

THE FRAGRANCE OF EAST

Vol. XXVIII No. 2

February 2026

Annual Subscription:

Rs. 300 (per copy Rs. 30) in India
\$ 75 (USA, UK, Asian, African and European Countries)

Cheques and Drafts may please be sent to:

The Fragrance of East

Nadwatul Ulama, P.O. Box 93,
Tagore Marg. Lucknow-226007, U.P. (India)
Out-station cheques will not be accepted.

A/C 10 863 759 664

IFSC Code No. SBIN 0000 125
State Bank of India, Main Branch, Lucknow

Whats App call : 9559844716

Office Time : 08:00 am To 01:00 pm

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Rs. 30/-

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The Quranic Dictum

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Qur'an lays stress on following the way of the prophets and asks the believers, time and again, to pattern their lives and conduct after the example set by the messengers of God.

"Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah much."

It directs the Muslims to beseech God always to show them the right path.

"Show us the right path, The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;

Not (the Path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray."

This prayer which forms part of the service repeated several times a day, teaches man to seek the companionship of the prophets, their leaders and guides and God-loved souls. Whoever shall live up to this supplication by coming close to the appearance and behaviour of these pious souls shall undoubtedly be sanctified and redeemed by divine grace. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

It's the Word of God

"This Book beyond all doubt, was revealed by the Lord of the universe."

(Al Qur'an - 32:2)

The Quranic declaration about its provenance is much more significant. For when it is proclaimed at the very outset of a Quranic surah that the message comes from the Lord of the universe, this not only indicates the origin and true source of the Quran, but also amounts to making a colossal claim, to hurling a stupendous challenge and to issuing a grim warning to the audience.

It is declared right away that the Quran is not a product of the human mind; rather, it is the Word of God. This declaration instantly places a grave question before man: should he believe this claim as true, or should he reject it as false?

If one affirms its Divine origin, one has to surrender oneself to it in obedience. In this case, one no longer enjoys the freedom to act as one pleases. On the other hand, if one rejects it, one exposes oneself to serious hazard. For, if the Quran indeed is the Word of God, one is wilful rejection of it will lead to eternal perdition. In this respect, this opening declaration puts one on high alert, impels one to pay full heed to the discourse, and, thereafter, prompts one to decide whether it is the Word of God or not.

It has not simply been stated that the Quran was revealed by the Lord of the universe. Instead, the assertion is couched in highly emphatic terms that leave no room for uncertainty about its Divine provenance. ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

None is Absolutely Free

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: "Every one of you is a shepherd; every one of you is responsible for his flock, A ruler is shepherd over his people; he is accountable for their welfare. A man is shepherd over his family; he is accountable for their welfare. A woman is shepherdess over her husband's household and children; she is accountable for their welfare. A man's servant is shepherd over his master's property; he is accountable for it. Be careful! All of you are shepherds; and all of you shall be accountable for their flocks."

(Bukhari, Muslim)

A close scrutiny of human life reveals that man is not absolutely free. He is always accountable to someone, may be a fellow human or Allah. For example, kill a person and you will be caught hold of if you live in a land governed by law and order. Even if you escape, you will be held accountable in the Day of Judgement.

In the present hadith, the Holy Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) says that everyone is responsible. The very word 'responsibility' carries with it a strong sense of accountability. The metaphor of a shepherd makes the idea abundantly clear.

If a shepherd takes his flock to a green pasture and brings it back in the evening, it is well and good. But if he turns careless, he may lose some sheep out of his flock. Similarly, everyone is responsible for whoever and whatever is under his or her care and supervision. ■

Editor's Note 

A Great Reformer

Before the advent of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) it is the misfortune that humanity forgot the true message of Oneness of God, known as 'Tawheed'. People started including the moon, sun, stars, jinns, angels, god and goddesses, mountains, rivers, animals, other human being into the folds of divinity. Thus he entangles himself in worshipping innumerable mortal objects and deprived himself of the calm of worshipping one God.

The construction of 'Kaaba' in Mecca by Prophet Ibrahim to help humanity to bow before the creator Allah was gradually turned into a house of man-made gods in the shape of stones. How ridiculous it was. They perhaps lost sense and believed that these man-made stone idols were their protectors and benefactors. Almighty God sent His messengers from time to time for reformation and to make them aware that there is a God who is the creator of the world and who has authority to make or destroy any thing on earth. When people gone astray God felt the necessity of sending His messenger again. Thus last Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) took the rein of reformation. Before his advent there were two super powers on the face of the earth at that time. They were Persia and Rome. Persians were following

Zoroastrianism which had its effects from Iraq to India. Romans had faith in Christianity. The whole Europe and African continent were under the impact of Christianity. Hindus and Jews were also two important religious sects. Everyone used to believe to be on right path. Worshipping of stars was common in Iran. The kings and elites also had religious status and they were prostrated before. The people sang songs in their praise. The Persia was thus bereft of the concept of 'Tawheed'. The Roman Empire which embraced Christianity was also bereft of the concept of 'Tawheed' and started believing Jesus Christ (Yesoh Masih) as the son of God. By the end of 6th century AD situation in the world became quite volatile. India too was passing through Puranic age.

In short the whole world was in turmoil and needed a great Reformer. To set the society on right path emerged a great reformer in the shape of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). He worked hard to establish the world on straight path and save it from evil forces by spreading the message of God Almighty. ■

S.A.

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Reform And Renovation

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Owing to various natural and historical proposals to discuss in the third volume of Islamic Spirit. India had come to be the religious and spiritual correction and reform during the phase of Islamic supremacy. Proselytizing and reformationist activities made such an advance in India that many countries were also influenced by them. Religious renovators were born here who on the strength of their earnestness, learning and popularity, the effectiveness of their appeal and the great number of people who profited by their efforts and by their natural harmony with the real spirit of Islam and its call constituted the choicest examples of Islamic missionaries and reformers.

The most elevated among these religious guides and redeemers was Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) upon whom men of vision and understanding have conferred the title of Mujadid Alf-is-Sani (the Renovator of the second Millennium). It was he who renewed and strengthened the bond of Indian Muslims with Islam and saved the Shariat from being corrupted by innovations and the apostasy of the extremist Sufis, inclined openly, as they were, towards the pantheistic doctrine of Wahdat-ul-Wajood (God is everything and everything is God). It was he again, who rescued the Mughal Empire from

the whirlpool of irreligiousness it had got caught into, a check on the highly dangerous movement for the unity and amalgamation of faiths as well as on the revival of Brahmanism. The great devotee of God and indefatigable crusader in His cause, Aurangzeb, too, was a product of his mighty struggle. The Sufistic Order founded by him still endures, besides India, in countries like Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Kurdistan and Syria. The popularity this Order acquired through the efforts of his disciple, Allama Khalid Shahrazori Kurdi (d. 1826) in Arabia, Syria and Turkey has not come by the way of any other System.

Then there was Syed Ahmad Shaheed who so splendidly reawakened the spirit of Jihad among the Muslims. He aroused them to make heroic sacrifices for the victory of Faith and establishment of a truly Islamic government on the lines of Khilafat-i-Rashida. As a result of his struggle, a wave of religiousness and righteous living swept over the Muslims, or, in other words, a gust of wind belonging to the early decades of Islam blew in breathing a new life of faith and endeavour into the dead body of the Indian part of the Millet. He had endowed his followers with rare religious devotion and enthusiasm. The religious steadfastness, scrupulous observance

of the Shariat and the ardent zeal for Jihad they displayed were simply unique. Writes Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan of Syed Ahmad and the splendid men he had collected around himself:

“.... the gist of the matter is that a mm of his has not been heard of in the current age in any part of the world, nor has a fraction of what his haloed band has done for the Muslims been achieved by any of the religious teachers or divines.”

In the modern times, India has once again become the centre of Islamic propagation and reform. It began under the inspired leadership of Maulana Mohammad Ilyas of Delhi (d. 1943)—and we must confess that throughout our travels in Muslim countries we have not had the experience of coming across a more staunch and fervent preacher of Islam than him. His special distinction lay in his absolute reliance upon God and total dedication to the cause of Islamic revival and resurgence. The missionary movement founded by the Maulana is now actively at work in all parts of the Muslim World and of preachers are sent out regularly even to far-off lands like the United States, the European countries and Japan. This movement has succeeded, in howsoever small a measure, in warming up the frozen furnaces of the hearts of Muslims by rekindling in them the sublime flame of Faith.

These are but a handful of instances of men of endeavour, faith and learning that arose from among the Indian Muslims to leave an indelible mark on the ‘Sands of Time.’ The eight volumes of Nuzhat-ul-Khawahir contain an account of 5,000 Muslims of confirmed excellence in various walks of life who sprang from the Indian dust. It shows how inexhaustible, indeed, is the capacity of this land of ours to throw up sons of exceptional ability and unusual calibre in all branches of human activity.

The sapling of Islam which the early Muslims had planted on the Indian soil with their hands and nourished with their life-blood is still in bloom. Indian Muslims have during all the stages of their career produced such exalted personalities as have been the envy of the world. Even under the British regime, where a deliberate policy was pursued to liquidate them intellectually and economically, they did not stop sending forth eminent legists, administrators, mathematicians and educationists and such brilliant masters of the English language whose proficiency and skill was acknowledged by Englishmen themselves.

The Indian Muslims have produced world-class leaders, legislators, debaters and orators. The fame of their thinkers and poets has travelled to Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey and their works have been translated into a

number of foreign languages, particularly of Muslim countries.

Throughout, they have also held dear the Arab culture and civilization and made their own contribution to it. Judging from the prevailing trends, it would seem that a new mode of thought and expression will soon get evolved in Arabic literature under the influence of Indian writers which will richly representative of both literary and

spiritual values.

The glorious past of Indian Muslims holds for guarantee for the future. Passing through they, at present, are through the most critical phase of their history, the Muslims of India are determined to ensure for themselves an honorable place in the Indian sun. Their personality is indestructible; it is touched with eternity. ■

SC has not upheld death penalty in 3 years: report

The Supreme Court has not confirmed a single death penalty in the past three years, according to an annual statistics report on death penalties in India, published by the Square Circle Clinic, a criminal justice initiative at the NAL-SAR University of Law, Hyderabad.

In fact, in 2025, the top court acquitted 10 prisoners who had been on death row, the highest number of such acquittals in the past decade.

The report, which examined death penalty trends across India over the past 10 years, found that the sessions courts handed down 1,310 death sentences nationwide between 2016 and 2025.

"Despite growing judicial scepticism at higher levels," the lower courts sentenced 128 individuals to death in 2025 alone, the report said.

