

# **THE FRAGRANCE**

**OF EAST**

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# **The Fragrance** **of East**

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## Editor's Note:

The demolition of the Babri Mosque on December 6 eight years ago was an unpardonable act which had rightly triggered wide spread criticism.

It is unfortunate that those responsible for the criminal acts at Ayodhya and those who created a mayhem subsequently leading to the massacre of innocent Muslims and destruction of their property not only in UP but in different parts of the country are still at large. Instead of being ashamed of their unlawful action they are terming the event as a part of freedom struggle.

Ms Pamela Philipose in one of her writ-ups in the Indian Express has questioned the BJP leaders who call it a freedom movement. We reproduce below extracts of her article:

Words in a politicians mouth are like chewing gum. You can shape them anyway you want. You can even blow bubbles out of them. Eight years after the Ram Janambhoomi campaign, which resulted in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the BJP would like to paint it as a "freedom struggle". In the words of its spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, it is comparable to that "led by Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders like Lokmanya Tilak and Subhas Chandra Bose".

This is, of course, not just a ludicrous statement, it is an audacious one. To compare a profoundly divisive campaign, the deleterious effects of which are felt to this day, to the national movement which had brought variegated peoples and communities together in a common project, is plainly outrageous. The values and spirit embodied in one still threaten to tear the nation apart; the values and spirit of the other are the basis on which the country survives. The people who guided the trajectory of one consciously sought to gain political power by the practice of exclusivist politics. The men and women who participated in the other strove to rise above communitarian divides to achieve what they hoped would be secular India.

But Malhotra's observation end up damaging even his own cause. They render meaningless the expressions of regret that the Union home minister, L.K. Advani, has routinely invoked over the demolition of the mosque. Advani is on record for stating not once but several times that the Demolition of the mosque was unfortunate and December 6, 1992, was the saddest day of his life. Yet here is his party spokesperson eulogising a campaign that ended with that very demolition.

But this is the paradox facing the BJP. The party would like to both claim and disclaim ownership of the Ram Janambhoomi movement, depending on the constituency that is being addressed. This legacy of doublespeak goes back to those stormy days that preceded the storming of the mosque as these excerpts from L.K. Advani's speech from that period indicate. On December 1, at Varanasi, Advani is quoted saying: "We do not want to destroy any Masjid and make a Mandir. There was never a Masjid at the Janambhoomi site. The idols of Ram are there and all we want to do is build a temple there ... to democratically protest against wrong practices ... kar sewa does not mean bijans and kirtans". In Azamgarh, a little later: "We want peaceful kar seva but the centre is creating tension."

The next day, at Mau, he said: "Now kar sewa will begin on December 6. All kar sevaks will perform physical activity on the 2.77 acres in Ayodhya and not merely sing bhajans." On December 3, at Gorakhpur, he explained, after describing a news report quoting him as having said kar sewa would evolve use of shovels and bricks as false: "The kar sevaks will be fully under control. The kar seva will be symbolic. I never said such a thing (about shovels and bricks being used)." Yet, due to this mis-reporting half a day's work in Parliament was lost because of the uproar this report caused.

A day after the demolition, Advani is quoted as having said in Delhi: "It (the demolition of the mosque) was unfortunate. Both I and the Chief Minister of UP did all we could to prevent the destruction but what actually happened was we could not gauge the intensity of

the people's feelings over Ayodhya." The very next day - on December 8 - Advani once again mounted an elaborate justification: "Today, when an old structure which ceased to be a mosque over 50 years ago is pulled down by a group of people exasperated by the tardiness of the judicial process and the obtuseness and myopia of the executive, they are reviled by the President, the Vice-President and political parties as betrayers of the nation ... It is blatant double standards such as evidenced by this tirade against the Ayodhya movement that is making the Hindus feel incensed and outraged."

Words are dangerous. Not only do they legitimise the unacceptable at certain points in history, they return to contradict newly assumed positions, like hornets stirred from their nest. The words voiced in the winter of 1992 wrought immense damage. Some 1,119 lives were lost in the immediate aftermath of the demolition and a city like Bombay felt the after-shocks for months thereafter.

Today, eight years later that hate campaign continues to shackle the BJP, and its political leadership. Still call it a freedom movement, Mr. Malhotra?□

S.A.

Opinions expressed in the articles appearing in this magazine are those of the writers and are not necessarily of the Institution.

*--Editor*



# GREAT RELIGIOUS & REFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS OF INDIA

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi

*Excerpt from Karvan-i-Zindagi - autobiography of Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (RAH)*

**An Introduction to reputable organisations and seats of learning and training; eradication of mis-givings:-**

Several educational institutions and organisations have been ardently preaching and propagating the message of Islam in this country, rather in the sub-continent, rendering yeoman service since a considerably long period. This mission has been instrumental in instilling into the Muslim masses an awareness of the spirit, purpose and ways of Islamic life and culture, associated arts and crafts.

It is these efforts that have helped maintain quality of life, preservation of ideals and line of action according to the holy Book and dictum of the Prophet (pbuh) leading to development and sustenance of a pious and healthy environment. The part they played and sacrifices they made for liberation of the country from alien imperialism also stand out as a shining edifice to devotion.

**An Inopportune Vendetta:-**

Of late, a sort of offensive has sprung up. It is apparently aimed at maligning the fair name of these worthy organisations by creating suspicions about their sincerity and righteousness in the minds of people at large. The offensive creates doubts about the teachings and actions of these organisation, adherence to the

time and correct path laid down by the Book and Word of Prophet (pbuh). The propaganda emanates from the followers of a certain line of faith, claiming theirs to be the jurisprudence based on and deriving directly from Qur'an and Hadith and thus being the only correct form of religion. The organisations described above, being, by and large, followers of Hanafi jurisprudence have been targetted for maligning their fair name, despite their integrity, purity of thought and unwavering zeal in the service of Islam and Muslim masses.

More is the pity that the propaganda is bereft of a cogent research base or incisive quest, and is meant to serve vested parochial interests and for financial and material gains.

An unfortunate aspect is that the propaganda should have cropped up in a country far removed from the centre of Islam and having an entirely different culture and language. The Muslims here are already victims of attempts at character assassination, distortion of their culture, and annihilation of their unique identity by way of enforcement of a common civil code, promulgation of an educational system based on anti-Islamic principles and in line with Hindu mythology. Already afflicted by ills and maladies induced by the vitiated atmosphere, the community is now having to contend with ill conceived attempts at internal harmony and resultant disarray. It would be apt to remind those who have targetted the organisations engaged in preaching and teaching for narrow gains, of the following exhortation by the holy Qur'an

*"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as witness to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just : that is next to piety : and fear Allah for Allah is well acquainted with all ye do." (Al Maida - 8)*

This writer considers it his sacred duty not only to present the scenario in a balanced manner but also to remove the misconcepts and suspicions lurking in the minds of masses, coming as he does, from a family

which has over centuries been just before God, walking in all commandments and justifications, along the path broken by the earliest sages, whose lofty status we hold in deep, full reverence and have unwavering belief in Unity of God and teachings of the Prophet (pbuh). There have been in this family persons of great knowledge and wisdom, whose jurisprudence was based on and derived directly from the Book and utterances of the prophet (pbuh) [Hadith]. Far from being subjected to any disrespect or denigration, they were held in high esteem for their piety and wisdom. My teachers in Arabic language and literature, whose equal could hardly be found even in Arab countries as far as richness of knowledge, depth of research and style of teaching go, professed the same jurisprudence. I am all admiration for the knowledge, wisdom and incisive thinking of the great mohaddis (one having command and in-depth knowledge of the sayings of the prophet), Allama Abdur Rahman Mubarakpuri, whose two books, "*Tuhfat-ul-Ahwazi*" and the elucidation's and annotations of "*Sunan-ut-Tirmizi*" (Hadith of Tirmizi) have enriched my knowledge no end and I was honoured with a testimonial on Hadith by the Allama.

A book titled "*Udwa*", in Arabic, was compiled and printed at Arabic press of Nadwatul-ul-Ulema and published from the council of Islamic research and propagation. It was primarily for the enlightened ones in Hejaz and Gulf countries. Subsequently to meet the requirement in Indo-Pak sub-continent, an Urdu version, titled *Basair*, was compiled by Syed Jafar Masood Hasani Nadvi, member of faculty at Nadwatul Ulema and chief writer *Saheefa-i-Arabi-ur-Raid*.

This writer is in receipt of several communications, from all over the country - South India, Gujarat, other states, districts and towns-delineating the irksome situation and the danger that looms over the Muslim masses. An eminent learned person, Maulana Mufti Syed Abdur Raheem Lajpuri also brought the situation to my notice. He authored a book in Urdu, elaborating upon the fact that each was, according to his individual judgement, justified in reposing faith and acting accord-

ing to jurisprudence of any of the four great Imams. The book was translated into Arabic by another learned person.

Rather than taking up cudgels against the inopportune movement, this writer thought it fit to address the learned ones, who profess the doctrine of basing and deriving their faith directly from the Book and the word of the prophet (pbuh) (*Ahl-i-Hadith*), in a cordial vein. Intention was to request them that, given their lofty status, wisdom, erudition and influence, they address themselves to the task of thwarting external and more serious threat, from forces hell bent upon striking at the very base of Islam and also help to allay the internal disruption. A letter, in Arabic was sent to ten such men of eminence, incorporating the above mentioned aim. A reply was received from the most exalted among the learned ones of Saudi Arabia, Allama Abdul Aziz bin Baaz, President of *Adarat-ul-Bahoos-ul-Ilmia val Ifta* (institution of discussion on learning and issue of edicts), and secretary *Hait-ul-Kabar-ul-Ulema* (Body of great men of knowledge). The Allama confirmed the following facts:

The standing committee of *Albahoos-ul-Ilmia val Iftaa*, on 17th of Shawwal 1404 AH and the congregation of on Islamic jurisprudence, sponsored by *Rabiat-i-Alam-i-Islami* (organisation for global link among Muslims) on 24th of Safar 1408 AH, issued an edict that the great Imams (pioneers) of all four forms of jurisprudence, Shafaiee, Abu Hanifa, Hambal and Malik were authorised to investigate, research and prescribe the mode of faith and way of life for the masses. No muslim, pursuing any of these modes is to be labelled as a non believer. A layman, not himself versed in the nuances of the religion may adopt and lead a life according to any the four jurisprudence.

The letter, eloquent on the qualities of all four Imams and value of their services to Islam, fully acknowledged their status. Some other organisations also replied on similar lines.

In this chapter of "*Karvan-i-Zindagi*" (Caravan of Life), a translation in Urdu of the original Arabic letter of

his writer, mentioned in the preceding lines is presented, in earnest hope that it would still be an eye-opener and elicit some serious thought.

"It is an accepted reality that in every age, guidance for correct way of life and safe guard against misdemeanour and sin, has been sought for by the layman from persons specialised in the relevant field and possessing wisdom and adequate knowledge, by virtue of research and inquest. The history of Islam, ancient and modern, bears ample testimony of this fact.

"What is more evident is the fact that for keeping to the correct path and to deal with ever emerging problems, in accordance with canons of religion (shariah), it is these men of wisdom and expertise who are to be banked upon for guidance. Such persons are the ones who have endowments of knowledge and wisdom; also grasp and depth of experience. They should be seized of the fact that in imparting their knowledge to others they would be accountable before the Almighty.

"In the earliest period of Islamic history, days of Caliphs, companions of the prophet (pbuh) and their immediate subsequent associates, it was a common practice to refer, the problems pertaining to Islamic tenets in the light of teachings of Qur'an and Hadith, to persons blessed with qualities mentioned in the preceding paragraph, who considered it their pious duty and were aware of accountability on the day of judgement.

"In the early days of Islam, in the prevailing clean and pious environment, strong urge for investigation and research to arrive at the correct conclusion, awareness for accountability and sense of righteousness, it was sufficient to refer the problems to any knowledgeable person rather than go looking for one professing a particular line of jurisprudence (*fiqah*).

"Then followed the period when under force of circumstance and to save time and effort, people resorted to taking their problems to learned men professing a particular line of jurisprudence (*fiqah*), whose piety and integrity was above board. This practice was popular mainly for its convenience. No stigma was at-

tached to those adopting any one jurisprudence nor were they marked out as being non-believers or their ways as subversive. The fountainhead of all jurisprudence and actions being the Book and word of Prophet (pbuh), none following any of four forms, is to be dubbed as non-believer or accused of inducting despicable customs and theories (*bidat*) into religion.

"A time has now come when the urge for liberation from all limitations, anarchism, lust for stark materialism has culminated in mental aberration, a vitiated environment, slander and spite. And all this in the name of advancements, in blind copy of so called liberated countries. To enable one in selecting the path of righteousness in the face of challenges and turmoil, advice and guidance has to be sought for from wise and knowledgeable persons, may be of any of the recognised jurisprudences. Provided of course the base and source of the logic and dispensation are Qur'an and Hadith."

"It is a matter of grave concern that in such times a vendetta aimed at maligning the purveyors of four recognised jurisprudences, specially the Hanafis who are an ostensible majority, should spring up. Neither is this the opportune time nor is India the proper arena for such activities, which are likely to achieve nothing but mental disturbance and a schism among the Muslims. The community is already confronted with concerted invasion at their culture, by forces advocating refrain from Unity of God, idol-worship and imposition of Western culture. The demand of the day is to strive for inculcation of brotherhood and unison among Muslims as a whole.

"India being geographically distant from the centre of Islam, with a language and culture at variance from Islamic language and culture, the Muslims here being deeply influenced by the customs and traditions of their physically and numerically dominant neighbours, the call of the moment is to devote all effort and energy towards inculcating awareness of correct identity and religious dignity. The ingress of cultural deviation and refrain are clear as daylight (phrase 'refrain from relig-

ion' has deliberately not been used as it would offend the sensitivities and has obnoxious connotations)."

The principles and code of conduct appropriate for this country are those expounded by the great sage Hazrat Shah Wali-ul-lah of Delhi, the glitter of which still persists. His talented sons, each of whom was unique and endowed with depth of research and insight into jurisprudence, carried on the mission. Another luminary, a beneficiary of the same house of wisdom, was Imam-ul-Muslimeen Syed Ahmad bin Irfan Shaheed (martyrdom 1246 AH), whose preaching and guidance reformed about thirty lakh people and rid them of undesirable habit and customs. Some forty thousand embraced Islam, influenced by his guidance. Same is the case with his successor and capable lieutenant, the great crusader Maulana Shah Mohammed Ismail Shaheed (martyrdom 1246 AH) whose book *Taqweeyat-ul-Iman* (fortification of belief), expounding the realm of unity of God and negation of doubt in Unity and refrain from undesirable beliefs was bestowed the epithet of *Towheed ki Minjaneeq* (catapult of unity) by a learned person of Saudia. □

English rendering: Mashoon Ahmad  
Ex – Director Training U.P.S.E.B

## THE BLACK STONE

The position of the Black Stone at the Kaaba and its significance often engages the attention of Muslims.

The history of the Black Stone goes back to the time of the building of the Kaaba. When the Prophets Ibraheem and Ismaeel completed its building and God ordered Ibraheem to do the *tawaf*, Ibraheem could not keep the number of rounds he had completed, because there was no mark to indicate the beginning and the end of the round. He prayed God to give him such a mark, and the angel Jibrail brought him the Black Stone, which is used as a mark for his *tawaf*.

That continued to be the case ever since. It is traditionally said that the Black Stone is a stone that has come from heaven.

Another event which is of importance is that fact that when the tribe of Quraish which inhabited Makkah wanted to rebuild the Kabba after its structure had been affected by some natural events, they quarrelled over which tribe should have the honour of restoring the Black Stone to its place. The dispute between the clans was so fierce that there was risk of hostilities breaking out. At last they agreed to put the matter to arbitration and the arbiter would be the first comer into the mosque. That was the Prophet Mohammed, but he had not yet received his revelations and he did not yet know anything about his future position as a Prophet and Messenger of God. He solved the problem to everybody's satisfaction when he ordered a robe to be placed on the floor, and he put the Black Stone in the middle. He then asked each clan to select one of its members, and all representatives lifted the robe, with the Black Stone in it to its place. He finished the task of putting it in the exact place. Thus all clans shared that honour, and with his wisdom, he prevented a serious clash between cousins.

