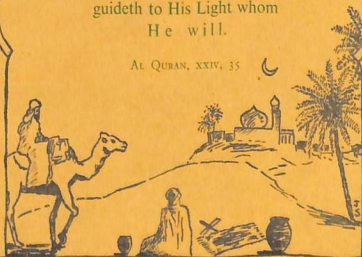


VALUES

A L L A H

is the Light of heaven and earth. His Light may be compared to a niche which contains a lamp, the lamp within a glass, and the glass as it were, a shining pearly star. It is lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree neither of the east, nor of the west. Its oil would almost shine forth if no fire touched it. Light added unto light! ALLAH guideth to His Light whom He will.

AL QURAN, XXIV, 35



THE WISDOM OF ISLAM

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VALUES is devoted to integrating human understanding unitively, impartially and globally in the interests of the general good.

NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC

ESOTERICS

Published monthly for the Gurukula Publishing House, Kaggalipura P. O., Bangalore District (South), India, and Edited by John Spiers. Printed by Kalyan Printers (Private) Ltd., 12, Jayachamaraja Road, Bangalore 2.

Rates (Yearly) by International Postal Money Orders :
Australia 25/-; Austria 75 Sch.; Belgium 140 francs;
Canada \$3.75; Denmark 20 kroner; France 1000 francs;
Germany 12 Dmk; India Rs. 6; Italy 1800 lire; Malaya \$6;
Mexico 28 pesos; Netherlands 10 guilders; New Zealand 18/-;
Norway 20 kroner; Sweden 15 kroner; Switzerland 12
francs; United Kingdom 18/-; U.S.A. \$3.75.

Editorial

WRITING about Islam is considered a touchy business in India. It is probably the same in Pakistan. The authority of religion is always compromised and in disgrace when it is confounded with national politics. Bergson was right. Religion can be open or closed. Closed patterns appeal to national sentiment where personalities are inflated and principles neglected. VALUES speaks for the open form of religion, whether labelled Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Buddhist. The politics of the Absolute ignores the intermediary groupings and meets humanity as individual and individual as humanity.

"It is not the name of a religion to which a man adheres that matters, but whether it makes him a better man". These are words of Narayana Guru. And it is on record that the Prophet Muhammed found more sympathy from many Christians and Jews than he found from his own near kinsmen at holy Mecca who sought to kill him. Is it not then better to seek out first principles and, where they are good, to give them all honour?

How little understood and how grossly misrepresented have been those wise men we call Sages, Prophets, Gurus, Teachers! Followers of Narayana Guru, for instance, implore us to say more about him. In praising "the kindly Prophet Nebi, Pearl and Gem in one" as Narayana Guru praised him, in *Anukampa Desikam*, 7, we are also praising Narayana Guru - as well as all Gurus the world over. But we don't want to give even the least suspicion of partiality here. Every man represents Humanity, and every Guru represents for us the principle of Guruhood. Nataraja Guru was reluctant to write every month for VALUES, for this very reason that it might seem as if there was some sort of secret conspiracy, some cult focussed around a name. Nothing of the sort. We are confident our readers can see beyond personalities.

What we need is more understanding of human values. Hence the name of this magazine. Such an understanding enables Humanity to rise above the forms of religion, above the names of personalities, beyond the letter and the word,

(continued on page 198)

Unmanifest, except unto Itself.
By Its own light, yet fraught with power to charm
The souls of all; concealed in the Unseen,
An Essence pure, unstained by aught of ill.
No mirror to reflect Its loveliness,
Nor comb to touch Its locks; the morning breeze
Ne'er stirred Its tresses; no collyrium
Lent lustre to Its eyes; no rosy cheeks
O'er shadowed by dark curls like hyacinth,
Nor peach-like down were there; no dusky mole
Adorned Its Face; no eye had yet beheld
Its image. To Itself it sang of love
In wordless measures. By Itself it cast
The die of love.

But Beauty cannot brook
Concealment and the veil, nor patient rest
Unseen and unadmired: 'twill burst all bonds,
And from Its prison-casement to the world
Reveal Itself. See where the tulip grows
In upland meadows, how in balmy spring
It decks itself; and how amidst its thorns
The wild rose rends its garment and reveals
Its loveliness. Thou, too, when some rare thought,
Or beauteous image, or deep mystery
Flashes across thy soul, canst not endure
To let it pass, but hold'st it, that perchance
In speech or writing thou may'st send it forth
To charm the world.

Wherever Beauty dwells
Such is its nature, and its heritage
From Everlasting Beauty, which emerged
From realms of purity to shine upon
The worlds and all the souls which dwell therein.
One gleam fell from It on the Universe
And on the angels, and this single ray
Dazzled the angels, till their senses whirled
Like the revolving sky. In divers forms
Each mirror showed It forth, and everywhere
Its praise was chanted in new harmonies.

* * * * *

Each speck of matter did He constitute
A mirror, causing each one to reflect
The beauty of His visage. From the rose
Flashed forth His Beauty, and the nightingale
Beholding it, loved madly. From that Light
The candle drew the lustre which beguiles
The moth to immolation. On the sun

His Beauty shone, and straightway from the wave
The lotus reared its head. Each shining lock
Of Leyla's hair attracted Majnun's heart
Because some ray divine reflected shone
In her fair face. 'Twas He to Shirin's lips
Who lent that sweetness which had power to steal
The heart from Parviz, and from Ferhad life.

His Beauty everywhere doth show itself,
And through the forms of earthly beauties shines
Obscured as through a veil. He did reveal
His face through Joseph's coat, and so destroyed
Zuleykha's peace. Where'er thou seest a veil,
Beneath that veil He hides. Whatever heart
Doth yield to love, He charms it. In His love
The heart hath life. Longing for Him, the soul
Hath victory. That heart which seems to love
The fair ones of this world, loves Him alone.

Beware! say not, "He is All-Beautiful,
And we His lovers." Thou art but the glass,
And He the Face confronting it, which casts
Its image on the mirror. He alone
Is manifest, and thou in truth art hid.
Pure love, like Beauty, coming but from Him,
Reveals itself in thee. If steadfastly
Thou canst regard, thou wilt at length perceive
He is the mirror also - He alike
The Treasure and the Casket. "I" and "Thou"
Have here no place, and are but phantasies
Vain and unreal. Silence! for this tale
Is endless, and no eloquence hath power
To speak of Him. 'Tis best for us to love,
And suffer silently, being as naught.

But is this not the sum of the Sufi's philosophy? Is he to rest content with earthly love, because he knows that the lover's homage is in truth rendered, not to the shrine at which he offers his devotion, but to the Divine Glory - the Shekinah - which inhabits it and irradiates it? Not so. Let us listen once more to the utterance of Jami:

Be thou the thrall of love; make this thine object;
For this one thing seemeth to wise men worthy.
Be thou love's thrall, that thou may'st win thy freedom,
Bear on thy breast its brand, that thou may'st blithe be.
Love's wine will warm thee, and will steal thy senses;
All else is soulless stupor and self-seeking
Remembrances of love refresh the lover,
Whose voice when lauding love e'er waxeth loudest;
But that he drained a draught from this deep goblet,

In the wide worlds not one would wot of Majnun.
 Thousands of wise and well-learned men have wended
 Through life, who, since for love they had no liking,
 Have left nor name, nor note, nor sign, nor story,
 Nor tale for future time, nor fame for fortune.
 Sweet songsters 'midst the birds are found in plenty,
 But when love's lore is taught by the love-learned,
 Of moth and nightingale they most make mention.
 Though in this world a hundred tasks thou trvest,
 'Tis love alone which from thyself will save thee.
 Even from earthly love thy face avert not,
 Since to the Real it may serve to raise thee.
 Ere A, B, C are rightly apprehended,
 How canst thou con the pages of thy Quran ?
 A sage (so heard I), unto whom a student
 Came craving counsel on the course before him,
 Said, "If thy steps be strangers to love's pathways,
 Depart, learn love, and then return before me !
 For, should'st thou fear to drink wine from Form's flagon,
 Thou canst not drain the draught of the Ideal,
 But yet beware ! Be not by Form belated ;
 Strive rather with all speed the bridge to traverse.
 If to the bourn thou fain would'st bear thy baggage
 Upon the bridge let not thy footsteps linger."

The renunciation of self is the great lesson to be learned, and its first steps may be learned from a merely human love. But what is called love is often selfish ; rarely absolutely unselfish. The test of unselfish love is this, that we should be ready and willing to sacrifice our own desires, happiness, even life itself, to render the beloved happy, even though we know that our sacrifice will never be understood or appreciated, and that we shall therefore not be rewarded for it by an increase of love or gratitude.

