

PUPPETS OF FAITH

theory of communal strife



BS Murthy

Puppets of Faith: Theory of communal strife

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Dedicated to -

All those men, women and children, who ever suffered at the hands of bigots
on account of the dogma of their faith, and to those sacrificial animals
that become victims of religious superstition.

Preface of Strife

The lava of the volcano on which the world sits is the disaffection the *Musalmans* nurse towards the *kafirs*. Its chemistry world over is the Islamic religious rigidity, compounded in India by the Hindu historical hurt that is catalyzed with the expediency of the political class. The Indian landscape is dotted with many of its earlier eruptions, but the one in Godhra affected everyone as never before. That a fanatical band of *Musalmans* should dare torch their *Ram Sevaks* in a railway coach seemed to the *Sangh Parivar* like Saladin crossing the *Lakshman Rekha*. Of course, that the neighborhood Hindus joined the hysterical mobs to burn their persons and property was beyond belief to the ghettoed Mohammedans.

While the prospect of the new Hindu reality spoiling their party was something galling to the pseudo-secular politicians, for the media world all this seemed godsend 'breaking news'. Thus the ill-informed columnists as well as the dull-witted *idiotbox-wallahs* began scoring a Brownie point or two into the Indian pseudo-secular goal. But, the half-red intellectuals, shy as ever to stare at the problem straight in its face, have chosen to push it all under the carpet. Well, given the cyclic character of the Hindu-Muslim riots, won't they repeat the lament at the next turn? And the politicians of all hues, alive as they are to every opportunity that presents itself to consolidate their constituency, wouldn't let this pass. They seem to be in no hurry to leave the scene, and continue to stoke the communal fires to keep the electorate warm.

The problem with a problem is that until one admits that it exists, one cannot address it, and unless it is addressed, it persists. Make no mistake there is this *Musalman-kafir* problem for the world to contend with, and the Hindu-Muslim disaffection is but its Indian edition. The pseudo-secular sophistry has it that when it comes to the basic tenets, all religions carry a premium on peace making and all the believers seek social harmony but for a few misguided fanatical elements on either side of the communal divide.

But, sadly, the ground reality is that to the average Hindu, it seems as if the *Musalmans* suffer from the symptoms of Islamic fever caused by a diseased mind-set afflicted by the *sharia* fervor. The Muslim compliment to the Hindu is the contemptuous *kafir*, destined for hell, and all that goes with it. In deed, it is but owing to our glossing over these entrenched misgivings that we let the communal lava erupt periodically.

This book seeks to outline the background of the *Musalman-kafir* animosity on one hand, and the Hindu-Muslim communal divide on the other. It would seem that these are the products of one or more of the scriptural notions, religious dogma, medieval history and modern politics, or all put together. As one cannot understand man unless he understands his religion, all must be abreast of the basic

religious tenets of the competing or conflicting faiths. Then, it would be revealing how the religious scriptures *per se* contribute to social discord and communal disaffection, and/or both. In the strife torn world of ours, it's our grasp of this canvas of conflict that might eventually enable us to paint the picture of peaceful coexistence.

Thus, the social evolution as well as the spiritual ethos of Hinduism and Buddhism on one hand and that of the Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the other are sketched here. Also, since man carries the historical deadwood, in spite of himself, the history that connects and disconnects the Semitic religions and that which divides the Hindu-Muslim emotions is recalled to appreciate the background to the continuing strife.

After all, there is more to religion than that meets the eye, and that is the overriding faith and feeling of the believers. Besides, as the Islamic creed is more so a product of Muhammad's persona, the influence of his character in shaping the ethos of the *Musalman*s has been analyzed. Won't the *Musalman*s themselves concede that their endeavor would be to follow the straight path of Islam as earnestly as they could, as others, any way, have strayed onto the satanic path? And it is this mind-set that makes the *Musalman*s apart in the religious sense. How this could possibly govern the Muslim psyche is scanned with "I'm Ok - You're Ok", the famous work of Thomas A. Harris, with their religious creed from Roland E Miller's "Muslim Friends-Their Faith and Feeling", as the probe.

All this might not only enable the 'the others' to appreciate the Muslim constraints but also understand their own aberrations. Likewise, it could be hoped that the *Musalman*s too would ponder over the apprehensions of the 'the others' as well as their own afflictions that are behind the *Musalman-kafir* confrontation.

Advent of Dharma

As opposed to the purported revelation of the God's 'chosen path' to man through some messiah, which forms the basis of the Semitic faiths, the essence of Hinduism has been for one to adhere to his *dharma*, supposedly sanctified by Gods in communion with the seers. And *dharma*, though varies from man to man, *per se* is the common course for the salvation of the souls. It is this salient feature of its religious character that gives Hinduism its theological variety and philosophical edge, sorely lacking in the Semitic faiths, each molded in the persona of its prophet.

Well, in the Semitic religions, the essence of the faith is the implicit obedience to the Almighty, and the strict compliance with the dogma enunciated by the messiah, ostensibly received from the Creator. Moreover, it is incumbent upon the faithful to treat that 'the God' showed the right path to His prophet for the

believers to unquestioningly follow. Besides, it is the unique feature of the Semitic religious dogma in that the messiah is believed to be endowed with the power of intercession on behalf of the faithful on the Day of Judgment. If anything, this precept seems more pronounced in the Christianity and Islam than in the Judaism. This unmistakably led to the Semitic habit of the faithful looking up to the messiah to help them attain salvation, or reach the paradise as the case may be. Intended or otherwise, the messiah became the fulcrum of the faith as well as the icon of the Semitic religious ethos. In the process, as it were, the Lord of the religion gets relegated to the background.

In such a religious setting, it was only time before the vulgar minds insensibly allowed the prophet to rule their religious space in the practice of the faith, supposedly founded by him at the behest of 'the God'. The Semitic idea of decrying idol-worship, ostensibly to let 'the God' not suffer any rivals, seems to have been diluted by the gentiles who embraced the Christianity in the medieval times. Of course, that was well after Moses' Hebrew herds worshipped that golden cow in the ancient times. At length, in the practice of the faiths, this 'no rival to the God' dogma turned out into an 'accent on the prophet' culture. But in the end, the Christian model insensibly found the savior sharing the ecclesiastical dais with the exalted preachers of his faith. And seemingly Islam wanted to avoid that ever happening to its prophet, and designed a mechanism to preclude that forever. But in the process, the *Musalman*s came to condition themselves to revere the Prophet rendering Islam into Mohammedanism in practice.

In the realms of Hinduism, even as one's religious ethos is to seek God's favor for his *moksha*, in the philosophical sense he perceives Him as his own spiritual self, *aham brahmasmi brahma*. Conceptually thus, such a relationship between man and his maker, without the intermediary of a messiah, enables the worshipper experience a sense of oneness with the worshipped. Hence, it is no blasphemy for a Hindu to tirade his God, strange though it may seem, when felt let down by Him.

Thus, going by the precept and practice, Hinduism cannot be deemed a dogma in the Semitic religious sense. Naturally, our enquiry should be directed at exploring the causative factors that should've induced this unique Hindu spiritual oneness with God, as against the Semitic religious projection of Him as an outside power, to whose will as conveyed through His prophets, the faithful should submit themselves regardless.

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that this Hindu thought process was fashioned by the Aryans who migrated to India around 1500 B.C.E from Eurasia. However, the moot point is whether they brought the four Vedas along with them to cultivate Vedanta in the fertile Indian soil, rechristened as *Aryavarta*, or descended on it with bagfuls of ripen fruits of Vedantic philosophy. Had they carried with them the Hindu brand of a religion and philosophy into a no man's

land of India, then it is reasonable to assume that there would have been claimants for the Hindu legacy in Eurasia as well.

But, as it is not the case, an enquiry into the origins and the development of Hinduism on the Indian soil is warranted, however bearing in mind, the discovery of the presence of Indus Valley civilization at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in Punjab way back in 3,500 B.C.E. And such an exercise is bound to address the question of the Aryan philosophical purity.

Even if the glorious Indo-Dravidian civilization were to be extinct by the time of the Aryan arrival, the remnants of its culture should have been still extant by then. After all, a civilization is but the cultural ethos of a people, and culture itself is a synthesis of the communal arrangement in a given society. Thus, it can be assumed that a stable polity would have been in existence in ancient India, probably dating back to 7,500 B.C.E. If anything, the recent discovery of a submerged city in the Gulf of Cambay would only strengthen that supposition.

But, the cultural hegemony of the Aryans over the life and times of the Indian aborigines, that any way is to be expected, left no traces of the pre-Aryan Indo-Dravidian social order for us to divine. Thus, for all practical purposes, the Aryan communal code with caste as creed, apparently in vogue from the Vedic times, is the only known social mores of India's ancient past. Though we might remain clueless about the pre-Aryan Indian social arrangement, yet, we may speculate about its probable influence on the evolution of the Aryan way of life, in what was essentially an alien setting to them. As they were set to dominate the polity of the land that came into their hand, the Aryans, after all, should be expected to have been acquainted with the nuances of the cultural ethos of the native race(s).

Hence, it would be interesting to speculate as to how the migrant minority should've subdued the native majority, without a fight at that, and obliterated their culture, without a trace for ever. It seems probable, notwithstanding their mental prowess exemplified by the civilization of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, the natives might not have been martial after all. Added to that, the natives of the land should have been either depressed economically, or depleted in numbers or even disjointed politically. And that was owing to famines or floods or petty jealousies of the communes. Whatever, they obviously were unable or unwilling to offer any significant resistance to the incoming Aryans.

Above all, the Aryan spirit of adventure, inherent to all migrants, should have overawed the lethargic aborigines into surrendering to the invading hordes. After all, won't the later day Indian history vouch for this phenomenon, time and again? Whatever it was, the migrants became the lords of all they surveyed in the land they prided as *Aryavarta* and believed as their *karmabhoomi*. In support of this presumption, in all of Vedic literature, we have no account of any battle royal fought by the Aryan migrants and the native Indians.

It goes without saying that the Aryans would have needed a social structure in place to dominate the natives they subdued. It was thus, the color of the skin could have played its part in stratifying the society, and it is not without significance that the Aryan concept of caste is *varna*, which in Sanskrit means color. The natives, probably a mix of brown and black, could not have measured up to the Aryan fair skin, and thus in the psychological sense, were unequal to start with. Just the same, on account of real politick; the Aryans could not have afforded to keep the natives out of their socio-cultural orbit. Yet, it was imperative for the migrants to preclude any politico-cultural threat from the natives. It was to serve these ends that the Aryans might have looked for ways and means of keeping the natives in an extended social fold, albeit at arm's length. And the result of this Aryan political compulsion was the evolution of the caste system, so unique to the human experience.

Needless to say, an organized culture, as the one available to the natives, would have had some class structure of its own. The imperative for the Aryans would have been to devise a new social order, without disturbing the old, in a way to accommodate the natives at the lower ends even while placing themselves at the zenith. Thus, the native brown-skinned would have been 'casted away' as *vaisyas* and *sudras* in that order, depending upon their social status or occupation, and/or both. However, the caste system so devised by the Aryans to integrate themselves into the polity, while dividing the natives from one another, was brilliant though cynical. With the Aryan social comfort zone thus drawn, the unfortunate blacks amongst the natives were dubbed as *antyaaja*, and eventually relegated as untouchable *chandalas*.

To enforce their caste law, as law of the land, the Aryans would have earmarked muscle-men amongst them, who in time came to be christened as *kshatriyas*. At some length, the Aryan intellectual class might have wanted to institutionalize their social supremacy for all times to come. It was towards this end that they, as Brahmans, posited themselves at the apex of the caste pyramid that they helped build over the ruins of the native social arrangement. In order to perpetuate the caste hierarchy thus evolved, the Brahmans envisioned the concept of *dharma*, which, being caste specific, not only defines the caste ethos but also draws the caste boundaries. It was thus, Brahmans, as a caste, came to be the shepherds of the Hindu philosophy and culture for all time to come.

Thus, it were these very Brahmans who gifted Sanskrit to the world, whose incredible beauty makes the Hindu believe that it is the *deva bhasha*, the language of the gods. Hence, it's no wonder that the British Indologist, Sir William Jones, a Greek and Latin scholar, who mastered Sanskrit as well, should have remarked that, 'Sanskrit is of wonderful structure, more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either'.

Nowhere in the annals of human history, as the Brahmans in India did, a small group of people, by the privilege of birth or the faculties of intellect, and/ or both, came to monopolize the soul of a people, the spirit of a culture and the destiny of a society for millennia. Only a unique sense of their destiny, or the arrogance of their perceived superiority, should've enabled the Brahmans to posit themselves as angels on earth, endowed with the power to control the gods themselves, well, with the mantras, composed by them in the language of the gods. That is what Narayana Upanishad expostulates as follows:

Daiva deenam jagat sarvam,

Mantraa deenantu daivatam,

Tan mantram brahamana deenam,

Brahmano mama devata

It's on god that hinges all
Mantras rein in that godhood
Controlled are those by Brahmans
Making them our own angels.

