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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Tanveer Khokhar

PUBLISHER

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Muhammad Hanif

All correspondence should be forwarded to the editor at:

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

Email:

reviewofreligions@gmail.com

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EDITORIAL

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Nobel Prize and Rushdie?

In June 2007, the unexpected news filtered out from the UK that Salman Rushdie was to be knighted by the Queen in her Honours list for his services to literature. Going by the euphoria that normally surrounds the subject involving Rushdie, it came as no surprise that differing reactions reverberated around the United Kingdom and the Muslim world. Whereas on the one hand the western media justified such an honour with the usual accolades, on the other hand certain elements of the Muslim fraternity reacted in the way they know best: by remonstrating and burning effigies.

Who is right, and who is wrong? The fact of the matter is that neither is right, but the way that feelings have been expressed or justified leaves a lot to be desired. What has prompted the out-going Prime Minister Tony Blair to put Rushdie's name forward for such

an honour normally bestowed upon someone who has made a great and positive impact upon British culture? As a Booker Prize winner, has Rushdie achieved such high status amongst other writers, who incidentally have also won this prize, that a knighthood is an appropriate and a just reward?

And what of the reactions of the handful of 'so-called Muslims', who are ridiculing the good name of Islam by their unacceptable behaviour, which is guaranteed to get the headlines all around the world?

It seems that the knighthood is a reward for Sir Salman for 'stirring things up' between Islam and the West through his writing over a few decades. He is a man who does not take criticism or defeat well at all. Philip Howard, the literary editor of *The Times*, mentions the debacle that followed the failure of one of

Rushdie's earlier novels, *Shame*, to win the Booker Prize after it was made the favourite to do so:

'It (*Shame*) was the favourite to win the Booker. When it did not, Rushdie took it badly. He leapt to his feet and harangued the judges and passers-by.'

(*The Times*, 15 February 1989).

Perhaps it was this intense passion and desire for fame and glory that Rushdie flaunted which made him the target for the Judaeo-Christian conspirators against Islam, who then took him under their wing and slowly but surely nurtured him to become part of their spiteful and implacable crusade to further defame and distort the name of Islam.

In 1995, Rushdie, much to his disappointment, failed to win the Booker prize for *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In spite of this he received great support from his close band of followers, like Auberon Waugh, Editor of *The Literary*

Review who said that a man who had been chased 'from pillar to post by religious maniacs' deserved victory, (*The Times*, November 1995).

The fact that Waugh admitted that he had not even read Rushdie's novel just adds absurdity to the blinkered and fanatical support Rushdie has received, just to reward him in the name of freedom of speech. But the knighthood is for services to literature, not for being a victim of the actions of some 'fundamentalists' or indeed for freedom of speech. At this rate, very soon the next 'obvious' step would be the pinnacle in anyone's life: the Nobel Prize, and in Rushdie's case for Literary Fiction.

Everyone has a right to an opinion, and a right for freedom of expression. But freedom without any sort of boundaries would lead to anarchy. Could you imagine letting everyone drive cars with freedom on any side of the road? What would be the reaction if nudists were allowed

to express their freedom in public places where there are young children?

No matter who we are, or what position we hold in society, no one has complete freedom to do what one likes. Writers are not a special breed of privileged people that are afforded carte blanche. In fact it is quite the opposite; they are the ones who have to exercise the most control because they reach out to a greater audience.

But where the ‘freedom of expression’ card is used to wilfully cause hurt and incite hatred causing riots, as did Rushdie, then that writer deserves no credit. Having read all Rushdie’s books, and moving in the circle of writers and publishers, both Western and Eastern, I have yet to meet one who has such high praise for him that merits any Book award, let alone a Booker Prize, or knighthood.

Most literary people I know have all said, without exception, that they start to read his books,

purely due to the publicity surrounding him. They end up putting them down after only a few pages: so incongruent and disjointed do they find his writing. So how did he become such a renowned author?

Every sane and rational human being is able to deduce that there are greater powers behind him and that mischief is the ultimate purpose. Lauding Rushdie with more ‘honours’ will add fuel to a hotbed of simmering ashes, and those that are behind this and support him unreservedly are equally guilty.

Some western writers have also doubted the suspicious motive of Rushdie’s writings. An eminent English author, Roald Dahl, a member of the Society of Authors, and who is perhaps the first non-Muslim to bravely expose Rushdie for what he truly represents, raised a very important question in a letter published in *The Times*, 28th February 1989. In it he wrote:

‘with all that has been written

and spoken about the Rushdie affair, I have not yet heard any non-Muslim voices raised in criticism of the writer himself. On the contrary, he appears to be regarded as some sort of hero... To my mind, he is a dangerous opportunist. Clearly he has profound knowledge of the Muslim religion, its people, and he must have been totally aware of the deep and violent feelings his book would stir up among devout Muslims. In other words, he knew exactly what he was doing and he cannot plead otherwise.'

Roald Dahl ends his letter by making a very noteworthy observation which has been missed by most of the western media and Rushdie's supporters:

'In a civilised world we all have a moral obligation to apply a modicum of censorship to our own work in order to reinforce this principle of free speech.'

Another English novelist, Will

Self, brands his literary colleague, Rushdie, 'irresponsible' for accepting the award considering the outrage it has created among Muslims worldwide. He says:

'Given the furore *The Satanic Verses* occasioned, it does strike me that any responsible writer might ask himself whether the fallout from accepting such an honour was really worth the bauble. It is surely better that writers decline any form of honour.'

But Rushdie is one who hankers after publicity at any cost, and he and his band of cohorts have tried to use the 'fiction card' to justify his 'over-imaginative' and creative writing of the *The Satanic Verses*. The Holy Prophet^(saw) of Islam, his noble wives and companions are mentioned specifically by name, which leaves absolutely no room for any doubt in the reader's mind as to who is being alluded. Let us examine some sections from *The Satanic Verses*.

Some allegations against the Holy Prophet^(saw), his noble wives and companions

In *The Satanic Verses*, matters relating to polygamy and the alleged licentiousness of the Holy Prophet^(saw) have been treated with the most potent poison:

‘In spite of the ditch of Yathrib, the faithful lost a good many men in the war against Jahilia... And after the end of the war, hey presto, there was the Archangel Gibreel instructing the surviving males to marry the widowed women..... Salman cried, we were even told it didn't matter if we were already married, we could have up to four marriages if we could afford it, well, you can imagine, the lads really went for that. What finally finished Salman with Mahound: the question of the women; and of the Satanic verses. Listen, I'm no gossip, Salman drunkenly confided, but after his wife's death Mahound was no angel, you understand my meaning....

Those women up there: they turned his beard half-white in a year.... he went for mothers and daughters, think of his first wife and then Ayesha: too old and too young, his two loves.’ (p.366).

‘How many wives? Twelve, and one old lady, long dead. How many whores behind the Curtain? Twelve again;..... When the news got around Jahilia that the whores of the Curtain had each assumed the identity of one of Mahound's wives, the clandestine excitement of the city's males was intense;.... So, in the Prophet's absence, the men of Jahilia flocked to the Curtain, which experienced a three hundred per cent increase in business..... The fifteen-year-old whore ‘Ayesha’ was the most popular with the paying public, just as her namesake was with Mahound.’ (pp.380/381).

Rushdie also mocks the idea that Muhammad^(saw) would go into trances when he wanted

revelations to be sent to suit his needs.

Rushdie picks on another incident concerning the Holy Prophet^(saw) and Ayesha to continue his perverted account in casting doubt using defamatory language. This incident was the one in which some scandal-mongers tried to taint the noble character of Ayesha, and it took a revelation from God to put the matter straight and exonerate Ayesha completely.

Rushdie has, as usual, treated the subject without any sensitivity and has used it to ridicule and to deride:

‘Lemme tell you instead. Hottest story in town. Whoo-who!’ ... The two young people had been alone in the desert for many hours, and it was hinted, more and more loudly, that Safwan was a dashing handsome fellow, and the Prophet was much older than the young woman, after all, and might she not therefore have been attracted

to someone closer to her own age?... ‘What will Mahound do?’ Baal wanted to know. ‘O, he’s done it,’ Salman replied. ‘Same as ever. He saw his pet, the archangel, and then informed one and all that Gibreel had exonerated Ayesha.’ Salman spread his arms in worldly resignation. ‘And this time, mister, the lady didn’t complain about the convenience of the verses.’
(pp.386/387).

Is this the work of a writer who has the interest of the reader in mind, or a deliberate attempt to incite and hurt the sensitivities of Muslims at large?

Rather than ‘honouring’ Rushdie to the hilt with presumably the Nobel Prize, the next in a long line of accolades, he should be exposed for what he really is, by rational and logical means and at the same time to extol the true beauties of Islam.

We would simply like the mischief the likes of Rushdie and

their accomplices to be exposed to the world so that in future no one is allowed to inflict such wilful hurt to the adherents of any faith.

Religion should always be judged from the sources upon which it is based, and not from the actions and pronouncements of a handful of fanatics or politicians.

The Islam taught and practised by the Holy Prophet^(saw) is a most beautiful and attractive religion. It is this Islam which will captivate the hearts of the entire world if it is given a chance to flourish. We can only hope and pray that the whole world becomes more tolerant and that it exercises more control over the 'freedoms' it professes to give everyone.

SOME OTHER FACTS

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born a Muslim in Bombay, the only son of Anis Ahmed Rushdie and Negin Butt. After a career in advertising, he took up writing. He has been married four times with all marriages ending or in one case about to end in divorce. In 1999, he had an operation to open up his eyes. He is a self avowed atheist.

His first work was ignored by the public. His *Midnight's Children* received the Booker Prize, the Booker Prize committee nomi-

nating him in 1993 as the Booker of Bookers. Magic realism became his genre.

In September 1988, Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses* in which he seemed to give vent to his personal perversion by scornfully referring to a falsely reported tradition that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) (whom Rushdie refers to as Mahound) added verses in an attempt to accept three goddesses worshipped by the Makkans. According to those who believe

in this falsehood, the Prophet revoked these verses as being from the Satan. Such people ignore the fact that the whole chapter is a strong rejection of idol worship and the question of any satanic prompting does not arise and is totally out of context. Rushdie on the other hand reinvents history by attributing these verses to the Archangel Gabriel.

This book was banned in many Muslim countries. In Bradford and other places in the world, the book was burnt on the streets. A fatwa (an edict) was issued by Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini, the then spiritual leader of Iran calling the book blasphemous and a bounty of US\$1 million offered for his death. Rushdie went into retreat with police protection costing several million pounds each year. Diplomatic relations between Iran and Britain were broken. Rushdie offered a public apology but to no avail.

Since then Rushdie has spoken out against the bill designed to

prevent religious hatred, has stated that veils suck and commented on the Danish cartoons. For his services to British literature (although he spends more time in USA than in Britain) or as some would have it portrayed for all these services against Islam, he was knighted as Sir Salman on 16 June 2007. Once again, calls for his death were renewed by several misguided Muslim groups. Pakistan's religious affairs minister, Mr Mohammad Ejaz-ul-Haq was reported to have said that: 'if someone commits suicide bombing to protect the honour of the Prophet Muhammad, his act is justified.' Islam does not need suicide bombers to tackle such writers: what is needed is a rational retort in writing to those who use the pen to criticise Islam.



ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Part 22 – Arabic, the Mother of Tongues

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, may Allah be pleased with him, and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

Faculty of Speech is the Basic Reality of Man

It is necessary to point out that observation of the book of nature compels us to acknowledge that the principal sign of all that has been created by the hand of God, or has issued from Him, is that it serves to bring about the recognition of God according to its respective rank and station, and that it proclaims in its own peculiar manner that the true purpose of its creation is to serve as a means of the recognition of the Divine. This is confirmed by the study of the diverse species of God's creation. Thus as the Arabic language has issued from

the mouth of God Almighty, it was necessary that it should also display this sign so that it may be established with certainty that in truth, it is one of those things which have proceeded solely from God Almighty without the intervention of any human effort. All praise, therefore, belongs to Allah that the Arabic language displays this sign most plainly and clearly. As the verse:

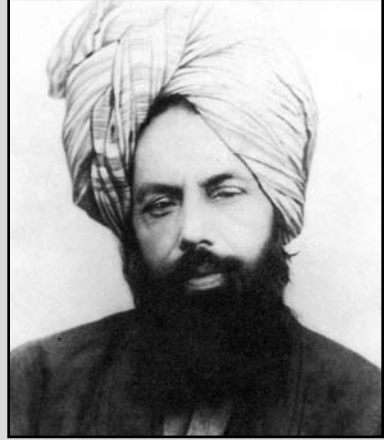
And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.

(Ch.51:V.57)

declares the true purpose of the

creation of man and his faculties. In the same way, the same verity is established about Arabic, which is man's real language and is a part of his creation. There can be no doubt that the creation of man can be deemed complete and perfect only when it is accompanied by the creation of speech also. For that which reveals the true beauty of humanness is the faculty of speech, and it would be no exaggeration to affirm that humanness means speech accompanied by all its essentials. Thus the affirmation of God Almighty that He has created man for His worship and comprehension means, in other words, that He has created the reality of humanness which is the faculty of speech, together with all the capacities and actions that are subordinate to it, for His own service.

When we reflect on what is man, it becomes obvious that he is an animate who is completely distinguishable from other animates by virtue of his faculty of speech. This shows that the



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

The founder's claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

faculty of speech is the basic quality of man, and that his other faculties are its servants and are subordinate to it. If it were said that human speech is not from God Almighty, it would amount

to saying that man's humanness is not from Him. But it is patent that God is man's Creator and is, therefore, also the Teacher of his speech. Of which language He is the Teacher can be determined by the consideration that it must be the language which can serve man for the purpose of the recognition of God, as the other faculties of man serve him according to the purpose of the verse:

'And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.'
(Ch.51:V.57)

We have already explained that Arabic alone possesses those qualities. Its service is that it possesses such power for conveying to man the comprehension of God as it displays beautifully in its elementary words the distinctions between Divine attributes, which is found in the law of nature. It makes manifest the delicate and subtle distinctions between Divine attributes which appear in the book of nature, and the proofs

of the Divine Unity which are indicated in the same book, and the diverse types of Divine designs relating to His creatures which are also discoverable from it, in such manner as to present a delightful picture of them. It illustrates very clearly the subtle distinction between the attributes and qualities of God Almighty on one side, and His designs and works on the other, which are testified to by His law of nature.

It thus becomes obvious that God Almighty has created the Arabic language as an adequate servant for the manifestation of His attributes, works and designs, and for illustrating the accord between His words and His works, and has from the beginning appointed this language as the key for resolving the mystery of all that relates to the Divine. When we appreciate this wonderful and majestic characteristic of Arabic, all other languages appear to suffer from darkness and deficiency. No language possesses the quality, inherent in Arabic that serves as a mirror for Divine attributes and

‘IT THUS BECOMES OBVIOUS THAT GOD ALMIGHTY HAS CREATED THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AS AN ADEQUATE SERVANT FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, WORKS AND DESIGNS, AND FOR ILLUSTRATING THE ACCORD BETWEEN HIS WORDS AND HIS WORKS, AND HAS FROM THE BEGINNING APPOINTED THIS LANGUAGE AS THE KEY FOR RESOLVING THE MYSTERY OF ALL THAT RELATES TO THE DIVINE.’

Divine teachings, and presents a simple reflective diagram of the natural pattern of all aspects of Divinity. When we observe, with the aid of sane reason and clear intellect, the division between Divine attributes, which is naturally reflected in the book of the universe from the beginning, we find the same division in the elementary words of the Arabic language. For instance, when we consider many aspects the mercy of God Almighty is elementarily divided, according to intellectual research, the law of nature instructs us that His mercy has two aspects: before any action on our part and after our action. The system of providence clearly testifies that Divine mercy was manifested for mankind in two

aspects according to its primary division.

Two Aspects of the Mercy of God

First is the mercy which was manifested for man without any action having proceeded from man. For instance, the creation of the earth, heaven, sun, moon, planets, water, air, fire, and all other bounties upon which man's life and survival are dependent. Without doubt all these bounties are a mercy for man bestowed upon him without any right, through pure grace and beneficence. This is a grace which came into operation even before the existence of man who did not even have to ask for it

The second type of mercy is that which follows upon the good actions of man. For instance, when he supplicates God earnestly, his prayer is accepted, and when he cultivates the earth laboriously and sows seed, Divine mercy fosters the seed, with the result that a large quantity of grain is gathered. In the same way, careful observation would show that Divine mercy accompanies every one of our righteous actions whether they are religious or secular. When we labour according to the laws prescribed by God, Divine mercy comes into operation and makes our labour fruitful. These two types of mercy are such that we cannot survive without them. No one can doubt their existence. These are the bright manifestations which support the whole pattern of our lives.

When it is established that Almighty God has caused the springs of two mercies to flow for our sustenance and perfection, and they are two of His attributes which are manifested in two

aspects for the watering of the tree of our being, we must find out how these two springs are designated when they are reflected in the Arabic language. By virtue of the first type of mercy, God Almighty is called *Rahman* in Arabic, and He is called *Rahim* by virtue of the second type of mercy. It is in order to illustrate this quality of the Arabic language that we have mentioned the expression *Rahman* in the very first line of our Arabic discourse. As the attribute of mercy by virtue of its elementary division comprises two types according to the Divine law of nature, the Arabic language has two elementary words for it.

A seeker after truth would find it most helpful to adopt as a criterion the Divine attributes and works that are visible in the book of nature, for the purpose of discerning the subtle distinctions of the Arabic language, and to seek for these divisions, which appear according to the law of nature in the elementary words of Arabic. Whenever it is desired to

highlight the distinction between such Arabic synonyms as are related to the attributes or works of God, attention should be directed towards the division between those attributes and works which are exhibited in nature, inasmuch as the true purpose of Arabic is to serve Divinity, as the true purpose of man is the enlightened recognition of God Almighty.

The qualities of any thing can be appreciated only by keeping in mind the purpose for which it has been created. For instance, an ox is created for the purpose of ploughing or transport. If we overlook this purpose and seek to use it as a hunting-dog, it would fail utterly and would prove useless and valueless. On the other hand, if we try it in the field of its true purpose it soon proves that it carries a great responsibility within the system of the means of maintenance of human livelihood. In short, the worth of everything is proved by its being utilised for its true purpose. Thus the true purpose of Arabic is to illustrate the bright countenance

of all manifestations of Divinity.

As the proper carrying-out of this delicate and subtle operation, and to be safeguarded against mistakes, was beyond human capacity, God the Noble and Merciful revealed the Holy Qur'an in the Arabic language, a miraculous illustration of the qualities of the Arabic language, and of the delicate distinction between the different elementary words, and the extraordinarily rich connotations of its compounds, in such manner that all heads bowed to it in acknowledgement. All these qualities of the Arabic language were not only acknowledged by the highest contemporary linguists, but their failure to match them established that human faculties are not able to set forth those verities and insights, to illustrate the true and real beauty of the language. We have learnt the distinction between *Rahman* and *Rahim* from the same Holy Book which we have cited, as an instance in our Arabic discourse. Every language contains many synonyms, but until we become

aware of the distinctions between them, and so long as those words do not relate to subjects pertaining to Divinity and religious teachings, we need take no account of them.

It should also be remembered that man cannot invent these elementary words, but once they are created by Divine power, man can, by study, discover their subtle distinctions and their proper use. For instance, the grammarians have not discovered anything new, nor have they framed any rules to which other people must conform; but, having studied this natural language they discovered that it was illustrative of a system of rules, and they proceeded to formulate those rules in order to facilitate the study of the language. Thus, by using every word in its proper place, the Holy Qur'an illustrated how the Arabic elementary words can be manipulated, how they serve the subjects of Divinity, and how subtle are their mutual distinctions

The Connotation of Some Arabic Words

Now we proceed to set forth some of the connotations of another Arabic word which we have selected from the Holy Qur'an and which is *Rabb*. This word occurs in the very first verse of the first chapter of the Holy Qur'an where Allah, the Glorious, says:

*All praise belongs to Allah,
Lord of all the worlds.
(Ch.1:V.2)*

Lisan-ul-'Arab and *Taj-ul-'Urus*, which are the two most reliable Arabic lexicons, have set forth that the word *Rabb* comprises seven connotations:

- Master or Owner (*Malik*);
- Master or Chief (*Sayyed*);
- Regulator (*Mudabbir*);
- One who nurtures (*Murabbi*);
- One who safeguards (*Qayyim*);
- Bestower (*Mun'im*) and;
- Perfector (*Mutammim*).

Of these seven, three refer to the personal grandeur of the Almighty. Of these, one is *Malik*.

In Arabic lexicon, *Malik* connotes that He owns the universe and can use it as He likes. His ownership of it is not shared by any other. This word in its true meaning cannot be applied to anyone except God Almighty, inasmuch as full control and complete power of disposal and perfect rights cannot be attributed to anyone except God Almighty.

Sayyed, according to Arabic lexicon, is one who has subordinate to him a large number who should serve him out of sincere eagerness and natural obedience. The distinction between a sovereign and *Sayyed* is, that a sovereign subdues people by his might and the strictness of his laws, while the followers of a *Sayyed* obey him voluntarily out of their sincere love and eagerness and inclination and call him ‘*Sayyedana*’ (our chief) out of sincere affection. A sovereign can be obeyed in that spirit when he becomes a *Sayyed* in the estimation of his people. This word can also not be used for

anyone beside God Almighty, inasmuch as true and eager obedience which has no personal purpose in view cannot possibly be accorded to any beside God Almighty. He is the only One before Whom the souls prostrate themselves, for He is the true source of their creation. That is why every soul naturally bows down to Him. The worshippers of idols and of men have also the same eagerness to obey Him as has a righteous person who believes in His Unity, but they fail, on account of their error and faulty desire, to recognise the true spring of life, and on account of their blindness they direct their inner eagerness towards a wrong object. That is why some of them deify stones, or Ramchandra, or Krishna, or the Son of Mary, under the mistaken belief that the object of their worship is the True God. They ruin themselves by investing creatures with Godhead. In the same way, those who pursue their own desires have been misled in their spiritual search for the true beloved and *Sayyed*. Their hearts also sought a beloved and a true *Sayyed*, but

having failed to recognise the true desire of their hearts, they imagined that the true beloved and *Sayyed*, whom the souls seek and whom they are eager to obey, are worldly wealth, properties and delights. This was an error on their part. The true Cause of spiritual desires, and the source of pious sentiments, is the Being Who has said:

And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.
(Ch.51:V.57)

Meaning that: I alone am the purpose of the creation of Jinn and men and all their faculties, which have all been created so that I should be recognised and worshipped.

