

# THE FRAGRANCE

OF EAST

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# **The Fragrance**

of East

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## **Editor's Note:**

### **Our New Shape**

The Fragrance of the East was floated to cater to the needs of English knowing readers. It may be reiterated that this magazine was started on the advice of late Hazrat Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, and it received his blessings and patronage. The late Maulana was quite aware of the power of media and always urged the community to come forward and take up the challenge of the time. The magazine was initially intended to keep a sensitive finger on the pulse of the people. It was a quarterly publication. However, after a decade of its publication we realized that it should be made a monthly magazine. So this is our last quarterly issue and from January 2007 our monthly issue will be sent to our readers. We do not want to burden the subscriber with a heavier subscription. Therefore, to begin with the annual cost of the magazine will remain Rs. 100 and per copy cost will be Rs 10 only. However, to balance out our finances that have increased as a result of its more frequent publication, we will have to reduce the volume of the magazine. We hope our readers will welcome this change and write to us about their views and suggestions for the further improvement of the magazine.

In the quarterly issues we had enough space to publish lengthy articles but now we will have to confine ourselves to concise and brief essays and writeups. We hope our contributors will now favour us more frequently with their articles and help us projecting our views in a better and more presentable way.

During the last one decade of our publication we have noticed that there is a paucity of writers in English on Islamic issues. It is also possible that we have not yet been able to encourage knowledgeable and enthusiastic authors to write for us. Now we hope that more and more writers will come forward to help us building a treasure of literary resource.

After converting this quarterly magazine into a monthly Journal we propose to introduce several new columns. We will cover the international/national events of our interest. The Reader's Forum which forms a formidable column of any good Journal will be our regular feature. Current events pertaining to community will also find place in our issues. To encourage young writers and students we will welcome their articles and may offer remuneration too for good articles.

To achieve our aims and objects the cooperation of subscribers for their generous help in attracting more and more subscribers is needed. We also look forward to writers in English to contribute their articles for publication and make this Journal an effective voice of the community. ■

Views expressed by writers of the articles, published in this magazine are their own. We do not necessarily endorse them.

Editor

# A STUDY IN CONTRAST INTROSPECTION

Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi\*

Intercultural clash has been engaging the attention of intellectuals and the learned since long; debate and analysis on the subject continues till date. Opinion with the Islamic world is also not quite unanimous.

The theme initially was "clash or unision" between various cultures. Some intellectuals mooted the idea of unity and synchronism between various cultures. Seminars and conferences in several parts of the world were organized to discuss the subject openly. View points were put forward by people belonging to different cultures, specially the Muslims and Christians. The Pope of the day also endorsed the steps being taken. Apparently the debate seemed to revolve around differences in religious beliefs whereas, in reality such clash does not exist. History bears testimony that the followers of various faiths had full liberty to pursue their own religious tenets, shunning interference in each other's actions.

As far as Islam is concerned, it has been an epitome, non-pareil, of open mindedness, tolerance and forgiveness, and affords full liberty to people of all faiths to act according to their own beliefs. Even during the period of their dominance, no coersive actions were resorted to nor any obstacles placed in performances of rites and rituals. Upon entering any country as conquerors, they treated the citizens with compassion, justice and were extremely condescending. People flocked into the fold of Islam of their own volition, so much so that several countries embraced Islam without any armed action and despite passage of centuries are Muslim majority regions.

Contrast between the attitude of Christian and Muslim conquerors is exemplified by the history of Spain.

*\*Professor, Nadwatul Ulema*

Before the entry of muslims as victors into Spain, flag of Christian power fluttered all over the land. Jewish community were under duress, suffering all indignities and humiliation. Islamic conquest resulted in total liberation for them, to the extent of being afforded a hand in administrative affairs. As a result of the contribution of Jews and Christians in all round development of Spain in all fields: v education, industry, trade and commerce along side that of Muslims in self-evident. The communities received equal and just treatment. In stark contrast is the treatment metedout to Muslims by the Christians when they managed to wrest power once again by overthrowing the Muslim government from Spain. Freedom and justice were murdered, virtually; Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity under severe duress and threat of extradition; their schools and mosques were shut down. In the event, hardly any Muslim survived in the entire country.

Similar was the scenario at the time of conquest of Holy land (Palestine) by Muslims. The other two communities received the same treatment and provided equal facilities. Places of worship and other monuments held sacred by Jews and Christians were just as sacrosanct to Muslims. Their monks and preachers enjoyed the same status as they did under their own rule. Peace and tranquility held sway and no outrage of female population occured anywhere. The great Caliph Omar bin-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him), in his letter to the Muslim governor of Palestine, Abu-Obaida-bin-al Jarrah (Allah be pleased with him), advised at length to be just and compassionate to non-Muslims, as a result of which transfer of power to Muslims was entirely smooth.

The reputed, reliable historian Stanley Lane Poole has described the conquest of Palestine by the Christians:

Upon their foray into the holy land they let loose a reign of terror and massacre, to the extent that horses of the riders who entered the mosque of Omar, were knee deep in blood. Children were either banged against the walls



or thrown down from the parapets. Jews were all burnt alive inside their place of worship. (tarikh-i-dawat-o-hazeemat, Vol. I p253)

In direct contrast is the case of re-conquest of Palestine by the youthful, prudent Sultan Salah-ud-din Ayyubi (Saladin to the English writers), who earned accolades for all and sundry, including the western writers and historians. Stanley Lane Poole in his book "Sultan Salah-ud-din Ayyubi" is eloquent in vivid terms:

The sultan took no stern action against any non-Muslim. One exception was to chastise Reginald for his threat to invade Makkah and Madinah and for using utterly derogatory language for the mausoleum of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Sultan saw to it that life and property of his subjects were fully safeguarded.

Message of Holy Quran on the subject are explicit:

"Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance (Al-Anam 6:108)

Another message is for believing in every messenger of Allah (peace be upon them) and to respect what they held sacred:

:Say: O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah: That we associate no partners with Him: That we erect not, from among ourselves, Lord and patrons other Allah." (Aal-Imran 3:64)

The era of western despotism is not too ancient history yet and perpetration of terror is fresh in human memory. No deep probe is required for judging the contrasting attitudes of non-Muslims and Muslim conquerors. While Christianity professes mutual affection, sympathy and forbearance among all human beings, history testifies to just the opposite. Similar is the state of current affairs, with all round air raids and mass massacre. What transpired in

Iraq and Afghanistan, the inhumanities committed in Abu Gharib and Guantanamo jails hardly need to be described. Atrocities upon prisoners in secret dungeons of USA continue unabated.

Entire Western and Christian media have waged an anti-Islam vendatta all through the Muslim world and beyond, spreading concocted versions of the holy message and their missionaries attempting to impose their own faith. Even the realm of edcation is not immune from pollution aimed at the nascent minds. In the western countries even the observance of Islamic dress code by Muslim women folk is not tolerated. Any member of a legislature or a government employee, observing the tenets of Islam is forthwith suspended or dismissed. On the other hand, Islam imposes no blanket ban on any form of dress, as long as the norms of decency and decorum are not violated.

Every conceivable hinderance is being placed on Islamic faith and religious beilef in Europe. Cartoonists and writers, journalists seem hell bent on maligning Islam and its history, so much so that they would not desist from targetting the holy prophet (peace be upon him). Propagation and preaching of Christianity goes on unbridled and reports of several Muslim countries entering the fold of Christendom pour in. Even purely welfare and religious organisations are made targets of violent action. Muslim countries which are influenced by the West are being forced to take action against Islamic movements, specially their educational institutions, without any exception.

Publication of cartoon in blatant derogation of the holy prophet (peace be upon him), received united support from entire Europe, under the guise of freedom of expression and media. No effort was spared to supress the show of natural resentment among Muslims, to the extent of using main force. Muslims, on the other hand exercised restraint. No word was uttered nor a pen raised against the prophets Moses or Jesus (peace be upon him). History is replete

with instances when Muslims have stuck to the path of fair play, peace and forbearance. Jews and Christians have forever resorted to cruelty.

A case in point is of death sentence by Afghan government passed on one Abd-ur-Rahman who had turned apostate. European media lost not a moment in propagating the subject in adverse light, harping upon the usual theme of personal freedom. Another instance is the onset of violent reaction following the demolition of the statue of Mahatma Budh by Taliban. Several mosques were raided and copies of Holy Quran consigned to flames. USA threatened to attack the holy Makkah. On the other hand no adverse publicity from Western media is coming forth on the atrocities of the worst degree unleashed on innocent persons in known and not so well known, jails of USA.

The current reign of sheer despotism is touted as an era of liberty, equality, justice and compassion. The powerful few have taken on the role of sole judge between right and wrong and even are in control of legal jurisprudence. The only aim seems to be concentrate all power in one hand so as make the rest of the nations its subservient satellites, ultimately to enforce one religious and cultural order, the world over. Alongside there is an ostentatious programme of negotiations through conferences and seminars, diplomatic exchanges, which ineffect boils down to orchestrated delirium. In reality internal or external peace, brotherhood and fairplay are nothing more than a pipe dream.

More is the pity that those who should take up cudgels against such unbridled rule are neither united nor find themselves in any position to even enter into an incisive and fruitful dialogue. Such steps are possible only if there was some sort of common platform for such nations, strong enough to spring up a situation akin to tussle between Communism and Capitalism, much like the days of cold war. The current scenario seems to inspire no confidence. ■

English rendering: Mashhoon Ahmad

## People can't be forced to sing

Sanjay Singh

Zeroing in on the concept of tolerance as the hallmark of our traditions, philosophy and Constitutions, the Supreme Court had in a landmark verdict in 1986 ruled that there is no provision in the law which obliges anyone to sing the national anthem *Jana Gana Mana*. Not joining in the singing of the national anthem does not amount to showing disrespect to it, the court had said, a ruling which assumes significance in the backdrop of the current controversy over the singing of the national song *Vande Matram*. "There is no provision of law which obliges anyone to sing the national anthem, nor do we think that it is disrespectful to the national anthem if a person who stands respectfully when the same is sung does not join in the singing," Justice Chinnappa Reddy had written on behalf of the Supreme Court bench two decades ago.