Such is the true love which leads us up to God. We love our fellow-creatures because there is in them something of the Divine, some dim reflection of the True Beloved, reminding our souls of their origin, home and destination. From the love of the reflection we pass to the love of the Light which casts it ; and, loving and Light, we at length become one with It, losing the false self and gaining the True, therein attaining at length to happiness and rest, and becoming one with all that we have loved—the Essence of that which constitutes the beauty alike of a noble action, a beautiful thought, or a lovely face [END]

EDITORIAL (continued from page 193)

where the wave is not distinct from the ocean. Humanity's oceanic content is grace, love, mercy, generosity, kindness and brotherhood. These are Value-synonymns for the Absolute in Man, and it is to present this afresh, in as many ways as possible, that VALUES exists.

Allah the Absolute

By NATARAJA GURU

THE status given to God in the Quran by Muhammed is what gives Islam its one excellence among the latest revaluations of religious life in the world.

In Islam God is not to be mixed up with a demiurge, a holy presence, or even a Deva or an Ishwara. He represents the Most High. He is not to be confused with other gods or deities, ancestral or heavenly. His unity is to be beyond suspicion. His supremely absolute status is not to be compromised. He is the high Ruler of all worlds and His law cannot and should not be transgressed. Man's multiple relativistic interests here should not be allowed to colour or vitiate God's high purity and aloofness. God is not merely good, but Goodness itself. There should be no watering-down of the intense or fervent content of the reality of God by loose analogy, comparison, substitution or transferred holiness through any indirect representation by imagery or impotent symbolism. He is unique and only comparable with His own High Self. Literary, philosophical or theological indirectness in the approach to God are to be discredited. The messenger of God, his apostle or prophet should not be encouraged to shine with any glory which truly belongs to God alone, as that might confuse or confound the supreme Goodness or Value of God in the eyes of the common man. Such is the zeal of the simplest member of the Islamic fraternity with which he safeguards the absolute status of the One God that knows no second. "None but the Most High" is thus the true watchword of Islam.

Enigmatic Epithets : Although thus the most exacting God and One always to be obeyed and feared, stern in His decrees and inexorable, the most favourite and oft-repeated epithets applied to Him are that He is *Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim*—The Beneficent and The Merciful.

To fear God and yet consider Him loving is a double-edged challenge presented by Islam. Neither the lukewarm "believer" in something indirectly and conventionally accepted as God, nor the disbeliever can by-pass in a

lazy indifferent mood this challenge which Islam poses before him. Those who are not with God are against Him. Such is the firm position that the religion of Muhammed offers for one to accept or reject. All cant and double-talk are ruled out by the Quran in such final terms that some have mistaken the zeal for fanaticism.

God's will must prevail one hundred per cent and yet there should be no obligation, compulsion or coercion in religious matters as the Quran clearly lays down (34, 256). There is thus a major enigma in Islam which is that in Islam there is the meeting of two factors — Freedom and imperative Necessity. The God of Islam is at once the highest and only hope and the categorical and imperative necessary factor for happiness or salvation.

Challenge and Recognition: Khatija the first wife of Muhammed first saw through this secret enigma that her husband taught her with love. His cousin Ali responded to the message with characteristic enthusiasm and fervour. Aisha, his younger accomplished wife, responded also to the verity thus revealed, though in a less clear way. But the Arab tribesmen and various kinsmen of Muhammed mistrusted and disadopted him, and thus the tearful growth of Islam began to trace its keen note through the pages of its long and troubled history. Humanity has still to travel in order to see through the challenge that Muhammed has placed before it.

Understood in the same strict sense that Muhammed himself intended, the absolute status and value of God to be recognized by humanity, the open, dynamic and scientific verity that the God of Islam represents remains unquestionable. Presented in its pristine purity, it is a revealed or *a priori* verity that each must accept wholeheartedly in the interest of the humanity which is dear to every member. Then let Allah be praised as He ought to be; let Him be understood as evermore He should be. Such is our fervent prayer.

[END]

AFFIRMATIONS

We are nearer to man than his jugular vein.—

Al-Quran, XXVII, 78

I am in your individuality, but you do not observe.—

Al-Quran, XXVI, 19.

The Dialectics of Love

By JALALU'L-DIN RUMI

One of the major mystics of the world, and the greatest of Persia, Jalalu'l-Din Rumi was born at Balkh in the province of Khorasan in A.D. 1207. Before he was 19 he was married and by the age of 25 began to come under the influence of the Sufis. His Guru was Shamsu'l-Din of Tabriz, whom he found at Koria in 1244. Rumi died in 1273. His literary output was stupendous. The following is from his largest composition, the *Mathnawi* (epic poem) which contains six books of about 25,000 rhyming couplets. Of the *Mathnawi* Rumi says, "It is the shop for Unity (*wahdat*); anything that you see there except the One is an idol." The following verses from the *Mathnawi* (III, 4393) are the translation of the late Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson.

*NEVER, in sooth, does the lover seek without being sought by his beloved.
When the lightning of love has shot into this heart, know that there is love in
that heart.*

*When love of God waxes in thy heart, beyond any doubt God hath love for thee.
No sound of clapping comes from one hand without the other hand.*

Divine Wisdom in destiny and decree made us lovers of one another.

Because of that fore-ordainment every part of the world is paired with its mate.

*In the view of the wise, Heaven is man and Earth woman: Earth fosters what
Heaven lets fall.*

*When Earth lacks heat, Heaven sends it; when she has lost her freshness and
moisture, Heaven restores it.*

Heaven goes on his rounds, like a husband foraging for the wife's sake;

*And Earth is busy with housewiferies: she attends to births and suckling that
which she bears.*

*Regard Earth and Heaven as endowed with intelligence, since they do the work
of intelligent beings.*

*Unless these twain taste pleasure from one another, why are they creeping together
like sweethearts?*

*Without the Earth, how should flower and tree blossom? What, then, would
Heaven's water and heat produce?*

*As God put desire in man and woman to the end that the world should be
preserved by their union,*

So hath He implanted in every part of existence the desire for another part.

Day and Night are enemies outwardly: yet both serve one purpose,

Each in love with the other for the sake of perfecting their mutual work.

*Without Night, the nature of Man would receive no income, so there would be
nothing for Day to spend.*

*The soul says to her base earthly parts, "My exile is more bitter than yours:
I am celestial."*

The body desires green herbs and running water, because its origin is from those;

The soul desires Life and the Living One, because its origin is the Infinite Soul.

*The desire of the soul is for ascent and sublimity; the desire of the body is for
pelf and means of self-indulgence;*

*And that Sublimity desires and loves the soul: mark the text He loves them
and they love Him. (Quran V, 59)
The gist is that whenever any one seeks, the soul of the sought is desiring him ;
But the lover's desire makes him haggard, while the loved one's desire makes him
fair and comely.
Love, which brightens the beloved's cheek, consumes the soul of the lover.
The amber loves the straw with the appearance of wanting naught, while the
straw is struggling to advance on the long road.*

SONG OF THE FLUTE

Oh! here the flute's sad tale again
Of Separation I complain ;
E'er since it was my fate to be
Thus cut off from my parent tree,
Sweet moan I've made with pensive sigh
While men and women join my cry.

Man's life is like this hollow rod :
One end is in the lips of God,
And from the other sweet notes fall
That to the mind the spirit call,
And join us with the All in All.

—JALALU'L-DIN RUMI

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Muhammed the Hero-Prophet

By THOMAS CARLYLE

Here are excerpts from a great philosopher-historian's biography of the Man who gave meaning to Islam. It is a generous and vigorous disarming of the Christian critic.

IT was among the Arab people in the year 570 of our era, that the man Muhammed was born. He was of the family of Hashem, of the Koreish tribe; though poor, connected with the chief persons of his country. Almost at his birth he lost his Father; at the age of six years his Mother too, a woman noted for her beauty, her worth and sense: he fell to the charge of his Grandfather, an old man, a hundred years old. He loved the little orphan Boy greatly; used to say they must take care of that beautiful little Boy, nothing in their kindred was more precious than he. At his death, while the Boy was still but two years old, he left him in charge to Abu Thaleb the eldest of the Uncles, as to him that now was head of the house. By this Uncle, a just and rational man as everything betokens, Muhammed was brought-up in the best Arab way.

