and the Iranian Sasanian empire, Muslims found this intellectual system flourishing in conquered lands. They appropriated it and made it part of their intellectual legacy. In the famous medical institution at Jundi Shapur, In south-west Persia, for example, Christian and Jewish physicians upheld the humoral theory of health derived from Hippocrates and Aristotle. They also acknowledged their intellectual debt to Galen, the physician who practised in Rome in the first century AD.

This Graeco-Roman medicine that politically expanding Islam adopted was represented largely as a form of Galenism. This

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meant a synthesis of the various Greek philosophical influences that had shaped Galen's notion of human procreation and the body. Galen's ideas derived from Greek culture and cosmology, which itself was rooted in the maintenance of a primarily agrarian political economy and territorial control by the ruler. Thus, Galen appropriated the idea of the world as divided between the 'spheres' or planets. These had perfect form and movement, but neither generation nor decay. According to Galen there was sublunar half to the world in which form and matter were continuously in transformation. Like Hippocrates, he saw the earth as located in the sublunar sphere, where nature conditioned generation. He explained the functioning of nature's laws using Aristotle's understanding, which was structured around a series of oppositions and correspondences: hot and cold, wet and dry. In this Galen was influenced by the analogical reasoning of Greek cosmology which treated the universe as a macrocosm perfectly reflected in the human microcosm. Thus he, like Aristotle and Hippocrates, believed that the human body ours that had to be kept in balance with the elements of nature so as of the mixing of two opposites: hot semen and cold ovum. Health, as framed by Greek cosmology, was very much part of social well being, the human body being dependent on the maintenance of a balance within nature.

So, the Greek medical theory that Muslims came in contact with was structured on a philosophical understanding of the working of nature as propounded by an associated with Aristotle. Primarily a political theorist, Aristotle's medical ideas mirrored the concerns of his political theory of governance. His spotlight on nature brought into salience the role of the king, who was meant to manage and administer the bounties of nature so as to maintain social equilibrium. The kingdom was like the body and the king its main physician. Just as the humoral equilibrium of the body had to

be maintained for good health, so social equilibrium in society was to be engineered by a just king to maintain a stable polity. As the propagator of this theory Aristotle, the foremost political theorist, was revered in medical circles as well.

The Umayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258) showed immense interest in Greek medical and political philosophical literature. It became part of the core of their intellectual heritage. The caliphs Al Mansur, Harun Rashid, and Al Mamun were instrumental in translating the corpus of Greek and Syriac medical literature into Arabic and integrating this Graeco-Roman intellectual legacy of philosophy and medicine into the Arab sciences. Special departments, the Bayt-al Hikmat, were set up in Baghdad to oversee the translation and compilation of Graeco-Roman texts. Here Arab Christian physicians like Hunayan ibn Ishaq (808-73), and his son Ishaq and nephew Hubaysh, translated from Greek into Arabic texts such as Hippocrates' Aphorisms and Galen's *De Differentiis Februm* and *De Typis Februm*, among others.

In this period, medical knowledge came also to Damascus and Baghdad from India. Trade in Indian medicines between the Middle East and Hindustan had been in the hands of Arab traders much before the consolidation of the caliphate. But Indian medical texts also attracted the Persians and Arabs. In fact the physician Perzoes from the Sassanian empire had been dispatched to India to procure medical literature which was then translated into Persian. But it was in the period of the Umayyad and the Abbaasid caliphates that intellectual exchange of ideas in medicine and science between the two regions began in some earnest. Yahya bin Khalid, the Arab general who laid the foundation of the caliphate, not only invited Hindustani vaidas (medicine men) to Bagdad, but also sent a man there to collect information about plants and herbs. Such emissaries interacted with certain Brahmins, who were the

repositories of medicinal knowledge, which remained confined in family records. In the Abbasid caliphate, as early as in the reign of Caliph Mansur, an important intellectual from Hindustan is reported to have been in Baghdad and presented his medical book, Siddhanta, to the caliph. This kind of exchange increased in the time of his successor, Harun Rashid, who invited several vaidas from Hindustan to cure him of his illness. Many of them were associated with the department he set up to promote the collection of scholarly manuscripts of all disciplines the Bayt-al Hikmat. These included the famous Vaid ibn Saleh, Manka, Bazigar, Qalbarqal, Bahlah, Ibn Dhan, and Khatif Hindi. Two of these, Manka and Ibn Dhan, settled in Baghdad. Ibn Dhan was made the chief officer of the biggest hospital, or shifakhaana, in Baghdad, and he translated into Arabic the famous Sanskrit books on Ayurveda Sushruta on surgery and Sameeka on the sures for poisons. Large-scale translations of Sanskrit medical literature into Arabic went on under the aegis of the Bayt-al Hikmat in Baghdad. Manka translated into Persian a Sanskrit book on poisons Sarat, and Sanjahl, another Indian, translated the work of Charaka into Persian: the latter had already been translated into Arabic.

The Abbasids also dispatched men of learning to Hindustan to explore both texts and material medica. Harun Rashid's prime minister sent an agent to Hindustan to collect and bring back medicines in use there. Many such agents learnt Sanskrit, which they saw as the key to Indian medical knowledge. One such scholar was Muhammad bin Ismael Tanoji, an expert on the ninth-century physician who lived in Baghdad, al Razi. He lived in Hindustan for years, learnt Sanskrit, and gathered expertise in psychology (himyaat). And he was not alone. Since Indian courts in this period were also keen to hold discussions (munaazra) on culture and religion with foreigners, many scholars travelled to India with enthusiasm. They often ended up living in India and

translating Sanskrit texts into Arabic and vice versa. Al Beruni's was an important case in point. Via such travellers a rich literature age, which reflected this dialogue.