High rate of acquittals

Of the 1,310 death sentences, 842 verdicts were handed down by the High Courts, of which 70 - that is, just 8.31% were confirmed. The High Courts acquitted 285 people on death row, while 411 death sentences were commuted. The Supreme Court's stance has been even more restrictive, with no death sentence confirmed in the past three years.

Also, in cases where sessions courts imposed death sentences which were confirmed by the High Courts, not a single sentence has yet been affirmed by the Supreme Court.

Of the 37 such death sentences which have been decided by the Supreme Court, 15 resulted in acquittal and 14 were commuted. "What is starkly clear from these figures is that errors at Sessions Courts are not only leading to wrongful imposition of death sentence but are also resulting in wrongful convictions. The high rate of acquittals by the appellate judiciary requires a serious examination of how Sessions Courts deem a case worthy of even a conviction," the report said.

The report also showed that India had 574 prisoners 550 men and 24 women - on death row as of December 31, 2025. The average time spent on death row before acquittal was over five years, with some prisoners languishing for nearly a decade before being exonerated.

However, 138 individuals were also removed from death row during the year through acquittals, commutations, or remand orders

One of the report's most alarming findings concerns procedural violations at the sentencing stage.

Despite clear guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in *Manoj vs State of Madhya Pradesh*, which mandate psychological evaluations, prison conduct reports, and mitigation hearings - which were elevated to a fair trial right requirement in *Vasanta Sampat Dupare vs Union of India* - in 2025, nearly 95% of death sentences in 2025 were imposed without compliance.

Sentencing hearings were frequently conducted within days of conviction, leaving little scope for meaningful defence representation, the report said.

Another emerging trend is the growing use of life imprisonment without remission as an alternative to the death penalty.

(The Hindu, 04-02-2026)

Constitutional Rights of The Cultural And Linguistic Minorities

- Manzoor Ahmed

India is a beautiful mosaic of cultures, religions and languages. During the last century, frequent movement and free settlement of one ethnic group in an area predominantly inhabited by another ethnic group has created islands of minorities all over the land. In Bombay, for example, while the Maharashtrians are the majority group, there are sizeable sections of Tamil, Telgu, kannad and Malyalam speaking people, besides the Urdu — speaking Muslims. According to the Supreme Court, any community, which is numerically less than 50% of the population of a particular State as a whole, should be known as minority. Thus, while the Hindus are a predominant majority in the country as a whole, they are a minority in the Panjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland and Mizoram. Similarly the Hindi — speaking people are a linguistic minority in all States except UP, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

The founding fathers of the Republic were aware of the need for creating a sense of security and partnership in nation building in minority communities. They also realised that educational autonomy to the minority groups was basic to democratic

institutions and our way of life. The Indian Constitution guarantees the right of the minorities to establish and run their own educational institutions. Article 30 of the Constitution reads as follows:-

1. All minorities, based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

1 A. In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in Clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under the Clause.

2. The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

The term “Educational Institution of their choice” in Article 30(i) includes, till to date, institutions, imparting technical, scientific and professional education also. In the Constituent Assembly, the Minority Rights Committee reported: “It is the fundamental duty of the state to

take special steps to bring those minorities which are backward to the level of general communities.”

Obviously the framers of the Constitution intended that the minorities, specially the back” ward ones, would be entitled to establish their own professional and technical institutions to assist the state in completing the task of their educational advancement.

The High Courts and the Supreme Court have all along taken a very liberal interpretation of these constitutional provisions. To quote Justice Chandrachud in a full bench judgement of the Supreme Court in 1974, “The parental right in education is the very pivotal point of a democratic system.” The courts have, therefore, protected and at times enlarged the scope of the exercise of these rights by the minorities. While allowing to the State authority to regulate the exercise of rights under Article 30 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court, in case All-Saints High School Vs. State of Gujarat, held that the rights of the minorities under Article 30 are ‘subject to reasonable regulation designed to ensure excellence of such institutions,’ In the famous Presidential Reference of the Kerala Education Bill 1957, the Supreme Court, however, held that such regulation should not indirectly take away what is given directly by Article 30. Again in cases Sidhrajbhai Vs. State of

Gujarat (1963) and Lily Kurten Vs, Sister Lestna (1979), the Supreme Court held that general public interests or national interests must not be allowed to override the interests of the minority communities.

There has so far been complete consensus that the Clause ‘the institutions of their choice’ referred to in Article 30 was not confined to religious, cultural or linguistic institutions for general education but also included those imparting technical, scientific or vocational instruction. In 1974, the Supreme Court in a nine-judge bench decision, unanimously expressed the same view, while I discussing the question of affiliating a minority institution. It said, inter alia, that affiliation must be a real and meaningful exercise for minority institutions in the matter of imparting general secular education. Any law which provides for affiliation on terms which will involve abridgement of the right of linguistic and religious minorities to administer and establish educational institutions of their choice will offend Article 30 (1). The educational institutions set up by the minorities will be robbed of their utility if boys and girls cannot be trained in such institutions for university degrees.

However, in April, 1986, a reference was made by three judges of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice, to the full bench to decide whether a minority institution,

established not exclusively for the preservation of its language, culture and script, is entitled to protection under Article 30 of the Constitution. It created a sense of acute cultural insecurity in the minorities. If Article 30 is interpreted in such a way as runs counter to the views held so far, it will imply that the minorities will not be able to establish and administer educational institutions imparting secular, scientific and technical instruction and it will take out all minority schools and colleges, even unaided ones, from the purview of Article 30. Obviously such an interpretation will defeat the very purpose and go against the intentions of the framers of the Constitution. Luckily the Supreme Court dropped the reference to the full bench and the legal position remains unchanged.

Muslims are the largest and the most backward community in India. Their backwardness is circular: their educational backwardness diminishes their prospects of employment; higher rate of unemployment creates economic backwardness which, in turn, creates educational backwardness. The most convenient point to break this vicious circle is to strike at their educational backwardness so that 'the fundamental duty of the State' to help this poor and backward community is fulfilled.

Since there is no reservation of seats for backward minorities in other

schools and colleges, they cannot hope to compete for admission with candidates belonging to other communities and catch up with the national standard unless minority institutions are established for them. However, there appears to be great reluctance on the part of a vocal section in the majority community and the Establishment to this line of action. Somehow, it is mistakenly thought that it would retard the process of national integration. In fact, the terms 'national integration' and 'national mainstream' mean different things to different people. To some, it may mean complete extirpation of the cultural traditions of the minorities. Even some liberals use the terms in a vague fashion. One is tempted to quote from the report on the State of East African Indians prepared by Yash Tondon and Arnold Raphael on this point, "No term has been so much abused as 'integration' in discussion of race relations in East Africa. Indeed its very vagueness is the source of its explosive potential in verbal dialectic." It is true of the India conditions also.

The minority educational rights of the Constitution are, unfortunately, not fully made available to the Muslims on account of antipathy of the bureaucracy. The administrations in almost all the States take a view that severely restricts the unfettered exercise of these rights. The State administration often raises frivolous objections to the establishment

and administration of minority institutions, sometimes going against clear court judgements. For example, the Supreme Court, in its judgements in State of Kerala Vs. Rev. Mother Provincial (1958), held that raising of funds for such an institution from members of other communities cannot debar it from getting protection under Article 30. The U.P. officials, however, claimed in the case of Qaumi Higher Secondary School, Tanda, (Faizabad) that an institution, to be entitled for protection under Article 30, must have been exclusively funded by the minority concerned. The Allahabad High Court, in its judgement in the cases of Azad Inter College, Bahraich, said "The reason that persons other than Muslims were associated cannot be a legal basis for refusal to extend the benefit of Article 30 (1) of the Constitution". The Supreme Court also in the case of St. Xavier College, Ranchi, gave a similar judgement. One can cite a number of court decisions on this point. However, administrators in some State Governments demanded that, to be entitled for the protection under article 30(1), the institution must have been established exclusively by the members or the minority community concerned.

In recent years a confusion on the issue of reservation of seats in minority institution has arisen as a result of machination of some self-seeking elements. are raised particularly if

Muslim minority institutions give any preference to Muslim candidates in the matter of admission. Some institutions like the Aligarh Muslim University have taken the subterfuge of making reservation in the name of internal or local students. Needless to say that such ways and subterfuges destroy the all-India character of such institutions. Some people defend this denial of reservation of the minority students in minority managed institution on the basis of Article 29 of the Constitution. However, in the case of Rev. Father W. Proost Vs. The State of Bihar, Hidayatullah, C.J. spoke for the members of the Bench hearing the matter and observed that the width of Article 30(1) could not be cut down by introducing consideration on which Article 29(1) was based. Article 30(1) was couched in wide language and had to receive its full meaning. Attempt to whittle down the protection given to minorities could not be allowed. In the case of Bombay Anjuman-Islam Saboo Siddique Engineering College and polytechnic, Justice Pendse of the Bombay High Court recently upheld as most reasonable the minority management decision to reserve 75% of seats for the Muslims. There are a number of Court judgements on this point. The right to admit members of a particular minority in institutions established and administered by it has the backing of the Law and the Courts. Unfortunately, the administration in some

States places undue and illegal hindrance in the free exercise of this minority right in the case of Muslim institutions though this right is enjoyed by other minorities without let or hindrance.

The matter of reservation for Muslim students in Aligarh has a stormy issue in the University Court with no end in sight. The same is the position in several other institutions. The short sighted administrative officials also take advantage of this reluctance on the part of our managements. Recently, the judicial trend also appears to be shifting. However, it will be better for all concerned if this issue is decided once and for all and the Government issues clear guidelines and directions based on the Constitutional provisions and the court judgements.

The National Educational Policy 1986 and the Programme for Action prepared to implement it, have reiterated the Constitutional guarantees

for this important educational right and have repeatedly assured proper and adequate representation of the minority teachers and students in minority managed institutions. The Programme for Action has also encouraged minority educational societies to establish new institutions and develop infrastructure in existing institutions. The Government has also undertaken not only to recognise such societies and to assist them, but also to grant scholarship etc. through such societies to make them effective, responsive and responsible. There is, however, hesitation on the part of Muslims also to exercise this right.

In the following pages the provisions with regard to educationally backward minorities made in the New Education Policy and the Programme for Action have been detailed so that Muslim organisations could take advantage of these policy pronouncements.■

Jamiat moves SC against remarks by Assam CM

The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind has moved the Supreme Court against some public statements made by BJP leader and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, calling them “communal, deeply divisive, and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution”.

Mr. Sarma is said to have made the allegedly offensive remarks in a speech on January 27 asking for harassing the Miya Muslims of Assam in various ways, including asking them to “cast their vote in Bangladesh, not India”.