In the end, it was the Brahman dominance even over the Aryan hegemony, not to speak of the native souls, which heralded Brahmanism to the hurt of Hinduism. However, to be fair to the Brahmans, it's not that they committed any fraud on the gullible public on that score, for they believed that the gods could indeed be appeased with their *mantras*. Besides, they felt it was their destiny to intercede between god and man for the well-being of the latter, and thus strived to equip to fulfill the unique role their religion afforded them.

And, for the supposed benefit of mankind, the Brahmans devised appropriate *mantras* to propitiate the gods for their rewarding man in his every endeavor. To help serve the public cause, they led a spiritually righteous life that involved a high degree of self-discipline as well as self-denial. Besides, for their *mantras* to be effectual on the gods, they strived unremittingly to attain the required chastity in the intonations of their recantations. Be that as it may, whatever could be the effect of the Vedic *mantras* on the gods; the sheer lyrical beauty of their composition has the power to enthrall all Hindus, nay, every listener for that matter.

Thus, in a unique phenomenon, their intellectual quality and a righteous lifestyle, gave the Brahmans an unmatched spiritual supremacy, which combined with the credulity of the public, enabled them to retain their premier status in the Indian society till the recent past. However, their methodology for monopoly over

the Gods curiously led to a religious system that helped as well as harmed the Hindu society in the end. In the Hindu system of heavenly rewards, the devout can seek them at their own dwellings, courtesy the Brahmans, who through their *mantras*, strive to invoke God's blessings on them albeit for a fee. Thus, in the Aryan scheme of things in the Vedic times, there was no felt need for a temple for their gods as such.

However, the temple with its presiding deity in the sanctum sanctorum was a later day social development of the *puranic* period. Even then, the periodic visits of the Hindus to temples are but supplementary to their ceremonies at their homes. Thus to this day, every Hindu home, if not a *pooja room* as such, has an earmarked space for private worship that is treated as a temple by the family. And the Brahman *purohits* continue to perform numerous Vedic rituals at individual residences, designed for the benefit of the believers' prosperity on earth and happiness in the heaven. Even in the temples, it is through *mantras* that the Brahman priests seek to invoke the Deity's blessings on the thronging devotees.

It is interesting to see how this unique religious model, practically frees the non-priestly classes, that include the majority of the Brahmans as well, from the obligation of religious education as well as a prayer regimen. All this enables the rest of the population to improve the productivity of the nation, assured of their own salvation, albeit of a lesser station. On the negative side, it distances the masses from the nuances of spirituality, and that keeps them ignorant and illiterate, religiously and otherwise too. And it is this shortcoming of the Brahmanic religious model that doesn't address itself to the theological grooming of the illiterate masses, which makes the Hindu fringes susceptible for religious conversion into the alien faiths of the Christianity and Islam. And the proselytizing zealots from both these faiths fail not to exploit this grand Hindu religious fault line.

It is one thing for the Aryans to have established socio-cultural hegemony over India, and given their numerical minority, it was another to avoid their social disintegration in the long run. Besides, it's in the nature of man to covet other man's spouse, while being possessive about his own mate. As a corollary, this individual proclivity transforms into the sectarian propensity of any community. Thus, while wanting to possess the native women, the Aryan men would have been constrained to detain their fair sex from succumbing to the charms of the native male folks. It was thus, they would have come up with a code that served them both ways.

While allowing the union of a higher caste man with a lower caste woman in *anuloma*, through *pratiloma* they strived to ensure that cupid's aboriginal arrows wouldn't strike the Aryan women. And to deal with the recalcitrant of their stock, motherly sentiment was brought in as a hurdle to deter them from opting for *pratiloma*, especially, with the lowly men. It was thus decreed that the offspring of an Aryan woman through a union with a *sudra* would be jeopardized as an outcast.

It would have dawned on the Brahmans, sooner than later, that for its effective adherence, it would be imperative to back the social code with divine sanction as well. It is thus, the *Manu Dharma Sastra*, with its adverse features that are inimical to the good of women, should have been the outcome of the Aryan compulsion to deter their females from coveting the native males.

It is inconceivable to imagine that a well-evolved ancient civilization, such as the Indo-Dravidian one, should be bereft of a religious custom, if not a theological creed as such. The Brahman intellect would have divined that the dogma or prejudice of the natives brooks no abrogation. Thus it is realistic to assume that in fashioning the Vedic rituals, if not their *mantras*, the Brahmans should have co-opted, or modified, the native mores to suit the Aryan tastes or fancies, and/or both. This could be the reason why the pre-Aryan folklore like Ramayana and Mahabharata became Aryan legends that eventually became the Hindu *puranas*. In this context, it is relevant to note that both Rama and Krishna, the *puranic* heroes, respectively of those epics, were indeed dark skinned and thus non-Aryan natives.

Likewise, the ongoing debate about the much repeated reference to *samudra*, the sea, in the Rig Veda, the first scriptural composition of the Aryans, a land locked people, when still in the North Indian landmass, would suggest the Indo-Dravidian influence on the Aryan thought process and religious practices. The Aryans would have co-opted the native social mores and the religious symbols like the hallowed *Om* and the sacred *Swastika*, for their appeal or as an expedient, and/or both. However, in the modern times, Adolf Hitler, in pursuit of Aryan hegemony over the Anglo-Saxon races, made the *swastika* infamous by giving it an artistic turn and a satanic twist.

Nevertheless, having accepted the inferior social status, for their part, the Indian natives would have had no difficulty in embracing the new Aryan doctrine that accommodated their own religious symbols, if not its dogma. This probably was the great Brahman religious coup that enabled their dominance of the Indian society for millennia to come.

God's quid pro Quo

In what could have been the first irony of human history, at the very time when the Aryans were subjugating the free people in India, the Jews, in slavery, were enabled by 'the God' to escape from Egypt.

The God, as though in reciprocity, demanded of the Jews to submit to His Will, made explicit in the Torah. And, as if to massage their ego, besides gaining their servitude, 'the God' proclaimed them as His Chosen People. However, to rein them in, He imposed a code of conduct upon them through the Laws He revealed

to Moses, the Prophet chosen for that purpose. Besides, as an incentive to their compliance with those harsh Laws, 'the God' promised to lead them into Israel, the 'Promised Land' for them. Nevertheless, the All Knowing God felt all that might not be enough to ensure an everlasting obedience and the abiding gratitude of His Chosen People. And thus, as though to keep the flock all to Himself, he warned them of their destruction if they ever worshipped other gods.

Hence, it is imperative to understand the nature of Jehovah, the Judaic God, and the tone and tenor of the Mosaic Laws to appreciate the life and times of the Semitic people in that distant past.

The Ten Commandments, with the God's preamble, read thus:

I am Jehovah your god who liberated you from your slavery in Egypt.

1. You may worship no other god than me.
2. You shall not make yourselves any idols: no images of animals, birds, or fish. You must never bow or worship it in any way; for I, the Lord your God, am very possessive. I will not share your affection with any other God!
And when I punish people for their sins, the punishment continues upon the children, grand children, and great-grand children of those who hate me; but I lavish my love upon thousands of those who love me and obey my commandments.
3. You shall not use the name of Jehovah your god irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood. You will not escape punishment if you do.
4. Remember to observe the Sabbath as a holy day. Six days a week are for your daily duties and your regular work, but the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest before the Lord your God. On that day you are to do no work of any kind, nor shall your son, daughter, or slaves - whether men or women - or your cattle or your houseguests. For in six days the Lord made the heaven, earth, and sea, and everything in them, and rested the seventh day; so he blessed the Sabbath day and set it aside for rest.
5. Honour your father and mother, that you may have a long, good life in the land the Lord your God will give you.
6. You must not murder.
7. You must not commit adultery.
8. You must not steal.
9. You must not lie.
10. You must not be envious of your neighbour's house, or want to sleep with his wife, or want to own his slaves, oxen, donkeys, or anything else he has.

In the New Stone Tablets that He gave to Moses, Jehovah further implores the Jews thus:

"Be very, very careful never to compromise with the people there in the land where you are going, for if you do, you will soon be following their evil ways. Instead, you must break down their heathen altars, smash the obelisks they worship, and

cut down their shameful idols. For you must worship no other gods, but only Jehovah, for he is a God who claims loyalty and exclusive devotion.

No, do not make a peace treaty of any kind with the people living in the land, for they are spiritual prostitutes, committing adultery against me by sacrificing to their gods. If you become friendly with them and one of them invites you to go with him and worship his idol, you are apt to do it. And you would accept their daughters, who worship other gods, as wives for your sons – and then your sons would commit adultery against me by worshipping their wives' gods. You must have nothing to do with idols."

Having thus laid the moral code of conduct for His Chosen People, besides revealing the religious regimen of Judaism, Jehovah advanced the enabling provisions of conformity that came to be regarded as the 'Laws of Moses'. Understandably, these Laws lay down the prescriptions and proscriptions intended by 'the God' for man in the journey of his life 'here'. What is more, and inexplicably at that, the Mosaic Laws detail the ordained punishments based on 'eye for eye' and 'tooth for tooth' jurisprudence. As the Mosaic Laws reveal, Jehovah comes out as an Impersonal Being, content Himself at punishing the wrongdoers in a legalistic fashion, rather than concerning Himself with imparting spiritual guidance to the Jews, His Chosen People, for their salvation. Nonetheless, as the following passages from the Torah illustrate, when it comes to His own relationship with them, Jehovah appears to be a very personal and demanding God.

"You must not worship the gods of the neighbouring nations, for Jehovah your God who lives among you is a jealous God, and his anger may rise quickly against you, and wipe you off the face of the earth. You must not provoke him and try his patience as you did when you complained against him at Massah. You must actively obey him in everything he commands. Only then will you be doing what is right and good in the Lord's eyes. If you obey him, all will go well for you, and you will be able to go in and possess the good land which the Lord promised your ancestors. You will also be able to throw out all the enemies living in your land, as the lord agreed to help you do.'

"In the years to come when your son asks you, 'What is the purpose of these laws which the Lord our God has given us? you must tell him, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with great power and mighty miracles – with terrible blows against Egypt and Pharaoh and all his people. We saw it all with our own eyes. He brought us out of Egypt so that he could give us this land he had promised to our ancestors. And he has commanded us to obey all of these laws and to reverence him so that he can preserve us alive as he has until now. For it always goes well with us when we obey all the laws of the Lord our God."

The rewards that Jehovah accords to His Chosen People in exchange for their obedience are all materialistic as stipulated in the Torah thus:

“You must obey all the commandments of the Lord your God, following his directions in every detail, going the whole way he has laid out for you; only then will you live and lead prosperous lives in the land you are to enter and possess.”

“If you obey all of my commandments, I will give you regular rains, and the land will yield bumper crops, and the trees will be loaded with fruit long after the normal time! And grapes will still be ripening when sowing time comes again. You shall eat your fill, and live safely in the land, for I will give you peace, and you will go to sleep without fear. I will chase away the dangerous animals. You will chase your enemies; they will die beneath your swords. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you, ten thousand! You will defeat all of your enemies. I will look after you, and multiply you, and fulfill my covenant with you. You will have such a surplus of crops that you won’t know what to do with them when the new harvest is ready! And I will live among you, and not despise you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people. For I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would be slaves no longer; I have broken your chains so that you can walk with dignity.”

“When the Lord brings you into the Promised Land, as he soon will, he will destroy the following seven nations, all greater and mightier than you are: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites.”

Equally significantly, the punishments of disregard too are mundane to the core.

“But if you will not listen to me or obey me, but reject my laws, this is what I will do to you: I will punish you with sudden terrors and panic, and with tuberculosis and burning fever; your eyes shall be consumed and your life shall ebb away; you will sow your crops in vain, for your enemies will eat them. I will set my face against you and you will flee before your attackers; those who hate you will rule you; you will even run when no one is chasing you!”

“And if you still disobey me, I will punish you seven times more severely for your sins. I will break your proud power and make your heavens as iron, and your earth as bronze. Your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its crops, nor your trees their fruit.”

“And if even then you will not obey me and listen to me, I will send you seven times more plagues because of your sins. I will send wild animals to kill your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your numbers so that your roads will be deserted.”

“And if even this will not reform you, but you continue to walk against my wishes, then I will walk against your wishes, and I, even I, will personally smite you seven times for your sin. I will revenge the breaking of my covenant by bringing war against you. You will flee to your cities, and I will send a plague among you there; and you will be conquered by your enemies. I will destroy your

food supply so that one oven will be large enough to bake all the bread available for ten entire families; and you will still be hungry after your pittance has been doled out to you.”

“And if you still won’t listen to me or obey me, then I will let loose my great anger and send you seven times greater punishment for your sins. You shall eat your own sons and daughters, and I will destroy the altars on the hills where you worship your idols, and I will cut down your incense altars, leaving your dead bodies to rot among your idols; and I will abhor you. I will make your cities desolate, and destroy your places of worship, and will not respond to your incense offerings. Yes, I will desolate your land; your enemies shall live in it, utterly amazed at what I have done to you.”