Directing the authorities to readmit three school children belonging to the Jehovah's Witnesses, a worldwide sect of Christians, who were expelled from the school for not singing the national anthem, the bench said compelling them to sing the anthem would infringe on the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution, particularly the freedom of religion.

"The expulsion of the three children from the school for the reason that because of their conscientiously held religious faith they do not join the singing of national anthem in the morning assembly, though they do stand up respectfully when the national anthem is sung, it is violation of their fundamental right to freedom of conscience and to freely profess, practice and propagate religion," the bench said.

The court also stated that the three appellant schoolchildren who refused to sing the national anthem could not be robbed of their fundamental religious rights guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution on the plea that they belonged to a religious denomination and not a separate religion. Setting aside a judgement of the Kerala high court, the bench went on to state that to compel each and every pupil in the singing of the national anthem despite his/her genuine, conscientious religious objection, then such compulsion would also clearly contravene the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution.

If each and every person was compelled to sing the national anthem it would go against our tradition, philosophy and Constitution. The court delivered its verdict on an appeal by the three schoolchildren, Bijoe, Binu Mol and Bindu Emmanuel, adherents of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were expelled from their school on July 26, 1985 for not singing the national anthem.

# RAMADAN: AN OCCASION TO TURN OVER A NEW LEAF

Saleh I. Babear

The month of Ramadan is not just a period of fasting but also a time for self-introspection and self-discovery. It's a month when we should try to increase our spiritual reward by engaging in various constructive activities for the cause of Allah, for peace and brotherhood.

It's an ideal occasion for spreading the message of Islam and removing misunderstandings. Lately, Islam has come under attack from its critics who have been working overtime to create doubts and confusion about its real message. This is the time to make a sincere attempt to remove such misgivings and earn reward through good deeds and fair dealings with people from all walks of life.

During the holy month our Lord bestows His bounty upon the fasting believers and multiplies the rewards generously for all our righteous deeds. No wonder, people compete with one another in undertaking good deeds, whether by offering iftar in mosque or by distributing water and dates near traffic lights for people on the move.

Ramadan is also a month when we should seek to attain a higher degree of piety. Faith is deepened by acts of obedience to Allah and weakened by acts of disobedience. It's Satan that instigates us to disobey Allah and incur His displeasure by indulging in wrongful actions. Since Satan is imprisoned during the holy month, the door is open for us to engage in charitable and noble deeds. Ramadan also gives us an opportunity to be true to ourselves and avoid being a hypocrite. Allah says in the Qur'an: "O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? Most hated is it in the sight of Allah that you say which do not do." Once must therefore strive to be honest and sincere in one's deeds and in our dealings with others. In the west they always talk about "keeping it real." What this means is

that we should not put up some kind of false personality and try to be what we are not. It is unfortunate that some of our actions and behaviour have created a distorted image of Islam in the west. The month of Ramadan provides a unique opportunity to correct by being sincere in our attitude and conduct.

The intensity of prayers and noble deeds goes a long way in subduing evil thoughts and the propensity to indulge in mischief. In fact, the spirit of egoism and the hunger for power and greed the root cause of all evils and conflicts in the world. The UN Charter declare that since wars arise in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men the defenses of peace should be constructed. Significantly, this is also the essence of Islamic thought and teachings- to refine the human being by alleviating his thoughts and actions above his baser instincts.

Here the role of Islamic education comes into play. By curing man of his evil desires, it instills in him an urge to do good and earn reward from Allah. Such a spirit every fasting Muslim fosters a real sense of unity and occasion to hold and inter-faith dialogue. The dialogue of civilization is nothing less than human encounters whose focus is to build up a civilization of love and peace. These are all called upon to promote such a dialogue as a way of bringing about an appreciation of other cultures and religions. The ultimate objective of such an effort should be a projected humanity as a single family by a desire to learn about other people and to share their feelings and concerns. Islamic history is replete with examples in which lifestyle, of its rulers had a profound impact on non-Muslims who reverted to Islam. Moreover, a dialogue of civilization could go a long way in promoting religious harmony through respect for different religious traditions. It also provides a platform for removing misgivings created through anti-Islamic literature or experiences with misguided followers of Islam. ■

# ESTABLISH PRAYER AND GIVE ZAKAT

The Qur'an always emphasizes on the issue of feeding the hungry and helping those who are in need, and the more you help, the more God helps you. And the more you give, the more God gives you. Since the month of Ramadan is the month of doing all the good deeds, and the good deeds are multiplied during that month, so the people try to give their zakat in the month of Ramadan to get more and more blessings. Zakat is always connected in the Qur'an with prayer. As Allah says, "Establish prayer and give zakat. Give in charity." You cannot claim that you are a true believer without helping others. The whole religion of Islam is based on helping others.

When you give, you feel a special gift from the Almighty in your heart. You feel that you are taking care of others as God is taking care of you.

## **Conditions that make Zakat obligatory**

There are two conditions for Zakat to be obligatory on the wealth.

1. Being in possession of Nisab i.e. possessing property in excess of a minimum exemption limit.

2. On completion of one Lunar year on the wealth. According to Hanafi, if a person possess wealth equal to or in surplus of Nisab in the beginning and at the end of the lunar year, (even though in between the year, the wealth was less than the Nisab), Zakat is obligatory, but if at the end of the lunar year if the wealth is less than the Nisab (though one had wealth equal to or in surplus during the year) Zakat is not obligatory. According to Shafie the passage of one lunar year is a must on the wealth (Nisab) (in Hanbali almost a year). The Zakat is calculated on the day on which a year is completed on that wealth (Nisab).

## **Nisab**

Zakat is paid on the surplus of wealth which is left

over after the passage of a year (Lunar Year). It is thus a payment on the accumulated wealth, leaving our animal and agricultural yield. Zakat is paid at almost a uniform rate of 2 1/2%. The minimum standard of surplus of wealth over which Zakat is charged is known as Nisab. It differs with different kinds of property. In case of silver it is 52 1/2 Tolas (634 grams), in case of gold it is 7 1/2 Tolas (88 grams). The Nisab for cash is the same as that of gold and silver.

### **On Whom Zakat is obligatory**

Zakat is obligatory of every Adult free Muslim man and woman, provided the above two conditions are fulfilled. According to Imam Malik, Shafie and Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal, Zakat is obligatory of the wealth of the Minor and insane person, and it has to be paid by the guardian. Whereas, according to Imam Abu Hanifa it is not obligatory. Since Zakat is an act of worship, the intention is a must and hence it is not obligatory on the wealth of a minor and the insane person.

### **Zakat on Woman's Mehr**

According to Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik, the wife need not pay Zakat on the Mehr amount still due by her husband. However Zakat will have to be paid on the amount she has claimed, provided it is equivalent to or more than the Nisab and on which one year has been completed. According to Imam Shafie, the wife has to pay the Zakat every year (though she herself is not claiming the Mehr, even though it can be claimed). According to Hanbali, the wife has to pay the Zakat for the entire number of years at the time when she gets it.

### **Zakat on Business Goods or Stock-in-Trade**

All types of goods for sale, whatever may be its form, whether hand made or machine products or fruits or books or jewellery or clothes or cattle or property brought with the intention of buying and selling etc., are liable for Zakat. Provided it is in one's possession for one complete lunar



year and the rate of Zakat applicable is 2 1/2% on its total value. The prescribed limit on goods is after conversion, in terms of its value, the total amount thus evaluated must be equivalent to the price of 634 grams of silver. If less, then Zakat is not obligatory.

### **Zakat on company or partnership, Silver, Gold, Currency and Shares**

If any wealth or property is held jointly by two or more persons, then according to Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik, Zakat is not obligatory on any person until each individual's share is equal to the value of the Nisab.

Zakat on Silver, Gold, Currency and Shares. The minimum prescribed limit on which Zakat becomes obligatory on Silver is 52 1/2 Tolas (634 grams), and of Gold 7 1/2 Tolas (88 grams) and is known as Nisab. Zakat on Silver or Gold items is one fortieth of its weight, i.e. 2 1/2%. Zakat on Silver or Gold is not calculated on its value but on its weight. However if one possesses some Gold and some Silver and neither of them is in the prescribed limit, then if their total cost is equal to the price of 634 grams of Silver, Zakat becomes due on it.

### **Zakat on the Ornaments of a woman**

Zakat is due on all the Gold and Silver ornaments, jewellery, and Gold or Silver lace woven into clothes, gold thread embroidered dresses for ladies, etc. Hadrath Umm Salman says that she used to put on (Gold) bracelets. When she asked the Prophet (pbuh) whether it was Kanz (hoarded wealth), he replied:

"When a piece of property reaches up to the prescribed limit and Zakat is duly paid on it, it is not Kanz". (Abu Dawood). Imam Abu Hanifa, his disciples and some scholars hold the above opinion. According to Imam Malik, Shafie, Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal and other scholars, there is no Zakat on the woman's ornaments. According to some other scholars, the Zakat on ornaments is due only once in a

lifetime. The difference of opinion among scholars is only on the ornaments in use by the woman, but there is a consensus among all the scholars that Zakat is liable on the excess of the ornaments held in possession as wealth.

### **Zakat on the Bank Deposit and on Provident Fund**

Both these fall under the status of debt. According to Hanafi school of thought: Both of them are liable for Zakat for all the years and it has to be paid, when out of it and amount equivalent to the value of 10 1/2 Tolas of Silver or more is claimed. According to Hanbali school of thought, also that Zakat is liable on both for all the years. It has to be paid when an amount equivalent to the Nisab or more is claimed.

According to the Maliki school of thought, the Zakat on Bank deposit is liable for all the years and it has to be paid when the amount is received. On the provident fund, since the person does not have any power to claim it, so Zakat is liable at the time when it is received and it has to be paid for one year only. According to Shafie school of thought, the Zakat on the Bank Deposit has to be paid every year. The Zakat on provident fund has to be made for all the years and it has to be paid when he is entitled to receive it, though he may claim it or not in time.

