

# **THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST**

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# **The Fragrance of East**

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**CONTENTS**

1-	Maligning the World of Islam	<i>S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi</i>	7
2-	Misconceptions about Islam	<i>S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi</i>	11
3-	Maulana Abdul Kareem Parekh: The 'Harbinger of Communal Harmony'	<i>B.A. Qadir</i>	17
4-	Islam, Palestine and Latin America	<i>Mohd. Shahid</i>	23
5-	The Prophet Teachings	<i>Mahmood Hasan Hasani Nadwi</i>	35
6-	Maulana Azad and National Integration	<i>Obaidur Rahman Nadwi</i>	39

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**Editor's Note:**

## **THE END OF INDIA**

The noted columnist former editor of the Illustrated Weekly of India, The Hindustan Times and National Herald, Khushwant Singh, does not need any more elaborate introduction. In the preface of his famous book "The End Of India"(Penguin-2003) Khushwant Singh writes: "These are the dark times for India. The carnage in Gujrat, Babu Gandhi's home state, in early 2002 and the subsequent landslide victory of Narendra Modi in the elections will spell disaster for our country. The fascist agenda of Hindu fanatics is unlike any thing we have experienced in our modern history. After partition I had thought we would never again experience a similar holocaust. I may be proved wrong. Far from becoming ' Mahan'(great),India is going to the dogs, and unless a miracle saves us, the country will break up. It will not be Pakistan or any other foreign power that will destroy; we will commit hara-kiri." These are the observations of a 90-years old Sikh who has always been very close to power and saw the jigsaw of politics from his journalistic eyes. In 60 years of our independence fierce communal riots broke out in various parts of the country. Muslims remained always the target of fascist forces. On several occasions, like Gujarat carnage-2002, state with its police force sided with rioters. Unfortunately after Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai amongst Indian Muslims no political leader of that stature came forward to the community's rescue...In 1960's communal frenzy was at its peak. Those who had thought that after creation of Pakistan whole Muslim population living in India would migrate were disappointed to see that still about ten crore Muslims were left in India, considering it their birth place and having genuine right to stay back. This was quite annoying to them and on flimsy issues riots became a routine. Disturbed with the prevailing situation a group of Muslims and secular minded non-Muslims under the leadership of Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi aka Ali Miyan(RAH) stood up to clear the clouds. Under

the banner of “Payame Insaniyat”(Message of Humanity)they ravelled far and wide in the country to inculcate the feeling of 'oneness'. Amongst different communities to infuse love and forbid them from violence. Many non-Muslim intellectuals and “dharma gurus” also joined Ali Miyan in different places. This movement did prove effective to some extent but the communal venom drilled into the minds of a section of non-Muslims kept on showing its tentacles time and again. The Gujarat carnage was in fact a reflection of that mind-set. Speaking from a Payame Insanyat platform in Lucknow on May 25, 1975 Ali Miyan dwelt at length the hardships and road blocks coming in the way of Indian society. He exhorted Indians that their problems of poverty, illiteracy, corruption in various forms are all man made. He said:” If there is anything which can keep the people away from malpractices and misconduct it is the fear of God. When it takes root in the heart of any man and he sincerely believes that he is answerable to a Supreme Being for all his deeds and misdeeds then he abstains from evil practices.” Ali Miyan’s message was for all Indians irrespective of their religious affiliation. It is still relevant and needs to be spread for the benefit of society. ■

S.A.

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## **MALIGNING THE WORLD OF ISLAM**

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

When Maulana Maududi, unhesitatingly, expresses the view that in later centuries the four basic terms were not understood in the sense they were understood at the time of the descent of the Quran and they got so heavily cloaked that not only three-fourth preachings of the Quran, but its real spirit was lost to view, it would mean naturally that to him the whole past history of the Ummat presents a spectre of unchecked decline and continuous decadence and the history of the middle period appears to him a barren desert and wilderness (though he has acknowledged the deeds of many revivalists working in a limited sphere in that period) and in this immense darkness, there were, according to him, only occasional flashes in some corners of the world of Islam of the lightning of religious endeavour and reform—something akin to the Quranic verse, “The lightning well-nigh snatcheth away their sight, whenever it flasheth, they walk into its light and whenever darkness closeth upon them, they hold back”. (Q.2:20)

The logical result of such a trend of thinking and presumptions would be that probably excluding the period of the companions and the Tabaeen, a sensitive and educated young Muslim who is not conversant with the vast history of Islam’s intellectual and reformative endeavours, would begin to doubt the eternal character of Islamic preachings, Islam’s capacity of producing men of calibre, the freshness and fruit-bearing capacity of the Islamic tree, his conviction would be eroded and he would become a victim of despondency and disillusion, of doubt and uncertainty. He can imagine that even after watering the soil of the wilderness cannot become fertile.

Some readers might start thinking that we are not being just and fair to Maulana Maududi for all Muslim reformers had started their reformative movement with criticism of and expression of dissatisfaction with the Muslim society of the day. For instance, Imam Ghazali in his book *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, Allama Ibn Taimiya in his books *ar-Rad alal Bakari* and *ar-Rad alal Akhna'iy*, Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in his scintillating sermons and addresses and Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and his

brilliant grandson Maulana Ismail Shaheed in their treatises, had adopted a severe critical approach. But it should not be forgotten that these dignitaries had confined their criticism to the aberrations and waywardness of the society of the day and had not painted a lurid picture of the entire Islamic history and all the periods and domains of the Islamic Ummat. It is one thing to criticise the society of the day in order to reform and re-invigorate it and another to malign the whole history of the Ummat. There is a world of difference in the two sets of approaches.

If anybody writes in a fashion that leads to un-warranted conclusion that the Islamic record is dark and barren, that the Ummat-e- Muhammadiyya does not possess creative ability and nothing but darkness, deviation and apostasy prevailed in Islamic history, it will have to be inferred that the writer has jumped to fatuous conclusion, and his knowledge of the history of reform and renovation is woefully incomplete. The writer himself committed this type of mistake in some of his earliest writings undertaken before he had acquired maturity of thought and had not made extensive study and specialised research. The writer had realised his mistake and when he wrote his more famous book *Islam and the World* he added the following paragraph under the heading *Revival and Restoration*.

“So far, however, as the basic values of religion were concerned, they remained intact and free from all distortion. They remained absolutely free from all kinds of innovation, interpolation, mis-construction or suppression. Islam did never wink at the lapses of its followers. It was always on the alert, correcting, mending, admonishing; the Quran and the Sunnah were continually there in tact and unpoluted-to guide and to judge on occasions of doubt and dispute. They kept alive the spirit of defiance against the libertinism of the ruling classes and against the other un-Islamic influences. The whole course of Islamic history is lighted up with the crusading endeavours of conscious, determined, brave-hearted men who, like the true successors of the Prophet, faced the challenge of the time and restored, revived and kept on moving the Millat by resorting to Jihad and Ijtihad. These two principles, which embody the dynamism of Islam, could never suffer a vacuum in its structure. They remained operative ceaselessly in the body of Islam as living factors, holding aloft the torch of religious endeavour in the midst of the severest tempests. Thus it was that darkness was never allowed to spread itself over the whole world of Islam.”

I had further added that:



“With all their failings, the Muslims were nearer to the path of the prophets than any other people. For this reason, whatever of their former power and prestige was left, continued to serve as a deterrent to ignorance. They were still a force in the world, commanding respect from far and near. But, internally, they had been shrivelling and declining. This fact could not be concealed for long from the outside world. The fiction of their strength was finally broken towards the middle of the 13th century, when they were attacked by wave after wave of the savage nations and hostile powers and Islamic lands fell into the hands of their enemies.”

For retracting the conclusions drawn up in haste by the author in his first work, he wrote the four volumes of his book the Saviours of Islamic Spirit in which he has extensively portrayed the intellectual and religious efforts of Islam, its social history and revivalist and reformative endeavours and has introduced in a copious way the leaders of such movements and has categorically stated in the Introduction to the book that in Islam there has been a continuity of reformative movements and there were no long interregnums of suspense or inaction.