By the thirteenth century Unani medicine had acquired a truly global character that corresponded to the cultural, political, and trading contours of Dar al Islam. And because the contours of other civilizations, it could never be imprinted, Jewish, Hindu, and a range of other civilizations, it could be imprinted only with the seal of Islam. Indeed it took on the flavour of the different civilizations over which it expanded. In the Indian context, therefore, it can be safely called Indo-Muslim medicine. However, it is more generally known as Unani in the subcontinent. This is because the Muslims acknowledged its cultural heterogeneity and christened their medical tradition on the name of the country they had adopted it from Greece. And hence the name 'Yunani' or Unani, i.e. Greek. The truly global and trans-religious character of Unani was best reflected in the names of medicines that Unani offered: Qist-I-Hindi (qist from Hindustan), Saazakh-I-Hindi, Aaloo Abukhaara (fruit from Bukhara), Ajwain-I-Khurasani (ajwain from Khurasan), Salih-I-Misri (salih from Egypt), Namak-I-Lahori (salt from Lahore), Dar cheeni (herb from China), Gul-I-Armani (flower from Armenia), Gul-I-Multani (flower from Multan), Gul-I-Dakhghastani, Afsanteen-I-Rumi (afsanteen from Rome), Gulnaar-I-Farsee (fruit from Persia), Asgandi-i-Nagori (asgond from Nagor), etc.

This variety of medical influences stimulated Islamic authors to classify the borrowed Greek medical knowledge in large encyclopaedic medical works. This huge compendium of medical literature in Arabic included not just translations of Hippocrates and Galen but also many lesser works written later and attributed to them. The encyclopaedic compendiums borrowed freely from earlier works and did not always acknowledge their sources, a

classic example being the enormously influential Canon of Medicine (al Qanun fi tibb) by Ibn Sina (Avicenna). The text stands at the end of a long tradition of Galenic scholarship that had formalized and idealized Galen's work, as Galen himself had done with Hippocrates.

Texts like the Canon that were compiled as anthologies of information culled from a variety of sources, and only occasionally containing references, became a characteristic fracture of medieval Islamic manuscript production. They were comparable to the florilegia (literally 'nosegays of readings') genre of anthological literature in medieval Europe. And, as in medieval Europe, in the Islamic florilegia literature reverence for ancient authority coincided with extraordinary indifference to textual authenticity. Thus, the famous Abbasid translator Hunain Ibn Ishaq is said to have translated or supervised the translation of more than 129 works of Galen into Arabic and Syriac. Many of these then appeared as fragments in other medical encyclopedic texts of Arab authors like al Jurjani and Avicenna (Ibn Sina). But many texts attributed to Galen in this list were not authentic, and were in fact spurious. Medieval medical encyclopaedic compendiums, often 'deauthorized, or attributed spurious authorship, 'decanonized', and 'detheorized' ancient authorities of knowledge even as they certified their own knowledge via the status of the knower or the source. Such texts in Arabic were stylistically austere. They offered nuggets of medical wisdom. And they delinked medicine from ideas about individual comportment.

Unani's medical rationality thus derived both from Graeco-Roman philosophical traditions as well as Ayurvedic ideas. This wide range of influences resulted in the development of a medical writing style that was encyclopedic and which did not necessarily acknowledge or accurately record its sources. This was particularly true in the borrowings legacy but remained unacknowledged. In

fact after al Razi Arab medical writers seldom made any reference to Indian medical works excepting Charaka and Sushruta, to which some of them referred in connection with drugs and medicaments. For instance Ibn Sina, in his encyclopaedic Canon, quotes Indian opinions only on the toxicity of leeches and only mentions the name of Charaka in connection with therapeutics. Al Razi is equally silent. Later medical encyclopaedias, like the twelfth-century Zakhirab-I-Khwarzmshahi of al Jurjani, are equally silent on Ayurvedic influences, even though they are so clearly visible, specially in their sections on surgery.

Of course, not acknowledging sources can be explained as being part of the medieval Islamic literary style; yet it also had to do with the fact that Unani's core, which lay entrenched in pre-Islamic philosophical traditions, had made it evolve as a system of medicine that saw itself separate from any distinct religio-cultural belief systems. In contrast, Ayurveda was entrenched in the Hindu idea that saw the physician the *vaid* as the incarnation of God. Thus, the most famous *vaid*, the physician Charaka, was seen as the incarnation of the Hindu serpent god with a hundred heads; and the surgeon Sushruta was seen to have divine powers as well because he was a student of the divine physician Dhanvantari who had been recovered from the ocean along with thirteen gems. Ayurveda had mixed notions of healing based on magic and superstition with psychosomatic cures of the Graeco-Roman type; but its links with Hindu spirituality remained. Unani therefore steered clear of the diagnostic theories of Ayurveda. It confined itself to benefiting from Ayurveda's surgical and pharmaceutical resources.

