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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

The HOPE Bulletin

MOTTO ISLAM: I SHALL LOVE ALL MANKIND



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Important Announcement

WATCH AND LISTEN ONLINE

FRIDAY KHUTBA AND PRAYERS AT 1.00 P.M. (UK TIME)

By DR ZAHID AZIZ

The link to this YouTube broadcast is: <https://youtu.be/9FQwBmlZeaU>

You can also use the following permanent YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWYoLGMhY7et1SIFJyv9jvw/live>

The link to the radio broadcast is: <https://mixlr.com/lahore-ahmadiyya-uk>

You can find the links to this *Khutba* and to previous *Khutbas* at our website:
www.ilam.uk

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THE MOST SUBLIME AND MAJESTIC NIGHT

Riaz Ahmadali

EDITOR, *A SPIRITUAL NOTE*, SURINAME

“Surely We revealed it (the Qur’an) on the Night of Majesty. And what will make thee comprehend what the Night of Majesty is? The Night of Majesty is better than thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord for every affair. Peace! it is till the rising of the morning” (Qur’an, 97:1-5).

A special night (in the third part of Ramadan) has been called the Night of Majesty because it is a night of great majesty and honour and one which man should value with total respect and reverence. There is no doubt that the night in which the Holy Qur’an was revealed — an extraordinary gift and an incomparable book of guidance to mankind — should be regarded with the highest honour and respect. This night receives its eminence from the fact that the Holy Qur’an was revealed in it, and the anniversary of the revelation of the Holy Qur’an on this night has been laid down for all times as a night of great blessings and honour so that every year when that night comes, Allah opens the doors of His mercy and blessings for His servants. This is not just a mere anniversary, for just as the rivers of Allah’s mercy gushed forth on that sublime night when the first revelation of the Holy Qur’an came, so too, the same thing obtains every year on that particular night when Allah showers His mercy and blessings on the hearts of all those who endeavour to seek His grace.

“And what will make thee comprehend what the Night of Majesty is? The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months.”

To perform worship and do acts of righteousness on that night will bring to the believer more reward than he would get in a thousand months. Here the word *thousand* is used to signify a very large number, and what is meant is that countless blessings will accrue to the devotee if he fulfils the conditions. It is recorded that in the month of Ramadan the Holy Prophet (pbuh) was extremely generous and at night he engaged in extra devotional prayers, especially in the last ten nights when his worship reached the topmost peak of perfection.

The entire article can be read here:

<http://www.aail.org/text/hq/comm/bash/ch97.shtml>

* * *

FORGIVENESS IN OUR DAILY LIVES

“... And pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving , Merciful” (24:22)

Small disputes often lead to lifelong quarrels among families, friends, colleagues, etc., who do not talk to one another, who spend their entire lives living in enmity rather than taking a small step towards reconciliation and peace.

Sometimes, such persons realise only after the death of someone they had a disagreement with that they had hesitated too long to restore good relations. Oftentimes, we are not inclined to forgive others, while, on the other hand, we want God to forgive us.

The Qur'an advises us about this, as follows:

“Pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (24:22; see also 42:43 and 7:199).

We read in the Bible:

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have fought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

And in the Mahabharata:

“One should forgive under every injury. It hath been said that the continuation of species is due to man being forgiving. He, indeed, is a wise and excellent person who hath conquered his wrath and who showeth forgiveness even when insulted, oppressed, and angered by a strong person. The man of power who controleteth his wrath, hath (for his enjoyment) numerous everlasting regions; while he that is angry, is called foolish, and meeteth with destruction both in this and the other world.”

Research has shown that forgiveness is good for the well-being of the person who forgives. Everything we experience, we store in our body cells. Unprocessed suffering cramps cell receptors, which transmit information. Therefore, these cannot do their job properly, which can manifest itself in symptoms such as migraine, depression, tantrums.

Forgiveness is a key to being healthy again. So, when you forgive, you do so not only for others, but you firstly benefit.

