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**The Editor**  
**Review of Religions**  
**The London Mosque**  
**16 Gressenhall Road**  
**London, SW18 5QL**  
**United Kingdom**

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ISSN No. 0034-6721

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# Editorial

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The realm of medicine has fascinated man for centuries. Particularly with the expectation of a longer and a healthier life, man has been obsessed with understanding nature and medicine. In the modern world, we have a range of treatments available based upon hundreds of years of compiled knowledge and experimentation. It does however come as a shock to many people to learn the extent to which our knowledge of nature, biology and medicine comes from the early religious scholars and the insights and inspiration that they gleaned through the Holy Qur'an and the practice of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>.

The feature article takes a closer look at how our understanding of medicine evolved in the schools of knowledge in the Islamic world. It shows how they preserved and built upon the knowledge of the Greeks. Moreover, it illustrates how unlike much of modern medicine which aims to treat the symptoms of illness, Islam encouraged early practitioners (or hakims) to treat the cause in order to treat the illness. In this way, Islamic medicine concentrated on lifestyle (exercise, food, stress, prayers, family) as well as the disease itself.

Even in modern times, scholars can explain phenomena through the insights of the Qur'an as shown by Hadhrat

Mirza Tahir Ahmad in his outstanding work *Rationality, Revelation, Knowledge and Truth*. In this issue, we have an extract from his book covering the science behind sidedness in nature as seen in animal and plant life.

For many centuries, Muslims were at the forefront of scientific and medical advance because they understood that the physical and spiritual aspects of life are closely intertwined, just as the modern phrase 'healthy mind, healthy body' would allude to.

Modern science has taken a more selective approach to medicine in which sporadic successes have pushed the medical profession to the view that they can play at creation as witnessed by recent activities around cloning and gene experimentation.

Hopefully, the articles in this issue will remind scholars of the fact that all life was created by God, and that the physical and spiritual aspects of life are governed by the same Laws of that one God. To understand one aspect without investigating the spiritual aspect will lead to a flawed confidence in our ability to control medical conditions.

# Notes and Comments

## Seasons Greetings

December is an interesting time of year. Christians celebrate Christmas Day to mark the birth of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and this year, Muslims will finish the month of Ramadhan and celebrate Eid ul Fitr during December also. In both cases, families will get together to celebrate, eat together and presents will be handed out. So are the two events similar or is there a difference?

Obviously the two festivals have different roots, meanings and significance, but there is also an obvious difference: in five years time, Ramadhan and Eid will be in October or November while Christmas will still be in December.

In the case of Christmas, it is tied to a particular date, the 25th December which was selected in Roman times because it was the festival of the Sun god *Sol Invictus*, and co-incided with the winter solstice on that day two thousand years ago. Adopting the Roman day of the sun god for the Christian son of God seemed a logical and safe decision at the time which meant that Christians in the

Empire could celebrate in peace and anonymity. Therefore Christmas is now a seasonal festival. In Europe and the States, this is a cold time of the year and often there is snow, so the festival has come to be associated with snow, trees, a warm fire, stockings etc. Similarly in the Christian calendar, Easter occurs during the spring. Of course, just as it is associated with snow in Europe and North America, in places like Australia, it occurs during the summer and so will be associated to warm weather and barbecues!

In Islam, all major events and festivals are tied to the Islamic calendar which is based on the Lunar calendar, and that is why the symbol of the crescent moon is so prominent in Islam. The Lunar calendar is 10 days shorter than the business year based on the solar calendar, and this explains why Islamic festivals move back 10 days each year. Accordingly Ramadhan will slowly move back from December towards August in a few years time. Many people in the past have mocked Islam for the fact that the dates change in this way and that festivals and major events

cannot be tied down in a fixed way to the Gregorian calendar.

So does any of this matter? After all, a festival is a festival, and the main purpose is the spiritual significance and the remembrance of God. The climate or other factors have very little to do with it. Well in the UK, there was a recent call from a Christian clergyman that Christmas should be celebrated two days after the 25th. His rationale is not based on any thoughts that the date is not the actual birth date of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>, rather it reflects his concern that the 25th has now been hijacked by the general public as a day of merry-making. In Europe, the run up to Christmas is now a time of many parties involving immoral behaviour, huge consumption of alcohol and a huge emphasis on commercialism. He is horrified at the way the day has become such a commercial institution while the religious significance has been all but forgotten. People now associate the 25th with a family get-together, presents, alcohol, snow and cold weather.

In Islam, this is not observed, partly because the festivals are not seasonal. Muslims therefore also

have family get-togethers and distribute presents, but the day also revolves around attending the mosque and remembering the significance of the day just as practising Christians also attend the Church on the 25th. If these festivals were fixed to a particular day, there is every danger that the same shift to commercialism could have blighted them also.

There seems to be a logic to the way Islamic events are based on the Lunar calendar which is only now coming to the fore. There are signs that true Christians are trying to rescue their festival and its significance from the commercial party. Whatever the merits or otherwise, it is a fact that more and more cards sent on this occasion have now replaced 'Merry Christmas' with 'Seasons Greetings'.

***Fazal Ahmad – UK***

# The History and Theory of Islamic Medicine

by Mrs Samina Mian - Edmonton, India

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The author had the opportunity to review the history of Islamic medicine and was so fascinated that she compiled this article to chronicle the achievements of Muslims in the field of medicine. The article explores how Muslim scientists created the very fundamentals of modern medicine.

Modern man, dependent as he is on the drugs of the chemist and the skills of the physician, on the reckoning of the computer and the predictions of the economic planner, owes more of a debt than he might suspect to the Islamic scientists of the Middle Ages. Between the 9th and 14th centuries, Muslim chemists, physicians, astronomers, mathematicians, geographers and others not only kept alive the disciplines of Greek science, but extended their range, laying and strengthening the foundation on which much of modern science is built (Stewart, 1967). The topic of this essay is Islamic medicine, with an emphasis

on its historical development, practice, theory and the influence of Islam on Islamic medicine.

## Historical Development

Islamic science, from its very beginning, did not concern itself only with man's physical environment, but included a penetrating analysis of man as a spiritual being and of the society in which he dwelt. The first Muslim physician was a Companion of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, Haridh ibn-Kaladah, who had studied at Jundishapur<sup>(1)</sup>. But despite this very early contact of Islam with the school of medicine, Arab Muslims did not pursue this field, and nearly all of the early physicians were either Christians, Jews or Persians. It was only after the establishment of Arabic as a major medical language, and the penetration of medicine and its knowledge into the texture of everyday life that Arab Muslims gradually became drawn to this subject.

In the beginning, the main target that drew the Islamic scholars was the capital city of Baghdad. There, the Caliph Mamun, who ruled the empire from 813 to 833, created the 'House of Wisdom' – a famous centre of learning that included a library, a translation bureau and a school. Within seventy-five years after the establishment of the House of Wisdom, the greatest thoughts of the Greek and the other early people had been translated into Arabic. These translations included the chief philosophical books of Aristotle, some important works of Plato, and major studies by Euclid, Ptolemy, Archimedes and the celebrated Greek physicians Hippocrates, Dioscorides and Galen, as well as many important Persian and Indian scientific works<sup>(2)</sup>.

Hippocrates, known in Arabic as Buqrat, was recognized from the earliest period as the 'Father of Greek medicine'. Numerous works by him were rendered into Arabic by the movement of translation, as described above. More of Galen's works survived in Arabic than in Greek, and Muslims identified him as much with philosophy as with medicine<sup>(1)</sup>.

One of the foremost of the scholars at the House of Wisdom was Hunayn ibn-Ishaq. Hunayn studied medicine in Baghdad under a physician who had trained at the famous Persian medical school in Jundishapur, which was to have a profound influence on the development of Islamic medicine. Later, Hunayn was made in charge of the House of Wisdom by the Caliph, where he supervised all the translations. In addition to his translations, Hunayn also produced a large number of medical works of his own, among them the earliest known textbook on ophthalmology<sup>(2)</sup>. The great compilation and translation of knowledge, accomplished by Hunayn and his colleagues did much to lay the groundwork of modern science, particularly in the field of medicine, as the works of these men were later translated into Latin and made their way into the West, primarily through Sicily and Spain.

The basis for all Islamic science was the Greek belief that underlying the apparent chaos in the universe was a fundamental order. This order was said to be governed by universal laws that could be understood by human reason; once these laws were

comprehended, all phenomena, no matter how unrelated they seemed, could readily be understood. Thus in an effort to understand the true nature of the universe, scholars pursued more than one branch of learning. The scientist-philosopher was not a narrow specialist, but was an expert in such varied fields as medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, logic, metaphysics, and even music and poetry.

Starting in the 8th century, the Muslims gradually developed a more sophisticated approach to medicine, rather than the early desert superstitions of the Arabs. The main impetus came from the Persian medical school in Jundishapur, whose teachings were based primarily on the Greek practice of treating disease by rational methods. The contact between Jundishapur and the rulers of Islam began in 765 – not out of the search for universal truth, but due to a more urgent and personal reason – a chronic indigestion that plagued the founder of Baghdad. The chief physician of Jundishapur, Jurjis, who was a Christian, was invited to treat him. He succeeded, and was appointed as the court physician.

Like Jurjis, most of Islam's early practitioners were Persian-born, but they spoke and wrote Arabic, the language of scholarship during the Middle Ages. One of the most celebrated of these Eastern physicians was al-Razi, who lived from 865–925 CE. The finest physician of his age, he has been compared to Hippocrates for his originality in describing a disease. Razi (Latin - Rhazes) is said to have written more than two hundred books, ranging in subject matter from medicine and alchemy to theology and astronomy. About half of these books are on medicine, and include a well-known treatise on small pox. In his discussion of small pox, Razi was the first to differentiate a specific disease from among many eruptive fevers that assailed man. By giving the clinical symptoms of small pox, he enabled doctors to diagnose it correctly and to predict the course of the disease. He also recommended a treatment for the ailment. He urged gentle therapy, good diet and good nursing care, which meant about the same as it does today; rest, clean surroundings and keeping the patient comfortable.

While Razi knew nothing about bacteria which were not discovered until the early 17th century, he had an intuitive sense of the hygienic principles far ahead of medieval standards<sup>(2)</sup>. He was once asked to choose the site for a new hospital in Baghdad. To do so, he suspended pieces of meat at various points around the city, and at the location where the meat petrified most slowly, he recommended building the hospital.

The 10th and 11th centuries were the age of numerous medical authorities of the highest rank. While al-Majusi was dominating the field of internal medicine in the East, Andalusia produced the first of its great medical figures – al-Fahrawi. He was the greatest of the Muslim surgeons and his *Kitab al-Tarif* (*The Book of Concessions*), which is a medical encyclopaedia, was a definitive guide for surgeons over the centuries. This was also the period of major works on ophthalmology. Ali ibn Isa was the first person to propose the use of anesthesia for surgery.

The most illustrious figure of this period and Islam's most famous physician was Abu Ali ibn Sina, the

'prince of physicians,' the Avicenna of Western scholastics and physicians, and one by whose name many people in the East call Islamic medicine to this day<sup>(1)</sup>. Born in Bukhara, he was self-taught in medicine and was already a famous physician by the age of eighteen. He lived from 980 to 1037 CE, and wrote some 170 books on philosophy, medicine, mathematics and anatomy, as well as poetry and religious work. Ibn Sina's most renowned achievement was *al-Qanvn fil-tibb* – the *Cannon of Medicine*, which was an encyclopaedia that dealt with virtually every phase of the treatment of disease. This is perhaps the most influential single work in the whole history of medicine, even including the writings of Hippocrates and Galen<sup>(1)</sup>. The encyclopaedia consists of five books which contain:

- the general principles of medicine;
- simple drugs;
- disorders of internal and external organs of the body;
- illnesses which affect the body in general;

- and compound drugs.