This verse indicates that man, by his very creation, has been invested with the search and recognition and obedience of God. Had man not been invested with these, there would have been no pursuit of passion, no idol worship, and no worship of men in the world, inasmuch as

every error results from pursuit of the discovery of truth. Thus God alone is the true *Sayyed*.

Another of these attributes is *Mudabbir*. This means the keeping in mind, with reference to every enterprise, the whole system of events in the past, and of consequences in the future, and the putting of everything in its proper place having regard to that system, and not to embark upon anything outside it. This attribute also cannot be applied to anyone beside God Almighty, inasmuch as perfect planning demands knowledge of the hidden, and that belongs to God Almighty alone.

The remaining four names - *Murabbi*, *Qayyim*, *Mun'im* and *Mutammim* - indicate those bounties of God Almighty which are bestowed upon men on account of His Perfect Mastership, Leadership, and Planning. *Murabbi* means he who nurtures, and perfect nurture means that all aspects of man, like his body, soul, faculties and capacities, should be nurtured

and the system of nourishment should extend to the climax of man's physical and spiritual progress. The manifestation of the point at which the name of humanness or its elements begin, and its features begin to move from nothingness towards existence, is also nurture. This shows that in Arabic idiom *Rububiyyat* has very wide connotations, and that it covers the whole expanse from the point of nothingness to the climax of perfection. The name 'Creator' (*Khaliq*) and the like are derivatives of *Rabb*.

Qayyim means one who safeguards the system. *Mun'im* means one who bestows all bounties, which man or any other creature can receive, according to its capacity, and is desirous of obtaining, so that it might arrive at its climax, as Allah, the Glorious says:

...Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its proper form and then guided it to its proper function.
(Ch.20:51)

Our Lord, Who invested all things with appropriate form and then guided them to the realisation of their requisite goals.

Mutammim means that the system of beneficence should not be left deficient in any respect, and should be carried to its climax in all its aspects.

Thus the term *Rabb*, which has been used in the Holy Qur'an comprises all the diverse connotations that we have set out briefly above.

We have to record with great sorrow that an ignorant European Christian writer has set out in one of his books that Christianity possesses this superiority over Islam, that it has named God Almighty 'Father', which is a very dear and lovely name, and that this name has not been applied to God in the Qur'an. We are surprised that this critic has not considered what honour and greatness the lexicons have attributed to the expression 'Father', for every word acquires

true honour and greatness from the position assigned to it by a lexicon, and no one is entitled to bestow such honour upon a word as the lexicon does not bestow. That is why even the Word of God does not disregard the lexicon, and according to all sensible people, in order to determine the honour and greatness of a word, recourse must first be had to the lexicon, in order to ascertain what robe of honour it has bestowed upon that word. Keeping this criterion in mind, we find that all that the lexicon discloses is that when a person is in fact born of the seed of another, and he who drops the seed has no further connection with his birth, it is said that that other is his *Abb* (father). If it should be desired to indicate that Almighty God is Himself the Conscious Creator of a person, and Himself leads him towards perfection, and out of His great mercy bestows appropriate bounties on him, and is Himself his Guardian and Supporter, the lexicon does not permit that these connotations may be expressed by the employment of the word

‘Father’; the lexicon provides another term for the expression of this concept, and that word is *Rabb*, the true meaning of which we have just set out on the authority of the lexicon. We are not at all entitled to invent our own lexicon, and must follow the division of words established by God from the beginning.

The Word ‘Father’ is Derogatory to God

This would show that the application of the word Father to God is disrespectful and derogatory to Him. Those who have invented against Jesus the charge that he was in the habit of calling God Almighty ‘Father’, and in fact believed that God was his father, have been guilty of accusing him of a false and hateful offence. Can any sensible person imagine that Jesus was guilty of such stupidity as to have applied to God, the Glorious, a name, the etymological meaning of which should be so low and humiliating and indicative of weakness, powerlessness and helplessness from every point of view?

The word *Abb* (father) is so low and humiliating that it does not necessarily import any kind of design or nurture or love. For instance, a goat that covers a she-goat and drops its seed or a bull that satisfies its lust with a cow and then turns away from it without any thought of a calf being born of its action, or a pig which under the surge of its lust is constantly occupied in satisfying it and has no notion that through its repeated action whole litters of piglets might be born and spread in the earth, would no doubt, if its lustful activities produce its young, be called their father. According to all the lexicons the word *Abb* does not in the least imply that a father after dropping the seed should take any further action so that a child may be born, or that this should be his design at the time of cohabitation; indeed the word *Abb* does not necessarily imply desire for progeny, and all that it imports is that he should drop the seed, and it is only on that account that lexicographically he is called *Abb*. Then how can it be permissible

that such a worthless word, which is so appraised in all languages, should be applied to the All-Powerful One, all of Whose works are manifested by virtue of His perfect designs, perfect knowledge and perfect power? How can it be right that the same word, which is used for a bull and for a pig, should be used for God Almighty also? What impertinence is this, which the ignorant Christians persist in committing? They have been left with neither shame nor modesty nor any understanding of human values. The doctrine of the atonement has affected their human faculties like paralysis, so that they have been rendered utterly worthless and without feeling.

Here we consider it proper to dispel some of the doubts and misconceptions of Max Müller which he discusses in the first volume of his book on the science of languages. **His statement:** One factor that has blocked the progress of knowledge is that in order to expose other people to ridicule

and contempt, some people employed contemptuous epithets to them, and thus failed to learn their languages. So long as the words wild and dumb (*'Ajami*) as applied to those people were not excluded from human dictionaries, and did not give place to the expression 'brother', and so long as it was not acknowledged that all mankind are of one species, a beginning could not be made with the science of languages.

My statement: The above statement shows that the writer is critical of the Arabs and imagines that the expression '*Ajam*', applied by them to those whose language is other than Arabic, is used out of bigotry and contempt for those people. He fell into this error because his Christian bigotry stood in the way of his finding out whether the expressions '*Ajam*' and '*Arab*' were devised by man or by God Almighty. He has himself acknowledged in his book that man has not the capacity to formulate the elementary words of a language on his own. Arabic

has two words in juxtaposition to each other. One is '*Arab*', which connotes those who are eloquent and possess mastery of expression; and the other is '*Ajam*', which means non-eloquent and tongue-tied. If Mr. Max Müller thinks that these two words are not ancient and Islam has invented them out of bigotry, he should specify the original terms which were used in these connotations, for it is not possible that a people should not have had any appellation in ancient times. If it is found that these two expressions are ancient, this would mean that they were not coined by man, but that the Almighty, Knower of the unseen, Who has created man with diverse capacities, has Himself applied these two names to different peoples corresponding to their respective abilities.

Another consideration is that if these two expressions, '*Arab*' and '*Ajam*', have been coined by some human being out of bigotry and contempt, then doubtless they would be contrary to fact and would be altogether false.

But we have established in this book that the word 'Arab' expresses a reality, and that it is true in fact that the Arabic language, on account of its system of elementary words and its delicate structure and other wonders, occupies so high a position that one is compelled to affirm that in comparison with it other languages are like the dumb. Moreover, we observe that other languages are motionless like solids and are so bereft of any movement towards development as if they are lifeless, and we are compelled to acknowledge that they occupy a very low position. The Arabic language describes non-Arabs politely as 'Ajam but in truth they did not deserve even this appellation. Had the low condition of their languages been correctly described the most appropriate expression to be applied to them would have been that they were dead languages.

(Minan-ur-Rahman, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol.9, pp.145-161)

perfectly illumined mantles! The earth has been brightened with its exalted lights, and it has been proved to possess the climax of the yearnings of man. In it are found wonders of the All-Wise and Powerful Maker, as they are found in everything which proceeds from the Great Creator. Allah has perfected all its limbs and has not left out anything from its beauty and splendour, and no doubt you will find it perfect in expression, comprising all the objectives of man. There is no action that begins at any period of time, nor is there any attribute out of the attributes of Allah, the Bestower, nor is there any doctrine out of the doctrines of mankind, but there is in Arabic an elementary word apposite to it. Should you have a doubt about it, let us know the contrary.

(Minan-ur-Rahman, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol.9, pp.193-194)

Glory be to Arabic, how beautiful is its countenance, looking out of

Blasphemy in Islam

An address by Dr Iftikhar Ayaz OBE (UK) at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Annual Convention in Dacca, Bangladesh.

It is pertinent to discuss the subject of the teachings of Islam on the offence of blasphemy as it is being used daily to persecute members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Whatever the quality of a Muslim's faith, even if he were a namesake Muslim, he holds an immense measure of respect for the Holy Prophet^(saw). This feeling is being exploited by the unprincipled and politically motivated Mullahs against other religious minorities. They particularly accuse Ahmadis of disparaging the honour of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and thus of being guilty of blasphemy for which the maximum sentence in Pakistan and some other countries is death.

I intend to examine the validity of the charge made against Ahmadis. Do they disparage the

honour of the Holy Prophet^(saw), or do they, in fact, honour him and exalt him as *Khataman Nabiyin* (Seal of Prophethood)? I will also explore how valid the death sentence is in accordance with Sharia Law.

There is no doubt that blasphemy is the most repugnant, detestable and loathsome act, which touches on the sensitivities of all decent-minded and believing people. No matter which faith one belongs to, any violation by words or deeds of the sanctity of God or His chosen Messengers, is considered deeply offensive. And yet, denigrating God and slandering the Prophets of God goes back into the mists of time.

All prophets suffered slander, mockery or derision during their lifetimes from their opponents and the practice continued after their deaths. What is the

punishment for such an offence?

The history of mankind reveals many sad periods of religious strife, bigotry, persecution and conflict. Muslims have not always acquitted themselves in their dealings with other people in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Their conduct has been regrettable, sometimes even reprehensible.

There can be no doubt that the teachings of Islam proclaim and insist upon complete freedom in matters of conscience and tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others. The pursuance of this Islamic requirement would eliminate one of the principle causes of international misunderstanding and conflict.

But Islam does not stop here. It exhorts Muslims to strive actively for peace.