“I will scatter you out among the nations, destroying you with war as you go. Your land shall be desolate and your cities destroyed. Then at last the land will rest and make up for the many years you refused to let it lie idle; for it will lie desolate all the years that you are captives in enemy lands. Yes, then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths! It will make up for the rest you didn’t give it every seventh year when you lived upon it.”

“And for those who are left alive, I will cause them to be dragged away to distant lands as prisoners of war, and slaves. There they will live in constant fear. The sound of a leaf driven in the wind will send them fleeing as though chased by a man with a sword; they shall fall when no one is pursuing them. Yes, though none pursue they shall stumble over each other in flight, as though fleeing in battle, with no power to stand before their enemies. You shall perish among the nations and be destroyed among your enemies. Those left shall pine away in enemy lands because of their sins, the same sins as those of their fathers.”

“But at last they shall confess their sins and their fathers’ sins of treachery against me. (Because they were against me, I was against them, and brought them into the land of their enemies.) When at last their evil hearts are humbled and they accept the punishment I send them for their sins, then I will remember again my promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will remember the land (and its desolation). For the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as it lies desolate. But then at last they shall accept their punishment for rejecting my laws and for despising my rule. But despite all they have done, I will not utterly destroy them and my covenant with them, for I am Jehovah their God. For their sakes I will remember my promises to their ancestors, to be their God. For I brought their forefathers out of Egypt as all the nations watched in wonder. I am Jehovah.”

Thus, in essence, it seems that the religion of Judaism emphasizes the duty of the Jews to follow the Will of their God, in gratitude for His benevolence of their deliverance from slavery. It was this remarkable covenant of Jehovah, which made them His Chosen People that should have enabled the Jews to brave the pogroms in alien lands for centuries with unrivalled forbearance. Besides, the underpinnings

of reward and punishment regimen that their faith inculcates in their consciousness would have served the Jewish people sustain hope in the face of adversity for millennia.

On the other hand, Jehovah, for His part, kept His word, first by punishing the Jews as he said He would, and then, in the end, gave them the Promised Land, also as promised. On the basis of the executed threats and fulfilled promises, and going by the recorded history of religions, the Judaism of Jehovah has a claim for authenticity amongst the faiths of the world. Thus, as Jehovah settled scores with the Jews 'here' itself, won't the proposition be valid that, after all, there could be no Hindu *swarga*, no Christian Day of Judgment and no Islamic Hereafter for man to contend with?

And inexplicably, Jehovah, in His Islamic avatar as Allah, revealed to Muhammad that Paradise is for the real for the new faithful. And in times to come, the propensity of the zealot *Musalman*s to put their lives on line to attain it, though with debatable outcome, has become the scourge of mankind.

Pyramids of Wisdom

It would be interesting to speculate what would have been the religious tenor of the Hinduism and its early derivatives, the Jainism and the Buddhism, if only the natives of India were equal to the task of thwarting Aryan domination in their own domain. Would it not have brought about a confrontation between the Aryan gods and the native deities? Wouldn't have Indra, the Aryan spearhead of a God, forced his people into a covenant with Him to destroy the alien gods of the Indian aborigines? Fortunately for the Hindu spirituality and the Indian philosophy, that was not the case. Though Indra spared the local deities of his wrath, his wards were less considerate to the souls of the very land they coveted.

As the brawn of the emigrants should've successfully relegated the native Indian souls, save those from the hilly habitats, into subordinate castes, their Brahman brain got into the act of drafting the *dharma* in the Rig Vedic mould. Any way, the tribal populaces were out of the Aryan geographical reach, and, besides, would have been beyond their interest. However, it was only time before the Aryan political conquest of the subcontinent was conceptualized through *aswamedha yaga* of Yajur Veda. At length, when the *kshatriyas* were on the conquering course, the Brahmans went about composing two more Vedas - Sama and Adharva - to define the spiritual tone of Brahmanism that in later days got evolved into Hinduism.

In due course, the breadth and depth of the Brahman intellect, nourished in the comfort of the Indian climes, came to shape, first the Brahmasutras, and then the Upanishads, as adjuncts to the four Vedas. And that fashioned the Hindu

Vedanta of yore. But, the culmination of the Brahman thought process and the crowing glory of the Hindu philosophy is the Bhagvad-Gita. The intellectual achievements of the Brahmans have so fascinated the modern philosophers and scholars of the West that they went eloquent about them.

Jawaharlal Nehru thus compiled the eulogies of Western scholars about the Hindu intellectual achievements symbolized by the Upanishads and the Bhagvad-Gita in 'The Discovery of India', of Oxford University Press.

"Schopenhauer felt that "from every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit.... In the whole world there is no study.... So beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads.... (They) are products of the highest wisdom... It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people." And again: "the study of the Upanishads has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

"Writing on this, Max Mueller says: Schopenhauer was the last man to write at random, or to allow himself to go into ecstasies over so-called mystic and inarticulate thought. And I am neither afraid nor ashamed to say that I share his enthusiasm for the Vedanta, and feel indebted to it for much that has been helpful to me in my passage through life." In another place he says: "The Upanishads are the.... sources of ... the Vedanta philosophy, a system in which human speculation seems to me to have reached its very acme." Max Mueller's wonderment about the Upanishads seems unending going by what Nehru quoted: "I spend my happiest hours in reading Vedantic books. They are to me like the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains - so simple, so true, if once understood."

"Formulating his admiration for the Hindu thought and culture, he further said that," Nehru continued, "there is, in fact, an unbroken continuity between the most modern and the most ancient phases of Hindu thought, extending to over more than three thousand years. If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow - in some parts a very paradise on earth - I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant - I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life - again I should point to India"

"Romain Rolland, who followed him, was no less eloquent: "If there is one place on the face of the earth where all the dreams of living men have found a

home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India.”

“G. W. Russell, the Irish poet, privy to the power of inspiration said about the inspiring value of the ancient Hindu scriptures: “Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of Wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure.”

It would be interesting to have a peep, first into the Upanishads, and then into the Bhagavad-Gita, that fascinated so many modern intellectuals of the East and the West alike. It could be said, ironically so, that the Brahman intellectual quest that was exemplified by the *gayatri mantra* of the Rig Veda, which forms the daily prayer of the Brahmans was in fact composed by sage Vishvaamitra, the *kshatryia rishi*, and it reads thus:

“We meditate on the lovely glory of the god Savitr that he may stimulate our minds.”

The above and the following excerpts are from ‘The Upanisads’ translated by Valerie J. Roebuck which was published by Penguin Books India.

In the Gayatri vein, the Upanishads expostulate about many facets of Hindu knowledge thus:

“OM. That is full; this is full;
Fullness comes from fullness:
When fullness is taken from fullness,
Fullness remains
They who worship ignorance
Enter blind darkness:
They who delight in knowledge
Enter darkness, as it were, yet deeper.
Whoever knows knowledge and ignorance-
Both of them, together -
By ignorance crosses over death
And by knowledge reaches immortality.
They who worship non-becoming
Enter blind darkness:
They who delight in becoming
Enter darkness, as it were, yet deeper.
Whoever knows becoming and destruction -

Both of them, together -
By destruction crosses over death
And by becoming reaches immortality.
From the unreal lead me to the real.
From the darkness lead me to light."

Now, contrast this with the Torah line where God forbids Adam to eat the fruit from the Tree of Conscience for that would open his eyes, and thus makes him aware of right and wrong, good and bad! And yet, it is the Jews and the Christians, if not the *Musalmans*, of the Semitic religious dispensations who have reached the heights of science and technology in modern times! And sadly, the Hindus, who once hovered about the intellectual horizon of the world, have sunk into the depths of collective ignorance and prejudice for reasons not far to seek.

However, the most fascinating aspect of the Upanishads, as expostulated in the Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad, composed around 700 B.C.E, is its theorization that man himself was the creator of the gods in heaven, and the *dharma* on earth, in more ways than one.

Two of the examples taken from Valerie's Upanisads read as follows:

"In the beginning this was self (*atman*), in the likeness of a person (*purusa*). Looking round he saw nothing but himself (*atman*). First he said, 'I am!' So the name 'I' came to be. Even now, when someone is addressed, he first says, 'it is I', and then speaks whatever other name he has. Since before (*purva*) all this, he burnt up (*us-*) all the evils from everything, he is *purusa*. Whoever knows this, burns up anyone who wants to be before him.

He was afraid: so when alone one is afraid. Then he realized, "there is nothing else but me, so why am I afraid?" then his fear departed. For why should he be afraid? Fear arises from a second.

He had no pleasure either: so when alone one has no pleasure. He desired a companion. He became as large as a woman and a man embracing. He made that self split (*pat -*) into two: from that husband (*pati*) and wife (*patni*) came to be. Therefore Yajnavalkya used to say, 'In this respect we two are each like a half portion.' So this space is filled by a wife. He coupled with her, and from that human beings were born.

She realized: "How can he couple with me when he begot me from himself? Ah, I must hide!" She became a cow, the other a bull, and so he coupled with her. From that, cattle were born. She became a mare, the other a stallion; she became a she-donkey, the other a he-donkey: and so he coupled with her. From that, solid-hoofed animals were born. The one became a nanny-goat, the other a billy-goat; the one became an ewe, the other a ram: and so he coupled with her. From that, goats and sheep were born. In that way he created every pair, right down to the ants.

He knew: "I am creation, for I created all this." So he became creation. Whoever knows this, come to be in this, his creation."

"When they say, "Sacrifice to that one!", "Sacrifice to that one!" - some god or other, that is his varied creation, and he himself is all the gods.

Then he created from seed whatever is moist, and that is Soma. All this is just food and the eater of food. Soma is food, and Agni is the eater of food.

This is the higher creation of Brahma, since he created gods who are better than he: and also because, being mortal, he created immortals, it is his higher creation. Whoever knows this, comes to be in this, his higher creation."

And here is another of the many an Upanishadic creativity.

"In the beginning, *brahman* was all this, just one. Being just one, it was not complete. So it created over itself a better form, royalty (*ksatra*), those who are royalty among the gods: Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrtyu, and Isana. Therefore there is nothing higher than royalty: therefore at a king's anointing the Brahmana sits below the Ksatriya and he confers this honour on royalty alone.

Brahman is the source (*yoni*) of royalty. So even if a king attains the highest state, in the end he takes refuge in the priesthood (*brahman*) as his own source. So whoever harms the priesthood attacks his own source: he becomes more evil, like one who has harmed a superior.

He still was not complete. So he created the people (*vis*), those kinds of gods who are named in groups: the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Visvedevas and the Maruts.

He still was not complete. So he created the Sudra class, Pusan. This earth is Pusan, for it nourishes (*pus*) all this, whatever there is.

He still was not complete. So he created over himself a better form, *dharma*. *Dharma* is the royalty of royalty, so there is nothing higher than *dharma*. Through *dharma* a weaker man overcomes a stronger one, as though through a king. *Dharma* is truth: so they say of one who speaks truth, "He speaks *dharma*", or of one who speaks *dharma*, "he speaks truth". Both are the same.

So there were *brahman* (priesthood), *ksatra* (royalty), *vis* (the people) and *sudra* (the labourer). *Brahman* came into being among the gods through Agni; as a Brahmana among human beings; as a Ksatriya through the Ksatriya: as a Vaisya through the Vaisya: and as a Sudra through the Sudra. So folk seek a world among the gods in Agni, and a world among human beings in the Brahmana, for *brahman* came into being through these two forms."

As against this, the manner in which the God created the world, as propounded by Judaism and subscribed by the Christianity, is narrated in the Torah thus:

"There were no plants or grain sprouting up across the earth at first, for the Lord God hadn't sent any rain; nor was there anyone to farm the soil. (However, water welled up from the ground at certain places and flowed across the land.)

The time came when the Lord God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And man became a living person.

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, to the east, and placed in the garden the man he had formed. The Lord God planted all sorts of beautiful trees there in the garden, trees producing the choicest of fruit. At the centre of the garden he placed the Tree of Life, and also the Tree of Conscience, giving knowledge of Good and Bad. A river from the land of Eden flowed through the garden to water it; afterwards the river divided into four branches. One of these was named the Pishon; it winds across the entire length of the land of Havilah, where nuggets of pure gold are found, also beautiful bdellium and even lapis lazuli. The second branch is called the Gihon, crossing the entire length of the land of Cush. The third branch is the Tigris, which flows to the east of the city of Asher. And the fourth is the Euphrates.

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it. But the Lord God gave the man this warning: "You may eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of Conscience - for its fruit will open your eyes to make you aware of right and wrong, good and bad. If you eat its fruit, you will be doomed to die."

And the Lord God said, "It isn't good for man to be alone; I will make a companion for him, a helper suited to his needs". So the Lord God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever he called them, that was their name. But still there was no proper helper for the man. Then the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the place from which he had removed it, and made the rib into a woman, and brought her to the man.

"This is it!" Adam exclaimed. "She is part of my own bone and flesh! Her name is "woman" because she was taken out of a man." This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife in such a way that the two become one person. Now although the man and his wife were both naked, neither of them was embarrassed or ashamed."