Black Stone has no significance other than that. It brings no benefit and causes no harm. We kiss it in *tawaf* because the Prophet kissed it.

If the crowding is such that it makes it difficult to reach, we signal to it with our hands to indicate salute and the beginning of another round of *tawaf*. □



## THE CHOSEN & DEPUTED LOT

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (Rah)

The prevailing state of Ummat (Muslims) in the world sets one ruminating over the past and analysing the reasons of their fall. The eternal trustees of the last divine revelation, Ummat deviated from the ordained path, shut-out from stream of life, ostensibly influenced by subversive philosophies and nefarious designs of material forces.

Conditions in the world at large, as obtaining in the sixth century Christian Era, were abhorrent, to put it mildly, and too well known to require any recapitulation. As in the present era, presence of a few pious and noble souls, who abide by the tenets laid down by the Almighty, is far too insignificant to influence the collective character, as was the case in the days preceding the advent of Islam. Quran bears testimony to the fact that even among the absolutely wayward masses, including the Jews who were the target of God's displeasure en bloc there did exist quite a few righteous persons.

*Surah 3, verse 113: Not all of them are alike; of the people of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of Allah all night long. And they prostrate themselves in adoration.*

*Surah 3, verse 114: They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works; they are the ranks of righteous.*

It is, however, a matter of common observation that a sparse sprinkling of noble persons, which is the case at all times, even in downright depraved societies,

has no bearing on the moral character of a community, nation, not to mention the world as a whole. Unless a people, collectively and individually, follow the rules of justice, righteousness in all commercial, political, social and cultural dealings, be it in peace or in war, widespread enduring uplift cannot be expected. It is the persons endowed with a crusaders' zeal, stoic in the face of adversity who would form a bulwark against subversive forces, who can be really instrumental in perpetuation of a holy mission.

History bears ample testimony to the fact that the message and teachings of several prophets, not to talk of missionaries and reformers, prtered out within short span of time, reverting the tribes and clans to whom these were addressed, to their original unprincipled culture. This, for the simple fact that the target population was devoid of will and spirit, by and large.

It was therefore the will of God that there rises an exalted one as His final messenger, a trusted repository of ultimate revelations. Along with the exalted one (pbuh) a whole group of people (Ummat) were charged with the responsibility of promulgating, spreading and perpetuating God's covenant, without the individuals being bestowed the prophethood. They were commanded as follows:

*Surah 3, verse 110 - Ye are the best of the people evolved from mankind enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.*

*Surah 2, verse 143 - Thus we have made of you an Ummat justly balanced. That ye might be witness over the nations, and the Messenger, a witness over yourselves.*

The prophet endorsed this while addressing some of his disciples:- "You have been deputed to facilitate, not for causing vexation".

The disciples who received enlightenment in the company of the prophet (pbuh), in the luminiscence of the Message were the paradigms of the traits narrated

above. The dialogue between Rustam, the commander of Persian army and Rebaibin Amir, representing Saad bin Abi Vaqas the Islamic commander illustrates the fact amply. On being inquired of the purpose and mission of Muslims' foray into Persia, Rebaibin Amir replied: " We have been sent by God the Almighty, to deliver the mankind from subservience of their fellow beings and guide them towards obeisance to one God, to rescue them from dungeons of the world into vastness, to relieve them from oppression of (any) religion unto a just and fair system."

Balance minded, knowledgeable historians of the West, like the German Caetani, also mince no words while eulogising this clan:

"These were the ones who having genuinely imbibed the teachings of the prophet, attained a lofty mental level, ushered in an environment the like of which was never before witnessed. Like seeds sown in fertile land, the teachings of the prophet brought about an unprecedented transformation and they were ever steadfast under most excruciating circumstances. They were the loyal custodians of the word of God conveyed through the prophets and in wake of their guidance emerged men of high calibre, versed in knowledge of Hadeeth and religion".

Ummat (world muslim community) is entrusted with the function of audit, as it were, of the character and deeds of entire humankind, for which they are answerable on the Day of Judgement:

*Surah 5, verse 8 - O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witness for fair dealings, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety; and fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with all ye do.*

Ummat themselves are also forewarned, in the words of God, addressed initially to the early group of a few hundred believers in Madina.

Surah 8, verse 73 - *Unless you do this (protect each other), there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief.*

Do these commandments not apply till this day, with Ummat spread over the globe, occupying position of power in several countries, with adequate manpower? Quranic reminder is unambiguous:

Surah 11, verse 116 - *If only there had been of the generations before you, men of righteousness who prohibited men from mischief in earth (but there were none), except a few among them whom We saved (from harm). But the wrong-doers pursued the enjoyment of good things of life which were given them and persisted in sin.*

Poet of the East, Dr. Mohammad Iqbal depicts the scenario and brings to light the machinations of evil forces, in his poem *Iblees ki Majlis-i-Shoora* (Executive Council of the Devil):

Whose clarion rents the juggleries of universe,  
Let not the dark night of such one see the light  
Obliviate to him the realm of moral character,  
Till all his pawns are vanquished.  
It is to your good that the believer be under siege,  
And demits to others this mortal world.  
Serves him right to engross in philosophy and rhymes,  
That blind his vision to the panorama of life.  
I dread unceasingly the resurgence of this Ummat,  
Whoes faith, in essence is the scrutiny of universe.

Nations basking in the glory of their past achievements, howsoever lofty, cannot survive, much less flourish, without exercising their capabilities, will to struggle against all odds and an enduring sense of responsibility. Failing which they would be relegated as an obscure chapter in history of the world.

It is time that Ummat rekindle the original glow, revive the qualities of leadership and once again em-

bark upon their designated journey. Poet of the East is there to spur on:

*Sabaq phir parh shujaat ka sadaqat ka adalat ka*

*Liya jaega tujh se kam duniya ki imamat ka*

(Recall the lessons of valour, veracity, justice.

Destined art thou to lead the world.) □

English rendering: Mashoon Ahmad

## RABEY NADVI VISITS BATLEY

Rector of Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulema Lucknow, Maulana Mohammed Rabey Nadvi Al Hasani recently visited Batley to attend the International Conference on Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (RA) organised by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford University, on 3rd September 2000, where world renowned scholars including Justice Mufti Mohammed Taqi Usmani, Maulana Mohammed Salim Qasim, Dr. Omar Abdullah Naseef, Dr. Abdul Sattar Abu Ghudah were present.

Maulana Nadvi delivered a lecture, to a large congregation on 4th September at Jame Masjid Henry Street, Batley. He started by briefly outlining the history behind the establishment of Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulema, saying "it was the vision of its pioneers to prepare calibre scholars who could meet the challenges of the day". Thereafter he made observations on the need for Islamic institutions in the West to ensure that their syllabi reflect the realities facing Muslims in this part of the world. He emphasised the need for Ulama and masses to work in unison realising the threats and dangers. Particular mention was made on the need for parents to ensure proper training of children, especially in a society where evil is contagious.

The Maulana also delivered an address at the Tablighi Markaz, Dewsbury. He elucidated on the qualities of a *Daee* (Preacher), highlighting the great responsibility entrusted to the Ummah of inviting towards good and forbidding evil, saying the delicate task required knowledge, wisdom and dedication but the rewards were tremendous. □

--- Sulaiman Kazi

# ISLAMIC WORLD UNDER MENTAL SIEGE

S.M. Rabey Nadvi

The Islamic world since about a century has been a victim of conspiracy hatched by Jewish and Western powers. Despite being rid of military dominance of the western despotism as an outcome of freedom struggle, political and cultural dominance persists. An astutely designed scheme, manoeuvred by Western despotism and Jewish powers, aimed at captivating the Muslim mind, aligning it to their own philosophy, is perpetually on. These forces are united in their endeavour towards undermining the hold of Islamic philosophy. The scheme is implemented through appropriately designed system of education and media, specifically aimed at alienating the vulnerable nascent minds from their lofty wholesome values.

The illustrated electronic media (television) has been a most incisive tool, what with its round the clock presentation, over-whelmingly carnal contents, accentuated specially during leisure hours. The blatantly immodest contents, depicting explicit liaison between male and female with all its nuances are largely viewed without reserve by the children and parents together. The depiction has a direct titillatory effect on the base instincts. Co-education, side by side, unavoidably provides moments of isolated togetherness for girls and boys, enticing them to uninhibited enactment of what they see on the screen. Situation is further aggravated by vivid depiction of acts of arson, burglary, murder, of offering and receiving illegal gratification and similar economic offences in all detail. Overall, the influence is

far reaching and impressionable minds are plunged into an abyss of depravity, completely oblivious of moral values.

Such depletion of moral values was already, ingrained and evident in the life-style of the West. Position in the East is no longer much different, the culture being thoroughly impregnated with similar trends in beliefs and actions, culminating into an obnoxious, stinking cult.

This, in reality is an outcome of a conspiracy hatched by the Jewish community who, through a meticulous protocol gained ascendancy over the Christian world, the two subsequently aligning themselves to influence the eastern nations. Following the decline and dismemberment of Soviet power, focus has been directly and solely upon the Muslim culture. The perpetrators of the plan coined terminologies aimed at denigrating Islamic philosophy and way of life. One who would lead a life in accordance with Islamic tenets, is branded a "fundamentalist" and made the target of ridicule and wrath of these forces, who play-up only the negative aspect of the term, implying a retrograde mentality and obstinacy. Those that are sincere to their faith and undeterred from the Islamic way of life, are not only ridiculed but upon expressing resentment, are categorised as "hard-liners", militants and often put behind bars. Torture and novel means of brain-washing are resorted to, till such time as they may overtly or covertly, relinquish the beliefs originally sacrosanct to them. The oppressors are lead to believe that the faith and religious ideas have been expunged from the minds of the victims, who are largely Muslim youth.

If and when, at last these young folks are let out, their woes being known to their other compatriots, an intense hatred towards the oppressors takes sway; consequences are confrontations, accidents and violent skirmishes. An objective assessment and deep probe is needed by the authorities to ascertain the real cause of such state of affairs. To a discerning eye the reasons are too obvious, yet the Western powers are adamant in their intentional refusal to admit reality, and persist tac-



itly in labelling the phenomenon as "religious militancy". Till such time as the truth is accepted, the present coercive aggression would prove futile.

In the so-called developed world, Jews and Christians are at liberty to pursue their respective faiths and lead a life to their prescribed traditions. In contrast the attitude of the West towards Muslims of the East and Arab nations, is manifestly offensive. For instance Christian and Jewish womenfolk have the choice of dressing as they wish. If a Muslim woman dresses in the fashion of the country no fingers are raised. However if seen attired in accordance to norms prescribed in Islam, even if dons just a scarf, is marked as a militant violating the country's constitution and liable to be ostracised.

The Jews, spread over several countries besides Israel, form an influential and effective part of cultural and legislative mechanism of the media. Yet they face no objection from the West despite sticking to their own faith and time-honoured traditions. This, in the face of irrefutable historical evidence of the Israelite rule being founded on religious and racial intolerance, usurping the territory, subjugating and largely extraditing the original inhabitants by main force. Far from labelling the Jews as fundamentalists or militants, the European nations extend them full co-operation in all spheres.

Muslims the world over are the target of an offensive launched in unison by almost all powers. The simple reason is that they are the torch bearers of righteousness and invite the humanity towards a culture which enshrines wholesome values. Their clarion call is construed by the West as a hindrance to their goal of promulgating a libertine cult. According to western powers the term "militancy" is applicable to such acts for which the blame can be slapped on to a Muslim. Total annihilation of Muslims is seen as the only effective resource towards, ushering in an era with a life-style devoid of any code of conduct and in which licentiousness and lasciviousness would rule the roost. This, in lexicons of the developed self-styled enlightened powers, is tantamount to secularism. More so, luring the Muslims

off their beliefs and healthy mode of life is interpreted as real secularism. Such lop-sided concept of secularism is manifest in France, Turkey and several other countries.

Acts committed with this notion in mind, under the auspices of Western powers, are projected as democracy and equality among humans. So potent is the propaganda that world is ensconced, deceptively, under the impression that never in time was provided such justice as in modern rule and cult.

How long the delusion lasts is anybody's guess.□

English rendering: **Mashoon Ahmad**

## NOCTURNAL JOURNEY TO ULTIMATE PINNACLE

Abdullah Abbas Nadvi

Attainment of highest conceivable level, among the entire creation, by the holy prophet, sequences of events and implications, have been interpreted and described by several highly learned persons and exegetists in the light of God's own revelations in slightly varying forms. The outstanding among them are:

- Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, the noted historian of twentieth century.
- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
- Qazi Sulaiman Mansoorpuri.
- Maulana Hakeem Abd-ur-Raof Danapuri.
- Maulana Ghulam Rasoo, Mehr.
- Hafiz Ibn-i-Kaseer.
- Allama Zarqani.
- Hazrat Shah Wali-ul-lah Mohaddis Dehlavi.
- Tirmizi.
- Nasai.
- Hafiz Ibn Al Qayyam.
- Imam Bukhari.
- Imam Muslim

Contemporary disciples of the Prophet (pbuh) and their next immediate ones whose versions form the major source of information are:

- Umm-ul-momineen Hazrat Ayesha.
- Hazrat Abdullah Ibn-i-Abbas
- Hazrat Abdullah Ibn-i-Masood.

- Hazrat Abu Huraira.
- Hazrat Abuzar Ghifari.
- Hazrat Ameer Maaviya.
- Khwaja Hasan Basari.
- Malik-bin-Saa'saa.
- Jabir bin Abdullah.
- Anas bin Malik.
- Saeed bin Jabeer.
- Masrooq.
- Mujahid.
- Akrama bin Jareeh.
- Hazeefa bin Alaiman.
- Hasan bin Maaviya.
- Ibn-i-Ishaq

Quranic revelation, explicitly describing the event of *Asra* and *Meraj* (nocturnal journey and ascent to pinnacle), is verse 1 of Surah 17 -

*Glory to Allah who did take his servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless - in order that we might show him some of our signs: for He is the one who hereth and seeth (all things).*

Surah 52 (Al Najm) verses 1-18 elucidates the event.

Surah 17 (Bani Israil) also describes it in more detail. Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadvi is of the view that the entire Surah 17 pertains of "night journey".

In the light of exegesis of God's revelations, information provided by Prophet's (pbuh) contemporaries, research and interpretation of learned persons, the panorama that reveals is broadly as follows:

- (i) Surah 17, verse 1 is a concise statement of having taken His chosen servant (pbuh) upon the journey.
- (ii) The important event occurred at about the time when, ten years after migration from Makka to Madina, the acute hardships perpetrated by the non-believers had abated and era of comfort had dawned. Maulana Azad, however has noted the occurrence about a year prior to migration (which appears more credible).

(iii) Angel Gabriel descended, opened Prophet's (pbuh) chest, filled it with radiance (of God) and did it up again. The Prophet (pbuh) felt no discomfort or pain.

(iv) The Prophet (pbuh) embarked upon the journey astride Buraq ("Buraq" is derived from "Barq" meaning electricity), with angel Gabriel for company.

(v) He (pbuh) was taken to Masjid-i-Aqsa (the farthest mosque).

(vi) Ascending further, he met prophets Adam, Swaleh, Abraham, Idris, Moses, Jesus. When it was dawn, he (pbuh) led the morning prayer offered by all the prophets. He was bestowed the leadership of all the prophets.

(vii) Gabriel escorted the prophet further up the Welkins, right up to where the movement of pen of destiny over the tablet (*Lauho-qalam*) was audible. This was the stage when five prayers each day were ordained for the believers.

(viii) The Prophet (pbuh) was shown around up to *Sidrat-ul-muntaha*, symbolised as a luminescent tree, which is the last permissible approach, except for him (pbuh).

Irrespective of the time of occurrence, the interpretations expounded and conclusions drawn by highly learned ones, in the light of information from contemporaries and of course Quranic verses, are as follows:

1. A majority of contemporaries and immediate-subsequent ones are unanimous on the journey involving body-and-soul. A few do hold that it was exclusively spiritual and this opinion has the endorsement of Hazrat Ayesha.