Unani medicine derived its cultural authority by combining ideas of Islamic cosmology and procreation with the health of society. Thus the Islamic formulation about the essential unity of being (*tauhid*), the Quranic idea of seven earths and heavens, the

Divine pedestal, and the Throne, and the sacred history and sacred geography that the Quran generated were integrated to Greek concepts of the universe, the latter being divided into a non-generative sphere and a sublunary sphere of generation and transformation (which included the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms). The essential unity of being (tauhid) so central to Islamic philosophy made it accept without problem the Aristotelian idea of the human body as a microcosm of the macrocosm represented by universe nature. In brief, unani medicine took over Greek ideas of nature's functioning to understand the health of the human body, and, like Greek medicine, saw health of the human body, and, like Greek medicine, saw health as part of both nature and social well being . In this manner, the sacred cosmology of Islam built itself on Greek cosmology and physiology and earned for itself a 'Cosmopolitan' cask.

In the period of classical Islam, Unani remained very protective about its Graeco-Roman intellectual legacy and the humoral theory central to health. The four humours red and black bile, blood, and phlegm had to be balanced for good health. These had also to be in harmony with the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The idea of a porous body conditioned by its environment was the key to Unani diagnostics and therapeutics. To this basic idea was added the knowledge of Aristotle's rationality, which focused on the functioning of organs, and Galen's contribution to human anatomy.

The development of Unani as a mechanistic medicine separated from religion and deriving from pre-Islamic philosophical traditions caused a clash with theologians and those who saw medicine as a cul-tural system of beliefs embedded in the Quran and the Hadith (traditions of the Prophet). And theologians were not the only opponents. As Islamic mysticism Sufism grew in

popularity respectability in the later Abbasid caliphate, its thinkers attributed healing powers to saints and shrines and questioned the claims of medicine. For instance, the prominent Sufi thinker al Ghazali of the twelfth century was a staunch critic of medicine.

The rejection of Unani by the theocracy traditionalists was particularly strong towards the end the Abbasid caliphate. This period saw in the hakim a serious lack of true faith. A religion vs medicine debate was triggered at the end of the period of the caliphates. As the debate picked up, a defence of medicine began by people who claimed religion for medicine. A certain Abd-al-Wadud son of Abd-al-Malik, who lived in this period, wrote an essay translatable as 'the blamelessness of making a living in this period, wrote an essay translatable as 'the blamelessness of making a living from the craft of medicine' (Fi Dhamm at-takassub bi-sina at at tibb). Here, he argues that medicine cannot be seen as ant-ireligion since its subject (maudu) is man the noblest of God's creation. This he argues, not only makes medicine fall within the framevork of religion, but also renders it the noblest of crafts. And there were many others who defended medicine in this manner.

The most strident resistance to Unani came from a competitive movement based on indigenous Arab medical traditions. These traditions were sanctified by being attributed to the Holy Prophet who may have given medical advice occasionally. This medical tradition referred to the Quran and the Hadith as the highest referents of legitimacy and transformed tribal Bedouin medical lore into an intrinsic part of the holy legacy of the Prophet. This Islamically inspired medical system is referred to by anthropologists and historians as Prophetic medicine, and it competed with the Arabic-Persian or Galenic-driven Unani.

By the fourteenth century, exclusive texts on Prophetic medicine began to be written as a genre of medical literature, separate from Unani. These derived from the Hadith compendium. As Prophetic medicine came into its own, it expanded on the Hadith works and ran into innumerable volumes. Each sometimes 400 pages. Its texts aimed to counter the authority of Galenic medicine via its appropriation of the Prophet's

authority and to thus weaken the hold of physicians. This literature was written by traditionalists who were attempting to spiretualize and Islamicize medicine, deploying the Quran and the Hadith. They steered clear of medical theory and instead offered advice and prescriptions on the prevention of disease. They also tried to make medicine comprehensible and accessible to the layman. They defined health in the Islamic tradition to mean spiritual, psychological, physical, and moral well being. Medication was not rejected, but was seen as a part of this Islamic notion of well being. Thus the two fourteenth century authors, Ibn Qayyuim al Jauziya and al Surramarri, were among the early contributors to the genre of Prophetic medicine. These authors in fact combined divinely ordained medicines associated with the Prophet with those offered by medical pharmacopoeias.

Finally, the Greek and Indian imprint, rather than the Islamic influence, was most evident in the Unani theory of governance corresponding with a similarly structured political theory of governance. Such correspondence had been a feature of both Greeek and Indian political culture. The correspondence of medical and political theories of governance had, as we saw, been a running theme in Greek philosophy whereby Aristotle made the king alert to the maintenance of the physical health of both his physical body and that of his body politic or kingdom. Unaani found this idea replicated in Ayurveda, where , as we saw, medical texts and texts on politics the Dharmashastras were put together by the same Brahmaical castes to consolidate the position of high-caste kings. This idea of medical theory aiding a political theory of governance found echoes in Islamic theories of political governance as well, penned by Muslim philosophers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi in the thirteenth century. Muzaffar Alam has shown that the akhlaaq genre of Persian literature, which discussed theories of governance in Islamic lands, discussed shariat in its non-juridical sense, and defined justice (adl) using the terminology of medical rationality derived from Greek philosophical traditions. Thus, a just society was a healthy society; justice was defined as a state of social harmony, co-ordination, and balance between different classes; as the maintenance of the equilibrium of a healthy body was the job of the physician, the role or the king lay in ensuring social balance.●

Islam Shaping a New Europe

Evan Osnos

Butchered piglets hang in tidy rows at the open-air market, and shoppers haggle over cheese and oysters in a scene hardly altered since the last Bourbon king was buried at the Gothic church on the corner. But slip out of the market on a Friday, and a quarter-mile up the road you will find a very different France: Hundreds of Muslims squeezed hip to hip into an unheated canvas tent, bowing in sacred silence toward Mecca, the birthplace of Islam, which few of them have ever seen.

