

THE FRAGRANCE

OF EAST

Vol. VII No. 4

October to December 2005

Academy of Journalism and Publicity
Post Box 93,
Lucknow 226 007

FAX (0522) 2787310

e-Mail: nadwa@sancharnet.in

Rs. 30/-

The Fragrance of East

The Fragrance of East

Founder : Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (RAH)

Advisory Board :

Abdullah Abbas Nadwi
S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi
Shah Ebadur Rahman
Wasi Ahmad Siddiqui
S.M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi
Shamsul Haque Nadwi

Editor:
Shariq Alavi

CONTENTS

1. Plain Speaking to Muslims Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi	9
2. The First Migration Jafer Subhani	31
3. A Word about the Revealer of the Qur'an M. Manzoor Nomani	43
4. What is Islamic Banking?	53
5. Commentator of the Holy Qur'an Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi	57
6. The Arab-Sufi Tweeds of Medieval Europe M. Sanaullah	63
7. Man's Origin and Status Jafar Wafa	85
8. Latino Catholics in U.S. Embracing Islam Chris L. Jenkins	91

Our Representatives Abroad

Britain	:	Mr. Akram Nadwi O.C.I.S.St. Cross College Oxford Ox1 3TU (UK)
Dubai	:	Qari Abdul Hameed Nadwi P.O. Box No. 12525, Dubai U.A.E.
Pakistan	:	Mr. Ataullah Sector A-50, Near SAU Qrs. 109, Township Kaurangi, Karachi 31 (Paakistan)
Qatar	:	Dr. Aftab Alam Nadwi P.O. Box No. 1513 Doha, Qatar
Saudi Arabia:		Mr. Tariq Hassan Askari P.O. Box No. 842 Madina - Munawwara (K.S.A.)
South Africa :		Mr. M. Yahaya Sallo Nadwi P.O. Box No. 388 Vereninging, (South Africa)
U.S.A.	:	Dr. AM. Siddiqui 98-Conklin Ave. Woodmere, New York 11598

Annual Subscription	:	Rs. 100 (per copy Rs. 30) In India \$ 25 (USA, UK, Asian Africa and European Countries)
---------------------	---	---

Cheques and Drafts may please be marked to:
"The Secretary, Majlise Sahafat wa Nashriat"
and sent to P.O. Box 93, Tagore Marg, Lucknow 226 007 U.P. India
Out - station cheques will not be accepted.

Editor's Note:

Post Ramzan Duties

While Muslims were celebrating Idd after month long fast one Kalyan Mitra played mischief by circulating on internet the following distorted extract, said to have been taken from Chapter 9, Verse 5 of the Holy Quran:

"Then when the sacred months have passed, kill the disbelievers wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and prepare for each and every ambush.

But if they repent and observe the Islamic lifestyle, leave their way. Verily Allah is oft forgiving, Most Merciful."

To mislead the recipients of this mail it was captioned "Post Ramzan Duties". Some Non-Muslims (say Hindus) could not relish it and enquired from us "Is this true? We can't believe it". We explained to them circumstances and situation in which the verse referred to above was revealed. The correct version as reproduced below from the Holy Quran was also communicated to them.

"But when the forbidden months are past then fight and slay the Pagans wherever Ye find them. And seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them, In every stratagic (of war) or of covenant! It is they who had transgressed all bounds." (Chapter 9 Verse 5)

After six years of 'Hijra' (migration) from Mecca to Medina when Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) attained some strength he thought of conquering the holy 'Ka'ba' and get it released in favour of Muslims. Therefore, he returned to Mecca with his followers to capture the holy place. A fierce fighting ensued between Muslims and non-believers of Mecca. It may be noted that most of the non-believers were closely related to the prophet and belonged to the same 'qabila' (Tribe). Here prophet entered into a 10-year treaty with people of Mecca and Muslims were allowed to enter Mecca and visit "Ka'ba", of course with

certain restrictions. However, after two years Pagans (non-believers) broke the Peace Treaty and so Prophet (peace be on him) along with his followers had to attack Mecca again and won the battle. A four month period was given to Meccan to either accept Islam or clear of the place. On this occasion the verse referred to above was revealed to the Prophet.

There is no question of the 'end of Ramzan' or general instructions for killing and capturing non-believers anywhere else. This verse was revealed in the context of war at Mecca and carries instructions which normally a winning party adopts against their enemies.

It may be reemphasised that people in Mecca against whom this verdict was given were the kin of Muslims. Most of them were related to each other but had refused to embrace Islam. ■

PLAIN SPEAKING TO MUSLIMS

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Dear Brothers,

I would like to do some 'plain speaking' without mincing matters because the distressing and sorrowful plight of the 'millat' all over the world warrants soul-searching by all thinking and responsible members of this vast community at the present juncture. It is being done in the interest and for the well-being of all of us in all sincerity and sympathy from the depth of my heart and I hope it will be received in the same spirit.

"Rakhiyo Ghalib mujhe is talkh nawal men mu'af,
Aaj kuchh dard mere dil men siwa hota hai."

(Ghalib excuse me for speaking so bitterly,
For today I feel greater pain in my heart).

Ghalib

The secret of safety, security and survival of the 'ummat' lies in looking for the real causes of the present distressful conditions and finding a way out of this unprecedented predicament. We are placed in a very unenviable position and there is no way out except to revert to Islam.

"..... and who had felt that the earth, spacious as it was, had become too strait for them and their very lives had become a burden unto them, and who had thought that there was no refuge from Allah except in Himself."

Surah at Tauba : 118

It is necessary as patriotic and conscientious citizens to draw the attention of the powers-that-be and important institutions of national standing to their errors of omission and commission and there is no need to be afraid of being misunderstood over it.

An Honest General Survey:

It is also our religious duty to speak the truth and not be guided by opportunism in doing so. The "khair-e-ummat" cannot and should not shirk its responsibility in this regard even if its voice is not heard. It is necessary for the elite in the 'ummat' to make a thorough study of the lurking dangers in the light of the 'Sermon on Mount Safa' by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and speak plainly about the righteous deeds and moral obligations on which the Divine Law of Rise and Fall of Nations is based: Recall the time When the Makkan elite had assembled at the foot of Mount Safa in response to the call by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who was known among them as "truthful" and "trustworthy." They thought that they would be told about a possible enemy attack or some such catastrophe. But they were told that there is no danger from outside, but it is from 'within' which is to overtake them on account of their ungodly and erroneous ways of life.

The guidance offered by the glorious Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is enough for the 'ummat' as a perfect and infallible guide for all times and under all conditions however worse they be. A few guidelines are being spelled out in this short discourse for consideration of the elite in the 'millat'. It is necessary for them to devote immediate and urgent attention to the suggestions being offered here to attract Divine Mercy and bring about a wind of change in the prevailing miserable conditions.

The Difference Between Monotheism and Polytheism:

It is abundantly clear from the study of the glorious Qur'an that if a community blessed with a divine book and avowing belief in Allah; is involved in polytheism of any kind, instead of following the guidance offered therein, it is deprived of the Divine Help, falls in disfavour and ultimately disgraced.

"The displeasure of their Lord will surely rest on those

who had worshipped the calf and humiliation will be their share in their present life, for, so do We requite those who give rise to false nations."

Surah al-A'araf . 152

"We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve because they ascribe unto Allah partners for which no warrant hath been revealed."

Surah al-i- Imran : 15

On the other hand if it follows Divine Ordinances in letter and spirit, to the best of its capacity, there is a definite promise of safety, peace and glory in the world as evident from the following verse of the glorious Qur'an.

"Allah hath held out the promise that those who believe and do what is right that He will accord to them the privilege of ruling in the land, even as He had accorded to those who had gone before them, and that He will let the way of life (din) chosen for them prevail and that He will replace their state of fear by one of security (the privilege of being conditioned by the Divine Command. They shall have to serve Me alone, without setting up any peers to Me. And whoso prove ungrateful after this, shall be regarded as wicked."

Surah an Nur : 54

The Lives of the Companions of the Prophet:

The glorious Qur'an vouchsafes for the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) when they practiced the principles laid down therein, that:

And remember the time when you were but few (at Makkah) and held of little account in the land and in dread of those who would forcibly expel you. It was then that He found you a place of refuge (Medina) and strengthened you with His help and provided you with the good things of life that happily you might give thanks."

Surah al-Anfal : 26

A few Polytheistic Beliefs and Practices:

The disclosure may, however, be unpleasant for some people, but it is fact that some polytheistic beliefs and practices have penetrated in a section of the 'ummat'. It requires a little understanding of the glorious Qur'an and moral courage to realise it. The glorious Qur'an has denounced polytheism in unambiguous terms as an unforgivable sin.

"Surely Allah forgives not the setting up of peers for Him; for anything less than this, He forgives whomsoever He pleases."

Surah an-Nisa:48

If anybody disbelieves or doubts the veracity of the above statement, he would do well to visit any popular shrine or attend an "Urs" and overhear the conversation of the frequent visitors to these places about the dogmatic notions which they, including a few bigwigs, have about these sages and "aulia". Except for the few attributes (sifat) like creation of the universe and the like, they have ascribed many divine attributes to these "aulia" including invocation (dua) from and prostration (sajda) before their graves though these forms of submission are exclusively meant for Allah. If someone, who has a little knowledge of the principles of Islam, visits any locality inhabited by such Muslims, it is feared, he may cry out:

"And many of them believe not in Allah except by joining others (with Him)."

We cannot, therefore, except anything substantial out of the plausible and specious means adopted at the instance of the so called leaders for safety, security and welfare of the "ummat" when the glorious Qur'an declares:

"Allah hath held out the promise that those who believe and do what is right."

Surah an Nur:55

The preachers, speakers and scholars who are endowed with the understanding of the spirit of Islam cannot escape their responsibility in this respect and they are likely to be questioned on the Day of Judgement.

The ill-effects of Immorality and Misdeeds:

The way the writ Allah runs in the universe since creation, the properties of matter are an established and known fact-water, fire, herbs, poisons etc. have their specific properties. The way discipline, diligence and such other tried and tested methods have proved their worth for success in the world in accordance with the Will of Allah, in the same way morality and righteous deeds and immorality and misdeeds do effect the lives of individuals and communities. The glorious Qur'an has described the ill-effects and dire consequences of misdeeds on the lives of individuals and communities in details. It is enough to look at the deplorable conditions and end the tribes of Prophets Nuh, Hud, Salih and Lut (peace be on them all) wherein their peculiar characteristic trait and deeds (rather misdeeds) have been mentioned along with the Divine chastisement which was wreaked on those tribes.

"O my people! Let not the schism with me cause you to sin so that there befall you that which befell the folk of Noah and the folk of Hud, and the folk of Salih; and the folk of Lot are not far off from you."

Surah Hud:89

Those who do not work according to the divine principles of Islam lead a miserable life. They are afflicted with distress, disrespect, diseases, abnormal deaths etc. The merciful Prophet (peace be upon him) has also warned that when the "Ordering of good" and "forbidding of evil" is abandoned, the invocations are not answered. On the other hand if a climate of repentance (inabat) and recantation (tauba) is created, the Divine chastisement is withdrawn.

"..... When they (the folk of Jonah) believed We drew

off from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the world and gave them comfort for a while."

Surah Yunus:99

It is observed that a large number of Muslims are involved in dissimulation (nifaq) of deeds (a'amal) and morals (akhlaq), and a good number of the pseudo leaders in the dissimulation of faith. It has also been noticed that a large majority of our brethren is permanently negligent of the daily five obligatory prayers - the most important of the fundamental principles of Islam after "iman". It is absolutely necessary that along with other measures for the uplift of the "ummat" (in fact, before they are taken up), the members of the "ummat" should be called upon to strictly follow the tenets of Islam, i.e., Prayers, Zakat, Fasting and Hajj along with rectification (islah) of their conduct and morals without which nothing worthwhile can be achieved by us as a whole. We should, where necessary, put a little fright in the hearts of the errant members of the "ummat" of the chastisement that afflicts the wrong doers in this world and the next for negligence of these fundamentals, which constitute the pillars of Islam.

"And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you; but ye steadfast! Lo! Allah is with the steadfast."

Surah al-Anfal:46

The Practice of Certain Rituals for Cheap Popularity:

The deeds which have their ill-effects in this world and the next and far-reaching consequences on the lives of individuals and communities are personal affairs, mutual dealings (mu'amalat), extravagance in certain rituals, spending lavishly for satisfaction of personal whims and fancies, etc. Because there can be no propriety for extravagance in religious ceremonies and social functions. They are not in keeping with the spirit of Islam and such persons are liable to be questioned when lots of people

do not have the means to meet the basic needs of life; when thousands of children cannot afford text books or School fees and cannot continue their studies; when such institutions, which form the backbone of the community, are struggling for survival and scores of plans, without which the meaningful existence of the community is inconceivable, are lagging behind or cannot prosper for want of necessary funds. It is unfortunate that prosperous persons and purse-proud upstarts spend lavishly on the marriages of their children and other ceremonies. The system of dowry is another curse which has infiltrated in a section of the 'millat' at some places. It is sad that inspite of education, social and political changes these princely and wasteful expenses have not stopped. On the contrary, novel methods have been adopted and political ambitions have been linked with them.

Even today in most of our professional fraternities, business class and the urban elite, the observance of these customs and conventions is given to ostentation; even if some of them are a necessity and a religious duty but they should be observed with austerity. There are some people who are otherwise religious minded but they consider these ceremonies unrelated with religion. The glorious Qur'an admonishes such persons in the following verses.

- (i) "What thinkest thou (O Muhammad!) of him who hath chosen to worship his own desires."

Surah al-Furqan:43

- (ii) But they say. We found our fathers following a certain way and we are simply guided by their foot-steps.

Surah az-Zukhruf:22

We have to make radical changes in the ideals and

concepts attached with these ceremonies. It is necessary to rise against such conventions, make it clear that these grandiose practices invite the wrath of Allah and bring about the decline and downfall of the community. The Beneficent and Merciful Allah and His equitable laws do not countenance this prodigality for illusory notions of recognition and, "the bubble reputation" when the wealth thus wasted can be usefully utilised to provide means of subsistence for lacs of indigent members of the "millat" or utilised to meet the expenses of institutions of religious, educational and technical instruction which sorely need funds.

"And whenever We intend (in consequence of misdeeds, to let the law of life take its course) to destroy a city, We forewarn the affluent among its people but when they disregard the warning, the doom deserved overtakes them; and We let it come to absolute ruin."

Surah Bani Israil . 16

The most detestable practice which can invite the wrath or chastisement of Allah is the long list of demands made by the groom's side from the bride's as the condition of marriage. This practice has been given different names at different places. The dowry in accordance with one's status is not against "Shariat". It is, in fact, an estimable convention and a sign of good family ties. The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave certain house-hold articles in dowry to his daughter Fatima Zahra because Hazrat Ali did not have those articles of daily use. The companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims, of all classes and in all ages have given dowry to their daughters. But the form has now changed. It is no more a gift, a token of family ties. It is given in some cases to make a name, or as a ritual, but in most of the cases under compulsion. The father of the bride, at times, raises a loan (may be at exorbitant interest), or disposes of his property to meet the demands of dowry. The importance attached to dowry in India is not the practice in other Muslim countries. it, therefore, appears to be indigenous custom. It has now assumed an alarming mag-

nitide and made marriages difficult and a curse and such despicable acts are perpetrated for dowry that they are enough to invite the wrath of Beneficent and Merciful Allah as such practices have been the cause of destruction of kingdoms and obliteration of civilisations in the past.

The Muslims who claim to follow the Prophet who was sent as 'Mercy for the worlds' (peace be on him) ought to have come forward and stopped this wicked practice as sincere and true followers of that Prophet (peace be on him) about whom the glorious Qur'an says.

"But Allah would not punish them
while thou wast with them"

Surah al-Anfal: 33

It is very sad that this evil has infiltrated in Muslim community also and some Muslims do not consider it against humanity and religion. if just one of item in the long list of demands is not provided the grooms (or in some cases the in-laws) do not allow the wedded wives to join them for years.

It is necessary that this evil be eradicated root and branch, else, I am afraid, the divine calamity may strike all of a sudden. Even otherwise the ill-effects of this practice which have affected the family and social life are not hidden from those who have a seeing eye. The holy prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said.

Hazrat Huzaifa Yamani narrates that Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, "By Allah in whose hands is my life, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. It is, otherwise, feared that Allah may send His chastisement ('azab) and you pray and it may not be answered."

(Tirmizi)

An Exemplary Event:

Those affluent members of the "ummat" who spend lavishly on banquets and illumination should keep the following exemplary event in mind. Hazrat Abdul Rehman bin

'Auf married after migration to Madina and Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was not informed of this important event though his presence would have been auspicious (babarkat) and a matter of just pride for him. These days relations are invited from far off places-countries from where passports and visas are required. When the Prophet (peace be on him) came to know about the marriage, he asked him to give a marriage feast (walimah).

