



# THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

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Post Box No. 93,  
Nadwatul Ulema  
Tagore Marg,  
Lucknow -226007

Ph. No. : 0522-2740406

Fax : (0522) 2741221 E-mail: [nadwa@sancharnet.in](mailto:nadwa@sancharnet.in)

Rs. 12/-



# The Fragrance of East

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## The Inception of Islamic Calendar

**S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

One of the greatest accomplishments of 'Ali which will last to the time Islam and Muslims serve, was the determination of the basis for beginning of Islamic calendar. In the days of 'Umar different methods were in use for recording events and happenings. There also existed difference of opinion on dating the events. Some favoured the regal year beginning from the birth or coronation of the ruler as was the practice of Persians while others wanted to adopt the system of the Byzantines. Some companions were of the opinion that the Islamic calendar should commence from the day Allah's Apostle was bestowed prophet-hood. 'Ali suggested that the day when the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Medina should be taken as the beginning of the Islamic era. 'Umar and all other companions agreed to the suggestion of 'Ali and 'Umar accordingly directed that the events should be assigned a date calculated from the day of Prophet's migration to Medina.

Generally, the inception of a calendar is related to the birth or death of a great personality or to the establishment of an empire or a great victory. It is a peculiarity of Islam that it is not named after its Prophet nor its calendar is associated with any exalted personage including the Prophet of Islam who was the greatest man born on earth and the most admired person both by God and the Muslims. It was also not related to the brilliant victories won by the adherents of Islam. Inception of its calendar from the date of migration of the Prophet is indicative of its peculiar way of thought and underlying wisdom since it points to the message of Islam. Anyone trying to go into its origin would know that Islam gives significance only to the faith and creed and considers it worth of being commemorated. Now, the conservation of creed in preference to all other things generally valued and taken pride of indicates that the triumph of faith or ideal really constitutes the occasion for beginning of a new era in human history. It also contains the lesson that the principle or doctrine has precedence over all events and happenings, and that man should be prepared to face all hardships for the sake of it. ■

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## Wisdom of Qur'an

Indeed, We have now sent a Book to you wherein is your mention. Will you not think?

### Commentary:

Mujahid believed in the meaning expressed in the translation. But Sufyan (Ibn 'Uyaynah) thought—to which meaning Ibn Jarir is inclined – that the term “dhikr” here alludes to “honor”. That is, it is a revelation that promises to ennoble those who follow and live by it (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi), as Allah said, adds Zamakhshari (43:44), Surely, it (the Qur'an) is a (thing of ) honor: for you and your people.”

Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna also explained, as in his biography, “The Qur'an was revealed to a people who regarded qualities such as good neighborliness, fulfilling oaths, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc., as noble qualities and which they themselves tried to live by. The Qur'an reminded them that by promoting the same values it was mentioning them” (Au). Hasan however understood the term “dhikr” of this occurrence as “religion (Ibn Kathir).

Asad's commentary is on the same lines, “...the above phrase contains, apart from the concept of 'reminder', an indirect allusion to the dignity and happiness to which man may attain by following spiritual and social precepts laid down in the Qur'an.”

If we take the standard meaning, then Mawdudi's comment explains what the verse means, “What was so exotic about the Qur'an which drove its opponents to hold such a collection of mutually conflicting opinions about it (as expressed in verse 5 above: au)? The Qur'an should have been familiar material to them for its discourses centered on the human psyche and on human affairs; on man's nature, man's beginning and end.” ■

*How many towns We destroyed that were transgressors, and brought forth after them another people? When they felt Our chastisement (coming) they began to run from it.*

### Commentary:

The textual word “yarkudun” is richer in meaning than simply running away. Zamakhshari points out that the word “rakada” is used for spurring a riding beast with the heels, in an effort to make it gallop. At another place Allah used the word in the sense of “rubbing.” He said (38:42), ‘Rub (the ground) with your foot.’ ■

## Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

(1) Abu Hurairah relates that the Apostle of God said: *No believing man hates his believing wife. If there is a bad quality in her, there will, also, be a good quality.* “

- Muslim

**Commentary:** It tells that if a man disliked his wife for some reason, he should not adopt an attitude of hatred or indifference towards her and start thinking in terms of divorce, but look for the good qualities in her and learn to admire her because of them. This is the claim of Faith on a believing husband and the privilege of a believing wife, As the Quran says: *But consort with them in kindness, for if ye hate them it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good.*’ -(IV:19).

(2) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Among Muslims his Faith is more perfect whose behaviour towards (everyone) is good, and, (particularly) towards his wife is of love and kindness.”*

- Tirmizi

(3) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Good among you are those who are good to their wives; and I, (on my part), am very good to my wives.”*

- Tirmizi

**Commentary:** It shows that a special mark of goodness is that a man treated his wife lovingly and well. To make the advice more effective for the Muslims, the Prophet added that, by the grace of God, he was most kind and considerate to his wives himself. The attitude of the sacred Prophet towards his wives was perfect, indeed, a few examples of which are contained in the narratives given below. ■

## **IMPORTANCE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE**

Time and again we have been stressing in these columns the importance of Arabic language. This is not because this magazine is the official organ of the institution, which is known, internationally for its excellence in Arabic language and literature. But for every Muslim his faith and devotion to Islam is strengthened if he understands what he is reciting in his prayers and reading in the holy Qur'an. The ever-increasing interest of the community in establishing religious schools-Madrasas is in fact the outcome of their urge to learn more about Islam. The traditional Islamic education in these Madrasas is normally confined to make the students familiar with the script and also in certain cases memorise the holy book to make them *Hafiz*. Apart from Arabic script students are also familiarized with Persian script to help them read and write in Urdu. So with the exception of some prominent institutions like Darul uloom Nadwatul Ulema, Draul uloom Deoband and Mazharululoom Saharanpur etc. where solid foundation of Arabic language and through it the understanding of Islam in its true perspective is laid, common Madrasas just introduce a basic knowledge of the religion. Learning and scholarship have always been the most prized virtues of Islamic society; but learning without understanding and putting it into practical use would be meaningless.

The dwindling sprit of Islam amongst Muslims can be brightened and strengthened if we make them understand the language in which revelations have been made. No doubt authentic translations of the Holy Qur'an and compilations of Prophet's traditions are available but they cannot infuse that pleasure which one gets by knowing what he is uttering in his prayers and reciting in the holy book.

Islam has set a high ideal of "ilm" which with all its scholastic accompaniments involved in the study of the holy *Qur'an*, *Ahadis* and other sciences, is the only way to seek truth. In history we find great philosophers, physicians and scientists like Ibne-Seena, Al-Beroni, Ra'zi, Al-Farabi and in the later part Ibne-Khuldoon who contributed a lot of knowledge with which even Europe in its renaissance has been benefited. The main aim of the education, as emphasised earlier, is to understand the relation of man with God as revealed in the holy book and serve the humanity. We make use of the facilities provided by God and also avail all those benefits which have been bestowed to us. The Madrasas strive to achieve this aim. But lack of resources now cause much hindrance and they are not as effective as they were in the past.

Thankfully, there has been a tremendous growth of Madrasas and Maktabas in

recent years. This is indicative of the urge amongst people to know much more about the religion also. The most encouraging thing is that efforts are a foot to integrate the old system of learning with modern ways. Moreover, due to lack of financial resources and infrastructure most of them have confined their activities only to imparting knowledge of basic religious education. They make students read the Holy Qur'an and learn the elementary knowledge and procedure of offering "Namaz". However, some Madrasas have started imparting both religious and worldly education, like Darululoom Nadwatul Ulema Madrasa Aliya, Calcutta, Jamia Nizamia Hyderabad. Still at lower level much is to be done particularly laying emphasis on making students learn Arabic language. Some easy and scientific ways have been devised for learning Arabic language for common people. About half a century ago Maulana Abdul Salam Kidwai had brought forward a method which could help in learning language easily. "*Arbi ke Das Sabaq*" (ten lessons of Arabic) promised to cultivate interest in the language in ten days. From the text along with some supplementary books ensured sufficient knowledge of Arabic language. Sensing the growing importance of Arabic language, in the present day world scenario, many institutions have come up to help in its propagation.

Nadwatul-Ulema, amongst Islamic institutions, has the provision of imparting instructions on modern subjects along with religious studies. Here emphasis is also laid on making a student perfect in writing and speaking Arabic fluently. Many students passed out of this institution, have made a place for themselves in important academic circles and in other spheres of life. To check the aggressive trend of anti-Islamic forces it is necessary that we educate our children in such a way that they may prove to be a stony rock in their way.

Prophet Mohammad (PBH) is often made a target of false and frivolous attacks. A well informed and educated Muslim fully equipped with knowledge of Islam and having social and historical background to his credit can easily handle the situation and present a true picture emphatically. In Nadwatul Ulema departments of Journalism and 'Dawa' train students to deal with anti Islamic elements in an authentic and effective way. ■

S.A.

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e-mail: shariq\_alavi@yahoo.com  
along with a hard copy, duly signed, by post.

## Some Distinguishing Characteristics of 'Ali

-S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

It seems proper at this stage to present a glimpse of 'Ali's character as described by his contemporaries and later historians.

### An Enthusiastic Iconoclast

Al-Hakam relates from Abu Muhammad al-Hadhali that 'Ali told him: "Once I was accompanying the Prophet (peace be on him) in a funeral when he said, 'Would that one of you goes to Medina and destroys all the idols and disfigures all the graven images? I volunteered myself and the Prophet asked me to go ahead. I went and did what the Prophet had desired, and then told him, 'O Apostle of God, I have destroyed all the idols I found there, razed to ground all the graves and not left even one graven image without defacing it.' The Prophet there-upon said: 'Now if anyone reconstructs these idols, images and graves, then he should be deemed to have rejected my prophet-hood.'"