Muhammed, as he grew up, accompanied his Uncle on trading journeys and suchlike; in his eighteenth year one finds him a fighter following his Uncle in war.

Physical Characteristics : His companions named him "*Al Amin*, the Faithful." A man of truth and fidelity; true in what he did, in what he spake and thought. They noted that *he* always meant something. A man rather taciturn in speech; silent when there was nothing to be said; but pertinent, wise, sincere, when he did speak; always throwing a light on the matter. This is the only sort of speech *worth* speaking! Through life we find him to have been regarded as an altogether solid, brotherly, genuine man. A serious sincere character; yet amiable, cordial, companionable, jocose even;—a good laugh within him withal: there are men whose laugh is as untrue as anything about them; who cannot laugh. One hears of Muhammed's beauty: his fine sagacious, honest face, brown florid complexion, beaming black eyes;—I somehow like too that vein on the brow, which swelled-up black

when he was in anger : like the horse-shoe vein in Scott's *Redgauntlet*. It was a kind of feature in the Hashem family, this black swelling vein in the brow ; Muhammed had it prominent, as would appear. A spontaneous, passionate, yet just, true-meaning man ! Full of wild faculty, fire and light ; of wild worth, all uncultured ; working out his life-task in the depths of the Desert there.

How he was placed with Kadijah, a rich widow, as her Steward, and travelled in her business ; how he managed all, as one can well understand, with fidelity, adroitness ; how her gratitude, her regard for him grew : the story of their marriage is altogether a graceful intelligible one, as told us by the Arab authors. He was twenty-five ; she forty, though still beautiful. He seems to have lived in a most affectionate, peaceable, wholesome way with this wedded benefactress ; loving her truly and her alone.

Contemplative Discovery : Muhammed had been wont to retire yearly, during the month Ramadhan, into solitude and silence ; as indeed was the Arab custom ; a praiseworthy custom, which such a man, above all, would find natural and useful. Communing with his own heart, in the silence of the mountains ; himself silent ; open to the small, still voices ; it was a right natural custom ! Muhammed was in his fortieth year, when having withdrawn to a cavern in Mount Hara, near Mecca, during this Ramadhan, to pass the month in prayer, and meditation on those great questions, he one day told his wife Kadijah, who with his household was with him or near him this year, that by the unspeakable special favour of Heaven he had now found it all out ; was in doubt and darkness no longer, but saw it all.

That all these Idols and Formulas were nothing, miserable bits of wood ; that there was One God in and over all ; and we must leave all idols, and look to Him. That God is great ; and that there is nothing else great ! He is the Reality. Wooden Idols are not real ; He is real. He made us at first, sustains us yet ; we and all things are but the shadow of Him ; a transitory garment veiling the Eternal Splendour. "*Allah akbar*," God is great ;—and then also "*Islam*," That we must submit to God. That our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He do to us. For this world, and for the other ! The thing He sends to us, were it death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best ; we resign ourselves to God.—"If this be *Islam*," says Goethe, "do we not all live in *Islam* ?" Yes, all of us that have any moral life ; we all live so. It has ever been held the highest wisdom for a man not merely to submit to Necessity,—Necessity will make him submit,—but to know and believe well that the stern thing which Necessity had ordered was the wisest, the best, the thing wanted there. To cease his frantic pretension of scanning this great God's-World in his small fraction of a brain ; to know that it *had* verily, though deep beyond his soundings, a Just Law, that the soul of it was Good ;—that his part in it was to conform to the Law of the

Whole, and in devout silence follow that ; not questioning it, obeying it as unquestionable.

It is good and wise, God is great ! " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Islam means in its way Denial of Self, Annihilation of Self. This is yet the highest Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth.

The First Disciples : The good Kadijah, we can fancy, listened to him with wonder, with doubt : at length she answered : Yes, it was true, this that he said. Long afterwards, Ayesha his young favourite wife, a woman who indeed distinguished herself among the Muslims, by all manner of qualities, through her whole long life ; this young brilliant Ayesha was, one day, questioning him : " Now am I not better than Kadijah ? She was a widow ; old, and had lost her looks : you love me better than you did her ?"—" No, by Allah ! " answered Muhammed : " No, by Allah ! She believed in me when none else would believe. In the whole world I had but one friend, and she was that !"—Seid, his Slave, also believed in him ; these, with his young cousin Ali, Abu Thaleb's son, were his first converts.

He spoke of his doctrine to this man and that ; but the most treated it with ridicule, with indifference ; in three years, I think, he had gained but thirteen followers. His progress was slow enough. His encouragement to go on, was altogether the usual encouragement that such a man in such a case meets. After some three years of small success, he invited forty of his chief kindred to an entertainment ; and there stood-up and told them what his pretension was : that he had this thing to promulgate abroad to all men ; that it was the highest thing, the one thing : which of them would second him in that ?

Amid the doubt and silence of all, young Ali, as yet a lad of sixteen, impatient of the silence, started-up, and exclaimed in passionate, fierce language that he would ! The assembly, among whom was Abu Thaleb, Ali's Father, could not be unfriendly to Muhammed ; yet the sight there, of one unlettered elderly man, with a lad of sixteen, deciding on such an enterprise against all mankind, appeared ridiculous to them ; the assembly broke-up in laughter. Nevertheless it proved not a laughable thing, it was a very serious thing ! As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him. A noble-minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards ; full of affection, of fiery daring. Something chivalrous in him. . . he died by assassination in the Mosque at Baghdad ; a death occasioned by his own generous fairness, confidence in the fairness of others : he said if the wound proved not unto death, they must pardon the Assassin ; but if it did, then they must slay him straightway, that so they two in the same hour might appear before God, and see which side of that quarrel was the just one !

Crisis and Opposition : Muhammed naturally gave offence to the Koreish, Keepers of the Caabah, superintendents of the Idols. One or two men of influence had joined him ; the thing spread slowly, but it was spreading. Naturally he gave offence to everybody : who is this that pretends to be wiser than we all ; that rebukes us all, as mere fools and worshippers of wood ! Abu Thaleb the good Uncle spoke with him ; could he not be silent about all that ; believe it all for himself, and not

trouble others, anger the chief men, endanger himself and them all, talking of it?

Muhammed answered: If the Sun stood on his right hand and the Moon on his left, ordering him to hold his peace, he could not obey! No: there was something in this Truth he had got which was of Nature herself; equal in rank to Sun, or Moon, or whatsoever thing Nature had made. It would speak itself there, so long as the Almighty allowed it, in spite of Sun and Moon, and all Koreish and all men and things. It must do that, and could do no other. Muhammed answered so; and, they say, "burst into tears." Burst into tears: he felt that Abu Thaleb was good to him; that the task he had got was no soft, but a stern and great one.

He went on speaking to who would listen to him; publishing his Doctrine among the pilgrims as they came to Mecca; gaining adherents in this place and that. Continual contradiction, hatred, open or secret danger attended him. His powerful relations protected Muhammed himself; but by and by, on his own advice, all his adherents had to quit Mecca, and seek refuge in Abyssinia over the sea. The Koreish grew ever angrier; laid plots, and swore oaths among them, to put Muhammed to death with their own hands. Abu Thaleb was dead, the good Kadjah was dead. Muhammed is not solicitous of sympathy from us; but his outlook at this time was one of the dismallest. He had to hide in caverns, escape in disguise; fly hither and thither; homeless, in continual peril of his life. More than once, it seemed all-over with him; more than once it turned on a straw, some rider's horse taking fright or the like, whether Muhammed and his Doctrine had not ended there, and not been heard of at all. But it was not to end so.

The Flight and Warfare: In the thirteenth year of his mission, finding his enemies all banded against him, forty sworn men, one out of every tribe, waiting to take his life, and no continuance possible at Mecca for him any longer, Muhammed fled to the place then called Yathreb, where he had gained some adherents; the place they now call Medina, or "*Medinat al Nabi*, the City of the Prophet," from that circumstance. It lay some 200 miles off, through rocks and desert; not without great difficulty, in such mood as we may fancy, he escaped thither, and found welcome.