O ye who believe! come into submission wholly and follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy.
(Ch.2: V.209)

There is severe condemnation of the conduct of one who, when he wields authority, strives to create disorder in the land and to destroy title and offspring:

...Allah loves not disorder.
(Ch.2: V.206)

Everything that tends to destroy local peace, create international tension or to disturb international relations is sought to be avoided and its mischief has been resented.

Our beloved, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) came as a blessing for mankind. Allah in His mercy revealed to him the complete Book, the Holy Qur'an – a guidance for all mankind for all times to come, which remains untarnished, unchanged and guarded by Divine decree. Allah revealed a complete code of life guarded by Divine decree – a law to govern all dimensions of human life. That Islamic law is known as Sharia.

Before we look at what Sharia has to say about blasphemy, we

must understand the character and structure of Islamic law. Sharia is based on a simple principle. What is right must be done and what is normally wrong must not be done. It is therefore important to correctly define what is right and wrong. These are important legal questions, so who can answer them? Certainly not man according to Muslim legislators. We have the Holy Qur'an, which is the very word of God. Supplementary to it, we have the Hadith – records of the Holy Prophet's(saw) actions and sayings from which we must derive help in arriving at legal decisions.

If, in the unlikely event, there is nothing either in the Qur'an or Hadith to answer a particular question, we have to follow the dictates of reason in accordance with certain definitive principles.

Islamic law is derived from four sources: the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet(saw), *Ijma'*, that is consensus of opinion among the learned Muslim

jurists, and *Qiyas*, that is analogy and reasoning. To elaborate further and show the position of these sources, it is appropriate to mention a famous and important Hadith.

It is said that the Holy Prophet(saw) sent Mu'adh, one of his Companions, as Governor of Yemen and also appointed him to dispense justice (no trained lawyers existed at that time). The Holy Prophet(saw) asked Mu'adh 'According to what will you judge?' He replied, 'According to the Word of God (Holy Qur'an)'. The Holy Prophet(saw) then asked 'And if you find nothing therein?' 'According to the traditions of the Messenger of God' said Mu'adh. 'And if you find nothing therein?' 'Then shall I interpret with my reason' said Mu'adh. And thereupon, the Holy Prophet(saw) said, 'Praise be to God who has favoured Mu'adh with what the Prophet is willing to approve'.

Having understood the nature and source of Islamic law, we

should know the definition of crimes and their categories in Islamic law.

Muslim legislators and jurists have defined crime as going against or beyond the commands and prohibitions laid down in the Holy Qur'an. In other words, crossing the bounds fixed by God. Since such crimes are violations of the rules made by God, they are considered crimes against religion.

In Islamic law, crimes are divided into two major groups:

- crime for which Hadd (punishment ordained by God) is given, such as adultery (*Zina*), false accusation of adultery (*Kadhf*), and robbery.
- crimes such as homicide, bodily harm and damage to property are considered offences. The punishment for such crimes are such as *Qisas* (retaliation), *Kaffara* (expiation) and *Ta'zeer* (disciplinary action).

The major difference between these two groups of crimes is that the punishments (*Hadd* punishments) ordained against the first group are considered the 'rights of God' for which there is no pardon or concession, while the punishments prescribed against the second group are the 'rights of man' and therefore they can be reduced or totally ruled out and pardoned. For instance, in the case of murder, the offender can be pardoned if the victim's next of kin agrees to do so.

The act of blasphemy is an act against the sanctity of God or against the honour of the Messengers of God. As such, this offence, committed against God, comes under *Hadd* punishments ordained against God. No earthly punishment has been prescribed and no human interference is permitted to increase or reduce the punishment. This admonishment appears at the end of many verses in the Holy Qur'an, as for example at the end of a long exposition of the rules of fasting, God says:

...These are the limits by Allah, so approach them not...
(Ch.2: V.188)

Let us examine what the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) have to say about punishments ordained by God. Allah the Almighty says about the arrogant:

...‘What think ye of that which your Lord has sent down?’, they say ‘Stories of the ancients.’ that they may bear their burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection, and also a portion of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without knowledge. Behold! evil is that which they bear ... Then on the Day of Resurrection He will disgrace them.’...
(Ch.16: Vs.25, 26 & 28)

Pride and arrogance are the primary ingredients of misconduct and misbehaviour, and it is only such people who would hurt and offend others. The punishment for the arrogant is

described in the same Chapter:

So enter the gates of Hell, to abide therein. Evil indeed is the abode of the proud.
(Ch.16: V.30)

Again in Chapter 33, Allah the Almighty declares:

Verily, those who annoy Allah and His Messenger – Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them an abasing punishment.
(Ch.33: V.58)

Let us look at the honour of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and how he was persecuted. He was mocked during his Makkan period and in Madinah, he was continuously ridiculed by the Jews who used every opportunity to make sickening jokes against him.

The Holy Qur'an refers to the arch persecutor of the Holy Prophet^(saw), Abu Jahl, and says:

Hast thou seen him who forbids a servant of Ours

when he prays? Tell me if he (Our servant) follows the guidance or enjoins righteousness, what will be the end of the forbidders? Tell me if he (the forbidders) rejects and turns back, does he not know that Allah sees him? Nay, if he desists not, We will assuredly drag him by the forelock, a forelock lying, sinful.

(Ch.96: Vs.10-17)

To look at the true status of the Holy Prophet^(saw), we should refer to the Holy Qur'an which says:

Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! you also should invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace.

(Ch.33: V.57)

Now we will look at the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the extent to which he was reviled, jeered at, conspired against and persecuted. His opponents tried by all means at their disposal to divert the Holy Prophet^(saw) from

his mission. The Qur'an remarks:

Many of the People of the Book wish out of sheer envy from their own selves that, after you have believed, they could turn you again into disbelievers after the truth has become manifest to them. But forgive and turn away from them, till Allah brings about His decree. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.

(Ch.2: V.110)

We see how serious Allah the Almighty considers the offences of those opposing, maligning and obstructing Allah and His Messenger in his prayer and in his mission.

Because of the gravity and perfidy of these offences, Allah considers them to be 'His right' to punish the offenders as He so wishes. He does not transfer this right of dispensing justice to anyone – not even to His most beloved of Prophets. Instead, He tells the Holy Prophet^(saw)

‘Forgive them and turn away from them’. It is because Allah the Almighty considers the offence so grave that no punishment in this world can do justice to the gravity of the offence. Allah the Almighty has prepared an abasing punishment for such people in the Hereafter.

Narrowing the subject of blasphemy to the Muslims, one notices that the passions of Muslims are aroused very quickly when the honour of the Holy Prophet(saw) is impugned. At least, the politically oriented leadership of Muslim clergy, notoriously known as Mullahs, exploit this emotional reaction of the innocent less educated masses, as we see happening in some countries today.

How did the Holy Prophet(saw), that excellent exemplar, the best and most Beloved of all Prophets, that interpreter par excellence of the Holy Qur’an, react to those who reviled him?

During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet(saw), there were many

vulgar and abusive campaigns by his opponents whose desire was to create dissension among the migrants (*Muhajirs*) and the locals (*Ansar*) and to create inter-tribal rivalry. They were singing:

‘Drive out that fool of yours that you may be safe. Here is a rider come among them who has divided them (he says) “This is permitted and this is forbidden”’.

At one occasion in Madinah, the opponents nearly succeeded in creating dissension among the Muslims. They would have fought each other but when the Holy Prophet(saw) heard the news, he addressed them:

‘O Muslims! Remember God, remember God. Will you act like pagans while I am with you? After God has guided you to Islam and honoured you and saved you from paganism? After he has delivered you from unbelief and made you friends by doing so?’

Let us remember the incident after the battle of al-Mustaliq, while the Holy Prophet^(saw) was staying by a watering place, an unpleasant dispute took place amongst the migrants and locals. Taking advantage of that incident, the leader of the Munafiqun, Abdullah bin Ubay, used extremely vile language against the Holy Prophet^(saw). When the Prophet^(saw) was told of this, Umar^(ra) who was with him, said, ‘Go and kill Abdullah bin Ubay.’ The Holy Prophet^(saw) answered: ‘What if men should say Muhammad kills his own companions? No, go and give orders for him to set off.’

The Holy Prophet^(saw) was undoubtedly very hurt, but took no action against Abdullah bin Ubay, instead giving orders for him to move away. The Qur’an refers to this incident:

They say, ‘If we return to Madinah, the one most honourable will surely drive out therefrom the one most mean;’ while true honour belongs to Allah and to His

Messenger and the believers; but the hypocrites know not.
(Ch.63: V.9)

When the son of Abdullah heard of this incident, he went to the Holy Prophet^(saw) and offered to kill his own father for the insult that he had caused to the Holy Prophet^(saw). The Holy Prophet^(saw) refused this and said, ‘No, let us deal kindly with him and make much of his companionship while he is with us.’

That demonstrates the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) reluctance to punish those who blaspheme, preferring to leave any such punishment in the hands of Allah.

When the Muslim Empire stretched from the Indus to Andalusia, Muslim jurists and judges who understood the injunctions of the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah refused to punish the blasphemers to create false martyrs. There are many such incidents in Andalusia and in the Ottoman Empire. I will quote one example from the book *Spanish Islam* by Dozy:

A group of Christian Zealots, led by a priest named Eulogius, were determined to denounce Muhammad publicly. Issac, a Cordovan monk, went to the Qadi (judge) and professed a desire for conversion; but when the judge, well pleased, began to expound Islam, the monk interrupted him; 'Your Prophet,' he said, 'has lied and deceived you. May he be cursed.' The Qadi reproved him and asked him if he was drunk. The monk replied, 'I am in my right mind. Condemn me to death.' The Qadi had him imprisoned and asked Abdur Rahman II to dismiss him as insane.'

(Spanish Islam: A History of the Moslems in Spain, Dozy Reinhart, Darf Publishers, London 1988 – reprint from 1913)

The only time when blasphemers were sentenced was when other offences were also involved. Of course, there have been incidents in Islamic history where blasphemy has been punished

with the death of the offender. Those incidents involved either political pressure from the rulers or by the unprincipled, power-seeking Mullahs, who disregarded Islamic Sharia for their own ends. The fact remains that in Islam, there is no punishment for blasphemy or heresy or for apostasy. These are the preserves of Allah the Almighty and no human being is permitted to interfere – the Holy Prophet(saw) understood this point and acted accordingly. Only Allah can judge and dispense justice on these offences.

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) in his book *Murder in the Name of Allah* states:

'There is no such punishment (death sentence) for blasphemy in the Holy Qur'an or in the traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam. Blasphemy against God is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the following words: "And revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in

their ignorance...”
(Ch.6:V.109).’

He further states:

‘No authority has been granted to any man to inflict any punishment for blasphemy against God. Blasphemy was committed by Jews against Mary, the mother of Christ. It has been mentioned in the Holy Qur’an where it says:

“And because of their disbelief and their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny”
(Ch.4:V.157).

Again no punishment other than by God Himself is prescribed.’