Jarir b. Habban relates from his father to whom 'Ali told: "I command you to do what the Prophet ordered me. He had asked me to raze to ground all the graves and destroy every idol. "

Abu Hayyaj al-Asadi says that 'Ali told him: "I appoint you to perform the

task entrusted to me by the Prophet (peace be upon him). If you come across any graven image, destroy it, and raze to ground if you find a grave above that level'.

### Insight into Shari'ah

A number of reports testify that the Prophet said: " 'ALI is most capable amongst you to deliver a correct judgement." 'Ali is on record that he was comparatively a younger man when the Prophet asked him to go to Yemen. Ali reports: "Thereupon I said to the Apostle of God, 'You are sending me to a people who would be having disputes amongst them but I have no experience of deciding cases.' The Prophet replied, 'Allah will help you to say only what is right and just and you would be yourself satisfied by it,' 'Ali adds that he never had any doubt about the correctness of his judgement since then."

'Umar was always exasperated if 'Ali was not available to solve an entangled problem. He often used to say: "Umar would have been ruined if 'Ali was not there.' If 'Ali was not available on such occasions, he used to say: 'A difficult problem but no Abul Hasan to solve it!'

'Ali was known for his intelligence

and judiciousness. His quick wit and sense of justice is demonstrated by a petty yet interesting case that came up before him. Two persons, one with five loaves and the other with three sat down together to take meals. They were joined by a third person when they were about to start eating. All the three ate together and then the third person gave eight coins and went away. The man who had five loaves took five coins. and offered three to the other. The latter, however, insisted on an equal share and the matter was ultimately referred to 'Ali who advised the man offered three coins to accept the same. But he refused and demanded justice. Thereupon 'Ali said that if every loaf was presumed to be divided into three parts and each man ate equally, the man who had five loaves should have taken eight parts and spared seven for the third person. Likewise the man who had three loaves himself took eight parts out of his nine parts. Thus the first man was entitled to seven coins and the second to only one coin.

### **Learning**

Abu 'Umar relates from Abu Tufayl that the latter saw 'Ali delivering a sermon. He was saying to the audience: "You can ask me anything you like about the Book of God. I swear to God that there is not a single verse of the Qur'an about which I do not know when it was revealed; in the night

or during day-time while the Prophet was betaking a smooth path or when he was on a hill."

Shurayh b. Hani says that once he asked 'Aisha about the duration of *masah* on leather socks. She told him to ask 'Ali for he knew more about it since he used to accompany the Prophet in his journeys. Shurayh then asked 'Ali who replied: 'The Prophet has allowed it for three nights and two days to the wayfarers and a day and a night for a man at his own place."

The compilations of *ahadith* contain 586 reports narrated by 'Ali.

### **Kindheartedness**

'Ali was unsurpassed in courage, bravery and intrepidity yet he was equally kindhearted, gentle and courteous. Possessed of a tender heart he was inclined to compassion. At the same time he was warm-hearted, affable and genial to one and all. These qualities are put to the severest test when one own's assassin is produced before anyone. It is related that when his assassin, who had attacked him with the poisoned sword had been arrested, he instructed Hasan: "Lo Hasan! If I do not survive after this assault, strike him only once (with your sword). Do not mutilate his dead body for I have heard the Prophet saying that no dead body should be mutilated even if it were of a biting dog."



When Ibn Muljam was produced before him, he said: 'Keep him in custody and deal kindly with him. If I remain alive I will decide whether to forgive him or take my revenge. If I die, then only one man is to be killed for taking a life.'

When the dead body of Talha was found by 'Ali after the battle of Jamal, he burst into tears and wept bitterly. He wiped the dust from Talha's face, saying: 'O Abu Muhammad, it is unbearable for me to see you here beneath the stars with cuts and wounds.' Then he added: 'Would that I had died twenty years before this lamentable day.'

Extremely affectionate and indulgent to the youngsters, 'Ali was equally respectful to his elders. He caressed and fondled the children and liked those who took delight in their company. Once he said: 'Father and son have rights over one another. It is the father's right that his son should always obey him, save in the case of any wrongful act, and the son's right is that he should be given a good name, brought up properly and taught the Qur'an.'

Once a man came to 'Ali and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I am in need.' 'Ali replied, 'Write it down on the ground, for I do not like to see your face entreatingly.' There after 'Ali gave him more than he wanted.'

### Ingenuity of 'Ali

'Ali introduced certain new things which will last to the end of time. Some of these relate to the grammar and syntax of Arabic which will always serve to commemorate his achievement. Abul Qasim al-Zaji writes in the *'Umali*: "Once I paid a visit to 'Ali whom I saw engrossed in some thought. I enquired, 'What is causing you worry, O Commander of the Faithful?' 'I see people in your city speaking faulty Arabic,' replied 'Ali, 'and I want to prepare a short manual of grammar for them.' I said, 'If you could do that we would get a fresh lease of life and Arabic language would be made secure here.' I called upon 'Ali again after three days. He gave me a paper on which he had jotted down the basic rules of syntax."

'Abbas Mahmiid al-'Aqqad writes:

'Ali b. Abi Talib had made, in truth and reality, a great contribution to the promotion of learning. A report handed down through numerous chains of narrators says that Abul Aswad Ad-Dawli complained to 'Ali that the people in the conquered territories were unable to pronounce Arabic words correctly and that they made mistakes in reading Arabic writings. 'Ali said in reply, 'Take down what I dictate.' Thus he dictated the basic rules of grammar and syntax and asked Abul Aswad

to draft other rules on the same pattern. It was from that time that these rules were known as *Nahv* (syntax).”

The word *Nahv* in Arabic denotes the ‘way’. The science of syntax came to be known by the word since ‘Ali had said, “Proceed on this way.”

‘Aqqad also says:

“Compilation of the basic rules of creed, theological dialectics, judicial procedure, jurisprudence, syntax and Arabic script were initiated by ‘Ali.”

The advice given by ‘Ali and accepted by ‘Umar and other companions to begin the Islamic Calendar from the *hijrah* (migration) of the Prophet from Makkah to Medina has already been mentioned earlier. This calendar which reminds us of the message of Islam and its values shall last so long as Muslims continue to live on this earth. In fact, this calendar speaks of the ideological sublimity of a great event of human history which changed the course of events.

### **Some Little Known Aspects of ‘Ali’s Caliphate**

Historians and biographers of ‘Ali have generally presented his life in a way that he had diverted his attention solely to the warfare between Syrians and Iraqis or the internal conflict amongst Muslims leaving alone the

administration of the countries conquered during the reign of earlier Caliphs and he did not try to extend the frontiers of the Islamic realm. Such a view is not only unjust but amounts to concealment of his certain significant achievements. Some of these facts and events do not find a place in his biographies but as touched upon in different annals and biographical works are given here.

When the people of Persia and Kirman rose in revolt and refused to pay the taxes ‘Ali sent an army to subdue them which succeeded in setting right the recalcitrant population. Ibn Jarir al-Tabri recording the events of 39 A. H./659-660 A. D. says:

“‘Umar relates from ‘Ali that after Ibn-al-Hadhrami was slain, different alliances supporting and opposing ‘Ali came into existence. The people of Persia and Kirman imagined that if they refused to acknowledge the caliphate of ‘Ali, they would be saved from paying tribute to him. Thus the people in different regions combined and turned out the tax-collectors.

‘Umar says that Abul Qasim came to know from Muslamah b. ‘Uthman through ‘Ali b. Kathjr that when the people of Persia refused to pay the tribute, ‘Ali consulted his friends as to who should be charged with the responsibility of chastening the

people of Persia. Jariah b. Qadamah offered to tell the Commander of the Faithful the name of the man who possessed the required political acumen and determination to accomplish the task. On being asked he suggested Ziyad and 'Ali entrusted the job to him by appointing him as the governor of Persia and Kirman. He had four thousand troops with him and he succeeded in putting right the entire region."

"Umar heard from Abul Hasan who relates from 'Ali b. Mujahid on the authority of Sh'abi that when the people of Jibal broke the agreement those paying tribute to the caliphate were emboldened to stop payment of the tax. They turned out Sahl b. Hunyaf, the governor appointed by 'Ali from Persia. Ibn 'Abbas offered to subdue Persia and 'Ali sent him to Basra. Ziyad was sent with an army to Persia who got those people under control and they again started paying tribute."

A noteworthy event of the caliphate of 'Ali was the conquest of certain parts of Sind which did not form a part of Islamic realm before him. Al-Baladhuri writes in the *Futuh-ul-Buldan*.

"It was by the end of 38 A. H. and in the beginning of 39 A. H. that 'Ali despatched an army under Harith

b. Murrah al-'Abdi to the regions beyond the Islamic dominion. The expedition was successful and the army came back laden with booty of war of which one thousand slaves were given away to the people in a single day..... The territory conquered was Qayqan in Sind adjacent to Khurasan."

Another important event was the chastisement of a group of 'new converts to Islam from Christianity who had abjured their faith. 'Ammar b, Mu'awiyah al-Dahni cites Ibn .Tufail as saying that certain Christian converts to Islam had forsaken Islam. 'Ali deputed M'aqal b. Qays al- Taymi who carried arms against them and brought them back as prisoners.