The plea filed on behalf of Mahmood Madani, president of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, through senior advocate M.R. Shamshad, urged the court to frame strict and enforceable guidelines for persons holding constitutional positions, so that public offices are not misused to spread hatred or target any community.
(The Hindu, 04-02-2026)

Early Influences

- Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi

It is a political biography of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who has carved out for himself a prominent place in the modern Indian history. It is, therefore, not necessary to give an extensive account of his life in all its brilliant aspects. There are a number of biographies and biographical studies available in English, Urdu and Arabic, and also hundreds of essays and articles in different languages on various aspects of his achievements as a great scholar, a profound thinker and a valiant and dauntless crusader for freedom and above all, as a deeply religious man of lofty ideas and noble cultural values, "of luminous intelligence and mighty intellect" that could see a "thing" to its very core.

Born in 1888 at Makkah with a rebellious spirit, Azad completed his traditional religious education at a comparatively young age of fifteen under the strict supervision of his father, a reputed 'alim of fixed ideas. He, however, during the course of his formal education studied literary journals and books on subjects that raised doubts in his mind, led him to think independently and question some of the basic premises behind the beliefs and practices he had been brought up with. Of such studies, Sir Sayyid's writings played a significantly major role in his intellectual development.

Azad felt a sort of repulsion towards circumstances in which he was persistently made to realize that his father was a pir and, as a son of a pir, he was expected to be pleased with the presents and adulation

offered by the disciples of his father, generally older than him. It was nothing else but the working of the rebellious spirit inherent in his nature. Writing about the change that initially took place in him when he was about thirteen, he says:

"My education had yet to be completed and I was not more than thirteen years old; I suddenly felt disgusted with the situation I was in and the circumstances around me; I also realized that it was an evil situation. My restlessness continued until I felt a sort of hatred for things that others held so honourable and virtuous, and in the inner recesses of my heart, I was ashamed of these things. Now, when people kissed my hands and feet, I felt as if something most heinous were being committed, although, a few days before, the very same spectacle been a matter of great pride and self-satisfaction for me."

This was the first sign of revolt in Azad against the family traditions which his father wanted to maintain at all costs. It was followed by the realization that all that he was asked to believe and practise was nothing but taqlid (following without questioning) of ancestors, and devotion to old customs and inherited beliefs. This raised a storm of doubts and in him as he did not see reason in blindly accepting what his ancestors had been believing and doing. Now, as he says, in this realm of doubts at the age of fourteen, three questions that confronted him, were:

1. Does God really exist?

2. Is there any truth for all the beliefs that religion teaches?

3. And, if so, then why so many differences about the great truth? If religion stands for true guidance and peace, then why so many controversies and conflicts, and so much bloodshed in the name of religion? And again, if one of the numerous religions is accepted by all, there would still problems; there are countless differences within each religion, and groups based on them are quarrelling among themselves. Why should one group be right and the rest wrong?

These questions kept on tormenting him; he tried to solve them through his studies of different religions and modern philosophy and of some branches of science available in Urdu and Arabic translations. But, instead of providing any remedy to his spiritual-intellectual agony, they further increased his doubts and dissatisfaction in regard to religion and religious beliefs.

It was at this stage of uncertainty and almost disbelief that Azad suddenly found a new world before him and that was the writings of Sir Saiyyid. Azad has unreservedly confessed the Sayyid's influence on his intellectual development. *Äzäd Ki Kahäni* and *Dhikr-i-Äzäd* both give a detailed description of the deep impact of Sir Sayyid's 'rationalism' on his thinking and approach to understand the religious and intellectual problems that confronted him at that stage. He was so intoxicated with Sir Sayyid that he did not hesitate to call him as a mujtahid-i-mutlaq and himself a mujtahid fi' l madhhab; and this was because of his emancipation from the

fetters of taqlid which he and his gurü (Sir Sayyid) both considered as inimical to man's spiritual and intellectual growth.

Once, as Azad later said, the structure of the traditional and inherited notion of religion was shaken, there was no power that could save it from crumbling to pieces. Azad was destined to live an intellectual life of wandering, first, in the wilderness of skepticism and, then, in that of atheism and denial for about nine years. During this period, after having been temporarily for not more than about one and a half years under the spell of Sir Sayyid, he felt there must be something beyond, him too. Why, then, remain satisfied with the Sayyid's taqlid? Sir Sayyid had not challenged the basis of religion. Azad's intellectual doubt carried him to that stage of insatiable curiosity where he had to suspend all religion and experience the spiritual agony that emanates from the total loss of faith. "Sir Sayyid had uprooted his old faith and allowed the expression of his doubts. Now he also questioned those parts of the faith which Sir Sayyid wanted to retain. What if, Azad asked himself, they were also delusions? The existence of a creator God, the Being and attributes of God, the immortality of the spirit, revelation and inspiration, prophethood, laws— why should not they also be untenable? Sir Sayyid had so weakened the case for all these beliefs in his mind that it was (not so) hard (as to) discard them altogether."

This development in Azad's thought was exactly what he had contemplated as a reaction to his father's usual remark that the stages in modern apostasy were first wahnäbiyat, and then néchariyat, but he never mentioned ilhad (atheism), the next

natural stage after nechariyat: he thought that néchariyat and ilhad were one and the same. Sir Sayyid called himself a Wahhābi, meaning a rebel against taqlid and traditional mode of thinking. His opponents called him néchari, as he believed that there could not be unconformity between the 'word of God ' and the 'work of God'.

In a very private letter to Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi in February, 1914, not intended to be published, Azad very frankly confessed his involvement in various forms of sinfulness and heretical views in the period of his early youth when he led a wayward lifé in matters of belief and practice both. Then, he refers to some tragic events that brought about a revolution in his condition, and when God granted him the grace of repentance, he took a vow that he would thenceforward keep himself away from all that was forbidden and act upon the injunctions of the Shariah.

Azad does not clearly and in plain words describe the nature of the tragic experience drat at Bombay around, 1909. Some of his recent have opined that it was a "love episode". In view of the kind of life he had to live, under the strict vigilance and domineering awe of the dominating of his father, with a soul troubled by the youthful convulsions within and a burning desire to revolt against all traditional values, family fads and false pretensions, me could oneself feel that the inferences drawn, in this respect, from Azad's writings are not so unconvincing.

It is, in itself, an exciting literary to go through the story of Azad's experiences at Bombay described in a poetic prose of beautiful metaphors and similes in Tadhkirah. Below are given a few extracts:

"When I opened my eyes, adolescence already dawned, and every thorn in the wilderness of my world was gay as a flower with the dew of ambition and desire. When I looked at myself, I saw a heart filled with quicksilver instead of blood.....

"Heedlessness and inebriation chanted their magic incantations, passions filled the cups, the madness of youth caught me by the hand, and my heart, loving to surrender itself, accepted as its goal the way shown to it by impulses desires....

"But it is better for me to declare openly and clearly what I have to say.....

"The cause of our ruin is this.' in the tumult caused by self-forgetfulness, the voice of the conscience reaches but a few ears, and if it does, our own hands beat so loudly upon the drums of the intoxicated senses that the voice of admonition is drowned in the noise....

"But greater than all the facts and proved realities of the world is this truth:

He that does everything for us

Looks to our needs:

We bring misery upon ourselves

If we worry about our concerns.

"All at the grace of God appeared in form of profane love md the of pleasure brought me of their own to the highway of Love....

"No doubt this (love of mine) a lapse. But what shall we lapse that casts us on the feet of the Beloved? The end of all efforts is to reach Him. If lapses and intoxication lead us there, why should not a thousand forms of constancy and sobriety

be offered up on their altar?"

The other characteristic of Azad's prodigious personality, of which he was justly proud of, was his independence of thought and action. Both the *Tadhkirah* written in 1916, and a letter in *Ghubar-i-khatir*, written in 1942, tell us about this prominent feature of his character. Throughout his life he trod the path he himself carved out, often as a solitary traveller, following no one's footprints. In religion, in politics or in any other aspect of his activities, he went his own way, suffering, bearing hardships with courage, asserting his individuality with determination, never halting till the destination was reached. While studying the kind of public life he led, one is asked to keep this unique feature of his dauntless character in mind.

"Suddenly there was the light of hope. Just as I am unable to say anything about the hand that pushed me into the darkness, so I am unable to tell about the hand that suddenly pulled me out of darkness. Nevertheless, the fact is that there was light that shone bright before me, and after nine years of groping in the dark, I found right within my own self what I was passionately seeking. All doubts disappeared, all delusions faded away, and I was blessed with the certainty (of faith) and peace (of mind) I had been seeking.

This reminds one of Al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) *al-Munqidh min ad-dalal* (Deliverance from Darkness) where he describes the story of his spiritual quest and finally reaching the goal. Azad, lauding and standing witness to the truth embodied in the mystical experience of Al-Ghazali, confirms the veracity of his statement.

"Doubt leads to seeking, seeking to wonder, and wonder to conviction."

In Azad's case it was not doubt-search-wonder-, and the conviction. It was more than that. Conviction came to him not after wonder, which, perhaps, he never experienced. Conviction and certainty he found after total denial. That was not the situation with Ghazali. He, however, in full accord with Ghazalian sufi tradition, described the sudden change in him in the language of metaphors of darkness and light, of veiling and unveiling:

"For a long time, I considered the sparkling mirage of materialism and rationalism as the water of life. All the infirmities of this path (of delusions) one has to endure, I had also to suffer from, and in search of cure from them I used all the necessary prescriptions. At last, when I was tired of my quest (for truth) and courage failed me, suddenly the curtain of darkness was parted. I lifted my eyes and saw face or the lost truth unveiled before me."

This event of unveiling of the truth before Azad took place sometimes at the end of 1909 or early in 1910, the year when he wrote famous essay, 'Sarmad, the Martyr, on the request of Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Delhi for his journal, *Nizām al-Masha'ikh*. The description of his earlier search for truth with masterly interjections of Sufi-Persian expressions, both in prose and poetry, and his essay on Sarmad have led some researchers to conclude that his religious experience was a mystical one. This may be partly true, and because of its being wholly personal and subjective, even of that one cannot be sure.