The time has now come that this tendency of pompous feasts and lighting should be curbed by the elite. They should openly express their disgust and displeasure at this wastage and discourage this trend by total boycott of such persons and festivities.

These spend-thrifts should know that there can be no justification for this needless luxury.

They should not be afraid of accountability on the Day of Judgement when they would be called upon to render account for each and every paisa and prove the legality of this wastefulness.

"He who hath placed you viceroys of the earth and hath exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He hath given you. Lo! the Lord is swift in prosecution, and lo! He is Forgiving, Merciful."

Surah al-An'am:165

Indifference to Social Obligations:

It is clear from the study of the glorious Qur'an that excessive interest and occupation in one's personal affairs and business or economic advancement to the neglect of collective needs of the "millat", propagation and defence of faith, etc. are like committing suicide. The "millat" which takes to this wrong course is doomed to failure.

"And spend in the way of Allah and do not with your own hands work for your ruin and do good for Allah verily loves

who do good."

Surah al-Baqrah:195

Hazrat Abu Ayyub Ansari- the host of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) - who knew the real significance of this verse rebuked his comrades-in-arm at the time of the seige of Constantinople when they wrongly inferred from this verse that wilful exposure of oneself to undue risks in 'jihad' is like committing suicide. He explained that this verse had been revealed when 'Ansar' had thought to take time off and look after their personal affairs, business, agriculture etc., which were adversely affected on account of their pre-occupation in learning and propagating the teachings of Islam. The 'Ansar' were admonished that if they suspend their religious obligations to look after personal affairs, this diversion albeit temporary, would be committing suicide: It was made clear to them in unequivocal terms that individual safety and security lies in the excellent state of preservation of the entire 'ummat' in the same way as freshness of leaves depends on their remaining joined with the trees. If the leaves are detached from the tree they are seared. The life, progress and advancement of individuals is bound with the 'ummat' and this law of life is inviolable.

"Paiwasta reh shajar se ummaid-e-bahar rakh"
(Keep joined with the tree and hope for the spring.)

The individual members of the 'millat' cannot live with respect and remain secure on the unfounded notion of personal prestige and riches, social and economic status detached from the 'millat'. The history of the 'millat' provides evidence that whenever a community forming part of it behaved in this short-sighted manner it was ousted from its hearths and homes.

"The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew".

Surah al-Ankabut:41

The Need for Judicious Efforts:

The 'ummat' is at a cross road at the present time. It is, therefore, necessary that judicious and Determined efforts are made for the survival of the entire 'ummat'. The situation demands vigorous implementation of certain well-thought out plans for our individual and collective existence as Muslims. It is necessary that they should be safe, respected and be in a position to play an effective and decisive role in the affairs of the society. They have also to, retain their special characteristics, make themselves useful to others and a blessing for humanity at large.

They must rise to the occasion, move with times (without in any way giving up the fundamental and basic principles of Islam) and march in step or ahead of developing nations as our forebears did. If necessary they should provide guidance and save the society from impending dangers and moral collapse. It is incumbent on the 'millat' to have its own educational institutions, initiate constructive plans and programmes and make organised efforts in the right direction. They are as important as air and water for life. If these institutions function properly and continue to march forward then the survival of the 'ummat' would be assured, its future would be bright and its position firmly established in the society. The narrow-mindedness and prejudices of some people, laxity or partiality of those in power and endeavours on the part of some persons in and outside the 'millat' to disrupt its unity or retard its future progress and these frequent disturbances would not seriously affect the attaining of its goal.

"If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraw His help from you, who is there who can help you? In Allah let believers put their faith."

Surah al-i-Imran:160

The Poor Man's Lamp:

If a few members of the "millat" are busy feathering their own nests, the rich and the powerful are negligent of

the needs and demands of the 'millat' and they are unabashedly luxurious in satisfying their whims and wishes when such institutions and programmes which are vital for the meaningful existence and regeneration of the 'millat' are in a morbid state, then these individuals, may be as rich as Korah, are exposed to catastrophic upheavals. They carry absolutely no weight in the sight of Allah. A slight turn of the wheel of fortune would dislodge them from their high but precarious position and when they come to their senses they would find themselves deprived of everything worthwhile and meet the fate of extravagant and defaultant people.

".....And even they (the People of the Book) on their part thought that their fortress will protect them against Allah. But Allah came upon them from whence they scarcely expected it and caused such upheaval in their hearts, that they let their houses be demolished by their own hands".

Surah Hashr: 2

Those scholars who have been endowed with some understanding of the immutable laws of Allah are apprehensive about the present conditions of the 'millat' as a whole.

The "millat" inspite of political changes and economic backwardness is still in a position to run its religious, educational and technical institutions and finance the plan and programmes meant for its all round progress. These institutions and plans need not suffer or lag behind for want or lack of funds. Because there are many plans without which the educational, economic and other problems of the 'millat' cannot be solved and there are a number of institutions in the absence of which it would not be fair to say:

"Khas hai tarkib men qaum-e-Rasool-e-Hashmi"
(Distinct is in composition the 'ummat' of Hashemite Prophet).

Iqbal

There are many educational and similar other institutions which can save the Muslim youth from mental and cultural apostasy (which has overwhelmed the Muslim countries) and regenerate their faith (which has been dampened by Western education) in Islam and its bright future and provide antidote for the poison with which the Orientalists have perverted the minds of those young men who now monopolise leadership or hold the reins of government in Muslim countries. There are, again, many institutions which can bring about a reconciliation between the ever-changing life patterns and the eternal laws of Islam; which can infuse a new faith and confidence and provide guidance to our younger generation which has been misguided by Western ideologies. These institutions can undertake the work of re-orientation which had been achieved by the former scholars. There are many institutions which can translate the glorious Qur'an and present the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in different national and international languages which would help in providing a proper understanding of Islam to those persons who harbour misgivings about it on account of the false propaganda carried out against it. But alas! all these plans and programmes remain a dream or exist just on paper and they cannot be implemented or expanded because the necessary funds are not forthcoming.

The Absence of English and Hindi Press:

It is difficult to find a parallel instance in history that a community whose numbers run in crores and which has lacs of rich and highly educated persons should suffer on account of doubts and suspicions created about it in the minds of others on the strengths of distorted history and there are possibilities of fresh misunderstandings being created about it at all times. At a time when every incident, however, unimportant it may be, is utilised to paint the community in the blackest possible colours; when it is innocent and oppressed it is indicted as tyrant and blood-thirsty; when it is unable to exercise its birth-right to self

protection, it is accused of oppression and armed raids; when its members are murdered, it is easy to denounce them as murderers; when the hostile press can make a mountain of a mole-hill; when fictitious stories are given the widest publicity; when all these things are going on for years on end, that community has no English and/or Hindi Daily Newspaper of its own to refute these false allegations voice its genuine grievances and convey its tale of woes and miseries to the powers-that-be and the elitist circles and educate them on the truths about this much maligned community and religion.

What can we say about the common sense and intelligence of that community whose privileged few make a show of being happy and in easy circumstances on all occasions in and outside the country; when a large majority of its members is oppressed and poor, backward and uneducated, unskilled and unemployed.

*"Khama angusht ba-dandan hai ise kiya likhiye,
Natiqa sir bagariban hai ise kiya kahiye".*

(The pen is awe struck as what to write about it,
Then speech is dumb-founded as what to call it).

Ghalib

Then that community has no right to complain about others. There is no use frowning at any event, however, shocking and objectionable it be. The frequent occurrence of riots has reached the stage that it should receive our immediate attention. It is not only the religious obligation to render all possible help to the helpless and homeless victims of the 'millat' but it is a moral and humanitarian duty also. It should not, however, take away all our time, energy and attention.

This State of Affairs Is Intolerable:

We should not allow the present state of affairs to become a permanent feature of our existence. That community is very unfortunate and pitiable which is persecuted time and again and all its resources are frittered

away in finding remedies to these inflictions.

This 'ummat' has not been raised to be continuously operated upon and to dissipate its energies all the time in attending to the gaping immedicable wounds. It is, therefore necessary to plug the loopholes through which these riots find their way into Muslim localities whether they be in or outside them.

There is an urgent need to imbibe Islamic teachings in their pristine form as expounded by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and practised by his companions which would pave the way for our unity, safety and welfare. We should take firm, positive and concrete steps in this direction and these should continue unabated till we feel sure of complete protection of the entire 'millat'. We should not leave any available stone unturned till we achieve our set goal.

"And hold fast all of you together, the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour with you, how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts by His grace, and (how) you were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it".

Surah al-i-Imran: 103

The recent woeful and tragic course of events all over the world demand that we sit up and take stock of the situation in a rational and candid manner like a living and conscientious community. The malaise is deep seated. We must revert to the glorious Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) because the root cause of our trials and tribulations is different as are their remedies.

"Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which have done in order that they may return (from evil)".

Surah ar-Rum:41

Excessive Sentimental Speeches:

Of the weaknesses which have crept into the temperament of the 'millat' in recent times, specially after the Khilafat Movement (which of course, created a political awakening amongst the Muslims), one is sentimental and passionate speeches by some of its leaders. There is no doubt that in order to brave national calamities, stiff opposition to emerge triumphantly from the tight corners we find ourselves in, firm resolution and a spirit of adventure are necessary and helpful. We find evidence of it in the history of different nations. But wise and intelligent leaders use impassioned speeches with utmost caution or else these impetuous speeches lose their efficacy and the old story of 'crying wolf' is repeated.

It has become a fashion with some speakers to talk big and inundate the audience with a deluge of words.

It should, however, be borne in mind that words also have their own temper. It would be wrong for a speaker to use harsh words at a time when mild words should be used.

It is also not wise to use strong language and stir human passions when there is no intention or occasion to turn words into deeds. It is a sort of a deception with the audience. Those who have a sense of realism are very sensitive in this respect, and their leaders use proper words in proper places. The way extravagance in matters of money is contemptible in the same way volcanic words are undesirable specially when they have an effect on the future of the 'millat'. This lack of caution may sometimes lead into desperate situations where remedial measures may not be possible. It is, therefore, necessary to be more cautious in the use of words than in that of money (it affects mainly the individuals and families), and exercise moderation in appealing to the sentiments of the people.

It is now being observed that at such meetings which are held with specific object of reforms in the 'millat' or presenting some problems or voice its grievances (before the powers-that-be), the speakers compete in inciting the

emotions of the audience and try to demonstrate their excellence in oratory. The strong words which are employed in very special circumstances are freely used in such meetings. While a speaker finishes his speech with a warning; "We will erect a minaret of skulls", the other boasts, 'We will cause a sea of blood to flow etc. etc.'. When no results are obtained after these inflamed speeches the words lose their effectiveness and the people their capacity to carry anything into effect.

It is necessary to be more careful where different sects and communities are living. It is sometimes felt that Muslims are born orators and every member of this community can speak with vigour. As against this, we find, the nations which have won many political battles and the ruling power had to yield to them even though they used rhetoric and jugglery of words to a lesser degree. They are still solving bigger problems with moderate and balanced speeches. But in view of the inflamed speeches the taste of the 'millat' has become like that of a person who relishes strong flavoured spices and demands more and more for them.

For the nations which have to live a respectable life the speech which may tire out the people easily, is neither needed nor it is wise. It is not also in accord with the temperament of the community which has been entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and reformation.

Lack of Patience:

The natural and psychological result of these inflamed speeches is that the 'millat' has lost its capacity for long and hard struggle, especially when the chances of quick results are not bright; when at times staking one's life or whole fortune for any cause appears easier but persistent efforts and ability to bear hardship for a considerable time seem to be against the nature of our people.

This impatience on a large scale in the 'millat' causes anxiety because silent, continuous and patient struggles are

necessary to create a place of honour for it, to find solutions to its multiple problems and preserve its unique personality, as couriers of a divine message, rather than as demagogues.

It is an established fact that the minority community has to exert itself two-fold or even four-fold to live with respect compared to what the majority community does. The Jews gave proof of their capacity to work hard and acquired such influence in the national affairs of the United States and some European countries which is quite out of proportion to their small population. But the 'millat' in India far from exerting itself two-fold or four-fold is not prepared even to work as hard as the majority community does with the result that it lags behind in competitive examinations and is deprived of executive posts. If this trend continues for some time more, it is feared, that the Muslims may fall back and join the rank of backward classes or even linger behind them.

This temperament which is to some extent the result of inflamed speeches and the desire to get quick results out of their sancty efforts, has become the cause of a severe trial for the 'millat' with its manifold and complicated problems. It has become difficult for them to run any organisation or persevere in their endeavours in any issue for long. The institutions which the 'millat' founded a century or half a century back are almost in the same position as at the time of their founding or languish in a torpid state on account of indifference by Muslims. But the educational institutions which the majority community or other minority communities started have progressed far ahead during the same period. There is no comparison in the standard of education, number and size of buildings and over-all working conditions. This difference in mental attitudes and temperament is a result of the style of leadership and impassioned speeches which have become a characteristic trait and a matter of prestige with the Muslims.

Lack of Co-operation and Confidence:

The spirit of mutual co-operation and confidence is lacking in joint ventures with the result that several larger Muslim institutions, whether educational or otherwise, are in a torpid condition. They are faced with all sorts of problems and it appears that they may close down at any time. The major reason for this state of affairs is lack of faith in the sincerity, honesty and managing capacity of the people who are responsible for running these institutions. Their decisions and actions are regarded with suspicion. There is always pressure on them to keep the members (as well as non-members) satisfied, sacrifice the interests of the institution over the wishes of the patrons, political leaders and influential persons and produce results.

If any time a petty wish (be it irregular) of any person who matters is not complied with, he would not hesitate to destroy the institution and deprive the 'millat' of a useful and valuable national asset. The other symptom of decline is the lack of patience and spirit of sacrifice. If by chance any institution obtains the services of a sincere worker who cannot please the political leaders, guardians of students and members of different committees and embarks on a few constructive measures to reform the institution, then all his past achievements, good qualities, sincerity and honesty are forgotten and campaign of vilification mounted against him.

The masses have double standards: one for themselves and the other for national leaders and public workers. They adopt a policy of 'forget and forgive' for themselves and their ilk but demand austerity, abstinence and simplicity of Syedna Umar bin Abdul Aziz, if not of Hazrat Umar Farooq from public workers. This kind of thinking has created uncertain conditions for our institutions and those sincere persons who can serve the people with honesty think a hundred times before accepting any responsibility when they look to the unenviable position of other social workers.

The matter is not confined only to lack of confidence

and undue criticism, it has gone to the extent of casting aspersions, making insinuations and even character assassination. If some one hears something unsavoury about a social worker or a political leader he puts together disjointed events, concocts a story and makes a mountain of a mole hill. The main purpose behind this fig of imagination and slander campaign is to gain some political advantage or news scoop. This trend started from the times of 'Khilafat Movement' when the intrepid and devoted leaders staked and sacrificed their lives for the 'millat' and it has now extended to regional leaders, social workers and theologians (ulama) also.

But the attitude of the majority community towards their leaders is different. They are, by and large, broad-minded and prepared to wait for results. The outcome of this confidence in their leaders is that they get sufficient time to implement their plans and carry them to successful conclusion. Their followers acknowledge it with an open heart and feel grateful for their achievements. This is the general practice in regard to the founders of Universities and ashrams, reformers and communalist revivalist movements.

The Need to Acquaint Others with Islam:

An evidence of the short-sightedness of the Muslims is that they did not try to acquaint their neighbours (the majority of which has not only religious differences with them but is suspicious of them on historical and political grounds) with the principles of Islam, the pious lives of their illustrious religious leaders and renowned historical figures. They have also not tried to explain the role they played after coming to India, the various gifts they conferred on the Indian society, and the contribution they can still make in internal and external affairs of the country. They have again, not tried to show that in spite of certain weaknesses they possess certain inherent qualities through which the Indian society can be saved from all round degeneration towards which it

is fast moving. The common man has not experienced their superior morals and excellent character. The non-Muslims have come across them as rivals in the political field and elections or in market places, offices etc. and they did not find any distinguishing signs among them which could set them apart from others. They know that a Muslim is circumcised, considers it necessary to eat beef as if it is part of his religion and that he is inclined to be short tempered. The other sign of a Muslim is that he is offended by the playing of music in front of a mosque. We have not tried to explain the 'azan' which is pronounced five times a day (at some places through loud-speakers). Our compariots are also responsible for this lack of knowledge and hateful attitude (which is dangerous for the country). Their attitude of superiority is partly responsible for this neglect. The curriculum, the political system, the communal leaders and the elections have also contributed a lot to the present estranged relations among different sections of the population. I am addressing you and I would like to concentrate on our own short-comings at the moment. We did not present before our countrymen the true Islamic way of life which would have attracted them and made them curious about Islam-the fountainhead of peaceful social revolution. It would have at least created a desire to study, think and enquire about it in them.

