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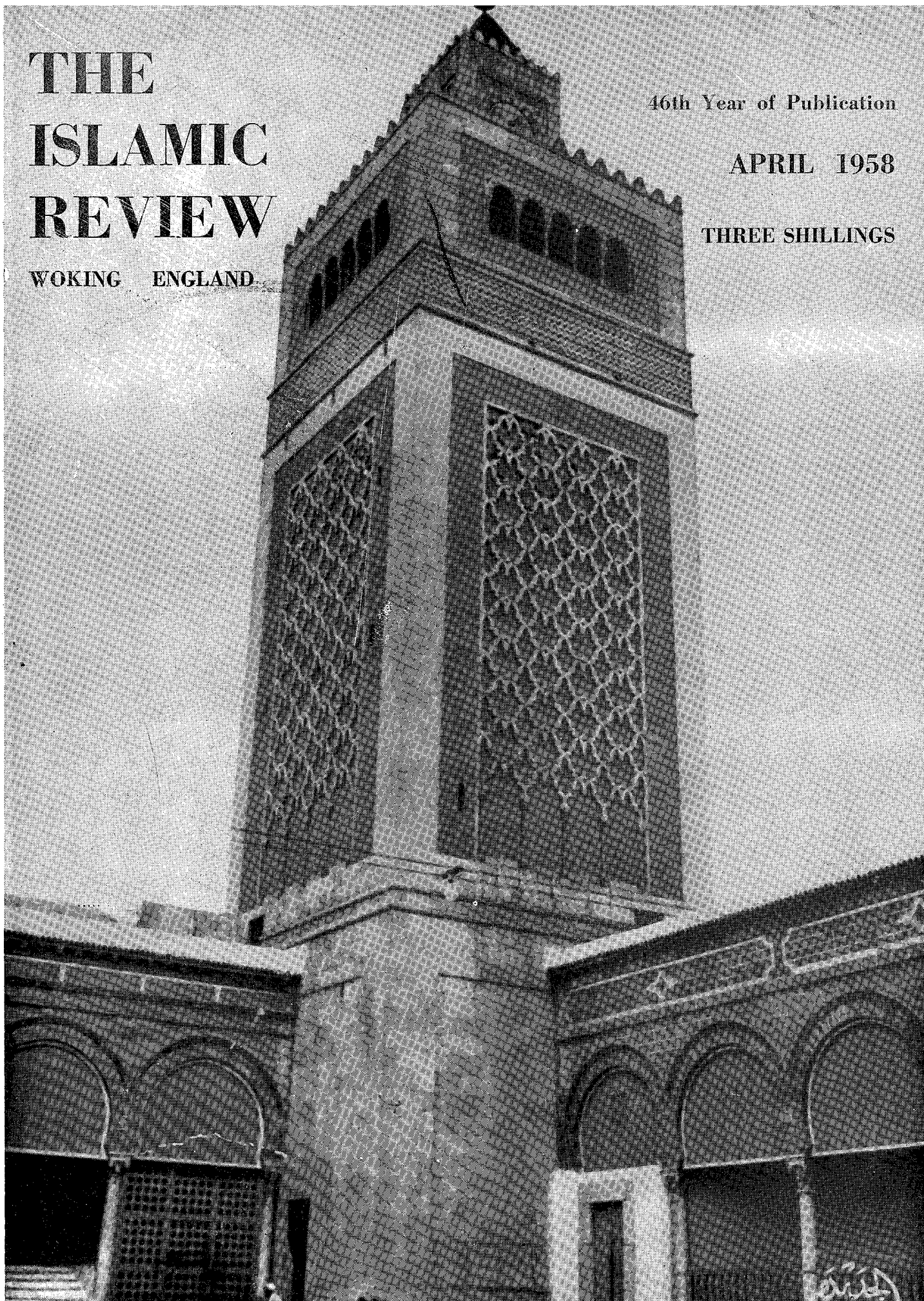
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## Between Ourselves

### THE COVER

The illustration on the cover is that of the Grand Mosque of Zaytunah, called by the Tunisians *Jami' al-Zaytunah* (the Mosque of the Olive Tree), which occupies a vast area of the quarter of the *sooqs* (markets) in Tunis. The Mosque was founded in 732 C.E. by the Umayyad Governor 'Ubayd Allah Ibn al-Habbaab, and was probably entirely rebuilt under the Aghlabide Abu Ibrahim (856-863 C.E.).

Beyond the colonnade of the Mosque, which stands opposite the covered upper part of the Rue d'Eglise in the Medina quarter, is the Mosque's imposing square minaret, which is 44 metres (144.35 ft.) high. This type of minaret is peculiar to the Malekite school of thought, which is the accepted school of thought of the Muslims in North Africa. It was entirely rebuilt in 1894 by two local architects and is best viewed from the Rue Sidi Ben Arous.

The Grand Mosque is the seat of an important Muslim university. The education is based entirely on Arab culture and the Qur'an and is given to approximately 35,000 pupils of various ages. The students whose families do not live in Tunis are lodged in 22 *madrasahs*, founded by generous benefactors, with 450 rooms. The library of the Grand Mosque contains some 12,000 volumes.

### THE CONTRIBUTORS

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"Muhammad is . . . the Messenger of God and the Last of the Prophets . . ." —THE HOLY QUR'AN 33 : 40  
"There will be no Prophet after me" —THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

VOL. XLVI No. 4

APRIL, 1958

Ramadhan-Dhu 'l-Hijjah, 1377 A.H.

# THE GOAL OF A MUSLIM

### The dilemma of the Youth of Islam

In the fast-changing world of today the one question which every Muslim should ask himself is : What can I do for Islam and Muslims? There may be many answers to this all-important question, and if we were to attempt to answer it we believe that, above all, it will be necessary to find out the greatest need of Islam in the stresses and strains of modern times.

When we look at the world of Islam, stretching from Morocco to the Philippines we are struck at first sight by the upward surge of its political and strategic importance in the world. Also, searching beneath the surface, we find that the rise of the temporal power of Islam has brought about a general atmosphere of dissatisfaction and frustration, especially in the minds of Muslim youth throughout the world. The Muslim youth in search of a world where Islamic ideals of social justice could be realized finds itself face to face with unpalatable conditions in almost all Muslim countries. Even the countries in which it had looked for a redemption of the high moral principles of Islam seem to have failed it. In turning its attention to other parallel social and political systems, it finds itself torn between the two opposing pulls, the pull of the religion of Islam and its glorious past, and the pull of dialectical materialism. This has resulted in a tremendous dissipation of its productive energy. Of the many other reasons that are responsible for its bewilderment and confusion today is its desire to cling to its past on the one hand and at the same time to respond to the call of the West and its social thought, which seems to clash at many points with those of Islam.

### The three sections of the world of Islam

The world of Islam is composed of three sections of people. In the first place, there is the section that controls its destinies. This section distinguishes itself in its divorce from

the ideals of Islam ; it is more at home with the West than with the rest of the people in the midst of which it lives and moves. This section knows more about Shakespeare than about the Qur'an and the Hadith. As against it, there is the other equally, if not more important, section of Muslims that goes under the name of the 'Ulamas, the religious scholars of Islam. This section, unlike the other, is steeped in the religious lore of Islam but knows next to nothing of what the West has to offer to the world of today. Between these two extremes is the most important section of the Muslim youth, which when it turns for guidance in the matter of the realization of the common sense ideals of Islam finds that neither of the two sections has anything satisfactory to give to it in its search. This state of affairs has paralyzed the mental powers of the Muslim youth. The only redeeming feature of the otherwise disheartening picture is that it has as yet not decided to sell itself body and soul to the materialistic allurements of capitalism and dialectical materialism. But for how long?

### The change in the political status of the Muslim world entails heavy responsibility

To return to the question we set ourselves. The answer, to our mind, lies in finding out as to what the causes were that made the Muslims the masters of the world at one time. The answer to this question is easier now than it was say about fifty years ago. At that time the Muslim world was sunk in a slough of despondency. There was no ray of hope anywhere. But now the change in its status from that of foreign tutelage to that of self-determination should set the Muslims thinking as to the responsibilities it entails. The immutable Divine law as stated in the Qur'an is : "God does not change the condition of a people until it changes its own condition" (13 : 11). This verse of the Qur'an is aimed at arousing in Muslims a desire for an inner change, namely,



aspiration to live for high principles. It was this constant striving that made Muslims great, and it is this striving once again that will enable them to retain and maintain their political independence which has been restored to them in recent times. In this connection it is worth while recalling that the power the Muslims of yesterday wielded was so great that no power from the outside world was in a position to bring about their downfall, if deterioration had not taken place from within.

No alliance with this people or non-co-operation with that people can do any good to Muslims unless they in the first place think more about improving themselves than about love and hatred for others, or unless they exert themselves to a much greater extent than heretofore for bettering the social conditions in their countries. Their efforts, in short, must in the main be directed towards the reform of the Muslim community and its thought, which should be directed towards restoring to each Muslim his personality. With this is allied the fact that the purpose of the very being of Muslims in this world is not simply their own social betterment ; rather is it the betterment of humanity at large, the bringing out of people from darkness into light, the dissemination of truth, the removing of all distinctions of colour and nationality, the establishment of a universal brotherhood all over the world, and finally the bringing about of a real union between God and man. The Qur'an says : " And We have made you the bearers of witness to the people and that the Messenger of God may be a bearer of witness, a witness to you " ; also, " You are the best of nations raised up for the benefit of men ; you enjoy what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in God ".

These verses sum up the purpose of the life of a Muslim and are an answer to the questions set above.

The world today is devoid of clear and correct ideas about Islam. Misrepresentation has been rampant for centuries in Europe and it requires a long and sustained effort on the part of Muslims to remove it. As a people, their first duty is to put their own house in order. For they have now reached a stage when they cannot afford to be looked down upon by the nations of the world ; the greater the esteem in which they are held by others, the less the chances are there of being ill-treated by them.

### The triumph of Islam

In our search for an answer we think it is in the fitness of things if we in the end referred ourselves to a great characteristic of Islam and its peoples.

Islam is the latest religion of the world ; its preaching commenced when all other religions had been firmly established and claimed homage from different nations of the earth. Yet so great is the spiritual power wielded by it that no religion has been able to withstand it. Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism have all contributed their millions to Islam, while none of these has ever been able to take away any appreciable number from amongst the Muslims. Christianity has, for centuries, worked with the most powerful resources to deal a blow to Islam, but has not been able to win back even those contributed by it.

## THE DIVINE DIVAN

34

The light and shadow of existence plays  
Around thy sleeping nights, thy waking days ;  
Or, dost thou wake by night and sleep by day,  
What is that gentle undertone thy heart can hear alway?  
"The One Supreme is here, to Him we pray.  
The One Supreme doth guide us ; His Name do we praise."

35

Let not this thought escape thee,  
He is thy life alone.  
Let this joy penetrate thee  
With magic undertone,  
He is thy life alone.  
He keepeth by thee, guides thee, witnesseth,  
All pow'rs that be to His Will harnesseth.  
He is thy Lord indeed!  
None else thou canst e'er need.  
Thy path is strown with flow'rs of Mercy. Ah! take heed!  
Forget not thy TRUE LOVE ; He is thy Lord indeed!

36

Happiness, happiness ! is that the goal?  
Is that the object of the human soul?

Wealth and possessions, pow'r ! is that the end,  
To which his aspirations man must bend?  
Be still ! and let not silken cords of evil strain  
Thy life and limbs in bonds of disillusioned pain.

37

Happiness, happiness ! so thought the thief,  
Seeing the glittering jewels and the banknotes, sheaf on sheaf.  
Then set his hand and grasped his so called happiness.  
Misguided mortal ! now he dwells in solitariness  
Behind blind bars, and ponders his lost happiness.

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(GOD is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth)

# NECESSITY FOR CO-OPERATION AMONGST RELIGIONS TODAY

## Islam's Way of Co-operation

By MUHAMMAD YAHYA BUTT

### The three important questions

#### *Why there are so many religions*

When discussing the necessity for co-operation amongst religions today, there are three important questions that can be asked. First, why are there so many religions? And do these various religions and creeds, which are followed by millions of people, have any importance in the world of today? Secondly, what are the conditions of the modern world, which demand co-operation of different religions? Lastly, if there is a need for co-operation amongst various religions, how to achieve this ideal?

Regarding the existence of a number of religions, one should bear the fact in mind that religion is not the outcome of meditation or thinking of some philosophers or wise people, but is based on revealed words of God. The words of God became the foundation-stone of every religion. I would like to offer an historical proof for the reality of revelation. Study the pages of the history of mankind and you will find that it is the experience of thousands of righteous people who lived in different countries and in different times. They never had a chance of meeting each other, and they could not possibly have forged anything after mutual consultation. They were raised in different countries and in different times, no doubt, but all of them experienced the same truth and basically conveyed the same message to their people. All such people were of pious character, and were respected by their communities on account of their high morals. They were able to bring about a noble change in the hearts of their followers. Above all, their work was carried out by their followers after their death. Statements of such people cannot be a forgery and it cannot be mere chance that all of them had the same experience. Everything goes to prove that their experience was a reality which enlightened the hearts of thousands and millions of people. So the history of mankind

bears witness to the fact that revelation from God is a great truth.

Revelation or guidance from God started from the very beginning of humanity. In some of the Holy Scriptures, the story of how Adam received the first revelation from God is described. So in the light of Adam's first experience it will not be wrong to presume that religion dawned when man was born. Revelation did not come to an end with Adam's death, but it continued in his progeny. Revelation was a universal dispensation, and it was God's light which enlightened the hearts of people in every part of the world. The message of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna and Muhammad were the dispensation of the same light that came from them in different ages. That is why we find more than one religion in the present world.

### A comparison of the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to show why they succeeded each other

There is another reason also that made the existence of different religions possible, and that is the growth and mental development of different nations. Divine dispensation became richer in its content according to the mental growth of mankind. The history of the children of Israel is a good example to prove how the message of God went on developing with the passage of time. Every time a new commandment was revealed to them by their Lord, or any amendment was made therein, it was to meet the growing needs of their society. Look at the teachings of Moses: you will find that his teachings are all based on harsh dealings. No leniency is found in his teachings. It does not mean that his teachings are incomplete. The fact is that the teachings of Moses are complete in the sense that Moses taught his people those teachings which were suitable to the conditions of those days. The early history of the children of Israel proves this fact. The child-



ren of Israel migrated in the days of Joseph to Egypt and lived afterwards as a minority for many centuries under the strong rule of Pharaoh. This made the children of Israel lose all their good qualities of bravery and changed them into a weak and timid nation.

Moses wanted to raise them from this state and worked to see them as a strong and brave nation. So he taught them the lesson of "tit for tat", which could bring back to them their courage and bravery. History tells us that these teachings made them a courageous nation within forty years, eventually to become a ruling nation. This shows how the teachings of Moses were suitable for the Children of Israel in their early days. But what happened afterwards? The Jews went on practising the teachings of "tit for tat" for a long time, making the Jews, with the passage of time, stone-hearted and deprived of any feeling for others. So in the days of Jesus the hardness of the hearts of the Jews reached its height and it needed someone to teach them the lesson of love and humility to restore peace in society. So the teachings of love and mercy towards others were preached to them by Jesus. Jesus was raised amongst them at the right time. The Jews had reached the extremities of harshness in their behaviour. Jesus taught them the lesson of forgiveness and went to the other extreme of not allowing his followers to punish even the aggressors. That was all to meet the immediate demands of his nation. So one can see how light from God came to meet the immediate needs of the nations and how it led people in their particular circumstances. The teachings of Moses and Jesus were useful in their particular circumstances, which laid stress on only one side of human life and did not guide their followers in every respect. To be harsh, or lenient towards others were the two extremes which could not be successfully practised by all the nations of the world in their daily lives. These extremes may serve a particular nation in its particular circumstances, as in the case of the Children of Israel, but it cannot be applied to all nations in their daily struggles. There must be a middle way between these two extremes. So we find this middle way discussed in the last message of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, where it is clearly laid down:

"And the recompense of evil is punishment like it ;  
but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with  
God."

There is in Islam neither the one extreme of tooth for tooth nor the opposite one of turning the cheek when the right is smitten or giving away the shirt to one who has already wrongfully taken the coat of his brother ; it is the golden and beautiful mean that forgives where forgiveness will mend the matter and do good to the wrongdoer himself. The object to be kept in view is to amend, whether it is attained by giving proportionate punishment or by exercising forgiveness.

So in the teachings of Islam we find the completion of the commandments of God revealed to different prophets in different ages for the betterment of humanity.

The third reason that can be put forward for the existence of more than one religion in the world is the circumstances prevalent in those days. Those were the days when, due to hardships of conveyance, people could not move from one place to another easily. It engrossed them in their own country's affairs, having nothing to do with the problems of other nations. That is why every nation had its own spiritual leader who led it in its daily life towards success and peace. This shows that all religions which we find in the world were originally revealed by God and were true in their original form. But it is sad that the followers of different religions have limited themselves to their own respective religions, revealed to them by God through their

respective spiritual leaders under particular circumstances, to such an extent that they do not pay any regard towards other religions. They consider themselves as the privileged nation and they do not think that the privilege of revelation was also granted to other nations. The conception of a privileged nation must be studied by the followers of different religions at the present day when the history of mankind has become clearer to us than previously.

### **Modern world conditions demand co-operation between religions, for science has proved ineffective in removing the causes of unrest**

Following this short history of the religions, let us study the present-day conditions and see if there is any necessity for co-operation amongst the different religions. First, comparing the improvement of communications in the modern world with the olden days, we see that scientific discoveries have brought about a great change in the modern world. Distances of thousands of miles are covered quite easily within a few hours. It has eventually turned the whole world into one big country. To move from one country to another is no longer a difficult task. This facility in travel has enabled people to meet frequently with those of other countries. Moreover, the invention of the printing press has played a great role in bringing people of the whole world together. It has enabled the thoughts of one nation to reach others. The publication of books and magazines is a means of influencing people of other countries. In short the nations of the present world have come so close together that the problems of time and space have been virtually eliminated. This change has rendered the economic conditions of the whole world interconnected. No nation seems to be independent in this respect. Not to speak of the cultural influences of one nation on another or the economic relations of one country with another, there seems to be a great need for co-operation amongst the followers of different religions. Otherwise due to bigotry there is every danger that hatred will overcome the hearts of the followers of different religions.

Anyone who studies the causes of unrest in the present civilized world will see that the hatred and prejudice of one nation towards another is one of the causes of this unrest. The scientific discoveries have no doubt eliminated the physical barriers and have enabled the nations of the world to meet each other, but it has not been able to unite the hearts of the nations. Science has nothing to offer for cultivating high and noble ideals amongst the peoples, to aid them in fostering love and fellow feelings between them. Not only this, but hatred and prejudice among nations has induced them to make the wrong use of the scientific knowledge, and nations proud of their scientific achievements are preparing to kill and destroy themselves and other nations. The more a nation equips itself with the means to annihilate another nation the more it is considered to be powerful and strong. The means which could be used for the benefit of humanity are used to destroy nations with atom and hydrogen bombs. It is a great tragedy. All such developments clearly show that scientific discoveries have not been able to inculcate fellow feeling among the nations. Had they been able to foster the feelings of love, nations would never have thought of preparing themselves to destroy each other with bombs and other nuclear weapons, but would certainly have thought of the means of serving humanity instead.

Again looking at the material development of the Western countries we see that the scientific discoveries have brought a great success to the Western nations. It is a fact which no one would deny. The development of these



countries depends entirely upon their scientific discoveries, and it is the only secret of their material advancement. With their scientific inventions the Western nations have made the best use of the natural treasures under the ground. They have attained the pleasures of material existence. This pleasure in material living has brought a great change in the outlook of Western countries to life. It has made them limit themselves to the material side of life only.

Now their materialistic outlook has made these nations exploit the weaker nations. The powerful Western countries always think of their own benefit and they do not mind trampling the rights of other nations in order to achieve their ends. This trend of mind has developed in them the low feelings of selfishness and hatred towards others which have proved to be the source of unrest throughout the world.

The development of the material aspect of life was considered to be the source of peace and happiness in the Western world, but within the past forty-four years this idea has received a rude shock in the occurrence of two world wars, which have brought unbounded disasters to the Western countries in particular and to the whole world in general. The dread of such calamities is not yet over. The most severe disaster in the shape of another third world war is hovering over the world. No one knows when a spark of passion may blow up the whole world and throw the whole of humanity into a burning fire.

### **Religion the only means that can save humanity from disaster**

Here lies the necessity for religion. Religion is the only means which can save humanity from disaster and which can lead nations towards peace and contentment of mind. Now is the time when religion must play an important role in the world. Until, and unless, high moral qualities are developed among individuals, humanity will not see the happy days of peace and contentment of mind. This is the difficult task which only religion can perform.

One may perhaps question the ability of religion to bring peace to nations while religion itself and its followers have brought disunity amongst peoples and fostered feelings of hatred and prejudice among them. Those who have this question in their mind know that hatred, prejudice and disunity to be found among the followers of different religions is due not to religion itself but to the lack of truly religious spirit. Every religion revealed at any time demanded of its followers to be kind towards their fellow beings. How then can one say that religion brought disharmony and restlessness among its followers? How could a religion based on the revelation of God be a source of unhappiness in human society when it inculcates in its followers the noble ideals of service to one's fellow beings? That is the spirit of service to mankind which every religion developed in its followers and which really brought a period of happiness and peace. But the moment people went astray from the path of religion and low desires took the place of those high ideals, then peace was replaced by bloodshed and hatred. So it is the religion of the pure words of God that can bring real peace to humanity in the present world. The failure in bringing peace to humanity is a challenge to religion to come forward and lead humanity from disaster to success.

Here is a challenge and opportunity for the followers of different religions to meet the need of the present world. Under these circumstances religion has to offer humanity something higher than the narrow conception of nationalities, which could widen the outlook of every individual and which could help people to regard those belonging to any religion or nationality as a human being equal in every respect to themselves.

In these circumstances, when the modern world has developed into one big unit, there is a great need of some spiritual force which will bind the whole world in a brotherhood and which will help people to wipe out the hatred and prejudices among nations and show them the way to tolerate others' thoughts and to respect others' feelings. Until and unless such feelings are developed among the followers of different religions it will be difficult to foster love and tolerance among men in the present day.

### **Anti-God movement in the Russian bloc a great challenge and opportunity to those who believe in the existence of God and the moral code based on revelation**

The second main point which requires the co-operation of different religions is the challenge coming from one of the big power blocs, which is proud of having expelled the conception of God from its society, namely the Russian bloc. This bloc is not materially backward, but is as advanced as other European countries, and has a great attraction in its social system which claims to improve the economic conditions of the common people. It lays great stress on the material needs, ignoring the spiritual side of life. Everything that serves the purpose of the State is considered to be good and the thing which hinders the progress of the State or inflicts any harm on it is considered to be evil. So the Russian bloc, which is based on a "Godless" conception and which has at the same time a great attraction for the masses as for the intelligentsia, is a great challenge for those who believe in the existence of God and who believe in moral codes based on revelation.

Not only the Russian bloc but also the Western countries have lost the true conception of God and have practically based their civilization on material values. In short, these are the two main points which require the co-operation of all religions.

There may be some other factors which one can suggest for the necessity of co-operation among religions, but the factors mentioned seem to be obvious and of great importance. The matter does not end here. There remains another important question, and that is the achievement of mutual co-operation among believers of different religions at the present day.

This is a question which demands much thought. It demands the chalking out of a *via media* for bringing people of different religions to a better understanding. To realize the necessity of co-operation between the different religions, and not to consider a means of achieving this object would mean to leave the question unsolved.