Members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan and unfortunately in a few other Muslim states as well, are being persecuted. Here, in this peace-loving country (Bangladesh), Ahmadis were recently hit by a colossal wave of persecution. In

Pakistan, Ahmadis have been sentenced to death and murdered on wrongful charges of blasphemy ever so often. What travesty of Islamic justice is this! Ahmadis are being accused of maligning the honour of the Holy Prophet^(saw) of Islam. The fabrication and falsehood of this charge can be seen from the writings of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), the immaculate and obedient servant of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He said:

‘The basis of our religion and the foundation of our belief is that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad^(saw) is His Prophet. The faith that we follow in this earthly life and the faith in which, by the Grace of God, we will depart from this temporary life, is that of our Lord and great Master, Muhammad^(saw).’

And again:

‘A superior status, comprising all that is good

belongs to our Lord and Master, Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad Mustafa^(saw). It is unique to him and it is unapproachable.’

The quality of Muslim faith and the measure of respect that he holds for the Holy Prophet^(saw) cannot be quantified by any yardstick, nor can another person sit on judgement on the sincerity of the belief of others.

In Pakistan, unfortunately, blasphemy carries a more restricted definition. It is being defined as an insult to the honour of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and it is under this charge that the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are being persecuted and prosecuted. They are being persecuted for the passion, love and devotion that Ahmadis have for the greatest of all Prophets, Muhammad^(saw) about whom the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community wrote:

‘After the love of Allah, it is the love of Muhammad which

has captivated my heart. If this love is blasphemy, by God! I am a great blasphemer.’

The matchless intense love for the Holy Prophet^(saw) continues to flow in his followers to this day and each and every Ahmadi, wherever he is on this planet, is committed to sacrifice everything for the sake of the honour of his beloved Prophet^(saw).

Those who are thirsty for the blood of Ahmadis, let them listen! Let them heed what the Promised Messiah^(as) had to say when one of his loving Companions, Hadhrat Sahibzada Abdul Latif^(ra) was stoned to death in Kabul, Afghanistan. He said:

‘This blood will not go to waste. God will not remain silent on this killing. Its consequences will be horrible. This is a ruthless murder. Under the blue sky, the example of this brutal murder will not be found. O Land of Kabul! Be a witness

of this heinous crime on your soil. O Land of Misfortune! You have fallen from the sight of God because you are the place of horrible cruelty.’

Any land where the blood of the flag bearers of Islam, the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Kalima will be shed, will suffer the same fate. And no doubt the terrible things

happening in countries where Ahmadis are persecuted today are not only a warning to them, but a brilliant sign of the truth of the Promised Messiah^(as). The Promised Messiah^(as) has come to revive the teachings and pristine pure traditions and practices of Islam, and it is Allah’s decree that he will succeed.

Verse references to the Holy Qur’an item count ‘Bismillah...’ (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted and should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, ‘(saw)’ or ‘saw’ after the words, ‘Holy Prophet’, or the name ‘Muhammad’, are used. They stand for ‘*Sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*’ meaning ‘Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him’. Likewise, the letters ‘(as)’ or ‘as’ after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning ‘Peace be upon him’ derived from ‘*Alaihis salatu wassalam*’ which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation ‘ra’ or (ra) stands for ‘*Radhiallahu Ta’ala anhu*’ and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, ‘ru’ or (ru) for *Rahemahullahu Ta’ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

IBN 'ARABI – *Sufi and Savant (1165-1240)*

By Zakaria Virk – Canada

Muhiyyud Din Ibn Arabi was a renowned mystic, poet, sage, and philosopher of Islamic Spain. During his lifetime he was acknowledged as one of the most important spiritual teachers within Sufism, renowned for his great visionary capacity as well as being an excellent teacher. He signed his name: Muhammad Bin Ali bin Muhammad Ibn al-Arabi al-Tai al-Hatimi. He was born in the Muslim Spanish city of Madinatula Mursiya (Murcia) in August 1165. His Arab family traced its roots to Hatim al-Tayy who was legendary for his generosity.

His father Ali Ibn al-Arabi was a man of influence as he considered Cordoba's chief judge Ibn Rushd among his intimate friends and was attached to the royal court of Muhammad Bin Saeed Mardanish. When Ibn 'Arabi was 8 years old, the

occupation of Murcia led his family to Seville via Lisbon. The Emir of Seville, Abu Yaqoob Yousuf had offered his father an important position in his royal court, so this is where Ibn 'Arabi spent the next 30 years of his life. Seville was also an important centre of Sufism, with a record number of Sufis living in the city. He met two women saints here who had a strong influence on him, Yasamin of Marchena, and Fatimah of Cordova. About Yasamin, he observed:

'In her spiritual activities and communications she was among the greatest. She had a strong and pure heart, a noble spiritual power and a fine discrimination... she would often reveal something of it to me, as she knew of my own attainment, which pleased me.'¹

Ibn 'Arabi completed his basic education in Murcia, and Lisbon. In Seville he studied the Qur'an, Hadith, Shariah (Law), Arabic grammar and composition. He did so well in his studies that he was employed as a secretary by the governor of Seville. Ibn Arabi's spiritual attainments were evident from an early age. He spent most of his time in the company of Sufis, because *Tasawwuf* was already practised in his family. By the age of 20, he entered upon the Sufi path.

Sufism in the family

His family, in addition to its cultural connections was inclined to religious tendencies. Two of his mother's brothers were Sufis, Abu Muslim al-Khawlani and Yahya ibn Yoghman. al-Khawlani used to spend his entire night standing in prayer and would beat his legs with sticks when he became tired from standing.

The second brother Yahya Bin Yoghman was at one time ruler of the city of Tlemcen until he met a holy man Abu Abdullah al-

Tunisi, a Gnostic, and he gave up his kingship, and became his disciple. When people requested Ibn 'Arabi for his prayers, he would tell them: 'go to Yahya ibn Yoghman, because he was a King and became a gnostic. If I was put into such a tribulation as he was, perhaps I would not have succeeded.'

Initiation into Sufism

Ibn 'Arabi states that he became a Sufi in 1184 when he was twenty. It is stated that Ibn Arabi was invited to a party at the house of a prominent leader of Seville, along with other civic leaders. They started having a drink, when it reached Ibn Arabi, he heard a voice saying: 'O Muhammad, did we create you for this?' He put down the drink and left the party immediately. Outside the house he met a shepherd and went with him to the outskirts of the city and exchanged clothes with him. After wandering around he arrived at a graveyard where he devoted himself to *Dhikr Ilahi* (Remembrance of Allah) for four days. Finally when he came out,

he was blessed with immense knowledge of numerous disciplines.

After this life-changing experience, he spent 9 months in total solitude under the guidance of his master Shaikh Yousuf bin Yuhlaf al-Kumi. Ibn Arabi says:

‘my solitary stay started at the time of Fajr, by the time the sun started to rise; the secrets of the unseen world “ghaib” were unravelling on me. I stayed in this retreat for 14 months and all those secrets that were told to me I have penned them down.’

His first employment in the civil service was as a scribe which was an important position in the cabinet. His father was a minister of state and his family was well known throughout the country. After his spiritual experience, he gave up his employment. He preferred to live as a dervish (*faqir*).

Meeting with Ibn Rushd

Due to Ibn ‘Arabi’s extraordinary

scholarship and spiritual insights, his fame spread throughout Spain. The master interpreter of Aristotle, Cordoba’s Qadi Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) requested his father for a meeting with Ibn ‘Arabi.

This meeting is important in that of the two illustrious men, one was a follower of the edicts of reason, who became the most influential thinker in the West. The other was a Gnostic for whom knowledge meant ‘vision’, who became a towering personality in Sufism. Ibn ‘Arabi related this visit in his own words:

‘One day I went to see Qadi abu Walid Ibn Rushd in Cordova as he wanted to meet me on account of what he had heard of the revelations which God accorded me during my retreat. Anyone who heard about these secrets used to wonder. I was still a beardless young man. Ibn Rushd was my father’s close friend. As I entered the room, he stood up out of respect for

me. He embraced me. Then he said to me “Yes”. I in turn replied Yes. He was pleased with this response thinking that I understood him. I on the other hand being aware of the motive for his pleasure, replied, “No”. Upon this, Ibn Rushd drew back from me, his colour changed and he seemed to doubt what he had thought of me. He then asked me, “What solution have you found as a result of mystical illumination (*Kashf*) and divine inspiration. Does it coincide with what is arrived at by speculative thought?”. I replied, “Yes and No. Between the Yea and Nay the souls take their flight beyond matter, and the necks detach themselves from their bodies.” At this Ibn Rushd became pale and I saw him shaking as he muttered, “*La Haula wa la Quwwat*”, (there is no power Allah”). This was because he had understood my insinuation. In cryptic language, the young boy had informed Ibn Rushd that rational investigation was not



Statue of Ibn Rushd, Cordoba

sufficient to attain complete knowledge of God and the world.

On another occasion, he asked my father to interview me so that he could tell me about things (knowledge) which he was in possession of. As he was one of the foremost intellectuals he thanked Allah for having met a person who went into solitude while he was ignorant but came out of it full of knowledge without having any discussions,

lectures, research or studying under a teacher. He said, “Glory be to God that I have been able to live at a time when there exists a master of this experience, one of those who opens the locks of His doors. Glory be to God to have made me the personal favour of seeing one of them with my own eyes.”²

In this encounter, the young mystic gained the upper hand, leaving the aged Peripatetic philosopher dumbfounded. It shows his philosophical thinking and mystical experience, how mysticism and philosophy were intertwined. Mysticism, in this case overcame philosophy because Ibn 'Arabi was also a master of philosophy.

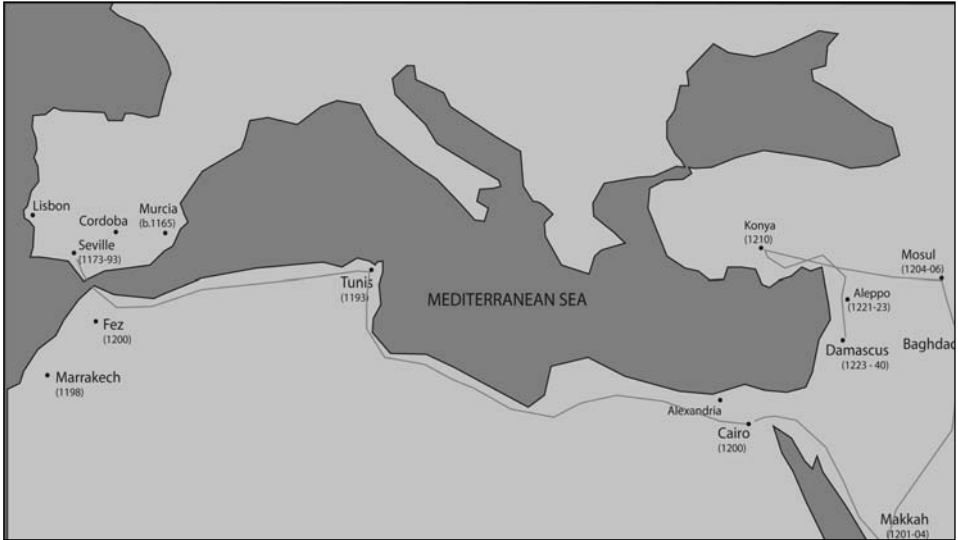
His travels

In 1193, Ibn 'Arabi made his first foreign trip aged 30. He travelled to Tunis where he met Abdulaziz bin Abu Bakr al-Quraishi al-Mahdawi on whose request he wrote a biography of 55 Sufi saints of Andalus with whom he had been in contact. It was called

Ruhul Qudus.