### **Zakat on Agricultural Produce (Ushr) (fruit vegetable and flowers)**

The Prophet (pbuh) said "On a land irrigated by rain water or by natural water channels or if the land is wet due to a nearby water channel, Ushr (i.e. one tenth) is compulsory (as Zakat); and on the land irrigated by the well, Ushr (i.e. one twentieth i.e. 5%) is compulsory (as Zakat on the yield of the land)".

A basic principle has been laid down for the Zakat in the agricultural produce. If the land is irrigated by artificial methods, one twentieth part (5%) of the yield is to be paid, if it is irrigated by rainfall, streams, rivers, fountains or by

the inner moisture of the earth, i.e., by natural resources of water, then one tenth (Ushr) 10% is to be paid as Zakat. There is some difference of opinion whether Ushr is levied on all types of agricultural yield or on some particular types.

According to Imam Abu Hanifa, Zakat is to be paid on all types of agricultural yield, provided the aim of cultivation is to improve upon the land and make it more useful for growing of crops. Thus only fuel, bamboo, grass and trees which bear no fruits are exempted from Zakat. He considers Zakat to be compulsory even on vegetables and fruits, which according to some Hadith, are exempted from Zakat. The scholars have reconciled the two views saying that the exemption granted in case of vegetables implies that the proceeds of the Zakat are not to be sent to the Bait ul Mal, but the owner may himself distribute it among the poor.

Ushr is to be paid at the time of harvest. Whereas in the other types of Zakat, one should be in possession of the wealth for one complete year.

### **Zakat on Animals**

Zakat is obligatory on goats, sheep, cows, buffaloes and camels which graze on wild grass, plant laves and on some feed, now and then given by the owner, and on the above animals meant for sale.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "By Allah in whose hand my life is, whoever had camels or cows or sheep and did not pay their Zakat, those animals will be brought on the Day of Resurrection far bigger and fatter than before and they will tread him under their hooves, and will butt him with their horns and (those animals will come in circle) when the last does its turn, the first will start again and this punishment will go on till Allah has finished the judgments amongst the people."

### **Zakat on Minerals and Buried Wealth / Treasure**

Zakat on Minerals and hidden wealth is one twentieth

5%. According to Imam Abu Hanifa, minerals are classified into three groups:

1. Gold, Silver, Brass, Bronze, Iron etc.
2. Crude Oil, etc.
3. Diamonds, precious stones etc.

Zakat on the first group only is Waajib (compulsory) and is to be paid at the time of acquiring. Here minimum period of one year in possession does not apply.

### **To Whom Zakat cannot be given**

1. Zakat cannot be given to a person who owns atleast 7 1/2 tolas of Gold or 52 1/2 tolas of Silver or equivalent wealth in cash, kind or in trade goods. If Zakat money is given to such a person, then the obligation will not be discharged. For such a person to receive and accept Zakat is forbidden and to use it is haraam.

If a person owns household goods over and above that which are necessary for his normal use, such as carpets, utensils or other goods which are owned and kept in possession, but are hardly in frequent use, then such goods do not come under essentials, but in accumulated wealth, and Zakat cannot be given to the person possessing them.

#### **2. To non-Muslims**

3. To some relatives: Zakat cannot be given to one's mother, father, paternal and maternal grand-parents, great grand-parents, etc. Likewise, Zakat cannot be given to one's offspring-sons, daughters, grand-children, great grand-children, etc. Zakat cannot be given by husband to wife, nor by wife to husband. Except for these, Zakat can be given to other relatives such as brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, etc.

4. To children: The position of a minor child is linked with his or her father. If the father is wealthy, then the child will also be considered as rich and Zakat cannot be given

to him. If the father is poor enough to receive Zakat but the mother is rich, then Zakat could be given to the child because the child's financial position is linked with that of the father, not the mother.

5. To Sayyeds: Sayyeds are the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through his daughter Hazrat Fatima (ra) and the descendants of his uncle Abbas and his cousins Aqeel, Haris, etc., Zakat as well as Sadaqah and Fitra cannot be given to them.

6. Zakat cannot be given to a person in payment of services rendered by him or in payment of wages to a teacher, caretaker, etc. It can, however, be given to such a person as a gift, if desired.

7. Zakat cannot be given to domestic or other servants as wages. Zakat money can be given to them as a gift over and above the wages paid to them.

- One of the conditions of the discharge of Zakat is that the person who receives it must become the unfettered owner of the amount of Zakat paid to him.

- Zakat cannot be given for building repairing or maintaining a mosque because a mosque is a place of worship which does not belong to anyone.

- To pay debts of a deceased: If a poor man dies in debt and someone uses Zakat money to pay the debts of the deceased, then the actions will be invalid and the obligation to pay Zakat will not be discharged, because the deceased did not become owner of the money paid for the discharge of the debt. The heirs of the deceased, however, if they are poor, can receive Zakat and discharge the debt of the deceased, if they desire to do so.

- To pay funeral expenses Zakat money cannot be used to pay expenses relating to the funeral and burial of a person. But the heirs of the deceased, if they are poor, can receive and accept Zakat and use the money for the burial expenses of their deceased relative.

- Zakat must be given on, and from, a commodity—that is, a portion of the wealth itself can be given in charity to discharge the obligation. But we are also permitted to determine the Zakat due and give its value in cash.

### **To whom Zakat can be given**

1. Faqir or beggar.
2. Miskeen or destitute.
3. Amil or petty collector of Zakat.
4. For emancipation of slaves.
5. For liquidation of a debt of a person who, if he himself liquidates it, will not be left with Nisab.
6. Fi-sabil-il-Lah or in the cause of God.
7. Ibn-us-sabil i.e., a wayfarer.

A faqir is one who has got something but less than Nisab or if it is equivalent to Nisab, it is required for his actual needs.

A miskeen or destitute [person] is one who has nothing, not even to feed and clothe himself.

Fi-Sabil-il-Lah means spending in the way of God like giving money to one who wants to go for the engagement in Jihad, but has not got the means to do it, or to a student who wants to go for religious studies (ilm-ūd-din) but cannot afford it himself, or a person who wants to go for Haj, but he has not got the means to do so.

Ibn-us-Sabil is a wayfarer without goods and money in the course of a journey although he may be having it at his home.

By Amil is meant the officials employed in the collection of Zakat. The Imam is to allow as much of it as is in proportion to his labour and is sufficient for him and his assistants. It is paid in the manner of a reward for services rendered.

### **Zakat-ul-Fitr**

- Zakat-ul-Fitr is a type of Sadaqah which must be paid by every Muslim, young and old, male and female,

free and slave, at the end of the Month of Fasting (Ramadan).

- The purpose of Zakat-ul-Fitr is to purify one who fasts, from any indecent act or speech and to help the poor and needy.

- Zakat-ul-Fitr is incumbent on every free Muslim who possesses one Sa of dates or barley (One Sa is equal to approximately 3 kgs) which is not needed as a basic food for himself or his family for the duration of one day and night. Every free Muslim must pay Zakat-ul-Fitr for himself, his wife, children, and servants. (One Sa' equals approximately three kilograms).

- The required amount of Zakat-ul-Fitr is one Sa' of wheat, rice or corn or similar items considered as basic foods.

- Abu Hanifa made it permissible to set aside, as Zakat-ul-Fitr, and equivalent value and also said that if the payer pays in wheat, one half of a Sa' would be sufficient.

- Most scholars believe that it is permissible to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr a day or two before Eid. According to Abu Hanifah, it is permissible to pay it even before Ramadan. Ash Sahfi holds that it is permissible to do so at the beginning of Ramadan. Malik and Ahmad maintain that it is permissible to pay it only one or two days in advance.

As-Sadaqat (here it means Zakat) are only for the Fuqara (the poor who do not beg) and Al-Masakin (the poor who beg) and those employed to collect funds and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined towards Islam and to free the captives and for those in debt and for Allah's cause (i.e. for Mujahidin-those fighting in the Holy Wars) and for those for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything), a duty imposed by Allah and Allah is All-Knower, All Wise (Surah Tauba-9-verse 60)■

Courtesy: Islamic Voice

### **Glasgow Central Mosque**

The Glasgow Central Mosque on the banks of the River Clyde is the largest mosque in Scotland, and one of the largest in the United Kingdom. The Mosque was opened in 1984. The Muslim population of Scotland is around 50,000 and comprises mainly Arabs, Pakistanis, Turks, African, Malaysians and Indian Muslims. The Mosque which can accommodate 2500 worshippers was built at a cost of around 3 million Pounds. ■



# VANDE MATARAM

Kancha Ilaiah

With the other students in my small village school, I used to sing the first two stanzas of *Vande Mataram* as a boy. Though I did not understand what it meant, I used to like the song at the time. Now after 45 years, as I witness the raging debate over the song, I have to think about what the song means to Dalit-Bahujans and in what context its author, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, wrote it.

To my shock, I discover that the song was written to instigate Hindu *Sanyasis* to make a communal attack against Muslims in the novel *Anandamath*. As is well known, *maths* are Hindu spiritual shrines where only Brahmin *sanyasis* are allowed to live. Tribals, Dalits and Sudars have no place in these hallowed *maths* even today. Shankara *maths*, the epicenters of Hinduism, are the best examples of this Brahminic Hindu culture. In the mid-and late-19th century, when Bankim lived and wrote his books, even Sudars could not enter these *maths*, leave alone Dalits.

Bankim was a contemporary of Mahatma Jotirao Phule whose book *Gulamgiri* (*Slavery*) on abolition of caste was published in the 1850s. In Kerala, even in those days, the festival Onam was being celebrated in praise of Bali Chakravarthi, a victim of the Brahmin Vamana, considered one of the *avatars* of Vishnu.