The process of bringing them closer can be achieved without sacrificing our principles, character, traditions and with no twinge of conscience. It requires exemplary conduct, good morals, spirit of sacrifice, patriotism, cordial relations and participation in social and such other works, and where necessary to provide guidance and make sincere attempts to save the country from impending moral chaos. It is easier for the 'ummat' which neither consider the life of the world to be final nor the fulfilment of personal interests to be the sole aim of life. It has, inspite of all its present weaknesses, divive teachings, the legacy of the prophets (peace be on them all) and traces of faith (iman).

It is clear as day and it does not require any extra intelligence that inspite of institutions of higher education, scholarly researches, presence of very intelligent and pious persons if the majority community is unaware of the teachings of Islam-indeed disgusting and sacred - then a tide of communal frenzy, a storm of hate and a fit of hysteria can change the whole scene in a few hours and destroy the achievements of years in a few minutes. The communal riots at some places have proved this. That is why we have to provide a 'safeguard' strong enough to protect all the religious and educational institutions, libraries, mosques and schools; as well as our honour and identity: it is that the people around us should be acquainted and familiarised with the fundamental principles of Islam; they should consider all these properties as precious national assets and a trust and recognise the usefulness and intrinsic value of the 'millat' in their midst.

Then it is necessary that there should be normal and peaceful conditions for continuance of all these efforts unhampered and to convey our thoughts to others. The other people should also be in a mood to hear and think over them patiently. If there is a thunder-storm, lightning or heavy rains it can disturb any meeting or social gathering. If a snake or a rabid dog appears at a meeting where a fascinating speaker (may be Sehban of his time) is delivering a speech the audience would disperse helter skelter and they would not like to gather again despite best efforts of the organisers. Then how a discredited minority can survive and continue its long term programmes in disturbed conditions?

The Need for Critical Review:

It is not enough for others to be acquainted with Islam. It is necessary for the Muslims to be well aware of the conditions obtaining in the country and their pulls and pressures and be vigilant about them. Their link with the society should not be cut off. We know from the history that when the Muslims did everything they could for the country but were unmindful of the harsh realities of life; did not try to

discharge their responsibility of guidance (enjoin the right and forbid the wrong), they were ousted from their hearths and homes. If the Muslims shut their eyes to the changing conditions, laws, educational system, language, script and the propaganda which is being dinned into their ears through all available media then far from providing guidance to others, their own survival as a community would become doubtful and their future generations would be exposed to mental confusion and prove an easy prey for apostasy.

Lastly, the only way for the Muslims, to live in this country with respect is that they should prove their usefulness, fill the gap of moral leadership when moral degradation has reached a point where the very existence of the nation appears to be in jeopardy. Because no minority community can live with respect and in peace in any country without proving its utility and indispensibility through selfless service, guidance and preaching. Dr. Iqbal has rightly said:

"Life is a struggle, not a privilege".

Furthermore the following edict of the glorious Qur'an stands for all times:

"Then, as for the foam, it passeth away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which is of use to mankind, it remaineth in the earth. Thus Allah coineth the similitudes".

Surah ar-R'ad: 17■

(Written in 1987, it is as relevant today as it was 20 years ago - Editor)

THE FIRST MIGRATION

Jafer Subhani

Migration of a group of Muslims to Ethiopia is a clear proof of their faith and deep sincerity. With a view to get rid of the mischief and atrocities of Quraysh and to acquire a peaceful atmosphere for observing their religious ceremonies and worshipping Allah the One, they decided to leave Makkah and to forsake their wealth, business, children and relatives. They, however, wondered what to do and where to go, for they saw that idolatry prevailed throughout the Arabian Peninsula and there was not a single point where the name of Allah could be proclaimed aloud or the laws of Islam could be introduced. They, therefore, decided to place the matter before the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) – the foundation of whose religion was laid on: **"Allah's land is spacious. Worship Me alone"** (choose that place for residence where you can worship Allah). (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:56).

The Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was fully aware of the pitiable condition of the Muslims. Although he himself enjoyed the support of Bani Hashim and they protected him from every harm, his devotees mostly consisted of slave-girls and slave-boys and some unprotected free men. The chiefs of Quraysh persecuted these helpless persons incessantly and, in order to forestall tribal wars, the powerful chiefs of various tribes tortured those persons of their tribes who had embraced Islam. An account of the torture and prosecutions to which Quraysh subjected the people has already been given in the books of Islamic history.

It was on this account that when the companions of the Prophet sought advice from him regarding migration he replied: "If you travel to Ethiopia it will be very profitable for you, because, on account of the presence of a mighty and just ruler, nobody is oppressed there and the land of

that country is good and pure and you can live there till Almighty Allah provides you relief.

No doubt a pure environment, where a worthy and just person is at the helm of affairs, is a specimen of Paradise and the only object of the companions of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) in occupying such a land was that they might perform their religious duties with perfect security and peace of mind.

The penetrating words of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) had such a wholesome effect that soon after that those, who were already quite ready, packed their luggage and proceeded to Jeddah at night, either mounted or on foot, without their enemies (idolaters) becoming aware of their departure. The total number of those who migrated this time was ten and they included four Muslim women as well.

It is worthy of note why the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) did not mention other places. However, when the conditions then prevailing in Arabia and other places are studied the secret of the selection of Ethiopia becomes quite clear. The reason for this was that migration to places inhabited by the Arabs, who were usually idolaters, was dangerous. The idolaters were reluctant to receive the Muslims either because they wished to please Quraysh, or because they loved the religion of their forefathers. The places in Arabia inhabited by the Christians and the Jews were not at all fit for migration, because they were fighting and quarrelling with each other for their spiritual penetration, and there was no room for a third rival. Furthermore, those two groups considered people of the Arab descent to be inferior and humble.

Yemen was under the influence of the King of Iran and the Iranian authorities were not prepared to accommodate Muslims in that land, so much so that when Khusro Pervaz received the letter from the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) he at once wrote

to the Governor of Yemen to arrest the new Prophet and send him to Iran. Hira, too, was under the domination of Iran like Yemen. Syria was far away from Makkah. Furthermore, Yemen and Syria were the markets for Quraysh and they had close relations with the people of these areas. If the Muslims had taken shelter there those people would have expelled them on the request of Quraysh, who had made a similar request to the King of Ethiopia who turned it down.

During those days journey by sea, particularly with women and children, was an extraordinarily difficult job. Undertaking such a journey and abandoning means of livelihood was a sign of devotion and pure faith. Jeddah (and according to Jurji Zaydan the post of 'Shoaibiyah' of those days) was a developed trading port, and by chance two trading vessels were then ready to sail from there for Ethiopia. The Muslims, fearing pursuit by Quraysh, made known their intention to perform the journey and boarded the vessel in much haste, on payment of half a dinar. A report regarding the departure of the Muslims had also reached the ears of the chiefs of Makkah and they sent some persons to bring them back, but by the time they reached there, the vessel had left the coast of Jeddah and could not be seen.

Pursuit of those, who had taken refuge in a foreign land only for the safety of their faith, is a clear proof of the villainy of Quraysh. The migrants had forsaken their property, children, residences and business, but the chiefs of Makkah were not, prepared to leave them alone. The elders of 'Darun Nadwah' feared the outcome of this journey and discussed amongst themselves the matters, which will be mentioned later.

The members of this group did not belong to one family and according to Ibn Hisham, everyone of these ten persons belonged to a separate family. Another migration took place after this and the leader of these migration was Ja'far son of Abu Talib. This migration was arranged with perfect freedom and some of the migrants were, therefore, successful in taking their women and children also with

themselves.

Consequently the number of the Muslims in Ethiopia reached eighty three and if we take into account the children who were taken there or were born in that land the number would exceed this figure.

As the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) had described, the Muslims found Ethiopia to be a prospectus country with a calm and free atmosphere. Umma Salama, the wife of Abi Salma, who later had the honour of marrying the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), says thus about that country: "When we settled in Ethiopia we found ourselves under the protection of the best patron. We did not meet with any trouble or hear any bad word from anyone".

From the verses composed by some migrants it transpires that the atmosphere of Ethiopia was very pleasant. Details may be seen in the Seerah-i-Ibn Hisham.

QURAYSH SEND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO THE COURT OF ETHIOPIA

When the chiefs of Makkah learned about the freedom and peaceful life of the Muslims in Ethiopia, the flames of rancour kindled in their hearts, they were disturbed by the happy life being led by them there, because that country had proved to be a haven for them. They were very much afraid lest the Muslims should have access to the Negus (ruler of Ethiopia) and they might be able to attract him to the religion of Islam and thus arrange the invasion of the Arabian Peninsula by a well-equipped army.

The elders of 'Darun-Nadwah' conferred once again and unanimously decided to send representatives to the court of Ethiopia and to arrange for proper presents for the king and his ministers to earn their good will, and then to accuse the migrant Muslims of stupidity and ignorance and of inventing a religion. In order that their plan might meet with an immediate success they selected from amongst

themselves two persons known for their cunning and deceitful activities. One of whom later became a juggler in the field of politics. The lot fell upon 'Amr bin Aas' and Abdullah bin Rabi'ah. The president of 'Darun-Nadwah' instructed them that before meeting the ruler of Ethiopia they should present gifts to the ministers and have conversation with them in advance and should try to bring them round, so that when they meet the king, they (the ministers) might support them. After having been briefed on these lines the said two persons proceeded to Ethiopia.

The ministers of Ethiopia met the representatives of Quraysh and the latter, after presenting the gifts, spoke to them thus: "A group of our young men have abjured the creed of their forefathers and have invented a religion which is opposed to our religion as well as yours. They are now residing in your country. The elders and chiefs of Quraysh earnestly request the King of Ethiopia to expel them as soon as possibly. Incidentally, we also desire that the council of ministers may support us in the presence of the king. And as we are fully aware of the shortcomings and ways and manners of these persons it will be expedient that the matter is not discussed with them at all and the head of the State should not also grant them an audience".

The greedy and short-sighted persons (i.e. the ministers) assured them of their full support. On the following day the representatives of Quraysh were admitted in the royal court and after conveying their greetings and presenting the gifts they communicated the message of Quraysh to the king in the following words:

"O honourable ruler of Ethiopia! Some foolish young men of ours have taken steps to propagate a religion which does not conform either with the official religion of your country or with that of their ancestors. These people have recently taken refuge in your country and are taking undue advantage of the freedom available in this State. The elders of Quraysh earnestly request your Majesty that orders may be issued for their expulsion so that they may return to their

own country"

As soon as the speech of the representatives of Quraysh ended the voices of the ministers, who were sitting round the royal throne, became loud. All of them supported the representatives of Quraysh and confirmed what they had said. However, signs of anger appeared on the face of the wise and just Ruler of Ethiopia. Opposing his courtiers he thundered. "This cannot be. I can't hand over to these two persons, without proper investigation, the people who have taken refuge in my country. It is necessary that the condition and particulars of these refugees should be looked into. And I will return them to their country only after the statements of these two persons about them have been substantiated thorough scrutiny. On the other hand, if what these persons have said about them is not based on reality, I will not forsake them, but will render them more assistance".

Thereafter a special emissary of the royal court was sent to the emigrant Muslims and he brought them before the king without providing them any prior information. Ja'far bin Abu Talib was introduced as the representative of those persons. Some of the Muslims were worried as to how he would address the Christian monarch of Ethiopia. To alleviate their anxiety Ja'far told them that he would communicate to the king exactly what he had heard from the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him).

The King of Ethiopia turned to Ja'far and said: "Why have you abjured the creed of your forefathers and adopted a faith which does not conform either to our religion or to that of your ancestors?"

Ja'far replied: "We were an ignorant and idolatrous people. We did not avoid eating the dead bodies. We always indulged in abominable deeds. We had no respect for our neighbours. The weak and the helpless were oppressed by the strong. We quarrelled and fought with our kinsmen. We spent quite a long time in this manner till a

person from amongst us, who has a very brilliant and pure past, rose up and invited us, under the commandment of Allah, to worship the One and only Deity, and declared the praise of idols to be despicable. He also ordered us to return the things entrusted to us by others; to avoid impurities, to behave well with our kinsmen and neighbours and to shun bloodshed, unlawful contacts, false evidence, usurpation of the property of orphans and imputing bad deeds to women.

He has ordered us to offer prayers, to fast, and to pay taxes on our wealth. We have believed in him and occupied ourselves with the praise and worship of Allah the One. We consider that which He has declared lawful to be lawful. However, Quraysh have behaved with us cruelly and have tortured us day and night so that we might abjure our faith, revert to the worship of stones and idols and do all sorts of evil deeds. We resisted them for quite some time till our energy was exhausted. Despaired of our life and property we have taken refuge in Ethiopia to save our faith. The fame of the justice of the Ruler of Ethiopia attracted us like magnet and now also we have perfect faith in his justice".

The appealing and fascinating speech of Ja'far impressed the king so much that he, with tears in his eyes, said to him: "Read something from the Heavenly Book of your Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him)". Ja'far recited some verses from Surah Maryam. He continued reciting these verses and fully explained the view-point of Islam about the chastity of Maryam and the elevated position of Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) 'Isa. He had not yet finished the Surah when the king and the bishops began to cry loudly and their beards and the pages of the books, which were lying open before them, became wet with their tears.

For some time after this silence prevailed in the assembly and the humming ceased. Then the king intervened and said: "The words of their Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) and that which Prophet 'Isa brought have emanated from one and the same source

of light. Be gone. I will never surrender them to you".

Contrary to what the ministers and the representatives of Quraysh had expected, this meeting ended to their disadvantage and no ray of hope was left for them.

'Amr Aas, who was a diplomatic and cunning person, had a conversation with his friend Abdullah bin Rabiyyah and said to him: "We had better adopt another method tomorrow and it is possible that method may end in the annihilation of the emigrants. Tomorrow I shall tell the King of Ethiopia that the leader of these refugees has a particular belief about Prophet 'Isa, which does not at all conform to the fundamentals of Christianity". Abdullah checked him from doing so and pointed out that amongst the refugees there were also persons who were related to them. His advise was not, however, effective. On the following day they went to the royal court along with all the ministers. This time they pretended sympathy and support for the official religion of Ethiopia and criticized the beliefs of the Muslims with regard to Prophet 'Isa and said: "These people have specific beliefs about 'Isa which do not at all conform to the fundamentals and beliefs of the Christian World and the presence of such persons is dangerous for the official religion of your country. It should be possible for Your Majesty to enquire about it from them".

This time also the wise Ruler of Ethiopia decided to investigate the matter and ordered that the immigrants should be brought before him. The Muslims pondered over the reason for their being called again. It appeared as if it had been revealed to them by inspiration that the purpose of their being called was to enquire about their beliefs with regard to the founder of Christianity. Once again Ja'far was introduced as their spokesman.

He had already promised his friends that he would say only those things on the subject which he had heard from the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be

upon him).

The Negus turned to the representative of the refugees and said: "What is your belief about Prophet 'Isa?"

Ja'far replied: "Our belief with regard to 'Isa is that which has been taught to us by our Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him). He was the servant and Prophet of Allah. He was the Spirit and Word of Allah with which He blessed Maryam.

The King of Ethiopia was very much pleased to hear the remarks of Ja'far and said: "By Allah! 'Isa did not enjoy a higher position than this". The ministers and the deviated persons did not like this observation of the King. However, notwithstanding their views, he praised the beliefs of the Muslims and allowed them full freedom. He threw the presents of Quraysh before their representatives and said: "God has not taken any bribe from me while giving me this authority. It is not, therefore, appropriate that I should accumulate wealth by such means".

RETURN FROM ETHIOPIA

Some persons who had migrated to Ethiopia left that country and returned to the Hijaz on account of false reports to the effect that Quraysh had embraced Islam. On their return, they came to know that the reports received by them were false and the pressure and persecution of the Muslims by Quraysh had not yet abated. Most of them, therefore, returned to Ethiopia and only a small minority entered Makkah, either secretly or under the protection of some mighty person of Quraysh.

Uthman bin Maz'un entered Makkah under the protection of Walid bin Mughirah and became safe from the atrocities of the enemy. He could, however, see with his own eyes that other Muslims were being persecuted and tortured by Quraysh. Uthman was very much grieved to observe this discrimination. He, therefore, requested Walid to declare publicly that the son of Maz'un was no longer

under his protection so that he might also be in the same position in which other Muslims were, and should share their grief and sorrow. Walid, therefore, declared in the mosque: "From this moment the Ibn Maz'un is not under my protection". And Uthman also said aloud: "I confirm it".

Soon thereafter Labid, the Arabian poet, entered the mosque and began reading his well-known Qasidah (laudatory poem) in the big assembly of Quraysh.

He said: "Everything except Allah is unreal and illusory". Uthman said: "You are right". Labid then read the second hemistich:

"All the blessings of Allah are unstable". Uthman was disturbed and said: "You are mistaken. The blessings of the Hereafter are permanent and eternal". Labid took ill the objection of Uthman and said: "O Quraysh! Your circumstances have changed. In the past your assemblies were in good order and your companions did not feel any grief. Since when has this change occurred in your condition? Who is he?" One of those present said: "He is a foolish man who has abjured our creed and follows a man like himself. Don't pay heed to his words". Then the man rose and gave Uthman a strong slap in the face and blackened it. Walid bin Mughirah said: "O Uthman! Had you remained under my protection you would not have suffered all this". Uthman replied: "I am under the protection of Almighty Allah" Walid said: "I am prepared to offer you protection once again". Uthman replied: "I shall not accept it at all".