Maulana Maududi in writing a critical chapter on the history of the community adopts a forceful style in a rhetorical and exciting strain quite distinguishable from his well known style of writing. He writes, “For nearly three centuries the spirit of the Muslims exhibited itself in its fullness for research, interpretation and re-interpretation for independent appreciation and enquiry and unshackled search for the truth which the holy Prophet (peace be on him) had engendered in his followers. But after that the oppression of the rich, the rulers and the Ulama and Mashaikhs began to erode that spirit. The right of the thinkers to think, the right of eyes to see, the right of the tongues to speak were denied and usurped. Right from the courts to madrsas and Khanqahs Muslims were trained in a slavish mentality. The slavery of the spirit and the body was imposed upon them. The rulers of the courts instilled slavish mentality by prescribing bowing and prostration before them, the educationists of the madrsas injected the venom of worshipping of great men besides the worship of God, the Khanqah people placed the yoke of sacred slavery, heavier then which man had never before invented, on the neeks of people by distorting the prophetic way of taking fealty (Bait). When heads can bow down upto the ground, before things other than God, when hands can remain folded in the posture of Namaz before other than God, when to lift up one’s eyes before another man becomes a gesture of disrespect, when hands and feet of men begin to be

kissed, when man becomes the lord and master of man and his sustainer, when man exercises his own volition in the matter of the enjoined and forbidden, when he arrogates to himself independence from the Book and the Sunnat, when man is taken as free from fault and blemish, when the ordinances of men and their opinions are treated as compulsory for obedience, may be not in the realm of belief but in actual practice, in the same way as God's ordinances, then take it that people have greatly digressed from the dictum that is contained in the Quranic verse "We serve God only and associate nothing with Him and that none of us shall take another for his Lord to the exclusion of God", (Q.3:64). After this no literary and scholarly, ethical or spiritual progress is possible. Decline and decadence are bound to be its result."

In reviewing the work and services of the great revivalists of Islam in his book, entitled A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam the Maulana has gone to the extent of saying, "History reveals that the ideal Mujaddid is yet to born. Caliph 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Aziz might have attained this position but he did not get a chance to achieve it. All the Mujaddids who appeared after him accomplished work in one particular or the other aspect only but none achieved the distinction of becoming the ideal Mujaddid." ■

*"Nobody can be a Muslim unless his heart and tongue have also submitted and cannot be a believer unless his neighbour is not secured from his misdemeanour." Abdullah b. Masud, who relates it, asked the Prophet, "What is meant by misdemeanour?" The Prophet replied, "Excess and oppression." (Tirmidhi and Nassai)*

*"A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims feel secure and believer is one from whom the life and property of others remain unthreatened. (Tirmidhi and Nassai)*

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

**S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi**

Very often we find some of our intellectuals and scholars raising strange and illogical objections against Islamic faith and practices without paying any heed to the basic norm for such a critique.

The evils that have crept into Muslim Society or the un-Islamic behaviour of certain Muslims are cited by such critics for passing strictures upon Islam and its teachings. This is obviously the result of not undertaking the study of Islam in depth and making conjectures on the basis of their own fallacious concepts or superficial observations. To take an example, the Quran contains progressive injunctions in regard to prohibition. At one place it says "Approach not prayers in a state of intoxication (4:43)." Supposing someone ignores the words "in a state of intoxication" and says that Muslims offer prayers in spite of the Quranic dictum, "approach not prayers", it would amount to a malicious criticism. One of such writers is Mr. Arun Shourie who has written a number of articles on Islam. But the question is how deep is his study of the Quran and the Hadith, and how much qualified is he in Islamic jurisprudence deduced from the divine revelations and the practice of the Prophet and his companions? If he has not studied these seriously what is the cause of his ardour for finding fault with Islam?

There are others like Mr. Arun Shourie who have made it their business to publish findings of surveys supposed to have been undertaken by them. These are actually meant for misleading those who have no knowledge of Islam. Recently, a survey given wide publicity by a section of the press claimed that ninety percent of the Muslim women approached for the purpose acknowledged that Islam was unjust to women and that its personal laws ought to be rectified. Who were these women and how much were they qualified to give their opinion about Islamic injunctions, the Quran and the hadith? Or, were they non-Muslims made proxy for Muslim women? The things that must be kept in mind for such a survey are the percentage off illiteracy in the country and that the ratio of illiterate women is far higher in relation to men. A large majority of India's population belongs to the rural

sector whose knowledge is confined to agriculture only. The ratio of illiteracy among Muslims being higher than other communities, the literacy among Muslim women would still be much lower, particularly in the rural areas. Most of these women would have perhaps never heard of Muslim personal Law and similar other technical terms. Taking all these factors into account, how could the opinion of such women be elicited about Islamic Shariah? It would be like asking the opinion of primary school children about the utility of American concept of political hegemony for India and then presenting the same as an erudite study. This is how these surveys about Islam and Muslim society are undertaken by those having an antipathy towards Islam, perhaps more for their own satisfaction than for any other purpose. They do not possess even an iota of knowledge about the vast corpus of Islamic jurisprudence, yet they continue to pick the Islamic laws to pieces.

A personal experience was narrated to me by a friend in one of the universities of Delhi. A seminar was organised on Muslim Personal Law in which several Hindu girls whom he recognised, were brought as barqa clad Muslim girls while it was ensured that no one knowing those girls or a Muslim not known as a critic of Islamic Shariah should be allowed to enter the hall where the seminar was being held. My friend tried to attend the seminar but he was not allowed. He, however, managed to find out who the organisers were. The following day Newspaper reports flashed the observations of the so-called Muslim women. Now if anyone were to contradict such press reports he will be immediately dubbed a Mullah and a staunch fundamentalist unaware of the changing times and its needs. Such efforts not only present a distorted picture of a reality but also mislead the nation. The masses are not expected to go deep into what is reported in the press, they acquiesce to the opinion of the elite section of the society. All of us know the tactics employed by the present-day promoters of consumerism who successfully persuade the people to buy injurious articles by projecting them as being conducive to health. Now, what will happen to the nation if a similar approach is allowed to propagate falsehood? The irony is that those who indulge in similar practices never care to know anything about the Muslims who form an important segment of the nation.

It has thus become a convention to find fault with Islam, its teachings and the Muslim society on the basis of customs and usages of illiterate section of Muslim society who are ignorant of the genuine Islamic creed and norms of behaviour

upheld by Islam are cited to disparage it. A number of such practices have been adopted by the Muslims from their neighbours. Take the dowry system which is a curse of the Indian society and as a result of which increasing demands are made from the parents of the brides and sometimes the newly-wedded women are burnt to death. The incidence of such occurrences is far less among the Muslims but it is a totally un-Islamic practice. As a matter of fact Islam lays no responsibility in regard to the expenses of marriage on the side of the bride. All the expenses have to be borne by the bridegroom or his parents. The guardians of the bride do not have to bear the expenses, according to Islamic teachings, on even the sweets distributed at the time of nikah or the walima i.e. repast of the guests invited on the occasion, the responsibility of all such expenses has been specifically laid on the bridegroom and his guardians. The bride becomes entitled to mahr or dower as it is usually translated, which is either a substantial amount of money or other form of property, from her husband. The wife does not have to pay or make any contribution. On the contrary, if anything is given to the bride by her parents or guardians, it becomes her sole property with out any right of the husband on it. The wife is entitled to be maintained by the husband according to his own standard of living, to be paid mahr and to retain exclusive ownership of the property given or acquired by her.

The marriage contracted by any man with the intention of not paying the mahr is illegal under the Islamic law, nor is such a couple recognised as legally wedded spouses. It is a prerogative of the wife to waive off her mahr by her own free will, but it is not permissible for the husband to put any pressure on his wife in this connexion. It would thus be seen that under the Islamic laws the woman enjoys all the social and economic rights while the husband is bound to bear all the expenses. Will it be improper, if under such a concept of family as envisaged by Islam, a husband expects his wife to manage the household affairs, remain faithful to him and remain diligent in the up-bringing of their children? The relations of the spouses under Islamic law are so subtle and delicate and require such constant adjustment involving the fate and well-being of the future generation that the Islamic law considers it expedient to allow the voice of the husband more or less predominance over that of the wife. Islam treats them like partners, one senior to the other. If the two are unable to carry on thus partnership amicably, it is incumbent on the relatives of both the parties to bring about amity and harmony between them by ironing out

their differences. In case such a concord is not possible then the two should separate in accordance with the procedure prescribed for it. The husband should pronounce talaq or repudiation of marriage once, and wait for a month during which period the pronouncement of divorce can be revoked. If the husband repeats this process again and pronounces talaq for the third time, the separation would become irrevocable. This process allows two month's time to both the parties and their relatives to bring about accord and harmony between the husband and wife. But if both the parties remain adamant and all efforts to reunite them are unsuccessful, would it be just to ask them to live together and continue quarrelling for the rest of their lives? Such a union of husband and wife would perhaps be analogous to the dispute between two real brothers which sometimes leads to the murder of one by the other. This is what happens when the husbands burn their wives and present the alibi that she caught fire in the kitchen. There can also be circumstances where the wife does not want to live with her husband any longer or both desire instant separations. In such circumstances the Shariah allows irrevocable divorce, that is, pronouncement of divorce thrice at a time, but it also strongly condemns such a separation. There are some jurists who hold such an irrevocable divorce to be impermissible, but nobody can deny that in certain situations it might be the best solution for both the husband and the wife to be separated immediately. That is the reason why some schools of Islamic jurisprudence hold such a divorce as valid and binding on both the parties.