Even in Bengal, William Carey, the creative evangelist, had started working among tribals and lower castes by having the Bible translated into the people's Bengali language, and not the Brahminical Bengali of Bankim.

When Bankim wrote *Anandamath*, which was published as a full-length novel in 1882 (it was earlier serialised in his journal) he had already witnessed the 1857 sepoy rebellion, in which Hindu (mainly upper caste) and Muslim soldiers participated.

Those were the times when preparations were being made to launch the Indian National Congress.

In this atmosphere of national reforms and anti-colonial struggle, why did Bankim write a novel with Brahmin *sanyasis* as protagonists revolting against the Muslims and not the British? The reason could be that quite a lot of Dalit Bahujan castes and tribals must have been moving into Islam. As M.J. Akbar noted in his recent book *Blood Brothers*, conversion of masses of people into Islam had made Hindus as minority in East Bengal.

Caste oppression and the control of Brahminism over Hinduism was the main reason for the productive masses moving into Islam.

Brahmin intellectuals like Bankim were obviously more worried about the exodus into Islam than colonial rule. It was probably as a representative of the Brahminic social force that Bankim wrote that novel.

*Vande Mataram* is a song that instigates. It is not a liberating song. There is no reformative appeal in it. The weapon-wielding Durga is the prime metaphor around which the song was woven. It was written to embolden the *sanyasis* to rebel against the Muslims. Who were these Muslims? The majority of them were SCs, STs and OBCs who moved into Islam because of the caste oppression within Hinduism. Did Bankim ask only the *sanyasis* to salute Mother Durga or did he address the entire nation including SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities to build a socially harmonious and egalitarian nation? There is no reference to the social mass and its productive ethics in the song.

In Aurobindo's translation of the song it reads:

*"Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,  
With her hands that strike and sword of sheen,  
Thou art Lakshmi Lotus-throned."*

From the above stanza there is no doubt that the song was meant to instigate violence.

It invokes Goddess Durga, whose iconic form shows her holding a *trishul* and wearing a garland of human heads. This cannot be taken as a symbol of a woman's revolt against patriarchy. We know that Bengal is one of the most patriarchal regions in India. The openly displayed violent Goddess or God images were essentially meant to protect and perpetuate the system of Varnadharma. Bengali nationalist writers used the violent Durga image to fortify Bhadrakal Brahminism.

What is the relation ship of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati with the SCs, STs and OBC masses? In Bengal, Surdas and Namsudras have no right to priesthood. The situation is the same all over India. Spiritual untouchability is an existential reality. Neither Marxist rule of the last 25 years nor the general democratic rule of last 60 years has changed caste cultural relations in Bengal and India.

When *Vande Mataram* was adopted as a national song it was done with deeply internalised Brahminic view. It was only after Muslim scholars objected that two stanzas, which do not make direct reference to Durga, were adopted. But the repeatedly uttered "mother" does refer to Durga, with whom the Dalit Bahujan masses cannot mediate as dignified human beings.

The song stands against the annihilation of caste and untouchability and that was why the Sangh Parivar adopted it. It essentially represents Hindu Brahminism.

As an OBC I would never sing *Vande Mataram* as it represents Bhadrakal Brahminism and not the nations as whole. ■

Courtesy: Asian Age (5/10/06)

Eat of your Lord's provision, and give thanks to Him.

Holy Qur'an

If I have enjoyed the hospitality  
of the Host of this universe,  
Who daily spreads a table in my  
sight, surely I cannot do less  
than acknowledge my  
dependence.

GA Johnston Ross

# MUSLIM RULERS

M. Riaz Hasan\*

The Muslim world today encompasses a motley collection of 55 countries that stretch across the globe from Indonesia to Morocco. They are as diverse and different economically, politically and culturally as their geographic location. Even the Islam that they claim to practise and which should have united them is not the same that Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) ushered into the world some 1426 years ago. Although they call themselves Islamic, none of them seem to govern their people on the basis of the Islamic principles of justice, equality and brotherhood. Their constitutions may be based on these principles but their governance is not. They are either brutal dictatorships, feudal monarchies or military-run oligarchies.

Five of the top 10 dictators in the world, according to the political weekly *New Statesman*, are Muslims. Their record in the matter of human rights, which the *Qur'an* upholds and guarantees, is unspeakable.

## Heinous crime

Islamic civilisation reached its zenith during the period 8th to 15th century and, according to the European Renaissance. Its decline and fall started as the Umayyad, Abbaside, Fatimide and Moghul empires fell.

Since 9/11, the Islamic civilisation has been perceived as inferior, according to the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and the Christian God "Higher" than Allah, according to the American, General William Boykin.

Muslim and their rulers are in a state of total selfdenial. Everything that afflicts and blights them is not theirs but someone else's fault. The West is blamed and held responsible for most of their internal and external problems. Most of the festering problems of the Middle East are put down to the Sykes-Picot plan, which redrew and re-

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delineated the Middle East map, and the Balfour Declaration which promised the Jews a homeland and resulted in the creation of Israel. The problems of the Indian subcontinent, notably Kashmir, are attributed to the British who partitioned the subcontinent before they left. The Indonesians believe that a corrupt military dictatorship in Indonesia under Suharto was installed and sustained by the U.S.A. The harrowing tale of colonial rule in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries of Africa is encapsulated in several books, including *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

In a fine Urdu couplet, the late Allama Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of the Indian subcontinent, addressed the Muslims of the world and wrote: *Europe key ghulami pay raza mand hua too/ Mujhko toh gila tujhse hai Europe say nahi hai* (You accepted the thralldom of the West, I blame you for it and not the West).

The 55 countries that constitute the Islamic Diaspora are in total disarray. The role of organisations like the Arab League and the Conference of Islamic Countries is worse than that of a parish council in a Third World country. How can organisations that represent countries with differing political agendas, governing systems, economies and cultures succeed? Islam seems to divide rather than unite them. In an Arab League meeting in Cairo not long ago two heads of state indulged in an abusive slanging match as the world watched them on TV screens. At another CIS meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the participants could not agree on the definition of terrorism and the meeting was abandoned.

The Middle East, where Islam was born and which contains some of the richest oil-producing countries in the world, has a population of 175 million or about 11 per cent of the total Muslim population of the world. In one of his poems, Allama Iqbal described it as a region where (*Mustafa nayaab, arzan Bulaheb*) the Prophet (pbuh) is rare and scarce but Bulaheb, a heretic who always found faults with the Prophet (pbuh), is common and popular.

The description of the Middle East seems as apt and appropriate today as it was when Allama Iqbal wrote it some eight decades ago. Most of the countries are close allies of the U.S.A. Tony Blair recently described Saudi Arabia, a feudal monarchy of mainly Wahabi Muslims, as "a world". Both Iran and Syria are regarded as pariah states. Iran is a republic in principle but a theocracy in practice and Syria, a secular autocracy, is ruled by the Alawi dynasty. Iraq is the fifth biggest oil producer in the world and, like Saudi Arabia, has several Islamic holy places.

The Indian subcontinent, comprising India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, has a total Muslim population of 440 million or 28 per cent of the world Muslim population. Pakistan has been under military rule most of the time since it was created in 1947. The present head of state, General Pervez Musharraf, is the "West's favourite dictator". It is also one of the failed states of the world which had close links both with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in the past. A hotbed of international terrorism, it established some 10,000 madrasas all over the country with Saudi financial aid mainly to religionise the Kashmir issue.

### **Political instability**

Bangladesh was created by the sudden break-up of Pakistan in 1971. After an initial period of political instability, a democratically-elected President and Parliament now rule the country. India, with a Muslim population of 140 million, is a secular democratic republic where Muslims enjoy greater democracy and freedom than anywhere else. They are also the most enlightened, tolerant and educated Muslims in the world. It is because of these reasons that there are no Muslim terrorists from India anywhere in the world today.

Indonesia has just emerged from the yoke of a 30-year long Suharto dictatorship. Malaysia had the potential of becoming a model Muslim state, but the actions of its autocratic leader, Mahatir Mohammed, who arrested and jailed his friend and deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, on trumped up

charges of sodomy etc, has permanently tarnished its image both at home and abroad. Somalia in the Horn of Africa is perhaps the only country without a government of over two decades.

The 9/11 catastrophe has been viewed by several Muslim rulers as an elaborate conspiracy of the West against Islam. Soon after 9/11, I visited the Middle East and there I met a most senior cleric. He was well-versed in Islamic theology and history but as soon as 9/11 surfaced in our discussion he blurted out: "Do you believe what you see on TV screens? It was all a conspiracy of the West and the Zionists". He didn't produce any evidence to substantiate what he claimed. The other reason that it put forward in support of the conspiracy theory relates to the capability of Muslims to carry out a sophisticated, meticulously planned and efficiently executed operation such as 9/11 even if some of those involved were highly educated.

Many Muslims think such an operation could be carried out either by the CIA or the Israeli Mossad. The conspiracy theory has also gained currency in the West since such books as *9/11: The Big Lie*; *The 9/11 Commission Report*; *Omissions and Distortions* and *The New Pearl harbour: disturbing questions about Bush administration and 9/11 have been published*. Whether 9/11 was a conspiracy or not, no Islamic country or organisation has taken any concrete steps to prove or disprove it.

### **Remained silent**

The reaction of the Muslim rulers to the incident and its aftermath has been conspicuously characterised by apathy or impotence. Only the moderate Muslims of the world or the 'silent majority' spoke against the atrocity while their respective rulers remained silent or indifferent. How could they condemn or criticise what happened on 9/11 when, in fact, one of the aims of the hijackers was to bring about a radical change in the governance of the countries



they came from.

The lack of any solution of the Palestinian problem and the continued bloodshed in the occupied territories, the hijackers claimed, was one of the principal reasons for their actions. But why should the hijackers or the Muslims in general hold the West responsible for the present impasse in Palestine? What have the Muslim rulers individually or collectively done to solve this problem and to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians? Nothing. If the U.S.A. and Europe are standing shoulder to shoulder in their defence of Israel and if the U.S.A. uses its veto in the U.N. Security Council 40 times in Israel's favour, why doesn't the Muslim world apply economic sanctions against the U.S.A. and Europe as the latter two did against Iran, Libya and Iraq?