On the other hand, the Quran avers that, "He hath created man from a drop of fluid" (v4, s.16) and "And the cattle hath He created, whence ye have warm clothing and use, and whereof ye eat" (v.5, S.16). It is another matter that Muhammad would have us believe that the first revelation to him read, "In the name of thy Lord Who createth. Createth man from a clot."

While the stress on religious belief led the Semitic people to take the Lord God's word without demur, the Brahman inquisitiveness went on to explore the relation between the self (*atma*) and the god (*paramaatma*), besides the nature of the soul and its probable immortality. It is this essential feature of Brahmanic enquiry that was possibly carried on for centuries, which culminated in the Vedanta. However, in the end, the quintessence of the Upanishadic wisdom got crystallized

in the Bhagvad-Gita, which William von Humboldt described as ‘the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue.’ What is more, Humboldt’s admiration for the Gita was such that he wrote seven hundred verses, equaling its length, in praise of it.

What is that which makes the Gita so unique and fascinating to the Hindus and others alike?

To start with, it is the setting: the battlefield of Kurukshetra where were assembled the armies of Paandavaas and Kauravaas, the estranged cousins, and the dilemma faced by Arjuna, the warrior-in-Chief of the former, about the propriety and usefulness of the fratricide that war ensues. Could the spiritual and temporal conflict in human existence go any better than that? And the highly sophisticated philosophical discourse that followed between Krishna, the supposed incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and Arjuna his *alter ego*, has a universal appeal to humanity at large, irrespective of the individual’s religious orientation and belief.

After all, the Bhagvad-Gita is not a sermon of religious conditioning; it is a spiritual tool of self-enlightenment. Apart from its peerless philosophy, the Bhagvad-Gita postulates the presence of one Universal Spirit, nursing no sectarian interests on religious lines. And one might contrast this with the unabashed partiality of the Semitic God to His protagonists, which, if only we were to go by the Quran, was prone to shifts and turns as well.

It is this concept of a universal, though uninvolved, God, as can be seen from the following verses from the Bhagvad-Gita, which sets Hinduism apart from the Semitic religions that seek to appropriate ‘the God’ all for their dogma besides prejudicing their followers towards other faiths.

*Thus spoke Arjuna:
Pray tell who’s better realized,
One that devoted as stated
Or relies who on God Obscure. (v1, ch.12)
Thus spoke the Lord:
Me in devotion who worships
Him I reckon as well realized. (v2, ch.12)
Having said that add I might
Looks as one to God Obscure – (v3, ch.12)
Doth he fine with senses reined
If well disposed towards the world. (v4, ch.12)

This is about the famed Hindu religious tolerance, and now for a sample of its philosophical sparkle in Lord Krishna’s postulations.

Wise all realize
 Embodies selfsame spirit all one
 From birth to death, in every birth. (v13, ch.2)
 Spirit in lay us All-Pervading
 Given that not to destruction,
 What sense doth it make to think
 That ever immutable gets destroyed! (v17, ch.2)
 Unbound being ever unborn
 Ageless since it's endless too
 Goes on Spirit, beyond life-span. (v20, ch.2)
 Change as men fade if clothes
 So doth Spirit as frames are worn. (v22, ch.2)
 Wind as carries scent of flowers
 While leaving them as is where,
 In like fashion Spirit from frames
 Moves its awareness to rebirths (v8, ch.15)
 Hold as patent on thy work
 Reckon though not on royalty
 With no way to ceasing work
 Never mind outcome but go on. (v47, ch.2)

It's but yoga
 If thou strive
 Wants without
 Emotions bereft. (v48, ch.2)
 Work well greedy with motive
 Work wise not with result in mind. (v49, ch.2)
 Wise not sentiment bring to work
 That's hallmark of art of work. (v50, ch.2)
 Freed from bonds with mind even
 Act wise regardless ever composed. (v51, ch.2)
 Clears if reason one's illusion
 Bothers he not to what's over
 Or for what might lie in store. (v52, ch.2)
 Rein in senses, hone thine effort
 Rely on Supreme, that's true wisdom. (v61, ch.2)
 Thus spoke Arjuna:
 Why should one with right intent
 Stray ever on the wayward ways! (v36, ch.3)

Thus spoke the Lord:

Well, it's passion, lust 'n wrath
 Drag that man on path painful. (v37, ch.3)
 Flame 'n mirror as shrouded
 Without let by smoke 'n dust
 As well embryo in the womb
 Wisdom is by wants clouded. (v38, ch.3)
 Wise all tend to cap all wants
 Which like fire all burn to core. (v39, ch.3)
 Veiled off wisdom sees not man
 Mind and body steeped in wants. (v40, ch.3)
 Rein in matter with thy mind
 Thus thou nip thy wants in bud. (v41, ch.3)
 Score over senses sensuous feelings
 Betters that mind, bettered by knowing
 Above all Spirit that reins supreme. (v42, ch.3)
 Thus spoke the Lord:
 Give up all 'n thou be freed
 So is the case with selfless work
 But know latter scores much better. (v2, ch.5)
 Wise neither want, nor they shun
 Thus they give up ever engaged. (v3, ch.5)
 Way action 'n path learning
 Know not ignorant not different. (v4, ch.5)
 Work highway 'n lane freedom
 Know the learned are the same. (v5, ch.5)
 What thou forego if thee quit
 Deeds selfless make acts forsake. (v6, ch.5)
 Such one realized
 Self-willed, dutiful
 Within self remains
 Without ever engaged. (v7, ch.5)
 Privy to this will realize
 On his body as it works
 Say hath he none to name one. (v8, ch.5)
 Wise do realize needs physical
 Are but urges driven by genes. (v9, ch.5)
 Spreads on lotus leaves as water
 Sticks none sin to deeds dutiful. (v10, ch.5)
 Wise in selfless work engage
 Forego while they self-purify. (v11, ch.5)
 Wise ever stay cool never in want

Bog down naive all ever in want.	(v12, ch.5)
Covetous not 'n ever laid back	
Wise in tune with Supreme stay.	(v13, ch.5)
It's his nature but not Spirit	
Makes man act by wants induced.	(v14, ch.5)
Takes not Supreme credit or fault	
Grasp none have of this uncouth.	(v15, ch.5)
He that keeps his bias at bay	
Sun-like he shines being wise	(v16, ch.5)
In clear conscience 'n fairness	
Faith in Him gives man freedom.	(v17, ch.5)

In stark contrast to the scriptural exclusivity of the Semitic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam that ironically are mutually skeptical and hostile as well, thus runs the all-inclusive Hindu philosophical stream of Bhagvad-Gita.

And yet, as if to prove that the destiny of man is but to suffer in strife, either of religious bigotry or of racial prejudice, and/or both, the Brahmanism had abused the all-inclusive Hinduism by subjecting large sections of the Indian society to In-humanism.

**From the author's Bhagvad-gita: Treatise of self-help*

Ascent to Descent

After their remarkable progress in spirituality and rationality, the Brahmans made an acknowledged advance in astronomy as well. The exposure to the mysteries of the universe that their astronomical pursuits afforded, insensibly led them to probe the vicissitudes of life and fathom the fate of man through the astrological vision. The fascination Brahmans felt for the charms of crystal gazing, in a way, put the wheel of the Brahman enlightenment in the reverse gear.

As the predictions about man's future brought the predilections of his present to the fore, and as the acceptance of the former led to the remedial need for the latter, charlatanry became a corollary of the Hindu wisdom. Thus, the imperfect science of astrology and the perfect sense of exploitation together came to dictate the Brahman ethos, and in time, the Hindu social psyche, even to this day. It was this Brahmanic propensity for things astrological that insensibly led to superstitious practices amongst the Hindus at large, giving a go by to the Upanishadic wisdom and all that goes with that. It was thus, in an ironical twist of

human destiny, the unmatched intellect of the Brahmans that contributed so much to the World Bank of knowledge, at first deprived their fellowmen by denying them the scope to learn, and in the end, deprived them as well, caught as they were in the quagmire of prejudice and superstition.

But then, what were the Brahman intellectual achievements that became legends in the annals of human learning! To start with, we have the astronomical reach of the Brahmans, depicted in his 'Indica' by Alberuni, written around 1,030 A.D. It may be noted that for this exercise in dissection, the implements are drawn from Alberuni's cabinet of Indica, presented in English by Dr. Edward C. Sachau, and published in India by Rupa & Co.

"The science of astronomy is the most famous among them, since the affairs of their religion are in various ways connected with it. If a man wants to gain the title of an astronomer, he must not only know scientific or mathematical astronomy, but also astrology. The book known among Muslims as *Sindhind* is called by them *Siddhanta*, i.e. *straight*, not crooked nor changing. By this name they call every standard book on astronomy, even such books as, according to our opinion, do not come up to the mark of our so-called *Zij*, i.e. handbooks of mathematical astronomy. They have five Siddhantas:-

1. *Surya-siddhanta*, i.e. the Siddhanta of the sun, composed by Lata.
2. *Vasishtha-Siddhanta*, so called from one of the stars of the Great Bear, composed by Vishnuchandra.
3. *Pulisa-Siddhanta*, so called from Paulisa, the Greek, from the city of Saintra, which I suppose to be Alexandria, composed by Paulisa.
4. *Romaka-Siddhanta*, so called from the Rum, i.e. the subjects of the Roman Empire composed by Srishena.
5. *Brahma-Siddhanta*, so called from Brahman, composed by Brahmagupta, the son of Jishnu, from the town of Bhillamala between Multan and Anhilwara, 16 *yojana* from the latter place (?)"

The table of contents of the twenty-four chapters of the *Brahma-Siddhanta* listed by Alberuni indicates the extraordinary range of the Brahmanical pursuits.

1. On the nature of the globe and the figure of heaven and earth.
2. On the revolutions of the planets; on the calculation of time, i.e. how, to find the time for different longitudes and latitudes; how to find the mean places of the planets; how to find the sine of an arc
3. On the correction of the places of the planets.
4. On three problems: how to find the shadow, the bygone portion of the day and the *ascendens*, and how to derive one from the other.
5. On the planets becoming visible when they leave the rays of the Sun, and their becoming invisible when entering them.
6. On the first appearance of the moon, and about her two cusps.
7. On the lunar eclipse.

8. On the solar eclipse.
9. On the shadow of the moon.
10. On the meeting and conjunction of the planets.
11. On the latitudes of the planets.
12. A critical investigation for the purpose of distinguishing between correct and corrupt passages in the texts of astronomical treatises and handbooks.
13. On arithmetic: on plane measure and cognate subjects.
14. Scientific calculation of the mean places of the planets.
15. Scientific calculation of the correction of the places of the planets.
16. Scientific calculation of the three problems.
17. On the deflection of eclipses.
18. Scientific calculation of the appearance of the new moon and her two cusps.
19. On *Kuttaka*, i.e. the pounding of a thing. The pounding of oil producing substances is here compared with *the most minute and detailed research*. This chapter treats of algebra and related subjects, and besides it contains other valuable remarks of a more or less arithmetical nature.
20. On the shadow.
21. On the calculation of the measures of poetry and on metrics.
22. On cycles and instruments of observation.
23. On time and the four measures of time, the *solar*, the *civil*, the *lunar* and the *sidereal*.
24. About numeral notation in the metrical books of this kind.

These, now, are twenty-four chapters, according to his (*Brahmaputra's*) own statement, but there is a twenty-fifth one, called *Dhyana-graha-adhyaya*, in which he tries to solve the problems by speculation, not by mathematical calculation...Such books as do not reach the standard of a Siddhanta are mostly called *Tantra* or *Karana*. The former means ruling under a governor, the latter means following, i.e. following behind the Siddhanta. Under *governors* they understand the *Acaryas*, i.e. the sages, anchorites, the followers of Brahman. There are two famous *Tantras* by *Aryabhata* and *Balabhadra*, besides the *Rasayana-tantra* by *Bhanuyasas*."

As Alberuni had observed as under, the Hindu intellectual descent was evident by the turn of the first millennium of the Common Era.

"The religious books of the Hindus and their codes of tradition, the Puranas, contain sentences about the shape of the world which stand in direct opposition to scientific truth as known to their astronomers. By these books people are guided in fulfilling the rites of their religion, and by means of them the great mass of the nation have been wheedled into a predilection for astronomical calculations and astrological predictions and warnings. The consequence is, that they show much affection to their astronomers, declaring that they are excellent men, that it is a good omen to meet them, and firmly believing that all of them come into paradise and none into hell. For this the astronomers requite them by accepting their

popular notions as truth, by conforming themselves to them, however far from truth most of them may be, and by presenting them with such spiritual stuff as they stand in need of. This is the reason why the two theories, the vulgar and the scientific, have become intermingled in the course of time, why the doctrines of the astronomers have been disturbed and confused, in particular the doctrines of those authors - and they are the majority- who simply copy their predecessors, who take the bases of their science from tradition and do not make them the objects of independent scientific research."

What of the Hindu astrology? The fascination Cheiro felt for the Hindu astrology could be seen from his foreword to 'Cheiro's Book of Numbers'.