The Sharigh concedes to the husband the right to dissolve the marriage. There are people who consider it unjust and want the same right to be given to the woman also. They, however, ignore the fact that the Islamic law makes the husband responsible to bear all the expenses from marriage to her maintenance as a wife and to have no claim whatsoever on the Mahr or any other property given by him to the wife. It is possible, in these circumstances that a woman may leave the husband with all the money and property in her possession after a brief altercation with her husband. She can also claim, in case she is pregnant, maintenance from such an ex-husband till the baby is born and attains the age of two years. She can marry after the expiry of the brief period of probation called Iddat, but can claim the expenses for the up-keep of the child born as a result of the former wedlock so long as she remains guardian of the child. Re-marriage of a man or woman is not held in contempt under the Islamic law. A divorced woman can easily get re-married without

incurring any expenses and attain all the rights of a wife from the second husband, while the ex-husband will have to bear all the expenses again at the time of his second marriage. It can easily be seen which of the two parties, the husband or the wife, is placed at a disadvantageous position by the Islamic law. Conceding the right to the woman to dissolve her marriage at her sweet-will might mean encouraging those of lewd character to exploit the situation to their advantage. In such a case a woman may marry for the second or the third time in order to get the Mahr and such other benefits as stipulated at the time of getting married, and then still retain the right to repudiate the wedlock whenever she takes a fancy to another man. The man, on the other hand, will have to take into account the losses suffered by him at the time of dissolution of his first marriage and the liabilities he will have to bear on the subsequent wedlock. Is it not justified that the right to divorce should be conceded to the party which is at a disadvantage in contracting a marriage? If he is prudent enough, he would have to give careful thought to all the advantages and disadvantages before exercising his right to dissolve the marriage.

There can, however, be circumstances in which a woman does not want to live with her husband who is unwilling for any reason to dissolve the marriage. The Shariah has the provision of Khula or judicial separation for such cases. The woman would have only to approach a Qazi and prove that she wants separation for genuine reasons. The judge or the Qazi will take a judicial view of the circumstances and if he finds the complaint to be true, he can dissolve the marriage. The husband can also confer on the wife the power of pronouncing Talaq, and thereby dissolving the marriage. Once a husband has conferred such power, say, as a condition of contracting the marriage, he cannot afterwards revoke it and it will depend upon the wife whether to exercise that power or not. A judicious balance has been maintained by the Shariah between the man and the woman and it has conferred different privileges to both in accordance with their liabilities. It is not harsh or in favour of either party, but if the people do not act on its injunctions, it should rather be called a social evil than a defect in the Islamic law. It is true that Muslim society does not follow these laws meticulously, but being a religiously oriented community it follows a great many of Shariah's injunctions, and at least, it is not in any disadvantageous position in this respect in comparison to any other sister community. If one were to make a survey of Muslim society dispassionately, one would find that lots of prejudices against it have been deliberately propagated and the Muslim society is still

better than others in so far as family relations, particularly those between the husband and the wife, are concerned. It would be found to have more fraternity and humanitarian feeling, it does not have a constricted outlook nor the tensions rooted in certain other communities.

It is to be regretted that certain modern educated Muslim women have come to rely on the anti-Islam propaganda campaign that they have not been justly dealt with. Such Muslim women are undoubtedly educated but they cannot claim to have adequate knowledge of Islamic Shariah. They can be compared to a scientist who considers himself equally proficient in law and rushes to offer his opinion on a legal matter without taking the trouble to consult a lawyer or even going through the relevant laws on the subject. It is an acknowledged principle that we seek the advice of an expert in every matter pertaining to that field of life since nobody is expected to form a correct opinion about which he has only a superficial knowledge. Supposing the people do not follow the constitutional provisions of their country or flagrantly violate the laws and legal norms, will it be treated as a fault of the constitution or law? There are often communal riots in our country, the people are done to death and corruption has become an established practice. Can all these ills be attributed to the Indian Constitution? Our country, or for that matter, the whole world is passing through phase of moral crisis, human rights are being violated and there is a prevailing trend of individualism or forsaking one's social and moral obligations. It is difficult to believe how these so-called intellectuals close their eyes to all these evils and instead of trying to reform the society, they are bent upon carping and condemning a religion with which they have nothing to do. Indian society has taken the road to moral anarchy and cultural degradation, moral values of justice and integrity are at a discount, trade has become more a profession of deception, corruption is widespread even in the highest official circles and those who contest the elections spend lavishly and then compensate themselves through illegal means on attaining power. The country is reeling down the road to caste and communal prejudices while those in power are more concerned with their party politics and personal gains. The scams have besmirched us as one of the most corrupt nations, but some of our columnists and political commentators seem to be interested only in finding faults with Islam and the Muslims and overlook everything that might be found appreciable in them. They, as a result of it, ignore or minimize the faults and failings of their own society which ought to have first attracted their attention. ■



## **MAULANA ABDUL KAREEM PAREKH: THE 'HARBINGER OF COMMUNAL HARMONY'**

**B.A. Qadir**

A time-honoured saying in the Arabic language makes a poignant point: "The death of the scholar is the death of the world." While this indicates the gravity of the issue in the passing away of scholars in the Muslim world particularly in the disturbing times in which the Ummah finds itself today this unfortunate trend seems to be the continuing pattern over the last decade. These were years wherein the Muslim Ummah lost one great scholar after another in a sure, but steady, stream of succession, the latest member of this hall of scholarly guides being Maulana Abdul Kareem Parekh of Nagpur, India, who passed away in the early hours of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007. He was 79 and is survived by his four sons and five daughters. His wife had passed away earlier in 2003.

A well-known timber merchant by profession, he earned a reputation as a 'harbinger of communal harmony'. He authored more than topics related to communal harmony. Particularly remembered for his popular classes on the Qur'an (Dars-e-Qur'an) which he initiated in 1960, no amount of activism in public, or private, life would keep him away from it for the next four decades. His first book in Urdu-Jadeed Aasan Lughatul *Qur'an*-published in 1952 to national recognition and acclaim, is still in demand, and has undergone translations into Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Bangali and other foreign languages like English, Turkish and Portuguese. Not surprisingly, the book is also included in the curriculum of many universities. The book version has been printed in Urdu more than 40 times over. In its own way, Lughatul Qur'an has been a means of bringing people closer to the Qur'an. This has been chiefly due to certain unique features of the work like the presentation of the meaning of Arabic words in the Qur'an in the order of their occurrence, avoiding repetition of words excepting, of course, where repetitions are necessary for the facilitation of the reader, and helping the reader to avoid the painful exercise of locating each word in a dictionary. Since in reading Lughatul Quran the reader

learns Arabic through the Qur'an, he-or she-will have the double advantage of learning Arabic and learning the Qur'an.

Having also himself translated the Qur'an into Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati and English, the audio cassettes and CDs of Maulana Parekh's translations, in easily language, and recorded in his own voice, have a popularity quite their own. He was, furthermore, the author of more than 50 books in different languages, all of which have an international readership. Granted his profound love for Islamic scholarship, in general, and Qur'anic exegesis, in particular, it was only a matter of course that he would soon associate himself with the spiritual and intellectual leadership of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, himself a leading light of a community floundering in the darkness of the times. Commenting on Maulana Parekh and his book, *Lughatul Qur'an*, Abul Hasan was to write thus:

"Our beloved Al-Haj Abdul Karim Parekh is one of those fortunate men who have served the Qur'an. Well-known through his popular lectures and lifelong service of propagating the message of Islam, he is an ardent caller towards the Qur'an. In the city of Nagpur, India, his regular Qur'anic lessons (*Dars-e-Qur'an*) have affected the Muslim youth, especially the educated class, and kindled in them the spirit of servitude to Islam and living according to the tenets of the Qur'an in everyday life..... His book, entitled *Lughatul- Qur'an*, is part of his literary service which he wrote in Urdu in order to convey the message of the Qur'an among the common and educated class alike so as to make the understanding of the Qur'an easy for them. The evidence of its wide acceptance is that within 15 to 20 years, more than a dozen editions of the book have been printed. He has translated the difficult words of each Juz' (parah) with the help of authentic translations and according to the context in which the word is used. He has also provided the root of the word wherever necessary. Brief rules of Arabic grammar are also provided at the beginning of the book. This way, the book has become a key for Arabic words as well as a guide to studying the Qur'an with the least effort."