The whole East dates its Era from this Flight, *Hegira* as they name it: the year 1 of this *Hegira* is 622 of our Era, the fifty-third of Muhammed's life. He was now becoming an old man; his friends sinking round him one by one; his path desolate, encompassed with danger: unless he could find hope in his own heart, the outward face of things was but hopeless for him. It is so with all men in the like case. Hitherto Muhammed had professed to publish his Religion by the way of preaching and persuasion alone. But now, driven foully out of his native country, since unjust men had not only given no ear to his earnest Heaven's-Message, the deep cry of his heart, but would not even let him live if he kept speaking it,—the wild Son of the Desert resolved to defend himself, like a man and Arab. If the Koreish will have it so, they shall have it. Tidings, felt to be of infinite moment to them and all men, they would not listen to these; would trample them down by sheer violence, steel and murder: well, let steel try it then! Ten years more this

Muhammed had; all of fighting, of breathless, impetuous toil and struggle; with what result we know.

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Fuel and Fire: MUHAMMED'S Creed we called a kind of Christianity; and really, if we look at the wild rapt earnestness with which it was believed and laid to heart, I should say a better kind than that of those miserable Syrian Sects, with their vain janglings about *Homoiousion* and *Homoousion*, the head full of worthless noise, the heart empty and dead! . . . Out of all that rubbish of Arab idolatries, argumentative theologies, traditions, subtleties, rumours and hypotheses of Greeks and Jews, with their idle wiredrawings, this wild man of the Desert, with his wild sincere heart, earnest as death and life, with his great flashing natural eyesight, had seen into the kernel of the matter. Idolatry is nothing: these Wooden Idols of yours, "ye rub them with oil and wax, and the flies stick on them,"—these are wood, I tell you! They can do nothing for you; they are an impotent blasphemous pretence; a horror and an abomination, if ye knew them. God alone is; God alone has power; He made us, He can kill us and keep us alive: "*Allah akbar*, God is great." Understand that His will is the best for you; that howsoever sore to flesh-and-blood, you will find it the wisest, best: you are bound to take it so; in this world and the next, you have no other thing that you can do!

And now if the wild idolatrous men did believe this, and with their fiery hearts lay hold of it to do it, in what form soever it came to them, I say it was well worthy of being believed. In one form or the other, I say it is still the one thing worthy of being believed by all men. Man does hereby become the high-priest of this Temple of a World. He is in harmony with the Decrees of the Author of this World; co-operating with them, not vainly withstanding them: I know, to this day, no better definition of Duty than that same. All that is *right* includes itself in this of co-operating with the real Tendency of the World: you succeed by this (the World's Tendency will succeed), you are good, and in the right course there. *Homoiousion*, *Homoousion*, vain logical jangle, then or before or at any time, may jangle itself out, and go whither and how it likes, this is the *thing* it all struggles to mean, if it would mean anything. If it do not succeed in meaning this, it means nothing. Not that Abstractions, logical Propositions, be correctly worded or incorrectly; but that living concrete Sons of Adam do lay this to heart: that is the important point. Islam devoured all these vain jangling Sects: and I think had right to do so. It was a Reality, direct from the great Heart of Nature once more. Arab idolatries, Syrian formulas, whatsoever was not equally real, had to go up in flame,—mere dead *fuel*, in various senses, for this which was *fire*.

The Kuran: It was during these wild warfarings and strugglings, especially after the Flight to Medina, that Muhammed dictated at intervals his Sacred Book, which they name Kuran, or *Reading*, "Thing to be read." This is the work he and his disciples made so much of, asking all the world, Is not that a miracle? The Muhammedans regard their Kuran with a reverence which few Christians pay even to their Bible. It is admitted everywhere as the standard of all law and all practice; the thing to be gone-upon in speculation and life; the message sent direct out of

Heaven, which this earth has to conform to, and walk by; the thing to be read. Their judges decide by it; all Muslims are bound to study it, seek in it for the light of their life.

Not a Religion of Ease: Much has been said and written about the sensuality of Muhammed's Religion; more than was just. The indulgences, criminal to us, which he permitted, were not of his appointment; he found them practised, unquestioned from immemorial time in Arabia; what he did was to curtail them, restrict them, not on one but on many sides. His Religion is not an easy one: with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not "succeed by being on easy religion." As if indeed any religion, or cause holding of religion, could succeed by that! It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense,—sugar-plums of any kind, in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. The poor swearing soldier, hired to be shot, has his "honour of a soldier" different from drill-regulations and the shilling a day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's Heaven as a God-made Man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest daydrudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns-up all lower considerations. Not happiness, but something higher: one sees this even in the frivolous classes, with their "point of honour" and the like. Not by flattering our appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart, can any Religion gain followers.

Muhammed himself, after all that can be said about him, was not a sensual man. We shall err widely if we consider this man as a common voluptuary, intent mainly on base enjoyments,—nay, on enjoyments of any kind. His household was of the frugalist; his common diet barley-bread and water: sometimes for months there was not a fire once lighted on his hearth. They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own clack. A poor, hard-toiling, ill-provided man; careless of what vulgar men toil for No emperor with his tiara was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting during three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial. I find something of a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself.

The Human Touch: His last words are a prayer; broken ejaculations of a heart struggling up, in trembling hope, towards its Maker. We cannot say that his religion made him *worse*; it made him better; good, not bad. Generous things are recorded of him: when he lost his daughter, the thing he answers is, in his own dialect, every way sincere, and yet equivalent to that of Christians, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He answered in like manner of Seid, his emancipated well-beloved Slave, the second of his believers. Seid had fallen in the war of Tabuc, the first of Muhammed's fightings with the Greeks. Muhammed said, It was well; Seid had done his Master's work, Seid had now gone to his Master: it was all well with Seid. Yet Seid's daughter found him weeping over the body; — the old

gray-haired man melting in tears! "What do I see?" said she.—"You see a friend weeping over his friend."

Withal I like Muhammed for his total freedom from cant. He does not pretend to be what he is not. In a life-and-death struggle with Bedouins, cruel things could not fail; but neither are acts of mercy, of noble natural pity and generosity. Muhammed makes no apology for the one, no boast of the other. They were each the free dictate of his heart; each called-for, there and then. Not a mealy-mouthed man! No *Dilettanteism* in this Muhammed; it is a business of Reprobation and Salvation with him, of Time and Eternity; he is in deadly earnest about it! *Dilettanteism*, hypothesis, speculation, a kind of amateur-search for Truth, toying and coquetting with Truth: this is the sorest sin. The root of all other imagineable sins. It consists in the heart and soul of the man never having been *open* to Truth;—"living in a vain show."

The Light of Heaven: Muhammed insists not on the propriety of giving alms, but on the necessity of it: he marks-down by law how much you are to give, and it is at your peril if you neglect. The tenth part of a man's annual income, whatever that may be, is the *property* of the poor, of those that are afflicted and need help. Good all this: the natural voice of humanity, of pity and equity dwelling in the heart of this wild Son of Nature speaks so.

Muhammed's Paradise is sensual, his Hell sensual: true; in the one and the other there is enough that shocks all spiritual feeling in us. But we are to recollect that the Arabs already had it so; Muhammed, in whatever he changed of it, softened and diminished all this. The worst sensualities, too, are the work of doctors, followers of his, not his work. In the Kuran there is really very little said about the joys of Paradise; they are intimated rather than insisted on. Nor is it forgotten that the highest joys even there shall be spiritual; the Pure Presence of the Highest, this shall infinitely transcend all other joys. He says, "Your salutation shall be, Peace." *Salam*, Have Peace!—the thing that all rational souls long for, and seek, vainly here below, as the one blessing. "Ye shall sit on seats, facing one another: all grudges shall be taken away out of your hearts." All grudges! Ye shall love one another freely; for each of you, in the eyes of his brothers, there will be Heaven enough!

For these twelve centuries, Muhammedanism has been the religion and life-guidance of the fifth part of Mankind. Above all things, it has been a religion heartily *believed*. These Arabs believe their religion, and try to live by it! To the Arab Nation it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it . . . a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great Belief is great, life-giving . . . the Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame.

[END]

CARITAS

WHAT shall make you know what the great steep is? It is to free the captive or feed in time of famine an orphan who is a kin or a poor man who lies in the dust. —*Al-Quran*, xc. 12-14.

Invocations

By ABDULLAH ANSARI OF HERAT

This famous Sufi was born in A. H. 396 or A. D. 1005. He composed about 6,000 verses in Arabic. Herat is in the far N-W corner of Afghanistan. Abdullah Ansari stands out as one of the great revaluators within the framework of Islam. The following translations are by Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh.

O LORD, if Thou sendest me to Hell
I raise no protest.
And if Thou takest me to Paradise,
I go there, but not of my own choice.

If in Hell I obtain union with Thee
What care I for those who dwell in Paradise ?
And were I called to Heaven without Thee
The pleasures of Paradise would then
Be worse than the fires of Hell.