Perhaps because of civil war in North Africa, Ibn 'Arabi returned to Andalus. In 1194, he travelled to Fez where he foretold the victory of the Almohad ruler Yaqub al-Mansur (1160-1199) over Christian armies at Alarcos. By 1195, he was back in Seville where he spent most of his time in study and discussion. It appears that by this time his reputation for spiritual authority had made others deferential towards him.

In 1196 he returned to Fez to attend the lectures of Abdul Karim, Imam of the Azhar Mosque. He frequented the garden of Ibn Hayyun to meet men of the spirit. During his stay here, his reputation drew many disciples. His own spiritual state was of the highest order as he tells us that he attained knowledge of the Seal of Muhammad's Sainthood (*Khatim al-Auliya*). In 1198 he made his way back to Murcia via Granada. He attended the last rites of Ibn Rushd in Cordoba who had passed away in Marrakesh but



Map of travels of Ibn 'Arabi

his remains were brought to his birthplace for burial. On this occasion he composed the following lines:

*This is the Imam and these
are his works,
Would that I knew whether his
hopes were realised.*

In 1200 he went to Marrakesh, where he spent some time with Abu al-Abbas of Ceuta, Keeper of the Alms. Here he had two experiences which brought him to an even higher spiritual level. Then he journeyed to Bugia and

Tunis on his way to the East.

Life in the East

He pursued his journey to the East with his companion al-Hasar. After spending a short time in Cairo and Alexandria, he arrived in Makkah in 1201. Once in Makkah he enjoyed the hospitality of Zahir bin Rustum of Isphahan who was himself a Sufi and occupied a high position in society.

Zahir had a daughter Nizam Ain al-Shams whose striking looks inspired Ibn 'Arabi to write

Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, a fine collection of love poems. Nizam was blessed with stunning beauty, intellectual calibre and profound spiritual experiences. 'Her dazzling beauty, graceful modesty of her bearing, and the soft melody of her speech, were such that her presence enchanted all those around her', wrote Ibn Arabi in *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*.

While in Makkah, he performed the Hajj. During the circumambulation (*tawaf*) of the Ka'aba he saw a vision on passing the Black Stone. This vision marked a critical stage in his spiritual maturity.⁴

In Makkah, he started the writing of his magnum opus *Futuhat al-Makkiyya*. In 1204 he left Makkah and travelled to Baghdad and then Mosul. Here he composed a book *al-Tanazzulat al-Mawsiliyya* (Revelations at Mosul) which described the significance of ablution and prayer (*salat*). He arrived in Hebron in 1206 on his way back to Cairo where he was accused of heresy by the

authorities, but the ruler Nasir al-Din al-Malik al-Adil intervened having received a letter of commendation from Abu al-Hassan of Bugia.

Life in Konya

Ibn'Arabi was discouraged by his reception in Cairo and in 1207, returned to Makkah. After a year long stay he made his way towards Asia Minor (Turkey). On his arrival in 1210, he was well received by the Saljuq Sultan of Rum, Kay Kaus (1210-1220) and the people of Konya. Here, Sadr al-Din was his faithful disciple who later became a major exponent of his teachings, and left many large commentaries on his works. Sadr al-Din was a close associate of Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi and was also the teacher of Qutb al-Din Shirazi (1236-1311), a notable Sufi of 13th century.

In 1211, he left Konya with a few of his disciples and travelled to Baghdad. Here he had a meeting with Shihab al-Din Suharwardi, a great Sufi master. In 1212 Ibn 'Arabi wrote a letter to Sultan

Kay Kaus who had asked him regarding the treatment of Christians as his subjects. Ibn'Arabi advised him to adopt strict measures in his dealings and prevent them from harming the cause of Islam in his Kingdom. This was perhaps due to the Crusades that were going on at the time.

In 1213, he travelled to Makkah and two years later he journeyed once more to Turkey where he met Kay Kaus and foretold his victory at the battle of Antioch. He went to Aleppo where he stayed to 1221. In 1223, he decided to settle in Damascus, as he wanted to spend the rest of his eventful life in relative peace, and was treated very respectfully by the ruler al-Malik al-Adil. In 1240 he breathed his last and was laid to rest at Salihiyah, near Mt. Qasiyun, north of Damascus. A Mausoleum was built for him in the 16th Century and is still a place of pilgrimage for Sufis.

His Children

Ibn'Arabi got married three times, in three countries. During

his stay in Seville, he married Maryam, the daughter of Muhammad ibn 'Abdun, who shared his aspiration to become a Sufi. The second wife, Fatimah, was daughter of Sheriff of Makkah who was mother of Imad al-Din. He finally also married the daughter of Qadi al-Qaza in Damascus.⁵

He had two sons, Sa'd al-Din Muhammad (1221-1258) an accomplished poet, and Ima'd al-Din Muhammad (d.1268).

His Works

Among the Sufis, Ibn Arabi is referred to as *Al-Shaikh Al-Akbar*, the greatest Teacher. The reason for this is that he was the first person to express in writing doctrines which had been confined to oral transmission and allusions. By doing so he compiled an enormous corpus on various subjects such as metaphysical doctrines, ritual ablution, cosmology, numerology, oneirology, mystical states and Sufi doctrines.

Ibn'Arabi himself listed 251

works in his list of books. Although few of these have been printed or translated, around 110 works are known to have survived in manuscripts, of which 18 are in Ibn 'Arabi's own hand. Some 71 have been printed and 33 have been commented on by Muslim scholars.

He was as much at home with the Holy Qur'an and Hadith scholarship as with philology, letter symbolism, philosophy, alchemy and cosmology.

He could write with equal facility in prose or poetry. The rhymed prose (*saj*), which is found in the Holy Qur'an abounds in his works.

Futuh al-Makkiyya, is a veritable encyclopaedia of Sufism (spiritual knowledge) which unites and distinguishes the three strands of tradition, reason and mystical insight. It was conceived and undertaken on his first visit to Makkah in 1201, and completed in Damascus in 1237. It covers mystical experiences, meta-

physical theories, visions, cosmological doctrines, Sufi doctrines and speculation. In 560 chapters, it is a work of tremendous size, a personal encyclopaedia extending over all the subjects in Islam as Ibn'Arabi understood and had experienced them, together with valuable information about his inner life. He asserts in the book that it was not the result of free choice, or reflection but:

'God dictated to me everything that I have written through the angel of inspiration.'

More than 100 commentaries have been written on this great work.

Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom) was composed by him in 1229, as an exposition of the inner meaning of the wisdom of the prophets in the Judaic/Christian/ Islamic line. Each of the 27 chapters is devoted to the basic doctrines of Islamic esotericism. It was inspired by a vision about the Prophet

Muhammad^(saw) holding a book in his hand which he ordered Ibn'Arabi to take and transmit to the world.

This book came under heavy criticism and he was declared a heretic (*Kafir*) by many religious scholars (Ibn Taimiyah). Many commentaries have been written on *Fusus*, notably that of Sadr al-Din al-Konawi, and Abdul Ghani al-Nablusi. It is studied in those Islamic countries where Sufism flourishes as the most masterly text on gnosis (*Irfan*).

Ruh al-Quds and *al-Durrat al-Fakhirah* were translated by Dr R.W. Austin, and published in 1971 in a single volume. Life sketches of 71 Sufis of Andalusia have been given in Sufis of Andalusia. Some smaller works were translated into Spanish by Asin Palacios in 1931.⁶

Only 18 of his works survive in his own hand, many exist in copies made with his authority. Many autographed manuscripts are stored in libraries in Baghdad, Istanbul and Konya.

His sayings

There are many quotes of Ibn'Arabi preserved which give us a sense of his views:

‘The knower of Allah knows through eyesight (*basar*) what others know through insight (*basira*), and he knows through insight what virtually no-one knows. Despite this, he does not feel secure from the harm of his ego towards himself; how then could he ever feel secure from what His Lord has foreordained for him?’

‘The discourse of the knower is in the image of the listener according to the latter’s powers, readiness, weakness, and inner reservations.’ – ‘If you find it complicated to answer someone’s question, do not answer it, for his container is already full and does not have room for the answer.’

‘The ignorant one does not see his ignorance as he basks in its darkness; nor does the

knowledgeable one see his own knowledge, for he basks in its light.’

‘The movement which is the existence of the universe is the movement of love.’

Addressing his close associates he once said:

‘For every type of knowledge, there are certain people. Everyone cannot master themselves for every type of knowledge, nor is there enough time to do it. Therefore, it is incumbent, that there should be every type of people in any community. There should be people with different bent of mind, although their objective should be the same’.⁸

Unity of Being

He is generally known as the major exponent of the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud*, though he never used this term in any of his books. Like every mystic, his emphasis lay rather on the true

potential of the human being and the path to realising that potential, which reaches its completion in the Perfect Man (*al-insan al-kamil*). *Wahdat al-Wujud* is a peculiar type of philosophy meaning ‘that while God is absolutely transcendent with respect to the universe, the Universe is not completely separated from Him; that the Universe is mysteriously plunged in God.’⁹

Ibn'Arabi shows how ‘A Perfect Man’ is the complete image of this reality and how those who truly know their self know God. His writings provide ample exposition of the Unity of Being, the single and indivisible reality which transcends and is manifested in all the images of the world. For this theory he was accused of being a pantheist, which implies a substantial continuity between God and the Universe, whereas Ibn 'Arabi believed in God's absolute transcendence over every category.¹⁰

His ideology

Ibn 'Arabi exerted a strong influence upon his friends and disciples, many of whom were spiritual masters in their own right. He considerably affected the whole course of spiritual thought and practice in the Islamic world. His books were studied by followers of Sufism. His poems were chanted in centers of various Sufi orders (*Tariqah*). In recent years his writings have also become increasingly the subject of interest and study in the West, leading to the establishment of an academic Society in his name.