Maulana Parekh's sincere following of Abul Hasan soon found him attached to the cause of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and the Nadwatul Ulema, Lucknow. He, thus, served the AIMPLB as a treasurer for several years. Deeply committed to the *Payam-e- Insaniyat* (Message of Humanity) series of lectures initiated by Abul Hasan, Maulana Parekh's active participation in these

conferences became a regular constant in his public life. So deep was his commitment to the programme initiated by his illustrious mentor that even after the passing of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and Maulana Jalees Nadvi, Maulana Parekh spared no effort in reviving and moving on ahead with the movement.

Maulana Parekh's ability to understand, and communicate, with the common-folk whether in the urban and rural areas or even those in the countryside, was a remarkable trait of his personality. Doubtless, this down-to-earth approach of the Maulana had a lasting impact on the way the common man understood Islam from his wise counsels. His translation of the Qur'an is, likewise, couched in simple language understood easily by the masses. In view of the great importance attached by the Maulana to the comprehension of God's Message, he always admonished people to read the Qur'an in such fashion that their reading would at least cover complete with translation-a significant subject that the Qur'an deals with.

In matters related to women's rights, Maulana Parekh constantly stressed on the need as much for their proper education as also their Islamic upbringing. It is a measure of his immense popularity that his lessons and lectures were telecast on different national TV channels. His articles and books like *Talimul Hadees*, *Vigyan Yug Mein Islam Dharam* (Hindi), *Aurat Ki Tauheen* (Urdu) *Qaum-e- Yahud aur Hum*, *Gaay ka Katil Kaun*, *Maqbool Duaaein*, *Insaniyat ke Naam Amn ka Paigam*, *Tafseeri Khasana*, *Bahnon ke Najaath* etc., were all based on meticulous research. His works, therefore, had read within both the Muslim and non-Muslim circles throughout the country. It is pertinent here to mention that his work on cow-slaughter-*Gaay Ka Katil Kaun*- written in 1970 was well-received, and read with interest, by all communities throughout the length and breadth of the land. It was also this book that was destined to seal his growing fame and popularity as a Muslim scholar of national renown.

He used to give his lectures, grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an, at a mosque in the Bhandara locality of Nagpur, at Geeta Mandirs, Hanuman Mandirs and in churches. In addition to his growing reputation as a scholar of great national and international standing, so well-known was Maulana Parekh as a timber merchant that his locality came to be known as 'Lakkadganj.' It was perhaps this adept, indeed Islamic, balancing of the spiritual and material realms in practical life that oftentimes enabled Maulana Parekh to deal effectively with modern challenges and

conflicts from a Qur'anic perspective that valued scientific reasoning and logic in a manner that satisfied, quite admirably, the inquisitive mind. Thus, his appeal was not confined to a few: it extended across the wide spectrum of the society men and women, the young and the aged, the common masses and the intellectual elites.

Besides Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English, Arabic, Gujarati and Sindhi, Maulana Parekh had a good command over Sanskrit. His deep knowledge of other religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other faiths along with and in comparison to Islam puts him in a class apart amongst Islamic scholars. In fact, he is considered to be one of the most versatile scholar for addressing religious meets, conferences and seminars as well as having dialogues and interactions with non-Muslim scholars.

A vice president of Society for Communal Harmony, Maulana Parekh was closely associated with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh; former President K R Narayanan; former Prime Minister V P Singh; former Orissa Governor and historian B N Pande; former Vice President Krishna Kant; Jain Muni Swami Sushil Kumar; Swami Jayendra Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram; Dalai Lama; Mufti Atiqur Rahman Usmani; Dr Syed Kalbe Sadiq; and former Union Deputy Law Minister and Bihar Governor, Mohammed Yunus Saleem; P N Haksar; CB Tripathi; Society for Communal Harmony Treasurer Abdul Mannan.

Deeply concerned about the growing rift between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India, Maulana Parekh never wasted an opportunity to foster communal harmony. At the time when the Babri Masjid crisis was at its height, he along with Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the late Krishna Kant and the late Yunus Saleem met the then 100-year old Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram in 1990, and almost reached a final agreement with him. However, due to some other reasons, the pact did not work, and this subsequently led to the demolition of Babri Masjid two years later.

Being such an erudite scholar as well as a successful timber merchant of Nagpur, Maulana Parekh was well-aware of day-to-day problems, conflicts and ground realities which the Indian Muslims faced on a daily basis. The solutions that he proposed for dealing with these conflicts always carried a lot of weight with the Indian intelligentsia. In his capacity as chairman, vice president, trustee, founder member etc., of institutions like Managing Committee Nadwatul Ulema (Lucknow), All India Muslim Personal Law Board (Delhi), All India Majlis-e-Mushawart (Delhi), faculty of theology at Aligarh Muslim University Court, Majlise Talim-ul-Qur'an

(Nagpur), Central Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (Nagpur), Society for Communal Harmony (New Delhi), his contributions are well-acknowledged. A Padma Bhushan awardee in 2001 for his range of social services, Maulana Parekh has received several other awards and citations as well. He was also honoured with the Life-Time Achievement and Pride of India Awards by the American Federation of Indian Muslims (ARMI) and the highest civilian award from the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dr. Shakir Mukhi, President of AFMI, described Maulana Parekh as a great religious scholar and social worker who was always concerned about the plight of the community. "In his passing away, we have lost a religious and social leader who worked for the welfare of the people throughout his life. May Allah bless his soul and grant patience to his family," Dr. Mukhi added. Dr. A.S. Nakadar, ARMI Trustee, in his tributes said, "Maulana Parekh's towering personality and his scholarly approach to our contemporary issues will be missed by the Muslims all over the world, especially the Indian Muslims. His passing away is a terrible loss to all of us. People all over the world will remember him for his outstanding work on Qura'n tafsir and its grammar that made it easy for people to understand the Qur'an." In his condolence message, Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh said that in Parekh's death the country had lost a great humanitarian and an ideal symbol of secularism. Condoling his passing away, noted Socialist ideologue Surendra Mohan, and National Media Centre General Secretary, Upendra Vajpeyee, said that in Maulana Parekh's passing, the country had lost a great messenger of peace and communal harmony. ■

(Young Muslim Digest )

### Meaning of Fath

*The prophet said, "Faith (Belief) consists of more than sixty branches (ie. parts). And Haya (This term Haya covers a large number of concepts which are to be taken together, amongst them are self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple, etc.) is a part of faith."*

*Narrated by Abu Huraira*

***On the authority of Masruq, who said :***

***We asked Abdullah (ie. Ibn Mas ud) about this verse: And do not regard those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead, rather are they alive with their Lord, being provided for. He said : We asked about that and he said: Their souls are in the insides of green birds having lanterns suspended from the throne, roaming freely in Paradise where they please, then taking shelter in those lanterns. So their Lord cast a glance at them and said: Do you wish for anything? They said : What shall we wish for when we roam freely in Paradise where we please ? And thus did He do not them three times. When they saw that they would not be spared from being asked [again], they said: O Lord, we would like for You to put back our souls into our bodies so that we might fight for your sake once again.***

***And when He saw that they were not in need of anything they were let be.***

***It was related by Muslim (also by at-Tirmidhi an-Nasai and Ibn Majah)***

## ISLAM, PALESTINE AND LATIN AMERICA

**Mohd. Shahid\***

Islam as the last edition of divine religion, emanating from the cave of Hira had surrounded the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the death of the Prophet (pbuh). Then it traveled east and west in the Persian and Roman Empires, reached the Berbery coast in far West Africa. It was also accepted by the people living in Central Asia, playing a kind of bridge between Arab , India and China. Historian, orator and a man of versatile genius like **Syed Sulaiman Nadvi** has proved in his well researched book “*Arbon ki Jahazrani*” (The Sea Navigation by Arabs) and his other essay *Arab wa America ke Ta'alluqat* ( The Arab-America Relations) the existence of relations between the New World and Islamic World from the Atlantic Coast of Africa as well as through the eastern route of Mongolia-Siberia via Bering Sea. There are indications of Muslim presence in Latin America even before the capture of Spain by Christian powers. In the wake of downfall of Muslim-Arab regime from Spain, history has preserved the exodus of large scale Muslim population in Africa of immediate neighbourhood and Latin America during the colonial conquests. The Art and Culture, craftsmanship and Architecture in various towns of countries of Latin America bears testimony to this valuable contribution of Islamic civilization. In the following pages an attempt has been made to evaluate the Muslim presence in Latin America by analyzing the promising condition of Arab-Palestinian émigrés in Venezuela and Panama. What is true of these two countries is almost true with other Latin American countries.