O Lord, prayer at Thy gate
Is a mere formality :
Thou knowest what Thy slave desires.

* * *

O Lord, I, a beggar, ask of Thee
More than what a thousand kings may ask of Thee ;
Each one has something he needs to ask of Thee ;
I have come to ask Thee to give me Thyself.

* * *

Some one asked the Holy Prophet —
“ What dost thou say concerning the things of the world : ”
The Prophet said :— “ What can I say about them :
Things which are acquired with hard labour
Preserved with perpetual watchfulness, and left with regret.”

* * *

My friend, put not thy reliance on three things :
On heart, on time and on life.
The heart is easily tempted,
Time is always in a state of flux,
The sands of life run out.

* * *

Know that the Prophet built an external Kaba

Of clay and water,
And an inner Kaba in life and heart.
The outer Kaba was built by Abraham, the Holy ;
The inner is sanctified by the glory of God Himself.

On the path of God
Two places of worship mark the stages.
The material temple,
And the temple of the heart.
Make your best endeavour
To worship at the temple of the heart.

O mendicant, Paradise is only
An allurement :
The real objective is
The house of God Himself.

Fasting only means the saving of bread,
Formal prayer is the business
Of old men and women,
Pilgrimage is a pleasure of the world.
Conquer the heart,
Its subjection is conquest indeed.

If thou canst walk on water
Thou art no better than a straw.
If thou canst fly in the air
Thou art no better than a fly.
Conquer thy heart
That thou mayest become somebody.

One man spends seventy years in learning
And fails to kindle the light.
Another, all his life learns nothing
But hears one word
And is consumed by that word.

On this path argument is of no avail ;
Seek, and thou mayest find the truth.

CORRECTION

In last month's VALUES, page 181, under subtitle "Chapter XVI" the last sentence should read: "Evil does exist in this world as part of the foundation aspect of the Absolute referred to in the last verses of the previous chapter. To avoid evil the shastras are to be relied on as stated in the last verse of Chapter XVI."

The World of Islam

By JOHN SPIERS

Many celebrated men and women have left the comforts of Europe for the hard life of the desert and many have turned towards Mecca. What is the fascination of Islam for so many? Who are the Sufis whose music has reached the ears of thousands in Europe and America? In the light of the wisdom of the Absolute how are we to "place" this mighty religious power in the modern world? An answer is attempted below.

THE BIBLE has already partly orientalized Western man. Jesus and the Prophets are portrayed in the dress of modern Arabs. Arabism is itself an accepted safety-valve preferred by many to outright paganism. To the orthodox polygamy may be deplorable, but there are biblical sanctions which may be permissible abroad. Islam does of course reduce Jesus from deific to prophetic rank, but the apologists can excuse this by saying it is only a slight deviation.

For beyond the frontiers of Islam lie the dangerous creedless religions, polytheistic, pantheistic, animistic, idolatrous, mysterious and incredible. Too strange. Islam remains on the safe biblical side of the great religious Semitic curtain. It "belongs." Such is the popular view.

Part of the Western Mind : The lands of the Fertile Crescent are part of the mental furniture of the West. Within that familiar sphere are memories of Moses-led Jews wandering in the Arabian wilderness for forty years, of women at the wells under the shade of date palms or fig trees. Childhood's impressions remain and for many the urge to actualize it is irresistible. Pent up and shivering on a rainy winter's day in a northern metropolis, there is a pressure from deep down to reach those promised lands of freedom of desert spaces and glorious heat; fire rather than ice; a wider range of sex-life; adventure, a glamour not defeated by politics, science, the aeroplane, camera or radio. As a value, the Arabian Nights is deathless. It supplies a need.

Nor is it confined to the male. We have that modern Zenobia, Lady Hester Stanhope, Queen of the Arabs in her castle of Dar el Sytt in the Lebanon, just a hundred

years ago. And what of Gertrude Bell and even Freya Stark, fully qualified archaeologists and blue-stockings, exploring the interior homelife of the Arabs? Was it only for pure science? How many generations of women have longed for an Arabian romance? From the time of Rudolf Valentino and Douglas Fairbanks, the movies have always had their Shaikhs and Thiefs of Baghdad. Women want real virile men who will abduct them and treat them as desert queens with no conventional frills.

But in the man's world what characters! Consider that bearded Charles Doughty, behaving like a Christian Druid, and doing impossible trecks and describing it in the delightfully invented idiom of Chaucer's day, and misfit imperialists like T. E. Lawrence and Bertram Thomas—each in their own way escaping duty in the sand-lands of the nearest East—and pure adventurers like the devilishly loveable inimitable erotic Sir Richard Burton, scandalizing Victorians . . . Even those who have never been there have the Arabian fever. Shakespeare knew of the resinous trees of incense and Pope too of "all Arabia" that "breathes from yonder box," while Walter de la Mare writes his poem of "the shades of Arabia where the princes ride at noon."

For others a more permanent spell. There was Prof. E. G. Browne, greatest lover of Persia. One year spent in the Shah's domain gave him material for the rest of his cloistered scholastic life in Cambridge.

The Sufi Movement and the Bahai Faith are but two of the several religious bodies emerging into world prominence from Islamic lands. They speak a revalued biblical language, the archaic English supercharged with the shimmering metaphor of Arabic and Persian. Dear old Edward Fitzgerald had pioneered here with his Omar Khayyam *tour de force*. Like a cascade of jewels, the Eastern thoughts in word rainbows carried off the prosaic reader beyond the flat-footed drabness of pure Anglo-Saxon.

Extremes: Islam abolished Jewish tribalism. Humanity became the Chosen People. Spiritually-starved seekers, hitherto tongue-tied, find copious articulation in a literary feast too luscious for the classical mandarins; but all to the good when eventually universality results from the linguistic melange.

New visions arose, of deep contrast; of the desert and the sown, of

hot howling wastelands and fountained white-walled cities; of oceans of sand and stones and paradises of the date, vine and melon, of camel-thorns and roses, of mirages and tulips, of freezing dawns and blazing noons, of the fugitive tent and the Kaba and the mud skyscraper, and even today there are the dirty black oil and the perfumed fabulous palaces of inordinately wealthy lords of the desert. And in religion too, the same extremes: the white flag of the Umayyad and the black of the Abbasid. On one side the bleaching bones of the "fleshless dead" and on the other side nightingales singing in an oasis garden. Arabia! still wondrous! Still desolate and happy, *deserta* and *felix*!

And humanity? Again ambivalency: tribal shaikhs in the wilderness dreaming of raids and sensuous delights; sultans on silken carpets in slender pillared, blue-tiled pavilions longing for the wild freedom of the desert marches; temperaments mirroring climates. In the midst of harshness the sudden tempestuous desire for ease and the harem, and when surrounded by luxury, an aching for the rigours of the caravan. In sex, in lust for life, in poetry, romance, religion, and in the eternal compulsions for the contemplative quest there has never been so great an enthusiasm, so intense a passion. Emotions are over-brimming, driven to madness by ice and fire. Impotence, inarticulateness and apathy are graded with cowardice and inhospitality as unworthy of the desert ideal of humanity.

Unity: Arabic is a language of consonantal clusters, written of old without vowels. Remove the vowels from words like Hebrew, Arab and Abraham and, like a clear unitive declaration, their affinity of B and R or R and B is beyond doubt. It is Arabic as a language which cements the Islamic world. There was a time in Baghdad or Cordoba when all the works of philosophers and scientists could be read in this grand language — Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus were all familiar. Through the Moors in Spain Europe was enlightened by Avicenna and Averrhoes and the legacy remains in words such as algebra, admiral, alcohol, aldebaran, alchemy, and the very name of numbers, "the Arabic numerals," proving the vast range of learning which was entirely in the hands of these people. The language still lives on through the Quran and, though loud-speakers are now used in mosques, and the cry of the *muezzin* is therefore not the same as of old, it still persists and rolls like a dedicated chant more intimately human than the mechanical clamour of bells. "*Allah-u-Akbar*," the *muezzin* calls, "God is most Great. I testify that there is no god but Allah. I testify that Muhammed is God's Apostle. Come to prayer, come to security. *Allah-u-Akbar*!"

Let us not judge the holy Prophet by the notions of today's history. See him in the setting of his time. While our sex life is still the same (as witness the Kinsey reports and the incidence of divorces and marriage troubles) we pretend to be virtuous and suffer for puritanisms which are contrary to human nature. We are equally smug about killing, and while war is an abomination, a just war could be defended.