MISSION OF THE CHRISTIANS

Consequent upon the propagating of Islam by the Muslim immigrants an inquiry mission visited Makkah on behalf of the religious centre of the Christians of Ethiopia. They met the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) in the mosque and asked him certain questions. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) gave replies to their questions and invited them to embrace Islam

and recited some verses of the Holy Qur'an before them.

The Qur'anic verses changed their mentality in such a way that tears began to flow from their eyes involuntarily and they immediately expressed belief in his prophethood and confirmed all the signs of the promised Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) about whom they had read in the Injeel.

Abu Jahl disliked this enthusiastic and well-concluded meeting. He said to those persons with much harshness: "The people of Ethiopia sent you on an inquiry mission and it was not the intention that you should abjure the religion of your ancestors. I don't think there are more stupid persons than yourselves on the face of the earth".

Those persons uttered conciliatory words in reply to the Firaun of Makkah, who wanted to hide the invigorating rays of the sun, like a dark cloud, and thus put an end to the dispute.

THE MISSION OF QURAYSH

The mission of the people of Ethiopia became a means of the awakening of Quraysh and they also decided to make investigation. A group of persons including Harith bin Nasr and 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'it left for Yathrib (Madina) as representatives of Quraysh with a view to place the question of the 'prophethood' and 'call' of Muhammad before the Jews. The Jewish scholars advised the mission to ask Muhammad the following questions:

1. What is the reality of the soul?
2. Story of the persons who disappeared in bygone times (the people of the Cave).
3. The adventures of the man who travelled in the east and in the west of the world. (Zulqarnayn).

They told them that if Muhammad was in a position to reply to these questions they should rest assured that he is the chosen one of Allah, but if he failed to give the requisite

replies they should consider him to be a liar who must get rid of as early as possible.

The representatives returned to Makkah in a very happy mood and informed Quraysh of the above-mentioned questions. A meeting was, therefore, arranged to which the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was also invited. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) told them that he was waiting for Divine revelation in connection with the three questions.

Heavenly revelation came. Reply to the first question (regarding 'soul') is contained in Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:85. As regards the other two questions they have been replied to in detail in Surah Al-Kahf 9-28 and 83-98. Detailed replies of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) to these three questions are found in the books of exegeses and need not be repeated here. ■

Views expressed by the writers
are their own and not necessarily
of the Editorial Board.

Editor

A WORD ABOUT THE REVEALER OF THE QUR'AN

M. Manzoor Nomani

It is, generally, agreed that in the sixth century of the Christian era, the whole world was immersed in moral gloom and spiritual torpor. The torch of heavenly guidance had been extinguished. Europe was steeped in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Iran and its dependencies were caught in the tempest of the Mazdakite Movement which had played havoc with the nobler values of life and reduced man to a beast. In India, the Puranic Age was in its prime. By all accounts, it marked the most woeful phase in the long and chequered history of the land. The condition of the other parts of the known world was no less deplorable.

Situated, so to speak, in the heart of the world was the Peninsula of Arabia. Owing to the centrality of its geographical position it was known, in the olden days as the "navel of the world". The whole country was devoid of the light of spiritual guidance, learning and civilization. The sixth century A. D., found the Arabs plunged in depravity, perversion and idolatry. Instead of one God, innumerable deities and images of stone were worshipped and human sacrifice was prevalent. The House of Ka'aba, built by the Prophets Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) with their own hands for the worship of the Almighty, had been turned into a huge idol temple. The law of the jungle prevailed everywhere. There was not even the semblance of a Government. Murder, infanticide and robbery were the pride of the Arabs. Daughters were buried alive at birth. Social debasement and lewdness had become the rule so that people performed naked the ritual of circumambulation around the Ka'aba. In many tribes the eldest son took the widows of his father as his wives. There was no material well-being either. Many people were driven by poverty to live on carrion and insects.

It was in these circumstances, and in the midst of these people, that a child was born, exactly fourteen hundred years ago, at Mecca, in the respectable Banu Hashim family of the Quraish tribe. The child was born an orphan, as his father had died while he was still in the mother's womb. The widowed mother brought him up. When he was six years old, the mother, too, died, and, thereafter, his grand father, Abdul Muttalib, took care of him. But Abdul Muttalib's guardianship was to last only for two years. When the child was in the eighth year of his life his grandfather, also, passed away, and his uncle, Abu Talib, took him under his affectionate protection. The child was named Mohammad which means 'The praised one', i.e., one who is worthy of praise due to his natural disposition, character and attainments.

Education in those days was not common among the Arabs. Very few people knew the art of reading and writing. So Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) also remained unlettered. But he had other special virtues which distinguished him from the young men of his time. He did not have any of the vices that were prevalent in his city. God had saved him from all bad practices.

As the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) grew up, he thought of earning his own livelihood so that the burden of his maintenance might not fall on his uncle who already had a large family to support and was not rich. He chose trade, which was the family profession, but due to the paucity of funds he could not set up his own business. He began to work in partnership with others. He provided the labour while they provided the money. Soon his reputation for honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness spread and the people of Mecca gave him the title of *Al-Amin*, meaning 'The trusted one'. Whoever came into contact with him was impressed by his good manners and perfect moral attributes.

In Mecca, and belonging to the tribe of the Quraish, there lived a lady, a rich widow, called Khadija. She had her own business, and, also, did trade in partnership with other people by advancing them money. She was very intelligent and possessed a noble character. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), also, had done some business for her and she was well pleased with his honesty, justice and high morals. Though the lady was about forty years old and the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was only twenty-five, and she, also, had children from her earlier marriages, she wanted to marry him. The marriage between the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) and Hazrat Khadija, thus, took place.

After the marriage, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was released of the need to make a living. He began to devote more and more time to the service of the people, specially of the weak and the downtrodden, and to the establishment of peace and order in the land. Life went on like that and people had, generally, come to love and admire him for his impeccable morals, righteousness and solicitude for the poor till in the fortieth year of his life an extra-ordinary change came over the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him). He was seized with an over-powering desire to spend his time in prayer and meditation at some secluded place far away from everyone.

Very often the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) would walk to a mountain, on the outskirts of Mecca, and go to a cave called Hira. He would take his food with him and stay there for a week. At the end of the week he would come home and return to the cave after replenishing his meagre provisions.

Till then the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) had not attained the knowledge of God, of His Being and Attributes, which was later vouchsafed to

him through Divine inspiration, and no particular mode of worship, also, had been taught to him. But he possessed that indefinable awareness of God and eagerness to earn His nearness and good favour which was expected of an earnest seeker of truth, blessed with a noble character, a refined soul and an illumined heart. He contemplated and prayed to God in accordance with his inner inclination and aptitude.

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was now in his fortieth year. One day, in the month of Ramzan, while he was in the Hira Cave, a strange thing happened and he returned home, pale and trembling, as if he was stricken with fear or high fever. On arriving, he said to his wife, Hazrat Khadija, "Cover me with a thick cloth. Cover me with a thick cloth."

When the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) recovered from the shock he told his wife everything that had happened to him, the visit by the heavenly angel in the Cave, the way he had conveyed to him the Divine Word and made him repeat it and the tremendous strain the whole experience had put on his heart and soul.

Being the mature and very wise lady that she was, Hazrat Khadija encouraged the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) and assured him that God would not fail an honest and just man like him who helped the poor, and the orphaned and did nothing to hurt his fellow-men. She, then, took him to her uncle, named Waraka bin Nofel, who had forsaken the Paganish beliefs much earlier and embraced Christianity. Waraka was a blind old man. He had studied the holy scriptures of the Torah and the Bible, and, also, translated them into Arabic.

When Hazrat Khadija told his uncle what had happened to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) in the Cave, his face shone with joy and he exclaimed, "By the Divine Power that holds my life, to Mohammad has come the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit which

brings the Divine message and commands to the Prophets (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him). It appears that God has chosen you, O Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), for the lofty mission of Apostleship, Listen carefully: community will turn against you. It will persecute you and drive you away". In the end, Waraka said sorrowfully. "I wish I was alive and strong at that time and could help you with all my power".

This was the beginning of the ministry of the sacred Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him).

Upto that time the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) had been leading a clean and spotless life of moral rectitude and social service. But, by nature, he was a man of few words and loved solitude. During those days the Arabs had a passion for poetry, but the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) did not take an interest in it also. He never appeared before the public as a poet or an orator. As a reformer, too, he did not start any movement or launch a struggle for the moral upliftment of his people. He had never said a word, during all those forty years, on Revelation and Apostleship, Resurrection and After-life, and Faith and Divine Law. He did not give any guidance to his community on political, economic or sociological problems. In sum, till the age of forty, he had not given the faintest indication of being interested in such matters or possessing even a rudimentary knowledge of them.

But in the forty-first year of his life, after the event of Cave Hira, he was suddenly transformed. It appeared that a new spirit had come to dwell in him. He was a changed man now. He said to his people, "Inspiration has come to me from God, and He has entrusted me with the mission of His Apostleship as He once had Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Issac), Yaqaob (Jacob) and Yusuf (Joseph), and, then, Moosa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus)".

He told them that the One God, and none aside of

Him, was the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe. He was free from every kind of blemish. All the attributes of Greatness and Perfection were assembled in Him. He, alone, was worthy of worship and obedience. Life and death, health and sickness, and riches and poverty, in short, all kinds of good and evil, and gain and loss, lay solely in His hands. No one was like Him, His coequal or partner. He was without a similitude. The gods and goddesses that were worshipped besides Him and regarded as dispensers of needs had nothing in their power. To worship them, or anyone apart from Him, was a fatal sin and an unpardonable crime. Hence, they should worship the One God and associate no one with Him. He, alone, was the Worshipped One, the Supreme Being, the Almighty to whom all their prayers and supplications were to be addressed. They should love Him wholly and in all conscience. This command was for him, for them, and for everyone.

He, also told his people, and tried to the utmost to convince them that the world in which they lived was not permanent one. It was not to endure forever. Just as everyone who was born was destined to die, after completing the allotted span of life, the entire world, too, would be destroyed one day at the command of God. That will be the Last Day. Then God, by His power, will raise up the dead again and bring another world, the world of the Hereafter, into existence in which men will be requited for the good or evil they might have done during their earthly sojourn. Those who will have led a life of piety and believed in God and obeyed His commands will be rewarded in the world to come with His choicest favours and blessings while those who will have denied their Lord and transgressed against His laws and spent their days in folly and neglect will be caught in a dreadful chastisement.

After it, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) informed them in detail about the rights of God on His servants and the rights of His servants on each other. He exhorted them to cultivate piety and a good moral

disposition and to avoid wicked and shameful things and warned them against the evil sequel of perversion and immorality.

In the same way, he conveyed to them the guidance of God with regard to trade and commerce, occupation and employment, and all other monetary dealings and transactions and explained to them what was fair and legitimate, and what was otherwise in those spheres.

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), also, told his people about the allowed and the forbidden articles of food and drink. He did not stop merely at exhortation and elucidation but these things became the sole mission and purpose of his life. The anxiety for the propagation of those truths and the moral and spiritual upliftment of the Arabs and the whole of mankind became so great with him that nothing else could hold his interest. He kept himself occupied with his work day and night and, also, prayed to God from the depth of his heart that his people would wake up and realise the truth.

As a consequence of preaching his mission, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) had to bear tremendous hardships. He was tortured and persecuted. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) and his family were boycotted, socially and economically, for three long years. Guards were posted on all sides so that the supplies of food and clothing could not reach them. But the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) bore it all with patience and an iron will and did not slacken his efforts. He did not make a compromise with his enemies and prayed to God even more fervently for his people.

Those among the Arabs in whose souls an element of virtue was present and who possess, in some degree, the capacity to respond to the call of faith accepted his mission, in ones and twos, and they, too, became the targets of persecution. It continued in that way for about twelve years

till the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) was forced by Pagans to leave Mecca. It had become impossible for him to carry out the duty of preaching the Divine faith in his own city.

The Prophet, thereupon, migrated to Medina, at the command of God, which now became the capital of Islam. On reaching there, the mission of Apostleship began to be fulfilled with greater enthusiasm, and, by the grace of the Lord, the pace of the acceptance of the Divine Call was also very much accelerated.

Within a short time a wonderful system of Government was established in Medina. It was a unique arrangement in which there was no regular army or police force. No one was an authorised functionary of the State and yet everyone was its functionary. All the functions of the Government were discharged by the Muslims who performed their duties without remuneration or an official designation. They did it solely for the sake of God and in the hope of earning His reward and good pleasure.

[The new type of Government, founded by the Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), showed to the world how the work of the State could be carried out and administrative functions performed in an ideal manner, without an army or an exchequer. It had to go to war against the enemies, and these wars can still serve, in many ways, as perfect models of warfare for mankind. It also, entered into treaties, made covenants and levied taxes from which much can be learnt even today.

After the Migration, the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) lived in this world only for ten years. In this short period almost the whole of Arabia had come under the sway of Islam and a large part of its population had embraced the Divine faith. Tens of thousands of persons who were sunk in idolatry, devil-worship and fetishness and to whom the life to come and retribution for good and evil as motives of action were practically unknown

became, in the Prophet's (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) company and through his guidance, such immaculate specimens of humanity that the like of them cannot be found in the annals of our race. Not individuals but the whole nation was awakened from slumber and it sprang into a new and earnest life of faith and uprightness.

All this was accomplished within the short space of ten—or, if the earlier phase of the Prophet's (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) Ministry in Mecca is also included, twenty-two years by a man about whom it is known that he was illiterate and never had the benefit of the society of wise and godly men, and who was neither a poet nor an orator nor had he, upto the age of forty, given an indication of the ability for leadership and organisation. Those, again, were the days when the press, the radio and other modern media of mass communication did not exist. The question, now, is how was this miracle, this most stupendous revolution in history was brought about through the agency of this individual?

This venerated servant of the Lord used to declare in a frank and straight forward manner that there really was nothing in him. He would say, "I am the son of a poor Quraish woman and I am also illiterate. I can neither read nor write. Whatever I tell about God, His Being, Nature, Attributes and Oneness, and about the Last Day, the After-life and Heaven and Hell, and the laws I formulate regarding the various branches of life; in fact, whatever I preach, instruct or enjoin is not of my own volition or understanding but from the Lord who is the Creator and Cherishes of the worlds. He had raised me up as His Messenger so that I may convey His guidance to you and serve among you as His Apostle". He recited a message, a communication which was the source and springhead of the guidance. There was a marvellous charm and appeal in it. Though it was in Arabic, which was the language of the land, it was supremely original and unique. Even the critics and opponents were impressed by it and called it magic. But its revealer insisted that it was

not of his composition or authorship but the Word of God which had been inspired to him. It was the command and guidance for him in the same way as it was for others and the whole of humanity. This was the Qur'an, the Last of the Divine Scriptures.

The Qur'an is still present among us in its original form, intact and unsealed. A seeker of Truth can even today conclude for himself, by bestowing a little thought on it, that it could definitely not be the work of a human mortal.

What has been said in the Qur'an on subjects like the Nature and Attributes of God constitutes the highest degree of awareness which no man, of whatever merit or ability, can attain without Divine inspiration. Similarly, the way transcendental truths, such as, Resurrection and Futurity are expounded in it is positively beyond the reach of human intellect and reasoning. The teachings of the Qur'an concerning the other spheres of life, also, are a class by themselves. These precepts are wholly sufficient for the guidance of mankind, in spite of all the changes that have taken place, or may take place, in the world we live in. About them it is, indeed, impossible to imagine that they are the product of a human mind, much less of the mind of a person like Mohammad bin Abdullah (pbuh).

In fine, the Qur'an itself is the proof of its Divine Origin, of its being the Word of God, and Guidance for mankind from Him, and of the fact that its revealer and interpreter, Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him), is among His true Apostles.

May Allah guide our steps and show us the Straight Path, the path of those upon whom is His favour. ■

He is the knower of the invisible and the visible, He is the wise and Aware.

(VI:74)

WHAT IS ISLAMIC BANKING?

It is banking practised as per the Islamic principles as prescribed in the 'shariah' known as 'Fiqah al-Muamalat' (Islamic rules on transaction). The Islamic law prohibits interest on both loans and deposits. Interest is also called 'riba' in Islamic discourse. The argument against interest is that money is not good and profit should be earned on goods and services only, and not on control of money itself. But Islam does not deny that capital, as a factor of production, deserves to be rewarded. It allows the owners of capital a share in as surplus, which is uncertain.

How does it function?

It operates on the principle of sharing both profits and risks by the borrower as well as lender. As such, the depositor cannot earn a fixed return in the form of interest. The banks are permitted to offer incentives, such as variable prized or bonuses in cash or kind on these deposits. The depositor – who unlike in the conventional banking system is risk-averse — is a provider of capital and equally shares the risks that the bank who lends his funds.