* * *

THE TRUTH AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE HOLY QUR'AN — III

**HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD
FOUNDER OF THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM**

(The serial of articles under the above title is taken from the abridged edition of *Barahin-i Ahmadiyya* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, in four volumes rendered into English by Mirza Ma'sum Beg. This epoch-making book was first published in 1880, at a time when the Muslim world was in the midst of an all-enveloping gloom and the well-wishers of Islam were in the grip of a conflict with Western civilization, and when our opponents were vilifying Islam and its Holy Prophet. It discusses the existing and divergent thoughts on religion; all arguments and evidence being based on original sources. The original voluminous work is in a difficult diction, which may be difficult for the present generation to understand it fully. This somewhat summarised version will be easier to understand and appreciate the forceful presentation about the basic concepts of Islam and the dynamic role of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a universal teacher. — *Ed.*)

Experimental experience

The peculiar quality of the incomparability of the Qur'an, based on the excellence of its phraseology and the majesty of its diction, can be appreciated only through experimental experience, much in the same way as the distinctive characteristics of other things are put to test and examined. For this purpose, the Divine Providence has prescribed but one course: in case of a doubt, the experiment should be repeated over and over again until it is completely removed, and the mind is fully satisfied in regard to that particular quality.

To illustrate this, let us suppose a man, after a long series of experiments, has arrived at the irresistible conclusion that arsenic is a violent poison. If he should, thereafter, deny this deadly quality of arsenic for the reason that it is not known to him why it should be so destructive, then such a man will be considered unsound and deranged. But the biggest of follies is to deny the exclusive and unique qualities of the Almighty,

of His being nonpareil and without any sort of association of partnership in His attributes and deeds, and of His being fully perfect and complete in His power and glory. This fact has been established not only by practical experience, but metaphysical reasoning and argument also prove it to be important in the highest degree, and connect the fact of His divineness with these superhuman attributes.

The arguments which God has adduced on the inevitable need and supernatural source of the Qur'an may briefly be summarized as follows: the Book came at the most critical time when the adepts of all faiths had forsaken the true principles and fallen away from godliness, piety and chaste action; human minds had been obsessed with the love of this world to such an extent that all their efforts and actions were inspired by one single motive: the attainment of worldly pleasure, honour and happiness.

So, in pursuance of His eternal law — that He turns mercifully towards His creatures whenever they are stricken down with affliction, just as He sends down life-giving rain when the death-dealing drought smites them — God liked not that His created beings should continue in that state of spiritual darkness and distress which would ultimately land them in eternal damnation and destruction. He thus revealed the Qur'an to call them back to rectitude from moral wandering and transgression. Without the advent of a prophet who brought with him such a mighty Book — which is pure and free from every kind of fault, flaw or failing that impairs excellence — it would not have been possible to bring back to the right path those who had renounced the true faith. The proof of this argument rests upon the fact that it is the immutable and eternal law of God that He confers His help at the time of physical and spiritual needs in the form of rain from heaven when physical distress afflicts the world, and in the shape of His word of wisdom and healing when spiritual calamity torments.

This proposition is so clear and self-evident that it produces conviction on its bare presentation. No man will ever deny the fact that both the physical and the spiritual systems have been coming down the ages, uninjured and unimpaired, for the one reason that the Lord has been protecting them against all the forces of desolation and destruction. For instance, if He had not vouchsafed His protection to the physical world, by sending down rain from the heaven when deadly drought and frightful famine prevailed, the inescapable result would have been that people, having consumed the yield of their first crops would have thereafter starved to death and mankind would have ultimately been annihilated. Or, if He had not ordained the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the wind and the cloud to function with perfect precision, the whole system of this universe would have broken down and disintegrated. And we know that "God it is Who sends down the rain after people have despaired, and He unfolds His mercy. And He is the Friend, the Praised One" [The Quran, 42:28].

General Law of nature

If we cast a glance on the creation of God, and ponder over the peculiar qualities which the Creator has reposed in them, we come upon and discern clearly the principle that all these qualities may be divided into two kinds. Firstly, those that can be easily appreciated. For instance, everybody knows that man has two eyes, two ears, etc. These are facts which can be appreciated and recognized by a mere glance. Secondly, those that are hard and subtle. For example, the strange construction of the eye, by means of which both the eyes function unitedly as one, beholding alike all things great and small; or the making of the ears which enable them to hear various sounds, etc. These facts are such as cannot be appreciated by a simple observation which necessitates many years of research of great scholars and specialists in sciences. There are yet hundreds of hidden marvels in the construction of the human body which no one may have so far been able to reach.