The inspiration from the heart or from on high which glows fiercely in Muhammed, truly makes him one with the long tradition of Prophets who have tried to unify mankind. He clarified a complex situation, abandoning both the tribal exclusiveness of the Jews of his time and also the theological disputes arising from the confusion between the relative

and absolute nature of Jesus. He disentangled the numinous from the commonplace. The Most High is outside the biological framework of parenthood, and the notion of a son of God was replaced by the notion of the Prophet through whose purified heart or mind there could come absolutist or God utterances (sometimes, as Muhammed admitted, badly transmitted, due to the human or biological limitations of the individual). Jesus he accepted as one of the great category of Prophets or Gurus in the long line of teachers descending from the first known who was Abraham, the common teacher-ancestor of Jew, Christian and Arab alike.

"Say we believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us as well as to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants; we also believe in what was given to Moses, Jesus and to all the Prophets raised by the Creator of the Universe; we accept all of them, without making any distinction among them."

and the Quran says, "There was no nation but had its teacher," and "A divine messenger was sent to every class of men."

Muhammed as Revaluator: In the world of Muhammed's time there were many shrines with holy stones. Some may have been set up on end like Jacob's pillow, and given ablutions of oil, in ritual recognition of the wonderful or the numinous, the awful. One such stone pregnant with the presence of the wonderful, and perhaps now the most famous stone in the whole world, and perhaps a meteorite which could truly be said to have fallen on earth from on high, became the Kaba at Mecca.

Wisely, in his revaluation of thought and practice, Muhammed allowed this one stone to remain, a single unifying Stone of stones, the Absolute value in stone. He had the clue to the unitive or yogic principle of unity. One Kaba, One Stone, One Centre or Mecca, One People, all "resigned" (Muslims) to the One Allah, no caste or tribes, but One Faithful. Muhammed had to insist by all manner of ways on this unity. It was the basis of his genius as a Prophet and Guru.

He was as firm and unrelenting with his Arab tribemen and relations as he was with opposition from elsewhere. Among many possible choices he took the role of the warrior commander of the Faithful. In the Quran there are many indications disclosing the struggle between the world of harsh necessity and the pure world of unitive ideals where Mercy, Compassion and Kindliness are praised. It was a double path and it is not always clear at first sight. In the midst of the strongest condemning tirades against relativists there will be a sudden burst of beauty and unitive light. The behaviour needed for the occasion of the Prophet's own time need not be nor could be (except for those without spiritual insight) that for all time, when the whole of humanity would be more enlightened in notions of brotherhood under the principle of the One, the "none but He" which the Quran calls Allah. "Deal gently therefore with the infidels" is the instruction of the Quran, and "grant them a gentle respite."

No Compromise: The history of contemplatives and Gurus and of their attempts to establish human justice and unity among men (Plato, Asoka, Marcus Aurelius etc.) shows that failure always resulted

because of wrong assessment of an actual situation and with subsequent compromises with relativists. Quite early, Muhammed learned never to compromise on principles. This was his strength and it must be the secret of the strength of Islam today. We can perhaps now hold on to principles without fighting and killing, but a certain harshness even though it may be just that of speech, or a movement against the Social stream, seems unavoidable. This one lesson for all who follow the unitive path stands out—perhaps with some exaggeration—in the life of Muhammed—no compromise with relativists. A Prophet who is not all out must “fail” in the practical sense as generally understood.

Principle and practice or pure wisdom teaching and a way of life, form the weft and woof of the Quran. Besides the revealed Book, there is the great body of traditional teaching, known as *Hadith*. This is the basis for Islamic custom and law, for *sunan* and *shariat*, and for the exactly prescribed ritual prayers and worship.

Relativism cannot be permanently shut out. It developed as always after the Prophet's time. The gossip and jealousies of women feature in these developments, as well as the normal selfishness and greed of all-too-human Caliphs, once there were the high stakes of an empire to be won. This is clear from the records of the rivalries in which Fatima (the Prophet's daughter) takes one side, and one of his wives, Ayesha, takes the other side. From these quarrels arose the great schism in Islam, with the division between the Shias and the Sunnis.

But the *Hadith* is plain. Note the last lines of this reported sermon of Muhammed, given one year before his death.

“Ye people: Harken to my words; for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you here again. Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until the end of time.

“The Lord hath ordained to every man the share of his inheritance; a testament is not lawful to the prejudice of heirs.

“The child belongeth to the parent; and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned.

“Whoever claimeth falsely another for his father, or another for his master, the curse of God and the angels and of all mankind shall rest upon him.

“Ye people! Ye have rights demandable of your wives, and they have rights demandable of you. Upon them it is incumbent not to violate their conjugal faith nor commit any act of open impropriety; which things if they do, ye have authority to shut them up in separate apartments and to beat them with stripes, yet not severely. But if they refrain therefrom, clothe them and feed them suitably. And treat your women well, for they are with you as captives and prisoners; they have not power over anything as regards themselves. And ye have verily taken them on the security of God, and have made their persons lawful unto you by the words of God.

“And your slaves, see that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear. And if they commit a fault which ye are not inclined to forgive, then

sell them, for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be tormented.

"Ye people! Harken to my speech and comprehend the same. Know that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim. All of you are on the same equality."

Another *Hadith* statement says: "Eat what you like and wear what you like, as long as they do not drive you to two sins: extravagance and pride."

Luxury and Poverty: The Prophet himself could be extravagantly generous and then rigorously austere, a double tendency which is seen throughout the history of Islam. Muhammed was as simple in habits as the Prophetic role required, but he was no Puritan as we understand it. We have seen his attitude to women and it is well known that he lived an unstinted sex life. But men loved him because he was human. An instance of his humour is related in the story about Umar, who was of a harsh temper. Umar once visited Muhammed, and at the moment of his call the women of Muhammed's household were all chattering away loudly. But as soon as Umar arrived they fled behind the curtain. Angrily, Umar demanded to know why they should show him more respect than they did to Muhammed. Muhammed, who was enjoying the talk of the women, said, "Umar, if the devil himself were to meet you in the street, he would dodge into a side alley."

Umar became Caliph, and when he came to Jerusalem to take over the city he was mounted on a camel, and had taken but one companion with him on the 600 mile journey from Medina. He had a bag of barley, another of dates, a water-skin, and a wooden platter as provision for the journey. But outside the gates of Jerusalem he was dismayed and annoyed to find his chief captains dressed in costly silks and splendidly arrayed on caparisoned horses. Enraged, the old man got down from his mount, and picked up stones and dirt and pelted the captains. He went on alone and met the Patriarch and in the most friendly spirit the leaders went round the holy city together.

But compare this with the fabled court of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid at Baghdad, made world famous through the Arabian Nights stories. Or with the luxury of the Moorish rulers of Andalusian Spain, with their fairy-tale palaces at Granada and elsewhere. And we need hardly mention comparisons today in the Arab world which must be patent to all devout Muslims.

Relativistic Dangers: Relativism and Absolutism are two ways of life which live side by side and yet cannot mix. Muhammed, his faithful follower Abu Bakr and the staunch Umar are representatives of the leaders who brought the Absolutist way to the fore. Later Caliphs (like their counterparts in many Popes of Christendom and the heads of religious institutions anywhere) more than often abused their office for relativistic social ends. Caliph and Pope rather than Allah or Absolutist Principle, became the power to be resigned to. A great empire of Islamic power (no doubt as good or better than anything else of its time) arose in the eighth century A. D., within 200 years of the time of Muhammed. It stretched from Central Asia to the Atlantic.

Newspaper readers' memories are shortlived. In 1953 Col. Nasser

of Egypt was writing his memoirs in the *London Observer*. What are we to think about his statement then about the Pilgrimage to Mecca which he wrote "should become an institution of great political power", and continued, "I remember I mentioned some of these thoughts to H. M. King Sa'ud, and he replied to me, 'It is indeed the real *raison d'être* of the Pilgrimage'. To tell the truth, I myself am unable to imagine any other *raison d'être*".

Were Muslims shocked by this dangerous relativistic attitude? We can only hope some of them were. Pure Islam is beyond frontiers and states. It signifies a dedication to the Absolute Allah, and whether the Muslim is a citizen of Indonesia or of the U. S. A. it makes no difference. The bond of spiritual brotherhood and fellowship is there. It is no claim for territory. It is surrender to Allah as a unitive Supreme. But the relativists are ready to claim political or other advantage, whether they are home-grown nationalists and state patriots, or oil interests, bankers, or even great imperialists. Great principles are defiled by such policies and politics.