From the 12th to 17th century, the Cannon of Medicine served as the chief guide to medical science in European universities. Ibn Sina is now credited with such personal contributions as recognising the contagious nature of tuberculosis, and describing certain skin diseases and psychological disorders. Western historians consider Ibn Sina to be a great thinker who was instrumental in passing the Greek heritage to the West<sup>(3)</sup>.

After Ibn Sina, Islamic medicine gradually underwent a regional development while preserving its basic unity. In Iraq, Syria and adjacent lands, major cities like Cairo and Damascus became centres of attraction for many physicians with the building of new hospitals in the 12th century. Ibn Nafis, philosopher, theologian and physician, was entitled the second Ibn Sina, while working both in Cairo and Damascus. Although Ibn Nafis has been celebrated throughout the Islamic world, including Persia and India, since his death in 1288, it was only in 1924 that an Egyptian doctor, Muhyi al-Din al-Tatawi, discovered that centuries

before Columbo and Servetus, Ibn Nafis had explained correctly the circulation of blood. This was one of the most important discoveries in the history of medicine, and made the name of Ibn Nafis celebrated in the West as the real predecessor of William Harvey rather than Columbo and Servetus, who had been credited until then with the discovery of minor circulation.

In Maghrib, between the 11th and 12th centuries, Ibn Fuhr composed *The Book Facilitating the Study of Therapy and Diet*, which is among the most celebrated products of Islamic medicine in Andalusia. A Spanish physician, ibn-Rushd (Latin – Averroes) wrote on medicine, philosophy, law and astronomy. His talent was varied enough that he served not only as a chief physician, but also as a judge in Seville and Cordoba. In addition, Ibn Rushd is known as one of the foremost interpreters of Aristotle. Another Spanish born Jewish physician who influenced western ways was Ibn Maymun, who served as a court physician to the Sultan of Egypt and Syria in the 12th century. His medical works include the commentaries on Galen and Hippocrates, as well as his own

observations, primarily related to diet and personal hygiene. After these celebrated figures, medicine gradually declined in Andalusia, but survived in Morocco, where it continues in certain quarters to this day.

In Persia and India, most of the medical history was dominated by the works of Ibn Sina. In the 12th century, there appeared the first extensive medical encyclopaedia in Persia modelled upon the Cannon by al-JurJani<sup>(1)</sup>. He is perhaps responsible for the perpetuation of the medical teachings of Ibn-Sina during the later centuries.

After the Mongol invasion, there was great cultural and scientific exchange between Islam and China. From the reign of Nadir Shah onward, modern European medicine was introduced into Persia. This process accelerated with the establishment of a new university Dar al-Fanun in Tehran during the Qajar period, where modern medicine was taught. In Persia, as in Egypt, Turkey and other lands of Western Islam, the traditional system has continued, although to a lesser extent<sup>(1)</sup>.

The history of Islamic medicine in India is inseparable from that of Persia because of the flow of a large number of Persian physicians to India in the 15th and 18th centuries, as well as the use of Persian as the primary scientific language, especially in medicine. It was after the Eighteenth century that Muslim and Hindu physicians from India itself came to the fore to continue the cultivation of Islamic medicine. It is in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh that Islamic medicine is most alive today<sup>(1)</sup>.

Medical activity in the Turkish part of the Ottoman world was closely related to that of Persia until the 15th century. From the 17th century onward, the influence of European medicine began to make itself felt in Turkey, and by the Nineteenth century, there had been a nearly total replacement of traditional medicine by the modern European system in this part of the Islamic world.

### **Islam and Islamic Medicine**

The principles of Islamic medicine are deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, although this medicine itself came into being as a result of the integration by Muslims of several older traditions of medicine,

of which most important was the Greek. Islam directs the faithful to seek knowledge of the natural world, and inspiration in it: the world is the work of God. In Islam, both the ends and means of an individual's actions must be halal (allowed). Therefore, the whole of Islamic medicine is also related to Islam through the injunctions contained in the Qur'an and the Hadith, concerning health and various questions related in one way or another to medicine.

The aspects of Divine Law concerning personal hygiene, dietary habits, ablutions, and many other elements affecting the body are again related to medicine. As a practical guide to health, the Qur'an makes some explicit instructions – for example, the importance of bathing is emphasised and it is included in great detail in the preparation for praying. The result is that there is always a link between Islamic medicine and the teachings of Islam, and whatever historians may say of the Greek, Syrian, Indian or old Persian origins of the medical idea or practice, Islamic medicine has always been seen by Muslims as closely related to religion.

Some jurists have pointed out that of the 'foreign' sciences, only medicine was studied by even one or two of the companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, and that medical practices which would lead to the regaining of the health of body and soul were encouraged from the earliest period of Islam<sup>(1)</sup>. Within the Islamic world, what survives of the traditional medicine today is closely associated with the actual practice of religion by the majority of people.

### **The Practice of Islamic Medicine**

Islamic civilisation created certain institutions and norms closely related to its own general structure in order to make the teachings and practice of medicine possible. Gradually, the figure of the physician, originally of Christian or Jewish background, became Islamic and there came into being the Islamic figure of the hakim – who was at once physician and philosopher, as well as a master of most of the other traditional sciences.

Most of the clinical aspects, as well as surgery and pharmacology were taught in hospitals to which usually a medical school was added. The teaching and the practice of Islamic

medicine are inseparable from the institution of the hospital, which at its height contained in addition to wards, major libraries, lecture halls and other facilities necessary for the training of medical students. To this day, the only remnants of large-scale hospitals and dispensaries where Islamic medicine is practised are to be found in the Indian subcontinent, some of the examples being the Osmania hospital in Hyderabad, Deccan, and the Hamdard Institutes of Dehli and Karachi. The practice of Islamic medicine has always been closely connected with the dispensaries and chemist's shops. The traditional druggist has knowledge of various drugs, especially herbs, which comprise most of the traditional medicaments.

Also significant for its medical uses is the traditional bath (hammam), which is found in one form or another throughout the Islamic world. Muslim physicians have used the traditional bath for all kinds of uses including overcoming headaches. These baths continue to fulfill medical as well as religious and hygienic functions.

### **The Theory of Islamic Medicine**

The theory of Islamic medicine is related to the whole of Islamic metaphysics, cosmology and philosophy. Islamic physicians saw the body of man as an extension of his soul and closely related to both the spirit and the soul<sup>(1)</sup>. Moreover, Islamic medicine was especially concerned with the interpretations and interrelation of cosmic forces, and the effect of these forces upon man. Muslim physicians also remained fully aware of the sympathy between all orders of existence, and the mutual actions and reaction of one creature upon another. They therefore visualised man to be related both inwardly through the soul and the spirit, and outwardly through the grades of micro-cosmic hierarchy of the Principles of Cosmic manifestation.

Muslims reject the idea of original sin, and therefore, the concept that disease and suffering have resulted from the original sin is contrary to the basic Islamic belief that men are born free<sup>(4)</sup>. Muslim physicians believe in the spirit which is the subtle body standing intermediate between the physical body and the force of life which comes from the world above. Muslim physicians

also believed that six external factors are essential and must be present to guarantee the health of the patient<sup>(1)</sup>. These factors are air, food, bodily rest and movement, sleep, emotional rest, and excretion and retention.

The four humours, that is blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile form the foundation of animal activity, and the body of all animals, including man, is comprised of them. The traditional physician sought to restore the health of the patient not only by examining internal problems but by studying all the external factors so as to discover the one or several causes which had disrupted the harmony of humours within the body and with the environment. These causes could range from having eaten the wrong food to emotional strain. Health then, as considered by Muslim physicians, is a question of living in harmony with oneself and with the environment, taking into full consideration of what one eats and drinks. It is then through diet, medicament, exercise or other factors to re-establish the harmony which is synonymous with health.

### **Branches of Islamic Medicine**

Different branches of Islamic medicine are anatomy and physiology, internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, and hygiene and public health. I will consider hygiene and public health in more detail because of the fact that Islamic medicine is concerned more with the prevention of illness than with its cure.

The emphasis upon personal hygiene and cleanliness in Islam is a direct effect of the teachings of Islam. Ritual cleanliness requires Muslims to wash themselves regularly. Dietary habits of Muslims, which include not only abstention from alcoholic drinks and pork, but also fasting, eating less than one's full appetite and eating slowly, may have a direct medical effect. Diet has a more prominent role in Islamic medicine than it does in modern medicine. The Muslims considered the kind of food and the manner in which it is consumed to be so directly connected to health, that the effect of diet was considered by them as being perhaps more powerful than that even of drugs on both health and illness. It is also interesting that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> stressed the use of a toothbrush

(miswak) and never neglected its use personally. Therefore, the Islamic belief is that sickness comes from unhygienic living, and is not a punishment for sin<sup>(4)</sup>. The aspects of Islamic medicine concerning hygiene and public health include the religious teachings, and purely medical ones inherited through millennia of experience and science.

### **Islamic Medicine Today**

The continuous weakening of traditional medicine before the onslaught of the spread of modern Western medicine in the last two centuries is seen in most parts of the Islamic world. As a result, today, except for the sub-continent of India where traditional Islamic medicine and pharmacology continue on both the intellectual and popular level, in Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt – only a few branches such as pharmacology and certain dietary habits continue, while the medical schools have become completely dominated by Western medicine.

Because of the rumours in the Western world about the shortcomings of Western medicine and especially pharmacology, new interest is being shown in the use of herbs as medicaments. As a result, a

greater attention is being paid to Islamic medicine. Many Muslim governments are trying to provide medical coverage for all of their citizens, but both the rapid rise in population and the cost of training the physicians in the Western type of medical school make such a programme impossible. Moreover, medical care has become much worse in certain areas where the old hakims have died out without anyone taking their place. Therefore, there has been a conscious effort in certain countries, such as Persia, to bring back traditional medicine in combination with certain programmes for the spread of rural medicine.

As revealed at the International Conference on Islamic Medicine in Kuwait (1981), medical school curricula should emphasize that medicine is ‘worship’, both as an approach to Belief by contemplating on the Signs of God, as well as from the applied aspect by helping man in distress. Moreover, the medical school curricula should comprise the teachings and the study of the ‘Islamic Code of Medical Ethics’.

In conclusion, it can be said that Islamic medicine is fully alive in

Pakistan and Bangladesh and among the Muslims of India, and only partly alive in the rest of the Islamic world. Islamic medicine is still able to teach a great deal in fields as far apart as pharmacology and psychosomatic medicine to a humanity that has divorced the soul from the body.

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# Assessment of Belief - Part I

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**Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>  
(The Promised Messiah and Mahdi)**

Presented below is a translation of the address that was delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, on 31 August 1901 at the occasion of the visit to Qadian of the Municipal Commissioner of Vizirabad, Janab Babu Ghulam Mustafa Sahib. For the purposes of translation, the original Urdu script of this address has been taken from Malfoozat, Vol. 4, pp.1–9.