Ibn 'Arabi believed in the continuous existence of non-legislative (*anbiya la tashri'a lahum*) prophecy. He also believed that the Sufis are able to receive instructions from the Holy Prophet^(saw) through the mediation of the angel Gabriel. He is reported to have thought that cessation of prophecy would amount to the death of Islam.¹¹

He explained the relationship between a *muhaddath* (person

<i>Ahl al-tariqah</i>	follower of a Sufi order
<i>Fana</i>	self-annihilation
<i>Faqir</i>	follower of a Sufi path
<i>Mutasawwif</i>	one who particip-ates in Sufism, dervish in Persian
<i>Shaykh</i>	Master
<i>Silsilah</i>	spiritual chain
<i>Sufi</i>	person who has realised the goal and achieved the state of supreme identity
<i>Tariqah</i>	Sufi Order
<i>Dhikr</i>	repetition of Divine Name

who is spoken to) and the non-legislative prophet. A *muhaddath* is different from a legislative prophet (*anbiya tashri'ee*) in so far as the imposition of new Sharia law is concerned. He is considered *Rai'sal auliya wa jami al-muqamat* (head of the saints and all the stages on the spiritual path are gathered in his personality). He has a share in the non-legislative prophecy and there seems to be little difference between him and the non-legislative prophet.¹²

The cardinal idea in his thought is that persons who attained the spiritual rank of prophecy will never cease to exist in the Islamic *umma* (community). It is based

on the hadith of Prophet Muhammad^(saw), in which he asked Allah to ‘pray for Muhammad and for the family of Muhammad as You prayed for Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim’. There were prophets among the descendants of Ibrahim^(as) (Abraham), hence it is implicit in the supplication that Allah will bestow the rank of prophecy on Muslims as well.

Ibn ‘Arabi says that no law will ever abrogate or add to the Prophet’s Law. This is the meaning of the Prophet’s statement that ‘mission and prophecy ceased and there will be no messenger after me and no prophet.’ There would be no more law-bearing prophets after the Holy Prophet^(saw), and any future prophets would be subject to his law. It is future laws that had ended, not the rank of prophethood.¹³

The greatest numbers of Ibn’Arabi’s adherents are to be found in modern Iran. Even today his metaphysics together with Suharwardi’s (1155-1191),

forms the basis of the world-view of Iranian intellectuals.

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The Purity of the Text of the

HOLY QUR'AN

PART 6 (continued from previous month)

From the Review of Religions, 1907

Arrangement of the Verses and Chapters of the Holy Qur'an

It may perhaps be objected that such an arrangement was not possible as the Qur'an was not complete till the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and verses and chapters were constantly being revealed. It is quite true that the Qur'an could not be said to be complete so long as the recipient of the Divine revelation lived, but this could not interfere with the arrangement of verses and chapters. The word Qur'an signified the part of the Qur'an that had been revealed.

Now the tradition quoted above (see previous issue) speaks of the conversion to Islam of the *Beni Saqif*, which did not take place till the ninth year of Hijra, in which year the chapter entitled 'Immunity' which is looked upon

as the latest in chronological order, was revealed. Hence at the time of which the tradition speaks almost the whole of the Qur'an had been revealed, and the division into seven portions which speaks of the number of chapters in each portion has in its favour the authority of the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself, and no objection to it is based on reasonable ground.

The verses that were revealed afterwards were put in their proper place in the chapters to which they belonged, and if any short *Sura* was also revealed afterwards, as the 'Help' it also found its proper place in the arrangement of chapters, and did not interfere with the enumeration of the chapters contained in the first six portions.

‘THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS EXISTING IN THE TIME OF THE HOLY PROPHET(SAW) WAS ALTERED IN ANY WAY BY ABU BAKR(RA) OR OTHMAN(RA). AGAINST ABU BAKR(RA) NO ONE HAS EVER ADVANCED SUCH A CHARGE, AND OTHMAN(RA) ONLY FOLLOWED THE COLLECTION OF ABU BAKR(RA).’

There is no evidence that the arrangement of chapters existing in the time of the Holy Prophet(saw) was altered in any way by Abu Bakr(ra) or Uthman(ra). Against Abu Bakr(ra) no one has ever advanced such a charge, and Uthman(ra) only followed the collection of Abu Bakr(ra). The copies made in the time of Uthman(ra) were made under the directions of the companions who possessed the best knowledge of the Qur’an, and many of them as *Obayy bin K’ab* knew the whole of it by heart.

The arguments which we have advanced above as to the arrangement of verses apply *mutatis mutandis* to the arrangement of chapters. But as some traditions speak of different arrangements, we shall consider them before leaving this subject.

Let us take first the chapter headed *Talif-ul-Qur’an* in the Bukhari. According to the first tradition mentioned in this chapter, a man from Iraq came to Ayesha(ra) and asked her to show him her copy of the Qur’an. On being questioned as to what he meant to do with it he said that no arrangement was followed in the recital of the Qur’an and that he wanted her copy for a right arrangement of the Holy Book. Upon this, the tradition tells us, Ayesha(ra) rebuked him and accosted him in the following words:

‘What harm is there which is read first. Verily what was revealed of it first was a chapter from among the *mufassal* speaking of paradise and hell. But when people began to accept Islam,

injunctions were revealed about the things legal and the things prohibited. Had the first injunction revealed been the prohibition of drinking, they would have said that they could not give up drinking. Then she brought out her copy of the Qur'an and recited verses of some chapters.'

In this tradition we have the objection of a man from Iraq, not one of the companions but a new convert to Islam, and the reply of Ayesha^(ra). In the reply the objector is rebuked for saying that no arrangement was followed in the recital of the Qur'an and it is explained to him what necessitated an arrangement different from the chronological order. It appears from the reply that his question related to the order of revelation, for he was told that there was no harm in placing a verse revealed before another after it in the arrangement. The copy of the Qur'an which Ayesha^(ra) showed the questioner had also its arrangement different from the

order of revelation, for she is stated to have recited verses of different chapters in support of her argument. And the man was satisfied with Ayesha's argument and did not take her copy which he would have certainly done if the arrangement of Ayesha's copy had been different from the current copies of the Qur'an.

It should also be borne in mind that the arrangement of chapters to which we have referred above was observed only in the recital of the whole Qur'an, and no such arrangement was observed in its recital in prayers or outside prayers when only certain portions were recited.

In prayers, for instance, if any chapter or any portion of a chapter was recited in one *rak'a*, any other chapter or portion of a chapter whatever could be recited in the second *rak'a*. There is ample evidence as to this in traditions. Similarly two or more chapters could be read in a single *rak'a*, and in some cases there were combinations of such chapters for recital in prayers.

In his *tahajjud* prayers, for instance, the Holy Prophet^(saw) used sometimes to recite twenty chapters, eighteen of which were termed the *mufassal*, or the shorter chapters towards the close of the Qur'an beginning with *Qaf*, and two *Ha Mims*, or chapters commencing with *Ha Mim*. Thus in each *rak'a* two of these chapters were recited, the total number of *rak'as* being ten. The Holy Prophet^(saw) made a peculiar combination which has been preserved to us through Ibn-i-Masud, and accordingly it is known as the *talif-i-Ibn-i-Masud* or the combination of Ibn-i-Masud. Now this combination has nothing to do with the arrangement of chapters in the Qur'an, nor was it followed on all occasions. It was a combination, which, according to Ibn-i-Masud, the Holy Prophet^(saw) followed upon one occasion or more occasions than one in his later midnight prayers. As authentic traditions show that the ordinary arrangement of chapters was not followed by the Holy Prophet^(saw) or his companions in

prayers, this peculiar combination does not detract aught from the value of the original arrangement.

On the other hand, this peculiar combination was preserved and mentioned only on account of its peculiarity and departure from the original arrangement of chapters. Nor was this peculiar combination followed always even in *tahajjud* prayers for there are other authentic traditions showing other combinations and the recital of other chapters.

Even in the public prayers the arrangement of chapters was not followed. On one occasion the Holy Prophet^(saw) recited the fourth chapter, *Al-Nisa* in the first *rak'a* and the third chapter, *Al-Imran*, in the second, and the incident has been preserved in a tradition only because a departure was made in the case from the recognised arrangement.

Many other instances of the same kind are on record, and as it was

not obligatory to follow the arrangement of chapters in reciting them in prayers, such cases furnish only additional testimony to the truth of the fact that the arrangement of chapters followed at present is the same as was followed in the recital of the whole Qur'an in the life-time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) according to his directions.

The circumstances narrated above as to the peculiar combination of the twenty chapters termed the *mufassal*, a combination resorted to by the Holy Prophet^(saw) sometimes in his *tahajjud* prayers, has led some men to think that Ibn-i-Masud's copy of the Qur'an followed a different arrangement of chapters. But the only trustworthy evidence to support this is the tradition quoted above, which speaks of a certain combination of twenty short chapters in the *tahajjud* prayers, and when it is shown that the observance of the arrangement of chapters was not necessary in prayers, the force of that

evidence vanishes altogether.

Even supposing for the sake of argument that Ibn-i-Masud followed a different arrangement of chapters, and it was according to that arrangement that the chapters were written in his copy of the Holy Qur'an, it does not follow that his was the right arrangement or that the arrangement in Abu Bakr's or Uthman's copy was the wrong one. None of the companions favoured the arrangement of Ibn-i-Masud.

On the other hand, all of them recognised the arrangement in Uthman's copy as the arrangement followed by the Holy Prophet^(saw). Among the companions who superintended the copying of the Qur'an in the reign of Uthman^(ra), there were such eminent men as Ali^(ra), Obayy bin Ka'b, Zaid bin Sabit and others. Uthman^(ra) had chosen, as I will show later on, twelve of the most eminent companions, who were distinguished for their sound

‘...SUCH CASES FURNISH ONLY ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH OF THE FACT THAT THE ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS FOLLOWED AT PRESENT IS THE SAME AS WAS FOLLOWED IN THE RECITAL OF THE WHOLE QUR’AN IN THE LIFETIME OF THE HOLY PROPHET^(SAW) ACCORDING TO HIS DIRECTIONS.’

knowledge of the Qur’an, and they decided all points on which any dispute arose. They could not be unaware of the particular combination of chapters which the Holy Prophet^(SAW) followed in his later midnight prayers, but they knew that no particular arrangement was adhered to by the Holy Prophet^(SAW) in the recital of chapters in prayers and no arrangement could in fact be observed. It is absurd to suppose that they were all ignorant of a certain combination and that Ibn-i-Masud alone knew it. Had the arrangement of chapters been left to private judgment, we could have supposed Ibn-i-Masud’s arrangement to be the right one and attributed the error to the rest of the companions. But the matter was to be decided by what the Holy Prophet^(SAW) had ordered.

Ibn-i-Masud thought that a certain arrangement which he had seen the Holy Prophet^(SAW) following in his *tahajjud* prayers was the right arrangement. But he made a mistake. The companions knew that the arrangement followed in prayers was not and could not be the right arrangement. Authentic traditions related by them show that the Holy Prophet^(SAW) used to recite a portion of one chapter in one *rak’a* and a portion of another chapter whether before or after the first in actual arrangement in the second *rak’a*. They also knew the case in which a companion who led the prayers in a certain mosque commenced every *rak’a* with the short chapter entitled ‘Unity’ and then followed it with any other chapter, and when the Holy Prophet^(SAW) was apprised of this

circumstance he did not object to it. They knew further that in the morning prayers on Fridays, the Holy Prophet^(saw) generally recited the chapter *Al-Sajdah*, the 32nd chapter, in the first *rak'a*, and the chapter *Ad-Dahr*, the seventy-sixth chapter, in the second *rak'a*, yet this did not mean that the latter chapter should follow the former in actual arrangement. They knew the actual arrangement and they followed it.