What are the different products offered?

Investment finance is offered by these banks through 'Musharka,' where a bank participates as a joint venture partner in a project and shares the profits and losses. Investment finance is also offered through 'Mudabha,' where the banks contribute the finance and the client provides expertise, management and labour and the profits are shares in a prearranged proportion, while the loss is borne by the bank.

Trade finance is also offered through a number of ways. One way is through mark-up, where the bank buys an item for a client and the client agrees profit later on. Banks also finance on lines similar to leasing, hire-purchase and sell and buy-back. Consumer lending is without any interest,

but the banks cover expenses by levying a service charge. Besides, these banks offer a host of fee-based products like money transfer, bill collections and foreign exchange trading where the bank's own money is not involved.

Where is it practised?

Islamic banks have come into being since early 70s. There are nearly 30 Islamic banks all over the world, from Africa, Europe to Asia and Australia, and are regulated even within the conventional banking system. The whole banking system in Iran has moved over to the Islamic system since the early 80s and even Pakistan is Islamising its banking system. A number of European and American banks are now offering Islamic banking products, not only in Muslims countries, but also in developed markets, such as UK. The concept is also catching up in Malaysia and Dubai.

How far is it feasible in a market economy?

Islamic experts say that with growing indebtedness of many governments and with bulk of the borrowing going to servicing of the past debt and payment of huge interests, it could be an alternative to conventional banking as practised, studies have showed that the rate of return is often comparable and sometimes even higher than the interest rate offered by conventional banks to depositors.

Is it practised in India?

In India, though there is no full-fledged Islamic bank, there are many non-bank financial intermediaries in Mumbai and Bangalore operating on Islamic principles. Their presence in the form of co-operatives in various parts of the country has been there before independence. The Reserve Bank of India has recently appointed a committee headed by a chief general manager to look into the prospects of introducing certain Islamic products in Indian banks. What is unique is that the products are structured according to norms prescribed in the 'Shariah'.

What are the drawbacks?

In many countries, these banks do not have the power of issuing cheques. Besides, many banks where they operate on a very small scale do not have adequate internal control system because of which their accounting is not very transparent. Also, inadequate information is provided to the regulator. Wherever they co-exist with conventional banking, the central bank's control of bank interest rates is liable to be circumvented by shifts of funds to the Islamic banks. ■

Courtesy: The Times of India

Say: O mankind! I am only a plain Warner unto you. Those who believe and do good works, for them is pardon and a rich provision; while those who strive to thwart Our revelations such are rightful owners of the Fire.

(XXII - 49-51)

Prophet of Islam

Mecca is a place in the desert of Arabia like many others. An obscure child like a million other, who had a nondescript childhood like an other one, was born in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal in 570 A.D. Had it been known to humanity that this child would climb the ladder of spirituality and become the prophet of Islam, they would not have certainly given room for controversy about the date of his birth. It is the day on which Meelad-un-Nabi is celebrated by the Muslims the world over.

Prophet Mohammad (Sal) hailed from the lineal tree from which He brought forth other prophets and his descendants are the noblest. Allah had deputed him and distinguished him with his revelations. Allah in the Holy Qur'an has said, "We have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of God." (33:21)

The Holy Qur'an has captured the life and time of Prophet Mohammed (Sal) more succinctly than many fulsome tributes paid to him. Allah had sent the prophet at a time when the people had fallen into errors of action and ignorance, and were indulging in idolatry; Prophet Mohammed (Sal) preached that Allah is one and the Exalted; he prescribed fasting for a month during Ramazan and ordained performance of the Haj and enjoined payment of Zakath. Prophet Mohammed (Sal) led a frugal life, and he and Hazrath Khadija as a couple were a picture of perfection. If we try to capture images of the Prophet (Sal), there would be hundreds of them – supplicating to the Omnipotent to the extent that Allah in the Holy Qur'an has said. "Stand (to pray) by night. But not all night (73:1); that of preaching Islam, carrying the objects of his deep affection, the two grandsons Hasan and Husain (AS) on his shoulders and so on.

It was unfortunate that the prophet (Sal) was snatched away at the age of 63 years on 28th safar 11 A.H. when Allah wanted to ensure the availability of His representative among His creation for guidance by establishing the institution of Imamate.

Mir Mazher Hussain, Chennai

COMMENTATOR OF THE HOLY QURAN

Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi

To those who have an eye on the tendencies of the age, it is obvious that Musalmans are turning their minds more and more to the Holy Qur'an, to the exclusion, in fact, of other sources of religious knowledge, and are endeavouring with increasing zeal and earnestness to understand the Holy Book and ponder over its message. Now, if the Qur'an is read only for edification and guidance in the practical conduct of life, it is easy; but if, on the other hand, it is studied with a view to discovering higher thoughts and principles and deducing positive law there from, it is indeed most profound. The former manner of study suffices for the average believer; but there are also those among them who are in the habit of diving deep and are given to philosophic speculation. They will not be satisfied until they have got to the bottom of every commandment and probed the depths of every verse. It is obvious, however, that, as the poet has said,

Ye mansab buland mila jis ko mil gaya,
Har muddai ke waste daro rasan kahan.

this manner of study and search is not possible to every one. It is, therefore, regrettable to find these days some short-sighted and superficially minded Muslims who fancy that the Holy Qur'an is easy not only for counsel and guidance in daily life, but also for profundities and deducing positive law from them. The result is that every Tom, Dick and Harry seems ready to venture, with great boldness, into the depths of every verse, whereas in actual fact, in venturing upon such irresponsible expositions, he only exposes the night of his own inner self.

Doubtless, it was the two weeklies of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, which created love of the Holy Qur'an among young Muslims. His manner of exposition, his skill in the art of letters and the power of his

pen, with which he interpreted the verses of the Holy Qur'an one by one to the young men of modern education, opened before them new avenues of faith and conviction and revealed to them the whole wealth, expanse and depth of the teachings of the Holy Book.

There was need that the same powerful pen should produce a complete commentary of the Holy Book, so that this fount of light and wisdom should become available in Urdu to those who do not know Arabic. The demand became persistent from 1912. The Maulana, too, had an idea that he should write a translation and commentary in Urdu. If I remember right, I was the first to suggest, in 1913, something in the nature of a compromise between a translation and a commentary, that is, a free translation, which though not literal, should yet be faithful to the text, accompanied with exegetical notes wherever necessary. The work required less labour. In view of the Maulana's lack of leisure, it was also possible and would have sufficed to enable the average student to understand the Holy Book. The Maulana appears to have accepted the suggestion and decided to write the "expository translation," though the idea of writing the larger commentary (*Al-Bayân*) too never left his mind. But with the outbreak of the Great War of 1914, commenced a regime of arrests and incarcerations, to which Maulana Azad became a frequent victim. His manuscripts shared his fortune and, owing to the many vicissitudes in the author's own life, were at last scattered beyond recovery. Whenever the Maulana, in jail or out, found some leisure, he tried to put them together, and in doing so must have recalled Hali's couplet:

Main âj baitha hoon tarteeb dene daftar ko,
Waraq ko jab ke uda le gai hawa ek ek.

At last the auspicious time arrived and the Maulana published the first volume of his expository translation under the title of *Tarjamân-ul-Qur'an*. The volume contains a full commentary of Sura *Fatiha* and the free translation of five Surats from *Baqarah* to *An'âm*, which comprise eight

Paras.

Musalman have written many commentaries of the Holy Qur'an and perhaps have not written even one. I say "perhaps," because the works of earlier writers have been lost, and it would be anything but proper to pass judgment upon them. In any case, of all the commentaries and exegetical works that I have seen, I have not come across any scholar with a deeper insight into the Holy Qur'an than Allama Ibn Taimiya and Hafiz Ibn Qayyim, Abul Fateh Abdul Karim of Mosul (especially with regard to the beauty of literature and originality of thought) and, among the latter-day writers, Hazrat Shah Wali-ul-lah of Delhi. The commentaries of Allama Ibn Taimiya and Hafiz Ibn Qayyim have perished, but in truth every work of theirs is but a fragment of the commentary of the Holy Qur'an.

As a matter of fact, commentaries are of two kinds. They are either traditional, like those of Ibn Jarir Tabari, Tha'âlabi, Qurtabi, Baghavi, Ibn Kathir, etc., or wholly rational, like those of Abu Muslim Nishâpuri, Râghib Asfahâni, Imam Râzi of Nishâpur, Mudârik, Baidâvi, etc. But a commentary comprising a careful balance of reason and traditional authority, in which the traditions are thoroughly tested by the principles of evidence and reason, and reason is itself free from the tyranny of Plato and Aristotle, was never achieved in Islam except by Allama Ibn Taimiya and Hafiz Ibn Qayyim. The *'Ulema* who followed tradition, became hopeless victims of Jewish folklore, while those who preferred reason lost themselves in the toils of Greek extravagances. The two above-mentioned thinkers were the only ones who were at once critical of tradition and Greek thought, and knew how to separate wheat from the chaff in the latter. Above all, they derived their light from a higher source: they had drunk deep from the spring of the Prophet's wisdom and had derived their wealth of thought from his storehouse. Their commentaries were based upon truth, reason and wisdom. But the wine of their thought did not come from the vats of Greece; it came instead from the

founts of Hijaz or from the divine springs of human nature itself.

It is a notable feature of the *Tarjamân-ul-Qur'an* that its author understands the spirit of his age and has adopted the same method to fight the evil of Westernism, which Ibn Taimiya and Ibn Qayyim had adopted to fight the evils which had sprung from the Tartan invasion. They diagnosed the cause of the downfall of the Muslims of their age to be their mental slavery to the Greeks; so the author of the *Tarjamân-ul-Qur'an* traces the disease of the modern Muslims to their mental slavery to Western thought. His prescription is also the same, namely, that the Word of God should be studied in His Apostle's own language and idiom and in the light of God-given reason.

The present volume consists of two parts. The first, a part of the author's projected commentary, *Al-Bayân*, is a full exposition of Sura *Fatiha*, while the second is the expository translation of five Surats from *Baqarah* to *An'âm*. The first part, which is in reality half the book, offers the author a wide field for his exegetical skill and depth of thought. The sura is expounded verse by verse and word by word in such a gripping and enlightening manner than the claim of the Surah being *Umm-ul-Kitâb* or the Root of the Book stands almost demonstrated. It is also a resume of all the more important teachings and principles of Islam. The Holy Qur'an's manner of argument and the proofs and evidences of the Creator's benevolence and His being the Cherisher especially are treated in such detail that they compel one's admiration of the author's range of vision and learning. What was written on these subjects by Imam Ghazzâli in *Al-Hikmatu Fee Makhlooqat-il-lah* and by Ibn Qayyim *Miftahu Dar-is-Saâdah* has been discussed in much greater detail in the *Tarjamân-ul-Qur'an*, but in keeping with the requirements of the age. The exposition from the Holy Qur'an itself of *Tauhid* and its proofs, 'creation with truth,' *al-Hudâ* and *Din* are original and profound as well as a source of faith and conviction.

The *Tarjamân-ul-Qur'an* is a significant product of the age. No home should be without it; every Muslim library should have a copy of it, and every young Muslim should make it a point to study it carefully. ■

DARUL QAZAS FEW IN UP AS MUSLIMS PREFER LAW COURTS

Atiq Khan

Even as the All India Muslim Personal Law Board distanced itself from the Imrana issue, it had done precious little to set up darul qaza (Islamic courts) for settling disputes related to divorce and inheritance which could ameliorate the suffering of battered Muslim women.

There are around 40 Islamic courts in different states but in Uttar Pradesh there are only 5 darul qazas including the one in Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama.

Incidentally, the annual convention of the Law Board which was held in Bhopal in April passed a resolution for setting up Islamic courts.

However, according to the chairman of the Law Board, Maulana Rabey Hasni Nadwi, the cost of setting up darul qazas was the main deterrent in this case. Maulana Nadwi told *the Indian Express*, "a proper infrastructure with a minimum of three rooms are needed for setting up court, besides the board also has to ensure that the qazi was trained who is aided by a moharrir (clerk) in dealing with the cases. More importantly, since the cost involved in setting up a court is around Rs. 20,000 the local people who come up with the proposal have refused to accept the responsibility."

The cost component, however, was not the only reason why the AIMPLB was going slow on darul qazas. In fact, the Muslims themselves seem to have more faith in law courts for the disposal of their cases on divorce etc. rather than on darul qazas. The Board chairman admitted, "only when the parties agree that the Islamic court's decision would be binding on them, then their cases are taken up for hearing."

Though the Mulana said stress is first laid on rapprochement between the couples but the fact remains that the AIMPLB itself is sceptical on the success of the darul qazas. ■

THE ARAB-SUFI TWEEDS OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE

M. Sanaullah

i. The Sufi boom in Andalusia

Muslim Andalusia of the Almoravids (1095-1194) and Almohads (1149-1248) has been home to a large number of high-ranking Sufis with their esoteric centers that enjoyed wider collective appeal and greater following among the Muslims in cities like Almeria, Cordova, Granada, Seville and certain regions of Portugal. The mystics with their allegorical interpretation of the orthodox creed and proselytism were able to avoid the suspicion of the clergy and authorities, and were truly regarded as austere pious people. Their simple social behaviour with ample stress on the contempt for the world, the fear of God and hope in His mercy, the necessity of penitence, the merits of tears of contrition, keeping aloof of courtly life and worldly honours, and seeking refuge in solitude and meditation made them known for piety and devotion who never possessed any political threat to the ruling class. And their philosophical approach to the great problems of ontology, epistemology, morality and ethics made them highly respected to the academia. Among the Andalusian Sufis, mention must be made of Mohammad Ibn Abdullah Ibn Masarra (269/899 20th October 319/931) and his school consisting of Tarif Ibn Saleh al-Barghowati of Rota, Mohammad al-Fanni (d.371/982), Ibn Ukht Abdoon of Bajjanah (Pechina) who died in the year 376/986, Aban of Medina Sidona (d.377/987), Ibn al-Imam al-Khawlani of Cordova (305/917-380/990), Mohammed al-Qaisi Ibn al-Khair of Jaen (d. 382/992) and Abd al-Aziz of Cordova, great grandson of Caliph Mohammed I (d. 387/997), Ismail al-Raini, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Mohammed Ibn al-Areef al-Sinhaji (d. circa 536/1141) and his three disciples Abu bakr al-Mayurqi in granada, Abd al-Salam Ibn Abjd al-Rahman Ibn Barrajanal-

Lakhmi in Seville (d. circa 536/1141) and Abu al-Qasim Ahmad Ibn Qasi al-Shibli (d. 546 A.H.) in Portugal, and finally Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi of Murcia (560/1156-638/1240) and his school.

ii. Ibn Masarra

Ibn Masarra's father, Abdullah, was a client of a Berber of Fez or one of Jain, and has visited Basra in the year 240/854, and returned as a Mutazilite, and later on died in Mecca in the year 286/899. In the last years of the rule of Abdullah, before the year 300/920, Ibn Masarra built a hermitage on the cliffs of the Sierra of Cordova where he lived with his most intimate disciples, hence called al-Jabali or El Serrano and peoples labelled him to be a Mutazilite (attributing to man's liberty the efficient causality of all his acts), a heretic, pantheist or atheist who followed Empedocles, the ancient Greek sage, all that posed serious consequences for his school. Abdullah of the caliphate of Cordova was facing Spanish native leaders of renegade families like Ibn Qasi in Aragon, Ibn Marwan al-Jilliqli in Extermadura who had allied with Alfonso III of Leon, and Umar Ibn Hafsoon in the Sierra of Ronda. A Muslim ascetic named Abu Ali al-Sartaj al-Zahid had skilfully carried out the alliance between Ibn Hafsoon and Ibn Qasi, thus making all the mystics less tolerable for the Caliph. Under such circumstances, Ibn Masarra went to Mecca. Meanwhile, a zealous and learned canon lawyer of Cordova Ahmad ibn Khalid al-Habbab, who was a native of Jaen, refuted in a booklet the dogmas of Ibn Masarra, sufficient enough for the later to leave the country or face Court action. Mohammed al-Madani and Ibn al-Saiqal accompanied Ibn Masarra in his journey. He stayed in Qairwan and attended the classes of Ahmad Ibn Nasir, successor to imam Shanoon of the Malikites, and afterwards he headed for Madina. In Mecca, Ibn Masarra met Shaikh Abu Said al-Maghribi (d. 341/952), disciple of Shakh Junaid al-Baghdadi and Sufyan al-Thauri, who indoctrinated his disciples in the esoteric and illuministic subtleties of Sufism. His return to Spain coincided

with the rise to the throne of Abdurrehman III, a more tolerant and friendly to scholarship ruler. Now his hermitage had the glaring proselytes such as Hayy ibn Abd al-Malik, Khalil Ibn Abd al-Malik (d. 322/934 or 323/935), Mohammed (d. 357/968) and Ahmad Ibn al-Muntil (d. 344/955).