Latin America was considered a far-off continent from Asian and Indian mainland. Although the world has become the global village but geographically

that continent is still at a farther distance. No doubt both the North American and South American continents are permeated by Atlantic Ocean in the east and Pacific Ocean in the west, almost the same air-distance from India but a visit to US or Canada is easy because of a large number of international carriers and heavy rush of students, jobseekers and immigrants. For example 76000 students were registered last year from India to various US institutes of higher studies. Such carriers fly both ways from India to westward over Atlantic and to eastward over Pacific. Air fares are also relatively competitive and cheaper, whereas the South American destinations are largely covered by European and American airlines on much higher prices. Malaysian and South African airlines also provide air services to some of the destinations in Latin America. There are frequent competitive price information available in Newspapers and on the Internet for travels to different destinations of US and Canada with cheap quotations like Chennai-Boston, Kolkata-California, Delhi-Montreal, Mumbai-New York, Hyderabad-Chicago with economy class travel ranging between Indian Rupees 26000-35000. On the other hand a journey from New Delhi to South American destinations is within the pricing range of Indian Rupees 70000-150,000. Frequent traffic and heavy rush of Indian passengers to US and Canada is reason for cheap pricing whereas Latin American destinations lack this opportunity. India has lesser manpower presence in Latin American countries. The 3000 km. long South to North stretch between the two oceans from Panama to Mexico is known as Central America (Meso-America) which is also part of South America. After Panama in the northward are Costa Rica<sup>1</sup> . (population 5 million), Nicaragua ( 6 million), Honduras ( 7 million), El Salvador (7 million), Guatemala ( 15 million) and Belize ( half million).

The construction of Panama Canal connecting Atlantic to Pacific has definitely facilitated the sea traffic and cargo transportation and shortened the sea distance from Asia, Africa and Europe to the western parts of the Latin American continent. Recently I visited Venezuela and Panama for a study tour in a group of eight persons from different walks of life. I had received no objection certificate from Registrar to proceed for Venezuela and Panama. During the summer vacation we applied for Visa of Venezuela and Panama. After submission of applications for visa to the Venezuelan embassy at E-106, Malchha Marg, New Delhi, we were told after the lapse of one week that your applications were rejected. Although we had produced the Invitation Letter from the President of *Luna Oriental Cultural Foun-*



*dation.* In fact Mr. Hussain Abdallah, the President of this foundation has sent the original copy to the embassy wherein he has mentioned that 'said citizens belonging to India will visit our country and during their stay will visit some of the cities of the National Territory. This invitation is under the social and cultural exchanges offered under the policy of our foundation, which will be further developed and enriched with the knowledge of the aforementioned persons.' Then he also wrote that I would be highly obliged if you could issue them a three month visa with multiple entries, as the group will be visiting other South American countries.' But the embassy staff refused to explain the reason. Upon request I was allowed to see the Visa counselor, *Analida Alfaro*, a lady Venezuelan national. She also said that you don't have any right to ask us explanation. Then we contacted our friends in Venezuela who got our names and passport numbers cleared from the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of External Affairs in Venezuela and the later ministry sent Visa request to the Embassy in New Delhi and we got our passports stamped with tourist visa in the last week of June. A few days ago we had also received the Visa of Panama cleared and recommended by the Department of Immigration in Panama. The next step was to get an early booking in the aero plane. We came to know that American and European Airlines (like Air France, British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM etc) require transit Visa of USA or any of the European countries. Due to events in the wake of 9/11 (eleven September 2001) we were informed by the travel agents that it was really difficult to get even transit visa of these countries. Only *Alitalia* the National carrier of Italy was not under the requirement of transit visa of Italy if the connecting flight was within 24 hours. That was the only airlines, therefore, there was heavy rush and we were able to get our seats confirmed only for the flight of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006. I was about to finish the summer vacation when we reached Caracas. Caracas is a modern city which was developed largely during the Spanish conquests. Situated at the coast of Caribbean sea off the Atlantic ocean it is near to West Indies group of islands (Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados), the islands of *Margarita* (Venezuela), and the three small island group known as ABC (*Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao*) under Dutch control. Venezuela is federal country having 24 provinces and loose Presidential system both at the center and in the provinces. Venezuela has around 27.5 million population in which the Indian tribes (the original inhabitants at the arrival of Spanish conquerors) make 10 percent of the population. The people

of European descent are nearly 70 percent. In rest of the 20 percent are the people of Caribbean and African descent. For the past four decades Venezuela has seen rapid urbanization on account of oil boom. We were told by our guides that milk, vegetable and fruits produced in the fertile and rich countryside is costlier at its source than its economic outlets in the city areas. The super markets in the cities sell every item of daily need at their stores. According to official statistics 75 percent of Venezuelans live in urban areas whereas 25 percent are rural dwellers. The Indians are living in deep forests in the Amazon basin south to the Brazilian border, in the Andean mountains to the Southwest towards Columbia and also in the valley of *Caracas*.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Indians also live in the forest areas bordering Guyana. The frontiers of Venezuela form a huge and almost unbroken belt of forest-dwelling Indian lands. But as the Spanish and Portuguese colonial conquests of South and Central America made them vulnerable to dehumanized status. 'By the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Columbus and a dozen other merchant entrepreneurs had reached many of the islands of the Caribbean, and had mapped the northern coast and most of the eastern coast of South America, as well as the Caribbean and Central America. From the Iberian peninsula came impoverished members of the nobility, mercenaries and criminals. They seized the land and property of the local populations, and declared the territories extensions of the Spanish and Portuguese states. These acts were confirmed by the monarchies, and endorsed by the papal authority of the Roman Catholic Church, formalized in 1494 in the treaty of *Tordesillas*.'<sup>3</sup>

Caracas has a population of 6 million. It looks really a cosmopolitan city. We often happened to meet nationals of several countries at a single place even in small gatherings. Five of our group members were able to communicate in English whereas two of us were also able to communicate in Arabic. Sometimes there used to be translation of our conversation and speeches in 4-5 languages like Spanish, French, Arabic, Urdu, English. We came to know that in all the Latin American countries the cosmopolitan character is visible in the capital towns and big cities. There are two-fold reasons for this cosmopolitanism. First, almost all the South American countries have free border schemes for the citizens of South American countries. Second, Venezuela and other countries are transit route for Europe and North America. For Venezuelans there is no need for visa to visit to Europe. Many immigrants from Guyana, Surinam, African countries, use this route to get entry

into Europe or North America. It may be recalled that during the great age of colonialism, the British colonizers brought Indian labourers to British Guyana for sugarcane plantations and mining from Bengal and United Province. Similarly the Dutch colonizers had brought labourers from Indonesia in Dutch Guyana which is now Surinam. Indian labourers also got entry in Surinam in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. French brought labourers from North African colonies to French Guyana. The Guyanese (British) have also settled in United States of America and Canada because of English language and British rule over them. A good number of Guyanese, both Hindus and Muslims have also come in Venezuela in the search of livelihood. They are engaged in taxi-driving, ice cream making, and selling eatable items as food vendors. Some are also having grocery shops and some have got employment in super stores.