### **Islam's unique connections of universal humanity and universal dispensation of Divine Light**

As I pointed out at the beginning, the message of God went on developing to completion through the passage of time to meet the needs of developing human society. Every religion revealed to the different nations of the world were all true, having the capacity to meet the requirements of the society of their time. But with the passage of time and with the development of human society most religions lost their original purity and had nothing to meet the needs of the more developed society. At the present day it is obvious that the whole world has become one big family. So the conception of universal humanity and the conception of the universal dispensation of Divine light was needed to bring all nations together. Such universal conceptions were not needed in olden times. That is why the problems of humanity on a universal basis were not discussed in previous scriptures. But as the need was going to occur in the near future, God threw light on these universal problems through the Prophet Muhammad and guided human beings in developing them-



selves into one universal whole, eliminating all feelings of bigotry, hatred and prejudices, and helping them to foster feelings of love and harmony among the people of different nations. Here is the soundness of Divine planning which started with different revelations in different countries and then ultimately brought humanity, in the most developed circumstances, under one banner so as to unite all the nations of the world.

So the religion revealed to the Prophet Muhammad fulfils present-day needs and guides humanity towards peace and helps to foster the feelings of love among different nations. I am sure the ways discussed in the Holy Qur'an, the holy scripture revealed to the Prophet, if acted upon, can certainly bring peace among nations, which the modern scientific developments and modern civilization based on materialistic values has failed to do.

#### **Islam does not claim to be a new religion**

First, the religion revealed to the Prophet Muhammad does not claim to be a new religion but to be the religion of every righteous person and of human nature. It is a great thing for the development of mutual understanding among the followers of different religions that every religion revealed to different spiritual leaders was the same as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. There is no difference in its nature. The sum and substance of the religion taught by the Holy Qur'an is "submission to the Will of God", and that was the spirit of all other religions. That is what Islam is. This very word means peace and submission. These two words indicate the main object of every religion and the means for achieving it. The ultimate object of the religion of Islam is to bring peace in human minds and subsequently in society, but the means to achieve this end is submission to the commandments of the Lord, which stand for the laws working in human nature. What a great truth this is. Peace cannot be achieved by mere lip profession, but one has to rise above one's low desires and to submit himself to the will and commandments of his Lord. That is the way which would bring peace in individual minds and eventually in human society.

So coming to the point the first step that Islam has taken towards creating harmony in human society is to impress on human minds that it is not a new religion, but is the pure and complete form of religions taught by previous prophets and spiritual leaders.

#### **Muslims must believe in all the prophets of God**

The second point which Islam has made clear to its followers is the fact that before the Prophet Muhammad, many other prophets were raised to different nations and they received guidance from their Lord, and above all that they did a great service to humanity in their own day. So it is a matter of faith with Muslims to believe in all the previous dispensations. To believe in all the previous prophets is the logical conclusion of its first claim that Islam is the perfect development of all previous religions. More than one verse can be quoted in favour of this claim, but I would like to quote a few of them.

In the very beginning of the Holy Qur'an a Muslim is said to be one

"Who believes in that which has been revealed to thee (i.e., the Prophet Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee (i.e., which was revealed to the prophets before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad)."

Again, in the concluding section of the first chapter of the Holy Qur'an it is said:

"Say: We believe in God and in that which has been revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the

tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, *we do not make any distinction between any of them*, and to Him do we submit."

Ponder over this golden principle of believing in and paying regard to all the prophets and the spiritual leaders of the world and see how far it is helpful to develop mutual co-operation among the followers of different nations. Every Muslim has the same regard and respect for all the prophets of the world as he has for the Prophet Muhammad. They are asked not to make any distinction between any of the prophets. To believe in Muhammad is to believe in all the prophets of the world. What a mighty change it is. Before the advent of the Prophet every nation was proud of its own prophet, and they had never thought of paying any regard to the prophets of other nations. We Muslims are proud of all the prophets of the world.

#### **The conception of prophethood is quite different from that of the Old Testament**

The conception of prophethood or messengership in Islam is quite different from that of the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament a prophet can tell a lie to save his life or can drink wine or commit fornication or can plan to get another's legal wife or he can worship idols out of the love of his wives, but all these ideas of prophethood are foreign to Islam.

In Islam prophets are considered to be persons of high moral standards. They are said to be ever submissive to the will of their Lord, and thus regarded as an excellent example for their followers. They, being the messengers of the Lord the Holy, were themselves holy and innocent. No moral indecency was ever committed by the prophets. So a Muslim, while believing in the prophethood of Moses, Jesus and all the other prophets, believes that all these prophets were of high moral character, holy and innocent, ever submissive to the will of their Lord. So to have full respect for all the prophets of the world is a means to promote love and harmony among the people of different nations.

Thirdly, Islam soars above the narrow conception of tribes and nationalities and offers a universal conception of humanity, and says:

"Mankind is a single nation".

All sorts of hatred and prejudice based on superiority of nation above nation are wiped out with this single statement that the whole of mankind is a single nation.

The Holy Qur'an discusses human problems on a universal level, because the day was coming when the whole world was going to be moulded into one big nation.

The thing, of course, which makes an individual or a nation honourable in the eyes of the Maker is to serve humanity and to tread the ways of His pleasure. The Book says:

"O Mankind, surely we have created you from a male and female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the noblest of you with God is the most dutiful of you."

This conception educates the believers to take all human beings on an equal footing and to pay regard and respect to others as humanity demands.

Here are the few principles laid down by the Holy Qur'an to bring co-operation among the followers of different religions. Think over these universal conceptions and then apply these principles in the modern world and you will really appreciate that these are the only principles which can lessen the tension of different nations and which can really develop the feelings of love and harmony among the people of the whole world.



# Some Verses to Show that the Qur'an is not the Work of Muhammad'

By MUHAMMAD MAHDI ISTANBULI

I give below a selection of verses from the "Glorious" Qur'an which contain lofty wisdom, lay down progressive constitutional ordinances and disclose scientific facts which were not even known till very recently.

These few verses, in my opinion, are enough to prove, if any proof were needed, that the "Glorious" Qur'an is not the product of the brain of the illiterate, uneducated Prophet Muhammad. In this regard it is interesting to bring to mind a verse of the Qur'an which reads :

"And that those who have been given the knowledge may know that it is the truth from thy Lord, so that they may believe therein and their hearts may submit humbly unto Him. Lo! God verily guides those who believe in the right path" (22 : 54).

*In this verse the Qur'an says that its message can be understood better by those who have been given knowledge.*

"And whomsoever it is God's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the surrender,<sup>2</sup> and whosoever it is His will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent. Thus God layeth ignominy upon those who believe not" (6 : 126).

*This verse denotes that oxygen decreases as we go up into the air, so that we feel it is very difficult to breathe. The feeling of suffocation increases as we go up. This fact, which was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an fourteen centuries ago, is one of the discoveries of modern science.*

"And thou seest the mountains, which thou thinkest so firm, pass away with the passing of a cloud! This the work of God, who ordereth all things!" (27 : 88).

*This verse alludes to the rotation of the earth, which fact was discovered only five centuries ago.*

"He it is Who appointed the sun for brightness<sup>3</sup> and the moon for a light,<sup>4</sup> and measured for her stages, that ye might know the number of the years and the reckoning. God created not (all) that save in truth. He detaileth the revelations for people who have knowledge" (10 : 5).

*This verse states that the moon receives light from the sun, which fact was discovered only lately.*

"His are the ships going upon the sea, like mountains" (55 : 24).

*This verse points to modern ships, destroyers and the huge aircraft carriers which are as big as mountains and all these have been invented in modern times.*

"And a sign to them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship.

"And We have created for them the like of it, what they will ride upon" (36 : 40-41).

*These verses refer to steamships which are moved by steam laden with goods. The reference "to the like of it" in verse 41 adumbrates the trains that are also moved by steam, whereas the words "their offspring" evidently means the people of today.*

"Only that which dieth of itself, and blood, and



Muhammad Mahdi Istanbuli.

that over which any other name than that of God hath been invoked, are forbidden you. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. Lo! God is forgiving, merciful" (2 : 173).

*Modern medicine has established that many parasites are the normal inhabitants of the bowels of the swine. One of the parasites, trichinella spiralis, cannot even be destroyed in the process of cooking the pig's flesh. It is no mere coincidence that the Old Testament forbids the consumption of the swine's flesh.*

"Year after year for many decades, consumers have been warned not to eat undercooked pork because of the risk of trichinosis — a serious and occasionally fatal disease caused by very small parasitic worms called trichinella. Recent cases indicate that trichinosis may also be acquired by what is assumed to be beef, if the beef has been mixed with contaminated pork shreds. Even running the beef through a meat grinder which was previously used for pork but not cleaned thoroughly may be sufficient to infect the ground beef with trichinella. One scrap of infested pork is sufficient to produce the disease.

"Trichinosis is an insidious disease in several respects. When meat containing the larvae of the parasite trichinella spiralis is eaten, the minute round worm reproduces larvae in the intestines, which then invade the blood stream, and settle in the muscles, heart and even brain. Mild cases have been mistaken for a "cold" or "upset stomach"; more serious cases may disable a patient for weeks, affect heart and brain, and occasionally cause death. Experts estimate that some 23,000,000 Americans harbour the parasite in their muscles after a mild disabling illness.

"Trichinosis is especially common on the East Coast, and in the Far West, where raw garbage is fed to the hogs. . . . Even raw pork which bears the 'U.S. Government Inspected' stamp may harbour trichinella spiralis, through pork products, such as cold cuts."—Consumer Reports, Mount Vernon, New York State, U.S.A., for August 1949.

1 Courtesy, the Editor, al-Tamuddun al-Islami, Damascus, Syria, for January and February 1958 (Nos. 17 to 24).

2 That is, makes him willingly embrace the true religion of Islam.

3 For emitting light.

4 For reflecting light.



# POETRY AS A LIVING FORCE IN ISLAMIC LIFE AND CULTURE

## Islamic Poetry a Gift of the Arabs

By M. ZARNIGAR

**"Literacy may be low in many Islamic countries but certainly culture and intelligence are indeed high among these people"**

Not very long ago an Orientalist left his books to go on a voyage of discovery to the Middle East. Once there he heard Egyptian farmers on the Nile and Persian gardeners in Isfahan quote and recite classical poetry in their everyday conversation. To him it was like a fisherman in Devonport quoting Chaucer or a villager in Kent dwelling upon the frailties of Shakespearean women while having a little quarrel with his wife.

The Orientalist came home well chastized and told his colleagues that the so-called yardstick of literacy did not hold water and that the percentage of literacy was not a measure of the assimilation and spread of culture in Islamic countries.

I always remember what a learned friend of mine, a well-known history professor at Yale, told me in Teheran when he was visiting the Middle East on a United Nations' mission. He said to me with some emphasis: "Literacy may be low in many Islamic countries but certainly culture and intelligence are indeed high among these people." He added: "I have heard ordinary people recite whole classical odes from memory, and, what is more, they understand it fully. Such a thing is rare even among educated Europeans."

In fact, this has been so for centuries. Let me give you an example. Some 600 years ago a young Arab living in the city of Tangier, Morocco, resolved to travel all over the world. All know him well. He was none other than the incomparable Ibn Battuta (d. 1368 C.E.). When he reached Alexandria, he met a great Muslim mystic and philosopher, Burhan al-Din al-Aaraj. On being informed of the young man's quest, the philosopher said to him: "Be sure to meet one of my brothers in India and the other in China." And so Ibn Battuta added China to the list of countries he desired to visit.

Ibn Battuta travelled for over thirty years and succeeded in meeting both the brothers of al-Aaraj, one in India and the other in China. But what surprised him in China was something else. Let me tell you that in Ibn Battuta's own words:

"I reached the city of Kingtse. The ruler of this city is called Emir Qur-tai. He took me to his palace and entertained me with great honour. We were his guests for three days. He sent his son with me on a boat ride. A number of musicians and singers were in the boat singing in Chinese, Arabic and Persian. The ruler's son and heir had, however, a special love for Persian songs. He loved it so much that he asked them to repeat the verses over and over again. And I took down the words . . . though the Chinese sailors and musicians pronounced it rather peculiarly."

Ibn Battuta gives the lines. The lines are from an ode of Sa'di of Shiraz who had passed away just 55 years before the year Ibn Battuta reached China, some 612 years ago. In those days there were no newspapers, no radio and no electronic means of communication. Yet contemporary poetry com-

posed by a Muslim poet of Shiraz was being sung by musicians and sailors of China.

When I came across this passage in Ibn Battuta's *Travels*, curiosity prompted me to dig up the ode. And the appropriateness of the lines that had struck such a note in the heart of the Chinese prince astonished me. Here is a rough translation:

"Ever since my heart has become your slave, I seem to have fallen into an ocean of grief;

"And as I stand to pray, I see your beautiful face in the niche.

"Tell the portrait painter of China to come and see my beloved . . .

"Challenge him either to paint a face as beautiful as hers,

"Or abandon painting forever!"

I shall return to Sa'di in a few moments and tell you something of this great Muslim poet whose works have had so much influence on Muslim people.

Islamic poetry, in all its glory and wealth, began with the Arabs. What Anwari, famous Iranian poet of the twelfth century, said is still true:

"What people laid the foundation of poetry? The people whose first was 'Imru al-Qais and whose last — Abu Firas."

### Arabs gave the Muslim nations a mathematically precise prosody

I need not point out that older civilizations like those of Persia and India and others had a vast heritage of poetic culture. But with the advent of Islam a new spirit was instilled into these older cultures. Islamic poetry, as we know it today, is however a gift of the Arabs. On the cultural side, this was Arabia's most important contribution. And it should be so; for poetry was Arabia's most developed form of literature.

Poetry, says one authority, is the register of the Arabs. In fact, what the Greeks had achieved in philosophy, the Romans in law and the Persians in administration, the Arabs had in their poetry. Poetry was the very warp and woof and design of their life. And they sang in mighty tones of heroism in battle, hospitality at all times and the joys that beauty confers upon the mortal sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. And like all dynamic thought and art, Arabic poetry did undergo desirable changes in due time and fully adapted itself to the higher spiritual requirements of Islam. In the meantime it was duly influenced by the culture of the older civilizations that had embraced Islam — mainly that of Persia. Thus in place of romantic events taking place in the tents of the Bedouins of the time of 'Imru al-Qays, we notice a change of environment. For instance, the poet Is-haq Ibn Ibrahim of Mosul, living some two centuries after 'Imru al-Qays, describes the sorrows of parting and separation from his beloved — not in the desert but on the seaport. Here is a rough translation:

"I did not realize how deep the grief of separation could be until the boats were brought;



"Then she bent towards me like a flower-laden twig that bends in a soft breeze ;  
 "And weeping, she kissed me farewell, murmuring meanwhile,  
 "'I wish I had never met you !'."

Apart from the gift of poetry, the Arabs gave the Muslim nations a mathematically precise prosody and the Persian and Arab grammarians developed it to the greatest possible height



An artist's impression of Sa'di of Shiraz, Iran (d. 1291 C.E.). Much of what Sa'di wrote and said constitutes the main body of Persian proverbs.

of perfection. The Persians, further, added the *rubai*, the quatrain, to the existing meters. And today a major part of the frame of Islamic poetry rests upon *rubai* translated into other languages, such as those of 'Umar Khayyam (d. 1127 C.E.). We shall see, later, how the *rubai* became the best vehicle for the expression of philosophical thoughts and speculations.

### The three causes responsible for the living influence of Muslim poets on Islamic life and culture

#### 1. Muslim poets were extraordinary persons

The question is: How did it come about that poetry achieved such a vast, living influence in Islamic life and culture? For one thing, the poets themselves were extraordinary persons. And further, only the good ones survived and the bad ones were just forgotten as if they had never been born.

A few minutes ago I mentioned Sa'di of Shiraz, whose poems were sung by Chinese sailors and musicians just fifty-five years after his death. And that was 600 years ago. This Sa'di, like most Muslim poets of fame, was a man of many part, a universal genius. He studied in Baghdad at the great Nizamiyyeh University and then roamed all over the world of Islam — maybe for fun. We hear of him in Balkh, Ghazni, the Punjab, Gujrat, the Yemen, Ethiopia, the Hejaz, Syria, North Africa and then in Kashgar, Eastern Turkestan, known today as Sinkiang, deep in Chinese territory.

We hear of him depressed by the undesirable company of certain so-called pious men in Damascus, then taking to the deserts of the Holy Land, preferring, as he says, the company of wild beasts to that of hypocrites, until he is captured by the Crusaders and pressed into forced labour along with Jewish captives to dig trenches in Tripoli. There a merchant from Aleppo recognizes him and purchases his liberty from his Frankish captors for the sum of 10 dinars. The merchant takes Sa'di home and gives him his daughter in marriage. This girl, an incurable shrew, turns Sa'di's bright days into nights of horror. At last she taunts Sa'di with this: "Aren't you the despicable fellow whom my father bought for 10 dinars?" And Sa'di says: "Yes, Madam, and then he sold me to you for a marriage settlement of 100 dinars!"

Next we hear of him wandering in the streets of Kufah, Iraq, selling water to the thirsty. He is deeply depressed now because he has no shoes to wear, cannot afford to buy them and the sun is very hot. He goes to a mosque, he says, to raise his voice against the supposed Divine injustice, and what does he see there? A man with no legs! He thanks God and is fully reconciled to his state of shoelessness!

Later he is accompanying a caravan to Cathay and in Kashgar he meets a student studying Arabic grammar. Sa'di helps this student learn a lesson from Zamakhshari's famous grammar and the student asks him where he is from. Sa'di says, "Shiraz is my place of birth". The student says, "Then you are from the city of Sa'di; recite to us some of his new poems!" His fame had preceded him to the farthest cities of the Islamic world of the thirteenth century. Sa'di does not disclose his identity and the next day when the caravan is ready to move on, the student comes running and complaining, "Why didn't you tell me that you were Sa'di?"

Today, Sa'di's golden sayings and epigrams and *ghazals* are read and sung by Muslims and others from Kashgar to Karbala. Indeed, much of what he wrote and said constitutes the main body of Persian proverbs.

#### 2. Muslim poets were men of parts

For another thing, many Muslim poets have, themselves, been living examples of what they preached. We have the case of the great Arab poet al-Mutanabbi as an example. Al-Mutanabbi lived in the tenth century and is the author of the famous lines:

"The desert knows me well,  
 "The night, the mounted men;  
 "The spear, the sword,  
 "The paper and the pen!"

It is said that after an unfortunate skirmish with certain Arab tribesmen, al-Mutanabbi retired to a safe place to devise a plan for a new attack. While thus engaged in deep thought, his servant recited those very lines . . . perhaps inadvertently, or perhaps by way of a taunt. Hearing his own lines from the lips of his servant, the poet went back to the field of battle, fought and died in the field.

Thus the very versatility of the poets made poetry a living force in Islamic thought and culture. A poet of worth had to be a man of many parts. Al-Hamadani, the Arab-Persian poet who died in 1007 C.E., recounts his achievements and accomplishments in the following words:

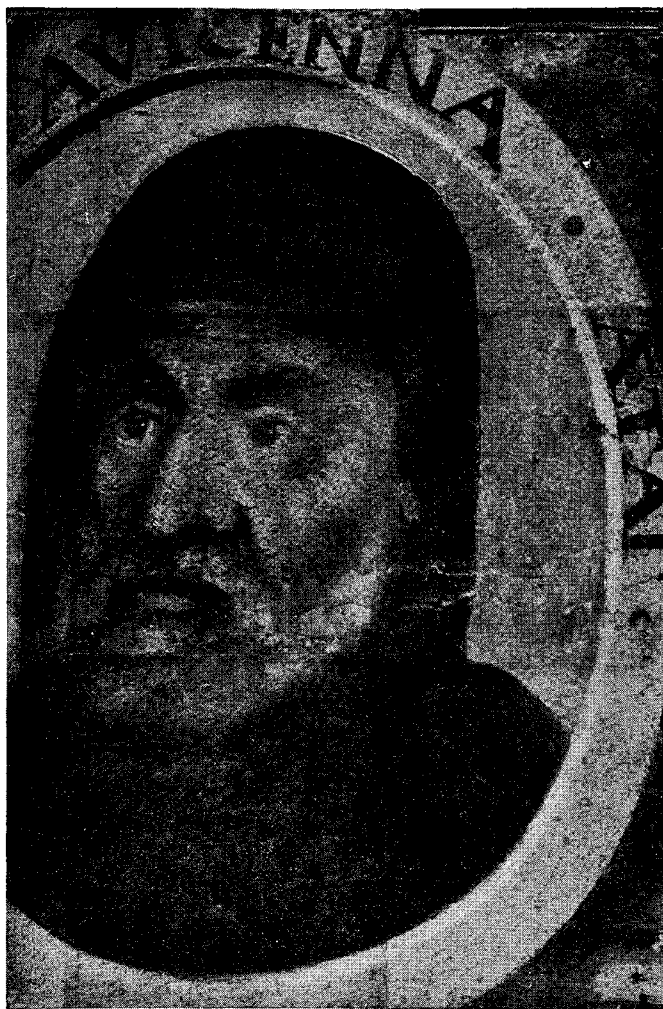
"... Do you desire to know that I have not been brought up in the lap of luxury?  
 "Then bring forth the steed, the lasso, the bow and arrow;  
 "Books of science and poetry, pen and paper,  
 "Wine and song; the lute, chess and backgammon!"



3. *Muslim scientists embraced poetry and made it a lucid medium of expression*

Perhaps the most important reason why poetry attained such great heights in Islamic life and culture was that poetry crossed the narrow limits ascribed to it in other parts of the world. I mean to say that Muslim scientists embraced poetry and made it a lucid medium of expression.

Many Persians are surprised that their famous countryman, 'Umar Khayyam of Nishapur, one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers of the East, has come to be recognized as one of the greatest poets of the world. In fact



*Avicenna, the Prince of Philosophers and Physicians  
(d. 1037 C.E.)*

*This picture is taken from a photograph of a painting of Avicenna in the Bodleian at Oxford, England. It was discovered in 1950 when the inner covering of the ceiling of the library was removed for renovation, and dates back to 1602 C.E., the year of the foundation of this world-famous library by Sir Thomas Bodley.*

the poetry — what little of it is extant — composed by Muslim scientists has become as valuable as their more serious works in prose.

Renowned Muslim scientists and philosophers like al-Farabi and Avicenna wrote their more basic scientific and philosophical speculations in fragments of poetry. And what

is more, these fragments of poetry are perfect examples of the highest order of poetry.

**Islamic poets and atomic physics**

*Avicenna*

I would like to quote some fragments from these scientists and philosophers, especially with reference to atomic physics; but before I quote some of these, I would like to make one point quite clear. I do not claim that a thousand years ago or even two hundred years ago Muslim scientists had discovered all there was to discover about atoms and the energy of the split atom. These honours belong to men like Rutherford, Enrico Fermi and Niels Bohr and their colleagues. But one is amazed how near some Muslim scientists and philosophers came to that in their speculations. To be sure, Democritus the Greek had propounded the Atomic Theory of the Structure of Matter some four centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. And certainly Muslim philosophers and scientists were acquainted with Greek learning because after all these came back to Europe through the medium of Arabic translations. Nevertheless, the idea of an atom possessing a nucleus — say, like a solar system in miniature, as we know it today — could be said to be wholly an idea first speculated upon by Muslim philosophers and scientists, and that, too, in poetry.

Here is the translation of a quatrain by none other than Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina, known to the West as Avicenna, Prince of Philosophers and Physicians:



*An artist's impression of Hafiz of Shiraz (d. 1388 C.E.)*



“Much have I travelled in the vast realm of science,  
 “And many a hair have I split ;  
 “A thousand suns have shone in my heart,  
 “Still I could not discover (the sun that shines in the)  
 heart of an atom !”

Avicenna, it may be recalled, died some 920 years ago.

#### Rumi

The great Muslim mystic and poet, the Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi, known as Rumi, is much more explicit. Rumi is the author of the stirring *Mathnavi*, the Qur'an of the Sufi mystics. He died over 650 years ago, yet what he says in one of his stories in the *Mathnavi* is nothing but a clear description of an atomic explosion. Here is a rough translation of the lines in question :

“There is a sun hidden in the atom ;  
 “Suddenly the atom opens its jaws . . .  
 “When the atom opens its jaws and the sun rushes out,  
 “The earth and the skies are reduced to ashes !”