*Compiled and translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad*

*(Translator's note: All references to the verses of the Holy Qur'an are given in Arabic as they occur in the text. The English translation, presented in italics, is taken from the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib<sup>(ra)</sup>. Where the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text).*

A person cannot, in reality, abandon his old ideas until he begins to think with a clear mind, listens with careful attention and gives due consideration to all aspects of the matter. Hence, when a person hears something new, he should not immediately be ready to oppose it. It should be considered his duty to carefully consider all aspects of the matter with due care, honesty and justice. Above all, he should ponder over it in solitude with the fear of God before him.

What I wish to say at this time is no small or ordinary matter that can be given cursory attention. On the contrary, it is a matter of great

magnitude. It is not something that has been concocted by me – it is something that has been stated by God. It is for this reason that he who dares to falsify it, does not falsify me but falsifies the signs of God and dares to falsify the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam. Falsification of me at the hands of my opponents is not of concern to me but I do feel sorry for the person who, through his own foolishness, invites the wrath of God.

It is a well-known fact among all Muslims that it has been stated by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> that God will send a Reformer (among the Muslims) at the turn of every century – a Reformer who will rejuvenate the religion of Islam by facing whatever tribulation was confronting it at the time. This system of appointing Reformers comes under the promise made by God as stated in the Holy Qur'an in the following verse:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ  
إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most*

*surely We will be its Guardian.*  
(Ch.15:v.10)

In accordance with this promise and in accordance with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, revealed to him by God, it becomes necessary that at the head of this century of which nineteen years have already passed, there should be appointed [by God] a Reformer for rejuvenation of religion [of Islam] and for the reform of its followers. However, before the appointed Reformer [of the 14th century Hijri] made manifest his claim of having been appointed by God, it was incumbent upon the good and steadfast people that they should have searched for such a man of God with deep anguish and anxiety. They should have become keen and eager to hear the voice bearing the glad tiding that 'I am the one who has come from God in accordance with His promise'.

It is true that the eyes of the great people of this Umma [the followers of Islam] are upon the fourteenth century [Hijri] and the people who had been given indication through dreams, visions and revelation, all pointed to the fact that the Reformer appearing at the head of the

fourteenth century will be an extraordinary person of great distinction who has been given the title of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi [by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>] in the Ahadith. However, I have to say this that when the time came and the one who was to come appeared, there were few indeed who heard his voice. In short, the fact that a Reformer appears at the head of every century is nothing new or strange.

In short, in accordance with this promise it was necessary that in this century also there should be a Reformer and nineteen years have already passed since the beginning of this century. It is important, however, to also consider the second aspect of this matter as to whether in this age Islam is faced with grave difficulties and dangers of such magnitude that they are calling out for a Reformer. When we carefully consider this aspect it becomes evident that Islam does indeed suffer from two kinds of difficulties at the present time – one is internal and the other external.

Internally, the situation of Islam has come to be such that there have crept in a number of religious

innovations and polytheistic practices in place of beliefs and practices glorifying the Unity of God. Virtuous deeds are being replaced by social customs and traditions. Worship of graves and worship of *Pirs* [i.e. religious guides] has reached such extremes that it has become a permanent ‘religious law’ in itself. I am always surprised and amazed at the fact that such people accuse me of having claimed ‘Prophethood’, even though they have not understood what it is that I do say, but they do not look at their own situation and ponder over the fact that it is they who have claimed ‘Prophethood’ by creating a new religious law for themselves. The question that should be answered is this: Were the chants and mantras that the *Pirs* teach their followers invented by me or is it the case that I follow the religious law and practice of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> [of Islam] and that to add anything to that, however minute, is considered by me to be an act of infidelity.

There are many thousands of religious innovations that different sects have adopted for themselves. Righteousness and purity that were the true desired aims and

objectives of Islam, for the establishment of which the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> faced all manner of dangers, difficulties and tribulations. The extent of these tribulations was such that no heart except 'the heart of Prophethood', could have the capacity to bear. Yet, that true purpose of Islam has today vanished. Go to the prisons and see – you will find that deeds such as adultery, use of alcohol, usurping of the rights of others and many other criminal acts are taking place to such a large extent that it is as if it has been assumed that there is no God. If one were to discuss the different levels of the nature of problems and shortcomings experienced by nations, it would become a large volume. If every wise and thinking person were to ponder over the state of the different people of this nation, he will reach the conclusion that righteousness, that was the ultimate desired objective of the Holy Qur'an, that was indeed the true source of noble acts and the true cause of good deeds, does not exist today. There was an urgent need for the state of people's deeds and practices to be good, providing a clear distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims – instead, it has become extremely weak and bad.

Externally, you will note that all the different religions that presently exist [in India] wish to destroy Islam. Christianity in particular is a staunch enemy of Islam. All the efforts of the Christian missionaries and priests are aimed at somehow bringing about the destruction of the religion of Islam as far as possible and however possible. Furthermore, the Unity of God that was established by Islam and for which many lives have been sacrificed, should be made extinct and thereby make the world accept the deity of Christ and establish the belief in salvation through his blood which in turn leads to a life of free license. In this way the true purpose of creating a life of righteousness and purity that was the aim of Islam would be wiped out. The Christian priests, in trying to achieve success in these aims have adopted many different means and it is with regret that I have to state that they have converted to Christianity. Muslims numbering more than one-hundred thousand in number. Besides these there are many whom they have turned into neo-Christians and there is yet a much greater number of those who are of an atheistic inclination who maintain a lifestyle that is greatly under the influence of

Christianity. There is yet another group of people that comprises young people who were born in Muslim households but were educated in colleges and who give precedence to philosophy and medicine over the word of God. To this group of young Muslims Islam was a religion appropriate for the Arab deserts. When I see and hear of such things, I feel a deep sense of sadness that today Islam is surrounded and entrapped by enormous difficulties and tribulations and the progeny of the Muslims is suffering such a fate that Islam is considered to be against their tastes!

The third type of people are those who have not stepped outside the limits set by God as such – they have not turned the permissible into the prohibited – but they prefer the fashionable style of dress. They have set one foot inside Christianity. It can now be clearly understood that internally there are the religious innovations and the polytheistic customs [that have seriously harmed Islam] and externally there are the dangers, especially those posed by the religion of the cross that has done great damage. Islam was the religion that even if one person

turned away from the faith, an uproar was created. Against this is the situation that now there is no count of those who are turning away. If a wise person were to ponder over all these matters together, and if he were to ponder over them for the sake of God and consider whether there is not now the need for some special manifestation of God or is it the case that even now time has not come for the fulfilment of God's promise of safeguarding [this faith as expressed in this verse of the Holy Qur'an]:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ  
إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.*  
(Ch.15: v.10)

If it is in fact the case that there is not the need [in Islam] for the special manifestation and assistance of God, then someone should tell us as to when that time will come. Consider carefully and think over this matter that on the one hand events are indicating that there have arisen such needs that there should

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**IF IT IS IN FACT THE CASE THAT THERE IS NOT THE NEED [IN ISLAM] FOR THE SPECIAL MANIFESTATION AND ASSISTANCE OF GOD, THEN SOMEONE SHOULD TELL US AS TO WHEN THAT TIME WILL COME. CONSIDER CAREFULLY AND THINK OVER THIS MATTER THAT ON THE ONE HAND EVENTS ARE INDICATING THAT THERE HAVE ARISEN SUCH NEEDS THAT THERE SHOULD BE A SPECIAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD TO SUPPORT HIS RELIGION THROUGH TRUE PRACTICES AND HEAVENLY ASSISTANCE.**

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be a special manifestation of God to support His religion through true practices and heavenly assistance. On the other hand, the century has set a seal [on time that] in accordance with God's promise that was made through the lips of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> that at the head of every century there would appear a Reformer for the rejuvenation of the religion of Islam. Hence, a Reformer should now appear. The century has advanced by nineteen years and yet, despite the needs of the time, [according to the beliefs of the opponents] no Reformer has appeared. If this line of reasoning is to be accepted then for the sake of God ponder over what remains of the religion of Islam? Does not the adoption of such a view go against the promise made by God [in the verse].

إِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُونَ

*Most surely We will be its Guardian.*  
(Ch.15: v.10)

Does it not falsify the prophecy of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> regarding the appearance of a Reformer at the head of every century? Does it not lead to the conclusion that Islam is a religion that is faced by numerous tribulations yet God did not care for it?

If someone wishes to put my claim [of being God's appointed Reformer of this age] to one side, he may do so, but he should carefully consider the issues before replying. The fact is that by falsifying me, you forego Islam altogether. However, I say it

truly that in accordance with the promise made in the Holy Qur'an, God Almighty has safeguarded His religion and the prophecy of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> [with regard to this] has been fulfilled. It is so because it was exactly at the time of real need that God Almighty established this Movement [i.e. the Ahmadiyya Movement] and that is also in accordance with the glad tidings given to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. This proves that the word of God and the word of His Prophet is true. It is a person of wicked inclination who falsifies them.

My claim now becomes clear that I have been sent in this century for the reform of religion. I say it forcefully that I have been appointed by God and a period of over twenty-two years has passed since this appointment. For there to exist numerous signs supporting me for such a long period is in itself an accusation of God against the people [who oppose me] as well as being a complete argument [in my favour]. This is because the claim that has been made by me, that I have been sent for reform of the situation of conflict and strife, is a claim that is in accordance with the Holy Qur'an and the AHadith. Now, those who

falsify me, do not falsify me but falsify God and His Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. They do not, in fact, have any right to falsify until they can present some other Reformer instead of me because the time and period is indicating that a Reformer should appear because everywhere there is disturbance and dissension. The Holy Qur'an states that it is at such times of trouble that the appointed one appears for the safeguarding of Holy Qur'an and the AHadith states that at the head of every century a Reformer will appear. The needs of the time are there and the promises of safeguarding and reform are in addition to that, which leads to the situation that the denial of one who comes in accordance with needs and promises is possible only in the form of one of two arguments: either another Reformer should be presented or the promises [made by God] are falsified.

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*(To be continued)*

# Chirality or Sidedness in Nature

by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad

*This is an extract taken from the book Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth written by the author.*

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What is sidedness, what significance does it possess if any and why sidedness at all, are the questions to which we shall presently turn our attention. When moving in circles whether we begin to turn from right to left, or left to right, the quality of this exercise is not in the least altered in whichever direction we initiate the turn. If we pick up an object with our right hand or pick it up with our left, so long as it is lifted the question of right or left loses significance. The question of right or left will acquire significance only if we understand its underlying wisdom. But surprisingly, both in Islamic teachings and in some manifestations of natural laws, sidedness seems to be rigidly enforced without any apparent reason for its preference. In the chapter Life in the Perspective of Qur'anic Revelation we briefly mentioned that many verses of the Holy Qur'an speak of sidedness with a religious significance. This Qur'anic attitude is further

elaborated to some detail in many traditions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> which instruct the believers as to how they should conduct themselves in their everyday social and religious practices. They display a decided trend in favour of the right over the left.

Why such partiality in matters so trivial, as the mere preference of one side over the other, is a question intriguing enough in its application to religious teachings. But when addressed to a similar universal phenomenon of sidedness in nature, the enigma assumes astronomical proportions. Religious instructions are invariably dictated by a conscious human mind, or Divine teachings. No such Conscious Creator is recognized by the secular scientists to have designed any code of natural conduct. Why then this intriguing similarity between religion and nature in the area of sidedness? If not due to a common

origin, could it be reasonably dismissed as mere coincidence? But that is not all. The more we study the manifestations of sidedness in nature, the more we are overwhelmed by the element of wonder it generates. There is no known scientific rationale for its existence. Why nature should display such selective propensity of preferring one side over the other is a question which has not been answered until now and may yet remain unanswered for many a decade to come.