It cannot be doubted that the higher purpose behind these wonders of the human body is that man should realize and appreciate the perfection of the Divine Power and Wisdom which have accomplished these marvellous deeds in his creation. But the following objection may, however, be urged for want of knowledge and discernment: Why should God have made this matter, which was intended to induce divine knowledge, so subtle and abstruse that a whole age of thinking and deliberation is required to understand and appreciate it, and yet with the uncertainty as to whether all the hidden realities will be unravelled and disclosed; and that, on account of this, man has not so far been able to get even one single drop out of the vast ocean of that knowledge; and that these marvels should have been so manifest and clear as to fulfil that great purpose easily?

The reply would be that the Creator, in regard to all His creations, is He Who is not contented with the display of some manifest marvels only, but has also concealed in everything profound and abstract wonders. To call and condemn this noble work of the Supreme Being as worthless and useless will be the height of ignorance. It should be understood that He has not created man, like other inferior animals, with such a narrow nature that his knowledge might have remained confined to a few tangible and readily perceptible facts. On the other hand, man has been invested with the power to make unlimited progress in the vast field of knowledge and learning through keen observation and deep thought.

If all these divine marvels had been made manifest and clear so that there would have been left no need for the exercise of observation and thought on the part of man, what things would have been there whereto he would have devoted and directed his intellectual powers, the cultivation of which is imperatively necessary for the perfect development of man? And if he had not been vouchsafed the opportunity to

comprehend and infer, how could it have been possible for him to raise himself to the intended stage of perfection? Since humanity is so closely connected with the use of man's mental powers, the Creator has concealed many wonders in His creation in such a way that unless man puts into action with full force the powers and faculties bestowed upon him, these marvels cannot possibly be comprehended.

In short, all the works of the Almighty finish not merely on rough and crude constructions, but the deeper one digs into them, the finer the marvels one will find. The general law, which has been proved beyond doubt in regard to all things coming from God, states that they are all full of deep secrets and abstruse subtleties. Every sensible man, therefore, will have to admit in accordance with this law of nature that the Divine Word also should not be devoid of profound delicacies.

People argue that since the sacred Scriptures have been revealed for the good and guidance of the ignorant and Bedouins of the desert, the teaching contained therein should, therefore, be within the ken of their meagre needs.

This is another misconception which has arisen out of ignorance. If we were to study the Qur'an seriously, and reflect over its excellences, our false notion would be dissipated like the dispersion of darkness when the sun rises.

It has clearly been stated by God that the Qur'an has been revealed for the reformation of the whole world and for the reclamation of all kinds of human temperaments. In it, the followers of all the faiths — the Jews and the Christians, the polytheists and the Magians, the atheists and the agnostics — have been addressed much in the same way as the ignorant of the desert have been accosted:

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve” [The Quran, 2:62].

When it has been proved manifestly that the Qur'an had to deal with all sorts of human temperaments, was it not necessary that it should have impressed its truth and glory on each one of them, and banished all kinds of doubts and misgivings? Moreover, if the ignorant have also been addressed in this sacred Book, it does not follow that God wished to keep them as such, wallowing in ignorance and lack of knowledge. On the other hand, He wanted that the human powers and wisdom which lay dormant in their nature should quicken up and come into action. What possibly is the use of knowledge if the ignorant are forever to be kept in ignorance?

It need not be said that mere conjecture or surmise is unable to hold its stand against a fact. When some peculiarity of a thing has been discovered after a long experience, it would be unwise to denounce it on the basis of some proofless presumption. It sounds as if a man were to deny the peculiar qualities of plants for the reason that if the Creator had reposed these qualities into them for the good and benefit of man, why should He have concealed them from the eye of human beings who, merely for want of a knowledge of them, continued to die without treatment for a long time? Should a man cast a glance around him, he will find that Divine Law is not confined to one or two things only, nor is it hidden to an extent which makes it difficult to understand.

Profound principles

It is to be understood that God has made no secret of, nor concealed any of the essentials of religion. The profound principles comprise those facts only which are beside and above these elementary fundamentals of faith, and are meant for such persons who have been endowed with the capability of acquiring higher excellences. By means of these subtle and finer truths those people rest not contented with those principles only, but make progress in divine knowledge and wisdom and get to the lofty tower of firm faith and certainty which is, indeed, a sublime point for human power and progress to reach.

If all the secrets and subtleties of divine knowledge had also been made manifest and easy to understand, there would have been left no difference between a wise and an ignorant person. All knowledge, in that case, would have been destroyed and test for the measurement of human capability, which increases man's observational power and makes him perfect would have vanished away. Man, without this important means, would have been rendered incapable of exercising his observation and thought, with the result that he would have stopped and stagnated at a certain point and lost all power for making unlimited progress and achieving that blessing.