Perhaps it is to explore further this mysterious territory that the poet Hatif of Isfahan, who lived in the sixteenth century, blankly speculates in his famous strophe :

“Were you to cleave the heart of an atom,  
 “Therein you would find : a sun !”

#### Nizami

And today when we talk of space travel and the possibility of life on other planets and solar systems, it is



An artist's impression of al-Farabi (d. 870 C.E.) reproduced by the Government of Turkey on postage stamps to celebrate his millenary in 1950.

perhaps refreshing to remember what another Islamic poet, Nizami of Ganja, wrote some 800 years ago. He speculated :

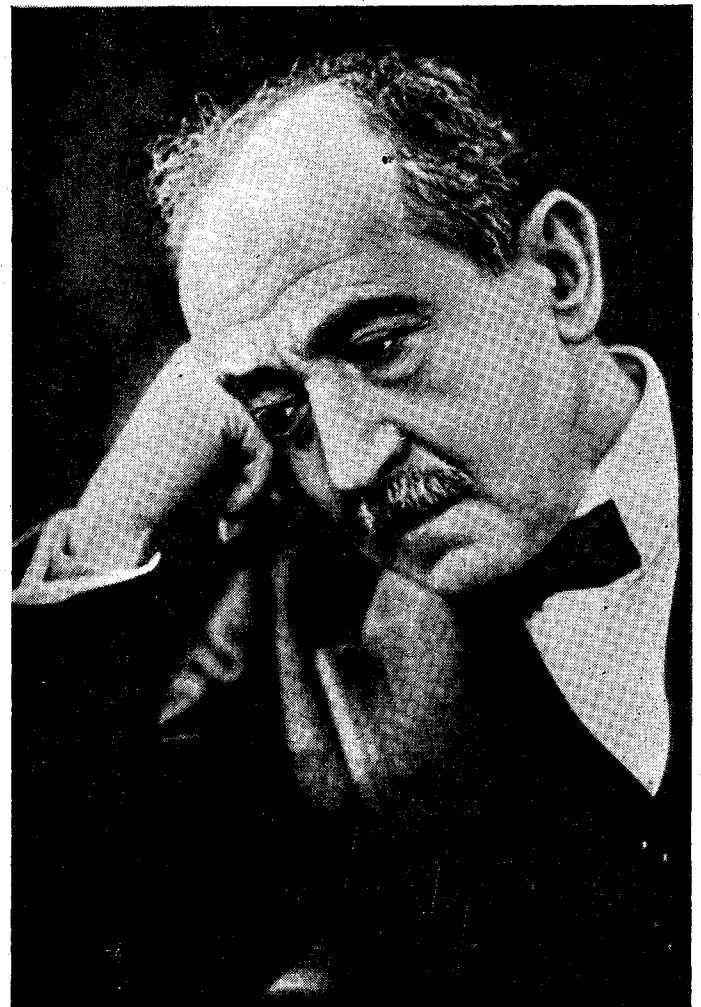
“ . . . Each star is a world in itself,  
 “With a separate, earth and sky of its own.”

In the biological realm, Rumi is a master speculator. He anticipates the Theory of Organic Evolution. On at least two different occasions, Rumi describes the process of evolution from inanimate objects to living cells — the cells going through the different stages of evolution until the animal kingdom is reached and from there to man. Then his fancy takes the mystical flight and says that the next stage of human existence will be in the realm of angels and other celestial beings. Beyond that even his mystical imagination falters.

#### Islamic poetry is replete with beauty

This much for classical Islamic poetry. On the lighter side, too, Islamic poetry is replete with beauty. They reach the height of beauty and poetic fancy in lines like these which are by Hafiz of Shiraz :

“At morn the nightingale said to the rose :



Ahmad Showqi of Egypt (d. 1932), whose poetry roused the Egyptians to their national destiny.



“Do not be so vain for many a rose has blossomed in this garden”;

“The rose said: ‘Truth does not displease us,

“But remember: No lover ever tells the beloved the bitter truth’.”

Another poet, lovelorn as usual, sends this message to his lady-love:

“I will hide myself in my odes,

“So that when you read the odes,

“I will be kissing your lips!”

### Islamic poetry plays its role in the rise of modern national movements in the world of Islam

*Iqbal*

If Islamic poetry proved to be such a lucid medium of expression in the hands of Muslim scientists, no less has the art been useful in the quest of statesmen-poets. With the rise of the vast national movements in the world of Islam, once again did poetry play its role. Poets like ‘Aarif and ‘Ishqi in Iran and Showqi in Egypt and Muhammad Iqbal in India roused their people. Once again it was shown that Islamic poetry is well at home in political struggles as it was at home in scientific speculations and philosophical thoughts or in pure lyrical forms. Often a poem has done the work of an army of propagandists and defeated them with a single couplet. Thus in the creation of the great Islamic republic of Pakistan, no one rendered more service than the late Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who is called the spiritual father of Pakistan.

Therefore, with Iqbal we bring to a close these remarks on the living force of Islamic poetry. But Iqbal went beyond the narrow concept of nationalism and incorporated the whole Islamic world in his dreams. He says:

“We are, it is true, from the Hejaz, China and Persia,

“But we are all the dew drops of the same smiling morn . . .

“Our heart does not belong to India, Turkey and Syria,

“It belongs to the abode of Islam!

“The people of God have but the one and the same aspiration,

“We may live in different tents but our heart is one!”

Iqbal dreams of a Commonwealth of Islamic Nations and considers this as a preserver of world peace. And he is not pessimistic. He thinks that there still remains in the jug a drop from that old spiritual wine that changes lethargic nations into great, living, dynamic ones.

Indeed, in Muhammad Iqbal, Islamic poetry once again attains its traditional heights . . . and rightly so; for Iqbal, too, was a man of many parts — a master of both the Eastern and the Western philosophical systems, a poet of great learning and of deep sincerity and devotion. And like all renowned Muslim poets, he fully realized the inherent power of his utterances and could foresee their future influence in shaping the destiny of Pakistan.

He knew this when he wrote:

“Well has the gardener tested the power of my poetry:

“He sowed a verse and reaped a sword!”

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# A STUDY OF RUMI AND IQBAL

## RUMI'S INFLUENCE ON IQBAL

By "AJJI"

### A brief description of the decrepit Islam of the days of Rumi

Rumi belongs to the thirteenth century, while Iqbal lived and worked in the twentieth. Despite the gap of 700 years, there is a striking similarity in the essential contours of the two periods. The world of Islam was tottering in the thirteenth century. Christendom, on the one hand, was engaged in waging a crusade against the forces of Islam; on the other the Mongols were busy devastating the fabric of Muslim social order which had been built over a period of 600 years. So sudden and devastating was the effect of the Mongol uprising that the Muslim Empire was crushed under its own weight. Balkh, Bokhara, Samarkand, Nishapur, Herat and Merv — famous cities in the Muslim Empire — fell one after the other. The *Sultanate* (Kingdom) of the Khwarizm was levelled to the dust. There was a cry of horror throughout a prostrate Islam. Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate, the symbol of Muslim unity, resisted for only a week. The Caliphate which had existed for more than six centuries became extinct at one blow. Sa'di's elegy on the sack of Baghdad is a classic in Persian literature. The effect of the picture conjured up by the poet is lost in translation, but a couplet alone will give some idea of the devastation wrought by the savage forces of the Mongols:

*Asman ra haq buwad gar khun babarad bar zamiyn  
Bar zawale mulke Musta'sim Amir al-Mumineen,  
Aiy Muhammad gar qiyamat miy bar ariy sar zi khak  
Sar bar awar iyn qiyamat darmayane khalq biyn.*

(It is meet that Heaven should rain tears of blood on earth  
At the destruction that has befallen the Empire of  
Musta'sim, Commander of the Faithful.

O Muhammad! If on the Day of Judgment you will raise  
your head above the earth

Raise your head and see the tribulators of the people now.)

Rumi's period was a period of political turmoil, economic insecurity and the general decline of Islam. The *Sunnah* in the thirteenth century had become for the Sufi an ideogram of mere platonic importance, for the theologian and the legist, a mere system of law, and for the Muslim masses nothing but a hollow shell without any living meanings. The intellectuals had all gone out for scholasticism, a subtle poison which had by this time eaten deep into the muscles and sinews of the Muslim body-politic. It had sapped the courage of millions of men; it had gnawed at the roots of faith and had demonstrably weakened the fabric of Islam. The Muslim society in the thirteenth century represented, therefore, a decadent social order incapable of dynamic growth and divested of a capacity for effective resistance. And yet with all its weaknesses, the Islamic Empire was confronted in this era with two formidable foes, one the Crusade from the West, the other the Mongols from the East. The third and perhaps the most dangerous of all sprang up from within the Muslim social order, and that was the tribe of assassins headed by the notorious Hasan Ibn Sabah.



The plight of Islam was surprisingly similar in Iqbal's period. The Caliphate dismembered in Turkey, which instead of being the symbol of Muslim unity, became the sick man of Europe. New countries were carved out of the Muslim Empire to inflict a permanent injury to the semblance of Muslim unity, which was represented by the outward structure of the Caliphate. Baghdad, which was once the seat of glory, became the capital of a country created by the British. The Persian Empire was no more, although the Shah of Persia still called himself the King of Kings! The new Arab States were governed by dynastic considerations. The grand structure set up by the Mughals in India had disappeared before the onslaught of the British, who had trampled the Muslims. Not only that, the Hindus in India and the Jews in the Arab world were set up to combat and demoralise the forces of Islam. The edifice of Muslim social structure was as weak and hollow in the period of Iqbal as it was in the age of Rumi. While it had to face formidable dangers from without, it was also confronted with an equally formidable foe from within. In the thirteenth century it was the movement of the assassins, while in the twentieth century it was the movement of disruption which started in Qadian which claimed Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be a prophet. Both offered a challenge to the inner unity of Islam, which certainly did not represent a structure of steel, that it was once. Both the periods were marked essentially by political turmoil, economic insecurity, religious disintegration and a visible decline in the forces which once made Islam a dynamic movement which rose to its full political maturity within the first century of the rise of the Prophet. The vigour and the dynamic growth of Islam was equally invisible in both the periods. The zeal for the faith was often accompanied by a complete disregard for the law of Islam. There was a sharp



cleavage between religious thought and religious activity. Islam had been split up into factions and the tree had been lost for the woods. With all the heavy odds against Islam in the thirteenth century, when its very existence seemed to be at stake, the forces of Islam emerged triumphant towards the end of the century, as if by a miracle. The Crusades, which began with the Seljuq Turks encamped at Nicaea on the confines of Asia, ended with the Ottoman Turks encamped in Europe itself on the Danube! The Mongols, who had suddenly sprung up from nowhere, seemed for a while to succeed in annihilating for ever the forces of Islam. Hard-pressed between the mounted archers of the wild Mongols in the East, and the fanatical Crusaders from the West, Islam seemed for ever lost in the early part of the thirteenth century. How different was the picture in the latter part of the same century? The last Crusader had been driven into the sea. The seventh of the Il Khans, many of whom had been flirting with Christianity, had finally recognized Islam as the State religion.

### History of the days of Rumi repeated itself in the days of Iqbal

For the second time in its history Islam had emerged victorious from a deadly struggle. In the thirteenth century it was Rumi who helped greatly to revitalize the decadent Muslim society which was groaning under the weight of superstition, ignorance, intellectual debauchery and moral cowardice. In our own day it fell to the lot of Iqbal to make his contribution in this field. He gave the much-needed impetus to the world of Islam which was torn asunder by internal dissensions, scholastic decrepitude, and an endless chain of religious controversies. And yet by the middle of the twentieth century a ray of hope appeared from this picture of gloom. The Muslim world had been galvanized into a new realization of its greatness. The sick man of Europe drove the last adversary into the sea. Persia showed signs of casting away its slumber and made an heroic effort to drive out the last British from its soil. Egypt led a movement to assert its own personality. This realization of the collective ego of Islam was widespread. Starting from Indonesia in the East it covered the whole field, which stretched as far West as Algeria, Tunis and Morocco. Individuals and nations were fast realizing their self. Out of the debris of the Muslim Empire in India sprang up the largest Muslim State known to the modern world, the greatest single tribute to the galvanizing spirit of Iqbal.

There is much truth in the old platitude that history repeats itself. Time after time we see in the history of Islam that the moment elements of decadence corrode into and threaten to destroy the vitals of Muslim society, some man of God arises to give it the force of life which is so necessary to meet the life and death struggle in which such ideological movements as Islam are challenged by other movements. Ghazali, Rumi and Iqbal, each one of them took years to prepare themselves for the great task. Each one of them struck, and struck very hard, at the root cause of the decadence. They attacked contemporary theologians, busy with questions of legality. They touched these pharisees to the quick, and not only did they squirm, they screamed loudly.

I have neither the intention nor the time to bring out in any detail the striking similarity, in its essential outlines, between the ages of Rumi and Iqbal as far as the decline and rise of Islam is concerned. The study is stimulating and provocative and could perhaps be pursued independently with profit. Having briefly hinted here at the

essential similarity, I will proceed to show how closely Iqbal followed the example of Rumi in dealing with a problem to which Rumi devoted all his lifetime.

### Brief sketch of Iqbal's life and his study of Rumi

Iqbal's career as a poet starts roughly with the beginning of the twentieth century, when he was still a student at the Government College, Lahore, West Pakistan. Unlike Rumi, who abhorred poetry and who started his career as a poet at the ripe age of 37 under the sudden and domineering impact of a mysterious personality, Iqbal began writing conventional poetry while he was still in his teens. There is no evidence of his acquaintance with Rumi till he left for England for higher studies in 1905. It was during the three years he spent in Europe that he devoted some serious thought to the study of Rumi, among other Persian mystics. This was the time when he was engaged in writing his monograph on the *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. This was also the period when he nearly decided to give up writing poetry, for he was itching to do something constructive and dynamic for his people and he considered poetry more of a hindrance than of a help for the task of which he was vaguely dreaming at this time. It is significant that the poet, who had easily earned for himself a high place among Urdu poets before his departure for England in 1905, was only too willing to abandon the place of honour which comes to a poet after a lifetime of struggle against the jealousies of contemporaries. Iqbal wrote little in Urdu on his return from England in 1908. The little that he wrote was so different from his erstwhile contribution that it became difficult for his countless admirers to reconcile the poet of *Himalah*, *Tarana-i-Hindi* and *Naya Shiwalah* with the poet who was now pensively complaining to God (*Shikwah*) and was fondly dreaming out the dawn of Islam (*Tulu'i-Islam*). The three years' stay in Europe had visibly changed the man who was no longer a mere patriot and a romantic. There is sufficient internal evidence to show that the man who had brought about this change in Iqbal was none else than Rumi. It was to him that he increasingly devoted his thought and study and it was to him that he turned for encouragement, hope and inspiration. The first work ever published by Iqbal was his treatise on the "Secrets of Self" (*Asrar-i-Khudi*), a long poem written after the pattern of the *Masnawi*. In this work, which was published in 1914-15, Rumi finds a place of precedence. Iqbal sums up beautifully the ardent yearning of his own heart in three verses of Rumi from *Divan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz*, which appear on the first page of his work.

*Diy Shaikh ba chiragh hamiy gasht girdi-shahr.  
Kaz ram o dev malulam wa ihsanam arzust.  
Ziyn hamrahane suste 'anasir dilam girift  
Sheri khuua o Rustaml dastanam arzust.  
Guftam kih yaft miy nashawad jastah iym ma  
Guft ankeh yaft miy nashawad anam arzust.*

(Last night the Shaykh was wandering about the town with a lamp in his hand.

Saying, "I am tired of both tame and wild animals and I long for the man."

"I am weary of these weak fellow travellers of mine

"And I wish for the Lion of God and the heroic Rustam."

I told (him), "It cannot be found, we have sought (also)."

He said, "But one who cannot be found, I long for."

Not only that. He does not leave his acknowledgment to mere chance. He mentions it specifically in the introductory verses of his *Asrar-i-Khudi* that he owes his maturity of thought and loftiness of vision to none else than Rumi. He compares himself in all humility to a wave which finds refuge in the ocean, that is Rumi. It is Rumi, Iqbal acknowledges, who has caused consternation in his heart. It is he



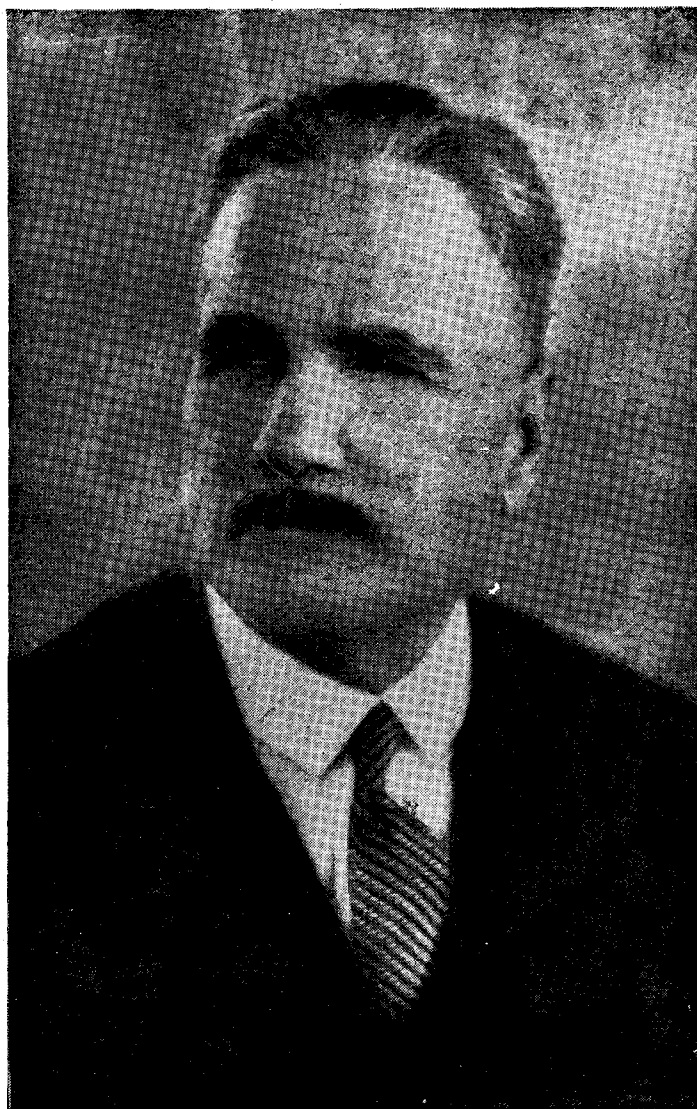
who has provided the healing balm to which Iqbal owes the unique peace of mind which he seems to have achieved after a period of restlessness which goes with the cravings of the heart, unaware both of its potential bearings and its final destination. Rumi then is the guide who takes him firmly by the hand and leads him to summits of faith and revelation where the most complex of problems are resolved, with the ringing clarity of conviction which springs from faith. The clarion call is sounded by Rumi, and Iqbal responds with all his heart. It is the resplendent light of Rumi in which Iqbal basks with a singular ecstasy. It is the dawn of a vision, a new world, an *élan vital*, the dawn of a new personality, the opening of unprecedented vistas of thought, unlimited possibilities, every moment of which is concentrated into eternity.

### The Masnavi of Rumi and Iqbal

Rumi ended up his eventful career with the immortal *Masnavi*, while Iqbal started it with one. The celebrated *Masnavi* of Rumi comprises thousands of verses in which the poet has beautifully woven in numerous didactic stories from which a moral springs up suddenly as a complete surprise, an original experience. Iqbal's *Masnavi* is a brief affair, and does not depend for its effect on didactic stories. The difference between the two *Masnavis* is the difference between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries. While the reader in Rumi's time had ample leisure to delve into volumes of poetry, the reader in Iqbal's day was hard-pressed for time and could not be expected to sift for himself the grain from the chaff. Iqbal, therefore, is more direct and less poetic than Rumi in the treatment of his subject. Rumi is not a thinker in the strict sense of the word. He generally makes assertions and tries to invest them with power by means of analogies. Iqbal on the other hand is a thinker *par excellence*. Although his greatness as a poet far outweighs his originality as a thinker, Iqbal's mind is trained for abstract thinking of a high order. His greatness as a poet lies in the fact that he can hit a most abstract problem right on the head without getting lost in the verbiage of unnecessary details. Not only that. He also invests the problem with such intense poetic beauty that the reader hardly ever feels he is being confronted with an abstract problem of philosophy. It is here that Iqbal's greatness lies as a poet who has an original contribution to make to the realm of ideas.

There is an enormous difference between giving expression to an experience and giving expression to an idea, and this precisely is the difference which distinguishes Iqbal the poet and Iqbal the systematic thinker. One experience does not necessarily follow like premises in syllogism. We can deduce one thought from another, but we cannot deduce one experience from another. While writing *Asrar-i-Khudi*, therefore, we find ourselves not only in the presence of a mind, but in the presence of a personality. Experience of a personality cannot possess a logical sequence since logical sequence is a characteristic only of thought. Therefore when thoughts are interwoven with experience and it is the expression of the experience which is primarily intended, thoughts have to be scattered as they are in both Rumi's and Iqbal's *Masnavis*. It is, however, comparatively easy to summarize Iqbal's thought without doing any damage to the spirit of his work than is possible in the case of Rumi. It is, however, not my intention here to summarize the thought of Iqbal as represented by his first poetical work, *Asrar-i-Khudi*. All that I seek to establish is the impact of Rumi on Iqbal's personality, which materially changes after 1908.

From the publication of *Asrar-i-Khudi* in 1914 onwards it is comparatively easy to show Iqbal's lasting debt of gratitude to Rumi. Nearly 10 years after the publication of his first work, he felt sufficiently confident to give a message from the East to the West in reply to Goethe's *Divan*. By this time the first world war had wrought havoc on the Western civilization. The states based on the narrow concept of geographical nationalism were crumbling under their own weight. The civilization which once seemed completely to dazzle the East, which was steeped in the torpor of its crippling inactivity, now stood discredited in its own eyes. The foundations of the old world had been shaken and a new



Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938)

order was imperceptibly coming to its own. There was a restlessness in the minds of men who were yearning for something of which they were only dimly aware. The East and particularly the Muslim East was awakening from its centuries old slumber and was pulsating with new hopes and aspirations. A revolution was in the offing. No revolution has ever succeeded, however, without being preceded in the



first instance by a revolution in the minds of the people, and this is precisely what Iqbal sought to achieve by his Message of the East (*Payam-i-Mashriq*). The Qur'an lays down the inevitable law of nature when it says :

“Surely God changes not the condition of a people, until they change their own condition” (13:11).

Iqbal's eye was constantly on this law and it was to this basic reality that he invited the attention of the world. In the very opening pages of *Payam-i-Mashriq*, he refers to the secret of life and death both in individuals and in nations.

*Murshide Rumi hakime pak zad,  
Sirre margo zindagi bar ma kushad.  
Har halake ummate paishe keh bud  
Zankeh bar jandal guman burdand 'ud.*

(The master Rumi, the sage of pure birth,  
Revealed to us the secret of Life and Death.  
Whatever destruction befell the preceding nations,  
The cause of it was that they took Jandal for 'Ud.)

Iqbal's faith within ten years of his acquaintance with Rumi had become so implicit that he would not look at the greatest of thinkers.

*Bu 'Aliy andar ghubare naqayeh gum,  
Daste Rumi pardayeh mehmāl girift.  
Iyn farotar raft o ta gauhar rasiyd.  
An bagirdabay chu khas manzil girift.*

(While Abu Ali (Ibn-e-Sina) was lost in the dust of the camel,  
The hands of Rumi seized the camel's rein.  
The latter penetrated deeper and deeper until he reached the pearls.  
(Whereas) the former dwelled in a whirlpool like a straw.)

Rumi, who gave him a lofty ideal, now seemed completely to sway Iqbal. Saturated with the new experience Iqbal could no longer contain the ecstasy to himself. He sang voluptuously of the song which had touched the innermost chords of his being. Having drunk deep at the fountain of Rumi's verse, he proceeded to inspire others with the haunting music and cadence of his poetry.