2. Surah 17, verse 60:

*We granted the vision which we showed thee, but as trial for men.*

Surah 53, verse 17-18:

*His sight never swerved nor did it go wrong.*

3. Prophet himself (pbuh), according to well established Hadeeth, describes the condition as between awakening and slumber.

Prophethood is a state wherein the chosen one is at an entirely different level, incomprehensible to human brain and not amenable to normal interpretation. Human concepts are incapable of depicting the state of prophethood, what with their vision limited to material existence.

4. The "journey" indeed was a dream, not as experienced by ordinary humans but in which vision is alive as if seen by material eyes.

Analysis and elucidations of important phenomena encountered during the "journey", on the authority of learned and wise, specially Shah Wali-ul-lah Mohaddis Dehalvi are described below:

(a) The action of opening and filling up of holy chest with radiance represents the dominance of spiritual faculty over the material one.

(b) "Buraq" is derived from "Barq", meaning electricity. Allusion is to the power and possibilities of this energy, till then not discovered by the world.

(c) Masjid-i-Aqsa is the point of convergence of God's manifestation and focus of vision of all prophets.

(d) Meeting with all prophets and bestowal of their leadership is construed as a common link and that all prophets embody the traits of the ultimate messenger (pbuh).

(e) Ascending the Welkins step by step denotes acquisition of knowledge and wisdom from all those who are already at those levels, including the angels appointed there.

(f) *Sidrat-ul-muntaha* (literally : the ultimate barrier), represents "existence", which despite numerous branches has a common root. It also, similarly denotes capacity of nourishment and development akin to a tree.

(g) The luminescence engulfing this tree are descended from Almighty, which are manifest only to those capable of imbibing them (allusion to holy prophet (pbuh)).

(h) According to Maulana Azad, the nocturnal journey is related to finalisation of *Wahi* (revelation), like in the case of prophet Moses decision having come during his sojourn to Mount Siania.

Two special awards were bestowed upon the holy Prophet (pbuh) during the course of *Asra*. First is that each one from among the believers desisting from treating any one as equal to God, shall be under the shelter of his (pbuh) benevolence. Second award is the revelation of the last section (rukoo) of Al-Baqr, (Surah 2, verses 284, 285, 286). Here, the principles of completion of faith and of supplicating God for pardon from sins and mistakes are expounded for the first time. □

English rendering - Mashoon Ahmad

## ITALY'S MUSLIMS IN UPHILL BATTLE FOR RECOGNITION

Italy's Muslims count for less than one percent of the total population but their place in a society founded on Catholic traditions is being disputed in an often ferocious crusade by church and would-be government officials alike.

Bologna Archbishop, Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, and opposition Northern League leader Umberto Bossi have become the most viable and outspoken opponents of Muslim rights in Italy, playing up fears of the unknown "other" and fanning a them and us mentality, avidly reflected by some media.

Biffi claims that immigration of Muslims will fast alter Italy's national identity, a fear apparently shared by more than a third of his compatriots. Preference should rather be given to Catholic immigrants, possibly from the Philippines or Latin America.

But his rather unevangelical admonitions are going down badly even with Catholic help groups who regret his closeness to xenophobic rightists in Italy and other European countries.

With more than 500,000 Muslims and Islam now replacing other Christian denominations than Catholicism as Italy's second spiritual creed, the construction of more mosques and Islamic cultural centres is fast becoming a highly charged issue as some politicians turn up their rhetoric ahead of crucial legislative elections.

There are three mosques - in Milan. Rome which has Europe's largest and Catania, Sicily - and some 100 houses of worship have sprung up throughout the country, more than 200 if those in apartments, workshops or rather more unfit structures are included in the count.

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# ISLAM THE MOST SUITABLE RELIGION

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (Rah)

## **The Revolutionary Message**

The liberal and revolutionary aspects of Islam and its Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, which transformed society in the seventh century, are still today amongst the most potent forces at work for the betterment of humanity. They brought not only a new ideology, but inspired the energy and confidence which so radically altered man and the society in which he lived. They provided the impetus for new age of culture and civilisation, arts and learning, material and spiritual progress.

## **The Oneness of God**

What was the nature of the service rendered to mankind? What were the gifts of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that so profoundly affected man and society as he found it? First and foremost he proclaimed belief in the Oneness of God. No more revolutionary, more life-giving and more profitable creed could have been vouchsafed to humanity. Man had been proud and presumptuous, boastful of his creations. He took pride in enslaving other countries and nations, often arrogating to himself even the position of God; yet at the same time he demeaned himself by bowing his head before idols, inanimate, lifeless objects, artefacts of his own creation. He subjected himself to the elemental forces

of fears of demons and devils. His life was spent in fear of the unknown and helpless belief in nameless powers, which could not but foster confusion, cowardice, doubt and indecision. Islam made him a self-reliant, courageous, rationale believing being. It was through Mohammad that the man came to recognise his Creator as the Supreme Power, the sole Enricher and Destroyer of life. By submitting only to the will of the one true God, man was freed from servility to other powers. He was enabled to see the unity of Cause in the multiplicity of phenomena; he was reassured of his pivotal position in the scheme of creation; he became aware of his worth and dignity. In short, by accepting the role of servant to the One and only God, he became master of every other created being and object. For the first time man became aware of the exalted position allotted to him by God in the scheme of things.

Unity of Godhead came to be recognised, thanks to the last Prophet, peace be upon him, as the guiding principle for all schools of thought. The power of his message undermined the Polytheistic religions of the day. Pagan belief and practice, though it persisted, suffered a blow from which it never recovered. Man was released from slavery to creation. Could there be a greater gift to humanity than this?

### **Equality of Men**

The second great favour conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was the concept of the equality and brotherhood of all mankind. Before him the world was divided into innumerable castes and creeds, tribes and nations, some claiming nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of sets and chattels. It was from Mohammad, peace be upon him, that the world first heard the revolutionary message of human equality:

“O Mankind, Your God is one and you have but one father, You are all progeny of Adam, and Adam was made of clay. Lo! the noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab save by his piety.”

The Prophet, peace be upon him, made this declaration on the occasion of his last Hajj before a congregation of one hundred and twenty-four thousand. His announcement put the seal on the twin principles of the Unity of God and the Unity of Mankind. These are the two natural foundations for raising any edifice of peace and progress, friendship and co-operation between different peoples and nations. Together they create a bond of brotherhood between human beings - that of One Lord and One Father for them all. Oneness of God is the spiritual principle of human equality; common lineage of high and low, white and coloured, places all men on the same line of humanity.

So radical a message was not well received. The world was in no mind to listen to a message which struck so sharply at the roots of existing social relationships and economic and political order. Its cataclysmic consequences threw the world into confusion. This was a time when numerous clans and families claimed their descent from the sun or moon. The Pharos of Egypt had believed themselves to be the reincarnation of the sun-god, while in India several ruling families claimed their descent from the sun and moon. The Emperors of Iran called themselves *Kisra* or *Chosroes* implying that Divine blood flowed in their veins. The Chinese rulers too, deemed themselves to be the sons of Heaven. According to the Qur'an:

*The Jews and the Christians say that they are the children of God and those whom He loves. (al-Maida, 5:18)*

Even amongst the Arabs things were little better. So proud were they of their language that every other nation besides their own was an '*Ajami*' or dumb to them. Further, the Quraish of Makka, being extremely conscious of maintaining their superiority, claimed a position of privilege even in the performance of Hajj. This was the shape of things all over the world, when the Qur'an heralded that all human beings were equal:

*O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware. (al-Hujurat, 49:13)*

In the opening Sura of the Qur'an, Allah is invoked as:

*Lord of the Worlds (al-Fatiha, 1:1)*

Man had been accustomed to associate nobility with those who claimed themselves to be the progeny of gods and demi-gods. In order that the honour of the common man was not usurped again by the selected few, the Prophet, peace be upon him, announced:

"The whole of mankind is the family of God and he amongst His family, is dearest to Him, who does good to others."

Today we find the principles of human equality enshrined in the constitutions of different countries and proclaimed from the forum of the United Nations Organisation in the shape of the Charter of Human Rights. Yet long before the days of UN charters, it was Islam that first proclaimed the concept of equality as a human right. The indefatigable efforts of Mohammad, peace be upon him, and his followers to create a truly egalitarian Muslim society established the principle later adopted as the basis for human existence throughout the world.

### **Human Dignity**

The third free gift bestowed by the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, is the concept of human dignity. During the age of darkness when Islam made its appearance, none was more ignoble and humiliated than man. Without realisation of his worth, he had no sense of human dignity. A sacred tree or animal, dedicated to some religious belief or practice, enjoyed a more coveted place than man himself. Human sacrifice on the altars of countless deities was a common spectacle. It was solely through Mohammad the Prophet,

peace be upon him, that men came to appreciate the fact that human beings, the glorious creation of God, were entitled to much more loving regard, respect and honour than any other creature. The rank accorded to man was next only to God, for God had Himself heralded the purpose of man's creation in words of lasting beauty:

*He it is who created for you all that is in the earth. (al-Baqara, 2:29)*

Man was declared as the best creation, the ruler of the world and all that existed in it:

*Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment (al-Asra; 17:70)*

A celestial Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, alludes to the deep concern of God for the welfare of human beings. It describes how God will question regarding the sick, the hungry and the thirsty, as if to neglect their care was tantamount to neglecting God himself.

Islam preaches unalloyed and absolute unity of God and rejects every form of anthropomorphism. Even so, it can employ this analogy to drive home the rank and dignity of man in the eyes of God. Has any other religion or philosophical thought accorded a nobler place to human beings than Islam?

The Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, stressed the importance of right actions in attracting the blessings of God. Most praiseworthy were kindness and consideration from one man to another.

"The Most Compassionate (God) is kind to those who are kind to others. If you would show kindness to those who live on the earth, He who lives in the Heaven shall shower His blessings on you".

The condition of mankind when this powerful voice was raised in the world was pitiable. Human life was of little account. Rulers dined with the lives of their subjects as they chose: a man was subject to his master's whim. For centuries the world had been one vast battlefield where kings and emperors fought for supremacy with the lives of their subjects. The entire population of a conquered land could be put to sword at the hand of the victor.

In addition, a profound sense of pessimism springing from the worthlessness of human nature and hopelessness of Divine succour filled the air. The ancient religions of the East and the perverted form of Christianity in the West, both had a share in producing a climate of despair. The philosophy of reincarnation preached by the ancient religion of India assigned no place to the will and decision of man in shaping his destiny. This present life was but a form of retribution for his actions during his previous life. The Christian doctrines of original sin and atonement had joined hands to shake man's confidence all over the world in the determination and accountability of human actions. Mankind had lost faith in the mercy of God. His eternal and immutable decrees seemed to condemn man to a predetermined destiny in which his own conduct, good or bad, was of little consequence. But Mohammad, peace be upon him, affirmed that man was born with a clean slate and perfect freedom of action. He was, declared Prophet, the author of his actions, both good and evil. As such he was solely responsible for his deeds, and would earn reward or punishment according to his deeds. Discarding the theory of vicarious atonement, the Qur'an established the principle, once and for all, that every man was his own redeemer.

*And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort.  
And that his effort will be seen. (al-Najm, 53: 39-40)*

This was the message of salvation which gave man a new confidence as master of his own destiny. He could apply himself with renewed vigour, confidence

and determination to shaping his own life and re-forming the future of humanity.

The doctrine of forgiveness of sins was one of the most bounteous gifts of Islam to mankind. The Prophet, peace be upon him, declared that sins were but temporary deviations from the right path inherent in the nature of man, and were brought about by ignorance, mistake, man's own desire and the promptings of the devil. But man's deeper desire was to regret his mistakes and seek pardon of God with a contrite heart. To be broken in spirit by ascent of guilt and to seek forgiveness of God showed the innate goodness of human nature and attracted the mercy of God. The gospel of hope and good tidings was a revolutionary message to despondent humanity condemned for ever by the guilt of original sin and past misdeeds. How profound a change is wrought on the prevailing atmosphere of gloom and depression is illustrated by the fact that the Prophet, peace be upon him, came to be known as the 'Apostle of Repentance'. Repentance, he said, did not involve faint-heartedness, nor did it arise from fear of disapprobation, but was a bold and daring step taken by the first man Adam, which showed the innate nobility of his nature. Repentance was sanctified as one of the acts of devotion due to God. So forcefully did the Prophet, peace be upon him, preach the virtue of repentance, that even those who seemed irredeemably sunk in sin turned in repentance to God and attained a sublimity of spirit that was envied by others.

Describing the clemency of God which is ever willing to forgive sinners, the Qur'an speaks with such alluring charm that one wonders whether God loves best those who seek His forgiveness after deviating from the path of virtue. God's magnanimity to those who turn to Him for forgiveness, is endless; He is forgiving and of great mercy. In the words of the Qur'an:

*Say: O slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, who forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (al-Zumar, 39:53)my*

Other verses in the Qur'an exhort believers to acquire positive merit and win everlasting bliss:

*And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil).*

*Those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; Allah loveth the good.*

*And those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins - Who forgiveth sins, save Allah only? - and will not knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did.*

*The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever - a bountiful reward for workers! (Al-i-Imran, 3:133-5)*

Among the characteristics of the true believers enumerated in another verse, repentance takes precedence all over others.

*(Triumphant) are those who turn repentant (to Allah) those who serve (Him), those who praise (Him), those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate (in worship), those who enjoin the right and who forbid the wrong and who keep the limits (ordained) of Allah - and give glad tidings to believers? (al-Tawba, 9:112)*

The place of honour accorded to those who repent of their sins is further illustrated by those verses of the Qur'an revealed on the occasion of three Companions of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, who had been excluded from other followers for their failure to accompany him on the expedition to Tabuk. Before the



verses alluding to the mistake of these Companions being condoned by God, the Qur'an mentions the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the *Ansar* and *Muhajir* Companions in order that no stigma may remain attach to them after their mistake had been pardoned. The Qur'an in this way, teaches all believers who take the Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, as models of virtue, that no ignominy attaches to a man after a genuine change of heart:

*Allah hath turned in mercy to the Prophet, and to the Muhajirin and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. After the hearts of a party of them had almost sewered aside, then turned He unto them in mercy. Lo! He is Full of pity, Merciful for them.*

*And to the three also(did He turn in mercy) who were left behind when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them till they be thought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him. Then turned He unto them in mercy that they (too) might turn (repentant unto Him). Lo! Allah! He is the Relenting, the Merciful! (al-Tawba, 9:117-118)*

Remission of sin leads us to one of the chief attributes of the Divine Being - His mercy and compassion. The bounty of God's mercy is the constant theme of the Qur'an. Says God:

*'My mercy embraces all things'. (al-Araf, 7:156)*

While a celestial Tradition of the Prophet tells us: 'Verily my Mercy overcomes My anger'. To despair of God's mercy was made a cardinal sin. Quoting Jacob and Abraham, two great Prophets of God, the Qur'an announces:

*Verily none despair of the comfort of Allah except a people disbelieving. (Yusuf, 12:87)*

And:

*Who desparith of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray? (al-Hijr, 15:56)*

According to the Jewish and Christian doctrines, the misery and suffering of humanity on earth was but a feeble image of the never ending agony which awaited them in the future world. The medieval monastic orders developed this doctrine with appalling vividness and in graphic detail. Humanity, scared by these ghastly visions and glimpses of eternal suffering, was relieved by the Prophet's, peace be upon him, emphasis on God's all-embracing mercy and the efficacy of repentance which could wipe clean the slate of even the most vicious among the castaways of society.