God has endowed man with the power to observe and think and soar upwards. How can it, then, be possible to allege against Him that He has sent down His Book to hinder man from rising to perfection? Is it not true that He has revealed His Word for the purpose of getting man out of darkness into light? Will then the divine claim that His Book only can accomplish this object not be reduced into a mere empty boast, if it were contended that the books of Aristotle and Plato alone could pull man out of the depths of darkness? Providence Divine has not involved man into a handicap or thrown him into a difficulty. He has bestowed upon him, in the first instance, the power to observe and reflect, and then He has provided materials for the exercise of

this power. These are indeed the divine blessings which have enhanced the grandeur and glory of man over other animals.

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MAHATMA GANDHI ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan
(TAKEN FROM *THE LIGHT*, OCTOBER 18, 1928)

It was with no small interest that we turned to the perusal of an article on this topic in the current number of *Young India* from the pen of Mahatma Gandhi. This is a Godless age. To talk of God in these times, especially in a society of educated people, is to invite ridicule. Even Mahatma's references to God in *Young India* was not spared, and he tells us they are characterized as "God stunt."

We have a similar experience of our own. Friends and admirers who wish to help forward our circulation often take us to task for the religious appearance of the paper. "You give us such up-to-date and uplifting ideas in your columns," they tell us, "but you spoil the whole thing when you call them religion." One particular friend still insists on our removal of the title-block on the front page which contains some Quranic verses.

"Your articles are so good, and I am sure of making subscribers of my friends, but the moment they look at the *وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ* stunt, the verse at the top, they fling it back at me in disgust. They are sick of religion, and anything that smacks of it simply gets on their nerves."

The other day we came across a very queer characterization of religious-minded people in the columns of a London paper. Under the caption "Tailed Minds" it was discussed how every human skeleton still ends in a tiny projection at the back, a relic of the tail which our animal ancestors actually possessed. And just as these tiny tails are reminiscent of our animal origin, likewise in regard to mentality there are superstitions which we have inherited from ancient times and which still cling to us. These superstitious beliefs are, so to speak, our mental tails, in as much as they remind us of the irrational animal outlook of our remote ancestors. It is thus no easy task to hold a brief for God in these days when every second man you meet would simply scoff at you should you have the courage to touch on the unwanted topic.

Our curiosity to see what light this greatest man of the day, Mahatma Gandhi, has to throw on this age-long question of God may well be imagined. While reserving our own humble contribution to the unravelling of this eternal mystery for our next issue, we believe we must treat our readers to the Mahatma's views on the question *in extenso*. The personal testimony of a man of Mahatma's position is well worth reproduction and may strengthen someone small in faith somewhere. This is what he says:

"The argument is as old as Adam. I have no original answer for it. But I permit myself to state why I believe. I am prompted to do so because of the knowledge that there are young men who are interested in my views and doings."

"There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses."

"But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler I, who am infinitely lesser than God than their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of kings. Nevertheless, I do feel, as the poor villagers felt about Mysore, that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings, and thanks to the marvellous research of Sir J.G. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Lawgiver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Lawgiver, because I know so little about it or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation, whereas humble and mute acceptance of Divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever-changing, ever-dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is."

“And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence, I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.”

“But He is no God Who merely satisfies the intellect if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every the smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization, more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.”

“Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.”

“This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God’s presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

But the foregoing does not answer the correspondent’s argument. I confess to him that I have no argument to convince him through reason. Faith transcends reason. All I can advise him to do is not to attempt the impossible. I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be coequal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.”

“I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile I invite the correspondent to pray with Newman, who sang from experience:

‘Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.' ”

(*Lead, Kindly Light* is a hymn with words written in 1833 by Saint John Henry Newman as a poem titled *The Pillar of the Cloud*, which was first published in the *British Magazine* in 1834 and republished in *Lyra Apostolica* in 1836.)

* * *

THE NOBLE MONTH OF RAMADAN

“A time to recognise and rekindle our responsibilities towards Allah, and also towards
our neighbours.”

Iain Dixon

Greetings for a blessed Ramadan

I wish all my Muslim friends a wonderful and blessed month of Ramadan! May the bounties of our Almighty Allah be poured out upon you and your families at this very special time.