*Biya kih man ze khume piyre Rumi awurdam  
Maiye sukhan keh jawan tar ze badae 'anabiy ast.*

(Come that I brought from the earthen jar of master Rumi  
The wine of poetry which is more refreshing than the wine of grapes.)

With Rumi Iqbal comes to the conclusion towards the end of *Payam-i-Mashriq* that intellect belongs to Satan and love to Adam.

*Danad an ku naikbakht o mahram ast,  
Ziyaraki ze Iblis o 'Ishaq az Adam ast.*

(He who is fortunate and confidential knows,  
Cunningness is of Satan and Love of Adam.)

### Rumi : Love is the motive force of the Universe

“Love,” says Rumi, “is the remedy of our pride and self-conceit, a physician of all our infirmities. Only he, whose garment is rent by love, becomes entirely unselfish.” Love is a mighty spell—an enchantment. It puts reason to silence. It is the motive force of the universe. In fact it is the only creative source. Reason has its own place, but then it has its own limitations. Love is the essence of religion. The more a man loves, the deeper he penetrates into the Divine Purpose. It is here that Rumi is absolutely at the top of the world, for his verse echoes beautifully the agony of a soul madly in love. The direct explosive force of expression, the ecstatic fervour and enthusiasm of Rumi's verse is not to be found elsewhere. He became a poet because he had to, and not because he wanted to be one. In fact it was in spite of himself that he started writing after that terrible onslaught

of love which appeared in the shape of Shams Tabriz. For thirty-seven years there is no evidence in Rumi's life of his inclination towards poetry. The Muse suddenly appeared in the form of Shams, whose disappearance was accompanied by an outburst of lyricism on the part of Rumi. For nearly seventeen years Rumi gave expression to the pangs of separation during this exploding and explosive state of his life. He wrote thousands of verses before he started his monumental work of writing the *Masnawi*. Iqbal offers a contrast to Rumi in that he started as a conventional poet. We are not aware of any incident in his life which can even remotely be cited as a parallel to the appearance of Shams in the life of Rumi. Not only that. We are not even aware of a lesser impact by way of an intense emotional experience which could be described as the dawn of love in the life of Iqbal. Much of Rumi's greatness can perhaps be traced to his intense and unique experience of love; but a personal experience of a similar nature of any significance is almost missing in the life of Iqbal. Notwithstanding this basic difference in the essential spiritual make-up of the two poets, we see both of them arriving at the same conclusions, though through different means. Iqbal could not have agreed more with Rumi on the concept of love of which we had an occasion to talk earlier. Both admit the importance of intellect, but both place an overriding emphasis on intuition as against intellect as a means of true knowledge. Their overwhelming emphasis on intuition, instead of reason and intellect, is explained by the exaggerated importance attached to reason by their contemporaries. In his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, London 1934, Iqbal has pointed out that “experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation can bring. That is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced man, while religion has always elevated individuals and transformed whole societies”. The apparent belittling of intellect, both in Rumi and Iqbal, is only a protest against the gross exaggeration of its role in life. Like Rumi, Iqbal looks upon Satan as the embodiment of pure intellect, which though valuable in itself, is likely to become an instrument of terrible destruction without the guiding hands of love. Iqbal elucidates this point in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, and in doing so he could not have offered a better commentary on Rumi's thought.

The modern man with his philosophies of criticism and scientific specialism finds himself in a strange predicament. His naturalism has given him an unprecedented control over the forces of nature but has robbed him of faith in his own future. Wholly overshadowed by the results of his intellectual activity, he has ceased to live soulfully, i.e., from within. In the domain of thought, he is living in open conflict with himself, and in the domain of economic and political life, he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless energy and infinite gold hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life weariness.”

There is infinite scope for a comparative study of the life and thought of Rumi and Iqbal, but I do not propose to pursue it here, for the purpose of this article is really not to attempt any exhaustive study of the subject. All that I seek to do is merely to provoke a parallel and then leave it to the more curious student to pursue it at his leisure.

By 1927, when *Zabur-i-Ajam* came out, Iqbal was already proclaiming to the world that he was the only Brahmin in the land of the Brahmins who was fully conversant with the thought of Rumi :



*Mara bingar keh dar Hindostan diygār namiyn biniy,  
Brahmin zadai ramz ashnanye Rumi o Tabriz ast.*

(Consider me, for in India you will not see again,  
Offspring of Brahmin who is acquainted with secrets of  
Rumi and Shamsi-Tabriz.)

Five years later, he was to have that rare spiritual experience which brought him nearer to the soul of Rumi than ever before. Dante's *Divine Comedy* stirred his imagination and Rumi's divine knowledge pervaded his personality. In *Javed-Nama* we see Rumi as his friend, guide and philosopher leading him to heavens of thought and ecstasy and opening up to the soul of Iqbal unprecedented avenues of development. The whole work is replete with references to Rumi, who unravels the mysteries of the world to our poet. He rids him of doubts and superstition. He rids him of fear and apprehension. He releases him from the shackles of the earth and leads him to the lofty light of the skies. He takes him where the angels fear to tread. The mercurian spirit of Iqbal flees from heaven to heaven in the calm company of Rumi, whose feet are firm and whose soul is illuminated. A new traveller loyally follows one who has seen the world. He walks through valleys, climbs mountains and manoeuvres dangerous passes with a guide who has traversed these regions a hundred times over. The beauties of nature open up to Iqbal as never before, the mysteries of nature are laid bare before him and he sees Rumi as no one had ever seen him before. In the concluding poem of what may prove to be the greatest work of Iqbal (*Javed-Nama*) he commends the services of his guide to the world, for was it not Rumi who revealed to Iqbal that all logicians and thinkers of the world had combined to conceal?

*Piye Rumi ra Rafiqe rah saz  
Ta khuda bakhshad tura soz-o-godaz  
Zankeh Rumi maghz ra danad zi post  
Paye u muhkam fitad dar kuye dost  
Sharhie u kardand ura kas nadid  
Ma'niye u chun ghizal az ma ramiyd  
Raqqe tan az harfe u amokhtand.  
Chashm ra az raqqe jan bar dokhtand.  
Raqqe tan dar gardish arad khak ra  
Raqqe jan barham zanad aflak ra  
'Ilm o hikm az raqqe jan ayad badast.  
Ham zamiyn ham asman ayad badast.*

(Choose Rumi as the companion of your path  
So that God may bless you with the profundity of love and  
understanding (of others))

Because Rumi knows the distinction between core and  
crust.

His feet are firm on the ground of the Beloved.

They have described Him, but no one has seen Him.

His inner meanings have eluded us like the gazelle

They learnt from him the movement of the body.

They have closed their eyes to the dance of the soul,

The dancing of the body makes the earth go round,

The dancing of the soil disturbs the heaven and earth

Knowledge and intellect are gained through the dance of  
the soul,

Both heaven and earth will be gained in this way.)

### Contributions of Rumi and Iqbal to Muslim Society

Rumi and Iqbal tried in their own way in the thirteenth and twentieth centuries to recreate and rediscover for themselves the original purity of Islam. Both worked and pleaded in their own way for bridging the gulf between religious thought and religious deed. Both attacked the quietest tendencies of sadism inherent in the philosophy of the sackcloth that was Sufism. Both fought against tendencies which were reducing Islam to the status of a dogma. Both worked for winning for it the unchallenged allegiance due to it as a complete programme of life inspired for all mankind by divine revelation. Both wrote in cold prose as also in the animate language of poetry. Both lived and worked in a period of intense gloom and deep depression. Both gave a stirring message of hope that moved millions. Both faced the challenge of the times and met it with a singular success. What Rumi achieved in the thirteenth century, Iqbal did in the twentieth. He legitimately claims to be the Rumi of his period, and this claim deservedly appears in his posthumous work *Armughan e Hejaz* :

*Chu Rumi dar haram dadam adhan man  
Azu amokhtam asrare jan man  
Beh daure fitnaye 'asre kohan u  
Beh daure fitnaye 'asre rawan man.*

(Like Rumi in the Ka'bah called for prayer,

From him I learnt the secret of the soul.

In the evolution of the old time—he

In the evolution of the present time—me.)

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# THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF MUHAMMAD JALAL-UD-DIN RUMI

By AFZAL IQBAL

Pp. XI + 181

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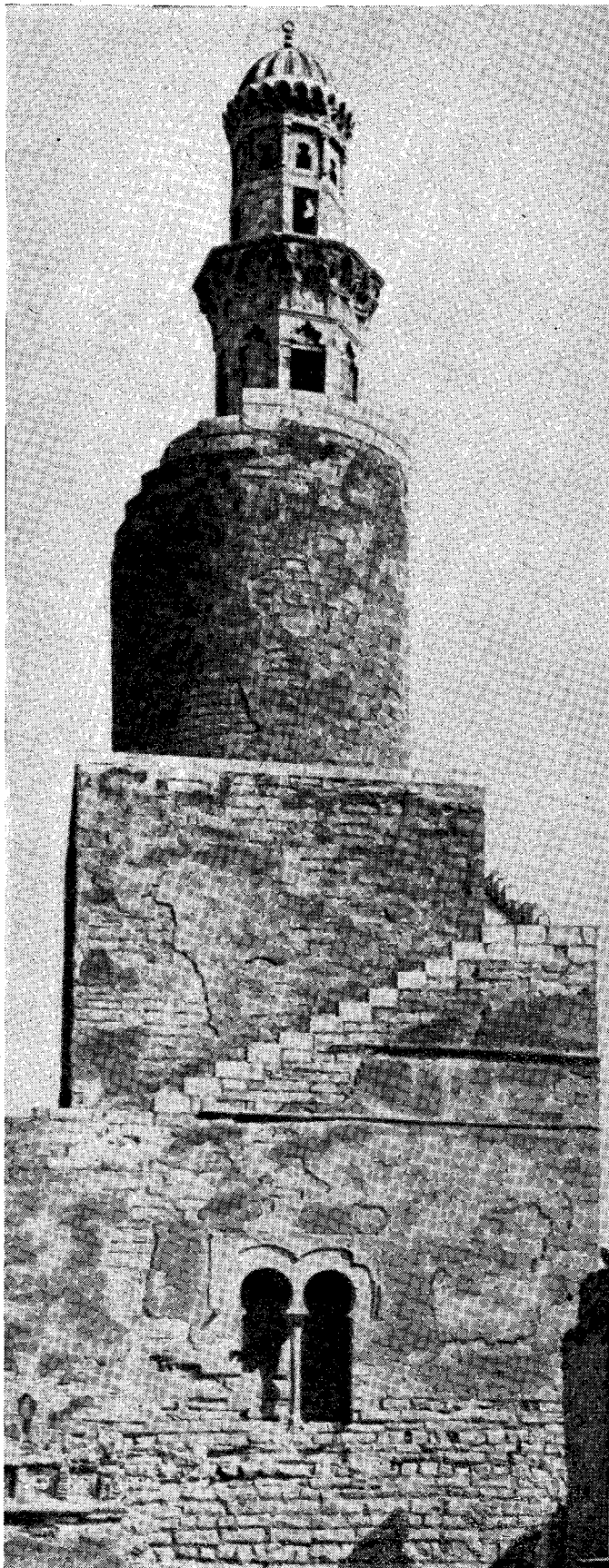
"I recommend this book warmly; it is a pleasure to read and it holds the key to further delight for those many who will be encouraged to study further the immortal poetry of Rumi".

(Professor A. J. Arberry of Pembroke College, Cambridge, England)

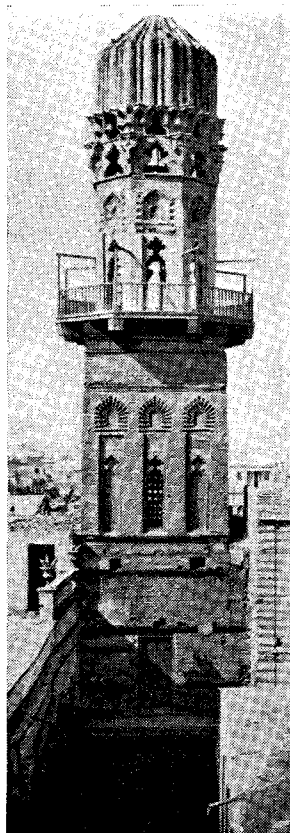
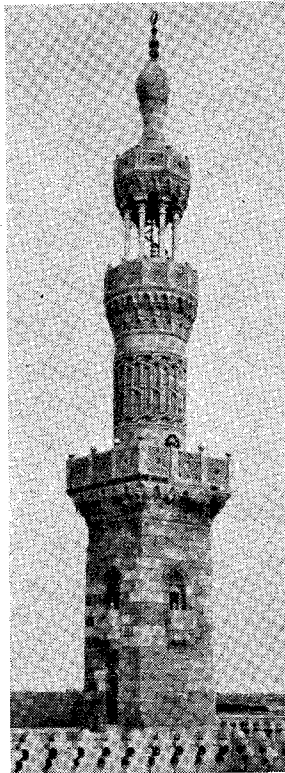


# A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF OF CAIRO

Cairo possesses masterpiece  
monuments running unbi  
the ninth to the nineteen



*The Minaret of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun  
(866-879 C.E.).*



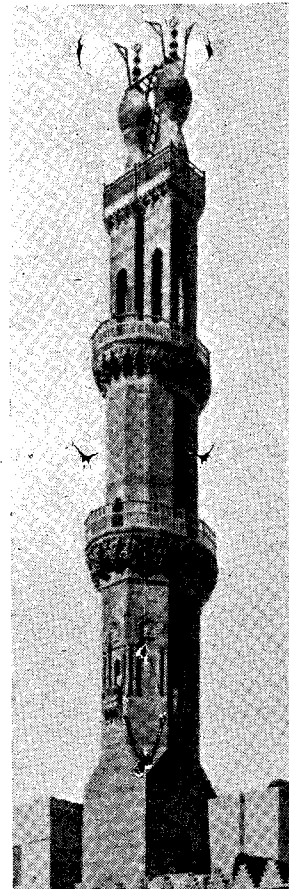
*Top left — The Minaret of the Mosque of  
(15th century C.E.).*

*Bottom left — Minaret of the Mosque of al  
Aiyub (1243-44 C.E.).*

*Centre — The Minaret of the Mosque  
(in the al-Azhar Mosque) (1503-.*

*Top right — The Minaret of the Mosque of  
(1423-24 C.E.).*

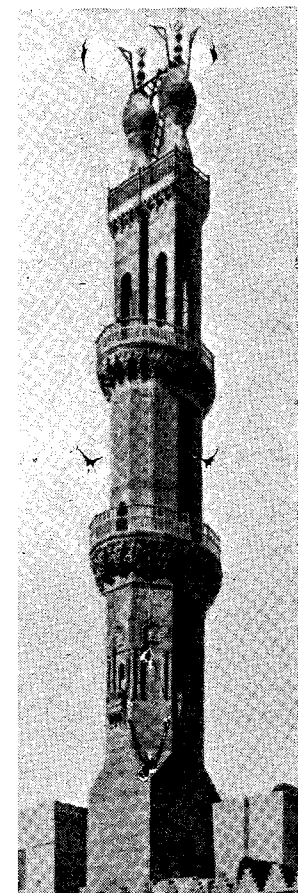
*Bottom right — The Minaret of the Mc  
(996-1013 C.E.).*





# NT OF MINARETS OF THE MOSQUES CAIRO

ses masterpieces of Muslim  
running unbroken from  
o the nineteenth century



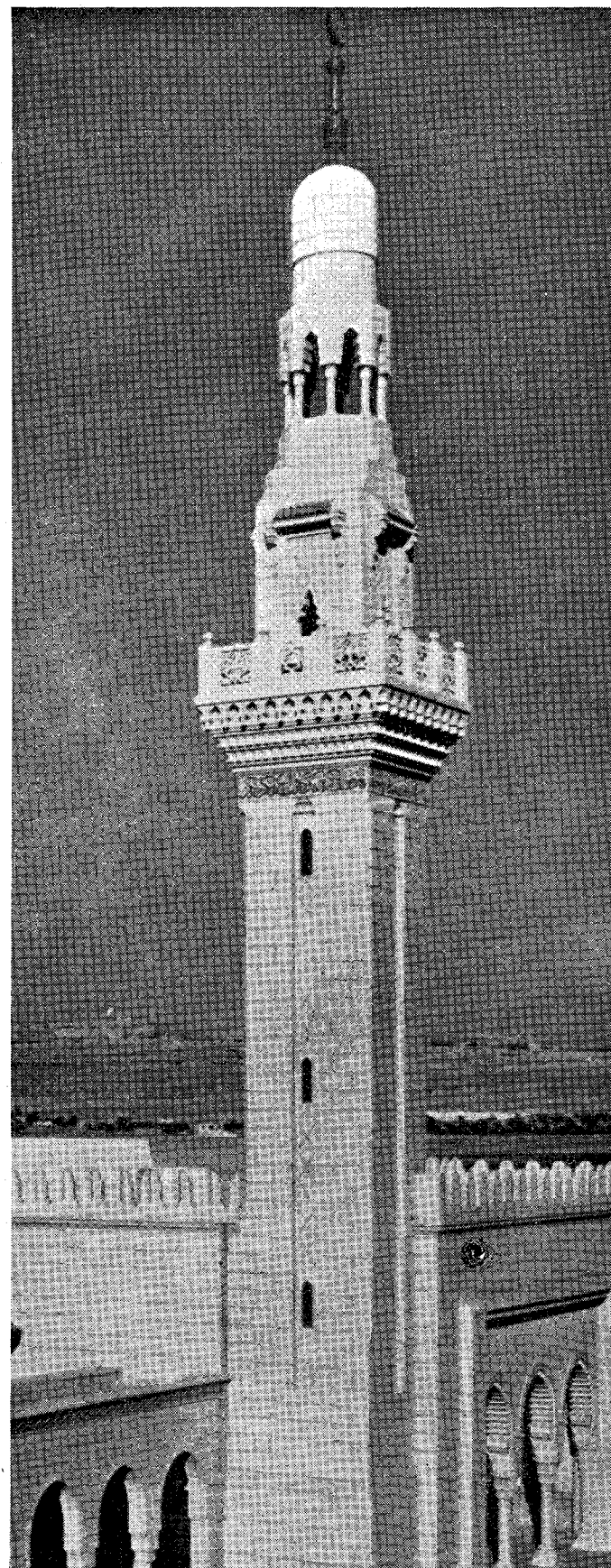
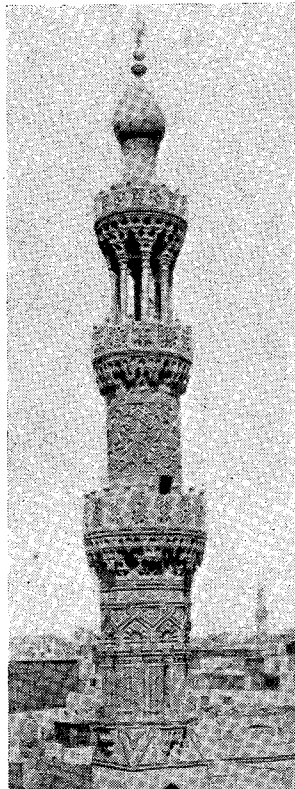
Minaret of the Mosque of Ganim al-Bahlwan  
(15th century C.E.).

Minaret of the Mosque of al-Salih Najm al-Din  
Aiyub (1243-44 C.E.).

Minaret of the Mosque of Sultan al-Ghuri  
al-Azhar Mosque) (1503-4 C.E.).

Minaret of the Mosque of al-Ashraf Barsbay  
(1423-24 C.E.).

The Minaret of the Mosque of al-Hakim  
(990-1013 C.E.).



The Minaret of the Mosque of al-Fuli (at Minya)  
(946 C.E.).



# CAIRO

## The City that contains the largest number of Mosques in the world

### The importance of Cairo in the Middle East

Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is the most populous city in North Africa. It stands on the eastern bank of the Nile.

It is estimated that there are about 1,000 mosques in Cairo. The ones of particular historical and architectural interest include those of 'Amr (642), Ibn Tulun (876), al-Azhar (970), Sultan Hasan (1356), Barkuk (1384) and Ka'it Bey (1475). Many monuments of Cairene art have suffered greatly through neglect or natural decay. Since 1882 the Arab Monuments Department has done much to preserve and repair ancient buildings, whilst monuments of pre-Islamic times are in the custody of the Antiquities Department. In the Egyptian, Coptic and Arab Museums are housed valuable records of Egypt's cultural inheritance. Cairo is one of the chief intellectual centres of the Islamic world. In addition to the medieval university mosque of al-Azhar (*The Resplendent*) there is the modern (1925) University of Cairo, both of which attract students from far beyond the borders of Egypt.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century Cairo has become the most important trading and distributing centre of the Middle East and North Africa. Its modern influence radiates far beyond the Egyptian borders. Its newspapers have powerful political editorials and excellent news services and circulate all over the Middle East. It is also a notable Arabic publishing centre, and the books it issues are sold throughout the Arab world. It has made great advances in the Arab theatre and cinema world. The State broadcasting services from Cairo are also the most powerful and best patronized in the Middle East. The news services in Arabic are completely edited and full. There are talks by distinguished politicians and men of letters. In the field of Arab culture, Cairo has an Academy of Oriental Music which has a large following and also a Society of Arts which holds regular exhibitions of modern Egyptian paintings and sculpture.

Islamic Cairo contains architectural remains of infinite artistic value, dating from all ages from the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs (641) till 1878. One is able to find mosques, the *madrasahs* (religious schools), the hospitals, the convents, and even the retreats of the hermits, the shelters of the poor, the public fountains, the homes for the protection of women, the aqueduct, the palaces, the *hammams* (bathing establishments), the *Wellalas* (caravan-sarais) and the surrounding walls and fortresses.

### Architecture of the mosques of Cairo

The architecture of the mosques of Cairo can roughly be classified into three groups :

1. In the first type we find a large open court surrounded by arcades or roofed colonnades ; the sides towards Mecca being more spacious than the others, and containing 3, 4 or 5 rows of columns supporting pointed arches. This is the most ancient and characteristic type of mosque. It is reproduced under all the succeeding dynasties. The mosque of 'Amr at Old Cairo may be taken as an example.

2. The second type was developed during the epoch of the Mamluk dynasties. In mosques of this kind a smaller hypaethral court forms the centre, while in the place of

arcades, or porticoes, are four deep niches with plain pointed valuting. The niches on the Mecca and its opposite side (especially the former) are more spacious than those to the north and south sides. There are separate sides built as mausolea for the founders or their families ; and the domes that rise above them, as well as the minarets (neither placed according to fixed rule) are conspicuous for their beauty of form and decoration. The mosque of Sultan Hasan is the largest and grandest in this style. In the smaller ones the whole is roofed and a skylight is introduced.

3. The third type represents the Turkish style transported from Constantinople to Cairo. The mosque of Muhammad 'Ali reproduces the Istanbul model on the most elevated and commanding site. Here the main edifice for prayer consists of a square surmounted by a colonnade with dome vaultings, and containing in the centre the *Hanfiyyah* for ablution. Already in some of the mosques left by Turkish rulers, e.g., the Sinaniyyah Mosque at Bulak and that of Muhammad Bey Abi Dahab near the Azhar, we have a foretaste of what might be expected to follow ; and the little mosque of Sitt Safiyya in the heart of Cairo is an effort to reproduce in miniature the Turkish model.

In the numerous mosques of Cairo there are of course various modifications of the first two types, and others which fall under no particular category. Many merely consist of rectangular buildings, entirely roofed, and containing rows of columns supporting pointed, rarely round, arches. Connected with many of the mosques are colleges and schools (*madrasahs*) and schools for children (*kuttabs*), hospitals, almshouses and dervish retreats (*khaniqah*), drinking fountains (*sabeel*). Most of these except *sabeels* and small schools are in a state of dilapidation.