But this is inconceivable because the rulers that are able to do it are themselves puppets of America and Europe. And so the bloody saga of the occupied Palestinian territories continues while the whole world watches passively on TV screens Israel turning them into veritable prisons.

The U.S.A. and its coalition partners decided to invade Afghanistan and then Iraq rather than hunt Osama bin Laden and his followers through over or covert means in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The war in Afghanistan was fought with UN approval but the invasion of Iraq was "illegal", according to the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. The Muslim rulers remained silent and supine as Afghanistan and Iraq were laid waste by continuous bombardment from air or shelling by heavy tanks and armour. By the time the first American and British bombs dropped, Afghanistan was already a stone-age country, thanks to a 10 year civil war and the Russian occupation that preceded it. The Iraqi invasion, it now emerges, was planned by the Bush administration long before 9/11 and the claim by Bush and Blair that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs, the whole world now knows, was false and bogus.

Two authoritative and well-researched reports by the

American Senate have concluded that there was no link whatsoever between Saddam and Al-Qaida. People all over the world protested against the Iraq war in their millions but in some Middle East countries, which remained quiet outwardly but actively supported the invasion, people were too afraid to demonstrate. Today, some three years after Bush declared "mission accomplished", Iraq stands on the brink of a civil war and some of its provinces are beyond the government or American control. In Afghanistan, the world was solemnly assured five years ago that the first war on terror was won, democracy had been inducted from the barrel of the gun and the Taliban had been banished into oblivion. Some 20,000 soldiers under NATO (a new and strange role for NATO!) are back to fight the re-emerging and rejuvenated Talibans.

In the recent 34-day Lebanon-Israel war, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan condemned Hezbollah for starting it while their respective populations supported Hezbollah and hailed it as victors. The Muslim rulers remain in a fitful slumber while the people they rule are beginning to defy and challenge them.

The colossal loss of human lives and the unprecedented destruction of infrastructure, national treasures and religious monuments in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon are being described as part of the inevitable 'collateral damage'. The killing of some 75,000 civilians in Iraq and 25,000 in Afghanistan has not raised any eyebrows among Muslim rulers. The rape and killing of 24 innocent civilians, including five women and six children, in Haditha in cold blood by U.S. soldiers in retaliation for the killing of one of their colleagues and the siege and massacre of Falluja, unobserved by the outside world, seems to have gone unnoticed by the Muslim rulers. Muslim lives have become so expendable that in Iraq and Afghanistan 15 Muslim lives have become equal to one American life and in Palestine 10 Palestinian lives are equal to one Israeli life. The existence of such modern Gulags as Guantanamo Bay,

Abu Gharib and bagram, where torture has acquired a new meaning and where naked men were piled up in mounds or led on a leash like dogs and where the *Qur'an* was desecrated and the prisoners were urinated upon shocked the people the world over except, it seems, the Muslim rulers.

### **Silent subservience**

The burning of the famous Islamic library in Iraq, which had some of the most precious manuscripts in the world, and the bombing and destruction of holy shrines and mosques in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, have stirred and shaken both Muslims and non-Muslims alike but the Muslim rulers remain nonplussed. Their silence, subservience and inaction in face of daily war crimes against the ordinary, law-abiding, and mostly poor civilians, are breath taking. No Muslim country has broken off diplomatic relations with the U.S.A. or threatened to do so. In fact, no one has even withdrawn its ambassador from Washington in protest so far.

Their silence and inaction has left the last word to the extremists and the moderate Muslims are bearing the brunt of their silence. Unless they seize the initiative from the extremists and redress their grievances, the profound words for Allama Iqbal, which he wrote during a similar crisis, might prove prophetic: "If you do not comprehend the gravity of the situation, you will perish and your long history will not even be a part of the folklore". ■

Courtesy: The Statesman

## **Islam Honours Women**

Islam is the religion which honours women and protects them, aiming to keep them safe and chaste, because this protects the whole society. So the woman offers comfort to the man and in his confidante and nurse, the one who breastfeeds him and nurses him. So if she is righteous, then she prepares a righteous generation for the future.

The home is the woman's domain, her base of operations in life. The Qur'an and Sunnah command women to stay in their houses. Allah has given both spouses their rights, and had enjoined upon each their duties, so that the structure of the family and the society may complement one another. So the man has to work and strive to earn a living, and spend on his family, and the woman has to take care of breastfeeding, nurturing and bringing up the children. If she forsakes her domestic duties, then the whole family suffers, emotionally and physically. ■

## CIRCUMCISION TO RESCUE OF AIDS

Nayare Ali

While much of the world associates circumcision with religious identity, studies are showing that this procedure may actually have lifesaving potential. Circumcision, research suggests, could actually reduce the chances of HIV infection. In fact, at the recently-held International AIDS conference in Toronto, former US President Bill Clinton, felt so hopeful about the preventive value of circumcision, that he made a forceful plea to the world to overcome the cultural and religious taboos that are associated with it, recognising full well that the road would be a bumpy one.

Clinton stated, "If the trials had good results, we will have another means to prevent the spread of the disease and to save lives. It is important that as we leave here we will all be prepared for a green light that could have a staggering impact on the male population but that will be frankly a lot of trouble to get it done."

In India, where HIV/AIDS is a problem of serious proportions, and where circumcision is strongly identified with religious beliefs, persuading many of circumcision's benefits may not be as easy as a wish. Still, it is worth generating a debate on the subject if it indeed has the potential to curb the spread of this dreaded disease. Sex specialist Dr. Kambhampati Swayam Prakash, who is currently attending the International AIDS Conference in Toronto, is cautiously optimistic about these recent developments, says, "Circumcision will prevent a number of sexually transmitted diseases including penile cancer in men and cancer of the cervix in women. It may also help in controlling AIDS/HIV spread to some extent. But it is not an absolute shield against AIDS," says Dr. Prakash.

The current debate was sparked off by the findings South African and French researchers who discovered in a study that men who underwent the circumcision procedure

had a 60 per cent lower risk of contracting AIDS. Three other studies are already underway in Kenya and Uganda, as per the report handed out by the Global HIV Prevention Working Group. Researchers are looking at different age groups of men and ways of carrying out the circumcision operation. One of the trials is following 7,000 women in Uganda to see whether they are less likely to get HIV if their partners have been circumcised. The results are expected next year.

Sexologist Dr. G. Samaram, agrees that circumcision will definitely check AIDS spread in 25 to 50 per cent of the cases, it is "hygienic sex" that will control the menace up to as much as 60 to 70 per cent.

"One should wash the genitals after every sexual act. This prevents the growth of harmful and disease-causing germs. Since the prepuce is cut during circumcision, there's little scope of germs (bacteria or virus) spreading between partners. Since circumcision is generally linked to religion (Islam and Judaism), people of other religions may not like the idea." In fact, this is exactly what the *Guardian* pointed out, adding that while Muslims are circumcised in India, Hindus are not, "and the difference is associated with religious identity."

During sectarian violence, men have been known to pull down each other's trousers as a means of identifying friend from enemy." This, in fact, may be the toughest battle for India. Promoting safe sex and prevention has largely been the job of NGOs in the country, and they may have to tread carefully if they choose to include circumcision education as part of their AIDS prevention agenda.

Indian NGOs have actually been conducting their own studies on circumcision and HIV. They appear to have found that circumcision may have some preventive benefits, but are wary about over-playing its importance.

Says N.V.S. Rammohan, convener of Network Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Andhra

Pradesh, an NGO working for rehabilitation of AIDS and HIV patients, "From what we have observed in our field studies, circumcision may bring down the risk factor, but will not eliminate it. Even if circumcision controls AIDS/HIV, one should not promote it because people who are circumcised will feel that they can have sex with anyone they like. This is nothing but legalising illegal sex." The medical community too fears that people may think of circumcision as some kind of "vaccine" against AIDS, which it certainly isn't, so they are hesitant to give it an unqualified thumbs up.

Dr. Aftab Ahmed, consultant physician of Apollo Hospitals, Secunderabad, points out, "Circumcision doesn't prevent transmission of infection. Sexual encounters with multiple partners, with or without circumcision, increase the chances of transmission of HIV. Safe sex and usage of condoms is the best means of preventing transmission of HIV." While the results of the studies in Kenya and Uganda are awaited, there are those even in the international community who feel a studied and comprehensive approach must be taken in promoting circumcision world-wide.

In a World Health Organisation report, Catherine Hankins, Chief Scientific Adviser, UNAIDS was stated saying, "If male circumcision is proven to be effective, it must be considered as just one element of a comprehensive HIV prevention package that includes correct and consistent use of condoms, reductions of sexual relations, and voluntary and confidential counselling and HIV testing to know one's HIV serostatus.

Just as combination treatment is more effective than single drug therapy for people with HIV, combination prevention is more effective than reliance on a single HIV prevention method." ■

### An on Burial Shrouds with Verses -

The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the prevention of Vice in Jeddah has banned the sales of green death shrouds that have sacred writing on them. The Commission's move follows a recent edict (fatwa) clarifying that the practice of writing verses from the holy Qur'an, the names of Allah, or various kinds of prayers on the shrouds is against the basic principles of religious law. the Commission seized large quantities of prohibited shrouds from several shops in Bani Malik in central Jeddah during recent inspection operations. The religious scholars have noticed recently the increasing practice among several people, both Saudis and expatriates of covering the bodies of their relatives with holy verses, prayers and the various names of Allah in the hope of escaping punishment after death. ■



# MUSLIM WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

Intikhab Alam Khan\*

Women Education is of great concern for all Philosophers and Educationists. Unless, there is a development in the field of women Education, the over all development of Education or national development is perhaps impossible. Muslims live in India in great numbers, perhaps more than many Arab countries. Therefore muslim women education is important for the development of muslims as well as India as a whole. The following attempt would help to analyse the relevance of Muslim women Education in particular.