I have heard that the word *kareem* means generous. May Ramadan be a time when we are all mindful of the many ways in which our Creator has been generous to us, and in turn, may we be generous to others around us — in the use of our time, our talents, our listening ears — and in excelling in kindness and good deeds. May this Ramadan be a season of great generosity. May our hearts of kindness be enlarged towards those in need, and conversely, may our hearts of selfishness be diminished.

A precious time

What does Ramadan mean to you?

A precious time to draw near to Allah? An opportunity for sins to be forgiven? Maybe to some it is a special time when we can begin and end the day with special foods, rejoicing with friends and family — a season to cultivate precious memories of unhurried time together. For others, Ramadan will also be a month of worship, and a time for blessing the communities around us with sacrificial giving — a time to recognise and rekindle our responsibilities towards Allah, and also towards our neighbours. Yet for many still, this Ramadan will be a time of remembrance and will be a marker point.

Let us remember those who are no longer with us. Some who celebrated with us last year have sadly passed away, either through ill-health, tragic circumstances, or just through the natural process of old age. May we always remember their legacy of good deeds and kindness. May we always be spurred on by their examples of faithfulness and integrity. May we choose always to build on the godly foundations which they tirelessly set in place for us. Rather than an empty duty or a dry tradition, may this Ramadan be filled with dynamic light and energy. May heaven reach down to us, and may we reach up to heaven. Let us be a changed people. May our sins fall away like dry leaves off a tree, and may our righteousness spring forth like a fountain of pure water.

May this Ramadan not be resisted like an intruder breaking into our home, but may Ramadan be our welcomed guest.

I wish you all a very blessed Ramadan. May it be the best one yet!

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SIKH-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP – I

Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf Granthi
EDITOR, THE WEEKLY NOOR

(TRANSLATED FROM URDU BY MAULANA AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD IN 1948.)

It is a well-known fact that the present-day Sikhs are a bit too inclined towards the Hindu community. This, however, has much to do with Hindu alertness and Muslim indifference towards this valiant community. It is, nevertheless, necessary to examine in the light of facts whether it is not more advantageous for the Sikhs to be in alliance with the Muslims than with the Hindus. To facilitate this discussion, I propose to divide it into four aspects: the spiritual, the historical, the cultural, and the political.

Spiritual aspect

Let me begin with the spiritual aspect. In this we have to see whether in the light of Shri Granth Sahib and other sacred books of the Sikh Community the Sikhs should be allied to the followers of the Holy Quran or to the followers of the Vedas; whether they should be in close contact with the people of Makka or with the citizens of Benares. The Guru Sahib says:

*“Narankar nar bakar nar lamb, ad anil anad asamb, tanka murh ucharat
bheda, tanka bheda na pavat beda.”*

“He is one in His person, without any support, without any birth. He existed in the beginning, exists now and will be existing for all times in future. The secret of His existence is unknown to the Vedas.”

Again:

“Parh parh pandit muni thakay vedon ka abhyas, Harnam chit na away na nij ghar howey bas.”

“Even the big *Rishis* and *Munis* are exhausted by the study of the Vedas, without being able to secure the pleasure of God.”

From this we can easily understand that the Guru Sahib or the Sikh scriptures do not favour unity and alliance with the followers of the Vedas. Had it been otherwise they would not have frankly expressed such views about the Vedas. One can produce many sayings and *shlokas* of this nature. But what has been cited already may suffice for the present in view of the shortness of space at our disposal.

It has to be seen now what the Guru Sahib has to say about the Holy Quran and its followers. On an enquiry on this line, we find in Shri Granth Sahib Ram Kali, Mohalla One:

“Kal parwan kateb Quran, pothi pandit Rahey Puran, Nanak Nao bhea Rahman, kar Karta tu eko jan.”

“In this age of evil, when there is an excess of sins in the world, salvation can be attained by basing one’s conduct on this Book, the Quran, alone, because it has become accepted in the sight of God; but as against this all the scriptures, *Pandits*, Vedas, and the *Puranas* that are to be found in the world have become ineffective and God has been addressed as *Rahman* (Beneficent) in this Book.”

These utterances of the Guru Sahib clearly show that in his opinion as compared with the Hindu scriptures including the Vedas, the Quran enjoys a distinct superiority. From this our Sikh brethren can very well find out whether Guru Sahib wants them to range themselves on the side of the followers of the Vedas or of those of the Quran.