### Essential features of a mosque

The following terms may be found useful in explaining the essential features of a mosque :

*Hosh* or *Sahn al-Jami'* the open court. *Mihrab*, or more commonly *Qiblah*, the niche situated in the principal wall in the direction of Mecca. *Mimbar*, the pulpit of wood or stone, invariably placed immediately to the right or south of the *Qiblah*. *Dikkeh*, a platform with parapet, generally supported by four columns in no fixed position ; but generally in the larger mosques in the *iywan al-Qiblah*, the principal portico, or portion of the mosque in which is the *Qiblah*, generally raised above the *Sahn al-Jami'*. *Kursiy*, the chair or desk for the Qur'an. *Meydaah*, the open tank for ablution ; sometimes in the *Sahn al-Jami'*, but generally in a side space outside the mosque, usually shaded by a roof or canopy supported by small columns. *Hanafiyyah*, the place of ablution, with running taps, generally in the *Sahn al-Jami'*, in large mosques, with canopy. *Maqsurah Qubbah*, a dome or chamber with a dome mausoleum, etc., *mi'dhanah* (a minaret). *Mabkharah*, a tower somewhat similar to a minaret but without balconies and containing numerous apertures in the upper portion, through which were formerly diffused the fumes of incense burned during the hours of prayer. *'Amood*, a column. *Shurfah*, the ornamental stones forming the parapets. *Tareeq*, the inscription giving the date of the edifice.



The oldest pointed arches are believed to be those in the mosque of 'Amr in Old Cairo, but their exact date is doubtful, as this mosque has so often been altered and rebuilt. The earliest building in which pointed architecture occurs as a general characteristic is the mosque of Tulun (876 C.E.), though perhaps a somewhat earlier example is seen in the Nilometer of Rodah, built fifteen years before in the same reign.

### **Richness and beauty of the ornamentation of the buildings in Cairo**

Decoration has always formed an important feature of Arab architecture, and no one can fail to be struck by the richness and beauty of the ornamentation lavished on many of the buildings, especially those of the era of the Mamluk sultans. All this ornamentation, whether fretwork in plaster, as at the mosque of Qala'oon, or inlay, as at Sultan Hasan, or carving as at Ka'itbey, is carried out without the use of natural forms or the representations of any animal or man. In a few places, as in the black and white painting of the screen in the mosque of Barqooq, flowers are sparingly employed. Richness of material — as porphyry, jasper, turquoise, alabaster, coloured marbles and granites, ivory, bronze and even mother-of-pearl — were lavished freely on patterns the monotony of which was relieved by the frequent introduction of verses from the Qur'an in ornamental bands and borders or in plaques of intricate monograms. Stained glass is similarly treated, vegetable forms being more frequent, and the occasional use of a very conventional peacock or pheasant being permitted. The pulpits are usually of wood, and on them the visitor will often find exquisite specimens of carved ivory, concealed under the dirt of ages.

### **A brief description of the minarets appearing on pages 20-21**

On our central pages this month we have pictures of the minarets of some mosques of Cairo. We have selected minarets of various periods in order to give an idea of the development in architectural design. Below is a brief description of each minaret.

#### *The Minaret of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun (866-79)*

The minaret of the Tulun Mosque, which rises from the exterior wall of circuit, has a singular appearance, owing to the staircase winding round the outside. Its novel form is said to have originated in the absent habits of its founder, and an observation of his *Vizier*. He had observed him unconsciously rolling up a piece of parchment into a spiral form, and having remarked, "It was a pity his majesty had no better employment," the king, in order to excuse himself, replied, "So far from trifling, I have been thinking that a minaret erected on this principle would have many advantages; I could even ride up it on horseback: and I wish that of my new mosque

to be built of the same form." The cornice of this staircase appears to have been of amber. A fine view of Cairo may be obtained from its summit.

#### *Minaret of the Mosque of Ghanim al-Bahlwan (15th century)*

The minaret is the most beautiful of the Mamluk period, both on account of its harmonious proportions and the magnificence and good distribution of its ornaments.

#### *Minaret of the Mosque of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (1243-44 C.E.)*

The minaret, which rises over the archway, begins as a square shaft and later becomes octagonal. The sides of this octagon are decorated with little panels with shell-like hoods and multifoil arched openings. The octagonal part is crowned with a ribbed dome, the lower part of which is again decorated with multifoil openings, on top of which are stalactites. This minaret is typical of most of those which were built about the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth centuries. A great development took place in minaret design after this, which culminated in the Mamluk period.

#### *The Minaret of the Mosque of Sultan al-Ghuri (1503-4 C.E.)*

The huge minaret is square in plan. It has two galleries supported by stalactites. The minaret ends with a square top with fine heads.

#### *The Minaret of the Mosque of al-Ashraf Barsbay (1423-24 C.E.)*

The first storey is square, the second cylindrical and ornamented with an interlacing pattern, and the third is a pavilion of marble columns with a cap on the top. The latter storey was renewed in 1945.

#### *The Minaret of the Mosque of al-Hakam (990-1013 C.E.)*

The shafts of the minarets and the monumental entrance are decorated with ornaments and Kufi inscriptions engraved in stone, while the lower part of the southern salient is decorated with a band of Kufi inscriptions engraved on marble. The quality of the design and execution of the inscription demonstrates the great progress achieved, and the perfection attained during the reign of al-Hakam.

#### *The Minaret of the Mosque of al-Fuli at Miniya (946 C.E.)*

The minaret has a sphere lower storey surmounted by the *Mu'adhdhin's* (caller to prayer) gallery, and another square storey ending with a wooden awning covered with red tiles. On top is a pavilion on columns, supporting the cap and crescent.

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# A STUDY OF THE ARAB MIND BEFORE ISLAM

By AFZAL IQBAL

## LANGUAGE

Language is a symptom of rational life. In no nation is it born suddenly nor is it inherited as a complete unit. People start with certain sounds which express their meaning to a certain extent. When new meanings or new objects are sought to be expressed, new sounds are born. When these meanings and objects disappear, the corresponding sounds also become extinct. Thus language lives and dies continuously. The same is true of etymology and idiom. They grow and develop according to the growth and development of a nation. If we could compile a lexicon of the language of a nation in a certain period, we would know all the material objects and moral values known and unknown to that nation during that particular period. It has to be borne in mind, however, that such a lexicon would not reflect a period unless it is compiled in that period. What exists now of Arabic lexicons and dictionaries represents neither the Arab of today nor that of the pre-Islamic era. They might, at best, represent the Abbaside period or an age nearer it. This point will be clearer if we refer to the European dictionaries and encyclopaedias. An hundred years' old French dictionary, for instance, would not contain the words "telephone" or "telegraph". This means that the French of that period did not know these objects. Similarly, if we were to compile a lexicon of words used before Islam, we could easily form an idea about the outlines of the contemporary culture. If, for instance, we fail to come across words like "passion" (*Atifa*) or "feeling" (*Shu'ur*) in the pre-Islamic language, we can conclude that the Arab of that period was alien to what the words denote. But can we compile such a lexicon? There is many an obstacle in the way of such a compilation.

Most of the pre-Islamic poetry and prose has been lost to posterity. According to Abu 'Amr Ibn al-'Alaa, we have hardly inherited more than a fraction of what the Arabs have left by way of parable and verse. Had all the literature reached us intact, we might have had a rich legacy of knowledge and poetry. In the absence of this, if we base our conclusion on a given line of verse which we accept as pre-Islamic, we can only say that the words and meanings occurring in that line were known to the Arabs, but the converse will not be true; for we cannot say that the words or meaning not found in that line were not known to the Arab.

Arabs before Islam were divided in different tribes and each tribe had its own dialect. It was quite possible, therefore, that a word denoting a certain meaning may not be understood to mean the same thing in another tribe. We have a striking example to quote. In the year of Khaybar, Abu Hurairah went to Daws. He met the Prophet Muhammad, at whose sight he dropped his knife. "Give me this dagger (*Sikkeen*)," said the Prophet. Abu Hurairah stared left and right, not knowing the meaning of the word *Sikkeen*. The Prophet repeated the word a number of times and when at last Abu Hurairah understood the meaning he said, "Do you want the knife (*Mudyah*)?" "Yes," said the Prophet. "Do you call it *Sikkeen* here?" asked Abu Hurairah. "By God, I had not heard this word before this day."

The work of unification of these dialects started before Islam and continued after its downfall. It was common, however, in those days for one tribe to use a certain word which was not known to the other, or for which the other tribe used another word. Therefore, if we find a word used by one of

the pre-Islamic poets, we cannot categorically take it as an indication of the rational life of all Arabs before Islam. Many Arabic words were coined during the Islamic period. Ibn Jinni has pointed out in his *al-Khasad* is than an Arab who was very eloquent and highly sensitive was capable of following his own course in the matter of language and could coin words. Ru'bah and his father were known to have coined a number of words. Moreover, certain words used before Islam assumed new meanings after Islam, while the meanings of certain words became limited, e.g., *Salat* (prayers), *Zakat* (charity funds), *Hajj* (pilgrimage), etc. Meanings of words change with the changing times. Chair (*Kursi*), eating table (*Khiwan*), kitchen (*Matbakh*) or theatre (*Malha*) evoke meanings in the mind of a bedouin different from those evoked in the mind of an urban man. A chair (*Kursi*) to the bedouin is anything to sit on, but a townsman has different sitting effects, a chair being only one of them: In our present-day life we have, for instance, the word conference (*Mu'tamar*), journalism (*Sahafa*), newspaper (*Jarida*), printing press (*Matba'a*), but pre-Islamic bedouin's or even an Abbaside Arab's conception of what they imply today would perforce be different from ours.

It is impossible, therefore, to compile a lexicon of pre-Islamic words. But what about the Qur'an, you might ask? It was revealed in Arabic and was understood by the contemporary Arab. Its text has been preserved without the change of a dot. Why can't we form an idea, then, through it, of the pre-Islamic language of the Arab? True, the Qur'an has been revealed in the Arab's own language and its text has been preserved in its original purity. True also that a study of its language is most valuable, especially the parts which deal with the objections of the pre-Islamic Arab. While it throws considerable light on the social and economic life of the pre-Islamic Arab, its words and idioms do not fully represent him. It uses certain words which Arabs before Islam did not use. It has standardized certain words which were commonly used and has limited the meanings of others. Its style and manner is so grand that it cannot be said to represent the spoken manner of an Arab. The word paganism (*Jahiliyyah*) is an expression which appeared with Islam to indicate the period preceding the time of the Revelation. *Al-Munafiq* (hypocrite) is a word which was not known before Islam.<sup>1</sup> The word *Fasiq* (impious) was not to be found either in the poetry or the sayings of the Arabs before Islam.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to say, therefore, that the Qur'anic vocabulary represents the rational life of the pre-Islamic Arab.

These handicaps notwithstanding, the fact remains that like a sleeve which can be an index to the dimensions of a shirt, the poetry and proverbs of the pre-Islamic period do help to throw some light on the rational life of the Arab in that period. What remains of these proverbs and verses shows that Arabic vocabulary before Islam was profusely rich in its association with Arab life. Keeping in view the simplicity of Arab life, one admits the richness of old Arabic vocabulary, especially when we take into account the fact that the dull, tiresome, monotonous scenery around him went a long way to limit his sphere of thought and expression. But within his narrow sphere, the Arab has a word for every shade. Arabic dictionaries abound in words which poets



employed to describe certain objects and which later became the original names for those objects. When a poet called a lion *Haytham* (breaker) or *Barraas* (the crusher), the words became a synonym for lion itself.

Satires have added to the language and literature and so have many idiomatic expressions originated by the poets — and sometimes in a queer way. Arabic is thus extremely rich in vocabulary and will always remain an important source of reference for the explanation of obscure expressions in other Semitic languages. It is not only rich in vocabulary, but also excels in rules of syntax and etymology.<sup>3</sup>

We agree with Professor Noeldeke that Arabic is a very rich language within the limitations which are imposed by climatic conditions of the country in which it grew. It abounds in words and expressions which revolve round the camel, the desert and its scenery, and the passions that animate the dwellers of a desert. Outside these boundaries the language is not so rich. Words for sea and life it, words for luxury and civilization associated with it, are not so well known to the Arab. Tribal life alone was known to him. He, therefore, had a name for every branch of a tribe. Government and its officers were not known to him. He had, therefore, no name for them. He was not supposed to coin words for things which had no relationship with his life. Besides vocabulary, Arabic is immensely rich in its etymology and conjugation of words. There is a tense for every time and there is a grammatical derivation for every person and meaning.

## POETRY

Some scholars think that the Arab poets before Islam were a group of learned people. They do not necessarily imply that they were learned in any organized branch of science; by their learning is probably implied their interest in and knowledge of the genealogy of their tribes, their virtues and vices. The Arabic word for poetry is *Shi'r*. It is derived from the verb *Sha'r* — to know. So the poet — *al-Sha'ir* — means the man of knowledge. The word was later limited to the known form of writing verse. According to al-Azhari, *Shi'r* is the rhythmic writing governed by certain rules. The plural is *ash'aar*, the subject is *Shaa'ir* — a person who knows what others do not know. Some Orientalists think, however, that the word is derived from the Hebrew *Sheer*, meaning a divine hymn. According to them the verb *Sha'ara* in Arabic does not mean writing of poetry, only the noun *Shi'r* means poetry.<sup>4</sup>

But is it correct to say that the pre-Islamic poet represented the learned strata of society? We have our doubts about this theory; for we know of another class, viz., the judges, whose claim to learning seems to be borne out by history. Each tribe appears to have had more than one judge whose function it was to decide cases and compose differences between members of the same tribe. Controversies about the lineage and virtues of a tribe were referred to him. Many of these judges became famous, e.g., Aktam Ibn Sayfi, Haajib Ibn Zuraara, al-Aqra' Ibn Haabis and 'Aamir Ibn al-Zarib. Decisions and rulings attributed to them in books of literature clearly establish their superiority over contemporary poets in points of mature judgment and a progressive outlook on life, although more imagination and power of expression must be conceded to the poets.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the poets formed the intellectual aristocracy of society. Their own poems, besides scattered anecdotes about them, amply illustrate the pride they took in their mental prowess. Ibn Hisham in his

*Sirah* has an interesting example. Al-Tufayl al-Dawsi wanted to go to Mecca. He was warned by the Quraysh against lending his ear to the Prophet, lest he might be converted. "I was so much overwhelmed by the warnings of my friends," says al-Tufayl, "that I decided not to listen to the Prophet. But then I said to myself, 'May my mother be bereft of me! By God, I am a poet and a man who can recognize the good from the bad; what is there to prevent me from seeing this man and hearing him? If what he says is good, I shall accept it; if it is bad, I shall reject it'."

Most of the pre-Islamic poets belonged to the tribal aristocracy. Their duty towards the tribe was to sing its praises, to satirize its enemies and mourn its dead. We seldom come across a "vagabond", a person who does not belong to the aristocracy, who took to poetry as a profession. Al-Hutay'a, however, was a rare exception. As a rule, the poets were among the most advanced and respectable persons in a tribe, but they were certainly not the only ones to claim knowledge, respect and imagination as their monopoly in contemporary society.

How does poetry reflect national life? There is a saying in Arabic, "Poetry is the history of Arabs". By this, of course, is meant that poetry is a chronicle of the traditional, religious and intellectual life of the Arab. In other words, the Arabs have registered themselves in poetry. There was a time when scholars looked to pre-Islamic poetry as an important source for details of battles and wars fought by the Arab; they looked to it for an account of characters praised or censured by him, for that gave them an idea of the Arab's conception of good or bad men; they looked to it for an outline of the Arabian Peninsula, with its mountains, plains, valleys, plants and animal life. Poetry threw a flood of light on the Arab's beliefs and superstitions. In fact, these are subjects on which volumes have been written.

The best approach to a compilation of pre-Islamic poetry would have been the one of the traditionalists towards the *Hadith*. It should have been compiled and collected after an extremely careful scrutiny of the text; that which raised any doubt should have been rigidly excluded. But, alas, there is no collection of pre-Islamic poetry whose sources are known like that of Bukhari or Muslim's *Sahih*. Pre-Islamic poetry, which was considered the "history of the Arabs", should have been collected with the care and consideration due to historical documents. It is obvious, however, that its importance as an historical source was not realized and poetry was generally considered a means of entertainment, or something which could be useful in public lectures and perhaps also in learning the language. It certainly never attained the sanctity of the *Hadith*, and fabricators of poetry, like the fabricators of the *Hadith*, were not condemned to "occupy a seat in Hell".

It is true that some scholars did attempt to apply the technique of narrating a *Hadith* to poetry as well. A story, for instance, was narrated in detail, certain idioms were used in this narration, but these efforts were at best primitive and soon fell into disuse. Most of the wealth of pre-Islamic poetry we have today has come down to us from those primitive narrators. Their point of view in selecting a poem was not that of an historian but perhaps of a man of letters. An historian would prefer to select a roughly laid out poem, badly written and odd in rhythm, if he can get some historical data from it. He would not hesitate to reject an eloquent well-finished poem which gives him no information. But the persons from whom we have inherited our store of pre-Islamic poetry were not historians. They have handed down to us what appealed most to them. Other attempts, comparatively weak and poor, were ignored; some were



corrected and improved upon, and consequently a great deal of historical material has been either distorted or has been completely lost to us.

Had we had a collection which was not based on subjective appreciation but on objective accuracy alone, we would have been in possession of a sincere account covering different aspects of Arabian history, including the rational life of the pre-Islamic Arab. What we have, however, throws some light on some aspects, though not entirely accurately. The most notable collections excluding the contemporary collections of poets are :

- (1) The Seven Hanging Poems (*al-Mu'allaqat al-sab'a*), believed to have been compiled by Hammad al-Rawiya ;
- (2) *Al-Mufaddaliyyat*, compiled by al-Mufaddal al-Dhabbi. It contains 128 poems ;
- (3) *Diwan al-Hamasa* (The Diwan of Courage), compiled by Abu Tammam. It contains many couplets and short poems from pre-Islamic poetry ;
- (4) *Diwan al-Hamasa*, compiled by Buhturi ;
- (5) *Al-Aghani* (The Book of Songs) and *al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'ara* (Poetry and Poets), by Ibn Qutayba ;
- (6) The Selections (*Mukhtarat*) of Ibn al-Shajari ; and
- (7) A Collection of Arab Poetry (*Jamharat Ash'ar al-'Arab*), compiled by Abu Zayd al-Qurashi.

All that we have of pre-Islamic poetry does not go back beyond 150 years before the Revelation. A glance through this material will show that it lacks both in depth and variety of content. Poem after poem will be marked by the same tone, the same musical notes. Even similies and metaphors repeat themselves. You will notice not only a lack of variety but lack of originality as well. The entire pre-Islamic poetry boils down to this : A poet on a camel back-travelling with a comrade or a caravan passes by a place where once lived his lady love and which now offers the appearance of a house deserted. He calls a halt to his friends and recalls the happy memories in mournful numbers. Life for him becomes intolerable after those he loved had passed away. Then he takes a turn in his poem, and addressing his lady love, dilates on her beauty ; he then proceeds to eulogise his camel, whom he compared with a deer, an ostrich or a gazelle. He then boasts of his hunting exploits and gives a graphic description of different scenes. After this, he comes to the point of the poem — the praise of his own courage, or praise of the virtues of his tribe, the generosity of his patron, a laudatory reference to the deeds of his tribe which won a battle, and a passing condemnation of the enemy tribe. He then proceeds to incite his people to avenge the tribe and ends up with mourning a person killed in a battle with that tribe. This, in brief, is a summary of the general trend of pre-Islamic poetry. It is a collection of limited deeds, a shadow of the desert life and a genuine picture of the bedouin. The Arab felt more at home at elocution and playing with words than with an ingenuous expression of rich and sensitive feelings.

'Antarah, one of the poets of that period, said : " Have the poets left any gap? " and Zuhayr said : " We do naught but repeat or or borrow a reiterated saying."

The fact is that the poets have left many a gap. While fertile imagination is exploring new possibilities, new subjects and new avenues on an unprecedented scale, the Arabs have limited their sphere, or rather their sphere has been limited by their environment, so that they do naught but repeat or borrow an utterance.

One comes across a few scattered lines of verse with a feeble trace of originality, but a poet with a distinct

individualistic personality is a rare exception. Of such kind is Zuhayr Ibn Abi Salma. He covers with thorough exactness the moral character and traditional life of the Arab.

On going through a poem belonging to the pre-Islamic period one feels that the poet often allows his personality to fade in the personality of his tribe. He gives an impression of being unconscious of his own individual existence. One seldom finds a poem stamped with the personality of the poet. This fact is amply illustrated by the Hanging Poem of 'Amr Ibn Kultum.

When Judaism and Christianity came to the Arabs, a new religious note made its appearance. This is discernible in the poems of 'Adiyy Ibn Zayd in Hira and Umayya Ibn Abi Salt in Ta'if. Pre-Islamic poetry, in brief, does not reflect the vast and varying imagination, nor does it indicate any richness of expression in the matter of subtle feelings. It does, however, illustrate the Arab's dexterity in wielding clever expressions and in producing beautiful phrases.

## PROVERBS and PARABLES

According to some lexicographers the original meaning of the word *Mathal* (proverb) was similarity. In the course of time every proverb came to be known as *Mathal*. There is also a view that the word is an Arabicized form of the Hebrew word *Mashal* — a word covering wider meanings, including proverbs, sayings, parables and myths, and this is precisely what the Arabic word *Mathal* indicates today. The proverbs of a given period are really more useful than poetry in helping us to assess the rational life of that age because poetry is essentially the language of an exclusive class while proverbs and parables spring from the people themselves. They may be rough and unchiselled in contrast with poetry, but then that is precisely why they represent the people more sincerely than poetry. Proverbs were, however, mutilated with the passage of time. The unfortunate fact has to be faced that except for a few proverbs the language of the common Arab before Islam has really not come down to us. However limited the available stock may be, it certainly offers rich material for our purpose, and in any case proverbs and parables are the only material in literature which truly reflect the life of the people and are, therefore, a more reliable guide than poetry.

It has been found that there is a certain class of proverb and parable which is nearly common to all nations. There are others which bear the stamp of a particular class. It is an interesting study to investigate as to how all nations agree in giving currency to the same kind of parable, especially in cases where their language happens to be of the same origin. In the Semetic race, for instance, we find close similarities in this field. It is significant that some proverbs are found only in a particular nation. An agricultural people, for example, has characteristics different from those of a commercial people. Applying this principle to the actual life of the Arabs we find that several proverbs in Arabic revolve round the camel. For example : " The camel is pretending to be a she-camel," " a man recompenses, not a camel ", " What a gland ! Is it a camel's? " While the language of the bedouins abound in words connected with the camel, the proverbs of the Quraysh clearly establish their commercial interest.

The pre-Islamic proverbs have, however, been inextricably mixed up with Islamic proverbs so that it often becomes extremely difficult to distinguish one from the other. The fixation of the period is, therefore, the first essential requisite before we accept a given proverb or a parable as representative of the pre-Islamic era. We have it on the



authority of some historians that one Illaqa al-Kitabi compiled a useful collection of proverbs in the days of Yazid, son of Mu'awiya. Had that work been intact it would have been a great help, but alas, it is not available. However, in fixing the period of the origin of a proverb one can rely on a number of factors which we briefly enumerate :

- (1) Most of the proverbs were uttered at some historical occasion. Once we succeed in establishing the occasion the period is easily fixed ;
- (2) The moral contained in a proverb helps in fixing the age to which it belongs. Take the proverb, for example, "Help your brother whether he is aggrieved or an aggressor". This is a proverb which preaches a moral which is clearly un-Islamic. The proverb, therefore, belongs to the pre-Islamic era ;
- (3) Many proverbs contain the name of the author. This is a clear indication of the period, once we can trace the author. It is, however, quite difficult to trace the author of a proverb, for when it was uttered it was not a proverb. It became so later, and with the passage of time there is every likelihood of the author's name slipping the memory of the people.

Most of the compilers have followed the old method in collecting proverbs. We do not have any glossary in which proverbs may be readily available according to their origin. We do not even have one in which one can refer to them according to their subject, for example wealth, poetry, age and its stages, marriage and family, trade and commerce, luck and fate, friends and neighbours, woman and her character, health and illness, and so on. Such collections are easily available in European literature and if only we had one, it would have been immensely useful for our purpose.