Ibn-i-Masud based his arrangement on a certain combination followed in certain prayers and thus made an error in judgment. Yet in the main even his arrangement was not different from the arrangement followed in Uthman's copy. The same longer chapters, the *Tiwal*, were first in his copy as in Uthman's, with this difference only that *Al-Nisa* preceded *Al-Imran*, the order of the third and fourth chapters being thus reversed. The reversal of this order is also due to the Holy Prophet^(saw) having once done it in reciting them in prayers. These are the only two differences as

regards the arrangement of chapters that are mentioned to have existed in Ibn-i-Masud's copy. So the error is either to be attributed to Ibn-i-Masud or to those who have supposed that his arrangement of the chapters of the Qur'an differed in these two points from the recognised arrangement followed in the official copies issued by Uthman^(ra).

Even the existence of the difference confirms the conclusion that the arrangement of chapters followed by Othman^(ra) was exactly the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet^(saw). There is agreement in the main between other companions and Ibn-i-Masud, and the difference arises only out of an error of judgment. The only differences in Ibn-i-Masud's arrangement, if these differences did actually exist in his copy, were those which arose out of the Holy Prophet^(saw) reciting certain chapters in a different order in the prayers. Perhaps Ibn-i-Masud thought that the order of those few chapters had been changed by the

Holy Prophet^(saw) when he heard him reciting them in prayers, but the other companions knew that it was not obligatory to follow the arrangement in prayers. Now we ask, if the order of chapters was not fixed by the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself, what led Ibn-i-Masud to follow the same arrangement as was followed by Uthman^(ra) and the other companions?

Such an agreement in the arrangement of 114 chapters was not possible unless both were following one and the same authority who had fixed that order. Such authority could be none but the Holy Prophet^(saw). As further testimony that Ibn-i-Masud's arrangement of chapters was materially the same as was followed in Uthman's copies and as is followed by us to this day, we have a tradition in Bukhari in which Ibn-i-Masud names the five chapters in the middle of the Qur'an, *Beni Israel*, *Al-Kahf*, *Ta Ha*, *Maryam* and *Anbiya*, in the same order in which they are found in our copies of the Holy Qur'an. All this evidence leads us to the certain conclusion that

Ibn-i-Masud's arrangement of chapters was the same as in the copies made by the order of Uthman^(ra), that if there was any difference it was very slight and immaterial, and that this difference arose out of a misunderstanding on the part of Ibn-i-Masud.

Two other persons are named as having followed a different arrangement of chapters in the collection of the Qur'an. These are Ubayy bin Kab and Ali^(ra). The case of the former may be disposed of at once, as there is no testimony worth the name which should show that Ubayy followed a different arrangement of chapters. The only thing stated about him is that he placed the fourth chapter before the third. If that was the only difference of arrangement, it is quite immaterial and the error may have arisen from the same source as in the case of Ibn-i-Masud. But as I will show just now, if Ubayy ever entertained such opinion, he afterwards gave it up when he came to know the facts.

Ali^(ra) is said to have collected the chapters in the order of revelation, and there is a tradition stating that he did not rest after the Holy Prophet's^(saw) death until he had collected the Qur'an, arranging its chapters in a chronological order. The authenticity of this tradition has been questioned, for that Qur'an was never handed down to posterity though Ali^(ra) reigned as Caliph immediately after Uthman^(ra). Moreover there are traditions of a higher authority which do not give to Ali^(ra) such credit. According to one tradition (*see Fath-ul-Bari, p.10*) Ali^(ra) himself said that:

‘the greatest of men as regards the collection of the Qur'an is Abu Bakr: he is the first man who collected the Qur'an.’

Therefore the tradition which makes Ali^(ra) say that he did not rest after the death of the Prophet^(saw) till he had collected the whole of the Qur'an is contradicted by the second tradition whose evidence is corroborated by other historical facts, one of which is that even

during his Caliphate, Ali^(ra) never referred to or accepted a different copy of the Qur'an or a different arrangement of its chapters. But besides this, there is another consideration which shows that neither Ali^(ra) nor Ubayy followed any arrangement of chapters other than the one which was followed by Uthman^(ra). Ubayy and Ali^(ra) were among the men under whose directions the copies of the Qur'an were written, and therefore they had as much hand in giving us the present arrangement of chapters as Uthman^(ra) or any other companion.

There is one tradition more which may be mentioned in connection with the arrangement of chapters, as from it a contrary conclusion is sometimes drawn by mistake. Ibn-i-Abbas thus narrates this tradition: ‘I said to Uthman what led you to put *Al-Anfal* (the eighth chapter) in juxtaposition with *Baraat* and you did not write between them the line ‘*In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful*’ (the verse with which every chapter

of the Qur'an commences), thus classing these two chapters with the seven long ones. Upon this question Uthman gave me the following reply: 'It was customary with the Holy Prophet^(saw) when many chapters were being revealed to him, that when any portion of any chapter was revealed, he sent for one of his amanuenses and told him to write down these verses in the chapter where such and such things were spoken of. Now *Al-Anfal* was one of the chapters revealed early at Madinah, and *Baraat* was one of the latest revealed chapters, and the subject matter of these two chapters was identical. Therefore I believed that the latter chapter was a part of the former chapter, and the Holy Prophet^(saw) died, and he did not distinctly say to us that it was a part.'

This tradition, far from ascribing the arrangement of chapters to the judgment of Othman^(ra), makes it clear that the arrangement of chapters was effected by none other than the Holy Prophet^(saw). It shows that

except in the case mentioned in the tradition, the Holy Prophet^(saw) had 'distinctly' told his companions where a verse or chapter was to be placed. It also shows that the arrangement was effected according to subject-matter by the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself, for it was the identity of the subject-matter which decided that the eighth and the ninth chapters should be placed in juxtaposition. In fact, leaving the case of this one chapter, *viz.*, the ninth, out of question, the tradition relates in express and clear words, not only that the Holy Prophet^(saw) pointed out the position of every verse, but also that he pointed out the position of every chapter and distinctly told his companions which chapter should follow which in the collection, and that it was he who arranged the chapters according to their subject matter.

Now taking the case of the two chapters mentioned in the tradition, does it follow from what is said in it that the Holy Prophet^(saw) gave no directions at all as to their arrangement? The

chapter entitled *Baraat* (Immunity) was, we know, revealed to the Holy Prophet^(saw) more than a year before his death and accordingly it is not right to say that he had no time to give distinct directions as to its place. The fact is that the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself desired the two chapters to be thus placed side by side and the *Baraat* to be written without *bismillah*, the formula with which every chapter began. The two chapters, although known under two different names, were really parts of a single chapter. The first eighty verses of the *Baraat* were proclaimed to the assembled hosts in the days of pilgrimage, and this was the reason that the *Baraat* was regarded as a different chapter. Hence the Holy Prophet^(saw) never told his companions distinctly that the *Baraat* was only a part of *Al-Anfal*, and it was for this reason that it was looked upon as a distinct chapter. But neither did the Holy Prophet^(saw) commence it with the opening formula, because in a certain sense, that is, the identity of the subject matter,

it was regarded as a part of the eighth chapter. This is what Uthman^(ra) explained to Ibn-i Abbas.

All these circumstances lead us to the certain and undeniable conclusion that the arrangement of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an and the arrangement of the verses in each chapter were both effected by the Holy Prophet^(saw). There is strong internal evidence to the same effect. The chapters like the verses have a connection with each other, but as this subject requires a separate treatment, we need not refer to it here. The next point to be considered is that if the whole of the Qur'an was safe in writing as well as in memory, and if even its verses and chapters were arranged before the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw), what was meant by the collection of the Qur'an in the time of Abu Bakr^(ra) or in that of Uthman^(ra).

To be continued.

Rationalisation

By Rizwan Khan – USA

... and Satan made all that they did seem fair to them.

(Ch.6:V.44)

One of man's most vain fantasies is to escape the consequences of his actions, to do everything he pleases and be accountable for nothing, not to others, not to himself, nor to God.

One means to this end is ignorance. If one is unaware that an action is wrong, one is not as accountable as one who does wrong intentionally. Thus, if one convinces himself that one is ignorant of the wrong in one's actions, theoretically, one is not responsible.

Accountability seems to dissipate in a myriad of deliberate confusions and calculated misunderstandings. In the desperate pursuit of this vain freedom, one is capable of going to great lengths to pretend to oneself that

there is nothing wrong with what one wants. The last resort of the irrational is to rationalise one's actions.

Some may be inclined to believe that this is far-fetched and rare, but on the contrary it is quite common. Such people underestimate what foolishness man is capable. However great our intellectual capacity may be, proportional is our ability to use that capacity towards the most senseless purposes.

And Satan made their deeds appear good to them, and thus turned them away from the path, sagacious though they were.

(Ch.29: V.39)

Rationalisation constantly manifests itself before us in various forms. For example, people are always convincing themselves that a lie, carefully worded, is not

actually a lie, or that cheating on a test, done with certain intentions, is not actually cheating.

These are common occurrences which we witness regularly or may even be guilty of ourselves. We turn a blind eye to the obvious evil in our actions in the hope that, as a result, we will not be answerable.

Is he, then, to whom the evil of his deeds are made to appear pleasing, so that he looks upon it as good, like him who believes and does good deeds?...

(Ch.35: V.9)

If we were straight-forward with ourselves, we would realise that we cannot divert blame for such faults away from ourselves by claiming ignorance. The fact is that we ourselves are responsible for that ignorance, for deliberately imposing it upon ourselves. If we try to fool ourselves into unconsciously doing a wrong, we cannot escape responsibility for consciously fooling ourselves and everything which results there-

from. The responsibility of our actions which we seek to escape ultimately finds its way directly back to us.

This deliberate ignorance, which we imagine is our freedom from responsibility for our wrongs, is, in itself, the worst wrong. Under its cover, we permit ourselves a host of new evils from which we would have otherwise abstained. In its delusional bliss, we sink deeper into self-righteous hypocrisy. Through it, we open a Pandora's Box of wrongs from which we had previously been secure.

When we rationalise an evil, we know it. Though we may convince ourselves on the surface, deep down we are always aware of the truth which we conceal from ourselves. It is for this reason that people always become so defensive when it is brought to their attention. Every defence mechanism in our personality reveals an insecurity which we seek to protect.

The sad result of this state of

affairs is that, though we may know the difference between right and wrong, that knowledge fails to benefit us at all. When we make up our minds to believe what we need to in order to do what we want to, we abandon any advantage our knowledge could have afforded us. We may know what is right, but fail to profit from it; we may believe in the religion, but fail to gain from it. Under such circumstances, we find ourselves with scholars who know everything and comprehend nothing, with saints who believe in everything but have faith in nothing.

The corruption of this hypocrisy is centred on one phenomenon, rationalisation. Rather than administering the anaesthetics of ignorance to subdue the symptoms of our moral diseases, perhaps it would be far better that we simply confront ourselves for what we are and be straight forward in our actions.

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