The worshipers at this makeshift mosque on the edge of Paris are men and women, dressed in the latest fashions and traditional robes, Arab, European and African. They are moderate, conservative and fundamentalist. They are first-, second- and third-generation immigrants. They are content and they are enraged. They are the future that Europe is straining to handle. What is happening in Europe may provide a partial preview of what lies ahead for the United States and its fast-growing Muslim population.

For the first time in history, Muslims are building large and growing minorities across the secular Western world—nowhere more visibly than in Western Europe, where their numbers have more than doubled in the past two decades. The impact is unfolding from Amsterdam to Paris to Madrid, as Muslims struggle with words, votes and sometimes violence to stake out their place in adopted societies.

Disproportionately young, poor and unemployed, they seek greater recognition and an Islam that fits their lives. Just as Egypt, Pakistan and Iran are witnessing the debate over the shape of Islam today, Europe is emerging as the battleground of tomorrow.

"The French are scared," said Tair Abbelkader, 38, a regular at the tented mosque whose light blue eyes and ebony beard are the legacy of a French mother and Algerian father. "In ten years, the Muslim community will be stronger and stronger, and French political culture must accept that."

By mid-century, at least one in five Europeans will be Muslim. That change is unlike other waves of immigration because it poses a more essential challenge: defining a modern Judeo-Christian-Islamic civilization. The West must decide how its laws and values will shape and be shaped by Islam.

For Europe, as well as the United States, the question is not which civilization, Western or Islamic, will prevail, but which of Islam's many strands will dominate. Will it be compatible with Western values or will it reject them?

Center-stage in that debate is France, home to the largest Islamic community on the continent, an estimated five million Muslims. Here the process of defining Euro-Islam is unfolding around questions as concrete as the right to wear head scarves and as abstract as the meaning of citizenship, secularisms and extremism. In some cases, conservative Muslims have refused to visit co-ed swimming pools, study Darwinism or allow women to be examined by male doctor.

One young St-Denis fundamentalist recently set off for Iraq (news-websites) and was captured fighting American troops in Fallujah. Stunned by stories like that, France is hoping to use the legal system to influence the direction of Islam within its borders.

The government has deported 84 people in the past six months on suspicion of advocating violence and drawn wide attention for banning head scarves and other religious symbols in public school. But even supporters of that tough approach concede that the measures can do little more than patch the widening cracks in Europ's image of itself.

"I'm not sure we'll go much further than gaining a few months or years" in the effort to limit Islam's imprint on France, said Herve Mariton, a member of the French Parliament who lobbied for the head scarf law. "That may be useful. But there is no way this is the ultimate answer to the challenge."

A new France

St.-Denis' narrow streets sweep outward from a soaring 12th Century basilica that is the final resting place for generations of French monarchs. But today their snowy stone statues stare down onto a city and nation in transformation.

The Muslim migration to Europe began in earnest after World War II, when North African workers arrived by the thousands to help rebuild the continent. A half-century later, no fewer than a third of St.-Denis' 90,000 residents are of Arab origin. Arabic script on butcher shops and storefronts touts halal meat, handled to Islamic standards. Couscous restaurants are as plentiful as brasseries. Muslim settlement houses usher in new immigrants, and Muslim funeral homes bid farewell to old ones.

Across the country, French Muslims still live more or less where the first arrivals settled a half-century ago, in suburban apartment blocks erected in the 1950s for foreign workers. These suburbs, the *bandlieues*, have become the byword for France's virtually segregated Muslim communities. The complexes used to be integrated, with polish, Italian and French workers living among North African arrivals, but over time the Europeans moved on - and the Arabs did not. It is a scene repeated across the suburbs of Paris.

"Gradually the French people left or died, and they were replaced by more people from North Africa," said Brigitte Fouvez, 55, deputy mayor in the neighboring town of Bondy. "The French people who stayed would say, 'You can smell the cooking in the

hallways,' and eventually they left too". Like other ethnic Europeans, Fouvez and her husband moved from Paris in 1978 in search of more room for their two children. She watched Bondy evolve. "Before, we had a charcuterie and a butcher," she said. "Now there are just three halal butchers, no fish shop anymore, no traditional French stores."

But those changes weren't nearly as startling as the sight of conservative Muslim women draped head to toe in dark chador robes - to Fouvez's eyes, "as black as crows."

Birth of an identity

Thirteen hundred years after the Frankish king Charles Martel repelled Muslim armies from the central city of Tours, Islam is now the second religion of France; there are about ten times as many Muslims as Jews. From the Paris suburbs 25 years ago, Shiite Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini planned a revolution that ultimately overthrew the Shah of Iran and, in turn, helped inspire a global Islamic revival. The fallout is easily visible today as the children and grandchildren of Muslim immigrants in Europe increasingly embrace religion. In France and England, polls show greater commitment to daily prayers, mosque attendance and fasting during Ramadan than there was a decade ago.

Only one in five Muslims in France say they actively practice the faith, but many who once defined themselves in terms of Tunisian, Iraqi or Turkish descent now consider their primary identity to be Muslim. "Nobody was talking about Muslims in France at the end of the 1990s. People were talking about Arabs or beurs," said French political scientist Justin Vaisse, using the term applied to French of North African immigrant descent.