In the beginning we spent 10 days in Caracas, then we travelled to western part of Venezuela. We reached to *Valencia*, also a big town 150 km. From Caracas. We boarded on the *Roadavias* bus from the terminal which is on a walking distance from *Mezquita Sheikh Ibrahim*,<sup>4</sup> the local headquarters of *Rabita Alame Islami*. The security arrangement, checking of passports and travel document, carrying and loading of luggage and boarding in the bus was resembling air travel. Bus was airconditioned with comfortable seats and the fare was also reasonable. We spent 4 days at Valencia. Here we met Hussain Abdallah, the president of the abovementioned cultural Foundation, who had extended invitation to us. He has his family here. He is known as Abu Jihad because his son's name is Jihad Abdallah. *Jihad* is an Arabic word which means struggle/effort. Arabs use such terms as '*abu*' (father), '*umm*' (mother) and '*ibn*' (son) to call a person with that relationship. So he is called Abu Jihad meaning the father of the (son) Jihad. I asked him why he had not used his name Abu Jihad on the Carta Invitacion (Invitation Letter). He laughed and said that although he was known as Abu Jihad in his community in Venezuela but he avoided because of wrong notions attached to this word. Abu Jihad is a born national of Venezuela. His father Professor Sameer Ali came from Palestine and he adopted Venezuela his new home. He is well versed in Spanish, Arabic and English and had taught English. About 300 families from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria are here. From here we went westward 140 kms. to the town of *San Filipi* where we stayed for 3 days. We also went to the countryside and saw the Venezuelans living in the villages. The concept of a village life is quite different from India. Twentyfour

hours electric supply, good road connectivity, uninterrupted water supply make them resemble Indian posh areas in metropolitan cities. These are village because of their natural habitat, agricultural and pasture lands and cattle breeding farms etc. Our next stay was 90 kms west to *Berquisimeto*, a town bigger than *San Filipi*. From here we went 200 kms further west to *Monai* a small roadside town on Berquisimeto-Valera highway. This town has a small Palestinian community, very hospitable for its guests. For the whole period of our stay they cooperated us in every respect. We also met some Columbians, Argentinians and Venezuelans of Portuguese descent. Mr. Malik aged 70 accompanied us from San Filipi as our local guide and translator. He was well versed in English. In *Monai* I asked one of the students of Intermediate (whose father was from Portugal and mother from Venezuela ) about the income of his mother who was a teacher in government middle school. Mr. Malik interrupted and told me that is question may offend him and may be he really does not know the real income of his mother. Then he told me that it was unpleasant to ask someone about his income. The father of that boy has divorced his mother and disappeared. Mr. Malik belonged originally to Barbados but he has been living in Venezuela since the past four decades. He also informed us that it was an emergent problem in Latin American Countries that marriages often end in divorce, burdenning the responsibility on the women. Our next stop was Merida. We hired a 5 seater taxi from *Valera* (80 Kms from *Monai*) bus terminal to *Merida* distance being 80 kms but journey time being 3 to 4 hours because of mountainous roads. *Merida* is in the southwest of Venezuela on the road leading to Columbian border in the Andean mountains. It seems that someone has beautifully decorated the mountainous chain with different flowers. Out of a sudden we experienced fall in the temperature. At *Monai* the temperature was 30° C whereas on the 5000 feet high peaks it was 7° C. for the first time here we felt the impact of altitude sickness and we had to slow the vehicle and even stop it at some places. Because of the zigzag rocky high roads we had to pay US\$ 50 for the taxi. *Merida* is also a big town which has a good number of universities and institutes of higher learning next only to Caracas. Some 35000 students are enrolled in the higher educational institutes in this town. On August eight we started our return journey from *Merida* to *Valencia* via *Monai*. There was a national level educational conference of Muslims of Venezuela in *Valencia* on 11-13 August, 2006. Delegates from different towns of Venezuela participated in this . We were also invited to attend this conference.

Muslims of different regions of Venezuela highlighted the socio-economic problems of their community and how they were trying to cope with those challenges through educational means. It was observed that the Arab Muslims are well versed in Spanish and Arabic and they are trying to keep intact their contact with their religion, culture and motherland. The young new generation is now going to schools in Venezuela but they are little interested in government jobs. The Muslims from Guyana, all English speaking are also trying to keep their Muslim identity in the national life. The local Muslims have greater access to government employment.

From *Valencia*, we started our journey eastward upto the border of Guyana. We covered *Maracay* (60 kms east), *San Juan* (spelt as Huan) 200 kms southeast, *El Tigre* 300 kms east, *Cuidad Bolivar* 90 kms east, *San Felix* a very big town in eastern Venezuela 70 Kms from *Bolivar*. In the eastern towns we came to meet a good number of Guyanese Muslims and Hindus. As they had come from the same villages of UP and Bengal, they are living in the same areas far from Hindu-Muslim polarization and animosities. In *El Tigre*, *Cuidad Bolivar* and *San Felix* we met Hindus and Muslims of Indian origin. Arabs are recent immigrants, have maintained their connection with their language, but Indians are unable to speak Urdu/Hindi and also unable to locate the villages or even districts of their ancestors.

On September 3 we travelled back to Caracas 700 Kms from San Felix. On September 7 we boarded the COPA Airlines plane for Panama. This was a small airbus carrying less than 200 passengers. Copa airlines is headquartered in Panama city. Our plane was packed with passengers who belonged to a dozen of nationalities and were to travel from Panama to different destinations by immediate connecting flights like *Miami*, *Florida*, *San Jose*, *Managua*, *Bogota*, *La Paz*, *Lima* and *San Andres*, *San Salvador* etc. we stayed in Panama for one month. The Panamanian embassy in New Delhi gave us some information brochures. One of them reads—

A visit to Panama is not simply a vacation; it is an intimate adventure. Come explore our beauty – linger in our rainforests, play on our beaches, enjoy our hospitality. Walk in the footsteps of Columbus. Discover Panama for the first time. <sup>5</sup>

Although we did not face any major problem in Venezuela but Venezuela was felt as a place friendly but not homely because of communication problem with the locals. No sooner we reached Panama than we found ourselves in Indian atmosphere as our Indian friends had come to receive us at the airport and there started

conversation in Urdu. At the Tocumen International Airport, the immigration and customs officials were bilingual—Spanish and English. At the time of first world war and then after the end of second world war smaller groups of immigrants from Gujarat arrived here and made Panama their home. After the 1980s, the fate of Gujarati Muslims brightened when they started the business of selling of imported old cars and wagons. They have *garages* (meaning show rooms) to sell old cars. The Gujratis have maintained their link with the mother country and they are a source of FDI in Gujarat. They are also supporting various charitable activities like establishment of orphanages, hospitals, schools particularly in the villages of South Gujarat near Surat, Rander, Dabhel, Navsari etc.

The group members visited several towns of Panama with the Gujrati friends. *Penonome, Agua Dulce, Santiago, David, Concepcion* (the towns on the national highway leading to US and Canada through Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico ), *Chitre, Chiriqui* have Arab presence also. The Gujratis are mainly concentrated in the Panama city. We also found a few families in *Agua Dulce*. Arabs are found in all cities and smaller towns. In *Agua Dulce* (meaning sweet water) and *Santiago* some 50 families from Bangla Desh are also living. Many have become Panamanian citizens whereas others have applied for registration and citizenship. Many of them used Lebanese route to come to Panama. They also told us that Costa Rica has also opened its frontiers for Bangla Deshi nationals without visa requirements and Bangla Deshis have started operating a rural credit bank in eastern Costa Rica.<sup>6</sup>

While we were in Panama, the Muslim holy month of *Ramdhan* (fasting) approached. The Arabs mainly from Palestine and Lebanon started fasting from 23<sup>rd</sup> September on the news of the Arab world whereas the Gujrati and Bangla Deshi Muslims (belonging to *Hanafi* school of thought) started fasting from 24<sup>th</sup> September after sighting of the new moon of *Ramdhan*. The *Hanafi* Muslims have a good presence in this region as Muslims of Panama City, Agua Dulce, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana follow *Hanafism*. Colon is a town situated at the mouth of Panama Canal in the Caribbean sea off the Atlantic Ocean 80 kms north from Panama city. It may be recalled that Panama canal is the main source of government revenues as plenty of cargo ships cross this canal every day. Government of Panama has created a free zone for international trade.

Strangely enough the Arabs from Lebanon have economic dominance and

control of this market. There are billionaire Arabs monopolizing textiles, electronics, cosmetics and toiletries, and various items of daily use. Chinese are ten percent of the total population (3.6 million) of Panama mainly trading in bakeries, pastries and food items. The Chinese have also established their schools. Arabs have not paid attention towards education industry. They still send their children for schooling in Palestine and Jordan. After attaining the adulthood the boys and girls come back to Panama and engage in their family businesses. Indians have recently started Islamic schools. The mosque libraries in Panama city and Agua Dulce have a good collection of Arabic and Urdu books. Arabs have also made libraries and they have adorned the shelves with Arabic, Spanish and English books on Islamic Studies.