Though women in ancient India could not enjoy wide educational opportunities, the high social status enabled them with an easy access to education. The women in Vedic age who studied the sacred texts had full access to different branches of knowledge. They also took part in religious and philosophical discussions. But, various political, social and economic changes that came about in the late 18th century changed the status of women. Education of women was affected by the restricted role that the woman was offered to play in society. It played an important role to check and go along with various practices like 'Sati', 'Purdah' system etc. as per the need. This position of women did not change even after India was controlled by the East India Company. The earliest modern schools for girls were started by the Christian missionaries. By the end of 19th century progress in education of women could be seen although at a slower pace.

The beginning of the 20th century noticed some developments in the field of education as a result of the changes in the status of women. The rise in the age of marriage and the demand for educated girls by educated families for marriages contributed to the development of women's education. In 1921, education from the state level

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was transferred to the control of Indian Ministers under the system of Dyarchy, and in 1937, Provincial autonomy was introduced, as a result, the state took an active role in women's education.

### **Post Independence Period**

At the time of independence, only 8% of women were literate. This was largely due to the indifferent attitude of the Government and the decision to leave the education of women in private hands. After independence, efforts from all directions resulted into the rise of the educational status of women. The constituent assembly of India resolved on Nov. 26, 1949 to provide to all the citizens of India equal rights, liberty of thought, expressions, justice - both social and economic. The Fundamental rights guarantee equal rights on all citizens. Article 15 states that "there would be no discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, race, sex or birth". Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity to all. Articles 29 and 30 give right to education to all. Above all, there has always been a provision to get free and compulsory education for all children upto 14 years of age.

The National Committee on women's education appointed by the Government of India (1958-59) identified certain major problems and advised the Government to focus its policy efforts on reducing the gap between men and women within the educational processes and to eliminate any difference in the curricula between two sexes.

The National Council of Women's Education (1974) suggested that apart from other problems, the problem of grants was found to be very important. It stated that the grants should be given to projects undertaken for the improvement of education of girls and women. The school curriculum should be made meaningful to increase the enrolment of women.

The Bhaktavatsalam Committee (1963) recommended that special programmes suggested by the National Committee on Women's Education should be emphasised

and attention should be given to education of all girls at all stages as an integral part of the general programmes for the expansion and their development.

The National Policy on Education (NPE-1986) could be considered as document for the spread of the women's education. In the section entitled 'Educational Equality' the policy states:

"Educational will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, text books, training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators".

It emphasises the removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to a retention in elementary education. Emphasis has also been laid on women's participation invocational education at different levels and also to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupations and existing and emergent technologies. The 'Programme of Actino' (POA) for implementing of NPE' 86 spells out the meaning and contents of women's empowerment. The parameters of empowerments are:

- (i) Building a positive self-image and self confidence,
- (ii) Developing ability to think critically,
- (iii) Building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action,
- (iv) Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social-change, and
- (v) Providing the basis of economic independence.

The POA includes the following points for further action.

- (i) A phased time-bound programme of elementary

education for girls, particularly up to primary stage by 1990 and up to the elementary stage by 1995.

- (ii) A phased time-bound programme of adult education for women in the age group 15-35 by 1995.
- (iii) Increased women's access to vocational, technical, professional education in existing and emergent technologies, and
- (iv) Review and re-organization of educational activities to ensure that they make a substantial contribution women's equality and creation of appropriate cells/units.

The Action Plan thus enunciates that every educational institutional should be taken up by 1995 as a active programme for the development of women. Social programmes should also be developed to create awareness among women. National Literacy Mission (NLM) which aimed basically at removal of illiteracy in 15-35 age group by 1995 concretizes with is envisaged in NPE-1986. However, complete literacy in India is itself a dream even at close of 2005.

In sum, it has been felt that the goals and strategies worked out in NPE, POA and NLM would ensure a much larger success for women to education. But despite so many constitutional provisions, policy directions, impressive Five Year Plans, National policies, Commissions and Committees, Parliamentary resolution setting goals to eliminate illiteracy and gender differences in education, the statistics show a dismal picture. From 6% of literacy in 1951 the rate of female literacy has just gone up to 39% in 1991 as compared to 25% of literacy among men in 1951 to 64% in 1991. This figure might subsequently change in 2001 but many questions are still unanswered regarding the achievement of 100% literacy or even 75% literacy in the largest democracy like India.

Even if the government is able to achieve the numerical literacy, social literacy remains a serious concern. It has been felt that NGOs and other organisations are only trying to do only a formality. Instead, each one of us should seriously think of both literacy and Education of Women so that the overall development may take place.

It is a general assumption that a country which gives so much of importance to women's education by reviewing it through committees and making changes in their policy directives, must also be sincerely committed to women's education. It should be kept in mind that legal rights and ordinances are not only enough rather values and social attitudes affecting women need to be changed radically. If we try to analyse we will find a wide gap can be seen not only between the literacy rate of men and women but also between the constitutional objectives and realities. The demand for women education today is not the demand to allow women entry into the system but to change the very nature, objectives and organisational structures of the system.

For women, education has always been with a 'specific' and 'changing' purpose. Its purpose varies to suit the variety of roles that the society offers a woman to play at different stages. Social roles of girls have always decided their educational needs and goals. Thus, during the late 19th century, and in the early 20th century when women were not expected to participate wholeheartedly in spheres of life beyond the family, formal and higher education was not considered essential. During the freedom movement when women took an active part in the National Movement, they were considered as an asset for wider participation and so education of women was given emphasis. After independence, it became imperative to develop the status of women with regard to education for the progress of the country. In addition, as said earlier, the rise in the status of educated women in the marriage scenario and availability to work for the family made women education more

important.

The assumption that Indian women as a whole are no longer educated because of 'purdah' system or social seclusion does not hold any truth in today's society. If we see the results of Xth and XIIth classes all over India, we can find the girls beating their counterparts in almost all aspects of education.

A review of the research on women education reflects that substantial number of studies have been done on history of education for women in India, including the role of social reformers in promoting women's education. The following data would show certain factual information about women education in general and Muslim women education in particular in India.

### **Muslim Women Education: Islamic Viewpoint**

It is rightly considered that the foundation of muslim education stands mainly on two pillars: Qur'an and Ahadith. The Holy Qur'an, in Surah Thunder (Chapter 13 of Holy Qur'an) states clearly about the importance of seeing over blind in relation to light over darkness, however, the context is knowledge.

The very first verse (Ayat) which was revealed to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) states as follows:

"Read" in name of the Lord who createth. He createth man from a clot. "Read" and thy lord is the most Bounteous who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man which we knew not. There are two important points for consideration in this revelation from God to the Prophets. Firstly, it was the first revelation and education was considered important as Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was told about reading and teaching. The importance of pen for knowledge has also been emphasised in the very first message. Thus, the knowledge of the script is a must. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an has several verses which highlight the importance of knowledge, education and teaching etc.

**AHADITH** (Holy traditions of the Prophet) of the are the second source of guidance in Islam. They are noble sayings of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Some Ahadith are referred to knowledge, education and teaching etc. as summed up below.

Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) Said, "To acquire knowledge is binding upon muslims and the placing of knowledge with the underserving is as the hanging of Jewels and pearls and gold round the neck of the Swine".

Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) further states that they are useless, who neither learn nor make to learn others. He (PBUH) continues to state about the need of education by asking people to learn since birth to death." "Obtain knowledge even if one has to go to Chine" is the statement that explains the troubles and problems that one has to face in the achievement of educational targets.

The statement Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) can further quoted: "When a man dies, his works also stop except three: acts of cahrity, knowledge and righteous deeds".

Hazrat Ali (one of the Kaliphs) says "Receive education to live for ever, people die but educated people do not die."

Keeping the above statements in view, it can be summed up that education is a must for the betterment of human beings as this very factor discriminates a man from an animal. Without having education, one can live a life, but can't make it meaningful or can't enjoy it. He can't understand various related things that are essential for a good human life.

### **Development of Muslim Women Education**

In this backdrop, one can understand the gesture of the First World Conference on Muslim education, held at Makkah in 1977. The delegates of the conference unanimously agreed and reiterated the importance of

Muslims women's education. Special curricula for women are also recommended so that the courses and their contents should be in conformity with the Islamic goals and objectives for female education and the natural and functional specializations suitable for women.

The subsequent world conference on Muslim education held at Islamabad (1979), Dhaka (1981) and Jakarta (1982) kept on the same spirits as regards the muslim women's education. Hardly any substantial matter could be referred on the educational scene of common muslim women during the medieval references are made on the educational status of such women. S.M. Jaffar (1936) and Mohd. Ameen Zuberi (1934) presented a comparatively detailed and lucid explanation of the historical perspective in which we find the muslim women's education today.

During the ancient and middle ages, education in the Indian sub-continent remained generally monopolized by the higher castes who for the most part, did not encourage women's education. The advent of muslim period set a retrieval and opened the door for an egalitarian education. Zuberi reports that from the time of Sultan Mehmood onwards evidences support sincere Muslim efforts to spread and advance knowledge.

Though women's education during the Sultanate period was not at the desired level, it was not neglected. Women of the higher society were normally educated elsewhere but the common men and women were imparted education mainly in the local makhtabs. Such makhtabs were opened for very young girls whose higher education was generally dependent upon their parents' capacity to afford private tutors. Ibne Battutah reported about existence of 13 Madrasas exclusive for girls in the Muslim state of Hannur, on the west coast of India, as early as 1333 A.D. Other evidences of female makhtabs of the period were also recorded.

Varying subjects were taught to the girls ranging from



recitation of the Qur'an to other activities like sewing, weaving and fighting, etc. Razia Sultana, Mah Malik Sharaqui, Bibi Razi, the wife of Tughrial etc. not only enjoyed immense political influence at that time but had also shown their literary superiority over male counterparts. Their generous patronage for the cause of education was also appreciable.