The merits and virtues of 'Ali related in the *ahadith* are so numerous that they perhaps exceed those about any other companion of the Prophet. He had in fact been endowed by Providence the qualities seldom found in any man, possibly because he was destined to encounter an unprecedented and extremely difficult situation, May be, The Messenger of God had acclaimed him repeatedly for this reason, and a large number of these have been preserved in the six most authentic compilations of the *ahadith*. Several writers have written treatises on the subject of which *Al-Khasais fi Manaqib 'Ali b. Abi Talib* by Imam Abu 'Abdur Rahman Ahmad Shu

'eb al-Nasa'i (d. 303/915), the author of *Sunan-i-Nasa'i*, is a remarkable work of its kind. He wrote this work when during his stay at Damascus he found a number of people harbouring certain misgivings about 'Ali and speaking ill of him.

### Understanding of Prophet's Character

Being a near relation of the Prophet and having spent a Considerable part of his life in his company. 'Ali had an intimate knowledge of the character and deportment of the Apostle of God. He had also imbibed many a quality of his mentor. 'Ali was a keen observer who had developed a hunch to discern the like and dislikes and inclinations of the Prophet. He also possessed a fluent tongue which enabled him, to articulate the Prophets character with grace and elegance.

'Ali has given a lengthy description of the Prophet's character in all its vividness and intensity. A portion of it reads as follows:

"He was the most generous largehearted, truthful, clement, lenient and amiable. One who saw him for the first time was overawed, but when one kept his company and came to know him intimately, one became attached to him like an inseparable companion. Those who had seen him say that they never

saw a man like him either before or after him-may God have peace and blessings on His Apostle."

'Ali knew how forbearing and soft-hearted was the Prophet. A cousin of the Prophet whose name was Abu Sufyan b. Harith b. 'Abdul Muttalib happened to meet the Prophet when the latter was leading the expedition to Makkah. He tried to contact the Apostle but as Abu Sufyan had insulted as well as persecuted the Prophet earlier in Makkah, he was given a cold shoulder by him. Feeling distressed and disconsolate at the indifference shown to him, he approached 'Ali to pour forth his lamentation. 'Ali advised him to go again to the Prophet and say what the brothers of Yusuf had said to him *\_By Allah, verily Allah had preferred three above us, and we we're indeed sinful - for,* said 'Ali, the Prophet never liked anyone to exceed him in words, kind and comforting. Abu Sufyan did as directed by 'A'li and got the reply from the Apostle, *'Have no fear this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.'* Abu Sufyan accepted Islam and was thereafter not only known for his piety and strength of faith but was ever so ashamed of his past misdeeds that he always talked to the Prophet with downcast eyes and never dared look into his face. ■

## **The Muslim Ummah Must Fulfil its Obligation**

**-S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi**

The distinction between it and the other nations that the Muslim "Ummah" has been bestowed with is that its goal of life has not been made confined within its own sphere. Instead, it has been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the interests, and welfare of other nations as well. For fulfillment of this universal and cosmopolitan task, this Ummah has been assigned of a teacher and guardian. It is for this very reason that it is defined as "the best Ummah". Indeed, whenever the Ummah has acted in accordance with its status mentioned above, it has resulted in the form of its own glory, supremacy and success apart from the tremendous priceless good it has rendered to world nations. They have thus been able to consolidate the humanity and sublime values of life.

Earlier when they did not have the good fortune of being influenced by Islam the various world nations had despite the pinnacle of progress they had attained in material and civilization advancement, manifested evidences of extreme paucity and penury in respect of humanitarianism and passions of mercy and sympathy. They had let the treatment meted out to animals and beasts be meted out to serfs and the subjugated. Women's modesty and chastity was very brutally expropriated and outraged. The wealthy and the opulent used to pursue most

lavish and fiendish pursuits of life. Between the rich and the poor, between the ruler and the ruled and between the families noble and those deemed ignoble a treatment of tremendous disparity and furtherance was exercised and practiced. But, when the members of the Muslim Ummah gave illustrations of the Islamic teachings through their practical lives many a members of other communities, getting impressed with them, joined the fold of the Muslim Ummah and adopted the sublime values of Islam. Even the nations which did not fully adopt Islam, adopted at least its various qualities impressed, as they were, by Islamic values and had their manners and traits mended to somewhat extent.

The U.N.O. now has the egalitarianism among the human beings and the respect of human dignity included in this Charter, whereas it was very distinctly announced about fifteen centuries ago from now, by the Prophet of Islam (SAW) at an all-world congregation saying "O people, you are all progeny of one man, that is Adam. You are therefore, all equal to each other. There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab; nor between a Black and White. Whatever would make a difference would be made by the good or bad character and manner that one would have. Whoever will have as

accordingly with care and caution will be as much superior and better than, one who would be as much deficient in the same. And subsequently the members of the of Muslim Ummah proved themselves observant of and compliant, with this proclamation which had its impact made on the world. The serf and the paupers were awakened to the fact that they, too, are human others, to respect and honour and to amenities and necessities of human life.

The western nations that are deemed today the highest paragon of civilization and culture had been, prior to being influenced with the six centuries old and barbarous and savage acts. The poor and the labourers were treated in their societies in a manner than that animals were treated in. They have in this modern epoch of theirs improved themselves a lot. And yet they discriminate, even today, between the white and the Black. In the greed of wealth and opulence, the poor are brazenly and unrestrainedly exploited. The subjugated and vanquished people are for selfish interests, deprived of their various rights of human egalitarianism. For the sake of specious manifestation of opulence and competition and vainglory, essential commodities of human needs are lavishly, not used but wastefully squandered. While within many segments of the human inhabitants deaths are simultaneously, caused extreme poverty and starvation.

The present Western Civilization which has held today the whole world

under its absolute sway and giving demonstration of such perpetrations of discriminative active practices in life and conduct as make the humanity shudder. Overshadows by towering and grandiose places, slum hutments and shanties which cannot protect the inmates from chilly winter winds nor from the scorching hot blasts of summer, can prevent the rain water dripping through the holes in nor the roofs during rainy seasons are seen spread far and wide in major cities and metropolises. These, hutments and thatched tiny dwellings are also seen on the two sides of ravines full of city sewage waters in megacities like Mumbai and Calcutta. And neighbouring them, flanked by neat and clean roads, grandiose palaces equipped with all kinds of luxurious and regal pomp and purchased at prices 10 to 15 times higher than that of the common market are seen being spent with abundance. Whereas in the neighbouring slums, even the two times square meal is hardly, even after great pains available to clad and cover the body. The rich if accused of a crime, escapes thanks to his wealth, punishment and sentences while the weak and the helpless fall victims to police atrocities and torture. In the American metropolis of New York, the rich spend their lives in maximum comfort and luxuries fully secured and unperurbed, whereas the ordinary men are stabbed and shot dead with the fall of sun-set in by lanes for just nor conceding to part with a dollar or two.

The "Millat" that was produced

and raised by Islam was taught in sharp contrast with the instances of gross high-handedness of the modern civilization mentioned above, to be not less concerned with and solicitous of interests of others than that of theirs. They should wish and seek others welfares as much as they did their own. And the Muslim society that complied with the Islamic directives has set many an example of it the various eras of the Islamic history. Whenever the Muslim, society has fulfilled its obligations, such examples have kept emerging from it which have in turn, made a large number of world populace influenced by the excellence and humanitarianism of Islam. And due to that, changes were brought about in the mode of life and conduct of the humanity. Its evidences are visibly seen in the European society, despite many a moral and human weakness it has and also in the non-Muslim society of the sub-continent, despite its many a weakness provided looked at with unbiased eyes.

It is a matter of great grief, however, that the member of the Muslim Ummah adopted themselves time and again during the Ummah's life-span, *items of glamour* and glitter at the time in vogue in the world, abandoning sublime Islamic values which caused damage to the reputation of Islam and the Islamic Ummah on the one hand and on the other, other nation who could have acquired virtues that are there in Islam are not able to do so. At present, the majority of the members of the Muslims Ummah who are basically products of the western

education system are found far from the life marked with sublime values of Islamic Ummah. Various such vices as are not compatible with the lofty status they hold by virtue of the Millat they belong to have crept into them. From here it is that the non-Muslim society is getting Islam's message wrong. And, hence, their alienation from the righteousness and quality of humanitarianism is distinctly perceptible. In view of such a state of affairs, Muslims are called upon to realize their delinquency and mend themselves. In fact, the blame for dereliction in improving the lot of the world, upon the whole and of our country, in particular rests with Muslims as well. For, a large number of Muslims have neglected the Islamic characteristic of compassion and guidance to the extent that far from making others apprised of these good qualities, they themselves are found delinquent in setting captivating and inspiring examples of humanitarianism, examples that would have captivated the hearts of others and would have projected the bounteous and philanthropist aspects of Islam. This state of affairs is due, generally speaking, to two reasons. One that our Muslim generations pass through such an educational and pedagogical system that makes them averse to God and oblivious of the Hereafter. It happens to be so because the Muslims, after their six centuries long educational exaltation, started dealing with such an important matter as the education in frivolous manner. Whereas the western peoples, having observed their supremacy is

knowledge and learning took a leaf from Muslims and paid enhanced attention to education.

Consequently within span of only a few centuries they were far advanced in education and Muslim were left lagging for behind. And matters reached such a pass that, Muslims had to pick crumbs at those very Westerners table. It is a fact that the education does not impart knowledge only. Instead it does the job of moulding the morals and the character the mentality and the ideology. It moulds the taught into the cast of the teacher himself. Hence, the student seeking knowledge from teachers who are averse to God and oblivious of the Hereafter turns out to be so himself. The sway of the western people under which the entire world is held today and their style and fashion that has overwhelmed it makes the people no doubt conversant with certain branches of the science and knowledge which does lead to uplift and prosperity in the material life of the man but morally and character wise he does not make a thorough their teachers and the system of education unless and until, the Muslims have their education formulated in conformity with the sublime values becoming to the way of life sent down to the humanity by Allah, the Millat cannot get moulded in the cast desired fir and conveyed to it by the Prophet (SAW) on behalf of Allah.