### **Unity of Life**

There is yet another gift of the prophethood of Mohammed, peace be upon him, still more far-reaching, more beneficial to humanity at large. This is the concept of the unity of spirit and matter: the harmony of the sacred and the profane. He taught that the dichotomy between the two was superficial: more apparent than real. Every one of man's actions, his behaviour and morality, is guided by his motive, which, in the terminology of religion, is known as *niyyah* or intention. No religious belief is entirely divorced from the realities of human experience in its manifold practical aspects. The intention or purpose with which any act is done is the criterion of its moral worth. The Qur'an does not recognise any division between the temporal and the spiritual since man's desire to God and follow His commands permeates every fibre of human activity, no matter whether it is the art of government or war; availing oneself of one's earthly possessions or satisfaction of one's natural desires; earning one's living or leading a satisfactory married life. If the intention is good even the most mundane act is turned into a virtuous deed, and becomes a means of bringing man nearer to God. On the contrary, no merit whatsoever attaches to right acts - like devotion to God or fighting in his cause - if the sin-

cere desire to attain the will and pleasure of God is absent.

The ancient world had divided life into two compartments - the religious and the secular. As a result a wedge had been driven between those who selected one or other of these modes of life. Frequently the two groups were at loggerheads with one another, for the 'world and 'religion' were to them incompatible spheres of human life. Every man was forced to choose one or the other, since no-one could be expected to travel in two boats at the same time. The prevalent view was that the path of salvation lay not through the rough and tumble of life, but only in isolation from the social, economic and political problems of worldly pursuits. No concept of religion which barred gates to material progress and acquisition of power, riches and fame, could be of interest to intelligent, capable and ambitious persons. Forced by this dichotomy to choose between the world and religion, large numbers of the most able people dissociated themselves from the rigours and constraints of religion and ascetic life. By withdrawing themselves from the pursuit of virtue, such men frustrated any integration of secular and religious affairs. Morality appeared to vanish from the conduct of public affairs. The State eventually revolted against the Church and made itself free from all obligations to it. This hideous schizophrenia not only divorced what was called worldly benefit of spiritual wisdom, but also gave birth to the faithlessness and agnosticism of modern Europe, which is now threatening, because of its political and cultural supremacy, to inundate the entire world. The presense of gross materialism, loss of faith and moral debasement can be seen as direct consequence of the division between spirit and matter effected by the older civilisations. It was left to the Prophet, peace be upon him, to re-iterate the spiritual and temporal spheres of life: to persuade men of religion and men of the world to unite in bringing about God's kingdom on earth.

It would be difficult to conceive a more complete transformation of life than the one brought about by the

fusion of the secular and the sacred. Let us leave the last word with Iqbal, one of Islam's great poets:

On monastic order was laid the foundation of Church,

How could mendicity contain royalty in its confines?

The conflict was deep between hermit and king,  
One was triumphant, the other subdued.

Politics got rid of religion,  
Helpless was the priest.

When the world and religion parted ways,  
Avarice was Ruler, King and Vizier.

Dualism was the doom of mind and matter,  
Dualism made civilisation blind.

This is the miracle of the dweller of the desert,  
Whose warnings reflected the tidings glad;

That humanity's only refuge was this -

That the mystic Junaid unite with Ardsheer the king.

## PURPOSE IN LIFE

Yet another radical change brought about by the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, in the life of man was to make him conscious of the ultimate end of existence. Unaware of any ultimate purpose, man had for long fixed his eyes on trivial and ephemeral ends. He directed his whole intelligence and labour to the acquisition of material wealth, fame or power. The only virtue lay in the pursuit of pleasure: happiness became identified with the satisfaction of worldly desires. But Mohammad, peace be upon him, told man that the business of mankind was to exert in striving to attain perfect knowledge of God; to contemplate His nature and attributes; to bring his soul near to God through awareness of the infinite; to seek unity in the diversity of nature; to seek fulfilment in virtuous acts. He told man that these were the objectives whose achievement conferred on him a rank envied by the angles of God.

The prophethood of Mohammad, peace be upon him, made a clean sweep of the existing order of things in the world. The desire and longing of man was now

centred on a new objective. Love of God took possession of his being; the pleasure of God became the everlasting thirst of the human heart; mercy and kindness to God's creatures became the prime object of his endeavours. It was only after the advent of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that the countries who submitted to Islam adopted the pursuit of spiritual values as a way of life. In Arabia and Persia, Syria and Egypt, Turkestan and Iraq, North Africa and Spain, thousands of souls undertook the search for higher and tender virtues. During this period we find innumerable men of God preaching to all mankind love of the Lord, kindness and compassion, the merits of virtuous living, the acquisition of Divine knowledge, the rejection of cruelty and indecency, and the grace of humility and modesty. They taught the lessons of human dignity and brotherhood of man and sought to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

Could we today look into the hearts of these supreme examples of mankind, we would witness the depth and purity of their innermost being. We would see how they were ever willing to put their own life at stake for others, made their own child suffer for the good of all, compelled autocrat kings and potentates to do justice to the weak and the poor, and dispensed true justice even to their enemies. Had historians and biographers nor preserved a faithful record of their lives, the truth of their deeds would be beyond belief. This revolutionary change in the manners and morals of people was indeed a miracle worked by the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, the sum of his great gifts to mankind.□

Translated by Mohiuddin Ahmad

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But while individual Muslims may chose to keep a low profile or not, as a group they have undoubtedly become more visible as the media jump on controversial

issues, like polygamy, mixed marriages, or whether Muslim women can be allowed to wear a veil in pictures carried by official documents.

Garden equipment manufacturer Castelgarden in the labour-starved northern Venice region however sees no problems in employing a substantial number of Muslims and had converted a storeroom for prayer. The company cafeteria also features special menus acceptable to the Muslims.

"Some people break off to smoke a cigarette, we do the same to pray," goes the saying among Muslim employees who follow strict prayer rules that are potentially disruptive of the work process.

Abdellah Redouane, secretary general of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Rome, advises critics who argue that Christians in Muslim countries do not enjoy the rights granted to the followers of Islam in Italy, to see the right officials. "Muslims in Rome wanted a mosque and they knocked on the right doors," he said. Construction of a mosque was first proposed by then Saudi King Faysal in 1973 but 11 years passed before the foundation stone was laid on municipal land. □

**Rome, November 14, 2000**  
**(news item – Hindustan Times)**

# PHYSICAL HYGIENE IN THE LIGHT OF QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

Mohammed Rashid Farooqi

Islam is a perfect code of life. The Qur'an was revealed as a comprehensive book for guidance of the entire mankind. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) during his life time guided the Community of the Faithful with his personal paradigm towards virtuous deeds. This also includes creating a hygienic environment for the betterment of the outward appearance of individuals.

Islam has repeatedly stressed on personal purification and cleanliness. The Holy Qur'an asserts that purification of spirit as well as body is essential for a Muslim: *"God loves those who turn to Him constantly and loves those who keep themselves pure and clean."*

The importance of physical purity in Islam becomes apparent from the fact that in the very second revealed verse of the Qur'an in its chronological order when the revelation of imperatives and duties for a Muslim started, the next commandment following *Tauhid* was the of bodily cleanliness; *"O thou wrapped up in (mantle), arise and deliver thy warning; and thy Lord do thou magnify; and thy garments keep free from stain and all abomination shun"*.

The interpreters of the Qur'an usually term this verse as an allusion to the cleansing of spirit and to the abomination of idolatry. Nevertheless, this verse does give an idea of outward cleanliness and purity as well.

### **Strength of Belief:**

The Messenger (PBUH) of God attributed the physical purity of a person to his strength of belief. He said: "Physical purity is one half of belief". Again he said: "Physical cleanliness is a part of belief". Islam laid down the rules for bodily purification and our Holy Prophet (PBUH) prescribed its limits by personal example and precept. He made it a prerequisite for proper performance of prayer that man's body, his dress and the place of worship should be clean and unsullied by any kind of filth or dirt. The Arabs like other barbaric nations had absolutely no sense of hygiene. But the wise teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) infused in them the habit of keeping themselves clean. One day while passing by a grave he remarked that the man buried in the grave was undergoing punishment because during his life time he would not avoid the contamination resulting from urine drops.

In short, Islam taught its followers to be neat and clean and acquainted them with toilet manners that are still unknown to many prominent people in the modern civilised world. It educated them in how to keep body clean and unpolluted. In the verses of Holy Qur'an it has been made clear that cleanliness and purity are means to achieving nearness and pleasure of God, and the Allah loves those who love to be pure and clean.

*"In it (i.e. in this mosque) are men who love to be purified; and Allah loves those who make themselves pure."*

### **Ablution:**

Islam has been founded on five fundamental principles known as the five pillars of Islam. After the first one out of these, i.e. the affirmation of oneness of God and Prophethood of Mohammed (PBUH), there are prayer, fasting, paying the poor-due and pilgrimage which are considered to be fundamental elements of faith as well as important acts of obedience to Allah. The foremost among these acts of obedience is prayer. The first necessary condition for proper performance of



prayer is physical purification. It is the duty of a Muslim to perform ablution before saying prayer. Books of history, biography, and some traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) tell us that the method of ablution was taught to our Prophet by angel Gabriel at the beginning of the revelation. According to the consensus of scholars of the Prophet's tradition, the revelation assigning ablutions duty came in Madina. Say's the Holy Qur'an: "O ye who believe when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows: rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles; In this verse washing of face, hands and feet and wiping of head have been prescribed as duties. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) enhanced the usefulness of ablution by commanding *Madmada* and *Istinshaq* (rinsing of mouth and nose), and wing of the ear etc. Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) has quoted the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as saying:

"When one of you is going to have ablution he should rinse through the nose with water to clean it. And when one of you wakes up from his sleep he should wash his hands before putting it into the water-pot because in sleep he knows not where his hand might have lain." It has been discovered that dust particles in the air around us carry germs which may cause diseases by entering into the human body through nose and throat. Medical scientists hold the opinion that solidified secretion in the nose may become fatal if not washed away regularly.

In every religion and community, removal of nasal secretion is appreciated but no religion except Islam has commanded the cleaning of nose essentially with water, whereas from the medical point of view it is most essential. Medical researches show that many diseases are caused by germs entering through the nose. These germs are expelled by washing and rinsing through nostrils with water. By commanding *madmada* and *istinshaq* (to rinse the mouth and the nose with water) Islam has introduced the way to protect human health against disease engendering germs.

## Proper Care

In the beginning some Muslims did not take proper care to accomplish the ablution. They washed the face and hands hurriedly and left the heels partly dry. Therefore the Prophet (PBUH) enjoined on them to do this duty with proper care. He said:

“Cursed be the se heels; Save them from the fire; accomplish the ablution (properly). Ever since that time *Isbagh-e-wudu* ( accomplishment of ablution with good care) has been considered compulsory. On another occasion the holy Prophet (PBUH) has said:

“The key to prayer is cleanliness. Thus it has been made clear that proper performance of prayer depends a great deal on careful accomplishment of ablution. On many other occasions also the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah persuaded his followers to protect ablution. He is quoted to have said: “On the day of judgement the community of my followers will have on their knees, hands and feet shining marks of ablution. Therefore add to your luminosity whosoever amongst you can “. According to another tradition he said: “A believer will be made to wear ornaments of Paradise to the extent he is purified by ablution”. On another occasion he said: As a matter of fact ablution for prayer is one of the best and most useful principles of physical purification. Scientific observation and medical experiments have shown that toxic substances continue to be secreted from the sides of human body and come to stay on hands, feet and the sides of face and head. Sometimes they appear in the form of poisonous sores and pimples etc. By washing the sides of the body these secretions are removed or their toxicity is diluted by water within the bodily tissues. Experience shows that washing of hands and feet, together with sprinkling of water on head and face have a refreshing effect on the human self. The action dispels drowsiness, lethargy and dullness of senses and activates the vital parts of human body including brain, heart and lungs etc. And it is prescribed by physicians as a therapy in cases of

fainting caused by heart stroke, diarrhoea and blood letting. In support of his view Maulana Thanvi quotes Al-lama Qureshi, an eminent physician of Indo-Pak to have said in agreement with other physicians: It (sprinkling of water on head, face and feet) revives and reinforces the natural heat of the body and is beneficial in case of unconsciousness caused by the malady of heat-stroke.

Medical scientists are aware of the fact that washing of hands has a purifying and invigorating effect on blood-circulation through heart and liver. This effect may best be achieved by washing of hands and arms up to elbows as ordained in the Holy Qur'an.

One of the principle veins that is visible near the elbow, has a dominating influence on the entire body and especially on heart and liver. During the surgical practices of earlier days medical experts resorted to blood-letting by incision of this vein for the treatment of certain diseases of skin, heart and liver and for purification of blood. The wholesome tactual effect of water while washing the arms up to elbow is passed on to all parts of the body through this vein.

### **The Dental Hygiene of Miswak:**

One of the most frequently emphasised principles of physical hygiene in Islam has been the cleaning of teeth by Miswak (i.e. rubbing of teeth by a soft-fibered and bristly-ended cuttings taken from a certain tree-branches or roots). The Arabs and especially the Bedouins seldom used to clean their teeth. Consequently, in addition to being dirty-mouthed and ugly toothed they were always likely to contract diseases of different kinds. But the Holy Prophet (PBUH) reformed their attitude by making the act of tooth-cleaning (i.e. *Miswak*) almost obligatory before each prayer. According to one tradition he is quoted to have said: "If it were not a bit too hard for my followers I would have prescribed (regular) tooth-cleaning as duty for them."

He himself was so punctual about cleaning of teeth that some moments before this death he ordered the attendants to bring his tooth-brush (Miswak) and

cleaned his teeth. He always used to clean his teeth for Tahajjud prayer, before dawn. Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) quoted the Prophet (PBUH) to have said: "Cleaning of teeth purifies the mouth and pleases Allah". "Once some Muslims appeared before the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) with their teeth unclean. He said to them: "Why do your teeth look pale to me? You must clean them regularly" The above mentioned examples clearly indicate how the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam ensured the maintenance of dental health by regular use of Miswak. As a matter of fact habitual cleaning of teeth prevents many diseases. Without it small particles of food caught up within the teeth start decaying, thereby producing germs that cause not only mouth and tooth diseases but also stomach disorders. The modern use of toothpaste and tooth-brush for dental hygiene is merely an inadequate substitute for the traditional Islamic method of Miswak, being practised by Muslims for the last fourteen hundred years.

### **The Obligation to Take a Bath:**

Islam has not contented itself by ordaining ablution as a duty before prayer. It has gone further to prescribe taking of bath as a must in certain cases. In married life whenever a husband and wife have sexual union they must take a bath following it. The Holy Qur'an says:

*If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity (arising from sex pollution) bathe your whole body.*

Similarly for a woman after menstruation bathing has been made obligatory. Says the Holy Qur'an:

*So keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean.*

Rather taking bath after the above mentioned condition has been decreed even for those who are

performing Hajj and Umrah in a state of *Ihram*. (i.e. wearing the garment of a pilgrim and having entered into the sacred precincts of Holy Makkah).

Taking bath on Fridays for Friday prayers and on the occasion of two Eids for Eid prayers has been classified as *Mustahab* (i.e. desirable). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "It is necessary for every Muslim, who has attained maturity, to take a bath on Friday."

Another tradition quotes the Apostle (PBUH) of God to have said: "It is right of his body on every Muslim that he should have a bath once in every seven days".

The need to keep water clean and pure for purposes of ablution and bath has also been particularly stressed. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "none of you should urinate in standing water while he intends to have a bath in it afterwards".

The Divine law of Islam has very usefully and wisely decreed it as an obligation for every Muslim to take bath after seminal discharge. As semen is the vital essence of entire body, its emission causes great weakness with loss of energy. Bathing in water to a great extent restores the bodily strength. After coition, taking of bath removes the heaviness of feelings, laziness and depression caused by the acts, makes the heart happy and strong and creates a feeling of lightness in the body. Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) depicted his feelings about this by saying; "The bath after coition makes me feel as if I have relieved myself of mountain-load on me".

It has been universally experienced by men having sound natures and healthy minds that after the act of coition a man finds himself in a state of anguish giving way to lowliness of spirit which is akin to a feeling of grief. But when he has removed the two kinds of impurities by rubbing himself clean in a bath and changes his clothes and scents his body and garments, all his depression goes away and he feels healthy and happy.