It should be worthy of note here, that according to the Qur'an every natural behaviour should be rationally explainable. The Qur'an categorically rules out any scenario of creation which is haphazard, disorderly or accidental. Hence, if not today, the dawn of that tomorrow may not be too far away when scientists will be able to fathom the deep underlying reasons beneath all expressions of sidedness in nature, however shallow they may appear at present.

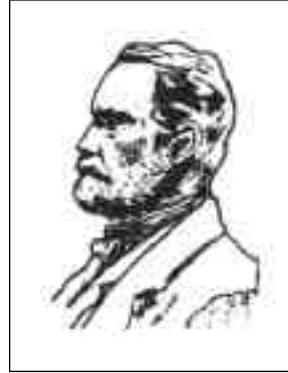
Before proceeding further, it seems appropriate to explain at some length the phenomenon of sidedness, or chirality, as found operative in

nature. It can easily be understood with reference to some group displays of children which highlight the excellence of their physical training. Children of some groups organized in circles of equal number are required to run clockwise while those of some other groups are instructed to run counter-clockwise. To enhance the spectacular effect they are generally so paired that if one of the pairs runs in one direction, then the other runs in the opposite one. Visualize just such a pair and you will grasp the meaning of sidedness or chirality in scientific terms. Although similar in all other respects, the image of the group moving from right to left cannot be superimposed on the group moving from left to right because of the opposite direction of their movement. Likewise, though all molecules spin, all do not spin in the same direction. Some move from right to left, while others do so from left to right. Some compounds of exactly the same chemical formula may contain both the right spinning and the left spinning molecules suspended together in a single solution; while some others are composed only of such molecules as move in just one direction. But chirality is not confined to the

molecular level alone, even the tiniest of subatomic particles display chirality.

The evidence of chirality in nature came to light only some one hundred and fifty years ago. It was Louis Pasteur, the great French scientist who discovered chirality in the spin of molecules in 1848. It is a great tribute to his exceptional intelligence and keen observation that while examining a certain salt of tartaric acid he noticed that there were two types of crystals, each a mirror image of the other.

He carefully separated the two, dissolved them in water and made a beam of light pass through the solution. He was surprised to discover that the polarized light was rotated differently by the two specimens. One was rotated clockwise and the other anticlockwise. This clearly meant that the molecules of the two separated specimens of tartaric acid were either spinning to the right or to the left - neither could be superimposed on the other. This was the first ever case of chirality observed by scientists at the elemental level.<sup>1</sup>



**Louis Pasteur**

Another singularly significant discovery in the same field was made yet again by Pasteur in 1857. One day he noticed the growth of a mould in a chemical solution lying in a jar. Instead of throwing away the solution as contaminated, he made a beam of light pass through it to examine the effect, if any, of that mould on the solution. He was astounded to discover that the solution, though inactive in relation to light prior to its contamination, had suddenly become active and started polarizing light. It was inactive in relation to light for the simple reason that it was composed of an equal number of right spinning and left spinning molecules each neutralizing the other's effect on light. Hence the polarity displayed by the contaminated specimen could only mean that the mould had eaten

up only such molecules as spun in the same direction and left completely untouched those which spun in the opposite. One mystery was thus resolved but only after having given birth to another much more complex one. How could a mere mould detect the spin of molecules with such unflinching exactness and why was it at all partial to the molecules spinning in any specific direction? These were the questions which baffled the mind of Pasteur then and still baffle the minds of scientists today. For how long they remain unanswered, the scientists know not. The magnitude of the dilemma is enormous. The molecules of any element or compound, right spinning or left spinning, share exactly the same chemical and physical properties. What or who dictates their propensity to spin in any particular direction is a brain-twister enough, but when it comes to the most uncanny ability of life to detect which molecules are spinning in which direction, the question acquires bizarre astronomical proportions. None of the five senses bestowed to man are equipped with any known mechanism which can determine the spin of molecules. The spinning molecules leave no imprint

on the property of matter to become detectable through human sensory organs. But what of moulds which have no known sensory organs; all they have is a diffused sense of awareness?

This amazing tale of chirality in nature does not end here. It just begins. Since the time of Pasteur, research on chirality has made tremendous progress and many more extremely perplexing examples have come to light testifying that chirality can be unmistakably detected by different species of life.

By now chirality is discovered to operate at every level of material existence. Yet the manner of how and why it so behaves is far from understood. Until 1957 it was believed that the four fundamental forces which govern the interaction of elementary particles were parity conserving. This simply means that all particles at elementary level had chiral-symmetry. However, in 1957 Chien-Shiung Wu and her colleagues at Columbia University discovered that beta particles emitted from radioactive nuclei did not display chiral-symmetry. The left-handed electrons far outnumbered the right-handed ones. It was further

discovered that the tiniest subatomic particles, neutrinos and anti-neutrinos, which are electrically neutral and move at the speed of light, also display a certain spin. But unlike electrons which predominantly prefer left-handed spin, anti-neutrinos are always partial to the right-hand. The contrary is not found in nature. No one knows why chiral-asymmetry exists at such fundamental levels of existence at all.

Many hypotheses are being presented but most are found to be simply preposterous when examined more minutely. However, there is one suggestion which seems to have provided scientists with a clue to the factor possibly at work at the most rudimentary level of chirality in nature. Yet at this level, it is too ethereal to be demonstrated or verified. It is related to a theory which unifies the weak and electromagnetic forces first propounded by Dr. Abdus Salam, Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Glashow in 1960. That theory predicted a new electroweak force which does not conserve parity. This disparity according to scientists could possibly be responsible for the right-handed spin of anti-neutrinos

and left-handed spin of neutrinos, as well as that of electrons. But this weak electric force cannot be contemplated as the causative factor to produce the right sided or left sided behaviours at all other levels of chirality. The behavioural difference between the two sometimes perplexes scientists, particularly in relation to the role they play in biotic evolution. The problem is further compounded when we observe that the two right sided and left sided components of exactly the same chemical formula exert a completely different influence on life in odd ways. The following are some fascinating examples:

Limonene is a compound found both in lemons and oranges. There is not the slightest difference in their chemical formula, yet the spin of limonene molecules in lemons is invariably opposite to the molecular spin of limonene found in oranges. Limonene in lemons is always right spinning while in oranges it is always left spinning. How on earth could lemons and oranges always pick the limonene of a specific spin for their consumption while the difference between their limonene is merely that of molecular spin? It needs to be emphasized yet again

that both the right-sided and left-sided specimens of limonene contain exactly the same chemical and physical properties. How the olfactory glands of the human nose can ever detect the difference of the spin in oranges and lemons and ascribe to them completely different smells is absolutely astounding. Of course there has to be some reason but as yet we cannot identify it.

Another example relates to the influence of chirality on life of a rather sinister nature. This came to light in 1963 when a drug, thalidomide, was introduced by a pharmaceutical company for the cure of morning sickness in pregnant women. Many were cured, but for many others it proved disastrous. Horrible congenital defects were found in the babies born to some mothers treated by the same drug. A subsequent intensive research revealed that the pharmaceutical company which manufactured thalidomide had inadvertently manufactured two types of thalidomide compounds of the same formula. While the molecules of one type spun in one direction, those of the second type spun in the other. While one type cured morning sickness without producing any

adverse effect on the embryo, the other type produced the most horrible congenital deformities instead of curing the morning sickness. The most profound side-effect was the deformities of the lower limbs among the infants born under its influence.

Another intriguing case of the detection of the spin and the preference of one spin over the other is found at the most fundamental level of life. Although there were several hundred amino acids freely available in the primordial soup from which such proteins were created as made the fundamental bricks of life (DNA and RNA), 'nature' selected only twenty amino acids out of them and they were all left spinning!

In the case of selecting molecules for building sugars however, the choice was reversed. The molecules of all the four different forms of sugars responsible for the provision of energy to all forms of life are, without exception, right spinning. This means that all natural sources of sugar available to life, like sugar cane, beet root, fruit, etc., manufacture sugar consisting only of right spinning molecules.

Nevertheless, a successful experiment was conducted a few years ago for synthesizing sugar comprising only left spinning molecules. It was discovered that this artificially synthesized sugar, though exactly the same in taste, chemical properties and cooking behaviour, was totally rejected by the human digestive system. Not a molecule was assimilated. This gave rise to the bizarre idea of manufacturing sugar consisting of only left spinning molecules on a commercial scale, not only for the benefit of diabetics but also for the pleasure of gourmands and gluttons. They could consume mountains of sugar without the fear of accumulating even a molehill of fat. The only snag is that, at present, the cost of manufacturing left spinning synthetic sugar is prohibitive. A mountain of money would be needed to produce a mere molehill of such sugar. Perhaps only the royal highnesses of oil rich monarchies sitting upon mountains of oil wealth could afford this luxury.

The apparently arbitrary preference for right or left also manifests itself in many other ways. Most humans are right-handed and the arrangement of the heart and liver is universally left sided and right sided

respectively, barring a few rare individual exceptions of course. Roger A. Hegstrom and Dillip K. Kondepudi in their jointly authored article *The Handedness of the Universe* published in Scientific American in January 1990, present many examples of handedness in nature without any apparent reason for preference. While observing that most people are right-handed, they fail to recognize any reason ‘...why right- and left-handed persons are not born in equal numbers.’<sup>2</sup>

But it is not a prerogative of the human race alone to display definite trends with regards to handedness.

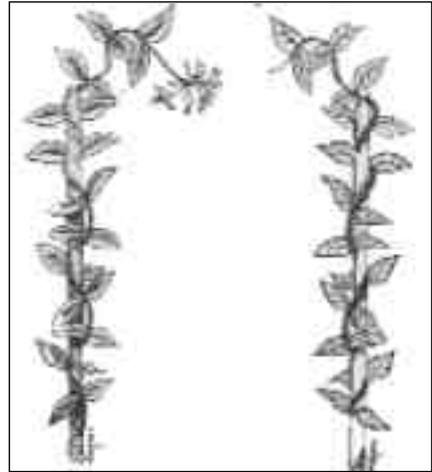
On partiality to sidedness as found in the animal kingdom and vegetative behaviour, they write:

‘Right-handed or dextral shells dominate-on both sides of the Equator. Among these right-dominated animals, left-handed individuals exist only as a result of mutations, which appear with a frequency ranging from about one in hundreds to one in millions, depending on the species.’<sup>3</sup>

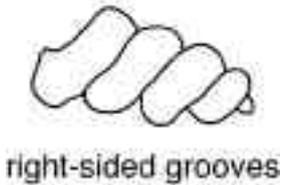
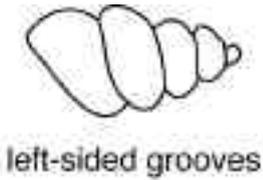
In contrast to them, the lightning-whelk of the Atlantic coast are

predominantly left-handed. In plants, the honeysuckle winds around its support in a left-handed helix while the bindweed prefers winding from right to left. Even in bacteria some of their colonies spiral from right to left yet as the temperature increases they reverse the spiral direction to left-handed turns.<sup>3</sup>

These are but a few cases. At every



**Honeysuckle and Bindweed**



level of evolution we find many other outstanding examples of how life displays partiality to the spin of molecules. Their study excites wonderment and leaves one bewildered. There has to be a Conscious All-Wise Supreme Selector who made choices at every stage of decision making or one has

to ascribe this role to the haphazard vagaries of blind nature!