On the other hand, in Azad's essay on Sarmad we find him depicting the non-conformist sufi mainly as a symbol of revolt against the established authority of traditional religious, juristic and political institutions, which, as mentioned before, was one of the main features of his intellectual and moral development. It is true that there was always a mystic element in his search for truth, and therefore in his spiritual growth. But Sarmad, it should be kept in mind, could not be the true representative of that element in him. Sarmad provided him with an opportunity to condemn the narrow-minded worldly 'ulamā' who were a class by themselves and whom Azad never spared and lost no opportunity to criticize with bitter sarcasm. It is important to note that Azad seemed not to have been reconciled to Aurangzeb's inflexible and unassimilative orthodoxy. His harsh comments on Shibli's Madamin-i-Alamgir deserve due notice. On the contrary, he openly expressed his sympathies for Dara Shikoh for his approach in search of the basic religious truth in spite of his (Dara Shikoh's) being at the other extreme of the issue concerned. Azad had just passed through the pangs of some 'tragic events' when he was asked to write on Sarmad. With abundance of ŞüJf literature in prose and in poetry in his memory on the subject of 'ishq (love) and its unique role in man's life, and his recent "experience of madness of love and self-forgetfulness" still fresh in his mind, he depicted the love story of Sarmad as a symbol of a journey from the 'unreal to the real'.

"Of whatever kind it may be, love ('ishq) is always the first step towards the station of truth and reality (haqiqat)..... Or,

better, love is the door to be passed through before man can become man. Whoever's is not wounded, and whoever's eyes are not with tears— how can he fathom the meaning of humanity" (Sawanih Sarmad Shahid).

The essay on Samad and a much later (in 1945) response of Azad to a query from Maulana Abdur Rahman Kashmiri, which we would presently discuss, have made some western scholars believe that Azad's commitment to the sufi approach to Islamic faith and practice was a continuous process.

But, had Azad's letter (of June 1910) to Mulla Wahidi, the then assistant editor of Nizām al-Masha'ikh, not the attention of these scholars, they would have cautious and have not to make such a sweeping generalisation. The letter is as it shows how casually the essay on Sarmad was written. Referring to his letter of June 3, 1910 to Khwajah Hasan Nizami, informing him that, during the journey from Bombay to Calcutta, he had a copy of Rubā'iyāt—i—Sarmad with him and had written a few pages, and inquiring that if he liked, he (Azad) would complete the essay, he wrote to Mulla that it was strange that he did not receive it in its complete form. He also wrote that first he sent Khwaja Sahib the few which he had written during the and then, after three days, he completed the essay and sent the remaining portion to him. He thought that that might have been lost. He, therefore, concluded:

"...However, if it has been lost, then, now, I have neither the time to write it again do I consider it so important as to spare some more time (for Sarmad). I wrote on Sarmad only the insistent persuasion of

Khwajah Sahib. Otherwise, in history, there are hundreds of people of ijthād and tajdid, who have genuine grievance against my neglectful and careless in not writing about them. Leaving them aside, now, why waste time on Sarmad and others like him (emphasis ours).”

In July 1912, about two years after the publication of the essay on Sarmad appeared al-Hilal, and in it there were clear indications of Azad’s salafy approach to Islamic faith and practice. Then, his internment (1916-1919) at Ranchi produced the famous Tadhkirah, in which muhaddithin like Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), Ibn Jauzi (d. 1200), Ibn Taimiyya (d. 1328) and found prominent place and their life and achievements were depicted as models of lifelong vocation, with strong determination, sacrifice and suffering, to uphold the cause of Islamic faith and practice as adumbrated in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

Maulana Abdur Rahman Kashmiri wrote to Azad in 1945 and, again in September, 1957, about five months before his death, there was another query, almost in the same strain. In his response to both the queries finds him unequivocally true to his salafi, not sūfi, approach to Islamic beliefs and practices. Maulana Kashmiri had written to him that muhaddithin, like Ibn Jauzi and Ibn Taimiyya, had criticized and opposed the sufis. But, among muhaddithin there were sufis also as Shah Waliullah, his family and his Khulafa.”He wanted to know Azad’s views as to whether (in this respect) the sūfis were on the right path or the mutaddithin; and, further, if both had failed in avoiding the extreme position, then he wanted him to indicate the way of those who

were on the middle, and, therefore, on the straight path, and also as to what he should do in a situation like this. Azad’s reply was:

“From what Ibn Jauzi and Ibn Taimiyya have written against the Sufis, we must not conclude that they were against genuine and perfect sufis. Ibn Taimiyya himself mentions Abdul Qadir Jilani (d. 1166) with great reverence, and his disciple, Ibn Qayyim (d. 1355) has written a commentary on Manāzil al—Sā’irin of Abdullah An-sari of Herat (d.1089). After the diligent search of a lifetime, I have come to the conclusion that on the way (to truth) the station of ‘assurance of the heart’ cannot be reached without a taste and experience of the spirit (Zauq-o-hāl)”—— (Troll’s translation).

“Azad then advises his friend to practice solitary, fully attentive prayer, including the prayer of night vigil, as a sure means to reach the higher stages of spiritual realization.

A close study of Kahāni reveals the influence of Ibn Taimiyya on Azad from the very beginning of his youth. The reformist Muslim movements of India including the Aligarh movement in the nineteenth century were definitely inspired by the teachings of Ibn Taimiyya. Like the intellectual fervour under his influence among the educated Arabs, in India, too, we find him inspiring Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan (1832-1890), Sir Sayyid, Maulana Nazir Husain Muhaddith (d. 1902) and the Amritsar group of hadih-’ulamā of the time, who took great pains to popularise his teachings in favour of “ijthihād”, and against blind taqlid. Azad’s stay at Amritsar, though brief (1906-7), as editor of Vakil, might have certainly contributed to his growing appreciation of Ibn Taimiyya’s teachings with which he had

already become familiar through his studies of the learned works of the 'ulamä, and the writings of al-Manar group of salafis in Egypt and Syria.

Approximately at the some time he met Shibli Nu'mani (1857-1914) with whom he had been in correspondence, probably, since 1901 , and on his invitation joined him on the editorial staff of an-Nadwah. Shibli's article "Allama Ibn Taimiyya Harrani" published in an-Nadwah of July 1908 might not have escaped his attention. Shibli was a great source of inspiration for him and he also recognised and appreciated Azad's literary talent and scholarly understanding of the Islamic intellectualism as it had developed during the past centuries.

In the said article, Shibli had asserted that Ibn Taimiyya fully deserved to be recognised as the mujaddid of his age. He fulfilled conditions which made an 'älim a mujaddid, and which, according to him, were as follows:

1. He should bring about a purposeful revolution in matters of religion, or in learning or in politics.
2. His reformist ideas should be the outcome of his own ijtihäd, not taqlid.
3. He should have endured physical suffering, even at the risk of his life in order to achieve his objective.

It is altogether a different matter as to how far Shibli and Azad were influenced by some of the Mu'tazali ideas or as to whether it was just a passing phase of their life and they had temporarily sympathised with the Mu'tazilah as a reaction to the dominating hold of Ash'arism on Islamic thought for centuries and their extremist stand against all rationalism. Shibli was

engaged in completing and publishing the Kaläm— series of his works from 1901 to 1906, such as al-Ghazäli, ilm al-Kaläm, al-Kalam and Sawäni Maulänä Rüm. He was, however, in touch with Ibn Taimiyya's writings during the period. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi (Hayati-Shibli, 1970, p. 332) writes that with the availability of Ibn Taimiyya's works in print at the time, Shibli 's interest in him and his ideas increased and ultimately he was led to comment that a biography of Ibn Taimiyya should be the first concern of theirs, and that he thought that among all the Razis and Ghazalis he stood at a high pedestal. Maulana Nadwi also writes that in the last years of his life Shibli would often say to him that he was prepared to follow Ibn Taimiyya in every aspect.

Ibn Taimiyya's influence on Shibli, during the last years of his life, has been given here a somewhat detailed consideration because of Azad's long enduring intellectual relationship with him.

In his essay on Ibn Taimiyya, Shibli made it a point to emphasise his political role and eulogise the sufferings he had to undergo in the struggle for his cause. "This was a departure from the trend represented by Sir Sayyid, Nawab Siddiq Hazn and Maulana Nazir Husain who had depicted Ibn Taimiyya only as a religious reformer."

It seems that Azad took the cue from Shibli's article and Ibn Taimiyya in the totality of his wholesome personality and intellectual and political efforts to regenerate the Muslim society of the day. But before we refer to the great tribute he paid to Ibn Taimiyya in Tadhkirah, mention is to be made that by 1908 Azad was a completely changed person in respect of

his being under the influence of the Salafiyah, i.e., the group of reformers in the Arab world who drew inspiration from the Salaf mainly through the writings of Ibn Taimiyya, in their zeal to bring about a truly Islamic renaissance in the contemporary world of Islam. This is corroborated by Louis Massignon's statements about Azad whom he met for the first time in 1908 at Baghdad. He confirms that he and Azad met and developed their contact with the Alusi family of Baghdad, which was the defender of Ibn Taimiyya and "took part in the Salafi movement for the reform of the Muslim community as a whole. Azad describes his experience of having contact with the Alusi family in details in his letter to Nawab Sadr Yar Jang, dated September 29, 1940, in *Karwān-I Khiyāl* (pp. 74-78).

In al—Hilal the salafi strand in Azad's thinking became much stronger, and the Qur'anic injunction of *amr b'il ma'ruf wa l naky* "an al-munkar (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil) and the theme of Jihād were repeatedly emphasised in passionate terms in the forceful style which was so characteristic of Azad during the al-Hilal days. He would argue that jihād and *amr b'il ma'ruf* were alternatively the same, and every step, violent or non-violent, in the way of God (*fi sabilillāh*) would be victorious and richly rewarded.

In the *Tadhikrah* (compiled at Ranchi in 1916, and published in 1919) Azad is all praise for Ibn Taimiyya, wherein he emerges as his greatest hero. Unlike the Arab and the Indian Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century, Azad's interest was not confined only to religious aspects of Ibn Taimiyya's teachings. He was also influenced by his ideas of reform of the

'ulamā' of his time and by his stand for continued resistance to the then Mongol invaders of the Muslim territories. He, therefore, thought and acted in the similar fashion, and made an attempt to organise the 'ulamā' to reform themselves and offer resistance to the alien rule in India and to all such elements in the Muslim society as represented the pro-British Aligarh school of thought in politics and the pro-West orientation in matters of culture and social and intellectual behaviour. From this it should not be presumed that Azad was opposed to new education and modern knowledge. But he did decry the form of the modern education which had resulted in no originality of thought, and had created, among most of its receivers, a complex of admiration for everything western along with a feeling of contempt for all that was Islamic and eastern.