The Lodhi era was remarkable from the point that it abounded with efforts for spreading education especially among common people, both Hindus and Muslims.

### **The Status of Muslim Women's Education**

Very few direct studies are available about the status of Muslim women's education, therefore, one relates muslim women education with general women's education in India. However, in following pages, the stat of Muslim women's education, is assessed and discussed on the basis of five parameters, namely; (i) Literacy, (ii) participation, (iii) performance, (iv) dropouts and (v) institutionalized efforts. The data, however are not based on the latest census. But, the overall trend will give a general picture regarding the trend of women education as a whole. Therefore muslim women education is no exception.

### **Literacy**

In the following table, decadal literacy rate in has been shown.

#### **Decadal Literacy Rates in India**

##### **Literacy rates in percentage**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Muslim Women</b>
1921	-	120.21	1.90	1.20
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	7.50
1961	28.31	40.40	15.34	12.50
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	18.30
1981	43.56	56.37	29.75	25.00
	(+ 1.42)	(53.45)	(28.46)	
1991	52.11	63.86	39.42	32.80

The figures female literacy notes indicate that just after the partition only around 5% women in the country were literate. Their literacy increased tremendously from 8.86% in 1951 to 39.42 in 1991; showing almost five times greater literacy rate since the first census. In the corresponding period the figures for male literacy increased just less than 2.5 times.

This marked increase in female literacy rats is somewhat encouraging but not large enough to offset the population increasing in the corresponding period. Nevertheless, the exponential rate of female literacy in India has a definite bearing on muslim women's education.

In a study, carried out in 39 districts with an average 34.26 percent muslim population, the arithmetic mean of the literacy rates of female population was worked out to be 21.91 as against the female literacy rate of 24.82 for the whole country.

It is apparent that the female literacy in the surveyed districts with significant muslimm population is only, slightly lower than the national literacy rate for female in 1981. An analysis of the census figures of 1981, the literacy rate for general women at 29.75 percent, a little higher than what referred in the study.

Therefore, it can be inferred that in tha districts with significant muslim population, the female literacy rate was around 25% in 1981. If such an inference is any indicator, the speculations for muslim women's literacy can be proportionality made for precending decades, fixing the literacy rates as 7.5% in 1951, 12.5% in 1961, 18.3% in 1971, 25% in 1981 and 32. 8%j in 1991. Hence, once can say that there are around 3-0% literacy muslim in the country, roughly 10% behind the general women.

The report of the Gopal Singh Commission, submitted in 1981, supports the above estimations and concludes that the muslim participations at the elementary stage of education is quite fair as compared to their population as

was in a sample from 45 representative districts. Later, it was reported that 29.11% women were literate in six predominantly Bengali speaking muslim villages. It should be noted that the female literacy rate for general women in West Bengal was 36.07% in 1981.

It is a fact that female literacy in North and Central India including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh etc. is lagging far behind in female literacy than the high female literacy states like Kerala, Mizoram, Goa, Nagaland etc.

In Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal the female literacy was recorded to be above the national average but not high as in the high literacy states. Taking the advantage of above mentioned general inferences, the female literacy rates in case of muslims in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, etc. may be deemed low in comparison to other states like Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam etc.

### **Participation of Muslim Women in Education**

The Gopal Sing Commission reported that the enrolment of Muslim students at the elementary level (Class I to VIII) was round 12.39% as compared to the muslim population in the sample districts which was 17.32%. The ratio of muslim enrolment to the muslim population in the sample is calculated to be 0.71, that means out of 100 expectants nearly 80 muslim boys and girls were attending schools at the time of above said survey.

Hence, it is stated that the Muslim participation in education was 'quite fair' at the elementary state. When compared with the state of Christian (1.60) and Sikh (1.43) participation at the elementary level, the muslims ratio of participation comes to be almost half. The statewise analysis of the collected data shows only in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, the participation rates in case of muslim students were above the percentage of muslim

population in the surveyed districts where as in case of Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh the rates were very low.

When we consider the widening gap between general boys and general girls participation from elementary to higher levels of education, it is an easy guess that the rates of participation of Muslim girls as compared to the muslim boys must have been further lower as we move from primary to higher levels of education.

According to an survey, conducted under the auspices of Hamdard Education Society, the percentage of muslim girls among total muslim students was 34.12 in 430 muslim managed schools. The analysis of figures of the survey shows that there were 41.58% muslim girls at the primary level in such schools.

The corresponding figure of middle, high and higher secondary school levels were 31.12, 31.76 and 30.50% respectively obviously, the rate of participation, as regards muslim girls studying in schools under the muslim managements falls sharply from the primary to middle levels and becomes almost stablized further.

It has also been noticed that there are certain isolated examples of high muslim female participation that may sometimes be observed in such schools as compared to muslim boys.

The rate of participation of general muslim students was 10.66% at secondary school level (I to XII) as against the muslim population of 18.36 in 11 districts surveyed by the Gopal Singh Commission. The rate was found to be alarmighly low in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

It has been observed that muslim boys appear to be a five time more backward and muslim girls eleven times more backward than rest of the population in Uttar Pradesh at the high school level. At the graduate and post graduate levels of general education the participation rates of muslim students were 6.12 and 9.11% as against their population

of 1.037 and 10.95% respectively.

At elementary level (Primary to Middle), there were 35 million girls students out of 94 million enrolments in the country in 1981. Therefore, the percentage of general girls enrolment in the country was around 37 in 1981 at the elementary level of education. The corresponding figure would have been 30% at the secondary higher secondary level. Supporting that the percentage of general girls participation is approximately same as that of the muslim girls against the respective total students then it can be said that the percentage of girls students of the muslim community as compared total muslim enrolment must have been slightly lower than 37 and 30 at the elementary and secondary levels respectively.

The above holds true at least, as shown earlier, in case of the muslim managed schools where the corresponding figures are approximately 36% and 32% respectively.

### **Performance**

Generally it is believed that being members of a backward community, the performance of Muslim students would have been affected due to various reasons than their counterparts. Even among Muslims a feeling may often be observed that their youngsters are not performing at par with other students. However, the available data lead us to some usual conclusions.

Strangely enough, the performance of Muslim girls had an edge over their counterparts. In the Muslim managed schools exclusively run for girls the percentage of successful students was 51.1 in 1978, 52.9 in 1979, 59.5 in 1980 and 63.0 in 1981. This shows that the performance of girls as recorded in the survey is not only steadily getting better but it always had a brighter overtake from the boys.

### **Dropouts**

The dropout rate of Muslim students at primary stage

of education (Class I-V) was worked out to be 65 percent in 1976-77. It has been stated that this rate, though high, is "at par with the general dropout rate for all communities" in the surveyed areas. The quoted survey also reveals that the dropout rates in Muslim concentration districts is generally higher than other districts with lesser Muslim population. Shamim Shah has pointed out that the dropout in case of elementary level is slightly lower (60.6% as regards schools under Muslim managements. According to him, the rates at high school and higher secondary levels were 72.5 and 90.9 respectively. Parent's apathy and financial constraints have been mentioned as the major reasons for these high dropouts.

The widening gap between the Muslim boys and Muslim girls enrolments from primary to secondary to college levels is an enough indicator that the dropout rates are much more in case of Muslim girls than the Muslim boys. It was estimated earlier that the dropout rates for girls students of Muslim managed schools from class V to X for 1980, 1981 were 64.40, 64.07 and 58.76 percent respectively in the city of Calcutta. The rates were significantly lower than the Muslim boys. The data, quoted earlier while discussing about the trends of participation indicate almost the same pattern in the state of U.P. However, in the dearth of empirical studies, it is presumed that the dropout rates of Muslim girls would be higher than male counterparts.

### **Institutionalised Efforts**

It has often been marked that there is a lack of institutionalised efforts as regards promotion of Muslim women's education. However, a welcome trend is noticeable in recent times.

Perhaps the first modern school exclusively for Muslim women's education was founded in 1892 in Marnataka. Since then a number of schools and colleges have slowly been founded for imparting education exclusively to Muslim girls. Most of the educational institutions under Muslim

managements have been founded after 1947.

It may be presumed that the institutionlised efforts in the form of establishing schools and college include muslim women's education in the sharp focus and with the passage of time these efforts are likely to increase. Nuemerically Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Jammu and Kashmir lead other states in having Muslim girls schools whereas there are more exclusive colleges in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra for Muslim women.

There are very few organisation striking for muslim educational advancement. It is good that the girls education is not out of their planning and efforts. The contribution of muslim education society can not be ignored.

### **The Prospects of Muslim Women's Education**

Indian Muslim have started showing signs of involvement in the reconstruction of the country by early seventies while getting rid of agnoies of the partition of India. Their increasing participation in the developmental process has been externalized, in a most, in all walks of life including education. As a result, a lot of activities on the part of Muslim activities are noticeable for promoting the educational attainments of the community especially from 1977 onwards.

The overall resumption of morale and confidence by the msulims in the major part of seventies and early eighties has accentuated various educational efforts on the parts of Indian Muslims in each dimensions.

Though its impact on the educational accomplishments of the muslim community are not very evident yet, it cannot be out rightly rejected. The uncertain environment in the country is likely to affect the prospects of muslim women's education along with that of others. The present socio-political situation is very challenging for the

desired development of the muslim community as a whole.

It is discussed earlier that due to various reasons and planned efforts the general Indian women have taken long strides in the field of education for paring down backwardness as compared to their male counterpart. This is going to make an impact on the muslim women's education as well. With the participation of increased general women for educational attainments muslim women would be certainly benefited.

It has already been seen in case of Kerala where the muslim women are at par with non-muslim women, at least upto school levels. If the present trend goes on the same progress will be observed in the coming days at the higher levels of education as well.

Some of the modern concepts such as democratic rights feminism, socialism etc. response of the mass media that have influenced the prospects of women's education and it is unlikely that this liberalizing process will prosper in near future.