We feel that at the end, the purpose of this exercise needs to be emphasized once again. The basic issue of discussion is whether revelation can play any role in transferring information from the realm of the unknown to the realm of the known. Every discussion under different titles in this treatise is invariably related to this issue. In this chapter the relevance may not have been clearly understood, hence the need for further elaboration of this point. We have already pointed out that in the entire comity of religions Islam stands out in its emphasis on sidedness in religious

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**LITTLE DID THE MAN OF THAT AGE KNOW THAT NOT ONLY IN MATTERS OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVISIONS, BUT ALSO IN THE DOMAIN OF SCIENCE, SIDEDNESS WOULD ACQUIRE SUCH IMPORTANCE AS COULD NEVER BE IMAGINED IN ANY PREVIOUS ERA.**

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behaviour and conduct. We respectfully draw the attention of the reader that in all other religions the opposite number of right is wrong, not left.

In Islam however, the word 'right' is not employed exclusively to indicate goodness, it is also employed to indicate 'the side' literally. As such, in this context the term 'right' is not used against 'wrong'; it is used against 'left'. This is clearly sidedness. In many Qur'anic verses right is decidedly mentioned in its preference over the left. It is these verses which must have provided the guidelines for the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> to direct the believers to prefer right over left in day-to-day religious conduct. His established practice was to always commence good things from his right side or by his right hand. The believers are told to perform ablution, for instance, with the right hand first. When they wear their shoes, they should insert the right

foot first. In the seating arrangements at a table, the guest of honour is seated on the right side of the host. At the birth of a child in Islam, the Muslim call for prayer (Azan) should be whispered into the right ear before whispering Al-Takbir in the left. Such instructions were not accidental but were specific down to the minutest detail. According to his instructions and his own personal consistent example, the Muslims are required to always use the right hand for touching and holding clean things, while the rest are left to the left hand. Hence when a Muslim shakes hands with others he is expected to do so with full confidence that he is offering a clean hand.

Instructions such as these clearly indicate that the concept of sidedness in religious and social behaviour were purposefully incorporated in Islam. It is also in this sense that the prophecies concerning the future of mankind use the terms

‘rightist’ and ‘leftist’. Hence the political and economic division in the contemporary age, based on the rightist philosophy or the leftist philosophy, tally clearly with the Qur’anic prophecies regarding the future of mankind.

Why is it that it is Islam alone which emphasizes sidedness so strongly while other Divinely revealed religions do not even mention it?

In answer to this question, it should be well understood that according to the Qur’an, the age of all other religions had come to an end with the dawn of Islam. Polarity and sidedness are the trends which had not yet been born in human affairs in the age prior to it. It was only Islam which was to address the people of an age where polarity and sidedness were to become common coinage in matters of expression.

Looking at it from this angle, the evidence of sidedness in day-to-day behavioural matters was in a way prophetic, that man was about to be ushered into that advanced age when sidedness would acquire new depths and new dimensions. This is exactly what has come to pass. Little did the man of that age know that not only

in matters of political and economic divisions, but also in the domain of science, sidedness would acquire such importance as could never be imagined in any previous era.

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# Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> - Development of Greek Philosophy and Religion

by *Fazal Ahmad - UK*

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**Ancient Greek culture developed rapidly before it came into contact with foreign cultures from Egypt, India and elsewhere. At some point in time this triggered the development of philosophy and religion.**

**This article examines the early development of religious concepts related to God, the soul, morality and society in Ancient Greece and the role of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> and his contemporaries.**

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## **Introduction**

The Greeks were one of the earliest cultures alongside the Egyptians, Persians and Indians to contemplate their lives, actions, beliefs, life after death, and the universe in which they co-existed with the rest of nature.

Over a period of a few hundred years before Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>, the Greeks had made huge advances in mathematics, philosophy, art, astronomy, medicine, music and politics. Their achievements are acknowledged to this day, but would have been lost but for the endeavours of the Islamic culture to preserve and translate their work, and to take their knowledge to new boundaries.

## **Early Development of Greek Thought**

The Greek civilization began to develop as early as 7000 BC when a farming community settled in the region. By around 2000 BC, the Minoan culture of Crete (a large Island near the Greek archipelago) became the dominant power of the region. After the eruption of the volcano on Thera around 1500 BC, the Minoans lost their power, and the Greeks began to rise in strength.

Over the period 1000 BC to the time of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>, the Greeks began to develop concepts of philosophy linked to science, politics and the arts. The question could be asked as to whether these were random developments in an advanced

culture, or whether any of these developments could have been framed within a religious context, and perhaps even through the bounty of Divine Revelation.

### **Greek Philosophy Flourishes**

It was at this time that some of the early schools of thought emerged. The Greeks had an essentially pagan culture in which they worshipped a plethora of gods and goddesses which were ultimately to have an effect on shaping the new religion of Christianity many centuries later. The Greek pantheon consisted of the following:

- Zeus - sky god
- Athene - virgin goddess
- Apollo - the brilliant god
- Artemis - chaste goddess of the hunt
- Poseidon - god of the sea
- Hades – the underworld

There were several others, but this list gives a flavour of ancient Greek religion, and there was a vast web of mythology by now built up around each of these characters. It was out of this chaotic view of religion and deity that the later philosophers of Greece tried to carve some harmony and order.

Pythagoras (580 – 500 BC) of Samos began to delve deeper into spirituality. Born in the 6th century BC according to some legends of a virgin to the god Apollo, in the knowledge that he was to serve mankind, he travelled widely and was trained in the Orphic, Judaic, Egyptian, Chaldean, Hindu and Zoroastrian traditions. Again according to some traditions, Pythagoras was later known as the ‘son of god’ and was the first Greek to call himself a philosopher – one trying to find out.

Pythagoras was aware of the soul, and taught that the soul was trapped in the human body as a punishment for sin, and could therefore be condemned to several incarnations, whether human or animal. His views showed an influence from Indian Hindu beliefs of reincarnation, and indeed, the pantheon of gods and goddesses amassed by the Greeks also bore the hallmarks of the Vedic Triad and other Hindu incarnations.

He also taught that all knowledge stemmed from mathematics, and related musical, astronomical and spiritual phenomenon to numerical relationships. He died at the age of



**Map of Classical Greece**

60, but the order of his followers lasted 250 years.

Another contemporary of Pythagoras was Xenophanes (563 – 483 BC) from Colophon who is reported to have said:

‘There is one God, greatest among gods and men, neither in shape nor in thought like unto mortals. ... He is all sight, all mind, all ear. ... Yet men imagine gods to be born, and to have raiment, voice and body, like themselves.’

Xenophanes was arguing against the unsophisticated approach of the Greeks to their deities. He argued that all creatures could view God in their own image, and thus humans had created a complex mythology assigning human form and weakness to God, as he wrote:

‘If cattle or horses, or lions, had hands, or were able to draw with their feet and produce the works which men do, horses would draw the forms of gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make the gods’ bodies the same shape as their own.’

(Xenophanes quoted by Diogenes Laertius)

In actual fact, Xenophanes was showing that God is a supreme power, beyond the forms and attributes that we could envisage. Could Xenophanes have been one of the first true monotheists of Europe?

So we can see that religious thought was evolving and debated at the time in Greece, and this was fertile ground for spiritual advancement. The state view was that all youths had to study Homer’s epics *The Iliad* (story of the siege of Troy) and

*The Odyssey* (journey home of the hero Odysseus after the war).

Ironically, nothing is known of Homer, and indeed doubts have been raised about whether Homer was a person or a group of traditions. Nevertheless, to the Greeks, the writings embodied everything that was moral, practical, heroic and poetic, and therefore all young Athenians had to digest Homer, and this alone would arm and equip them to cope with the rigours of life.

### **Life of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>**

Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> was born in Athens in 469 BC. He soon developed his thoughts on philosophy much as Pythagoras had done before him. Unfortunately, he left behind no direct written record of his beliefs, however we do have detailed accounts of his life recorded by Plato and also by the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens. From these records and accounts, we can piece together information about his life, his beliefs and his character.

As a youth, Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> would have received the normal training in science, music and gymnastics. These were the accepted subjects of

virtue during the classical Greek period. He was known as a sculptor, and some of his work is thought to have been on show on the road up to the Acropolis of Athens at one point.

However, he soon gave this up as he received a series of dreams, revelations and signs which pointed to his Divine mission to reform the people of Athens. He wanted to show them the futility of their beliefs and lifestyle in order to encourage them towards a more intellectual and moral lifestyle. Throughout the rest of his life, he was guided by his 'divine voice', and referred to this contact with God in such personal terms that modern religious people would recognise. Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> believed his 'voice' and never went against it, believing that the voice always pointed him to truth and good.

Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> had a unique style of preaching in which he would question someone on a subject from several directions and then draw out his conclusion, a style also later used by Confucius<sup>(as)</sup> among the Chinese people. A good example is a recorded conversation between Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> and a retired general, Laches, on the subject of what constitutes bravery:

*Socrates:* I wanted to get your opinion not only of bravery in the hoplite line, but also in cavalry engagements and in all forms of fighting; and indeed of bravery not only in fighting, but also at sea, and in the face of illness and poverty and public affairs. And there is bravery not only in face of pain and fear, but also of desire and pleasure, both fearsome to fight against whether by attack or retreat - for some men are brave in all these encounters, aren't they, Laches?

*Laches:* Yes, certainly.

*Socrates:* Then all these are examples of bravery, only some men show it in pleasure, some in pain, some in desire, some in danger. And there are others who show cowardice in the same circumstances.

*Laches:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Now what I want to know was just what each of these two qualities is. So try again and tell me first, what is this common characteristic of courage which they all share? Do you understand what I mean?

In these discussions, Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> encouraged people to think about deeper meanings, and to dwell on why they did and said things. He also encouraged the youth to think about their actions and thoughts, and not to leave all of their understanding to Homer as the state had mandated.

He also held some status, although he shunned politics as it interfered with his spiritual mission. However, in holding some office, he was bold and fearless in often standing alone for what he believed to be the right course of action. Examples included when he alone stood against the proposal against the victors of Arginusae in 406 BC. Two years later, he also disobeyed the Thirty Tyrants during their reign of terror.

The extensive preaching of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> and his principled stance had annoyed the Greek state who had him arrested in 399 BC. The accusers were Meletus, a poet, Anytus, a politician, and Lycon, an orator. The charge was as follows:

‘Socrates does wrong by not acknowledging the gods the city acknowledges and introducing other, new powers. He also does

wrong by corrupting the youth.’  
(Freeman, p.267)

According to the account of Plato, he refused to take up a rhetorical argument in order to defend himself, but instead adopted a more sober approach. He began his defence according to Plato’s apology with the following words:

‘Well then, I must make my defence, and endeavour to clear away in a short time, a slander which has lasted a long time. ... And so **leaving the event with God**, in obedience to the law, I will now make my defence.’  
(Apology, 19a)

He had opportunities to get himself a lighter sentence but resisted and stood his ground. He seemed oblivious to his impending death, and even stated that he could be going to a better place. He was sentenced to death, and after many days of imprisonment, he was forced to drink hemlock, and died.