Ibn Masarra wrote many books out of which two were very important, namely *Kitab al-Tabsirah* (Book of Clear Explanation) and *Kitab al-Horoof* (Book of Letters). He had to resist the intransigence of the Spanish jurists who ordered that the books of Ibn Masarra be burnt as impious, without crucifixion of its author. So not a single line of Ibn Masarra's writings has been preserved. But we can trace out his views in the *Fotuh* of Ibn Arabi where he had often cited him in support of his abstruse, Hermetic pantheist allegories. And on 20th of October 311/931, He breathed his last after his prayer of mid-afternoon, surrounded by his disciples in his hermitage of the Sierra.

We find fragmented information about Ibn Masarra's views on theology in Ibn Hazm's *al-Faisal* and Ibn Said's *Tabqat al-Umam*. And an outline of his philosophy can be found in *Rawdah* of al-Shahrazuri, *al-Milal* of al-Shahristani, *Uyoon* of Ibn Abi Usaibia and *Tarikh* of al-Qifti that describe his to adhere to the Empedoclean views. For Arab writers, the great Greek philosopher Empedocles of Agrigento was contemporary of King David and his inherited mystic sciences and wisdom from Solomon and Luqman, and other sages of ancient Hebrew and Syria. Some of the apocryphal treatises ascribed to Empedocles are: *Metaphysics*, *Treatise of the Sour*, *Book of the Falsity of the Spiritual and Corporal Resurrection* and *Book of Homilies or Ascetic Sermons*. The authentic work of Empedocles *On Nature* is not mentioned by the Arabs. The views contained in such sources are related to the excellence and esotericism of philosophy, the concept of *prime substance*, the esoteric method of psychology, the simplicity of soul, the absolute simplicity of Primal Being, the ineffability of the Primal Being, movement and quiescence

of the Primal Being, origin of the world by Emanation, Emanation as the subsequent to the Cause, Hierarchy of the Emanation, Love as property of Soul and Hate as property of Nature, Relationship between the first five emanations: Primal matter, Intellect, Soul, Nature and Secondary matter, particular souls as emanation of the Universal Soul, Five Categories of the Soul (Vegetative, Vital, Rational, Intellectual); concepts of physics and cosmology, pre-existence, isn and redemption of Souls.

The Sufis perceive the divine existence intuitively in a highly sublime mystical station: the absolute simplicity, One without attributes, names, actions or ideal relationship that determine limit or multiplicity. Ibn Arabi calls it *Tanzih al-Tawhid* (transcendence of the Unity), and affirms that even though this mystic station consists essentially in the intuition of the absolute unity of God and of His exemption of all multiplicity, it is manifested also in the act of illumination of the soul of the Sufi as something endowed with concrete and corporal forms. Therefore it is absolutely impossible for any of the Sufis to penetrate into it. Ibn Arabia scribes this idea to Ibn Masarra and his *Kitab al-Horoof*. Ibn hazm says that for Ibn Masarra, the Throne of God (*al-Arsh*) is the being that governs or commands the cosmos. God is too sublime to have any action attributed to Him *ad extra*. According to Ibn Arabi, Ibn Masarra thought of *Arsh* as the dominion which is reduced to body, Spirit, substance and grade. Adam and Israfil are those who bear the forms, Gabriel and Mohammed are the bearers of the spirits, Michael and Abraham of the provisions; Malik and Ridwan of the rewards and punishments. So the Throne of God is the whole of everything that exists in the universe. The cosmos is divided into four categories of phenomena: origin of the bodies and forms, the origin of the spirits, the conservation and continuity of all beings and their happiness of unhappiness. Each of these four categories possesses a double reality: the esoteric and exoteric. Prophet Mohammed (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him)

has a spiritual and pre-existence, preceding Adam and every being, and is the foundation of all spirits, but only with regard to their phenomenal reality. Their internal reality depends upon the angel Gabriel, the highest of the angelic hierarchy. Ibn Masarra, like other Muslim mystics recommended individual and daily contemplation and meditation in order to safeguard life from the dangers of carnal desires and worldly inhibitions, and keep up the fruit of the unitive life. This required a practice, which is made up of the commitment, that is anticipation from early morning the possible dangers to which the soul may be exposed, and in committing oneself before God to formulate the right intention in every case, vigilance or the careful attention of the soul in each incident or danger, examination of conscience, corporal mortification, expiatory penitence and reprimand of the soul, that is, the mental consideration which the devout person makes in order to free himself from the pain of contrition for the imperfections committed. This helps heeding to evangelical counsel to renounce all riches and the practice results in attaining the goal of saintliness and perfection like the prophetic souls. This amounts to human attainment of the gift of prophet, a concept full of great controversies between canonical lawyers, philosophers and intuitive mystics. The concept at an obvious contrast to the dogma of the *seal of prophecy* had its metamorphosis in the injection of Mutazilites and Batinites who sustain that *Mahdi* or later pontiff could complete it or at least interpret it with a new meaning. Orientation is quick to believe that the Alexanderian theories on the possibility of the mystic union of the perfect soul with God gave new force to that desire, as Philo himself had affirmed that prophecy is a common gift to all perfect men. Muslim philosophers came up with a naturalistic theory of prophecy, explaining that divine gifts of the prophets represent necessary effects of the natural gifts of the spirit, perfected by ascetic discipline and study, while Sufis distinguished between *Wahi* (revelation) and *Ilham* (inspiration), the former exclusively for the prophets and the

later for the mystics. Ibn Masarra had his sufi views stuffed with Scholastic-Mystic blend, although his allegoric exegesis is completely unknown to us.

Ibn Masarra started with the concept of One as utterly simple and explained the cosmos as the result of an emanation via the hierarchy of the five substances, and visualized Divine Throne as a symbol of Primal Matter, which is common to every being. His ascetic doctrine is based on purification of everything corporeal in order to maintain and eschatology absolutely spiritual, which denies physical rewards and punishments.

Ibn Masarran School was continued in Spain by Ismail ibn Abdulah al-Ruaini who lived in Pechina near Almeria, his son Abu Haroon, his son-in-law Ahmad ibn Yahya, Sahl ibn Ibrahim, who was probably a native of Orhuela, Mundhir ibn Said al-Baluti, the known Mutazilite and supreme magistrate of Cordova, his brothers Said and Abd al-Wahab, Abd al-Malik, who was a judge al-Wahhab, Abd al-Malik, who was a judge under al-Hakam II and others, of schismatic or moderate schools. Ismail al-Ruaini's political ideas took the form of a fierce theocratic fanaticism, the approach of a man who considered the whole land a land of infidels whose blood was therefore lawful to shed and whose properties should be confiscated. And no one was to be exempt from such a sentence except his followers. Palacios says:

"This brought about a problem in Spanish Islam identical with which that was a century later shook the Christian society in France, Italy and Germany. It was there were the illuminist sects which were called Amalricians, Albigensians, Catharic, Waldenses, Beghards, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, like the pseudo-prophets and Anabaptists of Zwickau in the beginning of the sixteenth century, paradoxically allied the asceticism and renunciation of the world with an antisocial hate for the rich."

Ismail had another scandalous transgression of ethics admitting the sexual union contracted for a fixed

(*Nikah al-Mut'ah*) and 'proclaimed free love with the same boldness with which the Catharis, Waldenses, Beghards and Joachinites condemned canonical matrimony in Christian Europe a century later.' Again, his denial of bodily resurrection and of the future destruction or annihilation of and the cosmos were related to the Plotinian principles, and were incompatible with the orthodox Muslim faith. This schismatic character of Islamil's was decisive for its death as a social organism.

Ibn Masarra's school in Andalusia flourished in disciplines adhered to by some new and inspired cenobitic associations headed by Abu al-Abbas Ibn al-Areef who had a large number of adapts especially from Seville, Granada and Portugal, Abu Bakr al-Mayurqi in Granada and Ibn Qasi in Portugal. Ibn Qasi was so successful that he ruled almost for ten years as a sovereign in Portugal and lived in constant alternation between alliance and war with Christians, Almoravids and Almohads until he died in 546/1151. Ibn al-Areef's *Mahasin al-Majalis*, Ibn Qasi's *Khal' al-Na'lain*, and books written by Ibn Barrajan, were destined to have an enigmatic personae in Murcia's Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi, who was educated in Seville, the city of Ibn Barrajan, and educated in Tunis, going through the book of Ibn Qasi with the latter's son. Ibn Arabi has frequently used the esoteric books and writings of the three masters of Almeria.

iii. Dissemination

Ideas of Ibn Masarra were disseminated by a number of Jewish thinkers of pseudo-Empedoclean initiative in the beginning of eleventh century, like Judah ha-Levi of Toledo who wrote *Cuzari*, Moses ibn Ezra of Granada, Joseph ibn Zaddik of Cordova who wrote *al-Alam al-Saghir* in Arabic, Samuel ibn Tibbon and Sem-Tob ibn Joseph Falaquera. 'They alluded with more or less precision to a supposed book of his called *Of The Five Substances*. To judge by the title, it must have contained the complete system of pseudo-Empedocles, and therefore, of Ibn Masarra. Kaufman had

the good fortune to discover some Hebraic fragments of that book and was able to prove the suspect... flagrant analogies were clearly indicated between the technical terms, symbols and ideas, on one hand, and the Arabic fragments of Shahrastani and of Shahrasturi on the other... material appears in them (i.e. rabbanic texts) designated by the name element (unsur) and symbolized by the Throne of God, the same as in the Arabic Empedocles and in Ibn Masarra. The same kind of correspondence are noticed in the hierarchy of five substances, in their mutual relationship, in the divine allegory of light, in the geometric pattern of concentric spheres, and in their eschatology based on *Katharsis*. Moreover, as the philological analysis of these rabbanic texts demonstrates that they are not original, but a literal version of an Arabic source, the dependency of this pseudo-Empedoclean movement of the Spanish Jews on Ibn Masarra is indisputable.'

Yanbu al-Hayat or *Fons Vitae* of Avicborn (Solomon ibn Gabirol) disseminated the thesis of *spiritual matter*, and its mystic and theosophic system shared the identical Masarran orientation.

We have seen earlier the Toledo and Palermo schools of translations and zeal of procuring and translating the Arab sources shown by noted persons, such as Raimundo the Archbishop of Toledo, Adelard of Bath, Herman of Dalmatia, Alfred of Morley, Gerard of Cremona, Michael Scott and others who come to Spain from the most remote countries of Europe. This situation has led even some orientalists like Palacios to suspect whether some pantheistic systems of the Scholastics before St. Thomas Aquinas were examined closely with heterodox Sufism, and whether the complete dependency of the pantheistic of John Scotus Erigena, whose boldness can not be fully examined, is on heterodox Sufism, whose pantheistic formula 'natura creans creat' (God creating Himself in the world) 'is very similar to that which Ibn Barrajan and Ibn Arabi employ to designate spiritual matter, the first emanations of God: al-

Haqq al-Makluq bihi' testifies Palacios.

The School of Chartres conceived the origin of the cosmos in a neo-Platonic and Pythagorean sense, and Thierry, one of its illustrious members, had maintained relationship with Spain and had enjoyed the first productions of the translations of Toledo. He had derived the abundance of new logic and introduced it to the scholasticism of his time. The Pythagorean apentheism of Thierry synthesized in the formula 'Omne quod est, quia unum est' seems to Palacios 'a copy of the famous verse often repeated by Ibn Arabi: *wa fi kulli shayn lahu ayah tadullu ala annahu wahid*: 'In every being there is a sign that proclaims that He is One', or *wa fi kulli shayn lahu ayah tadullu ala annahu ainuhu*, 'In every being is sign that proclaims that He is the same (that He is His essence, that of God). William of Conches was another prominent member of Chartres 'who had confirmed that Arabic character of that school by his physiological psychology derived from the Arabic versions of Constantine the African and by his atomistic cosmology which is of *mutakallim* lineage. The pantheistic heresies of Amaury of Bennes and David of Dinant had some analogous channels that are yet to be explored, but Gundisalvi, Avicenna and one Mauritius Hispanus have been identified by the Scholars. This 'Mauritius Hispanus was a Spanish Muslim, a defender of Pantheism, and this essential character would be analogous to that of David of Dinant for whom God is identical with *primal matter*. Amalricians affirm that God is 'principium for male omnium rerum' and David of Dinant: 'Deum esse materiam primam'.

The principal representative of the school of Toledo, Dominicus Gundisalvi, in his *De Unitate Liber* was inspired by Avicenna's *Fons Vitae*, and had pleaded for the Ibn Masarra view that every being except God is composed of Matter and form. This was beginning of a doctrinal tendency in a number of illustrious Augustinian or Pre-Thomist Franciscan Scholastics who inscribed at the head

of their *Summas* and philosophical treatises the theorem cited: the positive reality of the primal matter which is common to bodies and spirits and their consequent hylomorphic composition, and affirmation of the plurality of the forms. This blend of ideas is easily traceable in the works of Dominicus Gundisalvi of Segobia, Guillaume d'Auvergne (d. 1249), Alexander of Hales (d. 1245), Saint Bonaventura (d. 1274), Duns Scotus (d. 1308), Roger Bacon (d. 12920 and Raymond Lull (d. 1315), together with their disciples of second rank. 'Because of their inclinations more or less to blend the realm of faith with that of reason into total and harmonious "wisdom" which requires a certain divine illumination, they fully became a part of Muslim thinkers who call themselves *Ishraqis* or Illuminists'. Palacios calls Duns Scotus 'the legitimate heir of Avicenna and of Ibn Masarra', and St. Thomas 'the continuer of the spirit of Stagira (Aristotle) and of his Commentator'.

Roger Bacon's *Opus Majus* has cited on each page the names of each philosophers and theosophists, and has insisted on the unavoidable need to the study the doctrines of these in original, as 'Philosophy comes from ... the Arabic. And therefore no Latin can understand the wisdom of sacred scripture unless he understands the language from which they are translated... Likewise, almost all secrets of philosophy thus far lie in a foreign language. 'Latins have nothing to express this except in other languages, and these are few interpreters, and even these are bad'. Roger Bacon has cited a text from Sirr al-Asrar, the apocryphal Arabic book ascribed to Aristotle (which was translated into Latin by Philip of Tripoli, a Syrian Christian, around 1233) and states 'God has revealed all wisdom to His prophets and righteous people and to certain others whom He chose beforehand, illuminating them with a spirit of divine wisdom and endowing them with the gifts of knowledge... Philosophers coming after these received from them the beginning and origin of philosophy, and wrote down the principles and secrets of the arts and sciences. He has traced a long history

of philosophy, starting with Noah and Abraham, teachers of Chaldeans and Egyptians, to Zoroaster and Hermes, to Greeks such as Thales, Pythagoreas, Anaxagora, Socrates, etc., to Latins, to Muslims, and finally infers that 'we Christians ought to use philosophy in divine things, and in philosophy to assume many things pertaining to theology, in order that it be apparent that wisdom is one, shining forth in both. For Roger Bacon, a universal and harmonious wisdom, the *sapientia*, was transmitted by divine illumination from the time of the patriarchs of the ancient law to the philosophers of the time through the sages, saints and theosophists of all mystic method of spiritual interpretation. He imitates their esoteric attitude of concealing from the common man the mystic truths. He employs their symbols and geometric examples, which he accommodates to the physics of light, alchemy, astrology and magic...And the 'Muslim origin was proclaimed with utmost clarity'.

iv. Raymond Lull

The Spanish Reconquista's Catalan Ramon Lull or Raymond Lull (1232-1315) legendarily known and acknowledged for his propaganda for Crusade and Missionary work, and his *Liber Contemplationis in Deum*, *Liber de Gentili*, *Compendium Logicae Algazalis*, *Liber de Fine*, *Liber de Acquisitione Terre Sancte*, and other books, exhibits the esoteric Sufi imitation in excellent clarity, with reference to his concept of *Dignitates* (*Divine Dignities*), as a copy of the Sufi concept of the Divine Names the *Asma Allah al-Husna*, and *Hadarah* as found especially in the works of the Spanish Murcian Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi. I would like to entreat some details to the topic.

Raymond Lull was born in 1232 in Majorq and spent ten years in the study of philosophy and learning Arabic from a Moorish slave. He spoke Arabic and wrote couple of books in that language. He had coveted from a profligate life to penitence and to the service of God in 1263, and passed through spiritual crisis in the years 1291-92. In 1276,

he founded the college of Miramer under the patronage of King James of Majorqa, perhaps the first in the West for the study of Arabic; and John XXI gave him and his college the papal benediction in the same year. He was a prolific writer who wrote about 4000 or 488 or 321 or 282 books! he delivered lectures in many intellectual centres of Europe. In 1294, he appeared at Naples with *Petitio Raymundi pro convesione infidelium ad Coelestinum V*, and in 1294, he interviewed Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) in Rome and submitted his 'Petitio pro recuperation Terrae Sanctae et pro convesione infidelium'. Historians have different views on Lull's scheme of conquering the Saracens: by reason or by military action. In April 1305, he wrote *Liber de Fine*, a work of importance for the crusades. He was in the Council of Vienna in 1311 in one of his 'Ordinationes' for the 'exaltio sanctae fidei Catholice et bonus status totius universes' he pressed for establishing three colleges in Rome, Paris and another suitable city where philosophy, theology and Oriental languages may be taught for missionary propose. In the third and last sitting of the Council, it was decided that in order to propagate Christianity among the unbelievers, chairs should be created for the study of Oriental Languages (Hebrew, Arabic and Chaldee) at Rome and in the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca, and the faculty would be appointed by the Pope in Rome, the King of France in Paris, and in remaining universities by their respective prelates and chapters.