Renowned medical experts contended that a bath after coition recoups the loss of bodily energies

and refreshes the body and soul. On the contrary if no bath is taken after this activity, it may be harmful. As a result of seminal emission and the accompanying hot exercise the pores of the body are opened wide and alongwith sweat many kinds of impurities are secreted from them. These may cause dangerous diseases if not washed early.

The blood discharged during menstruation has been termed as an impurity by the Qur'an. It soils the body again and weakens the delicate nerves. A bath after menstruation not only brings about the physical and spiritual purification but also refreshes the nerves and restores the energy. Sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman wife is prohibited and it is injurious to health and may harm both man and woman.

Traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) affirm that fever may be relieved by water therapy. Thus there is a saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUH):

"Fever is a puff of hell-fire and it may be put out by water". Dr. Kuch, a German physician commented on this saying of the Prophet (PBUH) by saying that physicians used to laugh at the Prophets assertion that the cold water therapy may prove useful in relieving high fever but modern researches have proved that not only cold water but ice therapy is useful to assuage high fever. Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi has quoted the views of Christian scholars on bath-taking and bodily purification in contrast to the assertion of the Holy Qur'an, "God loves those who turn to him constantly and he loves those who keep themselves pure and clean". He says: Certainly the maxim which places cleanliness next to godliness has no place in the biographies of the saints and heroes of monasticism even in climates where bathing would seem almost one of the necessities of life. Jerome warns ascetics against baths as morally enervating, and in a letter to one of his female disciples denounces every sort of bathing for women. Augustine allows a bath once a month only. In fact the Muslims had a prominent position in the world so long as they acted upon the golden principles of Islam. In addition to their educational and cultural prog-

ress the greatness of Muslims was further established by their practice of the principles of body-cleaning. Professor Hitti while comparing the greatness of Muslims with Europe in his work, *The Arabs*, makes a special reference to the Muslims practice of bodily purification: "The Arab scholars were studying Aristotle when Charle maigne and his lords were reportedly learning to write their names. Scientists in Cordova, with their seventeen great libraries, one alone of which contained more than 4,00,000 volumes, enjoyed luxurious bath at a time when washing of the body was considered a dangerous custom at the University of Oxford". A famous German scholar and orientalist Joachim has written a rich article on the Islamic attitude to health care in the magazine, *Die Heif*. His opinion on ablution and bath may be summed up as follows: "By giving clear and detailed instructions for bodily purification and cleanliness Islam has dealt a severe blow to the germs that are fatal for health. The obligatory washing prescribed in ablution and bath is based on good sense and foresight. The whole body is cleaned in a bath and commonly exposed parts of the body are cleaned during ablution. Cleaning of teeth, washing of mouth, and removing of dust particles etc. sticking into the nose are the essentials of health care. The flowing water which is necessary for this toilet is actually free of germs".

### **Nail and Hair Cutting:**

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) commanded that fingernails and toenails should be pared regularly. If the nails are growing out they catch up dirt which may cause food-contamination resulting in stomach disorders. By enjoining paring of nails as duty on Muslims, Islam has ensured to protect their adherents from such diseases. Similarly, combing of the hair of head and beard, trimming of the hair and shaving of superfluous hair in certain parts of the body are a part of the exercise of body-cleaning.

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was the first teacher of humanity. By his time the world had attained an age of

maturity and was fit for teaching of manners and civilisation. Ibrahim (PBUH) was taught the various etiquettes for physical purification which are known as special requisites due to nature. Bukhari quotes that Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) first introduced circumcision, trimming of moustaches and paring of nails. Abu Huraira has quoted the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam as having said: "Shaving of pubic hair and hair under the armpits, trimming of moustaches, paring of nails and circumcision are the five special requisites due to nature". Another tradition quotes ten things as special requisites which include trimming of moustaches, growing of beard, tooth cleaning, washing of bowels after urination and easing, and last of all perhaps the washing of mouth. These etiquettes and requisites due to nature have become principles of bodily purification in Islam. Thus tooth-cleaning is desirable in ablution; washing of fingers, mouth, nose are obligatory; and paring of nails, trimming of hair and moustaches are also essential for cleanliness. Those who have outgrown nails and moustaches spoil every thing while eating or drinking. This not only offends others but also harms their own health. Syed Sabiq comments on the tradition of natural requisites: "The purpose is that moustaches should not grow out in such a way as to be soiled by drinks and thereby made dirty". He further explains: "It is desirable to shave off the pubic hair and the hair under armpits, to pare nails and trim moustaches once a week in order to obtain purity and cleanliness which may bring about peace of mind and contentment of the soul; otherwise leftover unclean hair cause uneasiness and discomfort".

Hadrat Anas has said: "The Holy Prophet (PBUH) had fixed the time limit for us to trim the moustaches, pare the nails and shave off the pubic hair and hair under armpits. These functions were not to be delayed more than forty days."

In Europe and in fashionable societies elsewhere growing of nails or moustaches is considered a sign of beauty. But both these acts are contrary to nature.



They contaminate food and drinks and may cause diseases.

### **Manner Relating to Urination and Chamberpot:**

Whenever there is natural urge to urinate or to empty the bowels Islam ordains its followers to give priority to it. Even the sayings of prayers must be postponed till the fulfilment of this urge. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said: "None of you should stand up for prayer if he feels to have an urgent need to urinate or evacuate the bowels." On another occasion he said: "If anyone of you has the need to use the commode he should do so before saying his prayer".

Delaying of urination or evacuation of bowels may cause inhibition and confusion in the mind, and may bring about a lack of concentration in prayer. Therefore, it has been decreed that a Muslim should first relieve himself of this natural and pressing urge. The medical opinion expressed by Hakim Muhammad Taunsaawi in his book, *Unua-al Sihhah* on this issue is as follows: "To delay the act of urination for a long time may be harmful and it may cause dangerous diseases like copiousness of urine and formation of stone in the bladder. Therefore, whenever a man feels the a need to urinate he should do so without delay".

Muslims have been prohibited to urinate or excrete in standing water, along thorough fares or under shady trees as it may be harmful for those who use the water, pass along the road or rest under the shade. To urinate while one is standing has also been prohibited as it may soil his body and dress. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "No one should urinate while standing so that his body and dress may not be contaminated by urine drops".

Hazrat Umar (RA) has narrated: "The Holy Prophet (PBUH) noticed me that I was urinating while standing. He said, 'O Umar, never urinate while standing'. After that I never urinated while standing".

Drying oneself clean with a pure absorbent material preferably dry clay after urination and excretion, followed by washing with water has been prescribed as desirable. Use of right hand for this cleaning has not been permitted. In this connection Abu Huraira has quoted the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to have said:

“I am like a father to you. I teach you the manners. When you go for toilet (emptying of bowels) do not sit with your face back in the direction of Qibla, do the cleaning and drying with three pieces of dry clay and never with dung or bones”, and forbade the use of right had for this cleaning.

Use of dung and bones for cleaning has been prohibited as there may be biting insects like scorpions which are usually produced and brought up in them and their bite may be dangerous. And the limit of three pieces of clay has been prescribed so that a person with superstitious nature may not continue to do the exercise of cleaning throughout the day.

Modern researches have shown that pure and dry clay contains ammonium chloride and certain other chemicals which kill the dangerous germs. Therefore cleaning and drying with pieces of dry clay may be good preservative of human health. Washing with water afterwards further ensures the cleanliness which is essential for good health.

Use of left hand for performance of cleaning after urination and emptying of bowels has been prescribed because the right hand is used for eating food and shaking hands with people. There is a tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) which says:

“While drinking water none of you should breathe in the glass. And while using the commode and doing toilet afterwards do not use your right hand for performing of cleaning.”

Thus under the principle of distribution of layout certain functions have been specifically allotted to both hands. The right hand is to be used for taking meals and doing other refined jobs. The left hand may be employed for performance of cleaning after toilet and other.

odd jobs. Although both the hands are to be made and kept thoroughly clean after every function, the specification of duties further ensures to keep the right hand free from all contamination as this is the hand which is going to feed us and on it will depend the condition of our health.

### **Purity of Dress:**

Ibn Maja has quoted a tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) which says: "Islam has been founded on purity and cleanliness". This tradition reveals that in Islam equal importance is attached to the purity of both body and spirit. Therefore in prayer (*salat*) which is a symbol of spiritual purification, the accompaniment of a clean body and clean garments has been made obligatory.

The teachings of the Holy Qur'an have made it quite clear that outward cleanliness is a means of achieving inner cleanliness. A pure heart is lodged in a pure body. Purity of body and dress not only ensures good health but leads to purity of spirit also. A good dress, according to the Holy Qur'an is decorative for the physical appearance. It says:

*"Say: who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath produced for his servants and the things clean and pure which He hath provided for sustenance."*

In another ayat of the Holy Qur'an it has been said:

*"O ye children of Adam, We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you."*

Then in the another verse of the Qur'an beautiful dress has been prescribed for prayers, as follows:

*“Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer.”*

This verse makes it clear that pure and clean dress must be worn for every prayer and especially for the prayer in mosque. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) quoted in Masnad al-Bazzar: “Allah is pure and loves purity, He is clean and loves cleanliness, He is kind and loves kindness, He is generous and loves generosity; therefore, keep your compounds neat and clean and do not be like Jews who gather rotten and stale things in their houses”.□

## THE VEIL

A. H. Nomani

The greatest symbol of women's oppression and servitude, in the eyes of the so called members of the modern society, is the veil or head-cover. Muslim women who cover their heads and body as per their religious diktats are looked down upon by "enlightened" and "sophisticated" people of the West. They appear to be ignorant of the fact that the veil had been in the tradition of Judaeo and Christian communities as well. According to Professor M. M. Brayer of Yeshina University, it was the custom in Jewish women to cover their heads in public. There was such a rigidity in observance of this practice that often women covered their whole face leaving only one small hole in-front of one eye only. Brayer further quotes some Rabbis sayings: "It is not like the daughter of Israel to walk out with heads uncovered"; and "Cursed be the man who lets the hair of his wife be seen ..... a woman who exposes her hair for self-adornment brings poverty". Rabbinic law forbids the recitation of blessings or prayers in the presence of a bare-headed married woman since it is considered nudity. Jewish woman's failure to cover her head was considered an affront to her modesty. When her head was uncovered she might be fined four hundred zuzim for this offence. Dr. Brayer also explains that veil of the Jewish woman was not always considered a sign of modesty. Sometimes, the veil symbolised a state of distinction and luxury than modesty. The veil personified the dignity and superiority of noble

women. It also represented a woman's inaccessibility as a sanctified possession of her husband.

The veil signified a woman's self-respect and social status. Women of lower classes would often wear the veil to give the impression of a higher standing. The fact that the veil was the sign of nobility was the reason why prostitutes were not permitted to cover their hair in the old Jewish society. However prostitutes often wore a special head-scarf in order to look respectable. Jewish women in Europe continued to wear veils until the nineteenth century when their lives became more intermingled with the surrounding secular culture. The external pressures of the European life in the nineteenth century forced many of them to go out bare-headed. Some Jewish women found it more convenient to replace their traditional veil with a wig as another form of hair covering. Today, most pious Jewish women do not cover their hair except in the synagogue. Some of them, such as the Hasidic sects, still use the wig. What about the Christian tradition? It is well known that Catholic Nuns have been covering their heads for hundreds of years, but that is not all. St. Paul in the New Testament made some very interesting statements about the veil:

*"Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head - it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head" (I Corinthians 11:3-10).*

St. Paul's rationale for veiling women is that the veil represents a sign of authority of the man, who is the image and glory of God, over the woman who has created from and for man. St. Tertullian in his famous treatise 'On The Veiling of Virgins' wrote, "Young women, you wear your veils out on the streets, so you should wear them in church, you wear them when you are among strangers, then wear them among your brothers..." Among the Canon laws of the Catholic church today, there is a law that requires women to cover their head in church. Some Christian denominations, such as the Amish and the Mennonites for example, keep their women veiled to the present day. The reason for the veil, as offered by the Church leaders is that "The head covering is a symbol of woman's subjection to the man and to God". which is the same logic introduced by St. Paul in the New Testament.

From all the above evidence, it is obvious that Islam did not invent the head cover. However, Islam did endorse it. The Qur'an urges the believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty and then urges the believing women to extend their head covers to cover the neck and the bosom:

*"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty... And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms...."* (24:30,31)

The Qur'an is quite clear that the veils is essential for modesty, but why is modesty important? The Qur'an is still clear:

*"O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their bodies (when abroad) so that they should be known and not molested"* (33:59)

This is the whole point, modesty is prescribed to protect women from molestation or simply, modesty is protection. Thus, the only purpose of the veil in Islam is protection. The Islamic veil, unlike the veil of the Christian tradition, is not a sign of man's authority over woman nor is it a sign of woman's subjection to man. The Islamic veil, unlike the veil in the Jewish tradition, is not a sign of luxury and distinction of some noble married women. The Islamic veil is only a sign of modesty with the purpose of protecting women, all women. The Islamic philosophy is that it is always better to be safe than sorry. In fact, the Qur'an is so concerned with protecting women's bodies and women's reputation that a man who dares to falsely accuse a woman of unchastity will be severely punished:

*"And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations) - Flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after; for such men are wicked transgressors" (24:4)*

Compare this strict Quranic attitude with the extremely lax punishment for rape in the Bible:

"If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives" (*Deut 22:28-30*)

One must ask a simple question here, who is really punished? The man who only paid a fine for rape, or the girl who is forced to marry the man who raped her and live with him until he dies? Another question that also should be asked is this: which is more protective of women, the Quranic strict attitude or the Biblical lax attitude?

Some people, especially in the West, would tend to ridicule the whole argument of modesty for protection. Their argument is that the best protection is the spread of education, civilised behaviour, and self restraint. We



would say: fine but not enough. If 'civilisation' is enough protection, then why is it that women in North America dare not walk alone in a dark street - or even across an empty parking lot? If Education is the solution, then why is it that a respected university like Queen's has a 'walk home service' mainly for female students on campus? If self restraint is the answer, then why are cases of sexual harassment in the work place reported on the news media every day? A sample of those accused of sexual harassment, in the workplace reported on the news media every day? A sample of those accused of sexual harassment in the last few years, includes: Navy Officers, Managers, University professors, Senators, Supreme Court Justices and the President of the United States! I could not believe my eyes when I read the following statistics written in a pamphlet issued by the Dean of Women's office at Queen's University:

- In Canada, a woman is sexually assaulted every six minutes.
- One in three women in Canada will be sexually assaulted at some time in their lives.
- One in four women is at the risk of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.
- One in eight women will be sexually assaulted while attending college or university
- A study found 60% of Canadian university aged males say they would commit assault if they were certain they wouldn't get caught.

Something fundamentally wrong in the society we live in. A radical change in the society's life style and culture is absolutely necessary. A culture of modesty is badly needed, modesty in dress, in speech, and in manners of both men and women. Otherwise, the grim statistics will grow even worse day after day, and unfortunately, women alone will be paying the price. Actually, we all suffer but as Khalil Gibran has said, "...for the persons who receives the blows is not like the one who counts them." Therefore a society like France

which expels young women from schools because of their modest dress is, in the end, simply harming itself.

It is one of the great ironies of our world today that the very same headscarf revered as a sign of 'holiness' when worn for the purpose of showing the authority of man by Catholic Nuns, is revealed as a sign of 'oppression' when worn for the purpose of protection by Muslim women.

## EPILOGUE

The one question all the non-Muslims, who had read an earlier version of this study, had in common was: do Muslim women in the Muslim world today receive this noble treatment described here? The answer, unfortunately, is: No. Since this question is inevitable in any discussion concerning the status of women in Islam, we have to elaborate on the answer in order to provide the reader with the complete picture.

It is to be made clear first that the vast differences among Muslim societies make most generalisations too simplistic. There is a wide spectrum of attitudes towards women in Muslim world today. These attitudes differ from one society to another and within each individual society. Nevertheless, certain general trends are discernible. Almost all Muslim societies have, to one degree or another, deviated from the ideals of Islam with respect to the status of women. These deviations have for the most part been in one of two opposite directions. The first is more conservative, restrictive, and tradition-oriented, while the second is more liberal and Western-oriented.