On 9<sup>th</sup> October we started our return journey. From Panama we came to Caracas by Copa Airlines. Then we boarded Alitalia — AZ 667 for Milan (Italy). It was a ten hours journey over Atlantic. We were served our *Iftar* (dinner) and *Sehri* (the foredawn meal for starting the fasting) in the aeroplane. The inflight air staff was very cooperative and in fact captain the flight said to us ‘ I know you are fasting and we will provide you food when you require.’

We arrived at Milan Malpensa airport on 10<sup>th</sup> October at 8-40 AM and then we boarded AZ 772 at 10-20 AM same day and reached IGIA, New Delhi at 9-45 pm on the same day after flying 8 hours over eastern Europe, black sea, Iran, Pakistan and Thar desert.

### **Some General Observations.**

Although various aspects pertaining to history, society and culture have been dealt in the previous pages but certain points can be deduced from this study which we took, observed or perceived which are as follows :-

- 1- The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the trouble situation in West Asia has led immigration of Arab people from Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria to almost all the countries of mainland South America and adjacent island nations since the past 60 years. In Venezuela and Panama we were able to have a first hand information of the Arab migrants whereas we also met several Arabs who earlier were staying in other countries of this

region, through whom we came to know the position of Arabs living in Brazil, Columbia, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Equador and countries of central America.

Further , through their industry and hard labour, the Arabs have a sizeable hold over trading and marketing in all such countries. Various big stores selling A to Z items are owned by Arabs.

- 2- Arabs have become citizens of the respective countries where they now live but have a living contact with their motherland through which they have been successful to maintain their identity and culture. For example for their sons/daughters they bring brides/bridegrooms from mother country cementing the old family relationship.

- 3- Although Arabs are a small minority but they are not totally exclusive. There have been cases where they married local women. Marriage and employment of locals on their stores is one of the major factors for the positive influence of Islam. A sizeable number of local Muslims can be seen in every country of the region. In this sense Arabs are not like *Parsis* who are also a small minority in India and some east African countries, totally exclusive in marriage and religion.

- 4- The Arab *Diaspora* (read Palestinian) has enlivened their political consciousness. The recent Israeli attack on Lebanon and *Hizbollah* became the cause of peaceful marches and protests in various towns of Venezuela consolidating the Arab unity and Islamic consciousness. The government and society 7 also extended support to the Arab cause. This phenomenon also reflected the support of Latin American countries for the early peaceful resolution of west Asian crisis.

- 5- The Arab presence in Venezuela and growing demand for Arabic language is evident with the fact that Arabic speaking courses have been introduced in various towns of Venezuela by *Rabita Alame Islami* and other Islamic cultural associations with the approval of the government. Publication of a monthly bilingual newspaper ' *Noticias*



*Internacionales*' from Caracas in Spanish and Arabic since 2000 also testifies growing interest.

- 6- The Guyanese nationals are also trying to maintain their distinctive culture in Venezuelan society. Although we met several Guyanese who have married local women but they try to keep their habits and culture practiced which has some distant reflections of Indian culture. Our history department can do some valuable service in locating the origin of plantation / indentured labourers in Guyana and Surinam. It is my view that Medieval and modern history department can seize this opportunity to enter into contract in some research projects with University of Georgetown in Guyana.

- 7- We also realized that barring few exceptions, the official language in all the countries of South America is Spanish. The Spanish colonial presence was so high that it left the Indian languages (spoken by the local Indian tribes) in a subordinate position. Many of Indian tribes and ethnic groups prefer to speak and communicate their own languages but Spanish is language of nation and administration. Spanish speakers of Latin America are manifold larger in size than the land of its origin i.e. Spain. Spanish language is like broken English easy in comprehension and syntax. When we were at New Delhi for Visa and travel procedures, I visited Jamia Millia Islamia and JNU. It came to my mind that our university can also establish a school of languages where all such major foreign languages can be taught. In fact the invitation letter from Venezuela was in Spanish and Airline staff asked us to produce it to them in English. We approached Dr. Rajiv Saxena, Asstt. Professor in Centre for Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Latin American Studies in the School of languages in JNU. He did this service for us free of charge.

These are reflections and opinions formed on account of travel of Venezuela and Panama. The journey to two South American countries have greatly facilitated my understanding of colonialism and its devastating character. We also came to know the American securitymania in the wake of 9/11 and the hollow concept of war on terrorism. Mr. Ilyas, a Gujrati Panamian seller

of old cars told me that how he was refused to travel by British Airways from London to Panama. He was coming from India by British Airways Bombay-London-Panama sector. But since the aeroplane was to use some portions of American air space to reach to Panama, he was refused permission to fly over American space and he had to travel from London to Cape Town to Beuonis Aires to Panama taking 3 days. Similarly Mr. Ahmed Bhikhu an old Indian of repute having Panamanian citizenship was refused to travel to USA. Several other businessmen complained of the same arrogant and undignified American behaviour. ■

## ***Suspicion***

***Prophet Muhammad said : "Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false, and do not look for the other's faults, and do not do spying on one another, and do not practice Najsh (to cheat), and do not be jealous of one another and do not hate one another, and do not desert (stop talking to) one another. And O, Allah's worshiper! Be brothers !"***

***Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 008 Book No. 073 Hadith  
No. 092 Narrated by Abu Huraira***

## **THE PROPHET TEACHINGS**

**Mahmood Hasan Hasani Nadwi**

Prophet Mohammad (May peace be upon him) laid great stress on kindness towards ones relations. He himself practically performed the trait and taught the same to his companions. A tradition of the authentic Hadith Books Bukhari and Muslim stresses on the same point as it says that a person asked the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), "please tell me an action which can carry me to the heaven. The Prophet replied, "Worship Allah, don't make partners with Him, Perform Salah, Pay Zakaah and do kindness towards relations. A tradition of the Muslim Sharief says that the Prophet said Allah ordered me to break idols alongwith kindness with relations, Monotheism of Allah must be expressed and nothing should be made partner with Him. One of the Prophet's companions wanted to finish his wealth through distribution. The prophet suggested him to distribute his wealth among his relations.

### **The family and its members**

The Prophet (PBUH) spent on the family and always thought a way to fulfil their needs. On an occasion he said to Saad Bin Abi Waqqas (May Allah be pleased with him) that to leave the heirs wealthy is better than to leave them destitute begging before people. What ever you will spend for the pleasure of Allah you will be rewarded on it even if you put a morsel of food in your wife's mouth, you will be rewarded on it as well. Rights of husbands on wife have also been described by the Prophet he (PBUH) said, "If any one would have been allowed to be adored other than Allah, I must have allowed women to perform "Sajdah to her husband. The Prophet also said, that if a woman dies while her husband is happy with her, surely she is heavenly blessed. The Prophet said regarding the family. One who behaves well with family is the best among you and I am the best among you because I treat them with utmost kindness. He supported the tastes and feelings of his family members. Though he kept on his teachings he was never so rigid morally.

The method of the prophet regarding the bringing up of children was very wise. He ordered to make them accustomed to Salah through interesting methods

when they are seven years old and directed to give them slight punishment if they lack preparedness in performing Salah when they are ten years old and their bed should also be separated. The prophet never ignored them in their food and drink. If he observed any misappropriate thing he prohibited them. Hazrat Hasan was a little boy, he took the unsuitable thing (Sadqah) into his mouth. When the prophet saw it he forbade him from doing so. He ordered him to take it out. "Do you not know that we did not eat Sadaqah. Likewise a child who was in prophets guardianship, his hand was wandering in the plate, the Prophet forbade him from doing so and said "say Bismillah before you start eating, eat with your right hand and eat what's close to you."

### **Weak and disabled persons**

The prophet treated weak and disabled members of society with exquisite kindness and exhorted his companions to do so. Whenever any of his companions for any expedience demonstrated favours to the elite of the Queraish in comparison to the weak section of 'Sahaba, the prophet never liked it and favoured the weak manifestly. On an occasion a wealthy companion of the prophet felt himself superior to the weak companion of the Prophet. The Prophet condemned the idea and said, you are aided and given sustenance due to the poor and weak (disabled) people (Bukhari). The Prophet laid great emphasis on sustaining the orphan. In the same way the person who fosters daughters and sisters is also a favorite of the Prophet. Such persons were given tidings by him. Any one who tries to fulfil the needs of widows, the weak and destitute had been given the status of Mujahid by him. He emphasized to invite the poor in parties in general and in "Walimah" feast in particular. He showed sympathy and Mercy to them and always offered a helping hand to them.