The bases that neglected the Hereafter and the mind-set of such a nature are bound to make one

enamoured of, and totally engrossed in only this world's prosperity, glory and selfishness — a state wherein one is concerned only with his own self and none else. The mundane and material advantage that such an education has and the extent of material advancement of peoples that it leads to and therefore, its need to that extent of material advantage that such an education has and the extent of material advancement of peoples that it leads to and therefore its need to do that extent is not denied. But, alongwith it, measures to make the man human in its true sense of the word, should also be made part and parcel of the education system.

Muslims today are in dire need of having their educational and pedagogical system strengthened and popularized among all sections of the Millat. But, it also has to be formulated in keeping with the sublime objectives and humanitarian and one solicitous of well-being of the humanity. It is, in fact, the result of nothing else but ,their the real role and character of the Islamic Ummah so that the new generaion on taking over from the currently active generation to replace it, is equipped and adorned with those qualities which could prove it to be the Ummah that is solicitous of the welfare of the entire humanity, capable of playing the role of the leader and the guide, an Ummah ideally symptomatic of its role and status. ■



## Islam –What does it mean?

-K.K. Usman

Islam is an Arabic word which connotes submission, surrender, and obedience. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to God.

Another literal meaning of the word Islam is 'peace' and this signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to God. Such a life of obedience brings in peace of the heart and establishes real peace in the society at large.

It is obvious that the universe we live in is an orderly one. There is law and order among all the units that comprise this universe. Everything is assigned a place in a grand scheme working in a magnificent and superb way. The sun, the moon, the stars and infact all the heavenly bodies are knit together in a splendid system. They follow an unalterable law and do not make any deviation from their ordained course. The earth rotates on its own axis and in its revolution round the sun scrupulously follows the path laid down for it. Matter, energy, and life, all obey their laws and grow and change and live and die in accordance with those laws. Man's birth, growth, and life are all regulated by a set of biological laws. All the organs of his body from the

small tissues to the heart and the brain are governed by the laws prescribed for them. In short, ours is a law-governed universe and everything in it follows the course that has been ordained for it.

This powerful, all pervasive Law, which governs all that comprises the universe, is the Law of God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. As the entire creation obeys the Law of God, the whole universe, therefore, literally follows the religion of Islam-for Islam signifies nothing but obedience and submission to God, the Lord of the universe. The sun, the moon, the earth, and all other heavenly bodies are thus 'Muslim'; so is the case with air, water, and fire, stones, trees, and animals. Even a man who refuses to believe in God, has perforce to be a 'Muslim' as far as his bodily existence is concerned. For his entire life, from the embryonic stage to the body's dissolution into dust after death, and every cell of his muscles and every limb of his body follow the course prescribed for each by God's law.

This, in short, is the real position of man and the universe. Let us now examine the problem in a different angle. Man is so constituted that there are two aspects of his life-two distinct

spheres of his activity. One is the sphere in which he finds himself totally regulated by Divine Law. He cannot budge an inch or move a step away from it. Nor can he evade it in any way or form. In fact, like other creatures, he is completely caught in the grip of the law of nature and is bound to follow it. But there is another sphere of his activity as well. He is endowed with reason and intellect. He has the power to think and form judgements, to choose and reject, and to adopt and spurn. He is free to adopt whatever course of life he chooses. He can embrace any faith, adopt any way of life and formulate his living according to whatever ideologies he likes. He may prepare his own code of conduct or accept one formulated by others. In this latter aspect, he, unlike the other creatures, has been given freedom of thought, choice, and action. Both these aspects distinctly coexist in man's life.

By nature he, like all other creatures, is a born Muslim-in-variably obeys the injunctions of God, and is bound to remain so. As far as the second aspect is concerned, he is free to become or not to become a Muslim. Here he has been given the freedom which divides mankind into two groups: believers and nonbelievers. An individual who chooses to acknowledge his Creator, accepts Him as his real master, honestly and scrupulously submits to His laws and

injunctions and follows the code He has revealed unto man for his individual and social life becomes a perfect Muslim (Now his entire life has become one of submission to God and there is no conflict in his personality). He is a perfect Muslim and his Islam is complete, for this submission of his entire self to the Will of God is Islam and nothing but Islam.

He has now consciously submitted to Him Whom he had already been unconsciously obeying, He has now willingly offered obedience to the Master whom he already owed obedience unintentionally. His knowledge is now real, for he has acknowledged the Being Who endowed him with the power to learn and to know. Now his reason and judgement are set on an even keel-for he has rightly decided to obey-the Being who bestowed upon him the faculty of thinking and judging. His tongue also is truthful, for it expresses with conviction its confession of the Lord who gave the faculty of speech. Now the whole of his existence is an embodiment of truth for, in all spheres of life, he voluntarily as well as involuntarily obeys the laws of the same One God-the Lord of the universe. Now he is at peace with the whole universe for he worships Him, Whom the whole universe obeys. Such a man is God's vicegerent on earth.

In contrast to the man described

above, there is the man who, although a born Muslim and unconsciously remains one throughout his life, does not exercise his faculties of reason, intellect, and intuition to recognise his Lord and Creator and misuses his freedom of choice by choosing to deny Him. Such a man becomes an unbeliever in God.

Man is the summit of creation, unique now and for all eternity. The first human being created by God was Adam. He was endowed with knowledge and a free will. The whole human race is a descendant of Adam and his spouse. Among all creations of God, man alone was given the faculty of knowledge, wisdom, reason, to form ideas from abstractions and of choosing to conform or not to conform. There is an eternal righteousness, but there is no internal compulsion; he has the choice of accepting or rejecting it. Of course this freedom is a momentous responsibility.

Any human knowledge of God must perforce be a knowledge of transcendent in perception. No man can ever claim to know God in His divine essence but it is possible to know His Will by the twin roads of reason and His revelations (Scriptures). Man is an immortal soul, and his individual destiny through eternity as well as his society on earth depend on his willingness to pattern

his life here and now on the transcendent norms.

God has not left mankind without guidance on this matter of how (it) should be lived. Through all ages and to all communities of nations God sent His Messengers, with Truth and Wisdom, as their guides and warners. The first Prophet was Adam, he was the first human being as well, and the last of the prophetic chain was Muhammad (Peace be upon all of them.) Some of those Prophets received revelations from God in the form of Scriptures. The Quran is the last of such Scriptures.

Throughout the ages, the basic doctrine of Islam has remained the same. All of Prophets whom God delegated for human guidance have promulgated the basic doctrine with remarkable similarity. The three basic concepts of Islam, as propagated by Prophet Muhammad and earlier Prophets are: *al-Tawhid*, the Oneness of God; *al-Risala*, Prophethood; *al-Akhirah*, the life Hereafter.

Islam is summed-up in *Shahada: La ilaha illallah*; 'There is no god, but God' - affirming God to be One and Only One. He is the Absolute Transcendent Creator, the Lord of the universe. The two authoritative sources of Islam are: The Quran, the Word of God and *Sunnah*, the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him).

Every religion designates some element in this world as mediating the other world. For the Greek, the link between finite man and the ultimate scheme of things is rationality. Man through his intellect participates in ultimate reality insofar as his ideas are true. For the Christians the link is the person of Christ. For the Muslims the mediator between man and God is belief, righteousness and virtue. It is in moral behaviour that the human and the Divine meet.

To the general question of who are the 'saved', the felicitous, the men of final success, the Quran repeatedly answers: "Those who believed and did the good". The instances in which this expression occurs in the Quran are so many as to obviate any listing of them, so that doing the good things in the world is inseparable from the faith and is tantamount to it as well as to salvation. On the other hand, to the opposite question of who is the damned, the denier of religion, the rebellious, unjust, and evil, the Quran answers: "It is he who violently repels the orphan, who does not urge the feeding of the deprived, who is oblivious of what he says in prayer: the pretender, who stands in the way of assistance to the needy." (107:1-7)

Islam thus anchors its moral ideal not only in faith in the transcendent, not in a realm outside of space-time, but on "doing the good"

here and now, on realizing the demands of social justice here and now.

Islam, as propagated by Prophet Muhammad, although a religion centred in Mecca, is not an Arabian religion, nor even an Arabian adaptation of Judaic Christian monotheism. On the contrary, the whole function of Islam was to raise both Arabian and non-Arabian religious conceptions and ethical standards to the levels set by the preaching of the earlier Prophets.

The Islam that was given by God is not only the elaboration of doctrines and practices, but rather the vivid and personal summons to individuals and societies to live their lives always in His presence and to treat their fellowmen always under His judgement.

The discussion on the meaning of Islam may be concluded with an observation made by Thomas Carlyle: "*Allah akbar, God is great; -and then also 'Islam,'* That we must *submit* to God. That our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He do to us. For this world, and for the other! The thing He sends to us, were it death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God- 'If this be *Islam*', says Goethe, 'do we not all live in Islam?' Yes, all of us that have any moral life; we all live so."■

## Muharram - A Month To Remember

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Muharram, the first month of Islamic calendar is considered one of the four sacred months. The holy Quran says: "Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve months a year, so it was ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the month, of them, four are sacred. (Muharram, Ziqadah, Zilhijjah, and Rajab). That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein." (At-Tawbah-9:36)

History bears witness that the month of Muharram assumes great significance because of various events. Adam was created on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram and he entered paradise the same day. He was thrown out of the paradise the same day and his repentance was also accepted that day. This is also said that the first time rain descended to earth on month of Muharram. Prophet Noah's ark touched Mount Judi from horrible deluge in this month. Namrud's fire turned into flowers on Prophet Ibrahim on tenth of Muharram. Prophet Jonah was taken out from abdomen of fish after a long time in this month. A splendid throne was conferred on Prophet Solomon on 10<sup>th</sup> of this month. Prophet Moses got rid of oppressions and atrocities of Pharaoh in this month. Hazrat Husain, grand son of Prophet

Mohammad (S), was martyred on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram too.