The societies that have digressed in the first direction treat women according to the customs and traditions inherited from their forebears. These traditions usually deprive women of many rights granted to them by Islam. Besides, women are treated according to standards far different from those applied to men. This discrimination pervades the life of any female: she is received with less joy at birth than a boy; she is less likely to go to school; she might be deprived any share of her family's inheritance; she is under continuous sur-

veillance in order not to behave immodestly while her brother's immodest acts are tolerated; she might even be killed for committing what her male family members usually boast of doing; she has very little say in family affairs or community interests; she might not have full control over her property and her marriage gifts; and finally as a mother she herself would prefer to produce boys so that she can attain a higher status in her community.

On the other hand, there are Muslim societies (or certain classes within some societies) that have been swept over by the Western culture and way of life. These societies often imitate unthinkingly whatever they receive from the West and usually end up adopting the worst fruits of Western civilisation. In these societies, a typical "modern" woman's top priority in life is to enhance her physical beauty. Therefore, she is often obsessed with her body's shape, size, and weight. She tends to care more about her body than her mind and more about her charms than her intellect. Her ability to charm, attract, and excite is more valued in society than her educational achievements, intellectual pursuits, and social work. One is not expected to find a copy of the Qur'an in her purse since it is full of cosmetics that accompany her wherever she goes. Her spirituality has no room in a society preoccupied with her attractiveness. Therefore, she would spend her life striving more to realise her femininity than to fulfil her humanity.

Bibi Sulata Yusuf Ali, a 17 year old Toronto High School girl, has very innocently defended her "wears" in an article published in Toronto Star (Young People's Press) abstracts of which are reproduced below:

Of course, the issue in hand is more than a mere piece of cloth. I am a Muslim woman who, like millions of other Muslim women across the globe, chooses to wear hijab. There are many different ways to wear it, in essence, what we do is cover our entire bodies except our hands and faces.

If you're the kind of person who has watched a lot of popular movies, you'd probably think of harem girls and belly dancers, women who are kept in seclu-

sion except for the private pleasure of their male masters. In the true Islamic faith, nothing can be further from truth. And the concept of hijaab, contrary to the popular opinion, is actually one of the most fundamental aspects of female empowerment.

Whenever I cover myself, I make it virtually impossible for people to judge me according to the way I look, I cannot be categorised because of my attractiveness or lack thereof. Compare this to life in today's society: We are constantly sizing one another up on the basis of our clothing, jewellery, hair-do and makeup. What kind of depth can there be in a world like this ?

Yes, I have a body, a physical manifestation upon this earth. But it is the vessel of an intellectual mind and a strong spirit. It is not for the beholder to leer at or to use in advertisements to sell everything from beer to cars. Because of the superficiality of the world in which we live, external appearances are so stressed that the value of the individual counts for nothing.

It is a myth that women in today's society are liberated. What kind of freedom can there be when a woman cannot walk down the street without every aspect of her physical self being "checked out"? When I wear the hijaab I feel safe from all of this. I can rest assured that no one is looking at me and making assumptions about my character from the length of my skirt. There is a barrier between those who would exploit me and myself. I am first and foremost a human being, equal to any man, and not vulnerable because of my sexuality.

One of the saddest truths of our times is the question of beauty myth and female self-image. Reading popular teenage magazines, you can instantly find out what kind of body image is "in" or "out". And if you have the 'wrong' body type, well, then, you're just going to have to change it, aren't you? After all there is no way that you can be overweight and still be beautiful.

Look at any advertisement. Is a woman being used to sell the product? How old is she? How attractive is she? What is she wearing? More often than not, that woman will be no older than her early 20s, taller,

slimmer and more attractive than average, dressed in skimpy clothing. Why do we allow ourselves to be manipulated like this? Whether the '90s wishes to believe it or not, she is being forced into a mould. She is being coerced into selling herself, into compromising herself. This is why we have 13-year-old girls sticking their fingers down their throats and overweight adolescents hanging themselves.

When people ask me if I feel oppressed, I can honestly say no. I made this decision out of my own sweet will. I like the fact that I am taking control of the way other people perceive me. I enjoy the fact that I don't give anyone anything to look at and that I have released myself from the bondage of the swinging pendulum of the fashion industry and other institutions that exploit females. My body is my own business. Nobody can tell me how I should look or whether or not I am beautiful. I know that there is no more to me than that. I am also able to say 'no' comfortably when people ask me I feel as though my sexuality is being repressed. I have taken control of my sexuality.

I am thankful I will never have to suffer the fate of trying to lose/gain weight or trying to find the exact lipstick shade that will go with my skin colour. I have made choices about what my priorities are and these are not among them. So next time when you see me don't look at me sympathetically. I am not under duress or a male-worshipping female captive from those barbarous(?) Arabian desert. I've been liberated by Islam.□

Contd. from page 100

by the Chair - the highly respected and world renowned jurist, Qazi Mujahidul Islam Qasmi. He is the successor to Maulana Ali Mian as President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, and is Founder and General Secretary of the Islamic Fiqh Academy, India. In his estimation the late Maulana's greatest attribute was love and solicitude for humanity. He had an extraordinary ability to present bitter talk in a most palatable way. This was amply demonstrated on numerous occasions under his presidency of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. He said Maulana Ali Mian was a great guide for the Muslim Ummah and a scholar par excellence.

### Second Session

The second session opened with the speech of Maulana Abdullah Kapordravi. He recounted his first hand experiences of Maulana Ali Mian's Taqwa and noble conduct. Yaqub Qasmi, Chairman of Islamic Research Institute of GB, Mohiuddin Khan from Bangladesh, a member of the Muslim World League and Mufti Ahmad Khanpuri explained the factors for Maulana Ali Mian's popularity. Taqwa, humility, indifference to the world and disciplining of the *Nafs* pervaded his life and teachings, and embellished his efforts.

Mufti Zubair Nayat, Media Officer of Jamiatul Ulama KZN South Africa, Abdussatar Abu Yusuf Shaikh and a prominent scholar from Kuwait, Shaikh Nadir Abdul Aziz An Nuri, highlighted how Maulana awakened Kuwaitis and the Arab world in general to their responsibilities as torchbearers of the truth.

Salman Nadvi Al Husaini explained his life was devoted to advancing the cause of knowledge and learning.

The second session came to an end with the speech by the Chair - the highly respected and world renowned jurist, Justice Mufti Mohammed Taqi Usmani. He concentrated on the late Maulana's remarkable faith and conviction coupled with abundant knowledge and practice. □

# A PROPOSED APPROACH TO REDRESSING THE IMAGE OF ISLAM IN THE WEST

Abdulkader Tash

The phenomenon of fabricating pejorative images on Islam and the Arabs and implanting them in the collective mind of western societies is an old and ever-renewing process. Its historical and intellectual roots date back to several centuries. It would not be an exaggeration nor a fallacy to say that Islam has always been and still is the most attacked religion, and the Arabs and the Muslims have won the popularity contest for the most denigrated and falsely accused people.

In spite of the anti-Islam campaigns which have never ceased since the first armed clash between Islam and the West back in the beginning of the first hegirae century, the animosity has fluctuated between strong and weak according to the extent of discord between Muslim and western parties.

A true comprehension of this phenomenon is conditional upon a thorough and careful study and analysis of the religious, ideological, political and economic factors that motivated the West into clashing with Islam and Muslims, and upon a discerning view of the developments that have marked relations between the two parties over the centuries.

It is rather unfortunate that from a review of history and an analysis of reality, one conclusion emerges: The West has always considered Islam as a "threat". In the Middle Ages, the theologians were concerned about

what they called "the destructive influence of Islamic values over the Christian ones". They therefore concluded that the protection of Christianity from Islam could only be achieved through military destruction, confiscation of its lands and convincing Muslims to convert to Christianity.

The goal of the Crusades was to face the "Muslim threat" before it invaded Christian lands, the reason why the Crusaders worked hard to poison the Western mind against the Muslim world by interpreting the teachings and lofty values of Islam purposefully in a wrongful manner.

The attitude of the West towards Islam in the age of colonialism did not change from what it had been in the two eras preceding it. The movement of orientalism was as a whole just another tool in facing the "threat of Islam". This movement was called upon to fathom the working of Islamic mentality and comprehended it in a way conducive to facilitating the colonial ruling of Muslim populations.

The view the West holds of Islam is concordant with the set of hostile beliefs the Western mind had inherited by way of a historical build-up from its Middle Ages, Crusades, orientalist and colonialist days. Islam is a "peril" to the West according to the Berginsky theory on the "crescent of crisis", to Bernard Lewis' theory on the "comeback of Islam", and to Huntington's discourse on the "clash of civilisations".

In the eyes of all these, Islam is synonymous with the end of Western civilisation, not by being a mere ideological rival, but because it represents an extremely dangerous civilisational challenge.

Furthermore, it seems that in our present times, we are not dealing with a case of Western hostility that has limited effect and scope. In fact, reality is witnessing what the British researcher Fred Halliday called in his book "Islam and the Myth of Confrontation", published in London in 1995, the phenomenon of "anti-Muslimism". Halliday maintains in his book that this anti-Muslimism trend has been spreading throughout the world since the late eighties and is no longer re-



stricted to the West as a result of the end of the Cold War, the increasing popularity of the idea of Islam replacing communism as the enemy of the West, and the rise of an extremist rightist tide in Europe and in America.

### **A Weapon Against Islam**

Fabricating a fallacious image of Islam is an instrument in anti-Islam campaigns. In fact, it is a most efficient weapon in the war that Western circles are waging against Islam and Muslims. Therefore redressing this image and freeing it from all distortion and disfigurement would be tantamount to depriving the West from a most efficient war tool.

The question arises here: can we do it? Will any effort to redress the image of Islam in the West meet with success? What are the requirements of this success?

Some researchers believe that the source of distortion of the image of Islam does not lie in ignorance or lack of information, but rather in the "specific branch of knowledge of which the roots are religious and racial hostility towards Arab and Muslims". Increasing information on Islam and improving its quality are not sufficient for solving this problem. In the final result, facts and truths disintegrate in the prevalent mode of thinking of the receiving end, and that mode is the most difficult to change.

Though in general terms we agree with the above opinion, we do have some reservations on the tendency to generalisation that marks it. Not all westerners harbour a grief against Islam that is an echo of the old hostility. In fact, many of them know very little about Islam, hence the easiness with which anti-Islam campaigns carry a success with them and easily prejudice them against this religion.

On the other hand, we should not despair from changing and redressing the image of Islam in the minds of the West. Endeavouring to change and redress is a cultural and real necessity because a distorted image of Islam harms our culture and its civilisa-

tional values and encourages people's disrespect and ill regard for its position and the benefits it might bring them. It is again a real necessity because a misconstrued perception of Islam can be used as a weapon against us, harm our interests and violate our rights.

Another realistic dimension that should not be taken lightly is the change that has taken place in our relation with Western societies, which has been a relation of geographical and political separation. Islam is, today, "present in the West, just as the West is present In Islam", as says the French sociologist Gilles Cable. There existed in the past relative barriers between Islam and other religions, but the boundaries of the house of Islam have today spread to all the countries where Muslims live. In the past, the West viewed Muslims as the "Others" because they were far, but today Muslims are present in the heart of the West.

For reforming and redressing efforts to succeed, the West itself should contribute to these efforts. It has committed many an injustice towards us and it is high time it started acting fairly, as it is high time it realised that its interest lies in rebuilding its relationship with the Islamic world on sounder foundations of understanding, respect and co-operation.

### **Fair Voices**

Many Westerners' voices have risen lately in defence of Islam, calling their people to review their anti-Islam opinions, show its culture due respect and understand the circumstances of Muslim peoples. Some of these voices have even gone so far as to acknowledge the important part played by Islam in Western civilisation and to call for following the lead of Islam and seek inspiration from its noble values and enlightening precepts.

The most extraordinary voice of these is probably that of British Crown Prince Charles who considered Islam a part of the cultural heritage of modern Europe, and not as an isolated and remote entity.

Price Charles says: "Islam can teach us today a way of understanding and living in the world which

Christianity itself is poorer for having lost". he added that the integral view of the universe existing at the heart of Islam could help Christians rediscover the metaphysical roots of the timeless traditions of the natural order. In this common quest, both Western and Muslim societies would rediscover the genuine values and principles of our religions.

These fair voices that have started proclaiming their positive views of Islam are heralding the awakening of the Western conscience after centuries of antagonism, ignorance and hostility. An increasing number of eminent and highly placed people with varied backgrounds and proclivities belong amongst these fair voices, namely French President Jacques Chirac, German President Roman Herzog, Irish Prime Minister Mary Robbins, American Vice-President Albert Gore, the American first lady Hilary Clinton and the former two aides of American Foreign Secretary, Robert Biltrow and Edward Georgian.

Also amongst these voices are the following academicians and media figures: Arthur Lowrie from South Florida University, eminent German or orientalist Anne-Marie Chimel, Francis Leeman, President of the "Islam and the West" Association, French sociologist Gilles Cable, Thomas Mastinack, author of the book "Islam and Creating the European Identity" Lewis Cantury, Political Sciences lecturer at Maryland University, Gerhard Boring from Yale University, Jorgen Nielson from British Sills Hawk University, Roger Hardy, a prominent BBC commentator, French researcher Joclyn Cezary, Dutch orientalist Christian van Niessen, International Relations professor in London, Fred Halliday, American journalist Robert Berringer, Graham Fuller, former CIA officer, Terry Anderson, the American journalist who spent seven years as a hostage in Lebanon, Edgar Bizani, former President of the Arab World Institute in Paris, Jim Moran, member of the Foreign Affairs Commission in the American Congress, and many more.

## **Do We Seize the Opportunity**

It is our belief that we should avail of this suitable opportunity to devise an Islamic strategy of which the mission would be to redress the image of Islam in the West and which would evolve around two complementary axes. The first would be to refute the fallacies and injurious opinions on Islam, and limit the impact of all educational, cultural and media channels that prejudice against Islam and the Muslims. This could be achieved either through establishing contact with the disseminators of this information and opinions and co-operating with them in correcting these ideas and opinions, or through denouncing these falsehoods and exerting pressures to obtain positive reactions and results.

The second dimension of this strategy would be the "creation of an alternative image". Reforming and redressing the image of Islam cannot be achieved through refuting falsehoods and changing opinions only, but would require the presentation of an alternative image of Islam that would replace the warped one, compete with it or atleast challenge it.

The monumental and critical importance of this civilisational undertaking reveals that its responsibility should not fall on the shoulders of one party, nor be limited in scope; hence the importance of co-operation among Muslims as individuals, institutions, entities and governments, and the importance of attracting westerners, individuals, groups, institutions or entities, with enthusiasm for this work.

In the light of this Islamic strategy, we can envision the venture of redressing our image - in its two parts of refuting the untrue and providing an alternative - as evolving around three main axes:

- The specialised education axis
- The general cultural axis
- The public and media axis

### **The Educational Axis**

1. The educational axis concerns the importance of correcting false, incomplete or warped information comprised in textbooks for primary, elementary, secondary

and university education in western societies. Results of many studies and research projects that reviewed these textbooks in many European countries revealed that a great number of these textbooks present a false perception of Islam and Muslims. In this book "The Conflict of the West and Islam", published in 1990, Assaf Hussein presents a generous compilation of the results of several Christian studies of school manuals in the United States, Canada, West Germany and the United Kingdom.

2. The appeal to the West to better understand Islam and to correct false information on it would involve convincing educational authorities in the West of the importance of including Islamic education in its public schools.

3. While educational systems in public schools contribute greatly to shaping the minds of children and teenagers in western societies and moulds their opinion of Islam and Muslims, Islamic and Arab studies institutes and centres as well as oriental and Middle East studies centres play an important role in forming the minds of specialists and preparing new generations of specialists and experts who enjoy an objective perception of Islam and who see Muslims in a better light.

4. Creating specialised Islamic educational institutions in Western countries would greatly contribute to redressing the image of Islam and presenting an alternative image through the activities and programmes of these institutes. These activities would draw the attention and interest of academicians and researchers as would the scientific relations that link them to analogous institutes and centres in these societies.