### **Character of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>**

Plato in his work *Symposium*, captures the thoughts of Alcibiades, a wealthy politician in Athens, and his reaction on listening to the

preaching of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> as follows:

‘When I listen to him, my heart pounds ... its a sort of frenzy ... possessed ... and the tears stream out of me at what he says. And I can see a lot of other people that he’s had just the same effect on. I’ve heard Pericles, I’ve heard plenty more good speakers and I thought they did pretty well, but they never had an effect like this on me. My soul wasn’t turned upside down by them and it didn’t suffer from the feeling that I’m dirt.’

(Freeman, p.264)

Alcibiades was describing his interaction with a unique man, not a politician, nor an egotist, but someone with conviction and a strong sense of good and evil, right and wrong, who could stir his listeners in the way that only a prophet of God can. Plato even described Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> as ‘*the most just man of his time*’.

Another of his friends described him in the following terms:

‘so pious that he did nothing without taking counsel of the

### **Greek Philosophers**

Pythagoras (580 - 500 BC) - originally of Samos, he developed a fraternity who believed that the unity and order of the world could be seen through Science, Mathematics and Music.

Socrates (469 - 399 BC) - developed concepts of virtue and vice, and encouraged people to contemplate on their actions.

Plato (427 - 347 BC) - founded the academy in Athens in 387 BC. He stressed the major virtues of wisdom, courage, sobriety and justice.

Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) - founded the Lyceum at Athens. He encouraged analytical thinking, experimentation and speculation.

Epicurus (342 - 271 BC) - brought his concept of a life withdrawn from politics from his upbringing on Samos. He encouraged the fight of reason, and in its path, the acceptance of pain and no fear of death.

Zeno of Citium (336 - 263 BC) - developed Stoicism and the humanist ideal.

Aristarchus (320 - 250 BC) - from Samos, developed concept of a Sun-centred universe, with the Earth revolving around the Sun.

Posidonius (130 - 50 BC) - came from Apamea and founded of the School of Rhodes, and the fusion of Stoicism with mysticism.

gods, so just that he never did an injury to any man, whilst he was the benefactor of his associates, so temperate that he never preferred pleasure to right, so wise that in judging of good and evil he was never at fault - in a word, the best and the happiest of men.'

These attributes describe a pious man who reflected upon his own actions and words, and took each step with care so as not to offend God, and the 'voice' of God that he had grown accustomed to. The historian Xenophon made the following observations about him:

'No one ever knew of his doing or saying anything profane or unholy.'

Another interesting facet of the character of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> was that he was able to discuss his ideas and beliefs with people of all strata of society and from all walks of life.

Greek culture was very structured and hierarchical just as society was in India, Egypt and elsewhere, and normally poets, scientists and politicians held discussions amongst themselves as the *intelegensia*. At

that time, Athenian society consisted of the following classes:

- *pentakosiomedimnoi* - upper class of property owners;
- *hippeis* - middle class;
- *zeugitai* - peasants;
- *thetes* - property-less class.

Even in political life, the Athenians elected their *Archons* and the keeper of the Treasury from amongst members of the first class, and the 400 members of the Council were elected from members of the upper classes. The lower classes were permitted to take part in the popular assembly and courts.

However, for Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>, his God was the creator of all mankind, and the messages and the reform of society applied to all men and women in Athens, therefore he was just as comfortable having discussions with poets, historians and military men at one level, and then with shoemakers and carpenters at another (Ahmad, p.81). This again is a quality that we see amongst prophets such as Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>, Moses<sup>(as)</sup> and Buddha<sup>(as)</sup>.

### **Beliefs of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>**

At that time, much of the brain-

power of Athens had been devoted to the study of science and external nature, but he began to change that balance more towards mankind and the effects of actions and thoughts. He wanted to give his followers an understanding of what it would mean to live a good and pious life. Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> tried to teach people about the meaning of life and death and was surprised at their reaction as he said:

‘Nobody knows what death is, nor whether to man it is perchance the greatest of blessings, yet people fear it as if they surely knew it to be the worst of evils.’

He also challenged the ancient Greek concept of the soul or *psyche*. Ancient belief was that the soul was a mirror of the deceased person which moved from the worlds of the living and the dead. Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> argued that the soul was distinct from the physical body. He argued that the *psyche* had a natural tendency towards good, a concept which was later challenged by Aristotle (Freeman, p.281).

Most strikingly though, Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> held a personal view of God which

leads us to the view that he was the recipient of dreams and revelations, especially when we consider the impact that he suddenly made upon Athenian life.

He was able to reconcile his belief in a Supreme Being and Creator of the universe against the state polytheism by referring to the common law of nature. He was defiant against the plurality that had developed in Greek religion out of their mythology. He encouraged his fellow Athenians to pray for good rather than for material gain.

#### **After Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>**

Many schools of thought developed after Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>. The reason we have so much knowledge about him in the first place is through the writings of his admirer Plato. Plato was so moved by the predicament of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> that he wrote about his life and the subsequent trial in his famous works *Dialogues*, *Apology* and *Symposium*. He also accepted the view that the Universe was governed by an invisible force.

At the same time, there had been many followers who had got closer to Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> during his lifetime according to Xenophon in order to:

‘become good men and true, capable of doing their duty by house and household, by relations and friends, by city and fellow citizens.’

Some of these followers had got closer still (in Christianity, they would have been called disciples) and upon his death, they took it upon themselves to continue to transmit his message.

Plato believed that the visible world did not contain all knowledge and truth, and was rather a façade for an unseen world where truth and knowledge existed.

By the time Aristotle of Stagira came on the scene, the concept of God was reduced to one of the initial cause of Nature, but as not playing an active role thereafter (Ahmad, p.77).

### Conclusion

Islam, Christianity and Judaism all share a common heritage of prophets in the line from Abraham<sup>(as)</sup>. However, the Qur’an is unique in acknowledging that other prophets also existed outside of the middle east, as we later understood through a study of Krishna<sup>(as)</sup>,

Buddha<sup>(as)</sup>, Confucius<sup>(as)</sup> and so on. The Qur’an alludes to this in several places:

*‘And We did raise among every people a Messenger preaching: “Worship Allah and shun the Evil One”. Then among them were some whom Allah guided and among them were some who became deserving of ruin.’*  
(Holy Qur’an, Ch.16: v.37)

In another verse we read:

*‘Surely, We have sent revelation to thee, as We sent revelation to Noah and the Prophets after him; and We sent revelation to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children and to Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave David a book. And We sent some Messengers whom We have already mentioned to thee **and some Messengers whom We have not mentioned to thee**’.*  
(Ch.4: vs.164-165)

There are no written works from many of the early prophets of God to demonstrate their beliefs, however the evidence they leave behind in the reaction of their people and their

influence on historians and future generations of religious thinkers provide us with strong clues about them.

In the case of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup>, we are lucky in that accounts of his life, works and beliefs have been recorded in some form by one of his students, Plato. While the accuracy of these works could be debated, there is no doubt about the general picture that emerges.

We have to rely on this kind of evidence for prophets among other races also such as the Egyptians. So using the best sources of evidence that we have available to us, we can infer through the life, works and sayings of Socrates<sup>(as)</sup> that he was more than likely a prophet of God.

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# Division and Unity

**Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the Fourth Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, from time to time offers to people of all nationalities, faiths and beliefs the opportunity of raising questions and issues that are of interest to them. Presented below is an answer to a question that was raised in a session held at the London Mosque on 14 September 1984.**

*Compiled by Amatul Hadi Ahmad*

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## **Questioner:**

I wish to ask how we can know that of the seventy-two sects which exist within Islam why is the Ahmadiyya Community the right one?

## **Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:**

This question was first raised about fourteen hundred years ago and was asked directly of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam and his answer is obviously the best answer. A better answer could not possibly be given to this question than the answer that has already been given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>, the Founder of Islam. His answer makes this apparently difficult issue very easy to resolve. The question in itself is very difficult particularly for a newcomer to Islam, such as yourself, who finds Islam divided into seventy-two

sects plus one, that is, the Ahmadiyya Community. It is not so much a question of whether the Ahmadiyya Community is right or whether the others are right – it is an open question for all. Of the seventy-three sects one is the Ahmadiyya Community and seventy-two other sects each one of which claims to be the sect whose followers are deemed to enter heaven. For a newcomer who may be a convert from Christianity or from some other religion, this situation presents great confusion and requires a very difficult judgement to be made. However, consider the greatness of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam when we discover how easy he has made it for us to decide upon this question and how simply he has resolved this issue. He was asked the same question by one of his Companions – the question was: O' Prophet of

God! How will we find out which one out of the ‘seventy-two’ (or ‘seventy-three’) sects is the sect that will enter heaven and which ones are the sects that are bound for hell (as had been described by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> earlier)? Before proceeding further, however, it would be helpful if we consider briefly the background to this question. The question arose as the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was explaining to his Companions how in the future a time would come upon Islam when the Muslims would be divided into seventy-two sects and another sect, (a *Jama’at*), that would be in addition to the seventy-two sects and would be a distinct entity, separate from the other seventy-two sects. He further stated that the seventy-two sects would be hell bound and the one distinct *Jama’at* will be heaven bound. These were the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam – as translated by me. Hearing this description from the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, one of his Companions became concerned and asked the question as to how we could find out which one of the seventy-three was that fortunate sect? This is a very difficult

question indeed but consider the answer – the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> stated: *Ma ana alaihe wa ashabi*, (that is, those who follow my example and that of my Companions), thus simplifying what was otherwise a very complex issue. In other words, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was stating that you need not be in any doubt as to which of those sects is on the right path – the sect that you find to be in a situation closely resembling mine and that of my Companions, that would be the sect whose followers would be heaven bound.

The question here arises as to what was the situation of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his Companions and who was responsible for creating [the extreme hardships and cruelties that they had to endure]? An understanding of the answer to this question simplifies the whole matter.

The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers were not permitted to proclaim *La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* (meaning ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger’ –

this being the first article of faith of Islam). For uttering these words, the early Muslims were cruelly punished. They were dragged along the stony streets of Mecca and were at times put to such extremes of torture as can possibly be invented by evil human beings. The Meccans thought up various kinds of torture with which the Muslims were tormented merely for uttering the words: *La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah*. They were, in fact, forbidden to do so.

The next question that arises here and needs to be addressed is to ask which sect today is not permitted, in a Muslim country, to utter the same words: *La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* or to inscribe these words upon the walls of its mosques? It is the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, none other, that is receiving such harsh treatment. The other sects within Islam have their animosities and their hostilities between themselves – each sect opposes the other and there is no doubt about this. Each sect declares the other to be an infidel but each permits the other the use of the *Kalima*, that is

to pronounce *La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* – that is ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger’. The only sect that stands alone and is distinct in this is the Ahmadiyya Jama'at. The Government agencies come along with the Mullahs and they wipe out the *Kalima* themselves from the walls of the Ahmadiyya mosques. They have to do this themselves because the Ahmadis do not acquiesce to such demands and they refuse to commit the outrage of erasing with their own hands the *Kalima*, that is, the words ‘*La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah*’. Such events decide one thing very clearly which is that in our time the situation that was faced by the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers is being repeated and is being faced only by one sect and that is the Ahmadiyya Community.