It may be noted that when Prophet Muhammad (S) migrated from Mecca to Madinah, he saw that Jews observe fast on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. They said that it was the day on which the Prophet Moses and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its water. On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet said, "We are more closely related to Moses than you" and advised the Muslims to keep fast on the day of Ashoorah. The Prophet said: "The best of fasting after Ramadhan is the fasting in Allah's favourite month of Muharram. A number of Traditions describe virtues and attributes of Muharram in a sublime way. Let us see to what extent we observe the day of Ashoora (10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram). Here there is no difference or distinction between different sects of Muslims as they observe this great and sacred day reverentially.

There is no dispute that the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram was indeed a great event in the annals of history. In his book "The Life of Caliph Ali", Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes: "Abu Makhnuf relates that after Husain was martyred

he saw his body bore marks of 33 cuts by Lances and 34 by other weapons. The number of martyrs who laid their lives with Husain was 72. Muhammad b. Hanafiyah relates that 17 of the martyrs were the Progeny of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. The day on which this tragedy befell was Friday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram, 61 H/10<sup>th</sup> of October 680 A.D. Husain was then of 54 years six and a half month of age." In fact Hazrat Husain was on the right path. He dedicated his whole life to the cause of Islam. His martyrdom reflects his courage, bravery, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, justice and righteousness to fight against evil and disruptive forces. Needless to add that Yazid whose forces attacked Hazrat Husain's party himself confessed his sin and mourned the death of Hazrat Husain.

Hisham says that when the head of Hazrat Husain was brought before Yazid, his eyes got filled with tears. He said to his courtiers: "I would not have admonished you if you had not killed Husain. May Allah curse Ibn Sumayyah. By God, had I been there, I would have forgiven him" (Al-Bidayah, Vol. VIII, P. 189)

It is a point to ponder over that Sunnis and Shias have no difference with each other on this issue. Sunnis and Shias both have high regard for Hazrat Husain. Needless to add that Hasan and Husain are called the leaders of youngmen in paradise. In

Friday sermons Sunni Imams often praise Hasan and Husain in their congregational address.

Ibn Taimiyah says: "Allah honoured Husain with martyrdom and disgraced those who took his life or assisted in the misdeed or assented to it. Husain was a paradigm of the earlier martyrs of Islam since he and his brother are the leaders of the youth Paradise. They had been brought up during the initial period of Islam and so they had been deprived of migration and sufferings for the cause of Islam and the persecution undergone by their predecessors. Therefore Allah blessed them with martyrdom and raised them in honour and esteem and enhanced their status. His martyrdom was grievous tragedy" (Fatawa Ibn Taymiyah Vol. IV: P. 483)

To sum up, Sunnis and Shias both hold Hazrat Husain in high regard and esteem. The tragedy of Karbala is considered by both too painful to be forgotten. It is unfortunate that today a political colour is given to this tragedy. The best tribute to Hazrat Husain would be to keep fast and get involved in good deeds and pious and holy acts on 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram. Husain laid down his life for the cause of establishing an honest and God-fearing society so he should not be betrayed by raising disputes on the interpretation of his mission and thus dividing the community. ■

## The Earliest Translation of the Holy Qur'an: Latin, French and English

- Muhammad Sultan Shah

The Holy Qur'an has been translated by many scholars, both Muslim and orientalist. Latin was the first western language into which the Holy Qur'an was translated. In 1143, an Englishman, Robert of Ketton, completed his Latin translation of the Muslim scripture which was published in 1543 by Theodore Buchmann of Basel. Andre du Ryer rendered the Holy Qur'an into French and published it in 1647. Alexander Ross was the first to translate it into English. His translation, published in 1649, was based on du Ryer's French translation. This article introduces the earliest renderings of the Holy Qur'an in three Western languages - Latin, French and English. These translations have been analysed and some of lacunae have been emphasised.

It was the Crusades that first brought the West into contact with Islam, but between the years 1096 and 1270 we only hear of one attempt to make known to Europe the sacred book of the Muslims - the Latin version. Scholarly concern of Europeans with the Qur'an may have begun with the visit of Peter the Venerable (1142-3 C.E.), Abbot of Clugny, to Toledo in the second quarter of the twelfth century. He gathered a team of scholars who

intended to review Islam in an intellectual manner. As part of that effort, a translation of the Qur'an into Latin was produced by an Englishman, Robert of Ketton (whose name is often deformed into Robertus Ketenensis) and was complete by July 1143. The translation remained hidden for nearly four centuries in manuscript form. In 1543, the Latin translation of the Qur'an prepared in the mid-twelfth century by Robert of Ketton was printed in Basel at the famous Oporino press. It was edited by Theodore Buchmann, a theologian from Zurich who was known in the academic world by the Latinised name Bibliander. Saddled with the lengthy title of "Machumetis saracenorum principis vita ac doctrina omnis, quae et Ismaehelitarum lex et Alchoranum dicitur," the volume also contained an apologia written by Bibliander, a Praemonitio by Luther and a series of other texts, including editions by Ricoldo da Montecroce and Nicholas of Cusa.

Robert of Ketton was an Englishman chiefly interested in astronomy and geometry. He translated into Latin the works of Muslim scientists and philosophers on alchemy, algebra, geometry and astronomy while an archdeacon at Pamplona and canon at

Tudela.

It is interesting to note that a Muslim, whose name is recorded only as "Muhammad", took part in translating the Qur'an for Peter the Venerable. Whilst little is known about him, one might presume that he was hired in Spain to assist in the translation project. Peter the Venerable explicitly stated that it was his duty to ensure that the translation "should not lack the fullest fidelity, nor anything be taken away by deceit." This position of trust is astounding, not only in terms of the plan and sponsorship of this particular project, but also in the wider context of twelfth-century translation activities in Spain. Muhammad's duty would have involved giving information to the other translators on the exact meanings of Arabic words and, very likely, on Islamic doctrine in general.

Robert of Ketton indicated in his preface to the translation that he had experienced considerable difficulty with it. Among the many liberties he took with the text was a re-division of the chapters, which he began by dividing the second chapter into three separate parts and continuing that policy wherever he thought necessary; he ended with nine more chapters than the traditional number. On the basis of his occasional biting remarks concerning the Qur'an's style and content, it might be thought that Peter the Venerable underestimated its place amongst Muslims, but he was fully aware that

the Qur'an was the unique and divinely inspired scripture of Islam. He entitled his translation "*Lex Mahumet Pseudoprophete*" (The law of Mahomet the pseudo-prophet) and it survives in seven medieval manuscripts, one of them fragmentary. It has been criticised by many orientalisists. George Sale who rendered the Holy Qur'an into English directly from Arabic, said of it:

"What Bibliander published for a Latin translation of that book deserves not of the name of a translation; the unaccountable liberties therein taken, and numberless faults, both of omission and commission, leaving scarce resemblance of the original" According to Daniel Varisco, Robert of Ketton was "always liable to heighten or exaggerate a harmless text to give it a nasty or licentious sting, or to prefer an improbable or unpleasant interpretation of the meaning to a likely but normal or decent one." Hadrian Reland, in his "*De religione Mohammedica*" complained that it was "the worst Latin version of the Qur'an." According to Daniel Martin Varisco "The Latin version was full of errors and inconsistencies." Bobzin called it a "quite inexact Latin paraphrase of the Qur'an" and it was also criticised of being paraphrastic. It would, however, be unjust to conclude that, merely because his *Lex Mahumet* is a paraphrase, it is a poor translation. Some mistakes were added to his own in the course of printing. Harry Clark



has pointed out that the manuscript of Robert of Ketton's Qur'an used by Bibliander for printing was a "corrupted one". Moreover, no revision of the translation was contemplated in spite of the fact that he could read Arabic.

Robert of Ketton relied on classical Qur'anic commentaries and incorporated a great deal of material from the Arabic exegetical tradition in his translation. He might have consulted Arabic lexicons for the meanings of difficult words but he used the commentaries to help him understand and translate not only rare words, but also difficult phrases.

Notwithstanding its drawbacks, it is remembered as the first version of the Holy Qur'an in any western language. Some western scholars accept it as the first rendering of the Muslim scripture in any language other than Arabic. James Kritzeck says that Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an has customarily been regarded as the first complete translation in any language, but the first Farsi translation of the Qur'an was made in the period of Samanid King Abu Salih Mansur ibn Nuh (348-364 A.H./961-976 A.D.), more than 150 years before the Latin version, which should therefore be considered the first translation into any European language. This translation was afterwards rendered into Italian by Andrea Arrivabene and published in Venice in 1547. It was the first translation into that language.

According to J. D. Pearson, a Dutch translation was published in 1658 by Glazemaker and a German one in 1688 by Lange. He has also mentioned a version in Russian by Postnikov and Veryokin.

The first version of the Qur'an into any European language was made with a negative agenda. Burman thinks that Peter the Venerable (1092/94-1156) persuaded Robert of Ketton to join a team of translators being formed to produce Latin versions of the Qur'an and other Arabic works that might be useful to Latin-speaking Christians attempting to convert Muslims.