### **The Cultural Axis**

1. With regards to the cultural axis, the establishing of Islamic information network, the creation of libraries containing the main sources and bibliography of Islam, the organisation of various exhibitions celebrating the landmarks of Muslim civilisation, the holding of conferences and symposia to present the Islamic approach and viewpoint on many of the problems and issues fac-

ing the world today , all of these would, doubtlessly, promote interest in Islam and urge for forming a more objective view on it.

2. More attention and serious consideration should be shown towards the statements and positive views expressed by unprejudiced western personalities who recognise the culture and civilizational role of Islam and attempt to alleviate the aggressive and biased attacks on Islam to denigrate and defile its values and its contributions. These positive attitudes should be used to serve our aim, embellishing the image of Islam in the West. It is unfortunate that many of these brave and positive initiatives have gone unnoticed by Muslims who, thus, lost a golden opportunity that could have had very positive effects had it been used in the proper way.

3. Other activities that could be undertaken within the framework of the general cultural action to correct the image of Islam is the organisation of joint conferences to reinstate dialogue between the West and Islam.

### **The Media Axis**

In order to increase Islamic efficiency in the media field in the West, two fields are open for action: first, western media, and second Islamic media in the West.

In western media, contact should be intensified between Muslims and media organs, individuals and institutions. This relationship, if full-fledged and mature, could contribute to intellectually shape western media men and women and rectify their perception of Islam by providing alternative information to them and conveying the Islamic view on the various issues and subjects pertaining to Islam and Muslims.

2. On another level, special care should be granted to developing and intensifying the means of pressure that Muslims can resort to in their efforts to reform and to find an alternative image to Islam. The policy of pressure, through its various legitimate forms, is a natural social practice in western societies and we have been able to gauge the success and positive results that crowned some practical experiences in this field.

3. Similar to this aspect is the contribution of Muslims through writings in western newspapers and magazines under various forms such as in the readers' opinion page, contributions to the 'Readers' Mail' or 'Letters to the editor' considering the importance of these writings in enlightening public opinion. Of an equal importance is the participation in radio and television programmes such as those involving telephone conversations, and televised debates, be it in famous programmes or else, on issues and problems.

4. As to Islamic media in the West, we should first of all demand an increase in the activity of Islamic media organs operating on the Islamic and international scene such as: the Islamic International Press Agency and the Organisation of Muslim countries Radio Stations. These institutions are called upon to produce written press, radio, and television programmes that can be made use of in the efforts to reform and create an alternate image of Islam. Great benefits can also be drawn from other Islamic stations, such as those based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt and operating in European languages by intensifying their transmission and widening their scope of interests.

5. Some Muslims and Muslim institutions hire air time and radio and television transmitting space from western media channels for use in Islamic awareness raising. This mode of operation is likely to benefit the efforts to redress the image of Islam if some of that air time and broadcasting space is used for informing non-Muslims on Islam, refuting all libel against it and enlightening their minds with facts and opinions susceptible of helping them acquire a better understanding of Islam and Muslims.

6. We suggest, in this respect, that an Islamic satellite channel be launched. Part of its broadcasting time would be used to show high content, well directed programmes that address western minds in the languages they understand best and in the style that would activate their minds into thinking, revising and acquiring new convictions. The goal of these programmes would be to

present a true image of Islam as a faith and as a civilisation and of Muslims, past and present. That image could thus represent the alternative to the **distorted and fallacious** images so far advertised by western media.

### **Islamic Discourse**

It is of paramount importance that the discourse used to present Islam to the West be based on sound foundations of Islamic principles and cultural and civilisational fundamentals. This discourse should also take into account the workings of the western mind, the methods of addressing it and the best ways to influence it. Special care should be displayed when Islam is presented to the West as a religion of illumination and compassion, as a civilisation of moral values and generosity, as a faith based on tolerance and co-existence between the peoples of the earth whatever their race or religion, as a way of life and a reality where humanity can seek and find solutions to its social problems and its torments.

If we represent Islam in this alternate image, which is the genuine one, we will dispel many of the fears cast in the hearts of western peoples by the unjust anti-Islam campaigns in western media on the one hand, and the shameful behaviour of some Muslims who have consolidated the frightening image of Islam on the other. That way, we should be presenting Islam to the West not as a rival power that instigates challenges and encourages clashes, but as an intellectual and civilizational wealth that calls upon people to contemplate its principles and values, assess its historical contributions at their true value, and capitalise on its inherent qualities in the modern times. □



## Good Manners And Noble Qualities<sup>\*</sup>

M. Manzoor Nomani (Rah)

Good manners and noble qualities of mind and character enjoy a place of crucial importance in the structure of Islamic teachings. Moral evolution and uplift was one of the main objects for which the sacred Prophet was raised up. The Prophet himself has said :

"I have been sent down by God to teach moral virtues and to evolve them to highest perfection ."

### Importance

An idea of the enormous importance Islam attaches to the cultivation of good manners and noble moral qualities can be obtained from the under mentioned Traditions of the Prophet:

"The best of you are those who possess the best of manners."

"On the Day of Recompense nearest to me will be one who displays in one's daily life the best of manners."

"On the Day of Reckoning the most weighty item in the 'Balance of Deeds' will be good manners."

Once a Companion asked the Prophet, "What is there that takes a Muslim to Paradise?" The Prophet replied, "Fear of God and good manners."

The Prophet, again, is reported to have said, "A Muslim with good manners and good moral disposition gets the same reward as he who fasts (permanently) during the day and spends his nights in prayer."

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<sup>\*</sup> Excerpted from "What Islam Is?"

The last Tradition tells that a Believer who possesses good manners and carries out scrupulously the moral duties imposed on him by God but does not engage himself much in supererogatory fasts and prayers, attains the degree of excellence of the man who stands up in prayer all night and fasts all day long.

### **The Curses of Bad Manners**

We have been warned by the holy Prophet in an equally forceful manner against the curse of bad manners. He has said:

"A man with bad manners and a bad moral conduct shall not enter Paradise."

"No sin is more detestable to God than bad manners."

### **Some More Important Virtues**

Though in the Quran and the Traditions we are taught to cultivate all good and noble moral and social qualities and to avoid everything that is mean or wicked, here we will take up only such virtues as are more important and without which no one can hope to be a good Muslim and a truthful Believer.

#### **Truthfulness**

Truthfulness is a matter of such supreme consequence in Islam that, in addition to speaking the truth always, a Muslim is exhorted, also, to keep company only with those that are truthful. The Qur'an states:

*"O ye who believe! Fear God and be only with those who are true. (in word and deed)*

(IX : 119)

Says the Prophet (pbuh):

"He who wishes to love God and His Apostle, or wishes God and His Apostle to love him, must take care to speak nothing but the truth whenever he speaks."

"Speak the truth even if you see your ruin or death in it for, surely, salvation and life alone in truth, and avoid falsehood even if it may hold out to you the promise of success and salvation for the end of falsehood is nothing but failure and frustration."

Once the Prophet (pbuh) was asked, "What is the hall mark of a dwellers of Paradise?" The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Truthfulness."

Conversely, a Tradition reads:

"To be a liar is one of the special signs of a hypocrite." The Prophet was asked whether a Believer could be a coward. He said, "It is possible." It was asked whether a Believer could be a miser. He said, "It is possible." Again, it was asked of him whether a Believer could be a liar. He said "No." (The idea of the Prophet (pbuh) was that a Believer in God could not develop the filthy habit of lying. Faith could never accommodate falsehood; they could not go together).

### **Fulfilling Promises**

Is also a part of truthfulness that when a promise is made it should be fulfilled. The Qur'an and the Traditions are very clear on the point. Our faith demands of us never to go back on our pledged word. States the Qur'an:

*"And fulfil (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)". (XVII : 34)*

*"To fulfil the contracts which ye have made". (II : 117)*

And the Traditions say:

"He who does not fulfil promises made by him has no share in Faith."

"Not to fulfil one's promises is a special sign of hypocrite."

### **Trustworthiness**

Closely allied to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness. It is an important branch of it. Islam has laid a special emphasis on it also. Here is what Quran says:

*"God doth command you to render back your Trusts to those whom they are due". (IV : 58)*

And the Traditions:

"People! In whom there is no trustworthiness, in them there is, so to speak, no Faith."

"Look not alone at anyone's prayers and fasts to decide about his spiritual excellence (that is, do not be impressed by anyone's spirituality simply because you find him devout in his prayers and fasts). You should also see that he is truthful when he speaks, restores honestly what he has received in trust to whom it is due, and remains righteous in times of adversity and suffering."

### **Justice**

Justice is an integral part of Islamic ethics. We must practise it in all spheres of life. The Qur'an states:

*"God Commands justice and doing of good". (XVI : 90)*

In Islam we are commanded to be just and fair not only towards our own people or co-religionists but also towards others even if they be the enemies of our life, property or Faith. It is candidly stated in the Qur'an that:

*"And let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just : that is next to piety". (V : 8)*

The above verse enjoins justice to those also, individuals as well as communities, who may be harbouring ill-will against us. Otherwise, we are sure to incur the dis-pleasure of God and become grievous sinners and criminals in his sight.

To refer now to some of the Traditions:

"The most beloved of men in the sight of God, on the Day of Resurrection, and the nearest to Him, shall be the just leader; and the most hateful of men in the sight of God, on the Day of Resurrection, and the farthest removed from Him, shall be the tyrannical ruler."

The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have enquired one day from the Companions: "Do you know who will be the first to come under the shadow of Divine Mercy on the Day of Requit?" The Companions replied,

"God and His Apostle know best." The Prophet (pbuh), then, said, "They will be those who accept a trust when it is offered to them and restore it willingly to the rightful claimant when they are asked to do so, and who judge in respect of others exactly as they would in respect of themselves."

The pity is that we ourselves have forgotten the glorious teachings of Islam. If we can produce these qualities within us today, and become truthful in word and deed, and honest in the matter of our trusts and promises and just and fair in our dealings with others, the success of the world is bound to kiss our feet and we will attain a high place in Paradise too.

### **Compassion and Forgiveness**

To feel pity on a fellow human being in distress, to be compassionately drawn towards him, to bring him succour, and to pardon the guilty and the defaulter are virtues that are valued very highly in Islam. Take these Traditions for instance:

"Show kindness, and kindness shall be shown to you; forgive, and you shall be forgiven."

"They will not obtain the mercy of God in whose hearts there is no feeling of kindness for others."

"His sins will not be forgiven by God who does not forgive the faults of others."

"God will have mercy upon them that are merciful. Treat kindly the dwellers of the earth, He who dwells in the heavens will treat you kindly."

It is apparent from the last Tradition that our kindness and gentility is not to be confined to our own people alone. We ought to be kind and compassionate towards friend and foe alike and to all the creature that exist on the earth.

It is reported from the Prophet (pbuh) that once a person who was travelling by road saw a dog licking wet earth in the agony of thirst. The traveller was moved by the spectacle and gave water to the dog to drink. This simple service of the man to thirsting dog pleased God so much that He blessed him with salvation.

## **Tenderness**

Tenderness in monetary dealings, and in all other fields of one's activity, and the readiness to oblige and put other at ease are all virtues of the highest order in the Islamic pattern of morality. We will reproduce two Traditions of the holy Prophet (pbuh) in support of our contention. Said he:

"Hell's fire is forbidden for those that are mild and gentle and make it easy for others to deal with them."

"God is compassionate and likes compassion in His creatures. He grants more to the kind and the tender-hearted than to those that are harsh and severe."

## **Self-Restraint**

Tolerance, affability, self-restraint, and the ability to control one's temper and overlook what is unpleasant and disagreeable are qualities that Islam wants everyone to cultivate. Believers who possess these fine moral attributes hold a very high place in the estimation of God.

In the Qur'an where a mention is made to the blessed ones for whom Paradise has been laid out such people are specifically referred to:

*"Who restrain anger and pardon (all men)". (III : 134)*

Said the Prophet (pbuh):

"God will hold back His punishment from him who will hold back his anger."

Blessed indeed, are men who remember these verses and Traditions during moments of provocation and exercise restraint and in return God stays His chastisement from them!

## **Gentleness of Speech**

Gentleness of speech is a religious virtue in Islam and rudeness a sin. The Qur'an declares:

*"Speak fair to the people". (II : 83)*

*"To speak politely is piety and a kind of charity."*

"To indulge in intemperate language and in harsh behaviour is to perpetrate an injustice and the home of injustice is Hell."

"Rudeness in speech is hypocrisy (i.e. The quality of a hypocrite)."

### **Humility**

Humility is a virtue. Islam wants its followers to practise it as a distinguished feature of their moral and spiritual behaviour. It does not become a Muslim to be haughty and vainglorious.

Greatness with God is not for those who look down upon others. Instead, it belongs to those who desist from thinking too highly of themselves and practise humility. In the words of Qur'an:

*"And the servants of (God) Most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility". (XXV : 63)*

*"That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not highhandedness or mischief on earth". (XXVIII : 83)*

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) had said:

"He who observes humility to God will make him so exalted that, ultimately, he will attain the highest grade in Paradise."

On the other hand, pride is so greatly repugnant to God that the sacred Prophet (pbuh) has warned us, again and again against it in such strong words:

"Whoever has pride in his heart even of the weight of an atom, shall be cast head-long into Hell by God."

"Whoever has pride in his heart, even of the weight of a mustard seed, shall not enter Paradise."

"Beware of pride! Pride was the sin which first of all ruined the Devil."

May Almighty God save us all from the Satanic evil of pride and endow our hearts and minds with meekness and humility which He admires so much and is the symbol of His slaves.

It needs, however, be remembered that it is demanded of us to practise meekness and humility in our

personal matters and not in matters where truth or Faith is involved. When it comes to Faith or truth we must be bold and outspoken and give the fullest proof of courage and firmness for this is the Will of God for such occasions.

The way of a Muslim, in sum, is that while he is meek and humble in his own individual sphere of existence, he is firm like a rock and allows neither fear nor weakness to come near him where Faith or truth or justice is at stake.

### **Courage and Fortitude**

There occur periods of hardship and adversity in the lives of men. Sometimes there is want, sometimes there is disease, sometimes our enemies harass us. And, so forth. For such situations the teaching of Islam is that we should bear them with courage and fortitude, remain firm and stout of heart and do not waver from our principles in spite of a thousand trials and calamities that may assail us. For such men there is the assurance of the Qur'an that they are the Beloved of God:

*"For God loves those who are patient and persevering".*  
(III : 146)

*"God surely, is with those who patiently persevere".* (II : 153)

*"And to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and through all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing".* (II : 177)

And the Prophet (pbuh) says:

"No boon conferred on man is more precious than that of patience".

"Patience is one-half of Faith".

Contrarily, impatience, chicken-heartedness and cowardice are the most lamentable of evils against which the Prophet (pbuh) used to beg God for refuge in his prayers.

### **Sincerity**

Sincerity is the life and soul of the entire moral edifice of Islam, nay, of Islam itself. By sincerity we



mean that all our deeds and actions solely be for the sake of God and prompted by no other urge than to earn His countenance. Apart from it, there must be no other desire, motive or intention behind whatever we do.

Monotheism which is the arch-stone of Islam attains fulfilment through sincerity. Faith in Divine Unity remains imperfect unless all our acts are performed wholly for the sake of God, and we have no other objective before us while carrying them out except the winning of Divine pleasure and reward. States the Prophet:

"He who loves or hates, offers favours or withholds them, and whatever he does, does so for the sake of God, he perfects his Faith."

It shows that a perfect Muslim in the sight of God is only he who succeeds in subordinating his entire conduct, his social relations and all his other affairs to the Will of God and is not influenced in them by personal desire or like or dislikes or by any other urges or impulses.

Another Tradition reads:

"God is not regardful of your fine visages or your wealth. He is regardful only of your hearts and intentions".

The idea of the above Tradition is that God will judge and requite solely on the basis of our motives and intentions.