Later, in 1921, addressing the Lahore session of the *Jam'iyat—ul—'Ulamā'*, Azad referred to the general devastation caused by the Mongols in the eastern world of Islam, likening the situation in the Muslim countries in the twentieth to that of the thirteenth century and asked the 'ulamā' to do what the 'ulamā' of those days had done. He told them that the first thing that they did was a general call to appoint amirs in all the occupied territories in order to organise the Muslims and establish the Shari'ah laws. He further said that Shaikhul-Islam Ibn Taimiyya gave a fatwa that the Muslims in the land occupied by the Mongols, should never accept the change (in the situation) and should not for a moment live without an imām, and that they should either migrate from the area or appoint an amir so that they were able to fulfil their obligations. ■

Muslim Reformist And The Transition To English Rule

- Seema Alavi*

DURING THE LATE eighteenth century, the Naqshbandi Sufi Shahwaliulla's madrasa at Delhi became the center of Arabic learning of both the religious and secular kind. Even though heavily influenced by the trends streaming in from Arab lands, the seminary continued to uphold the eclecticism of the Indo-Persianate literary culture. Reformist scholars of the seminary, often labeled by the British as "Wahabis" produced texts in Persian like the *Sirat-I Mustaqim*, which combined the Sufi doctrine with the monist doctrine of tauhid or belief in one Allah and His Prophet. Their literature catered to the Persian-knowing elite and called for the moral reform of Muslim society to meet the challenges of the time.

In the early nineteenth century, reformist literature increasingly spilled out of its elite encasement and became accessible to ordinary people. While the Persian *Sirat* was translated into the north Indian vernacular Urdu, a range of new texts were also written and printed in this local language. However, in its popular printed form, new Urdu texts like the *Taqwiyat al-man* and the *Nasihah-i-Muslimin* (1823—1824) forefronted the Koran, the Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet), and the individual as the ideal interpreter. The Sufi dimension of the original doctrine with its stress on the mediator—the spiritual leader—was either sidelined or was conspicuous by its absence.

This chapter argues that the sidelining of the interlocutor, the shift to the canon, and the focus on the individual was part of a larger process of Mughal crisis: the disintegration of the Indo-Persianate imperium of the late eighteenth century. As the Mughal Empire and its successor states moved into oblivion, so did the Indo-Persianate concept of the royal body and court society as the embodiment of knowledge of all kinds. In this period of transition, both religious and scientific knowledge spilled out of their bodily trappings—royal, sacred, and profane. There was a greater stress on the individual and his ability to create a doctrine that ensured universal appeal. British presence of course made it politically expedient that the doctrine be premised on easy accessibility, simplicity of style, and rationality, which enabled global connections. The Arabic-scripture-based tradition thus came to the forefront of South Asian religious discourse as a template whose universal appeal could meet best the new requirements of the early nineteenth century.

The Delhi Naqshbandi Sufi Shahwaliulla best epitomized this Indian brand of Arabic orientation. He and his multilingual disciples produced texts in Urdu that exemplified the Hindustani elites' interpretation of the Arabic tradition. He signatored a specific brand of Arabicism that stressed Muslim exclusivity via unity and compromise between the more liberal Sufi saint Ibn-i-Arabi and the conservative

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Naqshbandi Sufi sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. This formula of compromise produced an India-specific Arabic tradition with its stress on the individual, scriptures, monism, and social leveling, even as it left the space for intermediaries—now cast as spiritual mentors—who mediated between the individual and the text. However, the forefronting of the scripture and the individual meant that religious knowledge was slowly disembodied from its hitherto inaccessible encasings: the person of the king, the body of the Sufi saint, and single-copy Persian manuscripts. Religious dictums now came in easy-to-read Urdu printed books and pamphlets that were open to individual interpretation. They were a far cry from the Persian reformist texts, like the *Sirat*, as their tenor was Arabicist: individual-centric, austere, simple, prescriptive, exclusive, and with a claim to universality. Arabic (and all that it embodied), which had so far enjoyed only symbolic significance as a language of rituals and scholarship, was disseminated into society via Urdu texts.

The familiarity with and signification of Arabic language and tradition had always existed in the subcontinent. It had always been the language of Islamic scholarship in the eighteenth-century madrasas of Hindustan, and one of symbolic ritual observance. Now it brought center stage as the new referent that enabled the individual to envisage a new Muslim global imperium. Indeed, the regal, hyperbolic, eclectic Indo-Persianate world of the late eighteenth century was slowly giving way to the Arabicist tradition of the early nineteenth century, characterized by a relatively somber, prescriptive exclusivity

within Hindustan combined with a desire for a global hegemony via the universal appeal of the scriptures.

Thus the stress in reformist ideology on a singular Allah is not just a case of a response to corruption in society or Islam, or to British presence. Rather, it is symptomatic of larger societal churnings related to the disintegration of the Indo-Persianate culture and of the attempt to forge an alternate political imperium for Muslims via the universal appeal of the scriptures and individual agency. This is best reflected in the fact that the religious and moral prescriptions in these texts often use the royal court by way of illustrations and allegory. Very much like the intentions of a typical royal court, the Urdu literature too created a discourse of unity. However, this was no longer structured on the Persianate norm of the king maintaining an efficient social balance in an eclectic society, but on an aggressive Arabicist prescriptive Islam, which unified via compromise and leveling rather than balancing. The idea of social leveling stood in contrast to the Persianate idea of social balancing. Social leveling was committed to create a unified umma, or community. The Islamic textual dictum of *tauhid* was the key conceptual leveler. This became the main ideological plank of the reformists.

Early nineteenth-century authors like Khurram Ali and Ismael Shahid justified this ideology using the verses of the Koran. Thus the Arabicist tradition disseminated by elite Urdu reformers is heavily textual—mainly Koran oriented with a focus on only select Hadiths. It is Protestant in the sense of urging people to establish a direct link

with Allah—without interlocutors. It believes in the undisputed supremacy of Allah over all prophets and other intermediaries. And it is critical of any efforts to place any interlocutor in a position above Allah. Such efforts are defined as shirk (heresy) and are seen as sinful. Elite reformers of the Urdu texts upheld Shahwaliulla's compromise formula but leaned more toward the conservative Naqshbandi Sufi sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi side of exclusivity rather than toward Ibn-i-Arabi's brand of eclecticism.

The shift in reformist literature from a Persianate inclusivity to an Arabicist exclusivity was gradual. The drift can be discerned as we move from one of the earliest compendiums of early nineteenth century reformist literature in Persian, the *Sirat-i-Mustaqim* of Sayyid Ismael Shahid, to his later more definitive Urdu text, *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, and finally to the more derivative, shorter text of Khurram Ali called the *Nasihah-i-Muslimin*. These surveys of Urdu reformist literature also unraveled the critical significance of the multilingual Mughal legatees, as they were able to use their exceptional linguistic range to reach out to the Arabic tradition and popularize it in the local language, Urdu. In so doing, they tapped into the hitherto unused global referents in their last-ditch effort to survive.

Urdu Reformist Texts and the Interpretation of the Arabic Tradition

In 1818, Ismael Shahid compiled the Persian text *Sirat-i-Mustaqim*. This was a compendium of the sayings and guidance of his spiritual mentor and the foremost reformist of his time, Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. Harlon O. Pearson claims that the first

Persian version was published in 1825, during the lifetime of Sayyid Ahmad. Its fuller versions and editions in Urdu, however, were published after the death of the Sayyid Ahmad in 1838. The text represents Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and his *Tariqa-i Muhammadiya* (The Muhammadan Way) as transoceanic therapy for the social and political crises facing Muslim society. It is also significant because the author invokes the Islamic tradition of *l'tedal* (mutual trust) and *ijma* (consensus) to extend a long embracing arm to all four Sufi sects even as he highlights the salience of the scriptures and *tauhid* as the core around which the global community of Muslims would unite.

The Urdu rendition of the text, completed in the first half of the nineteenth century, continues with the Persianate eclecticism of the original version. Shah Ismael's preface claims that the work is a compilation of Sayyid Ahmad's sayings as heard and related to him by his companions. The text also includes essays based on Sayyid Ahmad's sayings memorized and penned by his companion Maulana Abd al-Hai. What is more important is that the author underlines the fact that even though the book stresses the exceptional status of Allah and the Prophet and the love and devotion of the individual to them, it does not ignore the Sufi brand of love mediated via the spiritual mentor. Indeed, the text devotes an entire section to the forms of devotion of the *Chishtiya*, *Qadariya*, and *Naqshbandiya* Sufi orders and attempts to arrive at a consensus in their devotional practices. Thus the Urdu translation upholds the eclectic tenor of the original Persian text, with its closeness to

the elite Indo-Persian genre of literature that stressed social inclusivity, while it maintains the power balance in society.

As we move from the masterpiece *Sirat* to Ismael Shahid's own more definitive Arabic/Urdu text *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, the change in stance toward a prescriptive exclusivity is evident—and so too is the sharpened focus on the individual as the interpreter of texts and the maker of his destiny. Written in 1825—1826 as a popular reader in Hindustani, the *Taqwiyat* is an easy-to-read text of 141 pages. Originally penned in Arabic, it was translated by Ismael Shahid himself into Urdu. In sharp contrast to the *Sirat*, it trims the reformist tradition of its Persianate Sufi eclecticism. It uses the Koran and the Hadith to dismiss local custom and rituals, labeling them as shirk or heresy. Instead, it invites people to believe in one God (tauhid). According to the author, the relationship between the individual and the holy texts is the singular frame to fit all social action. And tauhid was the only solution to end the ignorance Of Muslim society in India.

The book has an introduction that speaks to ordinary people who think that they are not knowledgeable enough to understand the books of God—the Koran and the Hadith. Ismael Shahid strived to make the scriptures user friendly as a way of popularizing his interpretation of the Arabic religious canon. He resolved to popularize the scriptures and thus chose to write in the local language of Urdu despite his firm intellectual rooting in Persian and Arabic. He disembodied religious knowledge hitherto locked in esoteric

languages: Persian and Arabic. The result was the production of his text the *Taqwiyatal-Iman* in the simple, easy-to-read vernacular Hindustani— or Urdu.

In the text he demystifies the canon and reiterates that to know the Koran one does not require any special scholarly skills. Indeed, he uses excerpts from the holy book to project it as a great social leveler. He invokes the relevant Koranic verses to dismiss the popular idea that the holy books are difficult to understand by ordinary people. He cites the Koran again to argue that God had said that it was not difficult to understand the holy book but hard on the conscience to follow it. He quotes the Koranic verse *Jamiah*, which underlines the fact that the holy book was revealed for ordinary people. He argues that the Prophet had arrived with the Koran to “guide the innocent, to make the ignorant understand, and to impart knowledge to the non-knowledgeable.” He concludes that the sacred books are user friendly, as God sent his Prophet with them to “purify the impure, make the ignorant knowledgeable, drive the fools towards sanity and put the derailed back onto the right path of faith.” Shahid warns that if despite this Koranic injunction pointing to the socially embedded nature of the holy book people continued to distance themselves from such literature, it would amount to denying God's words and declining His blessings.