"During my earlier years, when traveling in the East, it had been my good fortune to come in contact with a certain sect of Brahmins who had kept in their hands from almost prehistoric times, studies and practices of an occult nature which they regarded as sacredly as they did their own religious teachings. Among other things, they permitted me to learn certain theories on the occult significance of numbers and their influence and relation to human life, which subsequent years and manifold experiences not only confirmed, but justified me in endeavoring to apply them in a practical sense so that others might also use this knowledge with, I hope, advantage to themselves and to those around them.

The ancient Hindu searchers after Nature's laws, it must be remembered, were in former years masters of all such studies, but in transmitting their knowledge to their descendants, they so endeavored to hide their secrets from the common people that in most cases the key to the problem became lost, and the truth that had been discovered became buried in the dust of superstition and charlatanism, to be re-formed, let us hope, when some similar cycle of thought in its own appointed time will again claim attention to this side of nature.

When examining such questions, we must not forget that it was the Hindus, who discovered what is known as the precession of the Equinoxes, and in their calculations such an occurrence takes place every 25,827 years; our modern science after labours of hundreds of years has simply proved them to be correct.

How, or by what means they were able to arrive at such a calculation, has never been discovered - observations lasting over such a period of time are hardly admissible, and calculation without instruments is also scarcely conceivable, and so science has only been able, first to accept their statement, and later to acknowledge its accuracy.

Their judgment, together with that of the Chaldeans, as to the length of what is now known as the cycle of years of the planets, has been handed down to us from the most remote ages, and also by our modern appliances has been proved correct, so when one comes to a study such as this, as to the value of the numbers 1 to 9, which, as the seven harmonies of music are the bases of all music that has ever been conceived, these above-stated numbers are the basis of all our numbers and

calculations, it is then only logical to accept the decisions of those great students of long past ages and at least examine their deductions with a mind free from bias and prejudice.”

Cheiro’s admiration for the Hindu astrology made him say at one stage that the only reason why one should believe in it is because the Hindus invented it. However, the other side of the coin of the Brahman intellectual superiority, which gave zero to the world, was that it had nil value for things mundane. And in this lay the seeds of the Hindu philosophy that shaped the Indian psyche of contentment, which is at odds with the materialistic order of the day.

It is thus, the antics of Bal Thackarey’s *Shiv Sainiks* against the Westernization of the society represent the growing frustration of the traditionalists. However, maybe, once the charms of Mammon begin to wane in time, the core Hindu outlook of life, shaped by the soul of its philosophy, could be resurgent. Or, would it be a case of a people losing out, in spite of the *karmic* philosophy, so beneficially imbibed by their forbearers for forbearance against the vicissitudes of life! Only time would tell.

Be that as it may, the seeds of the eventual Hindu social decay could be traced to Cheiro’s eulogy of the Brahman virtuosity in astrology.

The Zero People

While the Brahman genius paved the way for the Aryan intellectual superiority, the natives of the land were denied access to education as a ploy to stall their challenge for all times to come. Nonetheless, the native non-Aryan genius was allowed to find expression in arts and crafts earmarked to their castes. By and large, the Aryan social re-engineering seems to have worked wonderfully well to justify Max Mueller’s eulogy.

The Brahmans who invented the zero, and the decimal as well, had however marginalized the *sudras* and turned the outcasts into ciphers, only to degenerate themselves in the end. The caste system of the Aryan social expediency was in time given the Brahmanical religious sanction through interpolations in the Bhagvad-Gita itself through the one below, and such others.

By Me ordained born beings
In tune with their own natures
Environs in such govern their life
But tend I not them to their birth. (v13, ch.4)

Alberuni describes the caste ridden Hindu society as he found it between 1017 and 1030 A.D thus:

“The Hindus call their castes *varna*, i.e. colours, and from a genealogical point of view they call them *jataka*, i.e. *births*. These castes are from the very beginning only four.

1. The highest caste are the Brahmana, of whom the books of the Hindus tell that they were created from the head of Brahman. And as Brahman is only another name for the force called *nature*, and the head is the highest part of the animal body, the Brahmana are the choice part of the whole genus. Therefore the Hindus consider them as the very best of mankind.
2. The next caste are the Kshatriya, who were created, as they say, from the shoulders and hands of Brahman. Their degree is not much below that of the Brahmana.
3. After them follow the Vaisya, who were created from the thigh of Brahman.
4. The Sudra, who were created from his feet.

Between the latter two classes there is no very great distance. Much, however, as these classes differ from each other, they live together in the same towns and villages, mixed together in the same houses and lodgings.

After the Sudra follow the people called *Antyaja*, who render various kinds of services, who are not reckoned amongst any caste, but only as members of a certain craft or profession. There are eight classes of them, who freely intermarry with each other, except the fuller, shoemaker, and weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them. These eight guilds are the fuller, shoemaker, juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and of birds, and the weaver. The four castes do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the villages and towns of the four castes, but outside them.

The people called Hadi, Doma (Domba), Chandala and Badhatau (sic) are not reckoned amongst any caste or guild. They are occupied with dirty work, like the cleansing of the villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations. In fact, they are considered like illegitimate children; for according to general opinion they descend from a Sudra father and a Brahmani mother as the children of fornication; therefore they are degraded outcastes.

The Hindus give to every single man of the four castes characteristic names, according to their occupations and modes of life. E.G. the Brahmana is in general called by this name as long as he does his work staying at home. When he is busy with the service of one fire, he is called *ishtin*; if he serves three fires, he is called *agnihotrin*; if he besides offers an offering to the fire, he is called *dikshita*. And as it is with the Brahmana, so is it also with the other castes. Of the classes *beneath* the castes, the Hadi are the best spoken of, because they keep themselves free from

everything unclean. Next follows the Doma, who play on the lute and sing. The still lower classes practice as a trade killing and the inflicting of judicial punishments. The worst of all are the Badhatau, who not only devour the flesh of dead animals, but even of dogs and other beasts.

Each of the four castes, when eating together, must form a group for themselves, one group not being allowed to comprise two men of different castes. If, further, in the group of the Brahmana there are two men who live at enmity with each other, and the seat of the one is by the side of the other, they make a barrier between the two seats by placing a board between them, or by spreading a piece of dress, or in some other way; and if there is only a line drawn between them, they are considered as separated. Since it is forbidden to eat the remains of a meal, every single man must have his own food for himself; for if any one of the party who are eating should take of the food from one and the same plate, that which remains in the plate becomes, after the first eater has taken part, to him who wants to take as the second, *the remains of the meal*, and such is forbidden."

The social duties of non-Brahmans as pictured by Alberuni are -

"The Kshatriya reads the Veda and learns it, but does not teach it. He offers to the fire and acts according to the rules of the Puranas. In places where, as we have mentioned, a tablecloth is prepared for eating, he makes it angular. He rules the people and defends them, for he is created for this task. He girds himself with a single cord of the threefold *yagnopavita*, and a single other cord of cotton. This takes place after he has finished the twelfth year of his life.

It is the duty of Vaisya to practice agriculture and to cultivate the land, to tend the cattle and to remove the needs of the Brahmans. He is only allowed to gird himself with a single *yajnopavita*, which is made of two cords.

The Sudra is like a servant to the Brahman, taking care of his affairs and serving him. If, though being poor in the extreme, he still desires not to be without a *yajnopavita*, he girds himself only with linen one. Every action which is considered as the privilege of a Brahman, such as saying prayers, the recitation of the Veda, and offering sacrifices to the fire, is forbidden to him, to such a degree that when, e.g. a Sudra or a Vaisya is proved to have recited the Veda, he is accused by the Brahmans before the ruler, and the latter will order his tongue to be cut off. However, the meditation on God, work of piety, and alms giving are not forbidden to him.

Every man who takes to some occupation which is not allowed to his caste, e.g. a Brahman to trade, a Sudra to agriculture, commits a sin or crime, which they consider only a little less than the crime of theft.

All other men except the Candala, as far as they are not Hindus, are called *mleccha*, i.e. unclean, all those who kill men and slaughter animals and eat the flesh of cows."

The ironclad caste arrangement that might have initially helped the work culture of specialization, insensibly led to the economic ruin of the society in the long-run. Those who didn't have an aptitude to the craft that was earmarked to their caste, or had an inclination towards the art reserved for another, must have been half-hearted in their pursuit at the best. Or at the worst, they became parasites on the society at large. Understandably, the progeny who were supposed to learn the nuances of the craft or tricks of the trade from such should've lost their ropes for the lacking of their parents. On the other hand, the watertight work culture could have prevented the flow of consultative corrections from one section of the society to the other, resulting in the stagnancy of skill that invariably led to the eventual decay of the craft itself.

In time, the social insult and the economic plight would have driven the numerically superior fourth castes and the fifth outcasts into a state of despondency. And owing to the segregated nature of the society, the *kshatriyas* too might have lost the pulse of these very people they were supposed to rule. It was under these circumstances that Buddhism and Jainism made their appearance to threaten the hitherto unchallenged Brahmanism socially, and the *sanaatana dharma* sanctified by them morally.

The account of the rise and fall of Buddhism, which initially challenged Brahman hegemony, only to lose out in the end, but, not before becoming the prevalent religion of Asia, is well recounted by Romila Thapar in 'A History of India' published by Penguin Books India.

"The Buddha (or the Enlightened One), as he was called, came from the republican tribe of the Shakyas, and his father was the *kshatriya* chief of this tribe. The legend of his life has curious similarities with the legendary episodes in Christ's life, such as the idea of the Immaculate Conception, and temptation by the Devil. He was born in about 566 B.C. and lived the life of a young prince but with increasing dissatisfaction, until he left his family and disappeared one night to become an ascetic. After an austere six years he decided that asceticism was not the path to salvation and discarded it. He then resolved to discover the means of salvation through meditation, and eventually on the forty-ninth day of his meditation he received enlightenment and understood the cause of suffering in this world. He preached his first sermon at the Deer Park at Sarnath (four miles from Banaras) and gathered his first five disciples.

This sermon was called the Turning of the Wheel of Law, and was the nucleus of the Buddhist teaching. It incorporated the Four Noble Truths (that is, the world is full of suffering, suffering is caused by human desires, the Renunciation of desire is the path to salvation, and this salvation is possible through the Eight-Fold Path), and the Eight-Fold Path which consisted of eight principles of action, leading to a balanced, moderate life, (right views, resolves, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, recollection, and meditation, the combination of which was described as the Middle

Way). To understand this sermon did not call for complicated metaphysical thinking, and the rational undertone of the argument was characteristic of the Buddhist emphasis on causality as the basis of analysis, particularly in a system where nothing is left to divine intervention. Salvation lay in achieving *nirvana*, or extinction, freedom from the wheel of rebirth. Thus the doctrine of *karma* was essential to the Buddhist system of salvation. Unlike the brahmanical idea, *karma* was not used to explain away caste status, since the Buddha rejected caste. Buddhism was also atheistic, in as much as God was not essential to the Universe, there being a natural cosmic rise and decline. The universe had originally been a place of bliss but man's capitulation to desire has reduced it to place of suffering. Brahmanical ritual was almost entirely eliminated and was disapproved of in the early pure form of Buddhism: popular cults such as the worship of trees and funerary tumuli were accepted and Buddhists were thus able to associate themselves with popular worship."

Romila Thapar further notes the effects of Buddhism, and its cousin Jainism founded by Mahavira, on the Hindu social strata thus:

"There was much in common between Buddhism and Jainism. Both were started by members of the *kshatriya* caste and were opposed to brahmanical orthodoxy, denying the authority of the Vedas, and antagonistic to the practice of animal sacrifices, which had by now become a keystone of brahmanical power. Both appealed to the socially downtrodden, the *vaishyas* who were economically powerful, but were not granted corresponding social status, and the *shudras* who were obviously oppressed. Buddhism and Jainism, though they did not directly attack the caste system, were nevertheless opposed to it and can, to that extent, be described as non-caste movements. This provided an opportunity for those of low caste to opt out of their caste by joining a non-caste sect. The lack of expenses involved in worship, as contrasted with brahmanical worship, also attracted the same stratum in society."

The challenge posed by Buddhism brought changes as well in Brahmanism that eventually evolved as Hinduism, and this phenomenon is described by Romila Thapar thus:

"The successful attack of the 'heretical sects' on Vedic sacrifices and gods strengthened the trend of monotheistic thinking in brahmanical teaching, which trend had originated in the philosophy of the *Upanishads* with its concept of the Absolute or the Universal Soul. This concept also resulted in the idea of the trinity of gods at this time, with Brahma as the Creator, Vishnu as the Preserver, and Shiva as the god who eventually destroys the universe when it is evil-ridden. This concept was associated with the cyclical conception of nature where creation, preservation, and destruction were seen as the natural order of things. Of the three gods, Vishnu and Shiva gained a vast following and through ensuing centuries the *Vaishnavas* and the *Shaivas* remained the two main sects of Hindu belief, each

believing that its god represented the Absolute. Brahma receded into the background.”