The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers were also not permitted to build mosques. It is on record that during the Meccan days, Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique, who later became the first Caliph of Islam, built a mosque in his own

courtyard as the Muslims were not permitted to build mosques outside. He was, however, stopped from building a mosque even in his own courtyard. A mob of Meccans entered his house forcibly and told Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique that he could not build a mosque as it was not permitted – not even in a Muslim’s own courtyard. Exactly the same situation was repeated in our own time in Karachi, Pakistan, a few months ago. Generally, this has been happening for a long time. Ahmadiyya mosques have been damaged, demolished and even burned down – that is a common story. This particular incident, however, was almost an exact repeat of the incident that took place in Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique’s courtyard many hundred years earlier. In Karachi, a mob entered the house of an Ahmadi and stopped him and other fellow Ahmadis from offering congregational prayers in his house saying that his house had been turned into a mosque and they would not permit it. They said that they felt insulted and were deeply hurt if an Ahmadi offered congregational prayers in his own house. [The anger of the mob]

endangered the family’s lives so much that they had to leave their house and were given refuge in a neighbour’s house and this is a common story. Is there any other sect in Islam that shares this situation with the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his Companions? There is none other than the Ahmadis.

Furthermore, Ahmadis are told by their opponents that they are not going to be accepted as Muslims to the extent that they are not permitted even to name themselves as Muslims. It is we, the non-Ahmadis, they say, who have the right to give you a name and we have named you either ‘Mirzai’ or ‘Qadiani’ – but not Ahmadis. In other words, they say that the title of ‘Muslim’ is out of the question but we will not permit you even to name your own sect.

At the time of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> the Muslims were treated in the same way. It has been recorded in the Holy Qur’an that the Muslims were told by the Meccans that your name is ‘Saabi’ and not Muslim. *Hadith*, (i.e. a record of the actions and sayings of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>), also speaks of this in

detail and tells us that on one occasion Hadhrat Umar Farooq [who was later to become the second Caliph of Islam] went to the Kaaba, the holy place of worship in Mecca. He had someone with him to declare that he, that is, Hadhrat Umar, had become a Muslim. Upon hearing this announcement, the person who made the announcement was mobbed and beaten up by the Meccans who said that they could use the word 'Saabi' but not 'Muslim'. The name 'Saabi', they asserted, was permitted as they had chosen that name for the followers of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> but to declare themselves as Muslims, that was preposterous and was not to be permitted. Another Companion of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was violently attacked for the simple act of declaring himself to be a Muslim. His own words regarding this event have been recorded and preserved in history. He said that he was so violently beaten up that he lost his sight and he did not know which way he was going. This is the punishment that has also been meted out to Ahmadis. Simply for declaring themselves to be Muslims, Ahmadis in Pakistan

have been imprisoned, they have been thrown into filthy lavatories and kept locked up there by the police who told them that this was their punishment for insisting upon calling themselves Muslims. Is there any other sect in Islam that is or has been treated like this for calling themselves Muslims? The answer has to be that the Ahmadiyya Jama'at is the only sect that has been treated in this way.

In short, we are told that we are not permitted to offer prayers in congregation. We are declared renegades and the punishment for renegades according to the Mullahs is stoning to death or to be killed – by whosoever wishes to do so. Daily we receive reports from Pakistan that under the marshal regime [of General Zia] which is extremely sensitive to its own criticism – even the slightest finger raised against it is 'cut off' – yet it is very lenient towards the Maulvis and the Mullahs who declare that Ahmadi life and property should be confiscated in the light of Islam. They do not mind that the Mullahs go on preaching openly to all that to kill Ahmadis is not forbidden – they

preach in fact that to kill an Ahmadi is to find a way to heaven. This situation has persisted for a long time and nobody seems to check and no one minds. This, however, was exactly the state of affairs that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his Companions had to face. It was openly declared that whoever kills a Muslim, a follower of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> would be performing a good deed that would be rewarded. They declared it to be a commendable act if the homes of the Muslims were looted or forcibly occupied and their ladies were dishonoured – whatever offences they wished to commit against the Muslims were, in fact, permissible. This is what happened to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers and the same is happening to us.

In Pakistan, the cruel treatment of Ahmadis reaches such extremes that at times some government officers themselves recoil from it. This is because cruelty in the end does have an affect on human nature. Sometimes it happens that those who witness cruel acts reach a threshold beyond which they cannot tolerate witnessing that

cruelty being perpetrated. I have just received a report of a Marshall Law Administrator who observed for a time the cruel treatment in his region of Ahmadis at the hands of the Mullahs and their followers. The Mullahs in that region were particularly hostile and treated Ahmadis so abusively and cruelly that ultimately it proved too much for the Administrator to bear – it went beyond the limits of his toleration. Consequently, he called the Mullahs and admonished them severely. He pointed out to them that if their cruel acts against the Ahmadis were repeated, they would be severely punished. The words he used were to the effect that from now on if the Mullahs tried to send the Ahmadis to hell, as they claimed to do, he would be sending the Mullahs to hell – so they should be prepared for this. Such incidents show that in face of the cruelties perpetrated against the Ahmadis, some of the opponents are breaking down themselves as did many an opponent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> who ultimately broke down in the face of extreme cruelty being perpetrated against the followers of the Holy

Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. Hadhrat Umar Farooq, for instance, became a Muslim because of the oppression of the Muslims and the cruel, inhuman treatment of the Muslims that he witnessed. It sometimes so happens that the hardness of the oppressor softens in face of the cruelty meted out to the oppressed and this appears to be what happened to Hadhrat Umar Farooq.

In short, take all these situations that were faced by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam and his Companions, and you will find that all of them are found together in one sect alone and that is the Jama'at Ahmadiyya. The similarity is brought even closer when one considers the fact that even Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, is not permitted for the Ahmadiyya Jama'at.

In 1974 when the Ahmadis were declared to be non-Muslims, (by an Ordinance of the Government) they were also forbidden by the Pakistani Government to perform Hajj. The Saudi Government also took the same action at least against the Pakistani Ahmadis.

They generally close their eyes to Ahmadis coming to their country from other directions for the purpose of performing Hajj, if they can afford to do so. However, if the matter comes to their attention openly then they find that they have to impose their regulation to prevent Ahmadis from performing the Pilgrimage. One of the questions that naturally arises here is to ask who was the first person in history who was prevented from performing the Pilgrimage to Mecca and the answer is that it was the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam himself who was prevented from performing the Pilgrimage at the time of the Agreement of Hudaibiyya. It is named after the field of Hudaibiyya where the agreement was reached between the Meccans and the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers.

It was there that he was prevented from going further in the direction of Mecca. Since that time now, in the present time, it is the members of the Ahmadiyya Community, as a sect, who are prevented from performing the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

The circumstances [in which the Ahmadiyya Jama'at finds itself] speak for themselves and this is the beauty of the answer given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> in that a decision in this matter does not require one to be a learned person [it makes it possible even for an illiterate Muslim to make a decision for himself]. However, if it were the case that the Muslims had not been provided with such a simple solution to this question, it would still have been binding upon them to make a judgement as to which of the seventy-three sects was right and, therefore, heaven bound. In a binding injunction lack of knowledge cannot be permitted as an excuse for one's inability to reach the right judgement. It can be argued, however, that in such a scenario an illiterate person could complain before God that God had Himself ordained his birth in an illiterate family and thus it was an impossible task for him to discover the truth through making a study of the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam. In short, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam has saved us from all such difficulties by giving an answer which can be understood equally

by the illiterate as well as the literate, by the black as well as the white because these events are a part of the history of Islam that is known to everyone. Every Muslim, right from his childhood, is taught about the circumstances that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his Companions had to encounter. Hence, even in the remotest corners of the Muslim world the Holy Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> guidance in this matter provides a light for all to see.

In conclusion, I think this is the best proof we have of our truth, of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at being the sect that is right. However, if you wish to investigate this issue in greater depth, there is literature available on this subject in different languages that can help you to pursue this matter further.

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# A Unique Cosmic Heavenly Sign

by M.Alikoya – India

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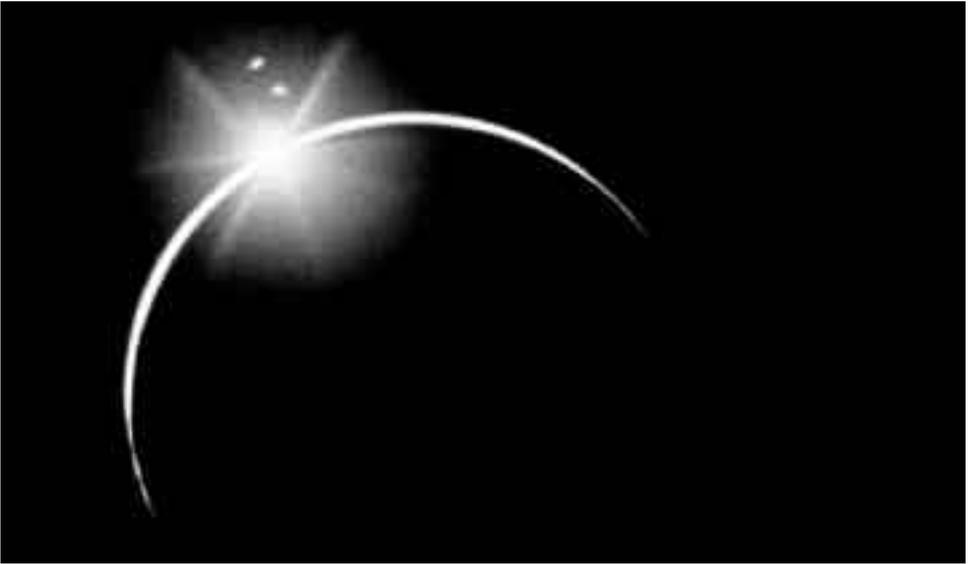
**The lunar and solar eclipses of 1894 provided a heavenly sign for the advent of the Messiah for all of the world. Here the author explores the expectation of the signs of the Messiah in many world faiths and in Islam. This article is reproduced from the *Minaret* quarterly journal published in Kerala, India in January 2001, of which the author is one of the executives.**

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A number of spiritual teachers have prophesied about the advent of a Mahdi or Messiah (Divine Reformer) in the latter days. Buddhist and Hindu scriptures have clearly alluded to the appearance of a Reformer in the latter days. The Gospels – Amos 8:9; Matthew 24:29 and the Holy Qur'an 75:9-10, have also referred to the second advent of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>. Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> himself has clearly mentioned about his second coming in the latter days. He further said that every eye would witness the arrival of the Messiah. The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam had mentioned an exact timetable for the advent of the

Mahdi (Messiah of Islam) and foretold how every eye would be able to witness it. Never before has a heavenly Sign given testimony to the arrival of a Prophet. But for the promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> who is the Mahdi for Muslims, Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> for Christians and Jews, Buddha<sup>(as)</sup> for Buddhists and Krishna<sup>(as)</sup> for Hindus, a heavenly Sign would appear so that every eye which has vision to see would be able to witness it.

The Signs mentioned in old scriptures and in the Qur'an indicated the time of the advent of this Promised Messiah which



have been fulfilled in this age. A mighty proof of the truth of the Qur'an is that in accordance with the prophecies made in it, a man has been raised by Almighty God in this age who has claimed to be the promised Messiah and Mahdi. This claimant was the late Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> (1835 – 1908) of Qadian in India, the founder of the Ahmadiyya community in Islam.

It is worth pondering over this great prophecy of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam. How beautifully it has come to fruition. The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> presented this

prediction when mankind had no clue of fore-casting any such heavenly signs. The great fulfilment of this prophecy proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was endowed with Divine inspiration.