In the wake of above developments, the policy makers are making provisions for changed participation of women in education activities and over much public funds are spared now for women and child development. The muslim women's education has also received a special attention of these policy makers. It is felt that the women literacy and girls involvement is lowest among educationally backward Minorities. However, with the growing communalization of Indian bureaucracy it is not certain how far these feelings would be helpful for educating muslim women in the country. Still, it can be hoped that the community would be able to gather enough favour from the policy makers and administration.

Perhaps the more significant tendency which is likely to shape the future of Muslim women's education is the rediscovery of a distinct perspective satisfying the ethos of the community. After a wayward journey as cross extremist



viewpoints on the part of Muslim scholars, between conservatism and modernism, an Islamic perspective of education is emerging through out the Muslim world having postive effects on the Indian pattern as well.

Even the Indian policy makers are now pleading for the establishment of exclusive institutions where muslim girls can be imparted education in more conducive environments. The repeated resolutions of various fora in this regard have definite bearing on the future prospects of women's education.

It seems that there is an increased emphasis on exclusive institutions for Muslim girls in India and abroad for quite sometime which is setting a visible trend. From the above submission it is apparent that the prospects of Muslim women's education in India seem quite bright although the growing anxieties and tensios in the country may affect the steady progress of attainments as regards female education among Indian Muslims.

The problem of female education among muslim gets further complicated due to conflicting goals set by the Islamic and secular ideals. There Natinoal Policy an education 1986 lays an overriding priority to women's education. Had it been simply so the Muslim women would have been, naturally, the beneficiaries along with others. But, the goal of women's education stated n the above document and implemented through public funds are interpreted in such a way that the muslim enthusiasm for female education becomes slender. According to the document, "Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women."

Enough had been said earlier and a lot is being done under 'Research' and 'development' of women education as a while. Data and quantification have been used to substantiate the findings and conslusions but a long awaited serious effort is still due from government of India and state governments to promote muslim women education in India. It is not only important to present facts but more important

is to change the mind of the muslim parents, guardians, community etc. so that a positive make up is ready to welcome the change in the direction of education. Women should not only walk hand in hand and shoulder by shoulder in other activities but muslim women should also develop in all dimensions simultaneously restoring their identity, culture and dignity. A very courageous action is to be initiated so that muslims as a whole can think of education of women and pursue in a conducive and feasible situation.

In sum, it can be stated that Muslim Women Education needs to be emphasized and felt important by the families, organizations, NGO's, government etc. Unless an organized and systematised effort is made to develop the level of muslim women education, the situation will not change.

There are some changes in some so-called prosperous and progressive muslim families, but most of the muslim girls and women are deprived of even primary education. There are many factors that are affecting the state of muslim women education such as: poverty, illiteracy, indifferent attitude of parents, lack of educational opportunities, lack of motivation, cultural misconception, early marriages etc. Purdah system is one of the causes due to which many respectable families do not send their girls to any co-educational school. But there are many girl schools where the number of enrolment is not that encouraging which should be. Ulama (Religious scholars) are also responsible for promoting Islamic education in particular and education in general. ■

# RETROSPECTION OF THE CULTURAL LIVING OF MALABAR

Yasser Arafath. P.K.

The history of Malabar witnessed the emergence and co-existence of different social and cultural groups. The multi plural flooring of this region had been woven through centuries with different religious groups like Hindus, Jain, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and Muslims co-existing without losing their basic religious identities. Each religion brought not only a creed but also a specific way of life in the social folder of Pre-colonial Malabar. This unique social complexity surfaced a lot of questions and debates on the heterogenic cultural life of the region. Cultural relations among different groups of the Malabar and the process of accommodating and assimilation between local people in general and Hindus and Mappia Muslims in particular are very interesting and unique in its characteristics.

Medieval period of the Malabar, especially 10th century onwards till the emergence of the Portuguese witnessed the social consolidations of the Brahmins as the most dominant social group and their association with another group viz. *Nairs* who later became a dominant social group and known for their unique societal functions. This is a period of fragmentation of political authorities and the disappearance of the centralised governing institution in the region. This politico-socio -economic situation which is generally called feudalism paved the way for a new social formation, in the medieval history of the region. Such an epoch which had witnessed the consolidation of feudal polity and society is important to understand the phenomenon of cultural exchanges, not only because of the scant of studies on it, but also because of the fact that the developments during period was so important in determining the societal and cultural fabric of modern Malabar.

The region of Malabar, which is situated on the Western Coast of India, evolved into a very important human

settlement in the pre-colonial history as a result of the role played by both indigenous and external forces. The transitional elements, like the growth and collapse of feudal system, emergence of new occupational groups, consolidation of different caste groups etc. transformed the economy of Malabar from pre-colonial to the colonial period, were very actively influencing the social and cultural life of the region. Even though agrarian economy was very much predominant, pre-colonial Malabar got exposed to the vibrant economic activities of Arab merchants who began to play key roles in the entire process of socio-cultural exchanges. The expansive coastline of this region was facilitating the growth of trade both in terms of volume and the number of commodities and merchant communities. It is this transitional nature of the economy and the material temptation thrown up by the growing trading activities that shaped the societal format of Malabar in pre-colonial times with the active participation of state machineries. These activities facilitated the settlement of the various communities namely Jews, Christians and Muslims from outside the country into Malabar on a permanent basis. With the increasing volume of trade activities, there emerged new economic relationships between rural agrarian classes and the different mercantile communities and gave birth to a new cosmopolitan character in the urban life. Emergence of various rural markets and *bazaars* across the region of Malabar became the interacting points for different people from diverse socio-cultural and ethnic background. As a result of this, the process of cultural interaction was also transforming and reproducing itself corresponding to the growth and development of various religious and political institutions of the region.

In Malabar, two cultural systems; indigenous and Islamic were not in collusion but happened to have close contacts with each other. The distinctive character of Malabar in this regard was very interesting. Unlike Punjab or Bengal, Malabar laid beyond the trajectory of Islamic

sovereign and the Turko-Persian cultural associate with it. When we trace the spread of Islamic culture on the Malabar Coast, it is quite clear that Muslims of early settlement were extended help by the local people and those were in power. Muslims were welcomed in Malabar and apparently, facilities were given to them to settle down and acquire lands and openly practiced their religion.

The first Muslim settlement in Kerala was Kodungallore (Cranganore), the reigning centre of Cherman Perumal, the king of Malabar. From this first settlement, Muslims established themselves in Malabar as the most vibrant trading community of the period. With the arrival of Malik Bin Dinar and his missionary acquaintances, first batch of the immigrant Muslims established in Malabar region and it became the core centre of Muslim settlement. They constructed mosques in the different parts of Malabar. These mosques were mainly located at Kodungallore, Quilon, Ezhimadi (Cannanore) and later they proceeded to Bekknore and to Mangalore. Later Ibn Habib, the chief associate of Malik bin Dinar erected mosque Jarfathan (Sree Kantapuram), Darmapattnam, Pantalayani Kollam (Koilandi), and port city of Chliyam.

From 10th century Calicut and surrounding places became perennial attraction of Muslim traders. With the easy accessibility, compared to other places, exclusive agriculture productions, and more over the welcoming nature of the port kings, those with modest territorial holdings, heavily depended on customs dues for their income, encouraged traders to conduct business in their parts and carefully protected their commercial interest. Muslim merchants established themselves as the most profitable trading community and influenced drastically, as Barbosa said, "in the land of Malabar area moors in great numbers who spoke the same language as the locals and were dressing like the *Nairs*, the local elites but as a token of distinction from the locals they wore little round caps on their heads and kept long beards." They were so much

rooted in the soil of Malabar that it seems as if they constituted a fifth part of its people spread over all its kingdoms and provinces.

Arab traders and navigators were settled in the Malabar Coast and developed matrimonial relationships with the local Hindu population. These Arab Muslims were associated with women of lower caste, the only ones who were allowed to marry them. The children of this union were brought up as Muslims with the Sunni faith. Even the political authority of the period also facilitated these relationships. King Samutiri, even directed that any of the male members of the families of the Hindu fishermen should be brought up as Muslim, and this practice had been continued till recently. Rigidity of the Hindu caste order was another reason for conversion. It seems that conversion largely took place from the lowest strata of the society. For them the spread of Islam was a desirable change; especially those who at the lowest strata had no other opportunities.

Successive rulers had acknowledged the feelings of the Mappila community in Malabar. Hindus used to facilitate material assistance to the Muslim on the occasion of Jumua, and Eid. This kind of response is clear from the tradition of the Cheraman Perumal to the Zamorin of Calicut, who was the ruler of Malabar in 16th century. Zamorins, who needed the help of Muslim merchants and leaders, bestowed some prominent persons to stand on his right side on the occasion of festivals. Qazis and Muaddhins were paid from the government treasury. Government used to seek the help from Muslim leaders and religious authority regarding the matter of jurisprudence, especially in the case of Muslim. Ibn Batuta corroborated the peaceful relationship between the Mappila community and other socio-political order of the Malabar.

In Malabar, we can see two most important aspects of cultural development. The first one is the gradual development of regional culture; Muslim and Hindus adopted the methods of independent invention on their own

and became the part of diffusion. The second breed is the process of cultural borrowing; copying or taking over from another, and developed a picture of different cultural complex.

This continuing process of synthesis was an unconscious process. It implies a process of adaptation and change by which the *Malabari* environment has exercised a powerful influence on Immigrant groups. It led to the modification of the behavioral patterns which led to intra regional variations among groups which have been subsumed under a single heading. In the overall examination of these different factors, it is revealed that Malabar society had never been a homogenous one at any given period of time. Different streams of local elements and diverse foreign elements laid the foundation of a multi-colored cultural society in the creation of a Malayali identity. In this folder includes the knowledge of belief, art, morals, law, custom, and different other capabilities. When Buddhism came to contact they were absorbed in to this unique folder. So was Jainism. When Christianity and Islam made their presence they were also absorbed. But more importantly they became greater absorbing power than dismissing the local situation. These engrossment meant all the elements in mature endowment, what different sectors had experience. ■

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