Young French Muslims gravitate toward charismatic spokesmen of a new European Islam, such as controversial Swiss-born philosopher Tariq Ramadan, whose French headquarters here

in St.-Denis urges a "silent revolution." In his writings, he advocates using the political process, instead of violence, to win Muslim rights and recognition across Europe.

Ramadan's supporters call him a major voice of moderate Islam, but some critics say he is tied to extremists, a charge he denies. He was scheduled to begin teaching this year at the University of Notre Dame until U.S. immigration authorities rescinded his work visa, citing unspecified national security concerns.

Unlike earlier immigrants, who were bent on returning home flush with cash, more-recent arrivals have been deterred by the turmoil in their homelands and stayed, building families that are larger than those of their graying ethnic European neighbors. The effect is amplified by the decline of European Christianity. The number of people who call themselves Catholic, the continent's largest denomination, has declined by more than a third in the past 25 years.

The results are stark. Within six years, for instance, the three largest cities in the Netherlands will be majority Muslim. One-third of all German Muslims are younger than eighteen, nearly twice the proportion of the general population. With that growth, and the deepening strains between the U.S. and the Islamic world, radical Muslim clerics have found no shortage of adherents. A 2002 poll of British Muslims found that 44 percent believe attacks by Al Qaeda are justified as long as "Muslims are being killed by America and its allies using American weapons." Germany estimates that there are 31, 000 Islamists in the country, based on membership lists of conservative federations.

Year by year, European Islam pulls further away from the cultural traditions of Morocco or Algeria, refashioned all the while by the pressures of life in Europe. For some, the solution is a more liberalized Islam that incorporates Western concepts of individual

rights and tolerance. But for others, the answer lies in a stricter interpretation of the core elements of the faith.

"It is more fundamentalist in its essence because what you subsist on is personal practice-reading of the Quran, Shariah," Vaisse said. "It can take very humanist forms, but in some cases, it can also lead to political radicalization and terrorism."

The potentially serious effects of that radicalization became clear on March 11, when coordinated bombings of four commuter trains in Madrid killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800. Moroccan and Tunisian suspects later killed themselves in a standoff with police.

More recently, the Netherlands is in turmoil after the brutal killing of Theo van Gogh, who made a controversial film about violence against women in Islamic societies. Police arrested a 26-year-old man with Dutch-Moroccan citizenship and charged him with stabbing and shooting van Gogh. The suspect allegedly pinned a note to the body with a knife.

Within days, an Islamic school was set ablaze, and retribution followed. Right-wing politicians in Belgium and Germany demanded new curbs on immigration. In time, however, a more ominous fact emerged from the case: It was not the work of newly arrived immigrants with extremist views, but the product of homegrown radicalism. Police say suspect Mohammed Bouyeri wrote the death note in Dutch, not Arabic.

"This (cultural) schizophrenia is the most dangerous thing we face in Europe today," said Gilles Kepel, head of Middle East studies at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris and author of several books on Islam in Europe. "It means Madrid. It means Mohamed Atta," he said, referring to one of the Sept. 11 hijackers who lived for some time in Germany.

Two men, two visions

Where moderate Muslims ultimately place their loyalty may be the defining – and unpredictable – ingredient in the struggle to fashion an Islam of the West. To understand the choices, visit the men who represent the two competing visions of Islam in France.

Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris in the heart of the city, is a long-standing voice of moderate Islam in France. On the other side is Lhaj Thami Breze, president of the Union of Islamic Organizations of France, the increasingly powerful Islamist federation.

Trained as a dentist, Boubakeur, 64, runs the 1920s-era mosque in the heart of Paris. He is prone to quoting Immanuel Kant and is a favorite of French officials and foreign ambassadors. He wears a red rosebud on his lapel signifying membership in the Legion of Honor. And he knows he is losing ground.

"Since Sept. 11, the world of Islam is changing faster in the West than other places in the world," he said at his antiques-lined office, his V-neck sweater, rimless glasses and wispy gray hair giving him the air of an English schoolmaster. "Western countries had had a gentleman's agreement with fundamentalists: You can stay here as long as you keep quiet. But the gentlemen are not being as quiet as they used to be".

There is no question that Boubakeur's influence is weakening. Last year he was handpicked to be president of the official French Council of the Muslim Faith, a new body established by the government in 2003 to give Muslims a formal voice in dealings with the state. Just as other bodies represent Catholics and Jews, the council speaks for Muslims on issues

such as the construction of mosques and the training of clerics. But things didn't go as planned. In the first election, his moderate camp was trounced by conservative candidates who won 70 percent of the 41 seats. The next vote is scheduled for April, and moderates are expected to lose even more to the men he believes are "radicalizing Islam" in France.

"The facts are there: Religions that close in on themselves become sects, and that is what is happening to Islam here," Boubakeur said. "And I am very sorry about that".

Across town, beside the highway in the tough Paris suburb of La Courneuve, Boubakeur's opponents are confident. Breze greets visitors at his glass-and-steel headquarters with a glossy package of materials and a clam message of "coordination, not confrontation".

"We are not extremists," he says, sipping espresso at a conference table. "We practice our beliefs and have respect for the state. We want one thing from Europe and France: that they are faithful to their values".

Indeed, Breze and the union have thrived under Western democracy. Just two decades after its creation, by two foreign students, the union dominates French Islam. In the last elections for the Council of the Muslim Faith, Breze won control of a crucial post representing central France.