In 1210 or 1211, three generations after Robert of Ketton completed his Latin Qur'an, Mark of Toledo (fl.1193-1216) was similarly persuaded to set aside scientific study in order to produce a Latin version of the Qur'an for a powerful patron. A native of Iberia, he probably learnt Arabic growing up in that still Arab land. He was best known for medical translation. It was the powerful archbishop of Toledo (1208-47), Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, together with his archdeacon Mauricius, who persuaded Mark of Toledo to work on a new translation. This was part of the military and intellectual mobilisation preceding the campaign of Las Navas de Tolosa, in which the Christian kingdoms of Spain destroyed the Almohad army and set the stage for the Christian conquests of the ensuing four

decades.

Mark of Toledo's Latin Qur'an is called "Liber Alchorani" (The Book of the Qur'an), which means that it was circulated in Europe under its proper Arabic name instead of any title indicating bias against Islam. It survives in seven medieval manuscripts, one of them fragmentary. He maintained the Arabic Qur'an's traditional divisions and perpetuated its standard surah titles as well. He carefully followed the Arabic syntax of the Qur'an, usually word for word. This meant that his version could easily be read side by side with the original Arabic.

According to d'Alverny, Mark of Toledo's translation was much more accurate than the ingenious but distorting work of Robert of Ketton because he translated the Qur'an much as he and the others translated Arabic scientific works: his Latin Qur'an sticks closely to the Arabic syntax and is a highly literal and trustworthy translation of the Muslim scripture.

Sir Thomas Adams founded the chair of Arabic at Cambridge (1632) and no less a person than Archbishop Laud patronised the rival chair at Oxford (1636). The first noteworthy Arabist of this new age was William Bedwell, who wrote of Arabic that it was "the only language of religion and the chief language of diplomacy and business from the Fortunate Isles to the China Seas". According to d'Arberry he produced the first version of the Qur'an

but his biographer, Hamilton, does not mention any translation, complete or partial, written by Bedwell. Bedwell (1563-1632) actually published his "Mohammedis imposturae" in 1615 and it was reissued with the title "Mahomet Unmasked" in 1624. The title manifests the intention of Bedwell, who called it "A Discovery of the Manifold Forgeries, Falsehood, and horrible Impieties of the Blasphemous Seducer". The title also bears the words "the cursed Aleoran". It is actually the English translation of an anti-Islamic dialogue between two Muslims on their return from Makkah, accompanied by "The Arabian Trudgman" and "Index Assuratarum Muhammedici Aleorani". It is an incomplete or partial translation of the Muslim scripture in that it only contains an index of the chapters of the Qur'an.

Selections from the Holy Qur'an first appeared in English translation in 1515 as "Here Begynneth a Lytell Treatyse of the Turkes Lawe Called Aleoran. And also It Speketh of Machamet the Nygromancer" printed by Wynken de Worde. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu says, "This 61 page translation and introduction is an indication that the interest in Islam in England, though limited, started earlier than in many other European countries."

Sir Henry Spelman was a professor of Arabic at Cambridge who contemplated a refutation of the Qur'an in English. In 1639 or 1640 he

established and endowed a chair at Cambridge for Anglo-Saxon studies. The newly-created post was given to Abraham Wheloc (or Wheelock), then Professor of Arabic at the University.

After Latin versions, the Qur'an was translated into French by Andrew du Ryer and published in 1647. The title of this work was "L'Alcoran de Mahomet. Translate d'Arabe en Francois, par Sieur du Ryer, Sieur de la Grande Malezair. A Paris et on les Vend, A Avers, Jean Francois Lucas, MDCCXXIII"

Andre du Ryer (c.1580-1660) studied Arabic and Turkish in Egypt in the early 1620s when he served as vice-consul for French traders in the eastern Levant. In 1631, he accompanied the French ambassador to Istanbul, where they began collecting Oriental manuscripts and antiques for their "cabinets of wonder", but such pursuits on the part of Europeans were not independent of political goals. Du Ryer was sufficiently fascinated by the manuscripts he collected to publish a translation of Saadi's *Gulistan* in 1634, thereby inaugurating a trend that culminated in the French translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* three-quarters of a century later. Du Ryer's fame as a translator rests on his daring rendering of the Qur'an into French in 1647. Neither publishers nor clerical/civil authorities were in favour of publishing the Qur'an in the vernacular. As Hamilton and Richard make clear,

du Ryer feared a hostile reception of his work and thus included anti-Islamic invective in his preface. More interested in making his text accessible to French readers than in its linguistic or structural accuracy, du Ryer made numerous mistakes in translation and did not divide the text into suras and verses. Nonetheless, for the first time in the history of Oriental studies in Europe, the Qur'an was interpreted with reference to the writings of Muslim exegetes and du Ryer's achievement was so original (and unexpectedly popular) that many later translations of the Qur'an into European languages relied on his text.

Du Ryer's greatest achievement was his French translation of the Qur'an in 1647, the first complete one in the vernacular to be published and the model for translations into other European languages. His preface is off-putting and he panders to European prejudices against Islam in his summary of the religion but these were techniques used to disguise his real sympathies and the translation gave a reasonable idea of the text.

According to Ahmad Gunny, Claude Savary was less fair to Du Ryer in the preface to his translation (1783). Sheikh Ash-Shabab Omar observed that du Ryer "made his own text not guided by any previous translation" such as the Latin translation by Robert of Ketton (1143), Italian by Arrivabine (1547) and German by Schweigger

(1623). Kenneth Setton says, "This was the first translation in a vernacular language that most Europeans could read." George Sale considered du Ryer's translation "a very bad one".

Two years later, Alexander Ross translated it into English from French. Unfortunately, he had no knowledge of Arabic and his proficiency in French left much to be desired. The translation is therefore highly defective and at times misses the sense of the original altogether.

Some scholars have erroneously alleged that Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah was the first French translator of the Holy Qur'an and Charles J. Adams has stated, "The foremost French translation is that of Regis Blachere." Sayyid Rizwan 'Ali Nadwi thinks *Le Saint Coran* is the foremost French translation by a Muslim scholar. Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah has himself mentioned about Qura'nic translations in his article entitled "French Translations of the Holy Qur'an". Most of them are incomplete, unpublished and unavailable today but eight of these are complete and were published before Dr. Hamidullah's translation, two of them by Muslims. The foremost complete translation of the Holy Qur'an was that published by Andre du Ryer in 1647 under the title "L' Aleoran de Mahomet", 312 years before Dr. Hamidullah's translation.

A Scot who preferred the safety of anonymity translated Du Ryer's version into English. The translation appeared in 1649 showing no publisher, no printer and no distributor; for none dared to be associated with so dangerous a venture. Alexander Ross introduced the translation with a 'needed caveat' to the reader, intended more for Ross's protection than for the enlightenment of the reader. In his English rendition, Ross's somewhat tainted views of Islam are apparent from the title page, which reads as follows: "The Aleoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabick into French. By the Sieur du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the French King, at ALEXANDRIA. And Newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish Vanities. To which is prefixed, the Life of Mahomet, the Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Aleoran. With a Needful Caveat, or Admonition, for them who desire to know what Use may be made of, or if there be danger in Reading the ALCORAN.

Alexander Ross (c.1590-1654) was a prolific and controversial Scottish writer. He was born in Aberdeen and entered King's College, Aberdeen, in 1604. In about 1616 he succeeded Thomas Parker as headmaster of the free school at Southampton, an appointment which he owed to Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford. He was vicar of Carisbrooke in the Isle of Wight

from 1634 to his death. He was also chaplain to the ill-fated King Charles I, who was murdered by republicans in 1649 after the Civil War. As an associate of Archbishop Laud, who was executed by the Puritan parliament in 1645, Ross might have come under threat, but he seems not to have been persecuted by the new regime. In 1641 he said that he had studied divinity for thirty-six years. He died in 1654 at Bramshill, where he was living with Sir Andrew Henley. In the neighbouring Eversley church there are two tablets to his memory, one on the chancel wall and one on the floor over the grave.

One of Ross's most significant accomplishments, published in the same year as the beheading of the king, was his complete translation of the Qur'an into English, named *L'Alcoran de Mahomet*. Although he knew no Arabic and only poorly translated the French of du Ryer, his translation was the first in English, and his influence still lingers faintly in some modern translations.

As du Ryer, Alexander Ross made his intention clear in the title. Both of them believed that Muhammad was the author of the Holy Qur'an and the prophet of the Turks. As most Muslims lived under the Ottoman Empire at that time, it was erroneously thought that Muhammad was the prophet of only Turks. As Muslims were living under their own dynasties in India and Iran

as well, the beginning of Qur'an translation in Britain was not with an academic intention, but to malign Islam.

Perhaps because the French translation had the blessing of King Louis XIV, Ross (who was a beneficiary of the English monarch Charles I and had received the vicarage of Carisbrooke in the Isle of Wight from him) may have thought that, by translating the Qur'an, he too might receive royal patronage. When Ross finished his translation, the King was dead (beheaded on 30 January 1649) and England became a republic. Colonel Anthony Weldon petitioned the Council of State to impose a ban on the printing of the "Turkish Alcoran". Ross undertook an English translation, which he sent to the press in March 1649 but the printer was apprehended and all the copies of the Qur'an were seized. Ross's translation finally came out in print on 7 May 1649.

Alexander Ross's English version of the Holy Qur'an became popular in the west. In 1688, another edition was published in England. It was the exactly same text, but the introductory material was rearranged, and the "life" and the "caveat" which had been at the end of the book were now moved to the opening, elevated from a postscript to an introduction that would provide the reader with the proper perspective from which to approach Islam.

Ross's four-volume *Alcoran with commentary* appeared in 1719. It is comprehensive, as indicated by its subtitle: "A Complete History of the Turks, from their origin in the year 755, to the year 1718... To which are added, I. Their Maxims of State and Religion, II. A Dictionary explaining the names and nature of their religious sects, civil and military offices, III. The Life of their Prophet Mahomet, IV. The Alcoran, translated from the Arabic by the Sieur Du Ryer, and now English' d.4 vols. London, 1719."