#### **Traditions about the Mahdi**

There are several traditions relating to the coming of the Mahdi of Islam. In the Qur'an, there is the following verse:

*Allah will raise him among others who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the*

*Wise. That is Allah's Grace.  
He bestows it on whom He  
pleases. And Allah is the Lord  
of immense Grace.*  
(Holy Qur'an: Ch.62, vs.4-5)

Explaining these verses, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> is reported by Bukhari to have said that:

‘If faith were to go up to Pleiades, a man of Persian descent will bring it back.’

Below are several other traditions in Islam about the arrival of the Mahdi:

‘I swear on Him who holds my life in his hands that the son of Mary shall surely appear amongst you as a just Arbiter and will break the Cross and annihilate the swine.’  
(Hadith of *Bukhari*)

‘I give you the glad tidings of the Al-Mahdi who will be raised by my Ummah at the time of the decadent people. He will fill the earth with

equity and justice.’  
(Musnad Ahmad)

At the time of the advent of the Mahdi, there would be a general disregard of the Qur'an and a weakening of Islam. Evil would be prevalent with open adultery, unnatural crimes, the bearing of false witness, the predominance of the use of the pen and trade on a massive scale. People would be engrossed in their worldly affairs, would be prone to apostasy and forming new creeds, Islam would splinter and there would be the appearance of the Dajjal and Gog and Magog in the world.

Hadhrat Ali<sup>(ra)</sup>, one of the great Caliphs of Islam is reported to have said:

‘The Mahdi shall resemble the Holy Prophet in character and not in personal appearance. The Promised Messiah will point out the errors of Christianity and it is on this count that he is called Jesus son of Mary. He will restore Islam to its pristine glory and

lustre and is called Ahmad.’  
(Hadithul Ghasia)

There are traditions in Shia’a Islam contained in the text *Biharul Anwar*:

‘The Mahdi will have a double name. One will be Ghulam and the other Ahmad and still another Muhammad and he will also be called Isa (Jesus) Masih’.

(*Biharul Anwar*, Vol.13, pp.7-8)

‘The Promised Messiah will break the Cross, i.e. he will refute and annihilate the creed of crucifixion by arguments against it.’

(*Biharul Anwar*, Vol.3, p.198)

A number of saints such as Syed Ahmad Sirhind and Shah Waliullah Dehlavi reminded Muslims of the advent of the Mahdi. The learned and the divines yearned to live long enough to be blessed with the presence of this august person and enjoined upon their children

to convey their respects to him when he appeared. There was a consensus among the Muslim sects that the Mahdi would appear at the beginning of the 14th century of Islam.

### **Prophecies of Eclipses from other Scriptures**

In the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> narrating the signs of his second coming said:

‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light.’  
(Matthew 24:29)

In the Hindu scriptures of the Mahabharat, Sri Vyasji states:

‘After this with the passage of time, Satyug would come; when the Brahmin would exert influence over society. Then the avenues for the advancement of the world would open. When the sun, the moon and Jupiter would be aligned with Pushya Nakshatir. It would be the

beginning of Satyug. At that time it would rain in time. The stars would shine brighter than before.’

Mahatma Surdasji has mentioned the following:

‘When Kalki Avatar would appear, both the moon and the sun would be eclipsed and there will be much violence and death.’

(Sursagar)

In the Holy book of the Sikhs, it is written:

‘When Maharaj (Krishna) will come as Nah Kalank, the sun and the moon will be his helpers.’

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

### **Prophecy of Eclipses from the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>**

Hadhrat Ali ibn Umar Al-Baghdadi Ad-Darqutni was an eminent authority on Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>) who lived from 918 – 995 CE. He recorded a hadith of unusual

cosmic importance reported by Hadhrat Imam Baqar Mohamed ibn Ali, the son of Hadhrat Imam Zainul Abideen<sup>(ra)</sup>. The quote which is accepted as authentic by both Sunni and Shia’a Muslims reads as follows:

‘There are two Signs for our Mahdi which have never appeared before since the creation of the heavens and the earth, namely the moon will be eclipsed on the first night (of the lunar eclipse dates) in Ramadhan and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day (of the solar eclipse days) of Ramadhan, and these signs have not appeared before since God created the heavens and the earth.’

(*Sunan Darqutni*, Vol.1, p.188)

Imam Darqutni was one of the most respected saints in early Islam and was scrupulously careful in recording the sayings of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>.

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**THERE ARE TWO SIGNS FOR OUR MAHDI WHICH HAVE NEVER APPEARED BEFORE SINCE THE CREATION OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, NAMELY THE MOON WILL BE ECLIPSED ON THE FIRST NIGHT (OF THE LUNAR ECLIPSE DATES) IN RAMADHAN AND THE SUN WILL BE ECIPSED ON THE MIDDLE DAY (OF THE SOLAR ECLIPSE DAYS) OF RAMADHAN, AND THESE SIGNS HAVE NOT APPEARED BEFORE SINCE GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.'**

**(SUNAN DARQUTNI, VOL.1, P.188)**

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### **Commentaries on the Prophecy by Islamic Scholars**

Several Islamic scholars and saints have commented on the time of the arrival of the Mahdi. An eminent Muslim divine Hadhrat Shaik Nematullah Wali wrote:

'He will be both Mahdi of the time and Jesus: I see him blessed with both the attributes. I see both the moon and the sun obscured.'  
(Musleh Akhir Zaman)

Moulana Muhammad Ismael Shaheed stated:

'Strange and unusual events

are going to happen in the 13th century and I am visualising the eclipses of the sun and moon to occur in this century.'

(Arbaeen Fi Ahwalil Mahdiyeen)

Allama Sheik Shahabuddin ibn Al hajr Al-Hashm wrote:

'Muhammad bin Ali, an elite among the Ahle Bait narrates that there will be two Signs for the Imam Mahdi which have never been shown to mankind since the creation of the heavens and the earth. One of these is the eclipse of the Moon on the first of its nights

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**IN THE LAST 200 YEARS, LUNAR AND SOLAR ECLIPSES HAVE OCCURRED DURING THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN ON 17 OCCASIONS BUT OF THESE, ONLY 6 TIMES WAS EITHER ECLIPSE VISIBLE FROM QADIAN, AND ONLY ONCE WERE BOTH VISIBLE FROM QADIAN. IT HAPPENS THAT THIS OCCURRED IN 1894, AND THAT BOTH THE LUNAR AND SOLAR ECLIPSES OCCURED ON THEIR SPECIFIED DAYS DURING THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN IN THE YEAR 1894.**

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in the month of Ramadhan and the eclipse of the Sun will be on the middle of the days.’ (Kitabul Falaw Al Hadeesiya, p.31)

### **Declaration of Mission**

In the latter part of the 19th century, a pious, middle aged revered personage identifying himself completely with Islam and a faithful servant of Allah, a devoted follower of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> announced that he had been a constant recipient of revelations and that the day of the renaissance of Islam was about to dawn through him. His name was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>, a scion of an ancient noble house of Persian lineage from the tiny

hamlet of Qadian in the Punjab region of India. He announced:

‘It was made clear to me through Divine revelation that the Messiah, whose advent among the Muslims had been promised from the beginning and the Mahdi whose advent had been Divinely decreed at the time of the decline of Islam and the spread of error, and who was to be guided directly by God, and who was to invite people to participate in the heavenly banquet and whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> thirteen centuries in advance was myslef. Divine revelation to this effect was

vouchsafed to me so clearly and so continuously that it left no room for doubt.’

(Tazhkiratul Shahatain)

It was revealed to him that he was the promised Reformer not only for the Muslims, Christians and Jews, but also for the Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians and Zoroastrians as predicted in their scriptures.

The world religious scriptures are familiar with the second advent of a great world teacher in the latter days. Nevertheless, the Reformer must appear in a religion that recognises on the strength of its scripture, all of the religious teachers and the Divine origins of their scriptures. Islam is the only such religion.

Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>, a faithful follower of Islam claimed that through his advent, these prophecies have been fulfilled. Thus he resolved the conflicts and paradoxes prevailing in them and laid the base for the reunification of all religions.

### **Need for the Signs**

Towards the end of the century, Muslims were objecting that the prophecy regarding the lunar and solar eclipses had not been fulfilled. In early 1894, the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> made the following supplication:

‘O God! Am I not from Thee? Curse and denial have now become excessive. Judge between us and our people with justice, for Thou art the Best of those who judge. O God! Please send Thy succour for me from heaven and help Thy servant in the time of adversity. I have become like the weak and disgraced and people have rejected me and reproached me. So Thou come to my help as Thou helped the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> on the day of Badr.’

(Noorul Haq, Part I)

### **Signs of the Eclipses**

In the last 200 years, lunar and solar eclipses have occurred during the month of Ramadhan on 17 occasions but of these, only

6 times was either eclipse visible from Qadian, and only once were both visible from Qadian. It happens that this occurred in 1894, and that both the lunar and solar eclipses occurred on their specified days during the month of Ramadhan in the year 1894.

The solar eclipse was a full annular eclipse, the most spectacular type which occurs just 10 times in any century. Therefore just as predicted, during Ramadhan of the Islamic year 1311 AH (1894), God manifested over the vast area of our hemisphere the heavenly Signs of the eclipses, and Qadian witnessed both eclipses on the specified dates:

- the lunar eclipse occurred after sunset on Wednesday March 21st 1894, the 13th night of Ramadhan;
- the solar eclipse occurred on Friday 6th April 1894, the 28th day of Ramadhan.

Both eclipses were visible from Qadian.

Soon after the celestial Signs, the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> wrote a book *Noorul Haq Part II* in Arabic which is devoted to an extremely enlightening discussion of the accurate fulfilment of the splendid prophecy of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam. In his book, he explained in the light of Divine revelation that the true interpretation of the Hadith is that in the time of the Mahdi, the moon will be eclipsed in the first of the three nights on which a lunar eclipse can occur (13th day of Ramadhan) and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day out of the days on which the Solar eclipse can occur (28th day of Ramadhan).

The Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> drew attention to several properties which make the Signs very impressive. He pointed out that the words *first* and *middle* used in the Hadith were fulfilled in two ways, namely with regard to the date and the time. Not only did the lunar eclipse occur on the first

of the three nights but also occurred in the beginning of the night in Qadian (7 – 9:30pm). the Solar eclipse not only occurred on the middle day but also occurred in the forenoon in Qadian (9–11am).

### **Gratitude for the Signs**

The Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> was therefore vindicated through these heavenly Signs as proof of his claim to be the Mahdi and Messiah. The last words are from his writings in gratitude for the Signs shown. He wrote:

‘And I also swear by Almighty God that I am the Promised Messiah and I am the same person who was promised by the prophets. There is news about me and my age in the Torah and in the Gospel and the Holy Qur’an. It is stated that there will be eclipses in the sky and severe plague on the earth.’  
(Dafae Balae)

‘In my age only in the month of Ramadhan, eclipses of the

Sun and Moon occurred; in my age only in accordance with the authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur’an and earlier books, there was plague all over the country, and in my age only, new modes of transport namely railways came into existence, and in my age only, as per my prophecies, terrible earthquakes came. Does not then righteousness demand that one should not be bold in denying me? Look, I swear by Almighty God and say that thousands of signs for establishing my truth have been manifested and will be manifested. If this were a man’s plan, he would never have enjoyed such support and help!’

(Haqeeqatul Wahy)

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