Breze's federation draws 30,000 people to its annual conference, and the crowd is increasingly vocal in challenging the political powers that be. At last year's convention, the interior minister was booed in the middle of his speech when he suggested that women must remove their head scarves for ID photos.

So what does Breze really want for Muslim in France? He and his group carefully calibrate their demands. They demonstrate against the ban on head scarves, for instance, but urge young women to respect the law as long as it is in effect. His federation is part of a broader umbrella group for all of Europe that is known for issuing decisions that help conservative Muslims function in a modern Western society by permitting, for instance, interest-bearing loans that would otherwise be banned under Islam and allowing the consumption of porkbased gelatin.

Push Breze on the most sensitive issues –does he seek an Islamic state in France, or the application of strict Islamic law and punishment – and he says no: “Perhaps they are valid in Saudi Arabia or Palestine, but they are not valid here.”

To some critics, Breze is a “double talker” who says one thing in French and another in Arabic. To other, he is simply a shrewd strategist who understands the coming power of the fast-growing Muslim communities here. For his part, Breze says his mission is to convey a simple message: “France must respect this population.”

A parallel world

By all appearances, she is as French as they come. A law student at the Sorbonne, she has dark brown hair that falls in stylish curls to her shoulders. Dining with friends in downtown Paris, 23-year-old Faten Mansour wears Diesel-brand jeans and red stiletto heels. But she will be the first to point out that she is not just French.

“I am a woman, I am an Arab and I come from the suburbs. I have three handicaps,” she says. “France is not racist, but it is xenophobic. I can study the law all night, but I don’t know if I

will find a job – not because I’m not competent, but because I’m an Arab.”

The feeling of exclusion has emerged as the central issue in the struggle to integrate Islam in Europe. Whether it is Turks in Germany, Indonesians in the Netherlands or Pakistanis in Britain, polls show Muslims feel they live in a parallel world within Europe. There are no Muslims in the French Parliament, no Muslim CEOs of top French companies, and the national news media is overwhelmingly white.

Mid-level Muslim politicians routinely recite instances of their careers being diverted by higher-ups.

In an unusually blunt official assessment, the French government’s auditing agency in a report released recently faulted the republic for failing to combat segregation in housing, workplaces and schools. The same week, France’s largest insurer, AXA, presented a report concluding that young immigrants in France experience a rate of unemployment that is 2 to 5 times as high as that of young people who are ethnic European.

Moreover, that frustration is getting worse over time. “The first generation came to Europe to work, the second generation was caught in between two cultures. But the third generation is completely French, and they want all the rights of citizenship,” said Khalid Bouchams, the St.-Denis representative for Breze’s group.

For ethnic Europeans, the Muslim migration amounts to a world upended: The continent that for centuries exported its people, culture and religion to the Third World is now being shaped by its former colonies. But for the French establishment,

the challenge is to bring Muslims into European society without changing the foundation of secular democracy.

No decision has sparked more controversy than the French government's move to ban conspicuous religious symbols from public schools, including Muslim head scarves, Jewish yarmulkes and large crosses. To its opponents, the law was a blunt refusal to accept Muslim immigration. But to its supporters, it was a decisive move to lower the barriers building between France's young people.

"It showed you can only go so far, you can't go any further," said Blandine Kriegel, an adviser to President Jacques Chirac on integration issues. "The issue touched a raw nerve. It is a nerve that is at the very heart of our way of life."

Kepel, the professor, served on the commission that recommended the law. He originally opposed the idea, he says, until he heard testimony from teachers and young women who described how young fundamentalists used girls' decisions to wear a veil as leverage to pressure them into adopting a more religious lifestyle.

"If we were accused of being Islamaphobes, let's take it and not give a damn. It was a time to give those kids the opportunities to interact in the best possible way and not jeopardize their futures in French society," Kepel said.

French Muslims responded with mass protests. Terrorists in Iraq abducted two French journalists and demanded that the law be repealed or the captives would be killed. The move backfired – French Muslims roundly denounced the threat.

Four months into the first school year under the law, 45 girls across France remain out of school or in mediation over their refusal to remove their scarves. Considering that 2,000 girls

were believed to be wearing the veil last year, French officials have been pleased with the outcome.

Other than the veil law, Kriegel said, the government is trying to reduce segregation of Muslim immigrants by expanding access to French language instruction and combating workplace discrimination. The government, she believes, is on the right track.

"There are no fires in the banlieues", she said. "There are no riots as there were in the black ghettos in the United States in the 1960s. Why don't we have that? Because we've been rolling up our sleeves and doing something... We have turned the corner."

But in St.-Denis and other suburbs, the verdict is less clear. The huddles of young men stand like emblems of 17 percent unemployment, well above the national average. Classrooms and public housing are overcrowded with fast-growing immigrant families.

The mosques are busier than ever: the storefront Tawhid Center for young followers or Tariq Ramadan; the Tabligh mosque for the reclusive adherents of Saudi-style conservative Islam; the many basement prayer rooms for whoever stops by.

A French intelligence official who monitors fundamentalist groups said he believes the veil controversy and efforts to train imams have pushed French Muslims to an awkward reckoning point: They must decide whether to integrate with Europe or fight back in earnest against official efforts to shape their community.

"They are at a crossroads," he said. "They can either go left or right." • (YMD)

Modesty

Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Modesty plays a constructive role in character building and in the formation of a sound and healthy society. It also wards off all sort of obnoxious and unholy acts.