However, though having enjoyed the support and patronage of the rich and the powerful, the Buddhism, on the other hand, lost ground in the country of its origin. The causes of this decline are well described by Romila Thapar thus:

“It is not to be wondered at, therefore that monasteries were richly endowed, that huge *stupas* were built, and that the Buddhist Order became affluent and respected. Some of the monasteries had such large endowments that they had to employ slaves and hired labour, the monks alone not being able to cope with the work. Gone were the days when the Buddhist monks lived entirely on the alms which they collected during the morning hours, for now they ate regular meals in vast monastic refectories. Monasteries were built either adjoining a town or else on some beautiful and secluded hillside far removed from the clamour of cities. Secluded monasteries were well endowed to enable the monks to live comfortably.

The Buddhist order thus tended to move away from the common people and isolate itself, which in turn diminished much of its religious strength, a development which one suspects the Buddha would not have found acceptable. Improvement in communications led to an increase in pilgrimages, which in turn led to the spread of new ideas. Buddhism had become very active in sending missions to various parts of the subcontinent and outside, and, in the process of proselytizing; Buddhism also began to receive new ideas. This inevitably led to reinterpretations of the original doctrine, until finally there were major differences of opinion and the religion was split into two main sects. This schism, as well as the growing tendency of the Buddhist clergy to live off the affluent section of society, bred the seeds of decay in Buddhism.”

“The more orthodox Buddhists maintained that theirs was the original teaching of the Buddha and they are called the *Hinayana* sect or the followers of the Lesser Vehicle. Those that accepted the new ideas were called the *Mahayana* sect or the followers of the Greater Vehicle. Eventually, *Hinayana* Buddhism found its stronghold in Ceylon, Burma, and the countries of south-east Asia, whereas *Mahayana* Buddhism became the dominant sect in India, Central Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan.”

When Buddhism ceased to be a force in the land of its birth, Hinduism eventually sealed its fate by proclaiming the Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, unmindful of the irony of it all going by the theory of Divine Incarnation expostulated in the Bhagvad-Gita through v 6 - 8 of Ch. 4 as follows.

Beyond the pale of birth 'n death
On My volition I take birth.
Wanes if good 'n vile gain reign
Know it's then that I come forth

It's thus I from time to time
Manifest here to uproot ill
And uphold well for public good.

Well, of what avail was the Buddha-avatar? If it were meant to destroy the oppressive Brahmanism and protect the suppressed castes and the outcasts, it was a failed avatar as Alberuni found in the early 11th century itself. On the other hand, by owning up the Buddha as an *avatar* of Vishnu, the Brahmans seemed to have unwittingly admitted to their own guilt for having deprived some sections of the Hindu society. But, the near extinction of Buddhism pushed the oppressed masses of the Indian mainland back to the square one in the socio-religious game of snakes and ladders.

However, as they moved into the hinterland, the political acumen of the Aryans didn't seem to match with their spiritual quest. After all, they did advance without guarding their tracks, didn't they? And inevitably, many others from the Central Asia followed the very Aryan footsteps into India. However, while most were insensibly absorbed into the Hindu cultural mainstream as sub-castes, some in the Sind, and yore, tenuously remained in the Hindu fold, only to jump into the Buddhist embrace in time. Thus, there developed in the populace near the Hindukush, an indifferent, if not hostile, attitude towards the Hindu cause, and apathy towards its ways. And this rendered the strategic Western frontier an Aryan barren land with disastrous consequences to the Hindu hinterland in due course.

Owing to the incompetence or corruption, and/or both, of the rulers, slowly but surely, the great medieval Aryan empires of the Gangetic plains got disintegrated. And this led to the mushrooming of minor kingdoms, raised for most part by the hitherto integrated foreign races. Thus, in time, while the society was fractured by the Brahmanical order, the land was sundered by political disorder. Moreover, the visions of greater glory of the Rajahs of these minor kingdoms for themselves set them on expansionist campaigns against the neighboring entities. And inevitably, all this wasted the resources of the land besides tiring its warriors. It is thus, at length, the war-torn land became a wasteland and that plunged its masses into depravity.

Amidst this anarchy, the by then weakened Buddhist religious buffer in the frontier paved the way for the then emerging religion of Islam for it to gain a foothold in the *Aryavarta*. However, that Arab conquest of the Sind in 712 AD didn't disturb the Hindu complacency, as the arrival of St. Thomas in Malabar in 52 A.D. hadn't done.

And the question that naturally arises is why it was so? Alberuni seems to have captured the peculiarities of the then Hindu character thus:

"... there are other causes, the mentioning of which sounds like a satire - peculiarities of their national character, deeply rooted in them, but manifest to

everybody. We can only say, folly is an illness for which there is no medicine, and the Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited, and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course from any foreigner.

According to their belief, there is no other country on earth but theirs, no other race of man but theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge or science whatsoever. Their haughtiness is such that, if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan and Persis, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and a liar. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is."

Well, Alberuni could not have been wrong in his speculation concerning the generations of the Hindus that passed by then, going by the intellectual reach of Chanakya, who under the pseudonym of Kautilya authored the celebrated Artha Sastra, during 325 B.C.E. After all, having envisaged the threat Alexander the Great posed to India, he, with political vision and personal sagacity, galvanized the Hindu kings to face the *yavana* challenge. But sadly, in the early 11th century, when the Muslim threat loomed large on its western horizon, there was no Chanakya in India to understand the Islamic ethos of expanding its religious space with the power of the sword, and gauge the zeal of the *Musalman*s for *jihad*. Thus, the warring princes and the dispirited populace were not galvanized enough to thwart the Quranic advance into the Hindu heartland.

Coming of the Christ

Elsewhere in the world, in the land of Israel too, the priestly class of Levites, armed with the Mosaic Laws, oppressed the Jewish masses. At length, the Jews found their Buddha in the persona of Jesus, only to be rubbished by their Rabbis, and crucified by the Romans. However, there is so much in common in the mental makeup of these two great preachers, the chief ones being their concern for the weak and tolerance as a strength. It is the ironical destiny of Buddhism and the Christianity, founded five-hundred years apart based on their teachings, were eventually rejected in the lands of their birth, only to be nourished by the nations of their neighborhoods.

While Buddha's fight was against the Brahmanism, symbolized by ritualism and orthodoxy on one hand and casteism and untouchability on the other, Jesus'

aim, as the Sermon on the Mount clearly shows, was to give a healing touch to the divine, though harsh, Laws of Moses.

“One day as the crowds were gathering, he went up the hillside with his disciples and sat down and taught them there.

Humble men are very fortunate!’ he told them, ‘for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. Those who mourn are fortunate! for they shall be comforted. The meek and lowly are fortunate! for the whole wide world belongs to them.

Happy are those who long to be just and good, for they shall be completely satisfied. Happy are the kind and merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Happy are those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God. Happy are those who strive for peace - they shall be called the sons of God. Happy are those who are persecuted because they are good, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers - wonderful! Be *happy* about it! Be *very glad*! For a *tremendous reward* awaits you up in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted too.

You are the world’s seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavour, what will happen to the world? And you yourselves will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the world’s light - a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light! Let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.

Don’t misunderstand why I have come - it isn’t to cancel the laws of Moses and the warnings of the prophets. No I came to fulfill them, and to make them all come true. With all the earnestness I have I say: Every law in the Book will continue until its purpose is achieved. And so if anyone breaks the least commandment, and teaches others to, he shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But those who teach God’s laws *and obey them* shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But I warn you - unless your goodness is greater than that of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, you can’t get into the Kingdom of Heaven at all!’

‘Under the laws of Moses the rule was, “if you murder, you must die.” But I have added to that rule, and tell you that if you are only *angry*, even in your own home, you are in danger of judgment! If you call your friend an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse him, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and suddenly remember that a friend has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar and go and apologize and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer your sacrifice to God. Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and he drags you into court and you are thrown into a debtor’s cell, for you will stay there until you have paid the last penny.

The laws of Moses said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say: Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye - even if it is your best eye! - causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. Better for part of you to be destroyed than for all of you to be cast into hell. And if your hand - even your right hand - causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. Better that than find yourself in hell.

The law of Moses says, "If anyone wants to be rid of his wife, he can divorce her merely by giving her a letter of dismissal." But I say that a man who divorces his wife, except for fornication, causes her to commit adultery if she marries again. And he who marries her commits adultery.

Again, the law of Moses says, "you shall not break your vows to God, but must fulfill them all." But I say: Don't make any vows! And even to say, 'By heavens!' is a sacred vow to God, for the heavens are God's throne. And if you say 'By the earth!' it is a sacred vow, for the earth is his footstool. And don't swear 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the capital of the great King. Don't even swear 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. Say just a simple 'Yes I will' or 'No, I won't.' Your word is enough. To strengthen your promise with a vow shows that something is wrong.

The law of Moses says, "If a man gouges out another's eye, he must pay with his own eye. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the one who did it.' But I say: Don't resist violence! If you are slapped on one cheek, turn the other too. If you are ordered to court, and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat too. If the military demand that you carry their gear for a mile, carry it two. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

There is a saying, "Love your *friends* and hate your enemies." But I say: Love your *enemies*! Pray for those who *persecute* you! In that way you will be acting as true sons of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust too. If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even scoundrels do that much. If you are friendly only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even the heathen do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

It is interesting to note that while commissioning the Twelve, Jesus sent them out with these instructions: "Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but only to the people of Israel - God's lost sheep. Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure the lepers, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!"

But as it happened, it was the Gentiles who were enamored by what Jesus preached, and helped spread his word around the world as wished by him towards the end: "And the good news about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it, and then, finally, the end will come!"

In a way, indeed, some two thousand years after the Gospel came into being; the end did come, in more ways than one. After all, the Christian faith hinges upon the belief in the miracles of Jesus and his apostles, and the rational mind of the developed West in the end found it hard to stomach these supernatural powers attributed to the Messiah and his apostles. Maybe, it's the disbelief in miracles that occasioned the inevitable dilution in the faith in the Christian West and that helped buttress its belief in materialism, which, any way, was anathema to Jesus.

Be that as it may, it is a paradox of the Christianity in that while it seeks to inculcate the nobility of humility in its believers, it tends to burden their psyche with a sense of guilt buttressed by the feeling of sin. Interestingly, the baggage of sin that the Christianity carries like a cross on its conscience might be a psychic relic of the not so human-friendly diktats of Jehovah as enshrined in the Mosaic Laws. After centuries of Papal oppression exemplified by the dogma of sexual sin, the Christian West broke loose from its puritanical shackles, as though with a vengeance. And the result was the penchant for taboo-less sex, which eventually transformed into free sex in the hippy movement of the sixties of the 20th century.

On the other hand, the Christian dogma that salvation is impossible for those who won't keep faith in the Son of God, and his Gospel, might have insensibly sowed the seeds of racism in the Gentile hearts. Thus, if untouchability is the 'speck' in the Hindu eye, the proselytizers might realize that anti-Semitism, nay, racism is a 'board' that obstructs the Christian spiritual vision. Well, when six million Jews get exterminated in the Holocaust, attribute that to the Fuehrer's Final Solution, but if an odd Hindu *dalit* is abused, blame it upon the Hinduism *per se*. Oh, what a double standard! Of course, in all this, it is not difficult to see the proselytizing hand with the Christian axe out to grind on the *dalit* discontent.

It may be the moot point to ponder over whether the deep-rooted anti-Semitism in the West is a manifestation of the Christian hurt of Jesus' crucifixion, believed to be brought about by Judas the Jew. Be that as it may, while rightly castigating the obnoxious Hindu untouchability, the Christian ethos seems to have no qualms about its own atrocities against the native races in the Americas and elsewhere. Well, though the Christian West went scot-free on this account, its crime of enslaving the blacks of yore came to haunt them in the form of street violence in these changed times. And what could be more galling to the Whites than to see the despised niggers in numbers becoming the masters of their own women. And what better poetic justice from the slave angle!

Nevertheless, the commendable Christian credo of service to humanity reflects the innate nobility of its religious character. In a way, what Hinduism conceptualized as *vasudhaika kutumbam*, world is but one family, that later day Brahmanism negated with its prejudice, the Christianity symbolizes with its service by reaching out to the non-Christian peoples as well. Is not the world better off owing to the penchant of the Christian missionaries in setting up schools to impart

secular education and build hospitals to provide health care in every nook and corner of the globe?

However, the misplaced zeal of some of its proselytizers to rope in the hapless or gullible, and/or both, of alien faiths into the Christian fold, by means not always fair, places them in the company of the dubious. It's by no means wise to push under the carpet the resentment of a Dara Singh against the unwarranted and provocative proselytizing that led to the senseless slaying of the Stains. Soft-pedaling the issue might serve some to buttress their secular image but it fails, say, the Indian social harmony in the long run.

Thus, it's for the Christians themselves to ponder over what Max Mueller and others have said about the Hinduism, and read an Upanishad or two for widening their narrow-minded outlook of salvation. Beside, on the mundane plane, it might serve the Papacy better if it watches out its own backyard from which its Blacks are slipping into the Islamic fold. And this at a time when Islam is branded as a religion of terrorism and publicized besides! That Islam, in spite of its bad brand image, should be the fastest growing religion on the globe is something that should alarm the world, and indeed this book, in the main, is about exploring the dichotomy of Islam.