Over half a century later and across the Atlantic, Ross's translation was reprinted in 1806. The "First American Edition" of the Qur'an (as it is advertised on the title-page) was the worse of two available English translations. The text was published by Isiah Thomas Jr. (1773-1819) who was a bookseller in Boston, as well as other cities of New England, and a publisher of almanacs. Thomas added footnotes, sometimes turning Ross's marginalia into footnotes and at other times omitting them altogether. He also omitted all of Ross's introductory material and postscripts. There is a short address "To the Reader" which includes some accurate information not mentioned by Ross but the tone of the preface is negative and bears the imprint of Ross's hostile attitude.

In his preface entitled "The Translator to the Christian Reader", Ross described his objective as follows:

"viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou mayst the better prepare to encounter". His aim was to defeat the Muslims after having full knowledge of their holy book. The bias against the Qur'an can be observed in the following sentence:

"Thou shalt finde it of so rude, and incongruous a composure so farced with contradictions, blasphemies, obscene speeches, and ridiculous fables, that some modest, and more rationally *Mahometans* have thus excused it; that their Prophet wrote a hundred and twenty thousand sayings, whereof three thousand only are good, the residue are false and ridiculous."

He used extremely derogatory language against the Qur'an and defamed the Prophet of Islam. The following articles are attached to the translation:

1. The Translator to the Christian reader
2. The French Epistle to the Reader
3. A Summary of the Religion of the Turks
4. The Life and Death of Mahomet, The Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Alcoran
5. A needful Caveant or Admonition for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran: By Alexander Ross.

The translation of the titles of Qura'nic Surahs in Ross's Alcoran shows that many were misunderstood by du Ryer and, consequently, by Ross. A comparison has been made between the titles as translated by Ross and and Pickthall in the following table:

<b>Surah No.</b>	<b>Arabic Title</b>	<b>English Title by Ross</b>	<b>English Title by Pickthall</b>
3	Al- 'Imran	The Lineage of Joachim	The Family of Imran
6	Al-An'am	Gratifications	Cattle
7	Al-A'raf	Prisons	The Heights
8	Al-Anfal	The Spoil	Spoils of War
9	Al-Taubah	Conversion	Repentance
15	Al-Hijr	Hegir	Al-Hijr
20	Ta Ha	Beatitude and Hell	Ta-Ha
25	Al-Furqan	The Alcoran	The Criterion
27	An-Naml	The Pismire	The Ant
28	Al-Qasas	History	The Story
30	Ar-Rum	The Grecians	The Roman
32	As-Sajdah	Worship	The Prostration
33	Al-Ahzab	Bands, & Troops of Soldiers	The Clans
36	Ya-Sin	Intituled	Ya-sin
37	As-saffat	Orders	Those Who Set the Ranks
38	Sad	Truth	Sad
41	Fussilat	Exposition	They are Explained
45	Al-Jathiyah	Genuflexion	Crouching
46	Al-Ahqaf	Hecaf	The Wind-Curved Sandhills
47	Muhammad	The Combat	Muhammad
49	Al-Hujurat	Inclosures	The Private Apartments

50	Qaf	The Thing judged	Qaf
51	Adh-Dhariyat	The Things dispersed	The Winnowing Winds
60	Al-Mumtahinah	Tryal Examined	She Who is to be
61	As-saff	Array	The Ranks
62	Al-Jummu'ah	The Assembly	The Congregation
63	Al-Munafiqun	The Wicked	The Hypocrites
64	Al-Taghabun	Deceit	Mutual Disillusion
67	Al-Mulk	Empire	The Sovereignty
69	Al-Haqqah	Verification	The Reality
72	Al-Jinn	Devils	The Jinn
73	Al-Muzzammil	The Fearful	The Enshrouded
77	Al-Mursalat	Them that are sent	The Emissaries
80	Abasa	The Blind	He Frowned
81	At Takwir	Roundness	The Overthrowing
82	Al-Infitar	Onpening of Heaven	The Cleaving
85	Al-Buruj	The Sign Celestial	The Mansions of the Stars
88	Al-Ghashiyah	The Covering	The Overwhelming
98.	Al-Baiyinah	Instruction	The Clear Proof
100.	Al-'Adiyat	Horses	The Courses
101.	Al-Qari'ah	Affliction	The Calamity
103.	Al-As'r	The Evening	The Declining Day
104.	Al-Humazah	Persecution	The Traducer
107.	Al-Ma'un	The Law	Small Kindness
110.	An-Nasr	Protection	Triumph
112.	Al-Ikhlās	Salvation	The Sincerity
113.	Al-Falaq	Separation	The Daybreak
114.	An-Nas	The People	Mankind



Du Ryer and Ross tried to translate the disjointed letters occurring in the beginning of surahs called *haruf-i muqatta 'at*. It is not translation because these are secret letters, which cannot be rendered into any other language. The meaning of these letters as rendered by these translators is mere speculation. Both Muslims and later orientalisists have left the disjointed letters untranslated. An attempt has been made to collect all such letters and their meaning as given by Ross in the following table.

<b>Haruf-i Muaatta'at</b>	<b>Surah Number</b>	<b>Rendering by du Ryer and Ross</b>
Alif Lam Mim	2,3,29,30,31,32	I am the most wise God.
Alif Lam Mim Sad	7	I am God, the most wise, the most true.
Alif Lam Ra	10,11,12,14,15	I am the merciful God.
Alif Lam Mim Ra	13	I am the most wise and merciful.
Kaf H a Y a 'Ain Sad	19	God is the rewarder, conductor of (The Righteous), liberal, wise, true.
Ta Ha	20	Beatutitude and Hell
Ta Sin Mim	26,28	God is most pure, he understandeth all things, he is the most wise.
Ta Sin	27	God is most pure, he understandeth all.
Ya Sin	36	Oh man!
Sad	38	Truth
Ha Mim	40,41,43,44,45,46	God is prudent and wise.
Ha Mim,' Ain Sin Qaf	42	God is prudent, wise, majestick, He understandeth all things and is omnipotent and wise.
Qaf	50	The thing judged
Nun	68	Whale or great Fish

The following are some extracts given from both du Ryer's French version and its English translation by Alexander Ross. First of all, consider the French translation of Surah al-Fatihah along with Basmalah:

"An Nom de Dieu clement & misericordieux, louange soit a Dieu clement & misericordieux, Roy du jour du Jugement, c'est toy que nous adorons, c' est a toy que nous demandons secours, conduit-nous au droit chemin; au chemin de ceux que tu as gratifies, contre lesques tu n' as pas ete courrouce, nous ne serons pas evoyez.

Its English translation by Alexander Ross is as follows:

"In the Name of God, gracious and merciful; Praised be God, gracious and merciful: King of the Day of Judgment. It is thee whom we *adore*; it is from thee we require help. Guide us in the right way, in the way of them that thou hast gratified; against whom thou hast not been displeased, and we shall not be mis-led."

Ross has followed exactly du Ryer in his translation. This translation is not wrong in itself but it has errors. For instance, ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim have been translated as "gracious" and "merciful". Both of these divine attributes start with a small letter, which is avoided now. Both should be preceded by "most" or "ever". The first verse of the surah is translated as "Praised be God" which is incorrect. Rab

al-alamin is erroneously translated as God. Translation of al-Hamd is also incomplete.

The first five verses of Surat al-'Alaq, initially revealed to the Prophet Muhammad the Hira cave were translated by du Ryer into French as:

"Lis l' Alcoran, & commence par le nom de Dieu qui a tout cree, qui a cree l'homme d'un peu de Sang congele. Lis l'Aleoran & exalte la gloire de ton Seigneur qui a ensele l' ecriture a l'homme."

Ross translated it into English as:

"Read the Alcoran, and begin through the name of God, who created all, who made man of a little congealed blood. Read the Alcoran and exalt the glory of thy Lord, who hath instructed man in the Scriptures, who taught him what he knew not."

*Iqra'* is translated as "Read the Alcoran" twice in this extract (verse 1 & 3). The translation of verse 4 is also incorrect because *bi'l-qalam* has been omitted.

Du Ryer translated Surat al-Ikhlas in the following words:

"Dis aux infidelles, Dieu est eternel, il n'engendre pas, il n'est pas engendre, & n'a point de compagnon."

Ross translated it as follows:

"Say unto unbelievers, God is eternal, he neither begetteth, nor is begotten, and hath no companion."

[The translation of the first verse is erroneous. It may be considered as the rendering of the first verse of al-Kafirun (109:1). The verse underlines the central belief of Islamic monotheism. It should be translated: "Say: He is God, the one". Both du Ryer and Ross mistranslated the verse because they believed in the Trinity. In the fourth verse, the word "companion" should have been replaced by "comparable" or "equal".

The last surah of the Qur'an, an-Nas, was not understood by du Ryer, who translated it into French as follows:

"Dis leur, Je me garderay des tentations du Diable & de la malice du peuple, par l'ayde du Seigneur du peuple, Roy du peuple."

Maintaining all mistakes committed by du Ryer, Ross rendered it into English in the following way:

"Say unto them, I will beware of the temptations of the Devil and malice of the people, through the assistance of the Lord, and king of the people."

This cannot be considered a valid translation of the last surah. Six verses have not been translated completely. Some portion of the text has been omitted and the order of some words has been changed. What is presented as translation of the surah proves that du Ryer failed to comprehend the text. For comparison Pickthall's translation of the surah is as follows:

"Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the evil of the sneaking whisperer, who whispers in the hearts of mankind, of the jinn and of mankind."

A comparison of Pickthall's and Ross's translations makes it clear that du Ryer and Ross mistranslated the final chapter of the Holy Qur'an.