Luqman was a familiar figure among pre-Islamic Arabs. With him wisdom is associated, and to him are attributed many wise sayings. Some say that there were two Luqmans — Luqman the wise and Luqman of 'Ad. To both of them many proverbs have been attributed. Luqman's wisdom was largely popular and was known to the Arabs. This is proved by many contemporary stories, and here is one of them. Suwayd Ibn Samit went to Mecca on a pilgrimage. He was known for his humour, courage and noble descent. When the Prophet Muhammad heard of him he invited him to the religion of God. "I guess what you have," said Suwayd to the Prophet, "it is like what I have." "What do you have?" asked the Prophet. "I have the book of Luqman," answered Suwayd. The Prophet asked him to read something from the book and after hearing a portion the Prophet remarked, "This is a good piece of writing, but that which I have is infinitely better. It is the Qur'an revealed to me by God. It is guidance and light." Then the Prophet recited some verses

from the Qur'an and invited him to embrace Islam. Suwayd became a Muslim.

But who is this Luqman? To which nation did he belong? What are his credentials? Which civilization does his wisdom represent? In which age did he live? History has been unable to ascertain these facts. On the contrary, there is a controversy about every one of them. Some think he was a Negro from Ilah ; others suggest that he was from Abyssinia, while still others hold that he was a coloured man from Egypt. There is also a suggestion that he was a Jew and a nephew of Solomon or a cousin contemporary of his. Baidhawi in his *Commentary* asserts that Luqman was a nephew of Ayyub and was one of the descendants of 'Azar. He was alive till the days of David, from whom he gained knowledge. Yaqut, in his *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, says that the tombs of Luqman, his wife and his son were in the east of Lake Tabariyya, but there is another tomb of Luqman in the Yemen. God knows which is the real one ! A saying is attributed to the Prophet that there are four masters of the black, Luqman, al-Najjashi (King of Abyssina), Bilal and Mahja. Whatever the truth in all these different statements, one thing is quite clear. All the authorities agree that Luqman was not an Arab. The inference is that he brought to the Arabs the wisdom of another nation. Some scholars have suggested that it was the Hebrew wisdom, and they go to prove it by pointing out that the word "Luqman" is the Arabicized form of the Hebrew "Balaam".

It does not, however, lie in our province to go into the details of these controversies. We are concerned with the fact that the Arabs have left us a substantial legacy of proverbs and parables which help us understand contemporary life better than poetry or stories as such. The proverb was eminently suited to the Arab genius which finds expression in limited and partial thinking rather than in general comprehensive thought. Proverbs and parables do not need great imagination or deep research. They only need local experience in a particular branch of life. This was consistent with the Arab genius which took to this form of expression. A glance at a collection of what has been said about women will easily establish her status. Parables about economic life will quickly bring out the poverty of the country. It is clearly not possible for us to attempt the analysis of all that has been said, but we will limit our reference only to the following sources: *Amthal al-Maydaani*, *Jamharat al-Amthal* of Abu Hilal al-'Askari, and *al-Amthal* of al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi.

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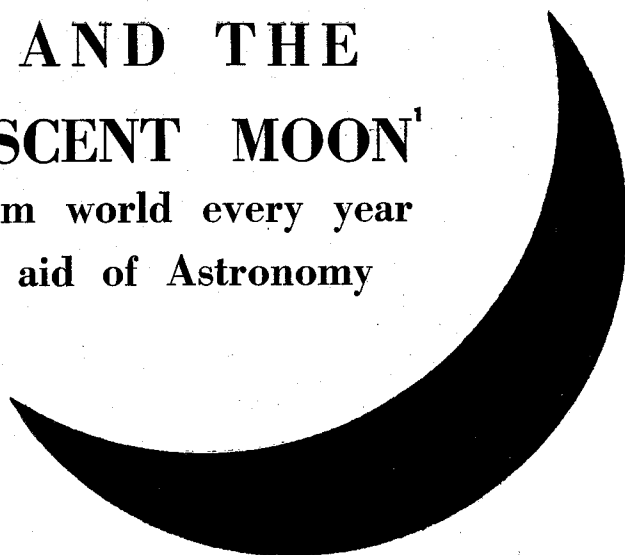


# MUSLIM SCHOLARS AND THE VISIBILITY OF THE CRESCENT MOON<sup>1</sup>

The confusion that arises in the Muslim world every year is absurd and unnecessary. With the aid of Astronomy unity amongst Muslims should be achieved

By SAYYID JA'FAR PHULWARI

(Translated from the Urdu by Iqbal Ahmad)



## A misquoted Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad

Certain months have an importance in the Muslim calendar, and for them Muslims are anxious to see the crescent moon. Every year there is a dispute amongst Muslims regarding the correct date of the appearance of the crescent moon — for determining the beginning of such months. If an appeal is made to adopt measures which may remove this confusion, a Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad is quoted to silence the request. The words of the Tradition are *Ikhtilaf Umatiy Rehmah* (Differences in my community are a blessing). Strangely enough, this Tradition is nowhere to be found in all the important collections of the Hadith literature, such as the *Sihah*, the *Sunan*, the *Mu'attaat*, the *Musannifaat*, the *Ma'aalim* and the *Masaanid*. Somehow this Tradition has become very popular and the purpose for which it has been used is nothing else but to see that differences do exist amongst Muslims and that selfish political motives are safeguarded. If differences are resolved it will mean that many selfish people will lose their leadership, with which their selfish goals are associated. This spurious and fabricated Tradition is presented in such a manner that suggests that unity of the followers of Muhammad is not a blessing and only disputes among the followers of Muhammad secure the blessings of God. The result is that there are differences of opinion not only regarding the appearance of the crescent moon for the months of Ramadhan and Shawwal, but there is never an agreement even for the date of 'Id al-Adha, when there are ten clear days to settle a small matter like ascertaining a correct date.

Perhaps it was last year when in a town of the Punjab (Pakistan) a learned Muslim led the prayers for 'Id on the date announced by the Government, and according to which the month of Ramadhan in that year was of twenty-nine days. Another *Maulavie*<sup>2</sup> proclaimed that this prayer was not correct, because first, the prayers were said according to the instructions of the Government (which was not a religious authority) and secondly because this particular *Maulavie* happened to be a Deobandi (a person educated at the Muslim religious institution at Deoband, India). He also said that it was heresy to doubt in the heresy of the first *Maulavie* who had led the 'Id prayers according to the announcement of the Government. Then another *Maulavie* (whom we will call the third *Maulavie* for the sake of convenience) declared that the second *Maulavie* was a polytheist because he belonged to the school of thought commonly

known in India as Brailwi. Therefore, the prayers led by the second *Maulavie* were also not correct. Consequently he led a separate set of prayers. Consider the plight of the common Muslim who cannot object to the validity of either the first prayer or the second prayer or the third prayer. If he opens his mouth to set matters right, the oft-mentioned Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad is quoted, "Differences in my community are a blessing".

**Methods adopted for determining the date of appearance of the crescent moon are queer and absurd. The confusion exists because of the wrong interpretation that the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad have acquired**

Now let us come to the interesting episode that starts with the witnesses to the appearance of the crescent moon. It is perhaps known that a special committee to adjudge the appearance of the crescent moon exists in Lahore (West Pakistan). At one of the meetings the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore informed the members that he had received information on the telephone from the Deputy Commissioner of the district of Lyallpore (West Pakistan) that the crescent moon had been seen by a certain person. On this a *Maulavie* remarked: "How do we know who is speaking on the telephone? One voice can resemble another, just as one handwriting can resemble that of another person."

In short, regarding the visibility of the crescent moon, one is not allowed to trust a letter, a telegram, a telephone message or an announcement on the radio. Perhaps according to the custodians of religion, on the occasion of the appearance of the crescent moon the whole nation forgets how to be sober and leaves all its senses of honesty and truthfulness and is in a mood to fool and cheat everybody. And therefore, no kind of evidence is to be trusted or relied upon on such occasions. On another occasion when some people gave witness to the fact that the crescent moon had been seen, their evidence was rejected on the grounds that they were beardless. Can you come across problems which are more difficult and complicated than this?

The time has come when this useless entanglement, which is a regular occurrence, should be stopped. There is only one solution to the problem. Dates should be announced according to astronomical calculations. It is quite obvious

1 Courtesy, the Editor, the *Tulu'i Islam*, Karachi, for October 1954.

2 In the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent the word *Maulavie* means a religious scholar.



that our learned scholars will never trust these dates because there is another Tradition to be found which says that you should start the month of fasting after seeing the crescent moon and the 'Id should not be celebrated without seeing the crescent moon.

**The aid of astronomical calculations should be taken for fixing the date of the appearance of the crescent moon, because astronomy these days is an exact science**

An illiterate and simple nation could not have been told any other method for calculating their months. For a nation that could not read or write the best method that could be recommended was they should watch the appearance of the crescent moon. They did not possess the modern methods of astronomy which are a result of the modern age. Moreover, in those days the alternative to seeing the crescent moon (if the horizon was not clear) was that witnesses from nearby areas should confirm that the crescent moon had been seen and such evidence should come from areas which were in the neighbourhood and which could easily be reached by a man on foot or horseback and that the information should be obtainable within a few hours. Conditions have changed now. Means of communication have developed to such an extent that information can be sent thousands of miles in a few seconds. Travelling has become so simple that now it takes a few hours to reach a place which previously took months. Astronomy has reached a stage when we can confidently say :

- (1) That the moon completes its orbit in 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 17.78 seconds ;
- (2) That the earth completes its orbit in 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes and 109.5 seconds.

Today with fair accuracy we can prophecy months beforehand :

- (1) That at a particular time there will be an eclipse of the sun or the moon which can be observed at a certain place ;
- (2) That the eclipse will be on so much area of the sun or the moon ;
- (3) That the eclipse will remain for so long at a certain place and for so long at another place.

In the same way today with great pride it is claimed :

- (1) That there is an instrument which can determine the speed of light or electricity ;
- (2) That there is an instrument which can tell the thousandth part of a second ;
- (3) That we can analyse an atom with the help of certain rays.

In an age of learning like this is it not surprising that Muslims cannot determine the exact time and date of the appearance of the crescent moon? If Muslim festivals were celebrated according to astronomical calculations, this would not be against the laws of Islam. If one were to say that in these astronomical calculations or in messages received by the radio, telegraph or postal systems or by telephone there were possibilities of error or mischief, then I would maintain that there was just as much possibility of mischief in oral evidence given on oath. The percentage of wrong information through scientific instruments is far less than the false evidence given in courts of law every day.

**The views of Dr. S. Mehmasani on this subject**

On this point it would be advisable to read what the Syrian Muslim scholar, Dr. S. Mehmasani, has to say. While discussing the subject he says that "cause and effect are present and absent together". Then he writes : "It is on this principle that some *Fuqaha* (Jurists) have considered it per-

missible to determine Islamic months, especially that of Ramadhan, according to astronomical calculations". The explanation for this decision is given as follows :

"The Tradition in which it has been ordained that the month of fasting should commence after seeing the new moon is strongly linked with a definite cause. And it is this. The Tradition was addressed to a community which was illiterate and did not know how to read, write or calculate. When this community grew out of illiteracy and became capable of reading and learning and it became possible for people to determine the appearance of the crescent moon with precision and accuracy, then with the change in conditions it became necessary that they should seek the help of this reliable and certain knowledge (i.e., astronomy). And that they should resort to astronomical calculations for determining the appearance of the new moon and should only adopt the old method of seeing the crescent moon with the naked eye where facilities of astronomical calculations are not available."

The above quotation has been cited by Dr. S. Mehmasani in his world-famous book *Falsafat al-Tashrih*, which he has taken from *Awa'il al-Shuhoor al-'Arabiyyah* written by Ahmad Shakir. The latter book is on the same subject and maintains that in the matter of the appearance of the crescent moon astronomical calculations should be accepted without hesitation. The points raised in the above quotation are as follows :

- (1) Effect always changes with its cause ;
- (2) The commandment that fasting should start after seeing the new moon is for people who are illiterate and not acquainted with the knowledge of astronomy and who cannot receive any information from other places. In such places even now the method should be that of seeing the crescent moon ;
- (3) But in places where such difficulties do not exist, the dates should be determined according to astronomical calculations and Muslim festivals should be celebrated according to dates thus determined. Apart from this we perhaps forget that this very community which is reluctant to believe in astronomical calculations for the month of Ramadhan, etc., takes the help of these methods for other religious matters. This paradox is inexplicable. For example :
  - (a) The orthodox method of determining the time when fasting should begin is to see when the whiteness appears in the sky. No one does this today. The siren or the drum is sounded or the guns are fired to announce the commencement of the fast according to astronomical calculations. People somehow trust astronomy for this purpose !
  - (b) Even for announcing the time for breaking fasts people usually rely on the pre-calculated times of sunset.
  - (c) No one today offers his prayers after measuring the angle of his shadow or after seeing the dawn with his own eyes. In every mosque timetables are found showing the times for prayers which have been prepared with the help of astronomical calculations. People trust such timetables and offer their prayers according to such calculations. Even the watches they rely on for saying their prayers are a modern scientific invention. Watches and clocks, as we know, are very often a few minutes slow or



fast. Sometimes they stop altogether. In spite of all these possibilities of error that exist in all watches and clocks, the whole Muslim world trusts and believes in them for all other matters except that of determining the date of the appearance of the crescent moon.

- (4) If an announcement was to be made that there would be prayers at the moon or sun eclipse on such and such a day at such and such a time, no one would consider such an announcement contrary to orthodox religious beliefs. As is obvious, such an announcement can only be made with the aid of astronomical calculations.

**The greatest benefit Muslims will have by depending on astronomical calculations is that they will be unified in action**

So if astronomical calculations are used in so many things what disaster would be wrought if the Muslims were to employ this very useful knowledge for determining the month of Ramadhan, etc.? If such calculations ever do happen to be wrong, then the only harm that will be done will be that the 'Id prayers will be said a day before or after the proper date.

It is common knowledge that the 'Id is not celebrated all over the world at the same time. While the 'Id is being celebrated at one place people at another place are perhaps still asleep. If it were to be declared that the 'Id should be celebrated in various zones on dates arrived at by astronomical calculations then it seems that no harm will be done except for the fact that if there is an error in the astronomical calculations the whole zone will celebrate the 'Id a day earlier or later than the actual date. If astronomical calculations are not relied on then, as is happening now, Muslims will celebrate the 'Id in a most confusing manner. There will be one benefit by relying upon astronomical calculations, even if the date determined in this manner is incorrect, and that is that Muslims at least will be celebrating their festivals on a definite and precise date and that there will be an expression of unity in their action. At least the confusion and disparity that exists among Muslims will come to an end. Celebrating the 'Ids on wrong dates is insignificant in view of the fact that unity will be obtained in the ranks of the Muslims.

**It will not be a religious crime to resort to astronomical calculations. Muslim scholars have supported this view in the past**

When we resort to astronomical calculations it will be necessary to determine certain zones or to divide the Muslim world into certain areas. This can only be done by experts in astronomy. This is not the work of religious jurists, but of those who are well-versed in geography and astronomy. I wish to stress the point that if help is taken from astronomical calculations for Muslim festivals, it will constitute no religious crime and will not be against the commandments of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The revolution of day and night takes place so that "You may know how to calculate and determine various years". If the horizon is not clear at a certain place, then evidence (for the appearance of the crescent moon) is taken from nearby places; the purpose of this is to remove doubts and to reach a definite conclusion. Our elders and our leaders should realize that results arrived at by scientific appliances are no less reliable than observation of the crescent moon by the naked eye. In fact, scientific appliances are far more dependable and accurate than mere observation with the naked eye. Astronomical calculations are extremely accurate in results.

In support of this view, I quote from *Hidayat al-*

*Mujtahid*, Cairo, 1357 A.H., p. 275, written by the Imam Quatubi :

"It is stated on the authority of some scholars that if the horizon is not clear then help should be taken from the movements of the sun and the moon. In other words, astronomy. Mutrif Ibn Shakheer was of the same opinion. And he is considered to be from among the notable generation following the generation of the Companions of the Prophet. Ibn Sareej quotes a saying of Imam Shafi'iy which says that if a person believes in reasoning with the aid of movements of the stars and the moon (that is, he is an expert in astronomy), and he on the basis of his knowledge of astronomy finds that the crescent moon has appeared, which is not visible (to the naked eye) as it is hidden in the clouds, then he should observe the fast. And this is sufficient for him."

The scholar 'Abd al-Rahman in his book *al-Fiqh 'al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, Cairo, 1358 A.H., on page 551, under the heading "Should the view of an astronomer be accepted?" says :

"The views of the experts in astronomy are based on very minute principles (calculations). This is the view of the three *Imams* (the three famous Muslim jurists Abu Hanifa, Malik and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal). The view of Shafi'iy is contrary to this; they (Shafi'iy) maintain that the views of a scholar in astronomy are matters on which the astronomer himself and those who believe in this science can depend upon. True, the masses are not obliged to act according to the views of astronomer."

This is the more accepted view of the two reported sayings of Shafi'iy.

- (1) Matraf Ibn Shakheer, who is from among the renowned *Tabi'iyin* (the generation following the generation of the Companions of the Prophet), is of the belief that when visibility is low, astronomical calculations should be relied upon;
- (2) Imam Shafi'iy is of the same belief, except for the fact that he makes a slight amendment. He says astronomical calculations should be relied upon by an astronomer himself or those who believe in this science;
- (3) There are two views of the Imam Shafi'iy on the question of whether masses should depend upon astronomical calculations. The most accepted view is that the masses should not depend upon it; and,
- (4) The three *Imams* (Abu Hanifa, Malik and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal) are of opinion that no reliance should be put on astronomical calculations because :
  - (a) This art was not developed then; and
  - (b) There is considerable difference of opinion among the experts on this subject.

If we seriously consider these points then there are many aspects of the problem that have to be discussed. They are as follows :

**The arguments put forward for not seeking the aid of astronomical calculations are not sound. They were perhaps acceptable in the past, but in the modern age they must be ignored**

It does not necessarily mean that if in any age *Fuqaha* (religious jurists) find a science to be unsound, that science should remain undeveloped for all ages to come. It is possible that if a science is not reliable in one age, it may become so perfect in another age that it can be dependable. Evolution is a continuous law of nature. Many sciences are reaching the summit of their advancement because of this



indisputable law of nature. The truth is that however advanced a branch of knowledge may be, it still is never perfect. Only God Almighty is perfect and without faults. In every age, in spite of the evolution of many centuries, there will be defects in every art and science. It is this defect which pushes man forward towards progress. In spite of knowing this, man in every age depends on whatever his defective knowledge has to tell him. Who can say that the science of medicine is perfect? Or that the science of navigation and aeronautics is complete and perfect? Every day people die because of wrong diagnosis and treatment. Quite often ships come to disaster and planes crash. Still man depends and trusts his knowledge of these sciences. What disaster would take place if Muslims were to rely on the science of astronomy? The fact is that this science in its progress and advancement is not behind any other science of this age. The worst that can happen is that in some year perhaps the date for a particular festival will be wrongly calculated. This loss is insignificant as compared with the humiliation and suffering Muslims face every year caused by the recurring differences in the dates of our festivals.

The argument put forward for rejecting the reliability of astronomy is that there is a difference in the view of the experts on astronomy. This is not a strong argument. Is there any science the experts of which do not disagree? There is always difference of opinion among the experts of every art and science. A branch of knowledge is never rejected just because there is difference of opinion among its experts. If this principle is adopted, then we will have to reject the whole legal system of Islam. There is no important problem of Islamic jurisprudence on which there are not a number of opinions. There are not only differences of opinion, but contradictions, conflicting and rival views, are to be found among Muslim jurists. The same is the plight of the Hadith literature and the books of *Tafsir* (Commentaries).

Every branch of religious knowledge is in the same situation. No one rejects the knowledge of religion because of this state of affairs.

In this matter the Imam Shafi'iy has taken a progressive step. In his age, perhaps it was not possible for him to take a more revolutionary measure. There appear two reasons for this. First, the science of astronomy was not developed to the height it has reached now. Secondly, in the early stages a revolutionary step has to be mild.

An example of this can be found in the fact that for a long time Muslims believed that many verses of the Qur'an were abrogated. If all such verses are collected they will constitute one-fourth of the Qur'an. Shah Waliy Allah of Delhi (India) wanted to reform this idea. But a view which was deeply ingrained in the minds of people for centuries could not be easily contradicted, for it would create unrest. He took his reformatory steps carefully and started the ball rolling by saying that only four or five verses appeared fit to be considered abrogated and proved the relations between verses which were previously considered to abrogate each other. By showing the way by means of which it could be proved that verses did not abrogate each other, Shah Waliy Allah of Delhi opened the door for re-interpretation of verses of the Qur'an.

His purpose was that in this way the whole fabric of the false idea of abrogation would ultimately come to pieces.

The same attitude was adopted by the Imam Shafi'iy. He established the principle of depending on astronomy. The Imam Shafi'iy introduced this principle in a manner that with the gradual development of astronomy more trust was to be placed in it, and slowly and gradually the masses would ultimately believe in it and trust it. That is the reason

why there are two opinions among the followers of the Imam Shafi'iy. According to one group the masses are included in the ruling of the Imam Shafi'iy, that astronomical calculations should be trusted, and according to the other group they are not included. The second view enjoys more acceptance among the Shafi'iy, and is considered to be *as-ha* — most correct (*as-hh* is used in contrast to *Sahih* (correct) and not as an antonym to *ghalat* (wrong)). It is not necessary that the *as-hh* (most correct) of one age should be the *as-hh* of another age as well. Time and place change the nature of problems. No *Faqih* (Jurist) can deny this.

Abu Bakr Hassas in his book *Ahkam al-Quran* (Cairo, 1347 A.H., p. 236), admits this much that the times for beginning fasts and breaking fasts are determined by a certain group of people with the help of astronomical calculations. But he does not approve of this practice and gives the following reason :

"Because it (fasting) is a worship (practice) which is obligatory on every Muslim, therefore, it should not be dependable on any science which is known only to a few persons, who are few in number and on whose views complete confidence cannot be placed."

The reason put forward by Hassas is not very sound. There is no science the truths of which are fully known to the masses. All the sciences are deeply related to the masses, and people in general cannot keep themselves separated from any branch of knowledge. This fact is not only true in worldly affairs alone but stands correct for matters of religion as well. Leave aside the common people and consider the learned men of the religion of Islam. Most of them are unacquainted with the fundamental principles of the law of inheritance. Births, deaths, property left at the time of death and inheritance are matters deeply concerned with every society. Of those '*Ulema* (learned scholars) who are acquainted with the subject, there are many among them who make mistakes in distributing properties among their inheritors. Should the Qur'anic laws of inheritance be rejected just because very few people know them? And the knowledge of many among them is not trustworthy. Leave alone inheritance, today people are even ignorant of the simple facts about prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and *Zakat*. They are not acquainted with the Arabic language, Arabic dictionaries and Arabic grammar. Does it then mean that we should trust the experts of the Arabic language? All sciences are in the same position. Those who are not well versed in them trust those who are experts in them. However, we are not very much concerned with the discussion as to whether the reasons given by Hassas for not trusting astronomy are correct or not. Even if they are correct, they could be correct only until the science of astronomy had not developed. If in the days of Hassas this science had not fully grown, then it was correct not to trust it in those days. But it does not necessarily imply that this science should not be trusted till the day of resurrection.

Moreover, I only wish to prove at the moment that the view to trust astronomical calculations is not an innovation introduced by me. In fact in previous ages there have been people who have advanced this view and Hassas admits this in the following words :

"There are two interpretations to the saying of Muhammad — in which he is reported to have said that when the horizon is not clear then one should resort to estimations. One group says that if visibility is not clear, and the crescent moon is in such a stage of its journey that if the horizon had been clear the crescent moon would have been visible, then it should be declared that the crescent moon had appeared. This applies to the



beginnings of the month of fasting as well as to the festival of 'Id. If this condition is not present then this rule for determining the appearance of the crescent moon does not apply. The second group holds the view that if visibility is poor then the month of Sha'ban should be taken to be of thirty days."