Now, here is a Tradition with which we propose to round off the present discussion. About this Tradition it is reported that Abu Huraira often used to faint while relating it. It says:

"The first of those who shall be called to account, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be one who had learned the Qur'an by heart, and one who had been killed in the way of God, and one who had an abundance of wealth. Then shall God say to him who had got the whole of the Qur'an by heart, 'Did I not teach thee what I revealed to My Prophet?' He will say 'Yes, my Lord!' God will ask, 'And what hast thou done with regard to what thou didst learn therein?' He will say, 'I was constantly at it in the hours of night and in the hours of day. I learnt it myself and taught it, also, to

other, and I did it all for Thy sake alone. God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst only desire that men should say that such a one was a reciter of the Qur'an and that has been said already.'

"And the master of wealth shall be brought before God, and God shall say, 'Did I not give thee an abundance of wealth so that thou wast no in want of anything?' He will say, 'Yes, my Lord!' God will say, 'And what hast thou done with what I gave thee?' He will answer, 'I regarded the rights of kinship, and gave alms, and I did so for Thy sake.' God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such a one was a generous man, and that has been said already.'

"Then shall be who had been killed in way of God be brought before Him, and God will say to Him, 'What was it that thou was killed for?' He will reply, 'Thou didst bid us to do *Jihad* in Thy way, and I fought, and was killed,' God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such a one was a valiant man, and that has been said already'.

"These are the three men, who of all creatures, shall be first sent to into Fire."

Brother, - Now, let us examine our thoughts and deeds in the light of the above Tradition and see where do we stand in the sight of God!

O Allah! Endue our hearts with sincerity, and set right our motives and intentions, and make us Thy devoted, dedicated slaves. □

# RUSSIAN MUSLIMS' FREEDOM STRUGGLE (1900 - 1916)

J.G. Tewari

## **New Orientation**

In the beginning of the twentieth century the entire Muslim world was in a state of intellectual fermentation. The questions uppermost in the minds of majority of thinking Muslims were "What had led to the current degradation of Muslim community?" and "How to extricate from the morass?" Among the ideological waves that were thereby generated, the two most striking were the radicalism of Jamal Uddin Afghani and Pan-Turkism of Turkic nationalist. Both these thought currents had invaded the minds of Russian Muslims whose land and property were expropriated by the Russians and who were living like their economic and political slaves. To them these questions were of additional significance because of the fact that half a century of their armed struggle against the Russian regime had brought them in no way nearer to freedom. European liberalism and socialist thought currents of Russia of those days too had influenced them although they had little faith in the Russian dominated parties of all political hues. Their spirit for freedom remained as undaunted as before. Rather they felt more emboldened by the humiliation of the army of the mighty Russian empire at the hands of a fledgling Asian nation like the Japanese. They were also encouraged by the mounting wave of Russian revolution.

The net result of these developments was that the struggle for freedom of Russian Muslims acquired a new thought content, a sense of larger unity and increased coherence. This spontaneity of the nationalist revolt of the nineteenth century gave place to calculated planning, organisation and improved methodology.

This did not mean that the nationalist abjured the path of armed revolution. Rather they improved upon its technique. Just when the Tsarist armies were locked in a life and death struggle with the Japanese forces, they raised their banner of revolt in the very region through which war material was being routed. Moscow in crisis, as has been their wont over the centuries, was an opportunity for the Muslim nationalist to strike. Bands of Muslim farmers marauded Russian village settlements, set up at the cost of their land and property. The Tsarist repressive machine could do nothing. So massive was the uprising. Nemoz Premkulov became the legendary hero of the peasant revolt. The city population joined them and the situation became menacing. Nationalist bands went on roaming in the countryside from 1905 to 1910 not caring for the consequences. The movement subsided in 1910 but flared up again when Moscow was in a difficult war situation in 1916 and this time it was a nation-wide anti-government conflagration unprecedented in Russian history.

Another section of the nationalists got busy in uniting and organising the Muslim nationalists on a countrywide scale. Muslim representatives met at Novgorod secretly in 1905 and set up nucleus of a Russian Muslim Party. They met for the second time in January 1906 at Petersburg, this time too secretly, discussed Muslim national problems and decided to join hands with the Russian moderate and liberal parties, not with socialists and other radicals, for the furtherance of their ends. The momentous decision of fighting elections to the Duma was adopted at the conference. They met again on August 16, 1906 at Novgorod and set up a united Muslim Party, Christened the "Ittfaq" with its headquarters at Petersburg to fight Duma elections. The second Duma had only 9 Czarists, was un-nerved.

It changed electoral laws so as to disenfranchise the Muslims of Turkistan and Kazakh steppes who had hindered war efforts in 1905. The consequence was that in 1907 Duma Muslim representation was reduced to a mere 10. The nationalists were baulked on the constitutional front as well. But they continued to meet at a number of All Russian Congress demanding rights for Muslims, restitution of land confiscated of the benefit of Russian settlers, whose number in Kazakhstan alone had swelled to 1,500,000 by 1914. By a statute of 1910, all land considered by the government in excess of the needs of a Muslim family was taken over by the government. A series of Russian villages were set up in Turkestan. The natives collided with the Russian merchants who plundered the cotton crops of the peasantry through arbitrary reduction of price. In this way the discontent against the Tsarist regime went on mounting. Tsarist repression knew no relaxation. Muslim nationalist press was gagged. Their Ittfaq party was banned.

The third nationalist current was generated by the Djadidist set of Muslim reformist, mostly confined to the new intelligentsia. They were rather inward-looking, blamed the Muslim divines and their practices for the downfall of the Muslim community, stood for human equality, were imbued with a sense of humanism and sought to reform the Muslim society in order to meet the challenge of the time, particularly the state-backed invasion of Slavic culture on the Muslims. They were a confused lot of people, under the combined influence of socialists, Jamal Uddin Afghani and European liberalism but constituted a challenge to the cultural chauvinism of the regime. Fitrat was their most outstanding leader. The Tsarist machinery met the situation with a heavy hand. Countrywide repression was launched, Djadids were hunted out from schools and academic institutions. The large number of periodicals they issued were closed. Their entry into Central Asia was banned. But the movement continued and erupted with full force after Tsar was deposed when the question of transfer of political power was placed on the agenda. From April to May 1917, a number of All Russian Muslim conferences

were held on their initiative to voice the demands of the community for autonomy, for restitution of land and for freedom of trade and their religion. These demands were voiced vociferously in the situation of turmoil following the February 1917 revolution.

After the collapse of the peasant uprisings in 1910, the dissolution of the Duma, and mass arrest of the Djasists there followed a silence, the silence of the graveyard. More than 231,250 desiatins of land (one desiatin is equal to 2.7 hectares), mostly fertile and irrigated was given to Russian settlers who numbered neatly 10 percent of the total population of Central Asia, more than two millions in the steppes alone. The ruthless exploitation of the native cotton growers by Russian merchants, the impoverishment of millions of artisans caused by influx of Russian goods in the market, the easing out of the native trading classes from their traditional business and above all the imposition of Slavic culture on the Muslims converted the Russian Muslim world into a powder magazine that could burst on the historical scene at any appropriate occasion.

### The Revolt of 1916

The war measures of the Russian regime acted like a spark that triggered a *jehad* over the entire Russian Muslim world, an example of which is difficult in the annals of Muslim history.

As voluntary contributors started dwindling the government resorted to forced exactions, forced requisitions of raw materials, foodstuff and cattle. Collection of cash contributions under duress became the order of the day. The Government taxation in the Turkestan region which were already between 50 to 150 percent higher than upon the population of European Russia, were further increased. The Kazakhs and Kirghiz had already been squeezed of their fertile lands under the Stolypin regime. Crop failure had depleted their cattle stock and the prices of essential commodities had reached sky high. The law and order situation had been steadily deteriorating and food riots had been reported all

over the Turkestan region. Attacks on the Russians were on the increase since 1900.

Then came the Tsarist *ukase* of 25 June, 1916 on the mobilisation of population of Central Asia for services behind the front. The total force to be drafted consisted of eight percent of male population of Turkestan. The Tsarist army had suffered heavy losses and Turkestan was to supply 250,000 men of 19-43 age group. Only the native population was to be recruited, as the word 'inorodets' of the *uskase* showed.

The absence of any record of date of birth of the indigenous population rendered the method of calling up of men for service difficult. In view of this Turkestan administration decided to raise the required number of men by allotting a quota for each oblast. Instructions were sent to oblast heads and village leaders that while drafting men for service men of influence such as *mul-lahs* and *kazis* should be spared. The impression went around that only poor agriculturists would be forced to join just because the Russian wanted to confiscate their land after they are gone, for allotting it to Russian settlers. The bitter memories of forced colonisation were already lingering in the minds of the village poor. The popular unrest burst out in revolts. Military guards were stoned and police stations in Tashkent were shattered into pieces. The entire Fergana oblast was up in the flames of a popular revolt. Similar revolt spread to Samarkand oblast.

Simultaneously an explosive situation rose up in Dzhizak uzed where there already existed a burning popular indignation against the Russian settlers who were allotted most of land of the natives, thereby bringing the local farmers to the verge of starvation. The war time extortions and arbitrary arrests exacerbated the situation. A number of Russians were killed, including their local commandant, their property was burnt. On July 24, 1916, similar incidents took place in Kokand, Namangan and Andizhan. The rebellion did not spread to Semiriche before August but when it began, it overshadowed the events elsewhere in Turkestan. The reason was obvious enough. Semiriche more than any

other part of Turkestan region had borne the brunt of Russian colonisation and its famine stricken population was seething with hatred against the Russian settlers and the government.

In Kirghizia the revolution took a menacing proportion. Even the upper classes joined the common man giving the revolt a real national colour. The *mnapas* and *bais* joined. In the uprising 15,000 Kirghiz were killed by the state punitive expeditions or Russian colonists. A number of Kirghiz migrated to China and many died on the way.

In spite of the spontaneous character of 1916 rebellion and the primitive type of weapons employed by the rebels, what is required to be noted is the kind of resistance they offered against the heavily armed forces of their Tsarist masters. In Samarkand on July 4, 1916, thousands of people collected round the military store, faced Red Army guns and left only when 30 of them were wounded. In Tashkent on June 11, thousands of natives assembled at the police headquarters and prevented recruitment. The police which was heavily armed was stoned and beaten. The police station was battered, and pitched battles took place between the mob and the police. At Andhzhan, led by the Muslim divines, the crowd tore the list of drafters, and 17 of them were killed by police firing.

In Zzhinak in Samarkand oblast, disturbances took a serious proportion. The crowd went to the Russian section of the town, seized draft lists and consigned them to fire. Troops were insufficient. Telephone wires and railroad stations were destroyed. Outside the town miles of railroads was destroyed and scores of Russian colonies were pillaged. This continued for several days, till on July 17 the military expedition arrived and according to an Austrian prisoner of war who was present on the scene, named Wilfort, thousands of natives were killed and 82 were publicly hanged. Entire Turkestan was placed under martial law, and military officers were replaced by more efficient ones. In the Semiriche oblast at Belcodsk, on July 8, 1916 Kazakh villages were plundered for several days



by the Russians. The natives in return attacked the police stations and Russian villages.

To deal with the situation Turkestan administration at once set up military division consisting of Russian settlers who took vengeance in the most brutal manner conceivable. Native population in 39 districts of Kirghizia and Kazakhstan were mercilessly attacked as a result of which thousands migrated to China and many died of starvation and exposure to cold in the way. As a result of similar punitive expeditions in Marditov, 2000 young Turkeins fled to Persia, abandoning to the Russians their land and property. After an extensive tour of Turkestan region, Kerensky who was later to become the head of the provisional government, reported to the state Duman that in putting down the rebellion Russian soldiers and settlers showed utmost cruelty and killed indiscriminately the natives of all ages and of both the sexes. General Kurupatkin, the head of the Turkestan administration was not content with putting down the rebellion. He believed that the task of his administration consisted in teaching the indigenous people of Turkestan a lesson for daring to take up arms against the Russian masters. On 22 February 1917, he wrote to Tsar Nicholas II:

"It is essential for the native population to know well that shedding of Russian blood is visited upon not only by punishing those who are guilty but also by confiscating of land of all natives living in the area where the crime has been perpetrated. The principle must be strictly adhered to in all cases of trouble resulting in the shedding of Russian blood and it is the only way of impressing upon all natives the need to prevent the unreasonable elements among them from taking up arms against the Russian authorities."

Kurupatkin set up a large number of Russian colonies by confiscating the land of the natives in Atrek, Yomed Turkestan, Issyk-kul region, Chu Valley, Dzhar- ketnt, Pishpek uzeds, Naryn uzed and in this way an area of more than 2,510,361, desiatins of land, almost equal to the area of land confiscated prior to this under the Tsarist regimes was confiscated from the native cul-

tivators and handed over to the new Russian settlers. Kurupatkin completed his grandiose plan but at the same time paved the ground for the collapse of the Tsarist regime. Nicholas II was overthrown not by the Bolsheviks but by the heroic Muslims fighting for their national freedom.

The number of the Muslims who died as Shaheeds in this one of the most outstanding, the most memorable bloodiest of struggles in the history of national liberation is difficult to estimate. According to one authority 300,000 Kazakh-Kirghiz took refuge in the mountains or crossed the broder into China. According to an Oxford historian, the number must have mounted to several hundred thousands and those who fled to the Chinese territory must have been still numerous.□

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM HELD IN ENGLAND ON ALI MIAN

Sulaiman Kazi

Over 1300 people from across the UK gathered at Dewsbury Sports Centre in West Yorkshire, England on Sunday 30th July 2000 to listen sixteen speakers travelling from nine countries to highlight the life and teachings of the great Islamic scholar of the 20th century - Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi. The programme was divided into two sessions with a two hour recess for lunch and Zuhr prayers. It was broadcast live on the local mosque transmitter for reception on home scanners within a two mile radius.

## **First Session**

The symposium highlighted the life and teachings of Maulana Ali Mian, with an emphasis on his efforts to reform and revitalise the Ummah. The Master of Ceremonies and Convenor, Sulaiman Kazi outlined the organisations aims and reminded the audience of Maulana Ali Mian's life-long admonition to Muslims who had emigrated to the West, that their primary responsibility was the protection of faith and propagation of religion. He urged to abide by this timely advice and continue the late Maulana's mission.

Successive speakers then drew on the multi dimensional personality of this stalwart of Islam who was the beacon of guidance renowned universally for his selfless sacrifice, wisdom, method of Dawah, and perspicacity in understanding the affairs of the Muslim Ummah. Maulana Ali Mian was the scion of a family whose tradition for serving the Ummah stretched back for centuries on end. Explaining why this servant of Islam earned the respect of so many saints and scholars of the day, was the main theme of the speech of the Chairman World Islamic Forum, Maulana Mohammed Essa Mansuri.

A former student of Maulana Ali Mian and President of the largest Muslim organisation in North America, Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Dr. Muz-zami H. Siddiqi spoke of Maulana's continuous admonition to Muslims in the West to reverse the distorted image of Islam by living as true vicegerents of Almighty Allah. He quoted the late Maulana's extemporaneous message given in 1983 to Muslims of America, in which they were urged to create a New World Order of Islam. This message was equally relevant to all Muslims living in the Western World.

Atiqur-Rehamn Sambhli, spoke of how the late Maulana invited towards strengthening of Iman coupled with the advancement of knowledge. He never allowed fame to interfere and was a true reflection of our great pious predecessors.

Dr. David Browning, Registrar of Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies, said the late Maulana was an embodiment of deep piety, sincerity, simplicity and a great Ambassador of Islam. His personal experience and dealing with Maulana Ali Mian made him appreciate the noble values of Islam in a much profound way.

Mohammed Manazir Ahsan, Director of Islamic Foundation, Leicester enjoyed a relationship with Maulana Ali Mian for over three decades. He spoke of how the late Maulana had called the *Azan* at Oxford by helping to establish the Islamic Centre there and it was now up to Muslims living in the UK to construct the edifice of Islam in this hemisphere. He said Maulana Ali Mian had constantly counselled Muslims with love and affection to unite as one, setting their differences for the larger interest of Islam. He related his own travel experience with Maulana Ali Mian to Algeria and Samarkand, and narrated the zeal, enthusiasm and sterling qualities he witnessed in Maulana Ali Mian.

The first session came to an end with a speech

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