The distinct cleavage in thought between the politicians and the contemplatives in Islam itself is necessary to know in order to understand the root of Sufi tradition.

The Sufis: In Islam as everywhere else there have been idealistic seekers disgusted with the intrigues, rivalries, crudities and lowbrowed zealotry around them, and they have arisen where bigotry and autocracy was strongest, as in Persia where Shahs and Shia Imams ignobly joined hand in hand in all alliance of political plunder and aggrandisement.

Sometimes through self-study and scholarship and sometimes through sudden flashes of illumination, the seekers reached a point beyond the current relativist outlook, and then sought out those who represented the absolutist way of life. Standing upon the basis of Islam itself, they have kept open the door of universalism against all the force of the orthodox to shut.

These seekers became known as the Sufis. The word may have been derived from *safa* meaning purity, or from *saf* meaning a bench (*ashabi-safa*, sitters in the shrines) or from *suf* meaning wool (a reference to their clothes) or from the Greek word *sophia* meaning wisdom. Taken together, these various meanings suggest a purified person wearing rough clothing, meditating in sacred places on wisdom.

They took the Prophet himself to be their original prototype. From him they derived several lines of spiritual descent through his immediate disciples. These *silsila*-successions, correspond to the Guru *parampara* of India. Again, the *khan-aqah* or home of the spiritual preceptor, has its equivalent in the Gurukula or *ashram* of India. The Guru himself is known as the *Murshid* or *Pir* and the disciple is called the *Murid*. The relationship between them is called *Piri-Muridi*.

All teachers of absolutist vision have revalued the old fixed texts and introduced larger concepts inherent in the language itself. The Sufi had at his disposal one of the richest languages in the world. From the Quran he took the absolutist verses and gave them an unequivocal status beyond the sections which dealt with transient affairs. Like all mystics, contemplatives and absolutists, the Sufi has resorted to metaphor, especially when face to face with the challenge of legalists.

Language of Parable : The very nature of such a language and style makes it seem florid or embarrassingly ornate when translated literally into English, but it played a useful part in preserving both the lives of the Sufis and their wisdom. Under the veil of simple innocent poems they often conveyed value-pregnant thought too dangerous to utter safely in more direct ways. Jesus had done the same and had used a similar cryptic style. Even now in Persia it is unsafe to speak openly, and the Bahais, for instance, have recently been harassed and distressed because of their views. How much more so were persecutions in the past when there was no world opinion to heed!

So their poems became rich in analogy. The *Tavern* was the place of meditation, while the *Inn-keeper* was the Teacher. The *wine* was the precious teaching. To be *drunk* was to be filled with the spirit of Absolutism, and to be *sober* was to be dualistic-minded. They called wisdom *fire*. Those who sat at the teacher's feet were *warming themselves at the fire*, and to be in a *fiery state* was to be aflame with wisdom through and through. The Sufis took the Pilgrimage to Mecca as an interior journey out of dualism into non-dual Unity. Although not a geographical pilgrimage at all, they used the terms of mountains and valleys to describe the stages of self-realization. They called these graded stations *maqamat*. The *Friend or Companion* who went with them was the Absolute as Guru.

The Absolute, the "none but He" of the Quran, is known as the Supreme Essence or *Dhat*, the Value of values. *Dhat* is *assamad*, i.e., without qualification. When known relatively, *Dhat* is called *asma*, i.e., with qualities. The Sufis declare that all has come to be by emanation or projection (*Laysal wujudu siwal khayali inda man udri ul khayal*). A Sufi from Rajput, India, Hamid-uddin-i-Naguri, writing in Urdu, has said :

Zi darya mouji gun gun bar amad

Zi bay dhuni bi rangai chun bar amad

Ghahi dar kiswat-i-Layla furou shud

Ghahi dar sourat-i-Majnu bar amad

In the ocean innumerable waves of different colours arise,

And from namelessness assume a name,

Sometimes in the shape of Layli,

And sometimes in the garb of Majnun.

(Majnun's passion for Layli the daughter of a Prince has been the theme of poets in Arabia and Persia for centuries. It has become part of the literary stock in trade of all the Sufis to use this theme.)

Neither East nor West: The three giants of Sufi literature are the Persian poets Faridu'd Din Attar, Jalalu'd Din Rumi (the most eminent) and Sa'di. Jami and Hafiz have almost equal claims to attention, and, although poets first, they absorbed much that was Sufi philosophy. Rumi's *Masnawi* is an immense work of 25,000 rhyming couplets. He also wrote a collection of 2,500 mystical odes known as *Diwan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz*, and a *Ruba'iyat* of about 1,600 quatrains. This gives some idea of the immense wealth of wisdom-literature awaiting the scholar to translate it with fidelity into the various world languages.

Through the organizations already mentioned, the Sufi Movement and the Bahai Faith, and also in other directions, through personal teachers

such as Meher Baba (who has a specially unique place in relating the wisdom of the Sufis with that of India), the global vision of the Absolutists of Islam reaches out in its generous way to all parts of the world.

Thus seekers of Near East values, such as our Arabists and Persophils, from a start which may be relativist, and originally confined to a closed Semitic world of mingled sensuous and numinous ideals, can have through the Sufis and their modern interpreters, an opportunity to discover absolutist ways. The fixed doctrinal aspects of Judaism, Christianity and Islam can be surmounted by the global-minded seeker for wisdom, without destroying anything but the seals of relativism which enclose them, and which indeed history and time itself must break. Differences can be penetrated by intelligence of the unitive kind whether near or far, East or West. Difficulties and discoveries found on one road of understanding can help the pilgrim coming from another direction. Thus the Indian or Chinese, tending to regard Islam as something foreign and Western can abolish his suspicions as much as the European or American who sees Islam as something equally foreign but Eastern. At such a point of really global intersection the delicate touch of the wise man who is all-directions in himself and neutral to all the winds of controversy and doctrines, can intervene and save bewilderment and needless quarrels.

If the vague sacred forms of hylozoic import known to Indian religions seem hard to comprehend by Western educated modernists, equally the religions of the Semitic order with their definite fixed creeds and rituals seem unnecessarily hampering and harsh to the tolerant Indian mind. But here too when the forms and creeds are both transcended, Sufi and Vedantin or Muslim and Bhakta become but names for the same lovely flower on the absolutist tree of wisdom. We must know what it is we name and then there can be no possible rivalry. The Quran says "by whichever name ye will, invoke Him : He hath most excellent names."

Non-Duality : The way of Muhammed was one of continued emphasis on the non-dual nature of Allah, in order to abolish all theological squabbles. The Jews said they were the people chosen by Yahvah. Muhammed declared that all men could resign themselves and come to Allah by their own free choice. He rejected the Christian term "Father" for the Supreme, because it lacked dignity and degraded Allah to a biological level, for it implied begetting and a trinity of a father, mother and son.

A similar non-dual outlook is implicit in that great Sentence of Islam, *LAILLAHA ILLAALLAH* (There is no god except Allah). Here we have both negation and affirmation. First a negation of all dualism "There is no god" and then affirmation "except Allah". This has its correspondence to the *Mahavakyas* or Great Sayings of the Indian absolutists of the Upanishads.

Nameless and formless and yet existent is Allah. Since Allah alone IS, say the Sufis, we are not. In the words of one poet :

Both power and being are denied to us,
The lack of both is what's ordained for us ;
But since 'tis He who lives within our forms,
Both power and action are ascribed to us.

The essential *Dhat* equates with Knowledge (*ilm*), Light (*nur*), Existence (*wujud*), and Self-consciousness (*shuhud*). These are not attributes superimposed on the Absolute but can be equated with the Brahman who is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* in India (Real, Existent-Intelligence-Self-happiness).