So far as this saying of the Prophet Muhammad goes, the second interpretation seems to be more correct, because there are other versions of this saying which confirm the second interpretation. Considering the question from this angle the interpretation of the first group is secondary in preference. After reading the quotation given above it cannot be denied that a group has always been in existence which has believed in the first interpretation; and which includes such great followers (of the orthodox schools of law) as Mutrif Ibn Shakheer and great jurists like the Imam Shafi'iy. It is also

an accepted fact that a saying which is secondary in preference in one age can be first in preference in another age on the condition that it is beneficial to the people. At the moment we have to see whether:

- (1) In this age astronomy has reached a stage where it can be trusted for determining dates of Muslim festivals?
- (2) If we depend on astronomical calculations, will it benefit the Muslims to any appreciable extent, e.g., in achieving unity of the Muslim people and putting an end to the dispute and confusion in determining the dates for Muslim festivals?

According to my understanding I maintain, with great confidence, that the answer to these two questions is in the affirmative.

# ISRAEL'S RECORD AT THE UNITED NATIONS

## A Retrospect on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Israel

### 1. The Partition Plan

Inasmuch as the establishment of Israel was proclaimed, in the words of its founders, "by virtue of . . . the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations," and since Israel, in the words of its Permanent Representative at the United Nations, "sprang into existence at the summons and behest of the international community," it is perhaps profitable, at the outset of our survey of the record of Israel, to compare the present *de facto* reality of Israel with the image of that State as it was envisaged by the United Nations in the Resolution which recommended Israel's establishment — namely, Resolution 181/11 of 29th November 1947, commonly known as the Partition Resolution.

It is perhaps unnecessary to recall that this Resolution did not recommend the establishment of a "Jewish" State unconditionally or without specifications; on the contrary, it defined the boundaries of that State and embodied clear provisions pertaining to its inhabitants and the city which is now its capital. Nor did the Partition Resolution recommend the establishment of a "Jewish" State alone; for it also called for the establishment of an Arab State and a Special International Régime for the city of Jerusalem.

Thus all the essential elements of statehood of Israel and all the essential coefficients of the Palestinian situation, contemplated by the United Nations as contributing to a final and indivisible solution for the Palestine Problem, were clearly spelled out in the Partition Resolution.

A point-by-point comparison between what the United Nations recommended, on the one hand, and what Israel subsequently became, on the other hand, yields the following results:

#### THE UNITED NATIONS DESIGN

*A "Jewish" State was to be established in the boundaries set forth in Part IIB of the Partition Resolution. (See Paragraph 3 of Part 1-A.)*

An Arab State was to be established within the boundaries described in Part II-A of the Partition Resolution. (See Paragraph 3 of Part 1-A.)

A "Special International Régime for the City of Jerusalem" was to be established within the boundaries described in Part III-B of the Partition Resolution. (See Paragraph 3 of Part 1-A.)

#### ISRAEL'S PRESENT SITUATION

##### 1. The "Jewish" State

*Israel today occupies territories beyond the frontiers laid down in the Partition Resolution; and the area of these excess territories amounts to 36 per cent of the total area assigned by the United Nations to the "Jewish" State.*

*Since 29th October 1956, Israel has occupied further areas of Arab Palestine as well as of Egypt, but was forced to withdraw.*

##### 2. The Arab State.

The excess territories currently occupied by Israel beyond the frontiers assigned to the "Jewish" State were reserved by the United Nations for the Arab State. They separate from one another the two remaining "pockets" of non-Israeli occupied territory of Palestine.

Thus Israel prevented the establishment of the Arab State — *first*, by denying it contiguous territory; and *second*, by rendering essentially *non-viable* any State that might have been established in the remaining non-Israeli occupied territories of Palestine.

##### 3. The Special International Régime for the City of Jerusalem.

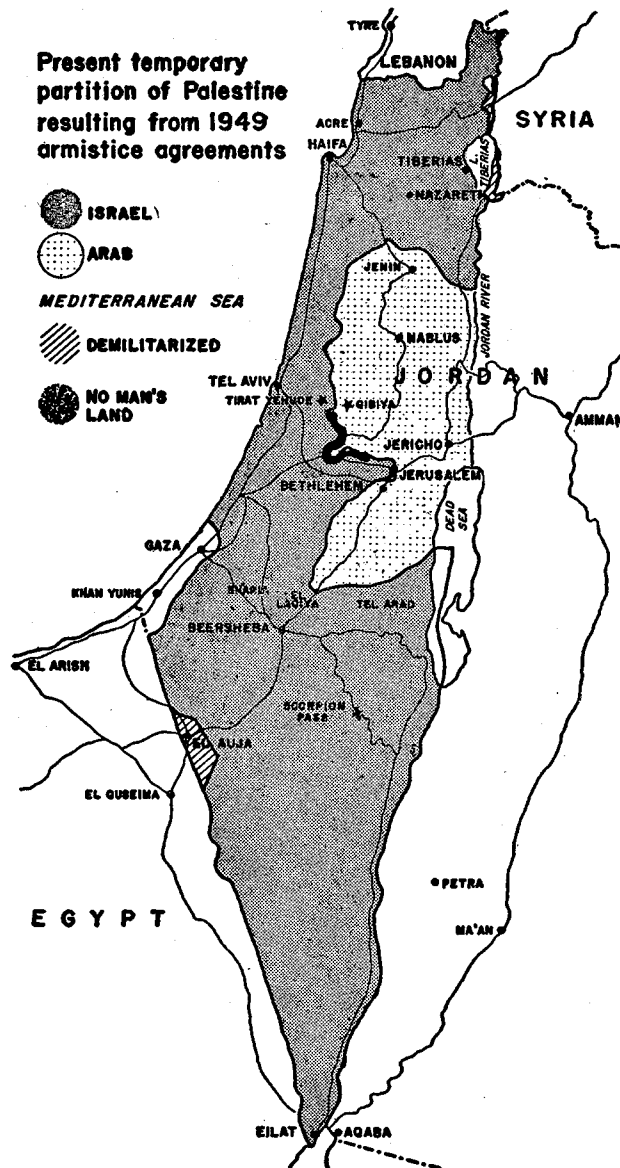
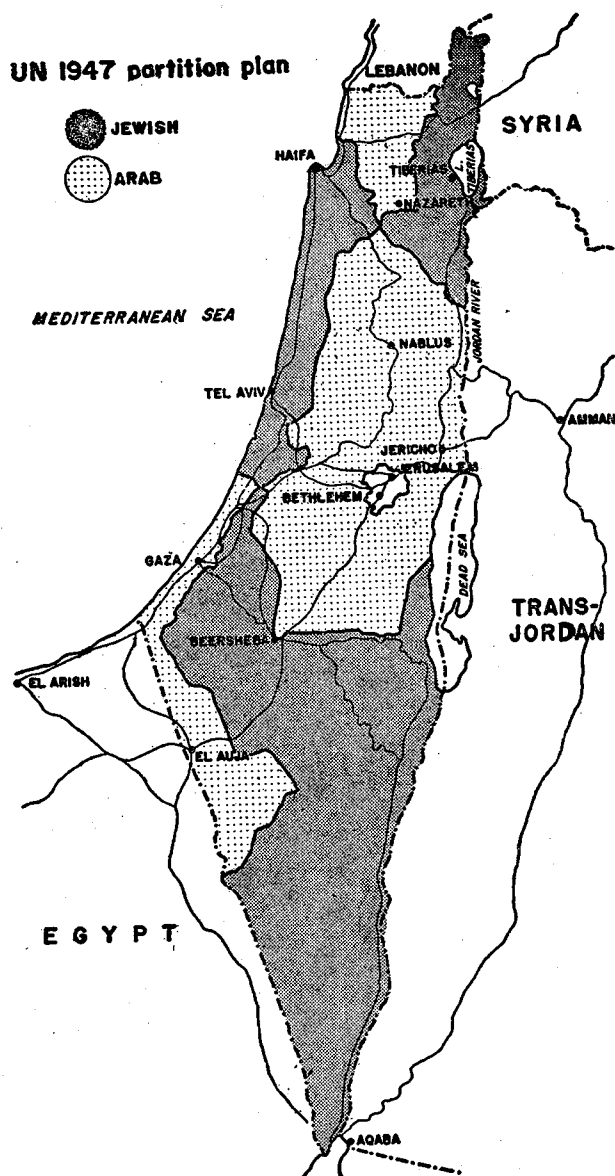
By occupying the greater part of Jerusalem and extending its *authority* over it, and subsequently by declaring Jerusalem to be its *national capital*, Israel has prevented the internationalization of the Holy City.



#### 4. The Economic Union of Palestine.

The Economic Union of Palestine, as described in Part 1-D of the Resolution, was an integral part of the United Nations' plan.

By preventing the establishment of the Arab State and of the International Régime for the City of Jerusalem, Israel has also prevented the establishment of the Economic Union of Palestine.



Two maps that describe what Israel should be and what it is today

#### 5. The Arabs of Palestine.

(a) No involuntary change in the demographic situation in Palestine was contemplated by the General Assembly to accompany or to result from the partition of the country.

(b) Nor was discrimination by the State against its minority tolerated in the United Nations' plan. The protection of the Arab inhabitants of the area earmarked for the "Jewish" State, and the respect for their fundamental rights and basic liberties, were to be guaranteed by the "Jewish" State in accordance with the provisions of Part 1-C of the Partition Resolution.

(a) In the process of coming into being, Israel uprooted and expelled the majority of the Arab inhabitants of the territories it came to occupy. These are the Arab refugees who, despite successive resolutions which were adopted by the General Assembly on 11th December 1948, and reaffirmed in every subsequent Session, enjoining Israel to permit their repatriation, remain, until today, homeless.

(b) The Arabs who continued to live in Israeli-controlled areas have been and still are subject to multifarious discrimination.



#### 6. *Method of Implementation of the Resolution.*

The "Jewish" State, according to the Partition Plan, was to be established peacefully and through measures to be taken by the Security Council. (See Paragraph A of the Preamble of the Resolution.) The transition of multiple statehood in Palestine was to be administered by a United Nations Commission progressively as the Mandatory Power withdrew its armed forces. (See Part 1-B of the Resolution.)

#### 7. *Date of Implementation of the Resolution.*

The Partition Resolution had recommended that the "independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Régime for the City of Jerusalem . . . come into existence in Palestine two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the Mandatory Power". (See Paragraph 3 of Part 1-A.)

The Zionist Community of Palestine used its armed forces, official and semi-official, to occupy the main cities and towns of Palestine — within the areas assigned for the "Jewish" State, in Jerusalem, and within the areas reserved for the Arab State . . . *before* 15th May 1948: i.e., *before* the withdrawal of the forces of the Mandatory power, *before* the proclamation of Israel, *before* the entry of the armies of the Arab States into Palestine. Embryonic Israel thus launched its war on the Arab cities of the area awarded to the "Jewish" State as well as the territories of the contemplated Arab State of Palestine, in order to implement a part of a resolution which was contemplated to be implemented peacefully and which was designed by the General Assembly as an indivisible whole.

Israel proclaimed its independence on 14th May 1948 — that is to say, *immediately* upon the completion of the evacuation of the British forces and *two months ahead of the schedule* laid down by the General Assembly.

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## Paper Industry In Early Islam

Until the Arab conquest of Central Asia, the Chinese had a monopoly of the paper industry, which had started in the first century B.C. under the Emperor Ho Tai. Apparently the Emperor's Minister of Public Works became intensely dissatisfied with the reports and accounts rendered to him on silk and bamboo sheets about his development projects because they were subject to wear and tear and could not be kept for long. He had noted that the bark of the mulberry tree could be broken into fibres, pounded and made into sheets on which Chinese characters could be recorded. Later, other Chinese introduced new raw materials into paper-making such as old rags, hemp fibres and old fish nets.

When an Arab army marched into Turkestan during the Umayyad period in the seventh century C.E., it captured a number of Chinese prisoners, among whom there were a few artisans who knew how to make paper. These were immediately dispatched to Damascus to teach the secret of the industry to the Arabs.

But the greatest progress in the manufacture of paper was recorded in Iraq later, in the eighth century C.E., when an ingenious Arab innovator thought of using cotton fibres for paper-making instead of the traditional mulberry hemp and old fish nets. And so it came about that the first paper plant known to history was established in Baghdad in 795 C.E. From then onwards the Arabs introduced many improvements into the process of making paper, including the addition of starch and glue to the pulp in order to achieve a glossy effect on the finished product.

Towards the beginning of the tenth century the paper industry was a well-established and prosperous business in Baghdad, Cairo and Toledo. The Arabs, who were using then the greatest amount of paper *per capita* in the world, managed also to establish a growing and lucrative paper

export business with the West.

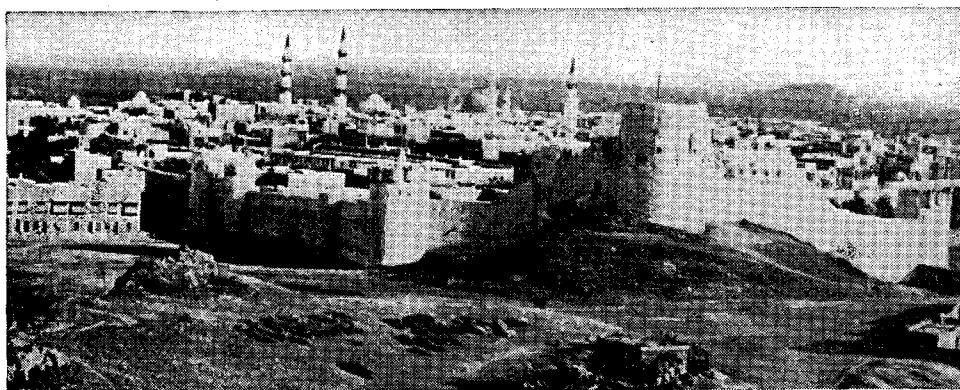
The manufacture and dissemination of paper became thus one of the greatest contributions the Arabs made to civilization. The great culture of the Abbaside period in Baghdad, based as it was largely on the translation of Greek science and philosophy both from the original Greek and from the Syriac, as well as on the translation of Sanskrit manuscripts, could not have been achieved on the scale it reached without the use of paper.

Through the new medium the Arabs were able to preserve, better than any other nation before them, both their own thought and the heritage which they had received from Greece, Persia and India, and to transmit all this wealth of learning to Europe through their Universities in Spain.

Paper, perfected by the Arabs, created in Baghdad two more lucrative businesses. The first was the manufacture of manuscripts. Cultured individuals avid for knowledge paid large sums to get a well-written copy of a newly published book. Bookshops came into being, using scores of scribes to copy such books. The other industry that derived from the manufacture of paper was bookbinding, which greatly added to the value of the precious manuscripts that were being copied out. It is on record that one of the Caliphs of Cordova paid 10,000 gold dinars for an early copy of the 20 volumes of *The Book of Songs*, which had been published only a few weeks earlier in Baghdad, and it reached Cordova in less than a month!

Hundreds of libraries both public and private came into being in Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Kairawan, Cordova and other leading Arab cities and in many of them thousands of manuscripts were to be found, testifying to an unprecedented diffusion of culture.





*A view of the city of Medina with the Five Minarets of the Prophet's Mosque. In the background on the right-hand side can be seen the "Green Dome" of the Mausoleum of the Prophet Muhammad which also contains the grave of the Caliph 'Umar, whose remains were laid to rest by the side of the Prophet Muhammad*

## THE STATE LETTERS\* OF CALIPH 'UMAR (634-644 C.E.)

By Dr. Khurshid Ahmad Fariq

### XVII

#### 227. To 'Amr Ibn 'As.

After the conquest of Baabilyoon in early Muharram 28 A.H. (640 C.E.), 'Amr set out in Rabi' I (of the same year) with his main army to Alexandria, the capital of Egypt and a most splendid city and port on the Mediterranean Sea. He had an easy march. Most of the villages and towns on his way preferred the *Jizyah* to war. But near Alexandria he met with stiff resistance. Several fortified villages in its suburbs fought the Muslims stubbornly before surrendering. Their women and children were captured and divided among the army as slaves. A considerable number of them found their way to the markets of Mecca, Medina and the Yemen and were sold out there. The Governor of Alexandria (whose name is not given by our reporters) sent a message to 'Amr that he was ready to pay the *Jizyah* and enter Islam's protection provided that all persons captured from the villages of Alexandria were returned. 'Amr informed the Governor that he would consult the Caliph at Medina about the matter and act according to his advice. It was agreed by both the parties to suspend fighting pending a reply from Medina. 'Umar replied to the proposal of the Governor as follows:

*"I am in receipt of your letter in which you say that the Governor of Alexandria has offered to pay the Jizyah provided that you return to him all persons taken captive from his villages. By my life, a permanent income from the Jizyah by which we and the future generations of the Muslims may benefit is much dearer to me than a booty which is divided and there it ends. Tell the Governor of Alexandria that you are ready to accept the Jizyah on the condition that the slaves who are with you (i.e., in the army) will be given option between Islam and Christianity, that anyone of them who chooses Islam will belong to the*

*Muslims, and his rights and responsibilities will be identical to theirs, that he who chooses the religion of his community will be charged the Jizyah not exceeding that charged from his other co-religionists, that we are unable to return those slaves who have been scattered over Arabia and reached Mecca, Medina and the Yemen and that we should not like to enter into an agreement upon a matter which lies beyond our reach"* (Ibn Ishaq-Tabari 4/227).

#### 228. To 'Amr Ibn 'As.

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam in his *Futuh Misr* has mentioned the names of four villages in the suburbs of Alexandria which as a penalty for waging war against the Muslims had been doomed to slavery. He has recorded the following letter of 'Umar recommending release of all available persons captured from Sultays, one of the four villages:

*"Give option to those of them (captives from Sultays) who are in your army between Islam and Christianity. He who accepts Islam will belong to the Muslims and have rights and obligations identical to theirs, but if he chooses his own religion, then let him go to his village"* (Yazid Ibn Habib, *Futuh Misr* by Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Cairo, p. 75).

Obscure allusions have been made by different traditionists for the Caliph's special treatment of the four villages of Alexandria. Some authorities also point out that this action was taken not by 'Umar but by 'Uthman after the second conquest of Alexandria (25 A.H.—645 C.E.) as it was proved that the inhabitants of the four villages in question had taken no part in the rebellion.

#### 229. To 'Amr Ibn 'As.

This letter comes from *Kanz al-'Ummal* on the authority of Ibn Sa'd. It is wanting in the printed edition (Leyden) of the *Tabaqat* and must be regarded as a missing link, amongst many others, of that important biographical dictionary. It

\* The sixteenth article in this series appeared in *The Islamic Review* for February 1958.



was written obviously after the foundation of the Bureau of Public Salaries in 20 (640 C.E. or 21 A. H. (641 C.E.)). It makes one curious statement, namely, that the annual salary of the warriors of the battle of Badr (2 A.H.) was 200 dinars which would be equivalent to 2,000 dirhams at the rate of exchange prevalent then. No writer or traditionist seems to have ever endorsed this view. The amount of salary for the warriors of Badr has been put by the great majority of historians at 4,000 dirhams (about £200 now), though higher scales have also been advanced—5,000 and 6,000 dirhams.

*"I have fixed (annual) salaries in the Public Registers (Diwan) for all those Muslims and their families that are here and also for those residents and non-residents of Medina who have gone to Egypt or elsewhere (for war) and have now come back. Find out those whose salaries have been fixed by me and who have settled in Egypt and continue these to them and their families. Allot to those who have domiciled in Egypt but whose salary I have not fixed, in proportion to that fixed by me for other Muslims of similar status. Take 200 dinars for yourself which is the salary of the Muhajir and Ansar Veterans of Badr. I have not given this salary to any other man of an equal status, as you happen to be the governor of a province.*

*"I am aware of your financial obligations. To meet them you must increase the revenue (Kharaj). You should collect it justly and from its proper sources and abstain from using it for personal ends. After taking out the salaries of the Muslims and other unavoidable government expenses, send the remainder to me. Let it be noted by you that no Fifth (the Centre's share of the booty) is to be taken from Egypt, as it is a treaty-land (different from the land conquered by arms) and (as such) a permanent source of revenue for the Muslims (present and future). Give from it first to those who defend the frontiers and perform other public duties, distributing the remainder, thereafter, amongst those who have been mentioned by God in the Qur'an.*

*"It is to be noted by you, O 'Amr, that God sees you and your actions. His Blessed and Exalted Majesty says in His Book: 'Make us the leader of the God-fearing.' He wants that men should follow His lead? You should also note that you have (in Egypt) non-Muslim communities who have made pacts with you and are under Islam's protection and that the Messenger of God has enjoined us to treat them well. He has also asked us to be kind and considerate to the Copts. He says, 'Accept my recommendations to treat (the Copts) well as they are your kith and kin and will live under your protection.' Your relationship with them is through the mother of Ismā'il who was a Coptic lady. The Messenger, may God bless him! says: If a Muslim wrongs a member of a community with whom an agreement has been made, or impose on him a tax which is too heavy for him, I will be his adversary on the Day of Judgment. Beware, O 'Amr, lest the messenger of God is your adversary, for he will certainly overcome those who quarrel with him. By God, O Amr!, I have been put under a trial by becoming the ruler of this nation. I have a feeling of weakness in me. My subjects have dispersed in far-off lands. I am worn out. I beg God to cause me to die, unduly praised or censured. By God, I fear that if a camel were to perish of neglect in the farthest corner of your domain, I shall have to answer for it" (Kanz 3/162, Ash-har Mashahir al-Islam by Rafiq Beg 'Azm, Cairo 3/613, Jamharat Rasaa'il al-'Arab by Ahmad Zaki Safwat, Cairo, 1937, 1/217-219).*

230. To 'Amr Ibn 'As.

Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam (187-257 A.H.—802-870 C.E.), the author of *Futuh Misr* is the oldest writer to record the following correspondence between 'Umar and 'Amr in connection

with the revenues of Egypt. The correspondence is by no means complete, some important links are missing and there is every possibility of parts of one letter having crept into the other or parts having been omitted or some unguine matter having entered into them. The first letter of the series, noted below, is claimed by its reporters to have been written when 'Amr delayed the despatch of *Kharaj* (revenues) to Medina. But a reference to the text of the letter shows that the Caliph is not complaining of the delay but of the fall of the revenues. It, moreover, shows that some letters between the Caliph and the governor had already been exchanged on this theme. The text also contains an appreciation of the excellent work of the Pharaohs done in the domain of agriculture. We learn from Maqrizi that these mighty native kings displayed very pronounced zeal for the prosperity of agriculture. They had established an efficient system of irrigation which brought the water of the Nile within the reach of every village and hamlet of Egypt. A permanent staff of about one hundred thousand men was kept under employment to dig and clean canals, make repairs and look after the bridges, channels and sluice-gates. Some Pharaoh kings were able to raise, without tyranny, a revenue of one hundred million dinars (*Khitat* by Maqrizi, 1911 C.E., 1/316-320). The revenues registered a sharp decline during the Roman rule. The Maquauqis, the immediate predecessor of 'Amr, could gather only 20 million dinars and the first year of Muslim rule yielded half that amount. We have no sure means of verifying the high figures of revenues with which the rule of the Pharaonic princes is credited, nor are we able to determine the true causes of their startling decrease. Our historians are silent on the subject. Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, the first writer to attempt a description of the system of land taxation agreed upon between the Muslims and the Copts, is so vague, brief and confusing in his narrative that it is difficult to form any clear picture of it. One thing, however, is certain, that no fixed amount of land tax was imposed; that crops were assessed on the basis of area and quality. Perhaps the main factors responsible for the decrease of the revenue were: (1) Shrinkage of the area of cultivation owing to the neglect of irrigation systems and other natural causes, such as sand invasions; (2) Unsettled or unfavourable conditions brought about by the persecution of the Copts and religious dissensions under the Roman rule; (3) Lack of administrative vigilance under the Muslim rule, as the Arabs, being inexperienced in fiscal matters, had to leave the revenue administration entirely in the hands of the Copts. Moreover, Coptic and not Arabic was the vehicle of financial transactions. The Arabs did not know Coptic and could not check the registers, thus offering temptations for under-assessment of the crops, evasion of taxes, misappropriation and cheating.