Reverting to the Christian ethos that is the proselytizing forerunner of dogmatic uprightness and religious intolerance, we would have the seeds of strife that Islam sows nowadays. After all, when Islam forced its way into its Holy backyard, crusades against the *Musulmans* became the medieval Christian calling. And now, the mere footmarks of the American GIs on the Islamic Holy land of Saudi Arabia was cause enough for an Osama bin Laden to call for a *jihad* against the Christian West. If ever the Musalmans came to dominate the Western world again, the predictable Christian response would be a crusade all over, maybe a guerilla war, if not with the *fidayeen* force. But then, who knows? After all, it is the paranoia of both these proselytizing faiths to ever expand their religious spheres of influence that came to be the curse of the world.

Maybe, Jesus had seen it all coming when he said about his mission on earth: "Do you think I have come to give peace to the earth? No! Rather, strife and division! From now on families will be split apart, three in favour of me, and two against - or perhaps the other way round. A father will decide one way about me; his son, the other; mother and daughter will disagree; and the decision of an honoured mother-in-law will be spurned by her daughter-in-law."

The call of the Christ to spread the faith and the prophetic warning about the coming strife in the world was the harbinger of the destabilization of the religious harmony of the ancient world, achieved, as Edward Gibbon had observed, by 'the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other's superstitions.'

Legacy of Prophecy

“This son of yours will be a wild one - free and untamed as a wild ass! He will be against everyone, and everyone will feel the same towards him.” - The Genesis

This prophecy of Gabriel, the Archangel of the Lord, revealed to Hagar, the surrogate wife of Abraham, was about Ishmael, their son, still in her womb then. In time, as their foolhardiness earned them the wrath of Sarah, the spouse of Abraham, the maid and her son were banished into the wilderness of Beersheba.

Preoccupied as it was with Isaac, the second son of Abraham, born to Sarah later, and the Hebrews his descendents, ‘The Torah’ mentions about Ishmael becoming an expert archer, and in the passing refers to his marriage with an Egyptian girl. And that was all there to Ishmael in the Book, as thereafter it chose not to record his life and times for the posterity.

Thus, there would have been no more to the tale of Ishmael, if not for the advent of Muhammad, his most illustrious descendant. And as the world knows, it was Muhammad who founded Islam, some six hundred years after Jesus, the peach Isaac’s progeny that ushered in the Christianity. Nevertheless, the Quran, the Script of Islam, too doesn’t contain any reference to the saga of Ishmael in so far as the said prophecy is concerned.

However, going by the strife in Muhammad’s life and the stance the *Musalman*s are wont to take in the name of the faith he founded, one might wonder at the truism of this telling prophecy with regard to Ishmael’s progeny. Whether it was owing to divine design or human aberration, and/or both, the acrimony between the *Musalman*s and their *kafirs* seems to have come to stay. In a way, the Semitic schism could be attributed to the will of ‘the God’ after all.

It’s a wonder why did ‘the God’ ordain Abraham to beget Ishmael through his surrogate wife Hagar, even as He enabled him to sire Isaac later through Sarah, his old, though, wedded wife! But now the moot point is whether in this age and time, driven by information technology, won’t be a change of the Semitic order be in order? And the imperative for man is to find out an agreeable detour from the centuries old vexatious route laid in the Semitic religious tracks.

As was seen, it invariably is the case with all the so-called revealed religions that the persona of its prophet tends to shape the course of its propagation. Besides, the sublimity of Jesus as a preacher and the divinity associated with his miracles, in The Gospel there is no reference to his proclivities as a person. After all, the apostles of Jesus who came to script The Gospel would have been in the know of the messiah as man, and all that goes with being human.

And yet, they could have thought it fit to exclude the mundane of the Christ from the scripture of the Gospel, lest human vulgarity should equate the divinity of the God with the frailties of His Son. In spite of this thoughtful omission by his apostles, yet, from time to time, the Christian world gets embroiled in controversies

involving the speculation about Jesus' personal life, the *Davinci Code* being the latest.

On the contrary, weaving the divine with the mundane in Islam, the proclivities Muhammad captured in the *hadith* and *sunna* came to be corollaries of the Quran. Since it's in the nature of the believers to equate the mission of the Messiah with the message of 'the God', in time, the life of Muhammad became the symbol of Islam. After all, Muhammad shaped Islam all by himself, aided though by the Quran, and didn't commission any to regulate his religion, as did the Christ.

But, seen in the context of the religion he founded, and Allah's mandate to fulfill his ambition, the course the Christ adopted would not have served Muhammad's cause. In essence, Jesus was a preacher of the Christian values more than the founder of the Christianity. But, Muhammad had assumed the role, not just of reciting the word of 'the God' to the willing through the Quran, but of setting the rules for Islamic practice and propagation, of course, as dictated by the circumstances of his life and times.

It is thus, while the Christian ethos is shaped by the preaching of Jesus that led to his crucifixion, the Islamic creed is a product of the conduct of Muhammad that gained him the Kabah. Hence, one cannot possibly appreciate the mind of a *Musalman* without understanding the psyche of Muhammad, shaped by the trials and tribulations he encountered in propagating the faith he had founded. An attempt is made here towards this end that owes the content, and at times the text even, wherever quoted, of "Muhammad - his life based on the earliest sources", the remarkable biography by Martin Lings published by Inner Traditions International, USA.

It is said in the Quran, as ordained by 'the God', Abraham and Ishmael built the sanctorum of Kabah near the well of Zamzam in Mecca. And the history tells us that their descendents, the tribe of Khuzaah, by installing its idol had turned it into the house of Hubal. After a prolonged tussle for its possession, the guardianship of Kabah changed hands from Khuzaah to Quraysh, one of the powerful Arab tribes of Abrahamic descent. That was in the 4th century A.D, and the Quraysh were still in control of Kabah when destiny brought Muhammad into its ranks.

However, to bring about Muhammad's birth on April 22, 571 A.D, fate had to play its part in preserving the life of Abd Allah of the Quraysh. It was thus, Mughirah, the chief of Makhzum, intervened to save Abd Allah in his youth from being sacrificed at the Kabah, i.e. to fulfill the vow of his father Abd-al-Muttalib. However, the amiable and handsome Abd Allah wasn't destined to live long; and he died when his wife Aminah was carrying Muhammad, their only offspring.

Some weeks before Muhammad was born, his mother had a vision, and heard a voice say to her. "Thou carriest in thy womb the lord of this people; and when he is born say: 'I place him beneath the protection of the One, from the evil of every envier'; then name him Muhammad." Apart from this prophecy, what Muhammad

had for inheritance were five camels, a small flock of sheep and goats, and one slave girl, too meagre to match the hollowed pedigree of the Quraysh.

When Muhammad was only six, he lost his mother as well, followed by his grandfather, two years later. And that virtually made him an orphan in the hallowed clan of Quraysh. However, his uncle, Abu Talib, took him under his caring wings, and his wife Fatimah tended Muhammad more than her own children. It could be for sentimental reasons that Muhammad could have named his fourth, and the favorite, daughter as Fatimah.

In time, Abu Talib tended his nephew into trade, and thus began to take him along to Syria on his business trips. But, when in Mecca, Muhammad was wont to occupy himself with archery in which he showed great skill. It was only time before Muhammad developed acumen for trading, and thus was able to fend for himself. At length, his honesty and integrity, in spite of his modest means, earned him the respect of the prosperous Meccans who bestowed upon him the title of Al Amin.

At length, when he saw the possibility of marriage, Muhammad approached his uncle Abu Talib for the hand of his daughter Fakhitah, nay Umm Hani, for whom he developed great affection. Supposedly by that time, there were many portents about Muhammad's prophethood, about which Abu Talib cannot be but privy. Besides, Bahira the Monk at Bostra, in the very presence of Abu Talib, identified Muhammad, when still a boy, as the envisaged Prophet of the Scriptures. And yet, inexplicably, Abu Talib refused his daughter's hand to his nephew whom he otherwise loved. Be that as it may, for then at least, it would have appeared to Muhammad that marriage was beyond his means.

Nonetheless, his personal integrity, business acumen and physical beauty, providentially pushed him into the matrimonial arms of Khadijah, a rich and twice widowed Meccan woman of forty, to all his twenty-five. Devoted as he was to his wife, and siring her children, Muhammad began to spend his life amiably in relative comfort. But then, all those who might have heard of the prophecies about his prophethood would have been dismayed. And Muhammad too didn't seem to lose his sleep over the apparent failure of Bahira's prophecy about his prophethood.

However, given Jehovah's disenchantment with His Chosen People by then, He seems to have had other ideas. It must have been galling for 'the God' to see what the Jews had meted out to Jesus, His Son and the Messiah. And by their rejection of the Gospel, the Jews didn't help their cause either for that could have made 'the God' truly angry. The irony that the religion of Jesus was usurped by the Gentiles, robbing its Semitic purity in the process, would have caused no less hurt to the jealous Jehovah.

Thus, the revengeful God of the Jews, whose temper His saintly Son helped soften up through his Christian mission, would have hardened His attitude towards the humans all again. It was in such a frame of mind that Jehovah would

have remembered the long forgotten progeny of Abraham and Hagar, furthered by Ishmael, whom He allowed to languish for far too long in the sandy deserts of Arabia.

By then, however, the idolatrous sons of Ishmael had desecrated Abraham's Kabah in whose precincts they installed a hundred statues for worship. And that no less offended the taste or sensitivity, and/or both of some of the Meccans, who as Hunafas, voiced their opposition to the idolatry of their brethren. In time, driven by the social appeal, or owing to his personal belief, Muhammad became a Hunafa himself.

Though the idolatrous sight of the progeny of Ishmael might have enraged Jehovah, soon He would have realized that their plight was of His own making. After all, didn't He, by not sending a prophet to the Arabic stream of the Abrahamic progeny, fail them in the proper worship of 'the God'? Thus, repentant at His own conduct, Jehovah should have deemed it fit to reveal the right path to the Arabs, albeit in the avatar of Allah. It was thus, 'the God' would have felt the need to have an Arab for His prophet to usher in the Quran, and would have on the lookout for a proper candidate.

In a divine coincidence, by then, Muhammad turned forty, and his wife Khadijah, fifty-five. Though it was not uncommon for the Arabs of his era to go in for a fresh nuptial in such a situation, or opt for a concubine, and/or both, Muhammad chose to remain faithful to his loyal wife. Instead, he chose to embrace solitude in a cave of Mount Hira, not far from Mecca. Of course, by then, Muhammad had successfully arbitrated the contentious issue plaguing Meccans at that time. And that pertained to which of the tribes had the right to place the Black Stone back in its place in the rebuilt Kabah.

In the process, he could wrest the privilege of placing the sacred stone all by himself in its Holy place, i.e. after the tribal chiefs had lifted it on a clock. Surely, this episode would have soared Muhammad's spirituality, nursed in the caves of Hira, straight to the heavens. And in that 'the God' could have discerned the charisma of a leader in Muhammad as well as the man-management skills so apparent in him. Needless to say, it should have furthered Muhammad's credentials for the job in the eyes of 'the God'. With the choice thus made, the Lord God, entrusted His trusted Archangel Gabriel to recruit Muhammad for the post of the prophet for the Arabs.

It was then, in the month of Ramadan, as was his wont; Muhammad retreated to Mount Hira to meditate at his favorite jaunt. And it was the time the Lord's Angel chose to anoint Muhammad as 'the Messenger of the God', a hitherto unknown title for a Jehovah prophet. Thus, when Muhammad was alone in the cave that night, Gabriel went upto him in the form of a man. The account of Muhammad of what followed is described by Martin Lings thus:

“The Angel said to him: “Recite!” and he said: “I am not a reciter,” whereupon, as he himself told it, “the Angel took me and whelmed me in his embrace until he had reached the limit of mine endurance. Then he released me and said: “Recite!” I said: ‘I am not a reciter,’ and again he took me and whelmed me in his embrace, and again when he had reached the limit of mine endurance he released me and said: ‘Recite!’, and again I said ‘I am not a reciter.’ Then a third time he whelmed me as before, then released me and said:

Recite in the name of thy Lord who created!
He createth man from a clot of blood.
Recite: and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful,
He who hath taught by the pen,
Taught man what he knew not.

He recited these words after the Angel, who thereupon left him; and he said; “It was as though the words were written on my heart.” But he feared that this might mean he had become a jinn-inspired poet or a man possessed, So he fled from the cave, and when he was halfway down the slope of the mountain he heard a voice above him saying: “O Muhammad, thou art the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.” He raised his eyes heavenwards and there was his visitant, still recognizable but now clearly an Angel, filling the whole horizon, and again he said: “O Muhammad, thou art the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.” The Prophet stood gazing at the Angel; then he turned away from him, but whichever way he looked the Angel was always there, astride the horizon, whether it was to the north, to the south, to the east or to the west.”