And just as the Absolute of Vedanta can be shown in a graded series of values from the lowest to the highest in manifestation, so the Islamic or Sufi *Dhat* can be found in incalculably immense numbers of manifestations. It is compared to the sun mirrored in millions of waves, and illuminating all things, drawing out from each their distinctive qualities. Here again verses from scripture are quoted to indicate what is meant:

"For God is in the East and West so wherever thou turnest thy face, there is the face of God."—*Surat-ul-Baqara* (ii. 128)

"Really, God surrounds everything."—*Surat-um-Nisa* (v. 116)

"God is with you wherever you are."—*Surat-ul-Hadid* (ii. 5)

Annihilation of the Relative: The Sufi seeker aims at *fana*, the annihilation of the relative, which is called *shay*—things of no lasting existence. There is a tradition that when the Prophet died, the people went up to Ali, his cousin and son-in-law (husband of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter) and said, "What is your vision of God?" He replied, "I do not see *shay* (the relative) but I see only Allah." (*Ma raytu shayan illa raytullah*). Then they went to Uthman, another son-in-law, and put the same question to him. He said, "I do not see *shay* (the relative), but I see God after it." (*Ma raytu shayan illa raytulla ha badabu*). Then they went to Umar, who said, "I do not see *shay* (the relative), I see God before it." (*Ma raytu shayan illa raytulla ha qublahu*). Finally they went to Abu Bakr (Muhammed's successor) who said, "I do not see *shay* (the relative) but I see God along with it." (*Ma raytu shayan illa ha ma a lu*). It is said that although Ali's was the more perfect vision, Abu Bakr was elected because he kept both the relative and the absolutist in view at the same time, and was therefore considered more suitable for the role of guiding the followers of the Prophet.

The Sufi can talk in the name of the Absolute and even say, "I am the Truth" (*ana'l-haqq*) as Hallaj did. He was crucified (A. H. 300—A. D. 922) however for what was thought to be blasphemy, and thereafter the Sufis were more cautious in their public statements, whether they were those who saw the world and the Truth hidden—the men of reason (*zawil-aql*), or those who saw the Truth and the world hidden—the men of sight (*zawil-ayn*).

The attraction of the lovely poetry of the Sufis—perhaps the most beautiful of all songs of the Absolute—has two drawbacks. First, its very richness and splendour disguises and hides away the deep core of exact philosophic truth which gives it its ultimate value, and secondly, it is removed today from the plain need for a clear statement of philosophic verity, unhampered by metaphor and analogic treatment. Even Bahai literature, with all due respect for its universality and truth, has also this archaic flavour or setting, out of tune with the urgent idiom of our time. The immense respect it carries is because of the sincere labours of those who work for its ideals and who have mined the depths for our benefit. But it is still much overshadowed by the backwater conditions of an effete theocratic situation which is confined to Iran.

Islam Today: What is really much overdue is an exhaustive recasting of the whole of Sufi wisdom, and for a presentation which will be acceptable to the modernised Muslim, who is no longer a tribesman of Arabia, nor an oppressed subject of Iran, but a modern educated universalist whose country is the world, and who may live in Singapore, San Francisco or Salem, and yet boldly surrender himself honourably to the principles of his faith.

There is no doubt the Prophet himself would have approved of a wholehearted revision of injunctions which were obviously made for the epoch in which he lived. Indeed many Muslim countries have already adapted themselves and their ways of life to the conditions of our time, while retaining the essentials of Islamic principles. Reform is obviously needed in Arabia and Persia and the adjoining lands. Turkey and Egypt have gone ahead with no real danger to the Faith. The general obsolete attitude to women has been transcended. In Malaya there can be no stauncher Muslims in the world, and yet there is no noticeable system of purdah or veiling of women. And just as human slavery, which existed at the time of Muhammed was a purely relativistic historical custom now outlawed, so with many other old ways. Human justice must be aligned with the notions of justice derived from absolutism, or Allah, if Islam is to have reality, and if human brotherhood in Allah is to be more than mere words. The inordinate wealth of the few princes and shaikhs of Arabia is an offence against the plain words of the holy Prophet himself who chose poverty:

“O the day of resurrection God will say, ‘Bring ye My loved ones nigh unto Me’; then the angels will say, ‘Who are Thy loved ones?’ and God will answer, saying ‘The poor and destitute.’”

Sometimes, on the other hand, Islam in practice rises higher than the existing laws and customs as, for instance, when in Malaya, recently, the mainly Muslim government refused an offered loan because usury and the paying of interest is opposed to the strict rules of Islam. This is one instance where Muslims can teach the world, and there are many other ways where the Islamic code is superior—in the refusal to recognize caste distinctions and in its plain insistence on the fact of brotherhood.

We must recognize many other worthy features. In the cleanliness of the mosques, in the stirring devotion and sense of unity of the worshippers and in their strict adherence to the simple essence of their faith, the three hundred millions or more Muslims present a very admirable example for the whole world, from which followers of other faiths can learn much. And when it comes to fundamentals and to the sense of inner verities, as in the case of the Sufis, and the Muslim's recognition of the place of all great representatives of the Absolute such as Muhammed called *nabi* or Prophet, the Announcer, or *rasul*, the Apostle, and of the liberation of mankind from the injustices and troubles consequent on giving allegiance to opposing Principles, instead of turning to the single non-dual principle, summed-up by Muslims in the term Allah, and called by many names elsewhere, and when we reach that core of understanding at the very heart of the faith of Islam, then without any violation of what is already dear to us, we can all share fully in the spiritual pilgrimage and aspirations of our Muslim fellow-men.

[END]

A WORD FROM THE WISE

A CERTAIN man gave a *dirhem* to four persons, they being Turk, Greek, Persian and an Arab, so that they might purchase some grapes.

"I will spend this on *angur*," said the Persian, for *angur* is Persian for grapes.

The second one was an Arab: he said; "No, I want *inab*, not *angur*, O rascal!"

The third was a Turk; and he said, "This money is mine: I don't want *inab*, I want *uzum*."

The fourth, a Greek, said, "Stop this talk: I want *istafil*."

These people began fighting in contention with one another, because they were unaware of the hidden meaning of the names. In their folly they smote each other with their fists: they were full of ignorance and empty of knowledge. If a master of wisdom and languages had been there, he would have pacified them, and he would have told them, "With this one *dirhem* I will give all of you what you wish. When without deceit you surrender your hearts to me, this *dirhem* will do all this for you. Four enemies will become one through unanimity. What each of you says produces strife and separation; what I say brings you agreement. Therefore *keep silence*, that I may be your tongue in speech and talk."

QUATRAINS FROM THE PERSIAN

TO gladden one poor heart of man is more,
Be sure, than fanes a thousand to restore:
And one free man by kindness to enslave
Is better than to free of slaves a score.

Till Mosque and College fall 'neath Ruin's ban,
And Doubt and Faith be interchanged in man,
How can the Order of the *Qalandars* *
Prevail, and rise up one true Musulman?

By whatsoever Path, blessed the Feet
Which seek Thee; blessed He who strives to meet
Thy Beauty; blessed they who on it gaze,
And blessed every tongue which Thee doth greet!

The Gnostic, who hath known the Mystery,
Is one with God, and from his Self-hood free:
Affirm God's Being and deny thine own:
This is the meaning of "*no god but HE*."

— ABU SA'ID IBN ABI'L-KHAYR (967-1049)
(translation by E. G. Browne)

*another name for the Sufi mystics.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE GURUKULA MOVEMENT

Inspired by the Guru Narayana (1854-1928), greatest recent exemplar of the non-dual wisdom of the Absolute, **The Narayana Gurukula** (an institutional Teacher-Disciple succession body) and its democratic counterpart, **The Yellow Fellowship**, form the Gurukula Movement which was founded in 1923 by Dr. Natarajan, the present Guru Head and foremost disciple of the Guru Narayana.

Under the motto "Of one kind, one faith and one God, is man," this Movement is intended for all who seek in living terms the wisdom of the Absolute.

Central Office : The Gurukula, Varkala, Travancore, India.

World Centre : The Gurukula, Kaggalipura, Bangalore District, India.

European Centre : Institut Monnier, Versoix, Geneva, Switzerland.

American Centre : The Gurukula, Schooleys Mts., Long Valley, N.J.

The Gurukula Movement is not a socialized religious organization. It stands neutrally above all particular expressions of faith or ideology. It is based on a vertical personal relationship of the individual with the Guru as a living representative of wisdom. Membership of the Yellow Fellowship requires only the acceptance of the following principles and the sending of a token outright gift of one rupee or its equivalent in any currency, along with the signed pledge below.

Principles of Affiliation:

1. Divisions such as caste and nation, attachment to faith or ideology, belief in deity or ideal, should not set up barriers between man and man, but should be understood and acted upon so as to promote integral human solidarity based on freedom, justice and fellowship.

2. A single kindly and generous attitude should be held in respect of all human beings.

3. The line of wisdom-teachers or Gurus of all times and places, of whom the Guru Narayana and his wisdom-successor the Guru Natarajan are true representatives in modern times has a high value for humanity.

4. Guruhood constitutes a moral and spiritual asset leading to the betterment of life and the increasing happiness of one and all.

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