In 1292, Lull sailed from Genoa to Tunis for missionary work. Before this mission he had worked hard for converting the Muslims who had survived the Christian conquest in Majorqa, although his efforts were of little importance as the Majorcan Muslims were destined to forcible conversion. Tunis was under the rule of the Hafside. Lull was caught preaching Christianity, and the penalty for this was death, but the Hafside Caliph managed to change the death-sentence into exile, and Lull had a narrow escape from the infuriated crowd. In 1300, he arrived in Syria to preach the

Tatars, but only to find that they had gone beyond reach. So he went to Genoa and then to Paris to petition the professors and bachelors of the University to formulate the argument most suitable for the conversion of heathens. This was the beginning of the Disputation Raymundi Christiani et Hamar Saraceni which he was soon afterwards write during his period of captivity in Tunis. His second North African mission took place in 1307, when he boarded a ship for the city of Bugia in Algeria, which was founded in 454 A. H. by al-Nasir b. Ilnas b. Hammad b. Ziri b. Manad b. Bulukkin on the site of an ancient Berber village, and had an excellent harbour. Bugian Muslims agreed to have polemic discussion with Lull, and this time Lull was able to gauge the depth of Muslim arguments forwarded by 'episcopi Saracenorum' against the Christian dogmas, and on this basis he prepared his book 'Disputatio'. Lull was thrown into prison, he came back to Italy, but in 1315, we see him back to his mission in North Africa for the third and last time. This time, he was armed with a letter of protection from King James II of Aragon to 'Miralmomnin Bujahie Zacharie, King of Tunis, son of Almir Abhalabbar, son of Almirs.' He was allowed to lead a quite life in Tunis, preaching his faith in secret and giving the public no cause for suspicion or animosity. In Tunis, Lull lived in a friendly atmosphere and even dedicated his book 'Liber de majori fine intellectus amoris et honoris' to the Mufti of the town. Then suddenly he takes the western road to Bugia, gets recognized and a furious mob stones him to death on the beach. Two Genoese merchants drag his body to their ship and carry it to Palma where it is interred in the old church of San Francisco.

Raymond Lull did not know Latin, nor did he learn it in Paris. He wrote books in Arabic and his mother tongue Catalan, and got them translated into Latin, and translated some of his own books into Arabic. Lull's following books are very important:

1. *Liber Contemplationis in Deum* (The Book of Contemplations of God), originally written in Arabic,

- and translated into Latin and Catalan. It is an encyclopaedia of practical theology that gives satirical descriptions of various classes of peoples, such as physicians, lawyers and teachers, and uses various algebraical and geometrical symbols and figures.
2. *Liber de Gentili* (Book of the Gentile), originally written in Arabic and translated into Latin, was a book on polemics.
 3. *Ars inventiva veritatis*.|Lull translated the book into Arabic.
 4. *Compendium Logicae Algazelis*, a summary of al-Ghazzali's logic originally prepared in Arabic, and then translated into Latin in 1290.
 5. *Liber de Fine*.
 6. *Liber de Acquisitione Terre Sancte*.
 7. *Ars*.
 8. *Ars Demonstrativa*.
 9. *Del Amigo y del Amado* (The Lover and te Beloved, al-Mhibb wa'l-Mahbub)
 10. *De quadratura e triangulatura de cercle*.
 11. *Disputatio Raymundi christiani et Hamar sarraceni*.
 12. *De Ascensu et descesu intellectus*.
 13. *Declartio Raymundi*.
 14. *Doctrina pueril*.
 15. *Els Cent Noms de Deus*.
 16. *Felix (Liber de meravelles)*.
 17. *Liber mirandarum demonstrationum*.
 18. *Liber angelorum*.
 19. *Liber de quatuordecim articulis fidei*.
 20. *Liber de quinque sapientibus*.

v. Sufi Hadarat and Lull's Dignitates Asma Allah al-Husna and Els cent noms de Deus

Lull's theological view reflect the Sufi tunes of Ibn masarra and Ibn Arabi. Lull says in his *Opera omnia; Disputatio Raumunid et Eremitae*, that God is the One being, infinite and eternal, having no determination in regard to His essence and nature... God cannot be a subject of theology in the sense of some determinate attribute, but only with reference to His properties and effects. Divine perfections and attributes, which Lull call *Dignities*, are identical to His essence, and it is impossible to think of his numerical plurality. Only approximately can His essence be even partially represented by means of the perfections of His creatures which are copies of His Dignities... Light is more adequate symbol of divinity... Spiritual matter common to angels and bodies is the first substance of every being except God... Even the plurality of human forms are axiomatic... The origin of world is explained by love and divine generosity. God created it to manifest *ad extra* His Dignities. Dignities are the Divine names in abstract, and they are exemplary and efficient cause of all created being, the latter being the concrete realization of the former. Proximity is evident between these views of Raymond Lull and what the Murcian Ibn Arabi said in his *Futuhat* and other books: the distinction between essence (*al-Dhat*) and divinity (*al-Uluhah*); the later is the object of theology which can know only by rational induction in the divine attributes or relationship of God with His creatures, while essence is unknowable and can only be subject of ecstatic intuition... Light is the symbol of *al-Haqq* (truth)... Sufi concept of love as the cause of divine creations 'I was a hidden and unknown treasure. I loved to be known and I created the creatures and I came to know them and they knew me' .. The theorem of *Asma Allah al-Husna* and their effects in the cosmos.

The Muslim theorem of Hadrah and *Asma Allah al-Husna* or *Divine Names* and Raymond Lull's Dignitates

should be discussed in some detail. *Hadrah* is a term from the Sufi illuminist lexicon, comparable to *Parousia*, or presence to designate each one of the aspects or concrete relationship under which God manifested to souls in mystic contemplation. These aspects, manifestations or presences of God are the perfections or divine names. Historians like Ibn Khaldoun have used *Ahl al-Hadrah* to refer to the illuminist Sufis. *Asma Allah al-Husna* have its origin in the Holy Quran, and collections of Hadith. The famous narration of Abu Hurairah is recorded by Sahih of *Bukhari* and Sahih of Muslim that says: "God has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. God is odd and loves the odd. He who enumerates them will never paradise." Then follows the enumeration of the divine names. The *al-Isim al-A'zam* (the greatest name) completes the number of one hundred. The *Muhadditheeb* (Scholars of *Hadith*) and the Sufis have written a number of commentaries on the one hundred divine names. Sufis approach to divine names had an esoteric hermetic initiation with somewhat cabala nature. Among the classic Sufi commentaries on divine names, mention should be of al- Ghazzali's *al-maqsad al-Asma Sharh Asma Allah al-Husna*, Abd al-Salam Ibn Abd al-Rahman Ibn Barrajan al-Ishbili's *Sharh Ma'ani Asma Allah al-Husna*, Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi's *Taj al-Rasail wa Minhaj al-Wasail fi Idah al- Ma'ani al-Ruhayah* and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's *Kitab lawami al-Bayyinat Sharh Asma Allah Ta'ala wa al-Sifat*. The cabala nature is evident in the literature of the Sufis of the Shattaria order, like the *Awrade Ghauthia* of Shaikh Mohammed Ghauth of Gwalior.

The Christian Scholastics before Raymond Lull had the concepts of perfections, attributes, names and relations with regard to God. Plotinus in his *Enneads* (VI, 9, 4) spoke of the ecstatic intuition of God as a phenomenon superior to rational induction which can only be called "*praesentia quaendam*". (parousa) But only Lull and his disciples used the term *Dignitates*. Palacios has argued that Lull was not well initiated in the esoteric sense of lexicological subtleties,

and "what does not derive from the Christian origin is the reduction of the number of those names to one hundred. Ibn Arabi formulated theorem of *Hadrah* to designate abstract divine names and their importance in Sufi meditation, dedication an article in full to each of the one hundred names in his *Futuhat*. In his *Els cent noms de Deus*. *Liber de quatuordecim articulis fidei*, Declarito from among the copious quantity of Sufi hadras ... in his various books with different number and order. But without a single exception, all of them correspond verbatim to one or more of the hadras of Bibn ARabi. Moreover, among them there are some which are exclusively used by Lull without precedence among the Christian theologians, such as Glory, Nobleness, Humility, Patience and Lordship. Let us compare between the following Divine Dignities of Lull and al-Hadarat al-Ilahiyay of Ibn Arabi:

Lordship	(250)	al-Rabbaniyah
Mercy	(255)	al-Rahmah
Glory	(263)	al-Izzah
	(293)	al-Izaz
Virtue or Power	(265)	al-Jabarut
	(275)	al-Qahr
	(362)	al-Quwah
Greatness	(364)	al-Matanah
	(308)	al-Kibriya
Largess	(277)	al-Wahab
	(324)	al-Ikram
Wisdom	(283)	al-Ilm
	(331)	al-Hikmah
Humiliation	(295)	al-Idhlal
Justice	(301)	al-Hukm
	(302)	al-Adl
Nobleness	(322)	al-Jalal
Love	(333)	al-Wudd
Goodness	(340)	al-Ihsan
	(339)	al-Tib
Simplicity, Simpleness		

or Singleness	(355)	al-lfrad
	(376)	al-Tawhid
Truth	(359)	al-Haq
Eternity	(378)	al-Samadiyah
Power or capability	(379)	al-Iqtidar
Patience	(408)	al-Sabr

Raymond Lull had a polemic argument with the Muslim canonical lawyers in the city of Bugia in 1307, and its details have been given by Lull himself in his *Disputatio Raymundi christini et Hamar saraceni*. In this book, Lull has put in the mouth of his adversary, hamar (most probably Amr), an enumeration of the dignitates 'almost identical in number and names with his, accepting it as a common point of departure for both disputants with the propose of better defending the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation against Islam.

Both of Professor Julian Ribera and his disciple Father Miguel Asin Palacois have dealt in good details with the astonishing similarity between the 'Dignitates' of Lull and 'Hadas' of Ibn Arabi. They have made comparison between the words and phrases used by Lull and Ibn Arabi while elaborating important points on the theme. We may have a glance of 'almost literal copy of the Arabic texts' in the following points:

(One) Allegory of two lights:

Lull says: "Just as the light of a candle descends downward through the smoke of a candle which has been recently extinguished and which is standing below and near a lighted candle, and this because fire seeks to rise with its own form... it will follow that the intellect and its understanding have the possibility of ascending higher, that in receiving...

Ibn Arabi says: "When the wick of a lamp is put out, there remains in its snuff a bit of light from which something like smoke issues which tends by its nature to rise. Then if there is another lighted lamp close by and if we place the wick of the lamp just extinguished, while yet smoking, verti-

cally below the flame of the light come together, we shall see that the light will immediately go down by itself to settle over the smoke and light the burned part of the wick. This light will appear in the same form as the lighted lamp from which it has taken its light... This in a similar way is the communication of the Spirit to the heart of man accomplished in order to teach him the knowledge of mystery."

(Two) Example of sick palate:

Lull says: "It is just as it seems in a sore throat that has a sensation of bitterness when it tastes a sweet apple or honey. From this it follows that the quality of bitterness is not in the apple or the honey, because, if it were there, the apple or the honey, would not taste sweet. Thus that bitterness is a quality which suggests soreness of the throat.

Ibn Arabi says: "In the same way, upon tasting sugar or honey and finding it bitter, even though it is sweet, one necessarily knows that the sense of that has been deceived... But there comes afterwards another understanding which says that the bilious disposition has been placed in the organ of taste... So the taste now perceives nothing but the bitterness of bile.

(Three) The secret virtues of the divine names:

According to Lull, 'As God has put virtue in words, stones and herbs, so much more, then He put it in His names.'

And Ibn Arabi sees that 'The science of the virtues of the divine names belongs to the intuitive mystics who should not reveal their mysteries to the secular... The letters which make up the divine names have virtues or properties as do the physical elements, drugs and every thing else.'

(Four) The goal of divine love:

For Lull, "Love is the charity and benevolence with which the friend and the Beloved are loved. The three... are the same thing... Love and loving, Friend and Beloved,

are so firmly united in my Beloved that they are one actually in essence...

And Ibn Arabi writes: "The goal of spiritual love is identification. This means that the essence of the Beloved becomes the same essence that as that of the Lover, and reciprocally, the essence of the Lover comes to be the essence of the Beloved."

Lull had written the book 'Els cent noms de Deus' as confessed by himself in imitation of similar books of the Muslim Sufis which study the metaphysics of divine love. Lull did not use the Christian terminology of the *soul and its spouse*, rather he borrowed the technical terminology particularly used in Arabic poetry, that is, the terms of 'The Lover and the Beloved,' *al-Muhibb wa al-Mahbood*, with their various themes, such as jealousy, weeping, sadness, secrets, presence and absence, madness, etc. Again, the reader finds similar method of expression in the writings of Lull and Ibn Arabi, like the cabalistic symbolic value of letters, use of geometric schemes with concentric and eccentric circles, triangles, squares and figures, the famous symbol of tree to depict the whole harmonious divine system, and the justification of using a distinctive vocabulary. Ibn Arabi's *al-Futuhat* had pleaded for the use of some esoteric technical terms on the ground that the mystic divine sciences are the fruit of religious experience and not of reason, and they vary in each subject and can not be enclosed within the narrow molds of the common theological terminology. He had prepared a special vocabulary for his works (which may be seen in the Ta'rifaat of al-Jurjani). Lull, too, justifies the same method. He says: It is very necessary that we seek appropriate vocabulary through which we may declare and make God... When, since this vocabulary is necessary to make credible the acts of the divine attributes (dignitatum), no one ought to be surprised... Very often it happens that, for fear of introducing errors, a person speaks in a curtailed and restricted manner and therefore can not explain those things that he could explain if he were able to

speaking at length...in completely what our mind conceives so much more perfectly than we can express in word. Nevertheless we should speak thus, if that we seek...we wish to explain to others.■

Dialogue is fine, court is better: AIMPLB

K.N. Arun

The Dalai Lama's suggestion that the Ayodhya issue be resolved through consensus is highly welcome, but there is no harm in waiting for the court verdict," All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) chairman Maulana Mohd. Rabey Hasani Nadwi said today.

In an extensive interaction with media, Nadwi pointed out that AIMPLB was never averse to talks. But talks, including two rounds of discussions with the Kanchi Shankaracharya, had not achieved anything, and that was why the Board was religion court verdict.

"Court mein barson se case chal raha hai. Aur thodi baaki rah gayee hai. Faisle ke liya intezaar karne mein koi harj nahin hona chahiya. (The case has been going on in the court for years. It is only a matter of time. There should be no objections to wait for the court verdict)," he said.

Nadwi pointed out that the matter was taken to court only because the dispute could not be resolved by the two communities. "Court ne abhi tak jitni bhi mehnat ki hai, usko koode meinto nahin dal sakte. (All the efforts of the court cannot be thrown into the dustbin now)," he said.

Pointing out that Islam did not permit construction of mosque on any ordinary site, he said the Board was willing to accept the court verdict irrespective of which way it went.

Reiterating that Muslims in general and the AIMPLB in particular, had never said no to a negotiated resolution of the issue, Nadwi said there was also a question of who represented the Hindu community. "When the Shankaracharya came up with a set of proposals there was such a hue and cry from some sections among Hindus that he withdrew the proposals," he said. However, the Board, on which all Islamic sects and schools of thought were represented, was willing to talk with any section if they were conducted on definite and credible proposals.

Admitting that the issue was an emotional one, he said it needed to be handled tactfully and not politicised. "*Masle ko samajhdari aur thande dimagh se hal karna chahiye. Use aise ssuljhana chahiye ki poori qaum use qabool kare.* (The issue need to be resolved with tact and equanimity. It has to be resolved in such a way that it is accepted by the entire nation)," he said.

On demands for a uniform civil code, Nadwi pointed out that India was a diverse country and that it would not be right to enforce a uniform code. Pointing out that any government would find it difficult to impose uniform dietary habits or dress code, he wondered how a common civil code, he wondered how a common civil code could be implemented. "*Zabardasti karenge kya? Hukumat koshish karte karte thak jayegi* (Will they try to implement it by force? Government will only get tired trying to do so.)"

Moreover, Muslim personal law was handed down by Allah himself. "*Kisi ko bhi use badal ne kahaq nahin hai. Usme kuch tabdili nahin ho sakti* (No one has the right to change that. There can be no amendments to it)," he said.