Ismael Shahid defines faith (*iman*) as comprising tauhid and *Itbai Sunnat* (the belief in Prophet Muhammad). According to Shahid, to include others in the company of God is shirk; to deviate from *Sunnat* is *biddat*. He states in the introduction that

his book is a compilation of verses from the Koran and the Hadith that explain tauhid and Sunnat and elaborate on the ills of shirk and biddat. The Taqwiyat is divided into two parts: the first focuses on tauhid and highlights the consequences of indulging in shirk; the second explains Sunnat and urges people to stay away from biddat. The text offers a compelling critique of rituals and spiritual mentors. It lends agency to the individual as the maker of his destiny.

The text is interactive in tone, and the narrative is in the form of a questionnaire. It opens with a section titled "Tauhid Va Shirk Kei Bayan Mein" (Explaining Tauhid and Shirk). Here Shahid lists things that comprise shirk: dependence on pirs (holy men); spurning imams, and angels; and christening children in ways that socially associate them with holy men, saints, and prophets. According to Ismael Shahid, naming someone Ali Baksh (disciple of All), Pir Baksh (disciple of any holy man), Hussain Baksh (disciple of Hussain), or Ghulam Muhiuddin (slave of Muhiuddin) amounts to shirk. He explains that many people who lean on holy men (or maulvis) and referents other than Allah for spiritual succor say that they should be slotted in the shirk category because they do not equate their mentors with God. Instead they see these holy figures as creatures of God who they merely use to access God. To such arguments Ismael Shahid replies that if people hold onto only the books of Allah and His Prophet they will not need anyone's mediation in their reach to God."

In the next two sections, Ismael Shahid lists certain rituals that can be performed only for God. He argues that

customs like sajda (prostration), standing with hands folded, spending money on the name of anyone else except Allah, and fasting for anyone else except Allah amounts to shirk, as these are rituals exclusively reserved for Allah. This exclusive package also includes the Islamic pilgrimage—haj. This spiritual journey is only to the house of Allah in Mecca—the kaaba. The circumambulations (tawwaf) ritual is also done exclusively around the kaaba. Pilgrimages, offerings, and circumambulations around any other house or grave amount to shirk. There are sections in the book called "Afsal Shirk Sei Bachnei ka Zikr" (Ways to Protect Oneself from Shirk). Here Shahid elaborated on how one can inadvertently slip into the wrong side—shirk. According to him, Islam is a way of life and should constitute the daily routine of the individual. The everyday life of Muslims can be easily framed in tauhid and protected from shirk. Tauhid protects the individual from a range of sins: forgetting the Muslim prayer namaz (the fasting regime), not observing Islamic dietary codes, being discourteous to parents, and denying one's wife and children their due.

Urdu texts that derived from the 'Taqwiyat sharpened the spotlight on the individual as the agent of change. The Nasihat-i-Muslimin is an important case in point. It can be called a derivative text that is heavily influenced by the social-leveling trend as reflected in the vernacular reformist literature of its age. Written in 1825, at about the same time as the Taqwiyat, it too exemplifies the tauhid based social-leveling process that dented the Persianate social balancing tradition of the

Mughal era and inaugurated the Arabicist interlude of the early nineteenth century. Authored by Maulana Khurram Ali, a disciple of the Delhi Naqshbandi Shah Abd-al Aziz, this is one of the early reformist doctrinaire texts, written in simple, easy-to-read Hindustani-Urdu. Its target audience is society as a whole and not just Muslims. It catered to jahil (ignorant/illiterate) Muslim youth, as well as to idol-worshipping Hindus. The author urges readers to read the text out loud and to spread the message far and wide to those who cannot read and to those who indulge in ahmaq (insane) activities. Such activities are defined as the customs and rituals of Hindus, belief in esoteric texts and inaccessible fulcrums of power, venerating Sufis saints, regional cultural observances of Muslims, and Persianate eclecticism in general.

The Sufi aspect of the Persianate ideological legacy of Shahwaliulla and Shah Abd-al Aziz is conspicuous by its absence. Instead tauhid—belief in only one Allah and turning to him as the sole provider—is the central pillar of the text. The text quotes select Koranic ayats, or injunctions, to justify its reliance on tauhid. It is a diatribe against all embodiments of sacred knowledge: saints, Sufis, and cult worship. It designates worship of such knowledgeable men as shirk, or anti-Islam. Allah is the sole embodiment of all knowledge—sacred and profane. Thus only He is to be worshipped. Significantly, even the prophets, including the last one, the Prophet, are demystified and humanized, and located firmly below Allah in the hierarchy of power. The reliance on the Koran as the word of Allah is salient in the text. Only select Hadith that are in

conformity with the Koran and Shariat are seen as credible. The text lays out the new Arabicized reformist orientation with its individual-centric gaze at its best. It divides the world between the insane (ahmaq) and the sane. The former are those who deviate from the path of tauhid. They are to be brought to the right path (sirat-i-mustaqim). Predictably, the ahmaq population is largely concentrated in the subcontinent, where they are said to have gone astray due to the Hindu cultural influence. Not surprisingly, the text focuses on this geographical space as the hub of reformist activity.

The sixty-nine-page printed text is divided into five sections. The first section, provocatively titled “Shirk Kis Ko Kehtei Hain” (What is Called Shirk), explains the concept of shirk to mean the worship of and dependence on many referents of authority. Ali defines it against tauhid—belief in one God. He elaborates on its meaning by quoting instances of the adulation of pirs and prophets. Also defined as shirk are individuals’ claims to creation and sharing with Allah what are His exclusive roles: procreator, producer of food and rain, and protector. Ali argues that that Koran was revealed to counter shirk and that the prophets of God fought battles with the infidel to wipe out this menace. He quotes the Koran to show that Allah created all, and even angels and prophets can never speak or know more than He. Thus the position of Allah is all powerful and supreme, and mortals in seeking help for their problems should approach no one else except Him.

The second section, written in an interactive question-and-answer format,

ridicules those who commit shirk. Titled “Shirk Karnei Walon kee Himaqat ka Bayan” (Description of the Foolishness of Those Who Do Shirk), it calls Muslims who turn to dead saints for help jahil (ignorant/illiterate), and it uses common logic to ridicule their acts by pointing out that those they venerate were themselves dependent for their existence on Allah. Ali wonders how such people could determine life-and-death issues of others if they were themselves not in control of their own lives. Ali asks: Who in fact are the jahils, or the ignorant? And why does the Koran prohibit seeking help from idols but not from auliyas (holy people) and pirs (Sufi masters)? To this self-posed question Ali replies that the Arabic word for Koran is Min-dun-i-allah—that is, don’t ask for help from anyone except Allah. And this injunction extends to all helpers: idols, prophets, and auliyas. He further clarifies that God himself said that even the Prophet had no power over his own life. Ali challenges the spiritual mentors of jahils to cite a single creation of their own as compared to the entirety created by Allah. Deviants (that is, those who have strayed from the Koran in belief in one Allah) are seen as bereft of intelligence, and their actions are derogatorily called foolish. The text advocates a social regime centered on Allah to bring society to the “proper” path. This is laid out in the form of prescriptive norms that are to be observed exclusively for Allah: sijdah (prostration), rozah (fasting), zabah (the slaughter of animals), and mannat (the promising of specific certitudes so that one’s prayer will be granted).

The third section compares God’s exceptional status as the sole referent of

Muslim rituals to the exclusive privileges that kings held in medieval times. Ali draws on this regal allegory to argue that just as a king alone can sit on the throne, Allah too is unique in His exclusivity. And just as a king will lay out a prescriptive regime, Allah has advocated a cultural regime that underlines His position as the highest reference point of legitimacy for Muslims. Thus the act of prostration can be observed only in reference to Him. Ali cites the Koran to say that such an act of reverence could not be observed in reference to the sun, moon, or to anyone who did not have the power of creation. Keeping in view the Hindu influence on Indian society, he forbids prostration at graves and bowing to Muharram taziyas (replicas of tombs of Shia imams). Ali also reprimands those Muslims who, influenced by Hindu rituals, observe the fasting regime not just in observation of Allah’s wish but in order to reach out to the prophets and saints. According to him, fasting in the name of people other than Allah or for certain hours in the day is a Hindu custom and thus heresy or shirk. Again, replying to a popular query of “misguided” people who ask why they should be prohibited from the ritual of sijda (prostration) when the angels had bowed to Adam, he draws on Islamic history. He argues that earlier sijda was a valid ritual to be observed freely, but that later, in the days of the Prophet, it was banned and reserved only for Allah.

The text devotes an entire section to Hindu-inspired customs that are listed as shirk and need to be avoided. This section, called “Rusumat-i-Shirk ka Zikr” (Discussion of Customs That Can Be Described as Shirk), once again spell out Koranic

injunctions in relation to Indian society. It lists some of the common customs observed in Hindustan that amount to shirk, for example, finding auspicious dates for marriages from Brahmins or ideal dates for travel. Also forbidden are names that announce a person to be the murid (follower of a prophet or saint). Such discipleship as indicated in names makes a person defy the Koran. And for such a person there is only hell after his death. Ali hits out hard at the Hindu influences that he feels have increased instances of shirk in Muslim society. He targets the Brahmins for having led Muslims astray. He argues that the innocent get carried away by the predictions of Brahmins. Referring to Brahmins in a disparaging way, he notes that they forget that if they were really all that knowledgeable about the future then they would have first taken care of their own welfare and not be seen in tattered clothes going door to door for alms and help. He also cautions people against reciting mantras from the Hindu tradition like the Hanuman Chalisa and Loha Chamar eulogies.

The final section lists the punishments given to people who commit shirk. According to Ali, the future of such people is only in hell. Titled "Shirk ki Buraai aur Shirk Karnei kee Saza ka Bayan" (The Ills of Shirk and Punishment for It), this section lists shirk as one of those sins that Allah rarely forgives. It calls it an evil and argues that its harmful effects are listed in the Koran and Hadith. He concludes that he is pained to see people in Hindustan wallowing in un-Islamic customs. It is for their moral reform that he made up his mind to write this book in an easy-to-read

Hindustani script. He has even translated the relevant Koranic and Hadith verses in Hindustani so that the "ignorant could benefit." In order to make the text easy to understand and popular he has appended to it a few verses in praise of the Prophet, as he feels that those will enhance its appeal.