There is much emphasis in Islam on observing modesty, holy Prophet says: "Every religion has a distinctive quality and the distinctive quality of Islam is modesty. (Muwatta). He again says: "Modesty and Faith exist together and when one of them goes out, the other, too, goes out". (Baihaqi) "Modesty brings nothing but good" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Noted Islamic scholar Manzoor Nomani (RAH) has observed that: "Modesty restrains a man from be-having in an undesirable manner and acts as a shield against lewdness and immorality. It holds the key to piety and good-doing". He further said: The word 'modesty' is used in a very wide sense in the special terminology of the Quran and the Traditions. In the common usage, what it signifies, simply, is that a man avoided lewdness and kept away from lustful and indecent acts. But, in Islam, it appears that it stands for a state of feeling which is intolerant of everything that is not desirable and produces a reaction of disgust and agony within anyone who knowingly and unknowingly, falls into an error or behaves in a manner having a semblance of sinfulness" (Meaning and Message of The Traditions, Vol. iv p, 63)

The immodesty, no doubt, is the root cause of all evils. It is such a menace which leads us towards adultery, fornication, rape, molestation and other obscene acts. It is modesty that keeps us away from indulging in a host of evil deeds and absurd acts.

The lack of modesty which results in nudity and obscenity are these days considered acts of 'modernity'. Transparent aprons,

designer dresses instead of covering the body contours expose them in a vulgar way.

It is unfortunate that today immodesty has reached such an extent that women are made to dance to attain political mileage. Such cases can be seen during election campaigns. Women should not be exploited in such a way. According to Islam, the world and all things in it are valuable, but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman. The holy Prophet says: "The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect of faith he is" (Tirmidhi)

Islam strictly prohibits such depiction. We may easily comprehend through the following *Ahadith* as to how Islam combats immodesty and indecency. The holy Prophet says: "Allah has a greater right that one should observe *Haya* (Modesty) before Him" (Al-Tirmizi) He further says: "Mind, you never be naked, for you are being attended by the angels of God who never leave you alone, except at the time when you have to attend to the call of nature or when you go to your wives. Therefore you should feel ashamed of them and have regard of them" (Al-Tirmizi) "Allah has cursed those women who wear clothes and still remain naked" "Those women who remain naked even after wearing clothes, allure others and are allured by others and walk coquettishly with the head turned to one side, will never enter paradise, nor even get its scent (Muslim)". Hafsa, daughter of Abdur Rahman, came before Hazrat Ayesha, she was wearing a thin wrapper over her head and shoulders, Hazrat Ayesha tore it up to pieces and put a thick wrapper over her". (Mu'atta of Imam Malik)

Islam also warns men not to dress like women and women too should not wear masculine dresses. Narrated Abdullah bin Abbas that: "The Apostle of God cursed men who effect a likeness

with women (in dress, manners, deportment etc...), and women who effect a likeness with men," (Bukhari). It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah cursed men who wore clothes of women, and women who wore clothes of men,". (Abu Dawood)

It is obvious that modesty is essence of Islamic Shariah. We may lead prosperous and peaceful life by observing it. Besides we can keep ourselves aloof from a variety of anti-social activities if we inculcate it in our lives.

In this context we may recall Saudi king Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz's directive to the media about displaying obscene and inappropriate pictures of women. He advised Gulf Media not to publish naked pictures of women to achieve material gains. He has rightly said: "one must think, do they want their daughter, their sister or their wife to appear in this way."

It would not also be out of place to recall chief Minister Mayawati's advice wherein she laid stress on weeding out obscenity and immodesty from the society. She advised her party leaders not to attend functions where women are made to dance in obscene manner or exhibit their bodies. She got annoyed on seeing her party leaders watching dance show by bar girls aired on TV channels. She said: "*Agar tumhari maa aur baheno ko nachaya jaaye toh kaisa lagega*" (How will you feel if your mother and sisters are made to dance?)

In short no religion likes immodesty and indecency. Each faith wants to do away with this menace. Hence we should develop sense of modesty, shyness and bashfulness and avoid all sort of immodest, indecent and impudent things so that an atmosphere of peace and serenity may prevail in the society.●

A Passion for Prayer Rugs

Rafiq Pasha

Muslims have been using the prayer rugs since hundred of years. Its origin is obscure even though it is certain that it has originated from carpet weaving Oriental countries. Muslims are ordained to pray five times a day on a clean spot; the prayer rugs are used for this purpose in mosques, homes and outdoors.

There is no distinction in Islam between the spiritual and the secular thus there is no division of art into sacred and profane – so for that matter any rug can serve as prayer rug.

"Prayer rugs are commonly available in three sizes", said Alex Imbimbo, a British national working as Avionics Engineer in British Aerospace, Riyadh. As a hobby he has been collecting carpets of different types. At present he has more than 120 oriental carpets of various types, sizes and design in his private collection. Probably the highest number owned by an individual in the entire gulf.

"I have been collecting carpets since I came to the Kingdom 16 years before." Said Aleex. Every second and last Thursday of the month, he conducts classes about the awareness of the carpet in his residence.

The most common size is 120 x 80 cm; it is small and easy to carry. The next size is 150 x 90 cm, the Persian zaronim size, which in Turkish is called *namalik* literally means "prayer rug". The next larger size is 180 x 120 cm commonly known as Turkish *sedjadeh*. 'Sedjadeh' is derived from the Arabic word, prostration; originally it also meant prayer-rug. At present the word 'sedjadeh' is purely used as an indication of size in Turkey and the valent or slightly bigger size in Persia is called 'dozar'. The Persians also use the word 'sedjadeh' in areas like Hamadan and Tabriz.