Welcoming the thaw in Indo-Pak relations, Nadwi said that Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf should take the process forward. If countries in Europe have come together as European Union, there should be no difficulty in the two Asian neighbours coming together.

"*Bhai nahin to sahi, dosti se to jee sakte hain. Beshaq donon mulkon ko amana majboor karega* (If not as brothers, we can at least live as friends. Without doubt, time will force the two countries to come together)," he said.

MAN'S ORIGIN AND STATUS

Jafar Wafa

There is virtually an antithetical relationship between man's claim to having scientific knowledge about his own origin and the religious belief that, having been created in God's own image, humans occupy a far superior status than animals. In other words, as certain scientific explorations about man's origin steer him away from the belief in 'direct creation', he tends to devalue his own self.

By subscribing to the postulated evolution from a lowly animal, scientifically-oriented man has unwittingly pulled himself down from the high pedestal on which his preceding generations of believers in Abrahamic faiths had hoisted him. The following couplet brings out this paradox with subtle sarcasm, so characteristic of Akbar Allahabadi:

*"Kaha Mansoor nay Khuda hoon mein
Darwin bolay boozna hoon mein"*

(Mansoor the mystic thought he was God Almighty;
And Darwin traced himself to tailless monkey).

The text book definition of man as a 'rational animal' places him on the same footing as ordinary animals, domesticated or wild, though he may belong to the highest form of animal in the evolutionary hierarchy. However, neither modern science nor common observation belie the truth that humans happen to be most superior and special kind of living being, not only on earth but in the entire universe. Yet, having been shorn of his divine connection by the creeping disbelief in the existence of the Creator of man and the universe, he has lost the grace and glory of being God's vicegerent.

No poet of today can feel the kind of inspiration that had made the British bard to put these memorable words in the mouth of a tragic character in one of his much acclaimed plays:

"What piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
How infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and
admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension,
how like a god! The beauty of the world! the paragon of
animals!"

QUR'ANIC REVELATIONS:

These verses of Shakespeare bring to mind various verses of the Qur'an about man's creation by Allah from earthly material, like clay, but *"having fashioned him, He breathed into him of his spirit"* (15: 28-29) and that, having been made of earthly matter, Allah *"appointed for him the earth as a dwelling place and the sky as a canopy, having fashioned him and perfected his shapes"* (40:64); and that *"He created the human being (Insan) of the best structure"* (95:4)

Along with diminution of the human's prestigious position in the created world, irrespective of how and when such a vast universe came into being, whose expanse man has not yet been able to fathom despite having attained such a high degree of technological capability to launch a probe in space not only around the galaxy which is home to the Solar system but also to peer into other galaxies millions of light year away, the scientific knowledge so far gained has reduced the Earth to the position of merely one out of myriads of such planets.

The earth, the human's home, is no longer the centre of the universe but is like any other ordinary planet orbiting around its Sun. The Earth's distinguishing features which make it stand out in the galaxy to which it belongs, are hardly mentioned in glowing terms by the agnostic scientific.

It appears, there had been a conscious effort to denigrate both the humans and their habitat, just because science acted as a hand-maiden of atheism and had been out to prove that neither man nor his home planet were created by the Divine Being, but were the product of chance and accidental orchestration of, what the scientists call,

geochemical and biochemical process which were set in motion automatically under unspecified temperature and environmental conditions. The enigmatic postulate regarding evolution of life, co-evolution of the biosphere and the earth are now being looked upon with suspicion, though much belatedly.

LATEST RESEARCH:

A new high-aim and high-cost research has now received official blessings of the American President with the recent inauguration of the NASA Institute of Astrobiology (NIA). This is a very important indication of the fact that the scientists of today are sceptic of the evolution theory and the postulate that the universe came into being by chance. Such scepticism regarding the accidental origin of the universe expressed about four centuries ago by Francis Bacon who pronounced, in his *Novum Organum*, that "chance is the name of a thing that does not exist."

Further, as a strong disclaimer of unbelief and atheism, he wrote in one of his famous Essays that "I had rather believed all the fabulous in the Legend and the Talmud and Al-Koran than that this universe is without a mind... While the mind of man looks upon second causes and beholds a chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity".

Instead of recognising that it is God Almighty who created everything, Bacon meant to convey, that scientists and philosophers talked about meaningless terms like "first caused uncaused" or the "first mover unmoved", which is indicative of a guilty conscience in denying the existence of God by taking cover under the figleaf of unclear jargon. NASA Research Centre appears to have now realised what Bacon has suspected far back in the post-Renaissance period of Europe. This Centre will try to find out, among other things, whether man came as an alien on Earth and whether there is a possibility of terrestrial life on other planets or in other galaxies in Space.

The Qur'an has already touched upon these subjects. Adam and Eve were created from Earth's "mire and mud" somewhere in the Garden of Eden (in Space?) from where they were sent down on the Earth, "*a habitation and provision for a time*" (2:36). Further, the Qur'an is the first religious Scripture that mentions of the existence of "worlds" (*Alameen*) and "seven (meaning several) strong heavens" (78:12) which hold "*Mansions of the Stars* (85:1), all of them "*in harmony*", or on collision paths, (71:15).

Today's man of learning can interpret these cryptic hints as numerous formidable galaxies with constellation of stars and planets which modern cosmologists are already observing with the help of powerful space telescopes.

SOLAR SYSTEM:

About the solar system, as we knew now, the Qur'an had said, a thousand and a half years ago, that "*the Sun continues drifting to a resting place determined for it by the Mighty, the Wise*" (36:38). It lends support to the current hypothesis that the Sun, with all its attendant planets, is gradually travelling away in the limitless Space. Regarding the possibility of terrestrial life in space, the Qur'an gives a positive hint: "*Of His portents in the creation of the heavens and the earth and of whatever living creature He has dispersed in both of them*" (42:29).

About the Earth, the Qur'an refers to its significant characteristics, having been specially designed to sustain human, animal and planet life. One such passage says: "*God made the earth like a bed spread out, and the mountains like spikes in it, built above it in seven strong heavens, appointing a dazzling lamp therein, and sent down round the rainy clouds abundant water to produce grain and plants and gardens of thick foliage*" (78:6-16)

Modern science has now rehabilitated the Earth to its prime place of importance in the universe, as had already been given to it in the Qur'an. Scientists admit that Earth is the only celestial body possessing inexhaustible reserve of

water and an atmosphere, thick and impervious (*"strong heaven"* in Qur'anic words) to prevent the high cosmic temperature of outer Space from reaching it and retain the necessary solar heat required for human life and for plants and animals.

ROTATION ON AXIS:

Another uniqueness is its rotation on its axis (for *"alternating days and nights"*, as the Qur'an says) and its inclination on its orbit to cause changes in season. Another peculiarity, which modern cosmologists have discovered, is that the solid elements of which the Earth is composed are rare in the wide universe. All these suggest that there is a *"Mighty and Wise"* Creator who fashioned the Earth for sustaining humans and all the fauna and flora for their benefit.

The authors of *Life Magazine's* several publication about "the world we live in" (published from New York) in 1955 observed that "it is the apparent loneliness and singularity of our planet in a hostile universe that evoke the deeper questions: How was earth created? When did it come into being? What is its fate? The concept of random universe, existing without origin or destiny, is meaningless to human mind who lives in a dimension of time. Man has always postulated Creation... modern cosmology impinges on the ancient realm of religion... And every mystery that Science resolves points to a larger mystery beyond it."

Unlike sceptics and agnostics who grope in the dark, a true believer, in the words of the Qur'an, *"remembers Allah standing, sitting and reclining, pondering over the creation of the heavens and the earth and on the alternation of day and night, and says: 'our Creator-Sustainer! You did not create all this in vain; glory be to You; save us from the doom of Fire' (3:190-91)."*■

Muslim clerics to fight terror

Indonesia's Muslim clerics, shocked by a video shown to them by Vice-President Jusuf Kala, have formed a task force to counter the influence of extremists.

The clerics were spurred into action after they viewed video recordings of three suicide bombers who claimed that their attack was part of the holy war against the enemies of Islam.

The statements of the suicide bombers, as well as one made by a hooded man — believed to be Asia's most wanted militant, Jemaah Islamiyah strategist Noordin Mohamed Top — came as a shock to many of the clerics.

The clerics, who were invited by the Vice-President to his home in groups over the weekend to view the video, represent the broad spectrum of Indonesia's Muslims, who comprise 90% of the nation's 220 million people.

They are not only members of the nation's highest Islamic authority, the Indonesian Ulama Council, which can issue and enforce religious decrees or fatwas, but are also leaders of two of Indonesia's largest and most influential Muslim movements.

Among the clerics spearheading the task force are leaders of the moderate, progressive 30 million member Muhammadiyah movement and those belonging to the more traditional Nahdlatul Ulama who count on some 40 million members.

Together, they represent the nation's Muslim majority, and their decision to form a task force as a counterweight to the propaganda of Islamic extremism is significant in Indonesia's battle to curb the spread of terrorism in ASEAN.

The taskforce will add teeth to the government's battle against hardline religious groups since the suicide bombings in Bali last month which killed 20 people.

In the past, many clerics and Muslim politicians have stayed clear of the issue for fear of being seen as supportive of the United States.

While the taskforce's duties have not been detailed and the official announcement is expected later this month, its broad aims include tracking information about terror suspects, examining Islamic publications which promote radicalism and putting them on a list of banned publications.

One likely candidate is a memoir by Imam Samudra, the convicted 2002 Bali bomber, who is now on death row. His book, *Aku Melawan Teroris* (I Waged War Against Terrorists), written while in prison, is said to promote a distorted view of the Islamic concept of struggle (jihad) while preaching hatred of the West and non-Muslims. The taskforce is likely to start its own publication, which will explain and promote the peaceful and tolerant face of Islam. In particular, the clerics aim to discredit the linkage of jihad (struggle), which extremists have used to justify suicide attacks. ■

LATINO CATHOLICS IN U.S. EMBRACING ISLAM

Chris L. Jenkins

At dusk, Aminah Martinez prepares dinner in her small Fairfax kitchen. Corn tortillas for enchiladas, grated cheese and beef for tacos, may be an avocado for guacamole - all staples of her youth.

But dusk is also time for prayer. So every thing, with her husband and two children, she places her hands together and kneels to the east. It is Maghrib, Muslims' fourth prayer of the day, and she begins whispering in Arabic as the subtle aromas of Mexico mix with sounds often associated with the Middle East.

Martinez is one of the thousands of Latinos nationwide who have converted to Islam. It is an amalgam of two seemingly disparate communities. But in growing numbers, Hispanics, the country's fastest growing ethnic group, are finding new faith in Islam, the nation's fastest-growing religion. Moved by what many say is a close-knit religious environment and a faith that provides a more concrete, intimate connection with God, they are replacing Mass with mosques.

"Islam has given me a sense of religious community and well-being that I was starting to miss in my life", said Martinez, 26, who converted from Catholicism in 1993. "It has helped give me a sense of completion."

The steadily increasing number of Latino Muslims illustrates how deeply rooted Islam has become in the national landscape - even spreading to communities not normally associated with the faith, religious scholars say. The Muslim population in the United States is estimated at more than 4 million, nearly six times the number in 1970, but still a fraction of the nearly 1 billion Muslims worldwide.

Although exact numbers are difficult to find, the American Muslim Council, an advocacy group in Washington estimates that there are 25,000 Hispanic Muslims in the United States. The largest communities are in New York City, Southern California and Chicago - all places that traditionally we had large Hispanic and Muslim population. All-Spanish mosques have emerged in some of those areas.

THE GENERAL TREND:

Many of these converts say they are choosing Islam because they feel the religion gives them greater direct contact with God, without saints and a rigid church hierarchy. Some also points to what they see as a closer-knit, smaller community that helps replace the extended family they have lost here in America, as well as supportive sanctuary to help sort through their sometimes recent immigration. The Latino Muslims are part of a larger trend of American Hispanics leaving the Catholic Church, experts say:

In the Washington region, the population of Latino Muslims is largely from Mexico and Central America, as it is in western states, according to Lating American Muslim unity, an advocacy group in Fresno, Calif. In other eastern cities, including Miami, significant numbers of converts are from Puerto Rico and Cuba.

"It certainly is a community that we have seem grow throughout the country over the past several years," said Aly R. Abuzaakouk, executive director of the American Muslim Council. "The community is not as organized as other Muslim groups here, so sometimes it's hard to determine the numbers".

Signs of the growth of Islam in the United States can be seen in everyday life. A few colleges are building student centres for Muslims, just as they built Hillel centres for Jewish students or Newman centres for Catholics several generations ago. The White House now sends greetings for the Muslim holiday of Id al-Fitr, the feast that ends

Ramadan.

"I think on college campuses and other public spaces, you're finding a great acceptance of the views and the presence of Muslims," said John L. Esposito, a professor at Georgetown University and director of its Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding. "A generation ago you might use the phrase 'Islam and the West,' and now would you say 'Islam in the West'.

ACCEPTANCE:

Indeed, acceptance and exposure are fuelling and inversions, making it easier for Latinos to learn about Islam. Martinez, for example, converted when she was a student at the University of Texas in Austin. The eldest child in a strict Catholic household, she says Islam was largely alien to her until she began talking with Muslim students on campus. Like many Hispanics who have converted, she said she felt a distance from the Catholic Church, both as a religious community and a spiritual path.

"Growing up, I was a very devout Catholic... Youth groups and everything," Martinez said. "But as I got older, I felt there were too many distractions in the church. Islam, to me, was a more direct faith where I felt a strong sense of belonging".

Her faith was tested immediately. Martinez's grandmother was so disappointed by the conversion that she asked for granddaughter to leave home and refused to support her financially. She saw the defection from Catholicism as a rejection of family and tradition, Martinez said. It would be a year before the two would reconcile.

Such stories are common among latinos who have abandoned Catholicism for Islam.

Others have a smoother transition. Becky Diaz Abu Ghannam, 39, a Chilean American resident of Sterling who converted in 1984, said that she grew up feeling that Catholicism did not provide the close-knit religious

community she was looking for. As she became more aware of Islam when she came to America, she found that it provided a warmth and direction that appealed to her - particularly the five daily prayers. Initially, like many other Hispanic women interviewed, she was concerned about the role of women in Islam and whether she should be forced to take a subservient position to her husband, who is also Muslim, and other men. Her fears subsided as she learned more about the Qur'an and its teachings and how some countries' Islamic communities are less stringent about such requirements.

And, she adds, her mother, a lifelong Catholic, converted several months ago after seeing her daughter's spiritual path.

SENSE OF SISTERHOOD:

"The sense of sisterhood I felt with others who wore hijab was something that I had never experienced," said Abu Ghannam, referring to the practice of Muslim women covering their heads in public. She added that, like Martinez, she is raising her children to speak all the languages of their upbringing: Arabic, Spanish, English.

"I think what many (Hispanics) are finding in Islam is a community that they find more nurturing," said Nicole Ballivian, a Los Angeles documentary filmmaker who is completing a movie about Latino Muslims called "*Luces Sobre Islam*" ("Islam is Focus").

She has travelled throughout South America and Caribbean and visited many Hispanic Muslim communities here. She said that many of the converts she has talked with, say the Catholic Church is large and impersonal.

These concerns about Catholicism mirror a trend that many officials in US dioceses have tracked for years: the defection of Hispanics. The Catholics Almanac estimates that 100,000 Hispanics in the United States leave the church each year, although some other experts put the number as high as 600,000. Most have moved to

Pentecostal and evangelical Protestant faiths as well as Mormonism, Islam and Buddhism. Converts appear to be both men and women in equal numbers.

"The numbers of Latinos who convert to various religions is certainly significant", said Alaejandro Aguilera Titus, assistant director for the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs with the National Council of Catholic Bishops in Washington. "We find that the conversion efforts to many faiths have increased recently, which has led many Hispanics away from the Catholic Church".

SPIRITUAL & PRAGMATIC:

Many area Latinos who have converted say their attraction to Islam is spiritual and pragmatic. And even as their community seems scattered - with members attending mosques in Manassas, Herndon, Falls Church, Langley Park and College Park - they have formed their own organizations and have produced their own literature. Spanish translations of the Qur'an, for instance, are popular at several Northern Virginia mosques.

The Association of Latin American Muslims, a group based in Takoma Park, distributes a bilingual, bimonthly newspaper, *"La Voz Del Islam"* (The Voice of Islam) with members occasionally walking the streets to talk to Latinos.

"Organizing here can be very difficult at times, because it is easy to mistake Hispanics for other ethnicities," said group president R. Abdur Rahman Campos, who converted in 1982 after coming here from Mexico.

Campos, 48, said he felt the Catholic Church frustrated by what he called its heavy emphasis on saints, which he says distracted him from the word of God.

"But it is important to continue to spread the teachings to Hispanics and non-Hispanics", he added. "To every one". ■