The Hindustani elites' interpretation of Arab Islamic tradition narrowed and trimmed Arabic tradition to the Koran and certain Hadiths. Through the use of the vernacular Urdu and an interactive, question-and-answer approach focusing on Indic rituals and customs, Ali's text incorporated the South Asian version of Arab tradition into Indian society. This literary style ensured that the text was not confined to elite scholars. In his conclusion, Ali appeals to all Muslims to read the *Nasihah-i-Muslimin* and spread its message to those who are illiterate. He also lays out the etiquette to be observed by readers for dissemination of the text far and wide. He wants them to read it with polite decorum and affection and to explain it "gently, slowly and patiently" to the audience. He was convinced that if they observed this style it would have an impact on society. People would understand tauhid and stay away from shirk. He exhorts instructors to carry on their mission with dedication, as doing so would earn them more dividends in the house of God than even their namaz and rozah. He concludes his book by emphatically reiterating that the literate and the scholarly (alim and fasil) had the responsibility to carry the message of tauhid to society. If they failed, the jahil would take over and destroy religion. ■

The Message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for the Entire Humanity

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

It was about two and a half or three millennium years before Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) that the very great and important ancestor of his family itself and the favourite Prophet of Allah Almighty, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), had, having made enormous sacrifices, laid the foundation of the universal movement of *Tauheed*. The innate, unaffected disposition of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) had comprehended *Tauheed* from the very childhood and had, having discarded the *'shirk'*, started calling towards *'Tauheed'*. His anecdote has been described in the holy Quran itself:

(And assuredly We gave rectitude to Ibrahim aforetime, and him We had ever known. Recall when he said to his father and his people: what are these images which you are cleaving to? They said: we found our fathers their worshippers. He said: assuredly you, you and your fathers, have been in error manifest.)

(*Al-Anbiaa*: 51-54)

Thereafter such a benediction he had that plenty of Allah's Prophets kept being raised from amongst the descendants of his son, Hazrat Ishaque. They kept promoting and pushing this message forward. "Because of this very distinction Allah Almighty granted his line of descendants lofty position. But, later this line of descendants of Hazrat Ishaque (AS), which was used to be called 'Banu Israil', kept gradually deviating from the straight path.

Then, lastly, Allah Almighty had Muhammad (SAW), from amongst the descendants of another son of Hazrat

Ibrahim, Hazrat Ismail, raised as the universal Prophet. He told him categorically that the very path pursued by Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) was the path that was to be pursued by him. It was he amongst whose descendants Allah Almighty had raised Prophets and all of them had, in their respective times, called the people towards *'Tauheed'* and kept calling towards compliance with Allah Almighty's dictates as they were instructed and exhorted by Hazrat Ibrahim (AS). The holy Quran states:

(And Ibrahim enjoined the same to his sons and so did Yaqub also saying: O my sons: surely Allah has chosen for you the religion; so die not except you are Muslims.) (*Al-Baqra*: 132)

Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) had all his might and strength that he had at his disposal devoted to the propagation of this very message and to having that put into practice. He had, having suffered great hardships and making sacrifices, built anew the House of Allah on the preordained spot in Makkah Mokarramah in order to have the banner of *Tauheed* raised from there. There he got his first sucking babe, Hazrat Ismail, settled along with his mother. It was this very child of his, Hazrat Ismail, through whom the dissemination of *'Tauheed'* had taken place here. His descendants, getting cut off from each and every one, remained steadfast in worshipping the One Allah. They had taken the pledge that they would call the people towards *'Tauheed'* and tell them the truth.

This practice had consistently been pursued when a man from that place got

impressed, during a journey he had made of Iraq and Syria, by what he saw there of the idol worshipping. He brought the idol here with him. As a result thereof, the practice of idolatry got introduced here. Ultimately, once again Allah Almighty selected a peerless individual of this very clan for the revival of the Ibrahimite message and getting the world back to the same ideology and creed. It was he on whom He had the Prophecy culminated. He had his followers entrusted with the task of promoting, generation after generation, this mission of making mankind bound to worshipping the One God and comprehending that their whimsical and their-own-hand-made gods were spurious. They should have this creed inculcated in minds that the functions and operations of all the worlds was only in the Hands of Allah, the One. It is He who has created each and everyone; and, after having created them, has not left them loose. Instead, He has commanded them to be duty-bound to worship and obey Him. The entire creation has to follow His commands. Whosoever would refuse to obey His commands would have to be accountable in the Hereafter and would get punished.

In the days preceding the manifestation of the Prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the people of Makkah had gone far astray from their path in respect of '*Tauheed*'. It was direly needed to be rectified. This need was fulfilled by Allah by making Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet. The primogenitor of the people of Makkah, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), had already had this supplication made to Allah that the Prophet for the reform, edification and education of these people be sent from amongst these very people. Allah had already granted this supplication of his.

Then, having granted them a long term respite, He chose Muhammad (SAW) from amongst his descendants themselves. He also had this announcement made that after him there will be no other Prophet, nowhere and never at all. He, and he only, is the last Prophet and for all the people and for all times to come. Thus, the Prophecy conferred on Muhammad (SAW) was a sort of resumption of the self-same Prophecy that was conferred on his ancestral father, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS). And both of them were the followers of the same path.

In His Book that He sent down to His Prophet, Allah Almighty had the *Ayats* (verses) conveyed to him, gradually and as per the demands of the situations and requirements, through His angel. And, beside the guidance towards the Faith and deeds of righteousness, He had therein narrated, in very felicitous and impressive style, such events of the previous peoples and Prophets as would make it known in how many varied means and ways Allah Almighty's Wrath had descended on peoples because of their persistence on perpetrating acts of '*shirk*' and other sins.

Hence, if the similar conditions prevailed amidst the Arabs of Makkah and their accomplices from amongst the Arab tribes, Allah Almighty's Wrath, taking the form of Retribution, may descend on them, too. Hence, these people should learn their lessons from these events and remain mindful how much severe punishments were inflicted on previous peoples for their intransigence and irreligiousness. They should, therefore, comply with the Prophet's advice and get back to the right path, the path of truth. They should have their ways mended under the guidance of the Prophet, excellence of whose manners and morals are already well known to them. ■

The Importance of Education in Human Society

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

The significance of education in Islam is an acknowledged fact. Islam is the first religion which promoted education in an unprecedented way and made it compulsory for its adherents. The very first revelation sent to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) vividly shows immense significance of education. The Holy Qur'an says, "Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man, out of a leech-like clot: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught the use of pen, taught man that which he knew not" (S.96, A.1-5)

It is clear from the above mentioned verse of the Holy Qur'an that Islam accords its complete attention towards knowledge and learning. The main aim of Islamic education is to know the relation of man with Allah. That is why from the very outset a deep and firm nexus of knowledge has always been to Muslims. No doubt, the first revelation is the main key for enhancing and promoting arts and sciences. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) laid tremendous stress on the acquisition of knowledge. Even he directed the captives of Badr, who were learned, to impart education to Muslims. The very same was their ransom. This also establishes the importance of education.

The prophet ordered some of his companions to learn Hebrew and Other languages. The contributions made by Islam regarding education and learning have no parallel in human history. No other religions of the world can reach its one-tenth.

The advancements in education started during the life time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He set up firm foundations on which vast colonies and splendid buildings were constructed. The fact is that Islam equipped the world with abundant blessings of knowledge that such example is not found in any other religions of the globe.

Islam's main plank is to put knowledge on its right dimensions and incorporate it with

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the name of Allah. As it was mentioned in the very first revelation "Read with the name of thy Lord" so that human beings may not misuse the knowledge and pen. Muslims dominated all branches of arts and sciences for hundreds of years. Consequently, human beings cutting across religions gained considerable profits from it. The crux of the matter is that Muslims possessed knowledge along with the divine instructions. They followed the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in letter and spirit.

The history bears witness that there were well- equipped and well-furnished hospitals for the service of humanity during Muslim regime in Baghdad. Apart from it there is a hospital named "Bimaristan" in which a host of departments were set up. There was a particular department where some people were appointed merely to gossip the patients so that they may achieve mental peace and tranquillity. Unfortunately, such sorts of facilities are not available today. Today, the condition is that if any patient goes to the doctor for check-up, the doctor treats him in harsh manner and puts him into trouble instead of giving good suggestion and sane advice. Sometimes on hearing doctor's severe talk, the patient's condition starts deteriorating. The main reason is that one has knowledge but devoid of its true spirit. Today, mankind made great strides in the arena of science and technology but their level in morality appears lowered than the wild animals. In the past so long as Muslims stuck to ethical values of Islam they achieved extraordinary success in every spheres of life. They were the torch bearers of culture, civilization and education for about six centuries. It was through them that various arts and Islamic sciences were transmitted to Europe.

History is replete with the instances of their remarkable contributions and achievements.

No doubt, it was the Muslim influence which brought about the Renaissance in Europe. ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

Islam And Education

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Islam lays tremendous stress on acquisition of knowledge and learning. From the very outset, knowledge is utilised by Islam as a potential weapon to eradicate ignorance, superstition, barbarism, obscenity and numerous other obnoxious and illegal acts. Besides, Islam linked the relationship of knowledge with Allah after a long gap of six hundred years. After Prophet Isa (A.S.), the revelations stopped but were resumed with the Quranic verses and the connection of the earth with the heaven restarted.

The first revelation of the Holy Qur'an vividly shows the main aim of knowledge which was the directive to read and recite.

The First Revelation was an imperative verb- "Iqra" i.e.read itself laying stress on reading and knowing the unknown.

The Holy Qur'an says, "Read! In the name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot of congealed blood. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught man by the pen. He has taught man that which he did not know."(S.96.A.1-5)

Commenting on the aforesaid verses, noted Islamic scholar S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi said, "These verses readily bring to mind the event which happened in a dry, desolate part of Arabia some fourteen hundred years ago. This single event changed the entire course of human history. Nay, it transformed the fate of the whole mankind. The event is closely related to the pen and tablet, for it laid the foundation of knowledge, scholarship and civilization."

It becomes crystal clear from the first revelation that it is knowledge that can bring

about unprecedented changes and remarkable revolution in every aspect of human life.

But it is unfortunate that Islam is being projected as a threat to the entire world. And even it is often reiterated

that Islam is the biggest hindrance and obstacle in the field of education including science and technology. While the crux of the matter is that Islam came to foster education and spread peace and amity across the world. It is Islam which led the way to inductive theory. Before the advent of Islam the base of education rested on Aristotle's deductive theory.

It should be noted that there are two types of research methods in vogue today: 1.Deductive Research and 2.Inductive Research.

Deductive Research belonged to Aristotle. It has four elements: 1. Theory, 2. Hypothesis, 3.Observation, 4. Confirmation.

Islam propounded the method of Inductive Research and the foundation of science rests on it. It has also four elements: 1.Observation, 2, Pattern, 3. Hypothesis, 4. Theory.

One may easily understand the significance of education through the Inductive Research.

Needless to add that the very first Revelation opened the doors of various branches of knowledge including Science.