*"In the name of God, the Kind and Merciful. From 'Abdullah (the Servant of God) 'Umar, Commander of the Faithful to 'Amr Ibn 'As, peace be upon you! I praise to you God who alone is fit for worship. I have pondered on the land you rule. I find that it is large, extensive and fertile and God has blessed its residents with numbers and hardiness on land as well as sea. The Pharaohs (Fara'inah) have ruled over it (in the past) and despite their unbelief and intense haughtiness they did excellent work for its prosperity. I wondered at this but what I wonder at most is that it is not yielding half as much revenue as it used to before despite the fact that there are no famines and its soil is not barren. I have corresponded with you much on the theme of the revenue due from you; I had thought that it would come to me in full measure (without delay—another version) and had hoped that you would come to your senses and send it to me. But you (go on) putting forth excuses which do not satisfy me. I cannot accept*



any amount of *Kharaj* which is less than what used to be collected before. I fail to understand what was in my letter to excite and distress you. If you are competent, efficient and honest, your effort to establish your innocence could be fruitful; but if you are incompetent and dishonest then all such efforts are doomed to failure. Last year I avoided to be involved in controversy with you over *Kharaj* as I hoped that you would come to your senses and send it to me (in full measure). But I have known since then that what prevents you from that are your corrupt officers who misrepresent facts and forge lies and who have taken you as their haven. However, I know, with the graciousness of God, a remedy for recovery the full amount of *Kharaj* (?) So don't be fretful and excited O Abu Abdullah! if the due is taken from you and you are made to furnish it. Indeed, the cow of Egypt is rich in the yield of milk. The truth of that has become clear beyond doubt. I don't want your lame and repeated excuses any more. The curtain of obscurity has lifted from the face of truth. Peace be upon you!" (*Futuh Misr* by Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam p. 158, *Kanz* 3/150).

Reply by 'Amr.

The charges of corruption and complicity with his officers so greatly roused 'Amr's feelings that he could hardly restrain himself. He replied:

"In the name of God, the All-merciful. To 'Abdullah' 'Umar, Commander of the Faithful, from 'Amr Ibn 'As. Peace be upon you! Praise to you God, besides Whom none else is fit for worship. I have received the letter of the Commander of the Faithful in which he has taken me to task for delay (in remitting) *Kharaj* (this is hardly correct, 'Umar's letter is not about the delay of *Kharaj* but its decrease, as we have just read), has referred to the good work of the Pharaohs in the bygone days and expressed his wonder at the (large amount of) *Kharaj* they used to collect (there is nothing in 'Umar's letter to show that the wonder was at the abundance of the *Kharaj*) and at its decrease since the conquest of Egypt by the Muslims.

"By my life *Kharaj* was, indeed, more plentiful at that time, the land more widely cultivated, as they, despite their unbelief and haughtiness, took keener interest in cultivation than we do. You state that the cow was rich in milk and that I have rendered it dry in overmilking (the letter has no words with this import). You have written many improper things and hurled rebukes and made unkind hints. That I know is due to your ill-will against me (?), by my life, you have employed very shocking and offensive language. It would have been better and more effective if you had said what was true and to the point. I served under the Messenger of God and his immediate successor and thank God, always discharged my trust, preserving the sacred loyalty to my leaders, and deeming a different conduct bad and shameful. My integrity would be recognized and my word (in matters of *Kharaj*, etc.) respected. I invoke God's protection against embezzlement (at which your letter hints), against bad temper and all other sins. Take back your office. God has kept me aloof from those mean gains, even their desire. I don't want to continue in office after your letter in which you have not spared my honour and showed no regard to a friend. By God, O Ibn Khattab! when I am insulted my feelings are greatly roused and I do my utmost to defend my honour. I have done nothing which could reflect on my honesty. I have, on the other hand, preserved your trust, but you have betrayed mine. If I were a Jew of Yathrib (pre-Islamic Medina), you would not have abused me more. May God pardon you and me! I shall refrain from saying out things which I know so well and which my tongue can utter with ease, in view of the unignorable claims of your exalted office

to our respect. Peace be upon you!" (*Futuh Misr*, I, 'A, Hakam, p. 159, *Khitat* 1/78, *Husn al-Muhaadarah* by Suyuti 1/64, *Kanz* 3/150, *Jamharat Rasad'il al-'Arab*, pp. 220-222).

231. To 'Amr Ibn 'As.

The above reply of 'Amr contains: (1) Some broad-based causes of the decline of *Kharaj*. (2) Repudiation of the charges of embezzlement. (3) Complaint of the offensive language of the Caliph and offer of resignation as a protest. But, it has not a single word about the delay of *Kharaj* which our transmitters declare to be the theme of the correspondence. Perhaps what they mean is delay caused by the refusal of the Caliph to accept anything less than what used to be collected by the Romans and the inability of the governor, for various reasons beyond his control, to do that.

"From 'Umar Ibn Khattab to 'Amr Ibn 'As. Peace be upon you! I praise to God Who alone is fit for worship. I wonder at the numerous letters I addressed you in connection with your delay in remitting *Kharaj* and at your idle talk. You know that I cannot be satisfied with anything less than the genuine amount. I did not send you to Egypt, offering it as a gift to you and your tribe. I sent you because I hoped that you would increase the revenue and rule efficiently. On receiving my letter (make haste to) send the revenue which is indeed (the only source of) income of the Muslims. I have here men who are in straits as you know" (*Futuh Misr*, I, 'A, Hakam, p. 160, *Khitat* 1/78, *Husn al-Muhaadarah* 1/65, *Kanz* 3/150).

Reply by 'Amr.

"In the name of God, the Kind and Merciful. To 'Umar Ibn Khattab from 'Amr Ibn 'As. Peace be upon you! I praise to you God who alone is fit for worship. I am in receipt of the letter of the Commander of the Faithful in which he has taken me to task for delay in sending *Kharaj* and asserted that I have deviated from truth and honesty. I tell you on oath that I adhere to what you know to be right. The cause of the delay is that the landlords asked me to postpone collection of the revenue until the crops were ripe. In the interest of Muslims I gave them respite. Leniency to the cultivators is better than foolish or harsh action which may compel them to sell their indispensable things. Peace be upon you!" (*Futuh Misr*, I, 'A, Hakam, pp. 160-161, *Khitat*, 1/79, *Hasn al-Muhaadarah* 1/65).

The letter No. 231 contains: (1) Complaint about the delay of *Kharaj*. (2) Insistence on the payment of genuine amount. (3) Strictures on the honesty of 'Amr.

'Amr's reply, as reported by the traditionists, once again passes in silence, over the second point which is the main spring of controversy and acrimony between the Caliph and his Viceroy. Even the reason given for the delay is far from satisfactory. It is but trivial. The Caliph, as we have read before, had been complaining of the delay for over a year. After all the protracted correspondence on the topic, the reason offered is the respite granted to the cultivators. Now this respite must relate to one of the 3 or 4 crops that would normally yield tax within a few months. It could, therefore, hardly cover the delay of a year or more of *Kharaj*. And supposing it covered the whole year, why did 'Amr not inform the Caliph of the innocent cause in the very beginning and why did he allow the worsening of his relations with the Caliph and provoke the latter into believing that he had misappropriated *Kharaj*? It seems to me that the above 4 letters, if they are authentic, did not take place in the order in which our reporters put them, that there are gaps in the correspondence that the letters have been subject to alterations and omissions.

Kindi (d. 961 C.E.) writes in his *Fada'il Misr* that the



amount of *Kharaj* which 'Amr could raise in the first year of his rule was one million dinars and that it increased by two hundred thousand dinars in the second year under the pressure of the Caliph's remonstrances which may well have been in one form or other of the correspondence recorded above.

We have another set of letters recorded by authors other than Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, dealing with the personal wealth of 'Amr Ibn 'As and confiscation of its half by 'Umar who was led to believe by reporters that 'Amr had got it by unfair means.



## Book Review

*L'EGYPTE EN MOUVEMENT*, by Jean and Simonne J. Lacouture, published by Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1956-7.

The authors of this interesting and sympathetic work are both well-known French journalists. Mr. Lacouture wrote for *Combat* and the greatest French daily, *Le Monde*. He also represented the Paris popular evening paper, *France-Soir*, in Egypt from 1953-6, and wrote for the Left-Wing enlightened Catholic magazines *l'Esprit* and *Temoignage Chretien*. His wife was a reporter attached to l'Agence France-Presse in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. Later she wrote for the Left-Wing anti-colonialist Paris weekly, *France-Observateur*, a column about Egyptian affairs.

The Catholic publishers of this book and the magazine *l'Esprit* have long shown their appreciation for the Muslims of North Africa, whom they supported during the height of the struggle and during the worst periods of repression in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

The authors attempt in this volume to give a lively account of modern Egypt with a fairly detailed historic introduction. Although they deal with the most important political, economic, religious and cultural matters affecting the new Egypt of Post-Revolution period, their style is lively and the book reads rather like a series of stimulating newspaper leaders which give the reader an excellent background to the study of modern Egypt.

The chapter entitled "Egypt, Islam and the Modern World" is of particular interest. A great deal of criticism is levelled at the direction of religion and religious interpretation given by the Shaikhs of al-Azhar. It is stated that although the mosques are full of worshippers in Egypt, while they are so (it is stated) empty in Iran, the religious fervour of Morocco is not to be found amongst the Egyptian masses. Furthermore, Mr. and Mrs. Lacouture consider that the "last chance of reforming Islam" will possibly be taken up by the Maghreb and by the Qarawiyyin University of Fez and not by al-Azhar with its servile 'ulemas, who are capable of any form of regimentation. In talking of the attitude of the average Egyptian to religion, the authors say that he fasts and prays but shows an unhappy passivity and that nonetheless, Islam is very likely to survive as the major religion of Egypt as it has become deeply rooted in "great pantheist ritual of the peasant universe". To use their words, "Islam has become peasant, and has in its form of adoption in Egypt incorporated certain pagan and Christian festivals such as the Sham el Nessim and a cult of the dead which is derived from the worship of Osiris".

From a study of this book it appears that our authors believe Colonel Nasir, in his visits to Indonesia and to other Muslim countries, amazed at the universal prestige which the University of al-Azhar enjoyed in world Muslim circles and the extraordinary effect with which it has spread the

word of Islam "during the past ten years", obviously realized the tremendous usefulness of al-Azhar to further the diplomatic missions of Egypt.

During the stay of the two authors in Cairo, they witnessed the historic dispute that arose with regard to the fast during the period of Ramadhan. They quote the whole case of the Shaikh 'Abd al-Hamid Bakhit, the Professor of Muslim theology at al-Azhar University who stated that fasting was not absolutely essential for people such as workmen, who would be caused to suffer too much as a result of it. The Shaikh Bakhit expressed the opinion that God did not intend to cause "intolerable suffering" to the believers by imposing a fast under these conditions. The Shaikh, only thirty-eight at the time, was rather an original character who wore a beret instead of the traditional headgear of a Shaikh. It is stated that it was as a result of the clamour the Pakistan press aroused that the 'ulemas of al-Azhar, who resented outside criticism, felt bound to react and forced the Shaikh to retract, to the apparent dismay of a section of the Egyptian press, which was only too ready to back him up.

The writers consider that public opinion in Egypt to a large extent welcomed these criticisms, and objected to the autocratic spirit of the Shaikhs of al-Azhar, who constituted a "clerical hierarchy".

The book contains an interesting and very important statement on the religious beliefs of the *entourage* of Colonel Jamal Nasir. We are told that after the trial of the Muslim Brothers certain charges were made against the Egyptian leaders to the effect that they were contemplating the introduction of a lay régime on Kemalist lines. Major Salah Salem stated emphatically that the Muslim Brothers had been condemned because they were "charlatans and assassins", and that the Egyptian Government had been motivated by solid Muslim motives and that they were faithful to the tolerant ideas of liberal Islam and that the more they managed to accomplish in the field of social justice the more their régime would approach the requirements of Islam. The writers are on sure ground when they state that the officers are pious and of humble origin, coming mostly from the land.

How the Revolutionary régime is trying to break the power of the "clerical hierarchy" can be seen in the setting up of an Institute of Islamic Research in 1955 as a counterpoise to al-Azhar, in the granting to women the right to vote, and the way in which the daily Government organ never loses an opportunity to attack the al-Azhar authorities in the controversy over polygamy. It takes the "modern" point of view on marriage.

The introduction of twelve special clinics for the study of "family planning" is taken by the writers as an indication that Colonel Nasir is playing with the idea of introducing Malthusian methods to solve the 500,000 per annum



surplus population. In showing the difference between Kemal Ataturk and Colonel Nasir, the authors describe Kemal as a victorious general who was not stopped by the same scruples as the pious Colonel Nasir, who is seeking to "neutralize Islam" in Egypt and to utilize it in foreign affairs. The authors opine that the lay approach of Mr. Bourguiba is not applicable in Egypt because Egyptian society lacks "the supple richness of Tunisian society". "Thus in order to modernize and rearm Egyptian Islam, the Colonel is forced to Islamize modernity."

The authors have found it appropriate to include Napoleon Bonaparte's appreciation of Islam.

When the authors deal with the conquest of Egypt, they are objective in their approach to Islam. The Arab Muslims in the initial stages of their conquest are described as more tolerant than the Christians; the Arab Muslims treated the Copts far more humanely than the latter treated the pagans of the Greco-Pharaonic period; Islam was more definite and modern than Christianity; it laid stress on hygiene; it was simpler in its approach; it was more dynamic; it did not treat human beings as original sinners from the moment of their birth, but as people capable of deviations; the Jews and Christians were perpetually in the role of the accused.

The negative reasons for the triumph of Islam were "the dullness of Egyptian Christianity, the extreme unpopularity of the Byzantine administration and the deplorable nonchalance of a society which both technically and politically had reached a breaking point".

This 480-page book should certainly be translated into the major language spoken by Muslims and into English. It is most stimulating and can do a lot to improve the relations between the West and Egypt, for it gives any fair-

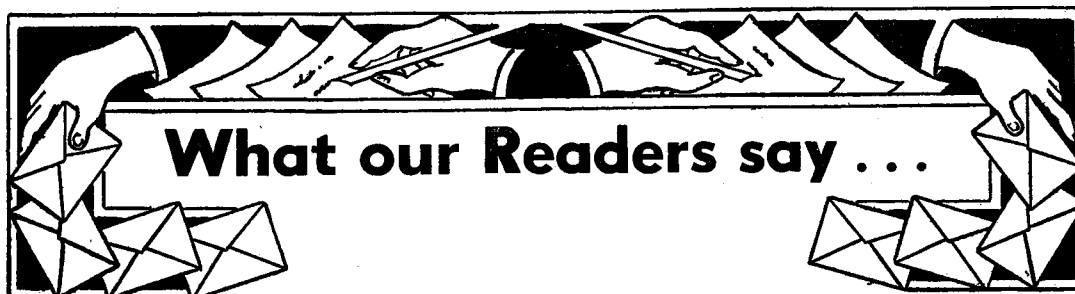
minded Westerner the chance of understanding the leaders and people of modern Egypt.

The authors do not make the mistake of judging Colonel Nasir by French standards. In their book the hero of the Arab peoples emerges as a man who loves simplicity, who is a teetotaler and lives in a simple bungalow, not a sumptuous villa, who prefers to eat the national dish of beans called "fool" to more expensive dishes, and whose only recreation is taken whenever he has the leisure to play a game of chess with his friend General 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amir. What a contrast to the feasts of many Muslim potentates and minor rulers from many impoverished States whose receptions are notable for their lavish hospitality, including wines and strong spirits, their palaces and their fleets of Cadillacs!

Two chapters are of particular interest in so far as they deal with two aspects of Egyptian life which are usually neglected — Left-Wing politics and culture.

In 1942 new Communist groups appeared; the Egyptian National Liberation Movement founded by Mr. Henri Curiel, and the "Iskra" movement of Mr. Hillel-Schwartz; the latter was accused of being too intellectual and the Communists tried to counter-balance their cosmopolitan leadership by recruiting Egyptians.

It is disconcerting to read in this book that about one-third of the University students are Communists and that most Egyptian newspapers have a large number of pro-Communists on their staff. We are also told that in the Shaikh Khalid Muhammad Khalid's *From Where Are We Coming*, which caused a furore in Egypt some years ago, and which has been translated into English, as much attention is devoted to *Das Capital* as to the Holy Qur'an.



#### FABRICATED TRADITIONS IMPUTED TO THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ON THE LEGALITY OF SLAVERY

7 Dr. Omer Sheriff Road,  
Bangalore 4,  
India.  
12th March 1958.

Dear Sir,

The Maulana Muhammad 'Ali's thesis on slavery (*vide The Islamic Review* for November and December 1957 and January 1958) misses one very important point: he forgets to condemn the fabricated traditions imputed to the Prophet Muhammad. The evil of slavery, as also that of usury, the former condemned by Abraham Lincoln and the latter by Karl Marx, is an evil which no other evil could surpass. Says Lincoln: "If slavery is lawful, then nothing in the world is unlawful." And Karl Marx, in condemning usury, quotes Martin Luther's words: "And since we break on the wheel and kill and behead highwaymen, murderers and house-breakers, how much more ought we to break on the wheel and kill . . . hunt down, curse and behead all usurers."

The old human society was based on the exploitation of man by man; there was hardly any social justice. From

human sacrifice to slavery, and from robbery to gambling, cheating was the order of the day in human society, and a religion which does not condemn them will not be fit to call itself an inspired religion. Though neither Judaism nor Christianity had much to say against these horrid forms of exploitation, the Qur'an would have fallen short of its standard if it had left them uncondemned. It condemns slavery indirectly and usury directly. As to slavery, the Qur'an saw to it that it stopped its source. It forbade making slaves of the prisoners of war (The Qur'an, 47:4-5), the main source of slavery. Then it made compulsory the release of slaves bought if they paid the price out of their earnings in terms of service to their master, if they had no other means of livelihood; it made the emancipation of slaves an act of merit like charity and made it a expiation for certain sins. How else could a wise legislator stop an evil which was the order of the day? But man out of his selfishness and covetness refused to obey God. And this inordinancy became worse when clever people invented traditions from the Prophet not only legalizing this evil, but even making God take sides with the slave-driver. The God who condemns both slavery and usury is, according to these traditions, made the champion of the exploiters. He refuses to accept the



prayer of a fugitive slave and makes him an infidel. An usurer according to these traditions may carry on his nefarious trade provided he, like the Jews, makes the distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. And what was the result of this invention? Islam became so tradition-ridden that even a pious man of Islam thinks nothing of this glaring slur on the fair name of Islam.

Yours truly,

S. M. AHMED.

\* \* \*

#### THE BOUNDARIES OF PAKISTAN: A CORRECTION

Office of the High Commissioner for Pakistan,  
Information Division,  
35 Lowndes Square, London, S.W.1.  
19th February 1958.

Dear Sir,

The November 1957 issue of *The Islamic Review* published an article on Afghanistan on pages 15-22. Its second paragraph states *inter alia* that Afghanistan is bound by Baluchistan in the south and by Chitral and Pakistan in the east. You will agree that this statement tends to create the erroneous impression that Baluchistan and Chitral are independent of Pakistan. I do not know who the author of this article is, but I am sure the editors of *The Islamic Review* could not possibly have any intention of creating an erroneous impression about the status of Chitral and Baluchistan *vis-à-vis* Pakistan.

Yours sincerely,

M. I. BUTT (Press Attaché).

\* \* \*

#### AN APPEAL TO MUSLIM CONSCIENCE TO REMEMBER THE 40,000,000 MUSLIMS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Achabstrasse 4,  
Munich,  
Germany.  
23rd February 1958.

Dear Sir,

Today the Soviet Union celebrates the Day of the Red Army. With the help of these forces Communism subjugated our peoples, seized power in half of Europe. This is not our holiday because it is dedicated to the instrument of violence over our peoples and also because the régime which enslaved our peoples made use of this day to commit one of its most terrible crimes — the deportation of whole peoples. Exactly fourteen years ago, on 23rd February 1944, the population of Checheno-Ingushetia, numbering approximately 700,000, was gathered in its cities and villages under the pretext of holding a meeting on the day of the Red Army. Then all of those people were arrested and deported to Eastern Siberia and Soviet Central Asia. Tens of thousands of adults, women and children perished during the mass arrest and on their way into exile. The fate of our Chechen-Ingush also befell other peoples: Karachai-Balkarians, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks and the Volga Germans. These peoples were also deported and deprived of their homeland and property. The victims of this deportation numbered tens of thousands.

This day is not a day of triumph for us, but a day of sadness and mourning. Most of those long-suffering peoples, Chechen-Ingush, Karachai-Balkarians and Crimean Tatars, were also Muslims as we here and like all people throughout the world who profess the divine laws given to us by our great Prophet. Today we honour the memory of our brothers and sisters in faith and origin who perished because of the crime committed by the Godless Communist régime fourteen

years ago.

One year ago Stalin's successors, who had slavishly obeyed him during his life and condemned him only after his death, issued a decree according to which the survivors of the Chechen-Ingush, Karachai-Balkarians and Kalmyks were permitted to return to their homeland. This decree did not mention the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars are still doomed to slow extermination. Like other deported peoples, they do not live together in exile, but are dispersed over a large area into small groups among other peoples. Under such conditions it is not possible to preserve one's national characteristics. Under such conditions a people must perish.

However, the destiny of those peoples who are returning to their homelands is far from being what it should be if the authorities really intended to render them justice. In the first place, the repatriation is being carried out very slowly, and is calculated to cover several years, although the deportation was accomplished within a few days. Besides, according to available information, not everybody will be allowed to return. Some of the deportees are detained at the place of deportation, because they are needed there as workers. Those who are repatriated are also considered only as workers. Their farms, their houses and property have not been returned to them, but remain in possession of those to whom they were transferred after the deportation of the owners. The accommodation of the returnees is left to the judgment of the authorities!

All people are equal in Islam. Our religion unites them all regardless of race. The recent tragedy of the small Tunisian town is our tragedy. We condemn violence exercised on our brothers wherever it happens and whoever the violators are. Therefore, today, on the fourteenth anniversary of the most horrible act of violence committed by the Soviet régime on the Muslim peoples, when we honour its victims, we appeal to the entire Muslim world and ask our Islamic brothers not to forget that 40,000,000 Muslims are living without the protection of law in the huge Soviet empire, the government of which is playing the role of friends of enslaved peoples. These Muslims in the Soviet Union once enjoyed national independence. Many of them once played a prominent role in the development of Islamic culture. Samarkand, a city famous in the history of Islam, was once the educational centre of the Muslims. Muslim theology flourished in the mountains of Daghestan. And now, under the outward cover of national independence, the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union are living in the political and cultural grip of Godless Communism. Under the pretence of developing a culture "national by form and Socialist by content", their national culture is being destroyed, and a Communist ideology is being instilled by force. They are deprived of religious freedom, and Islam in the Soviet Union is fettered. This fact cannot be denied even by the reopening of mosques in some towns since they are reopened only in the places where foreign tourists are admitted.

IBRAHIM EFENDI,

President of the Muslim Society  
in Western Europe.

#### PEN PALS

Br. S. M. Abdul Careem, 107, 109 Bazaar Street, Chilaw, Ceylon, age 23, wishes to correspond with friends of either sex in all parts of the world, especially from America (U.S.A.), Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaya. *Interests*: Exchanging of views on religious thoughts, exchanging views on international affairs, education and reading. Please correspond in English.

Mr. Jamaluddin, Tangail, Mymensingh, East Pakistan. Aged 18. wishes to correspond with persons of either sex. *Hobbies*: Stamp collecting, rowing, cricket, photography.





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