In earlier mosques usually there was a stone set in the wall pointing towards the direction of qibla (Kaaba). Later over a period of time this spot was decorated by the representation of arch-shaped niche known as 'mihrab' and this shape is universally adapted in prayer-rugs designs.

Handmade and tribal prayer-rugs are still made and used in many parts of the Orient, but they are rarely found in the carpet trade. "The use

of mihrab as a decorative rather than as a symbolic element is not new nor is restricted to the carpet, trade," said Haroon Rasheed, a carpet salesman.

"It is not clear that the paryer-rug layout was originally devised for a religious purpose, or it existed as an 'archawy' design before the advent of Islam." Said Alex.

Carpets used in mosques for men to pray in a row behind the Imam is known as 'saph'. Several saphs are deployed in the mosques as it is a practical way of achieving order among worshippers. Some of the designs used in the modern saphs are 600 years old.

The Kayesri saph design are found in Central Turkey and in Western China (leaving aside modern copies from Pakistan) and very rarely found elsewhere," said Rahimullah, owner of an antique carpet shop in Riyadh. Similar type of saphs are still made in Tarim Basin area and sold by the Chinese under the name Sinkiang.

Alex said, "the largest range of rugs for religious use are woven in Turkey region. The antique Turkish rug is being copied in Kashmir since many decades, but certain features enable it to distinguish from a modern Turkish piece, even though both are copies of an original antique. The Turkish village rug is recognizable by its woolen wraps and Kashmir by cotton, but this is not universal guide as even Turkish goods also use cotton." Old Turkish designs are copied in modern Turkey and many other areas including Rumania. The Rumanian copy is painstaking imitations of ancient pieces. The designs and colours of museum pieces are copied accurately and the rugs are then washed time after time. They are burnt and sand-papered until they become threadbare and tatty and the fringes began to fall to pieces, just as if they had been in use for hundred of years. "It is easy to distinguish the new 'antique' from the originals, for all Rumanian carpets have a strange and unmistakable oily smell." Said Alex.

Hereke makes the best prayer rugs in the Orient. The carpet production began here in 1890 by Sultan Abdul Hamid. The biggest Persian center for silk rugs is Qum, but people often prefer to hang silk rugs on the wall rather than lay those on the floors, and for this purpose one-way design of the prayer arch type are very suitable. •

Around the World

'US is not and will never be at war with Islam... Many Americans have Muslims in the family... I know, because I am one of them'

President Barack Obama formally began his outreach to the Muslim world when he spoke before Turkey's Parliament, telling legislators that the US "is not and will never be at war with Islam".

A day later, he told university students in Istanbul that he was "personally committed to a new chapter in American engagement" with countries like Iran. "We can't afford to talk past one another and focus only on our differences, or to let the walls of mistrust go up around us."

To Turkish lawmakers in Ankara, to whom he was introduced as "Barack Hussein Obama", he said: "America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot and will not just be based upon opposition to terrorism.

"We seek broader engagement based upon mutual interest and mutual respect."

On his maiden overseas trip as President, and addressing a Muslim majority nation for the first time, he appeared to have prepared for one particular line. "The US has been enriched by Muslim-Americans," he said. "Many other Americans have Muslims in their family, or have lived in a Muslim-majority country.

"I know," the US President said, "because I am one of them." He paused, waiting for the interpreter to catch up. After about five seconds, the applause came.

It was a bold line for the US President, who continues to be falsely described as Muslim in some right-wing fora. But Obama was clearly calculating that the benefits of demonstrating to the Muslim world that Americans are not antagonistic towards it outweighed the potential political fallout back home.

Hamas's popularity rises after Gaza war

Hamas's popularity among Palestinians has risen sharply since a three-week Israeli war in January devastated the Islamist-ruled Gaza Strip, an opinion poll released showed.

If an election were held today, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh would beat Mahmoud Abbas, the Western-backed Palestinian president and leader of Fatah who advocates a peace deal with Israel.

The face-to-face poll of 1,270 people by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research was conducted on March 5-7 in the West Bank and Gaza strip, as the factions tried to reach agreement on a unity government with Egyptian mediation.

Hamas, which Western powers shun as a terrorist organization, won a Palestinian parliamentary election in 2006 and seized control of the Gaza Strip the next year after fighting with Fatah.

Israel responded by tightening its blockade of the coastal enclave, increasing hardships for its 1.5 million residents.

The January war, which Israel launched with the stated aim of stopping cross-border rocket fire by militants, killed some 1,300 Palestinians, destroyed 5,000 homes and left much of Gaza's governmental and economic infrastructure in ruins.

World must accept possible Taliban election win: France

The world must accept the results of Afghanistan's elections in August even if hard-line Taliban militants win, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in an interview.

"We must respect the result of the elections whatever it is," he told Le Figaro daily.

"If the nationalist Taliban come to power through the vote and accept the constitution, that is the Afghans' business.

"What we cannot accept is support for international jihad," Kouchner added.

The French minister added that "there is no question of making (Afghanistan) a Western-style democracy." Afghanistan's electoral authorities have delayed what will be only the country's second presidential elections from April to August because of logistical and security problems in the war-ravaged nation.

Nearly seven years after they were ousted from government, the Taliban are still actively waging an insurgency aimed at toppling the Western-backed administration of President Hamid Karzai. •

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