Now, it is imperative for us to promote education and also motivate others to acquire the greatest asset i.e. education so that we do not lag behind others in any spheres of life.■

Bilal bin Rabah (R.A.)

- Abdul Aziz Ash-Shanawi

His Lineage And His Kunyah

His name is Bilal bin Rabah (RA); his mother, Hamamah, was born in Makkah, and she belonged to the clan of Banu Jumah. His Kunyah is not known for certain; it is said, however, that his Kunyah is Abu 'Abdul-Karim, though some maintain that it is Abu 'Abdullah, while yet others hold that it is Abu 'Amr.

His Acceptance Of Islam

The first slave to accept Islam, Bilal bin Rabah (RA) was among the early followers of the Prophet (SWS), and he also lays claim to the distinction of being the first person from Habashah to accept Islam.

Torture At The Hands Of The Quraish

No group of people was tortured more severely than slaves; for the most part, others had at least some form of protection or some status in society to prevent them from being severely tortured. And since Bilal (RA) was a slave, Quraish's chiefs had no qualms about torturing him: he had no protector or patron from Quraish's chiefs, and he was not a relative of anyone from the Quraish. Umayyah bin Khalaf would

make Bilal (RA) lie on his face in the hot sands of the desert; he would then place a heavy stone over his body, allowing it to heat in the sun and crush Bilal (RA) with its weight. Yet Bilal (RA) remained patient and steadfast throughout such torture sessions. Umayyah bin Khalaf would say to him, "Disbelieve in the Lord of Muhammad," and that is what it would have taken to end the pain and torture, but Bilal (RA) refused. He (RA) simply replied, "The One (true God), the One (true God)." Later, when he was asked why he would give that particular answer, Bilal (RA) said that of all the answers he gave to his torturers, it was the one that made them most angry.

The Purchase Of His Freedom

One day, Bilal's (RA) tormenters inflicted such severe physical punishment upon him that he was on the verge of dying; such was his physical state that the Quraish felt that he was of no more use to them. It was at that time that Abu Bakr (RA) passed by; he offered to purchase Bilal (RA), and his owner scoffed and said, "Were you to purchase him for even (such and such amount) — a very low amount - I would

still sell him to you (i.e., he is of no use to me)." Abu Bakr (RA), valuing the true worth of a believer, answered that if he were to sell him for no less than such and such amount — he mentioned a very high amount — he would still buy him. It is said that Abu Bakr (RA) bought him for seven Awaq (a measurement) of gold. After buying Bilal (RA), Abu Bakr (RA) freed him for the sake of Allah (SWT).

His Migration And New Brother

Along with the other Muslims who left Makkah, Bilal bin Rabah (RA) migrated to Al-Madinah; and when the Messenger of Allah (SWS) built his Masjid, Bilal (RA) became its Mu'adhdhin (Caller to prayer). And when the Messenger of Allah (SWS) established bonds of brotherhood between members of the Muhajirin and members of the Ansar, he (SWS) appointed Abu Ruwaihah Al-Kath'ami (RA) to be Bilal bin Rabah's brother.

Bilal (RA): The Mu'adhdhin And The Guardian Of The Muslim Treasury

Bilal (RA) was indeed among the most trusted and high-ranking of the Prophet's Companions; he was not given the duty of being of being the Mu'adhdhin, but was also appointed as guardian of the Muslim treasury.

One morning, Bilal bin Rabah (RA) went to the Prophet (SWS) when it was time to make the Adhan (Call to prayer) for Fajr prayer. He (RA) greeted the Messenger of Allah (SWS) saying, "Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessings of Allah (be upon you as well) ... the prayer (i.e., it is time for prayer), may Allah have mercy on you." Bilal bin Rabah (RA) repeated this two or three times, while the Prophet (SWS) remained in a state of slumber. Bilal (RA) then said, "As-Salatu Khairun Minan-Naum (prayer is better than sleep)." The Prophet (SWS) then woke up and said:

"Make it (that phrase) a part of your Adhan when you make the Adhan for the Morning Prayer (i.e., Fajr prayer). Say twice: Prayer is better than sleep."

Bilal (RA) In Paradise

One morning, the Messenger of Allah (SWS) summoned Bilal (RA) and said:

"O Bilal, what has made you to precede me in Paradise? I have never entered Paradise except that I heard your footsteps ahead of me. Indeed, I entered (Paradise) last night, and I (again) heard your footsteps."

"O Messenger of Allah (SWS), whenever I nullify my state of purity

(whether that is by passing wind, urinating, defecating, etc.), I make ablution (Wudu) and perform two units of prayer.”

“It is because of those two (acts that I have heard your footsteps in Paradise),” said the Messenger of Allah (SWS). According to another narration, it is reported that the Messenger of Allah (SWS) said:

“Bilal is the chief of the Muadhhdhinin (the Callers to prayer) on the Day of Resurrection, and none shall follow him except for the Muadhhdhinun. And among people, the Muadhhdhinun will have the tallest necks on the Day of Resurrection.”

Where Do You Stand In Relation To Bilal (RA)?

When the sons of Bukair (RA) came to the Prophet (SWS) and said, “Marry our sister off to so-and-so,” the Prophet (SWS) said:

“Where to stand in relation to Bilal (hinting that they should instead marry their sister off to Bilal (RA))?”

They then came a second time and said, “O Messenger of Allah, marry our sister off to so-and-so.” And again, the Prophet (SWS) replied, “Where do you stand in relation to Bilal?” They left only to return again later and say, “Marry

our sister off to so-and-so.” This time, the Prophet (SWS) answered:

“Where do you stand in relation to Bilal? Where do you stand in relation to a man from the dwellers of Paradise?”

They then agreed and married their sister to Bilal (RA).

Bilal’s Jihad In The way Of Allah

Bilal bin Rabah (RA) took part in all of the battles that the Prophet (SWS) fought in. And when Messenger Of Allah (SWS) died, the first Khalifah, Abu Bakr (RA), said to Bilal (RA), “Make the call to prayer.”

“If you had freed me so that I would be with you, then that is what will happen. But if you freed me for Allah, then free my way (i.e., allow me to go and fight in way of Allah)...” said Bilal (RA).

“I freed you only for Allah,” said Abu Bakr (RA).

“I will not make the call to prayer for anyone after the Messenger of Allah (SWS),” said Bilal (RA) with the intention of instead dedicating his energies towards fighting in front lines.

“Then that is up to you,” said Abu Bakr (RA). Bilal (RA) then made his preparations to go to Ash-Sham. Abu Bakr (RA) then said to him, “I did not

think that you would leave us upon this situation. Would that you stayed with us and helped us.”

“O Khalifah of the Messenger of Allah, I indeed heard the Messenger of Allah (SWS) say:

‘The best deed of the believer is Jihad in the way of Allah.’

“Then what is it that you want, O Bilal?” said Abu Bakr (RA).

“I wanted to guard the front lines in the way of Allah, until I die,” said Bilal (RA).

“I ask you by Allah, O Bilal ... (remain for) I have grown old and weak, and my death is near,” requested Abu Bakr (RA). Fulfilling Abu Bakr’s wishes, Bilal (RA) stayed in Al-Madinah until Abu Bakr (RA) died.

The Second Khalifah, ‘Umar (RA)

When ‘Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) would see Bilal bin Rabah (RA), he (RA) would say, “Abu Bakr is our chief, and he has freed our chief (i.e., Bilal).” After ‘Umar (RA) became the Khalifah, Bilal (RA) went to him and said, “The best deed of the believer is (performing) Jihad in the way of Allah.”

“So what do you want to do, O Bilal?” asked ‘Umar (RA)

My intention is to protect the front

lines in the way of Allah, until I die,” said Bilal (RA).

“I ask you by Allah, O Bilal ... (remain for) I have become old and weak, and my death is near,” ‘Umar (RA) said. But this time Bilal (RA) refused, and so ‘Umar (RA) asked, “Then who should we appoint for the Call (to prayer)?”

“Sa’d Al-Quraz, for indeed, he performed the Adhan (the call to prayer) for the Messenger of Allah (SWS),” said Bilal (RA). Bilal then travelled to Ash-Sham to fight in the way of Allah, and by the appointment of ‘Umar (RA), Sa’d Al-Quraz (RA) took Bilal’s place as the Caller to prayer.

His Death

True to his word, Bilal (RA) returned to Ash-Sham, where he remained in the front lines, fighting in the way of Allah, until he (RA) died. The Mu’adhdhin of the Messenger of Allah (SWS) was buried beside the smaller gate of the Damascus cemetery. But it is also said that he died at Halab (another city in Ash-Sham) in the year 20 H. Though it is not known what his exact age was when he died, it is known that he was between 63 and 69 years of age. ■

Around the World

North Korea Fires Short-Range Missiles Towards Sea of Japan

North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters, according to its neighbours, as the North heightens animosities with rival South Korea ahead of a major political meeting.

South Korea's military said it detected liftoffs of several ballistic missiles from an area north of the North Korean capital Pyongyang before the missiles each flew about 350 km.

Japan's Defence Ministry said two ballistic missiles launched from North Korea and landed off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The Ministry condemned the launches, as a threat to the peace of Japan, the region and the international community.

North Korea has engaged in a run of weapons launches to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals since talks with the U.S. and South Korea stalled in 2019. ■

Iran Rejects Holding Negotiations With U.S. Amid Military 'Threats'

Iran rejected holding negotiations with the United States if it makes threats against the Islamic republic, after President Donald Trump refused to rule out military intervention over its deadly crackdown on protests.

With a U.S. naval strike group led by an aircraft carrier lurking in West Asia waters, top Iranian officials also reached out to key Arab states in behind the scenes diplomacy to rally support. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said "conducting

diplomacy through military threat cannot be effective or useful".

"If they want negotiations to take shape, they must certainly set aside threats, excessive demands and raising illogical issues," he said in televised comments.

Mr. Araghchi said he in recent days he had "no contact" with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and that "Iran has not sought negotiations". ■

Ready To Transfer Gaza Governance, Says Hamas

Hamas said it was ready to transfer the governance of Gaza to a Palestinian technocratic committee, while insisting the key Rafah border crossing be fully reopened within days.

"Protocols are pre-pared, files are complete, and committees are in place to oversee the handover, ensuring a complete transfer of governance in the Gaza Strip across all sectors to the technocratic committee," Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem said.

The 15-member National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) is a team of Palestinian technocrats created as part of the U.S. sponsored ceasefire agreement which came into effect on October 10. It is charged with managing the day-to-day governance of postwar Gaza and will work under the supervision of the "Board of Peace", which U.S. President Donald Trump will chair.

The NCAG is expected to enter the Gaza Strip once Rafah crossing reopens. ■

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