I am not suggesting here that the Guru Sahib was a Muslim. Nor yet do I suggest that the Sikhs should accept the Quran as their scripture. Everyone is free to form his own opinion on such matters. But this much I must say: that in view of these clear injunctions of their *Guru*, the Sikhs should form an alliance with the Muslims in preference to the Hindus.

Again, in Shri Guru Granth Ram Kali, Mohalla Five, we find it written:

*“Mehrwan Maula to ek, pir, paighambar Sheikh, dila ka malik karey hak,
Quran Kateb Tey Pak.”*

“God is but One, Whom the saints, the Prophets and the *Shaikhs* have been worshipping throughout the ages. But where is one to find teachings on the worship of this One God?”

One God – Theme of the Qur’an

Evidently the owner of the hearts that is God, announces it ever and anon that you can find this One God in the Glorious Quran, which is Holy.

With all these sayings before them our Sikh friends can very well decide whether their holy founder and their holy scriptures want them to cultivate friendship with the people of Makka or if they are in favour of their alliance with the people of Hardwar. It will interest them to know that when Guru Sahib once visited this latter place of Hindu pilgrimage, contrary to the Hindu traditions, he started cooking fish there and throwing water towards the West instead of the East, remarking:

*“Teerath nahao na utras mael, Karm Dharam sab homey phail, anek teerath
jey jatan karey, ta antar ki homey kadi na jai.”*

“Innumerable visits to pilgrimage centres cannot clear the mind of hypocrisy.”

In other words, such visits by themselves cannot kill the sinful propensity.

From this it is evident that Guru Sahib was not in favour of his followers cultivating friendship with those who go to those places of pilgrimage.

At this point one is tempted to see what his attitude was towards Makka and the people whose religious centre it happens to be. His utterance on this point is to be found recorded in *Janam Sakhi Kalan*, and it reads as follows:

“Yeh Makka, Madina, ad jogad da Teerath hain.”

“Makka and Madina are houses of God from the beginning of the world, and will continue to be so as long as the world exists.”

One can understand from this whether the Guru Sahib would like his followers to be in close association with the lovers of Hardwar or with those of Makka.

Again, Guru Sahib did not leave the matter at a mere statement. He went further and exemplified it in action, and this is what is recorded of him in *Dera Bhai Gurdasji*:

*“Baba pher Makkay gia, nil bastar dharey banvali, Asa hath, Kitab kach,
kooza bang musalla dhari Baitha jai maseet vich jethay haji haj guzari.”*

I do not propose to go into the details of this description. The words, “*Kitab*” (Quran), “water pot,” “call of prayer,” and “prayer carpet” are quite significant. What one has to see now is whether the Guru Sahib enjoins his followers to ally themselves with the Hindus or with the Muslims. In the *Granth* it is written:

“Hindu anna, turku kana, dohan vichon giani siana.”

Here he clearly gives preference to the Muslims over the Hindus. This is because the Muslims even in these days of their degeneration have still one of their spiritual eyes opened, whereas the other party, namely the Hindus, have both their spiritual eyes blind, so the speak. It is evident that among these two “wise ones” are those who have retained some of their vision because in any case a one-eyed man is better than the man who has lost both his eyes. It should be noted that Guru Sahib holds this view as regards the artificial degenerate Muslim. As for the true believers in Islam, the Guru Sahib makes the following remarks:

“Ja Parabh param Purukh upjai, tan man apna rah chalaey.”

“When the first superman appeared in the world, after his departure corruption crept in his faith.”

What happened next is described in another verse:

“Maha Din tab Prabhoo apraja.”

“Then God sent the great religion.”

That is, the religion which is the greatest of all.

What this great religion was can be ascertained from the following:

“Arab desh ko keno raja.”

“Through this great religion the savages of Arabia became the rulers of the world.”

This clearly shows that in the opinion of Guru Sahib the Muslims of the early days were possessed of both their spiritual eyes. It is for our Sikh friends now to decide who are better: those who are spiritually blind, or those who have their spiritual vision unimpaired.

But the Guru Sahib does not leave the matter here. He goes further and gives us a comparative study of the two religious communities in a collective manner:

"Mussalman mom dil hoey, antar ki mael dil tey dhoey."

"The Muslims are soft-hearted because their heart is clean" (Granth Sahib, p. 312).