Some words have been interpolated in translation by du Ryer and Ross. For instance, the first verse of Surat al-Fil has been translated as: "Considerest thou not how thy Lord entreated them that came mounted upon Elephants, to ruin the Temple of Mecca?" The phrase "to ruin the temple of Mecca" does not occur in the verse.

Du Ryer wrote brief notes in the beginning of some surahs that usually give historical background or speak about some important event mentioned in that surah. In some introductory notes, he discussed nomenclature of the surah. For instance, the note added at the beginning of Surah Taubah reads:

"Reader, this Chapter beginneth not as the rest, with these words, *In the name of God, gracious and merciful*; because these are words of Peace and Salvation, and for that in this Chapter, *Mahomet* commandeth to break Truce with his Enemies, and to assault them. Many Mahometan Doctors have entituled this Chapter of Punishment, or Pain. See the Exposition of *Gelaldin*, and that of *Bedaoi*, and *Kitab el tenoir*."

With regard to the night journey of the Prophet, the introductory note to Surah 17 has been translated by Alexander Ross as follows:

“Reader, The Turks believe that this Night of the Voyage *Mahomet* ascended into Heaven with the Angel *Gabriel*: He was mounted on a white Burac, which is a beast partly Mule, partly Ass, and partly Horse. He saw all the Prophets that preceded him, all the wonders of Paradise, and saw God, who sate on his Throne. See *Kitab el tenoir*, *Tefsir anf Giauhoir*, and the Exposition of *Gelaldin*. The *Bedaoui* intituled this Chapter, The Chapter of the Children of *Israel*.”

In the translation of Ross, the following three sources are usually referred to in the margin notes:

1. The Exposition of *Gelaldin*; mostly written as “see *Gelaldin*” that refers to *Tafsir Jalalayn*, the work of two great Musiim commentators namely *Jalal ad-Din Mahalli* (1389-1459) and *Jalal ad-Din Suyuti* (1445-1505).
2. *Kitab el tenoir*; it might refer to a commentary by *al-Qazabadhi* on the Qur’anic commentary of *al-Badawi* entitled “*Tanwir al-basa’ir bi-anwar at-tanzil*”.
3. *Bedaoui*; famous exegesis in Arabic by ‘*Abdullah ibn ‘Umar al Baidawi* (d.1286) entitled *Asrar ut-tanzil wa Asrar ut-ta ‘wil* (*The Secrets of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation*).
4. *Tefsir anf Giauhoir* (Turkish).
5. *Bokari*; the famous hadith collection “*Al-Jami’ as-Sahih*” compiled by *Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari* (810-870).

The above-mentioned books are actual sources consulted by du Ryer. Ross did not add any footnotes and has only translated from the French. According to *Ahmad Gunny*, du Ryer’s great achievement was his pioneering use of well-known commentaries on the Qur’an such as those of *al-Baydawl* and the *Jalalayn*, which would otherwise have remained unknown to the general public.

Following du Ryer, Ross added very brief notes in the margins. Some examples are the following:

1. The term *al-A’raf*, the plural of ‘*urf* (7:46;48) has been elucidated as, “The *Mahometan* Doctors believe, that such as shall have done as much good as evil, and whose balance shall not decline, neither on the Scale of good works, or of bad, shall dwell in the place called *Aaraf*, with them that have done neither good nor evil; and this place is between Hell and Paradise.”
2. The Arabic word “*ba’udah*” in verse 2:26 is translated as “gnat”. Ross translated it as “puny” elucidating in footnote, “The puny is a stinking worm, frequently growing in Beds in hot countries”.
3. Regarding *Abraham’s* father he

added, "The Arabians say, Azer is Abraham's surname and that of his father was called Terec Azer".

4. The marginalia also demonstrate his limited information. Instead of writing "The Muslims believe....", he wrote "The Turk believe....".

According to Abdullah Saeed, "His translation has been described as crude and reflecting his 'rabidly anti-Islamic' feeling and orientalist approach."

S.M.Zwemer says "the first English Qur'an was Alexander Ross's translation of du Ryer's French version (1648-1688). He was utterly unacquainted with Arabic, and not a thorough French scholar; therefore his translation is faulty in the extreme".

According to Hassan Mustapha "the translation by Alexander Ross had dubious aims like the Latin translation sponsored by the Abbot of Cluny." Arberry criticised Ross's text for being "as hostile and bigoted in intention as it was in execution".

Henry Stubbe denounced the translation of Ross, saying, "Our English follows the French and the French is very corrupt, altering and omitting many passage[ s]."

Samir Khalaf calls Alexander Ross "openly antagonistic in tone and intention" and says his translation contains "grievous errors and distortions".

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali says,

"Like du Ryer[,] Ross also aimed at exposing what he called the 'Turkish vanities'. This phrase betrays, on the one hand, his and his contemporary Europeans' dislike of the Turks because of their political influence in Europe and, on the other, the common European misconception about Islam."

Professor M.A.S. Abdel Haleem argues, "The first translation into English was done in 1649 by Alexander Ross, a grammar school teacher in Southampton. However, Ross did not know Arabic and made his translation from one in French by Andre du Ryer. The translation is at times widely different from the original. Ross's title is indicative of his attitude."

The three earliest translations of the Holy Qur'an in European languages -Latin by Robert of Ketton, French by du Ryer and English by Ross - had influence on the later orientalists. These were considered the primary sources of knowledge on Islam for a long time as there were no alternatives in these languages. These translations were characterised by prejudice of the translators and inaccuracy. Relying on the inaccurate information provided by them, their successors intensified the hatred in the minds of western readers.

■

*(Courtesy: The Islamic, Quarterly, London)*

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## Around the World

### BRUNEI TO INTRODUCE SHARIAH CRIMINAL LAW

**Bandar Seri Begawan:** Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah has announced that a new Shariah criminal law that could include penalties like amputation for theft and stoning for adultery will be enforced in six months. The sultan said in a speech that the Shariah Penal Code would be applied to Muslims only. "By the grace of Allah, with the coming into effect of this legislation, our duty to Allah is therefore being fulfilled," he said at a legal conference in Brunei's capital. Brunei's Shariah Islamic court had previously handled mainly family-related disputes. But the new Shariah Penal Code was being reviewed for many years. Nearly 70 percent of Brunei's people are Muslim Malays, while about 15 percent are non-Muslim ethnic Chinese. Brunei already has a dual system combining civil courts based on British law as the sultanate was a British protectorate until 1984, and Shariah-complaint courts handling marital, inheritance, and other low-key issues. In his speech, the sultan appeared to try to assuage any international concern, saying the Sharia change "does not in any way change our policies ... as a member of the family of nations." ■

### TURKISH PRESIDENT GUL WARNS OF 'MIDDLE AGE DARKNESS'

**Istanbul :** President Abdullah Gul has issued a stark warning over the turmoil across the Middle East, saying ethnic and sectarian identity politics could presage an era of medieval darkness across the Muslim world similar to Europe's Middle Ages. Speaking at the Istanbul Forum organised by the Centre for Strategic Communication (STRATIM) on October, 4. Gul warned against the possibility of a clash "within civilizations" that will be more detrimental than a clash of civilisations in the Middle East, describing it as a doomsday scenario. "There is no possibility or probability that any country, sect, or community can come out beneficially from such a period. In other words, this scenario will lead to a 'clash within the civilizations' that will be more detrimental than a 'clash of civilisations' and is the disaster scenario where everybody loses," Gul told an audience that included participants from Syria, Egypt, Iran, Russia and the European Union. ■

### ISRAEL DEMOLISHES PALESTINIAN HOMES

Put yourself in the place of a Palestinian family. Imagine that authorities will not give you a building permit under any circumstances to expand your house to accommodate your growing family. You build it anyway, because you have no alternative, and spend large sums on lawyers to protect it in court. One day, when your children are in school and you have no clue that today will be the day, police and soldiers come with a giant bulldozer and demolish your house. We witnessed the demolition of the Kastero family's large home in Beit Hanina, north of Jerusalem, that left 45 people instantly homeless. The children came home from school screaming and crying, traumatized to see the destruction in progress. The family had invested its life savings in the home, so had no resources to relocate. A month later, we visited the extended family living in tents and a container next to the rubble of their home. This is not an isolated case. The United Nations estimates that one of three houses in East Jerusalem lacks Israeli-issued building permits, meaning that at least 93,000 people could potentially be displaced. Next scenario. Imagine that your husband is a taxi driver with heart problems. One day he is returning from a fare when he comes upon a clash between stone-throwing youth and Israeli soldiers. The soldiers shoot tear gas into his cab. He passes out, and his heart stops for several minutes. He is taken to a hospital, but never comes out of his coma and dies three weeks later. This was the story of Moyad Ghazawneh, in Ar-Ram. He had two daughters, one of whom he never saw: she was born 10 days after his death, in the same hospital. The family is going to try to file a claim against the Israeli government for wrongful death, but human rights groups told us there is little likelihood it will be successful. B'Tselem reports that between January 2009 and October 2012 Israeli security forces killed 326 Palestinians. During the same period Palestinians killed 5 Israeli security force personnel and 15 Israeli civilians. ■

**OUR REPRESENTATIVES ABROAD**

<b>Britain</b>	:	<b>Mr. Akram Nadwi</b> O.C.I.S.St. Cross College Oxford Ox 1 3 TU (UK)
<b>Dubai</b>	:	<b>Qari Abdul Hameed Nadwi</b> P.O. Box No. 12525 Dubai U.A.E.
<b>Pakistan</b>	:	<b>Mr. Ataullah</b> Sector A-50, Near SAU Qrs. Karachi 31 (Pakistan)
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