### **Neighbours**

The injunctions of the Prophet about neighbours are very clear and evident. In food and drink they were provided a concern by him they were granted a privilege in the transaction of land and property . Prophet's teachings exhort Muslims to treat them well. Neighbour's rights are described highly in Islam . A tradition of the prophet tells us that, "one who believes in Allah and in the Dooms day, should not torment his neighbours physically or mentally. (Bukhari & Muslim).

Neighbours could be of different kinds and qualities. Their quality also must be kept in mind in the behavioral treatment to them. The Prophet's ideal is present

in this regard also.

### **Hospitality**

High emphasis is laid in Hadiths about hospitality. It is urged to honour and extend hearty reception to guests. Hospitality of one night is their right but the true hospitality would be extended up to three days. However, hospitality of a day and night has special importance in this regard. Guests too are given instructions along with hosts. The guest should maintain his status and sanctity. Besides avoiding to act like a resident, he should abstain from troubling the host and hindering in the host's work with no obvious reasons. The prophet brought up his companions in such a way that they felt pleasure with the arrival of guests. Some times they compete among themselves for getting a chance of hosting the guests. They gave them priority in food and drinks. Even sometimes they offered what ever food they had for guests and themselves remained starved through out the night.

### **Love and affection for the creation of Allah**

To show affection and kindness to all creations of Allah is also among the good manners of the prophet. The Prophet conveyed the good tidings about those who show love, affection and kindness towards creations of Allah will get His mercy and kindness. He (PBUH) said "Show kindness towards earthly denizens, to creations of Allah, the Supreme Being who is in heavens will take pity on you". Who does not take pity, mercy, pity is never done to him. A companion of the prophet asked him, "How many times the slave would be forgiven?" He replied seventy times in a day. Once the prophet saw someone lashing his slave, he uttered, Allah has more powers on you than you have on this slave. Once he frightened people by saying that those who inflict others with severe punishment, Allah will give them punishment.

The prophet (PBUH) urged to treat even animals kindly. He told a story that a woman was punished because she had a cat that she neither gave food, water nor allowed it to scratch food and water. He told another story completely opposite of the prior one that a man during his journey got thirsty, took out water from the well and drank it then he suddenly observed a dog eating the clay due to severe thirst. The man took pity on it, taking out water from the well, he gave it to drink. Allah liked his act of kindness so much that he forgave his sins. The companions asked the prophet. If there is reward regarding animals, he replied; "Indeed there is reward on taking pity on every living creature. Prophet also instructed more regarding ani-

imals. All these teaching were meant only to avoid infliction even to animals.

### **The good company and the society**

The prophet laid stress with examples on the good company, good natured fellows and on an agreeable environment. What extraordinary and unusual effects they cast on one's future attention was paid thoroughly to this point in a Hadith of the prophet. The prophet said that. A man is considered on the religion of his friend. According to him who wants to make friendship with someone first of all he should observe the person minutely whom he wants to befriend. In marriage too it should be seen. The rule had been made equal to assets and wealth. The woman who is helpful in her husband's faith alongwith retaining her own faith should be considered an asset in the marriage. The things which should be seen in a woman for marriage, the good tidings given about the woman and her faith. ■

Translated by : Anis Ahmad Nadwi

## **ARROGANCE**

**The Prophet said, "A person who persistently keeps himself aloof from people and behaves insolently, so much so that his name is counted among the arrogant, he is meted out the same punishment which is earmarked for insolent persons."**

**- Narrated by Slamah ibn Akwa, Al-Tirmidhi Hadith**

## MAULANA AZAD AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

**Obaidur Rahman Nadwi**

As a student of primary class once I was asked by my grandfather, showing a photograph of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, "Work hard in your studies to become like him."

It was the first time I heard of Maulana Azad. My grandfather who was a fan of Maulana had brought a broucher on Azad in Bengali language for me. It encouraged me to read his writings with élan and enthusiasm.

The personality of Maulana Azad needs no introduction. Almighty Allah bestowed upon him extraordinary knowledge and wisdom. Right from his childhood, he was quite sharp-minded. He had exhibited his erudition and scholarship by rendredring the address of Allama Syed Rashid Reza of Egypt in Urdu when he had come to address a meeting in Nadwatul-Ulama, Lucknow on the invitation of Allama Shibli Nomani.

A.B. Rajput describing the influence of Maulana Azad says: "Caesar was a man of the moment and Paul a man of the future for Caesar was the symbol of his age and Paul was the embodiment of those prophetic qualities which create a future age. But Abul Kalam Azad happily combines in him the qualities of both Caesar and Paul, for his actions and achievements, though symbolical of the present age, required yet another age to be fully understood and recognized." (Khilafat to Partition)

Apart from being an academician, orator, writer, exegesist of holy Quran, he was an embodiment of all sublime qualities, virtues and norms, necessary for a good scholar and an able leader.

After going through the writings and speeches of Maulana Azad, one may come to the conclusion that his main plank was to liberate the country from foreign yoke and to save it from disruptive forces, nefarious elements and to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity. To foster national integration always remained his aim. No doubt, Maulana left no stone unturned restoring national integration and in perpetuating humanitarian atmosphere in the country.

In this context, it would be apt to mention that to strengthen their rule Britishers worked to shatter Hindu-Muslim unity bonds of unity by creating animosity, hostility, hatred and abhorrence against Islam and its ideology.

We may easily comprehend the devilish notions and thoughts of the British rulers through the following statement of eminent journalist Salahuddin Usman. "Almost the first step that the British rulers took, after grabbing Bengal through deceit and treachery in 1757 was to foster hatred between Hindus & Muslims. For this purpose they commissioned one of their employees, Bunkim chatterji, who had a flair for writing, to

write a book which could divide the people of India and alienate Hindus from Muslims. Chatterji dutifully authored his well known novel-Anand Math-which ruled this land, as some sort of "messiah." Who had come to India on a mercy mission to save Hindus from their Muslim oppressors, and gave them new courage and new strength to revolt against their Muslim oppressors."

It was Maulana Azad who realized the gravity of danger by his keen foresight and acumen that unless Hindus and Muslims unite nefarious designs of the greedy aliens can not be thwarted.

Maulana Azad said in his presidential address delivered at the Congress Session of 1923 : "If an Angel were to descent from the clouds today, settle on Qutub Minar, Delhi and proclaim from there that India can win Swaraj within two hours provided that India renounces Hindu-Muslim unity, then I would renounce Swaraj and not Unity. Because if Swaraj is delayed that is the loss of India, but if Hindu-Muslim unity is lost, it is a loss to Humanity."

In fact Maulana Azad wanted to make India an ideal country where all people may live with peace and amity by carrying out the principles and tenets of their respective religions. He never liked slavery, servitude and serfdom. That is why he remained an ardent preacher of his religion also. Even when he became the first Education Minister of free India he adhered to his principles and faith strictly. His monumental work Tarjumanul Quran is the best exposition of his religious thoughts and concepts.

Maulana did not isolate Islam from politics. He rendered valuable services and achievements for the cause of Islam in getting involved in political arena. He held that Islam is not only a religion but a complete code of life. It constitutes a perfect system of freedom and democracy.

Noted writer Moin Shakir writes: "Azad's approach to religion gave a distinctive shape to his political ideas. The principle of tolerance and brotherhood, and a long history of that growth of composite culture had forged unity between Hindus and Muslims against the rich background of diversity in the country. It was at this state, that Azad came into contact with Gandhi."

Today the need of the hour is that we should take a clue from Maulana's message and idealism and foster national integration by developing the sense of brotherhood, fraternity, equality, uniformity and unity amongst all regardless of caste, creed, language colour and region.

In short, unity, integrity and peace are the distinction and excellence of our composite culture and civilization. Let us preserve them to preserve India. The great poet Dr. Iqbal said : "Mazhab Nahin Sikhata Apas Mein Bair Rakhna, Hindi Hein Hum Watan Hain Hindustan Hamara. (Religion does not teach nurturing mutual hatred; we are Indian and India is our native land). Maulana Azad was an emblem of true Indian. Let us imbibe his qualities and prove ourselves a worthy son of India. ■