Again:

"Mussalman sift shariat parh parh karey vichar."

"Muslims are praiseworthy because they observe the *Shariat*."

Further on he says:

"Hoey Muslim din mohaney. Maran Jeevan ka bharam chukaney."

"By becoming a Muslim one is freed from the shackles of life and death and attains salvation."

As against this one can see his attitude towards the Hindus in his following observation:

"Hindu mooley bhooley ekhuthey jayen, Narad Kiha se kar karayen, andhey Gungey andh andhar, pathar lay poojey mugadh ganwar, Oh je yap dubey, tum kahan taran har."

I do not propose to enter into a discussion on the actual meaning of these verses. The words "blind," "dumb," and "obstinate" will make the reader easily understand what they mean.

Elsewhere we are further told:

"Hindu Hoey but parast, janat but khudaey, tiskar kafar akhia, hoey rahey gumrahey" (Janam Sakhi, Bhai Bala, p. 210).

I do not want to clarify the meaning of these verses either. The reader can draw his own conclusion from words like "Idol-worshipper," "Infidel" and "the lost."

In view of these clear sayings of Guru Sahib it is only proper that our Sikh friends should sit down with a dispassionate mind to decide with which religious community they can cultivate friendship with advantage, and what instructions in this respect can be found in the Holy Granth and the teachings of Guru Sahib. So much from the spiritual point of view.

Historical point of view

Now I proceed to discuss the subject from the historical point of view. One of the best friends and companions of Shri Guru Nanak Sahib (may the mercy of God be upon him) was Bhai Mardana, an out-standing Muslim of that time. He had also very cordial relations with Shah Farid and Pir Jalal-ud-Din Quraishi, so much so that the Guru Sahib undertook long journeys in the company of these Muslim sages (see *Janam Sakhi*, pp. 392 eq. and 445). It should be remembered that the Hindus also had their great *Pandits* in those days, but the student of the Guru Sahib's life will never find any instance of his intimacy with any of these *Pandits*. From this practical conduct of his one can very well understand which religious community the Guru Sahib would like his followers to associate with.

Again, in 1633 (Vikram Samvat era), the fourth Guru Ram Dass Ji paid a visit to Emperor Akbar, as a result of which the Guru Sahib received twenty-eight *bighas* [units] of land near about the villages of Sultan Wind and Tung, and an appreciable amount of a cash present from the Emperor. On this occasion the disciples of the Guru Sahib were also exempted from the Road Tax. The present Durbar Sahib at Amritsar stands on the land so presented. The exemption from the Road Tax was a great way to strengthen the consolidation of the Sikh community and help its prosperity. This is an indication of how anxious the Mughal Emperors were to win the hearts of the Sikhs, and this tradition of the Mughal court continues in the attitude of the Muslim community right up to the present moment.

Construction of Gurdawara Taran Taran

Now, let us see what lesson we get from the life of Guru Arjan Dev Ji Maharaj in this connection. When the Guru Sahib intended to construct the Gurdawara Taran Taran the Rajput Muslims of Bilaspur made a free gift of a piece of land for this purpose to the Sikh community. In addition to this, Abdul Majid Khan, the Governor of Fateh Abad, gave them a written exemption from taxes. What is more, at the request of the Guru Sahib, Emperor Jahangir granted an exemption to the Sikhs from the land revenue for one year in view of a great famine that was causing distress to the people in those days. This exemption from the payment of the land revenue added much strength to the Sikh community because this made people in general sympathetically inclined towards the Sikh Guru.

Relationship of Sikh Gurus with Muslim Saints

Now, we come to the Fifth Guru. When he started the construction of the Durbar Sahib of Amritsar, the foundation stone of this holy temple, which is the most respected of the Sikh temples, was laid by the great Muslim saint Hazrat Mian Mir Sahib (may the mercy of God be upon him). This step was taken by the Sikhs in spite of the fact that the Hindu community of the time had in it quite a large number of persons who were

regarded as great *Pandits*, *Rishis*, and *Munis*. One can very well understand from this to which religious community the Guru Sahib would like his community to be allied, if he were alive today. Nay, all the *Gurus* clearly indicated by their practical conduct that the benefit of the Sikh community lay in its alliance with the Muslims. Had it been otherwise the foundation stone of this holy temple would have been laid by Pandit Hardayal and not by Hazrat Mian Mir Sahib.

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