And the rest, as we know, is history. But, it should not be missed that Muhammad was unlettered, and Gabriel wanted him to ‘recite’ in the name of ‘He who hath taught by the pen’. Maybe, the Prophet’s positioning of Islam thus is indicative of Muhammad’s deprivation on that score. After all, man tends to miss his letters in spite of his social status while a man of letters holds his sway regardless of it. Any way, from then on, from time-to-time, ‘the God’ began to reveal to Muhammad what He revealed before to Moses, and others, so that the Arabs who took to idolatrous ways for so long could be put on to the ‘straight path’.

Reciting the revelations he received, Muhammad soon made bold to proclaim that ‘there is no god but God’ and that he was ‘the Messenger of God’. And that scandalized the Quraysh and others in Mecca no end. But then, ‘the God’ is aware that “verily man is rebellious, that he thinketh himself independent.” What is more, ‘the God’ by then, might have realized that the regimen of material rewards for compliance, His covenant with the Jews, didn’t work as that only made them more

covetous. So He seemingly thought it fit to devise a new world order for the *Musalmans* in the Quran

It was thus, 'the God' in His further revelations to Muhammad sought to deprecate the life right 'here' while stressing upon the rewards in the 'Hereafter'. Some of these are excerpted in this book from Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's 'The Message of the Holy Quran', published by UBSPD, New Delhi.

"Let not the vicissitudes (of the success) of those who disbelieve, in the land, deceive thee (O Muhammad). It is but a brief comfort. And afterward their habitation will be hell, an ill abode."

"Even as those before you were mightier than you in strength, and more affluent than you in wealth and children. They enjoyed their lot a while, so ye enjoy your lot awhile even as those before you did enjoy their lot a while. And ye prate even as they prated. Such are they whose works have perished in the world and the Hereafter, such are they who are the losers."

"O ye who believe! What aileth you that when it is said unto you: Go forth in the way of Allah, ye are bowed down to the ground with heaviness. Take ye pleasure in the life of the world rather than in the Hereafter? The comfort of the life of the world is but little in the Hereafter,"

"Allah enlargeth livelihood for whom he will, and straiteneth (it for whom He will); and they rejoice in the life of the world, whereas the life of the world is but brief comfort as compared with the Hereafter."

"A similitude of the Garden which those who keep their duty (to Allah) are promised: Therein are rivers of water unpolluted, and rivers of milk whereof the flavour changeth not, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of clear-run honey; therein for them is every kind of fruit, with pardon from their Lord. (Are those who enjoy all this) like those who are immortal in the Fire and are given boiling water to drink so that it teareth their bowels?"

"Naught is the life of the world save a pastime and a sport. Better far is the abode of the Hereafter for those who keep their duty (to Allah). Have ye then no sense?"

"Those who love the life of the world more than the Hereafter, and debar (men) from the way of Allah and would have it crooked: such are far astray."

It is worth noting that 'the God' had ruled drinking a sin here, only to provide 'rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers' in the 'Hereafter'. Maybe, it's in the realms of Allah's imponderables that while decrying the joys of life of here, He should have promised the believers earthly pleasures in the 'Hereafter'! After all, won't deprivation 'here' make the craving for the 'Hereafter' all the more intense in the believers? Be that as it may, it never seems to occur to the believers that with the body buried here, how one were to enjoy the joys of flesh the 'Hereafter' holds for him or her?

Well, 'the God' would have expected man viewing such diktats with skepticism, but then He must have banked on the "O ye believe" line of the Quran. After all, 'the God' could have reckoned that the 'sense of belief' insensibly undermines the faculty of reasoning. Oh God, contrast this with Krishna's proposition to Arjuna at the end of his talk in Bhagvad-Gita - "That thee heard of this wisdom/ For task on hand now apply mind".

However, it is in the Islamic virtue of deprivation 'here' lay the urge to savor life after death in 'the Hereafter'. And that seemingly enhances the craving of the faithful for the Paradise, and helps them get glued to Islam in hope. Besides, Allah well knew that all this would come in handy to Muhammad in raising a band of *jihadis* to serve his cause in times to come.

Armed with Allah's revelations, and possessed by the faith he preached, Muhammad set out to show the 'straight path' to the Meccans. Such is the force of habit, and the inertia of mind for change, that even a faith so well-crafted to cater to the psyche of poor, initially failed to make even the poorest of the Meccans flock into Muhammad's fold. In the end, however, he could entice a few deprived poor into Islam that assured the comforts of 'here', and more, in the 'Hereafter' for them. Compounding his frustration on the Islamic front, the Meccan gentry looked at Muhammad with suspicion, and treated him with disdain.

Stung to the quick by the obstinacy of the idolaters, and pleased with Muhammad's perseverance that was sustained by Khadijah's faith in him, 'the God' gave him hope.

"Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee nor doth he hate thee,
And verily the latter portion will be better for thee than the former,
And verily thy lord will give unto thee so that thou wilt be content
Did he not find thee an orphan and protect (thee)?
Did he not find thee wandering and direct (thee)?
Did he not find thee destitute and enrich (thee)?"

At last, Muhammad's patience paid, and Islam got a foothold in Medina, the then Yathrib, with some of the residents becoming *Musalman*s. In Mecca too, to the chagrin of the Quraysh, the new religion of Muhammad, with its handful of faithful, began to create a sensation. However, to avoid a schism amongst their clans, some leaders of the town came up with a compromise, which envisaged that one should be allowed to practice Islam and the religion of their fathers as well, if he so wills.

Even before Muhammad could weigh the options for a decision, an alarmed Allah sent in the message to him:

“Say: O disbelievers, I shall not worship that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship, nor have I worshipped that which ye worship, nor have ye worshipped that which I worship. For you your religion and for me mine.”

It would be interesting to speculate what could have been the outcome of the fusion of Islam and the Arabian idolatry, if we may call it so, had Muhammad agreed to merge them both. Of course, he would have successfully bargained for the control of the Kabah with Hubal and all. If not during his life time, which anyway was to last a decade or so from then on, but certainly after his death, Islam would have lost its way amidst the idols of Kabah. But, in the bargain, the progeny of Ishmael would have retained the magical name of Islam for their worship of Hubal. In the end, probably, Islam would have given way to the Christianity in the Roman era. More importantly, vexed with Muhammad for his lack of faith in His revelations, ‘the God’ would not have showed him the ‘straight path’ that unfolded later, and that would have been less of a discomfort to the surviving *Musalman*s. But then, the will of Allah or the ambition of Muhammad, and/ or both, didn’t let that fate befall Islam.

War of Words

In the wake of Muhammad’s refusal to their overtures, the Meccans decided to remove the Islamic thorn from their Bedouin flesh. However, Muhammad, on the mundane level, would have had his own informers to alert him about the conspiracy on his life or, for all that, his sixth sense, of a survivor, sensed the impending threat to his life, forcing his flight from Mecca. Yet, in the divine plane, Allah, the All Knowing, might have come to know about the brewing plot to assassinate His Messenger, and He, not the One to be outdone by Hubal’s men, could have helped Muhammad in his flight, along with Abu Bakr, to Medina, the then Yathrib.

While the Helpers of Medina welcomed Muhammad, the Jews of the neighborhood were scandalized by the *ayats* of the Quran. In deed, they felt that the Prophet of Islam was plagiarizing their Torah in Hebrew as Quran in Arabic. Though the Jewish diatribes put Muhammad on the back foot, going by the hostility exhibited towards them in the Quran, clearly Jehovah was not amused. Thus, it seems the God’s alienation with His once Chosen People was complete, and that sealed the fate of the Jews who came to flourish in the oases of Arabia till then.

“The likeness of those who are entrusted with the Law of Moses, yet apply it not, is as the likeness of the ass carrying books. Wretched is the likeness of folk who deny the revelations of Allah. And Allah guideth not wrong doing folk.”

“Say (O Muhammad): O ye who are Jews! If ye claim that ye are favoured of Allah apart from (all) mankind, then long for death if ye are truthful.”

“But they will never long for it because of all that their own hands have sent before, and Allah is Aware of evil-doers.”

“Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Lo! the death from which ye shrink will surely meet you, and afterward ye will be returned unto the Knower of the invisible and the visible, and He will tell you what ye used to do.”

However, unmindful of the Quranic warnings, which they dismissed as Muhammad’s ranting, the Jews continued in their tirade against Muhammad as an imposter. Besides, by making a common cause with the Quraysh of Mecca, and his enemies elsewhere, they had plotted for Muhammad’s downfall. It was then, ‘the God’ must have realized the dubious nature of man he created, and seemingly didn’t want to take any more chances with the flocks of *Musalman*s, His new favorites.

Thus, ‘the God’ lost no time in stressing that the *Musalman*s are but the servants of Allah, and made their surrender to Him the *raison d’etre* of Islam. Besides, ‘the God’ fashioned the Quran to psyche the *Musalman*s into Islamic paranoia with Muhammadanic paraphernalia. And still, as though not to leave any loose religious ends, and to eternally bind the believers in the Islamic fold, Allah sought to inculcate in the faithful, the habit of unquestioning obedience to Him. Besides, combining the fear of hell with the promise of paradise, ‘the God’ took care to dangle the carrot and stick before the believing *Musalman*s.

However, the God’s *coup de grace* appears to be in the psychological arena of the Islamic dogma. He sought to win over the compliance of the *Musalman*s by deriding the Jews and the Christians, the way a father harps on his hurt on account of his elder siblings to gain his youngest progeny’s sympathy. Like that father who wittingly or unwittingly imposes a psychic burden of obedience on his unfortunate son’s conscience, so ‘the God’ seems to have succeeded in inculcating a habit of mechanical supplication amongst the *Musalman*s to everything Islamic. Nonetheless, fearing that the prodigal Hebrews would tend to lead the new religious breed astray, ‘the God’ prohibited the *Musalman*s from having anything to do with them, and made a covenant to that effect with them in the Quran.

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam. Whoso is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin (for him) lo, Allah is forgiving, Merciful.”

“All they who disbelieve and deny our revelations, such are rightful owners of hell.”

“Allah made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel and We raised among them twelve chieftains, and Allah said: Lo! I am with you, if ye establish worship and pay the poor due, and believe in My messengers and support them, and lend unto Allah a kindly loan, surely I shall remit your sins, and surely I shall

bring you into gardens underneath which rivers flow. Whoso among you disbelieveth after this will go astray from a plain road.”

“We made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel and We sent unto them messengers. As often as a messenger came unto them with that which their souls desired not (they became rebellious). Some (of them) they denied and some they slew.”

“Lo! We did reveal The Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the Prophets who surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah’s Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and thereunto were they witnesses. So fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers.”

“And We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoso forgoeth it (in the way of charity) it shall be expiation for him. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are wrong-doers.”

“And because of their breaking their covenant, We have cursed them and made hard their hearts. They change words from their context and forget a part of that whereof they were admonished. Thou wilt not cease to discover treachery from all save a few of them. But bear with them and pardon them. Lo! Allah loveth the kindly.”

“The Jews say! Allah’s hand is fettered. Their hands are fettered and they are accursed for saying so. Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty. He bestoweth as He will. That which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them, and We have cast among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection. As often as they light a fire for war, Allah extinguisheth it. Their effort is for corruption in the land, and Allah loveth not corrupters.”

“They thought no harm would come of it, so they were willfully blind and deaf. And afterward Allah turned (in mercy) toward them. Now (even after that) are many of them willfully blind and deaf. Allah is Seer of what they do.”

“And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah – a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil).”

“And with those who say: ‘Lo! we are Christians,’ We made a covenant, but they forgot a part of that whereof they were admonished. Therefor We have stirred up enmity and hatred among them till the Day of Resurrection, when Allah will inform them of their handiwork.”

“They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on earth? Allah’s is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He createth what He will. And Allah is Able to do all things.”

“They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers.”

“They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.”

“The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. See how we make the revelations clear for them, and see how they are turned away!”

“When Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? He saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used say it, then Thou knewest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in thy mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Knower of Things Hidden.”

“I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, (saying): Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.”

“If Thou punish them, lo! they are Thy slaves, and if Thou forgive them (lo! they are Thy slaves.) Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.”

“The Jews and Christians say: We are sons of Allah and His loved ones. Say: Why then doth he chastise you for your sins? Nay, ye are but mortals of His creating. He forgiveth whom He will, and chastiseth whom He will. Allah’s is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and unto Him is the journeying.”

“Who is better in religion that he who surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good (to men) and followeth the tradition of Abraham, the upright? Allah (Himself) chose Abraham for friend.”

“O people of the Scripture! Now hath Our messenger come unto you, expounding unto you much of that which ye used to hide in the Scripture, and forgiving much. Now hath come unto you light from Allah and a plain Scripture.”

“Say: O people of the Scripture! Stress not in your religion other than the truth, and follow not the vain desires of folk who erred of old and led many astray, and erred from a plain road.”

“Say: O, People of the Scripture! Do ye blame us for aught else than that we believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed aforetime, and because most of you are evil-livers?”

“Say: O People of the Scripture! Ye have naught (of guidance) till ye observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord. That which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them. But grieve not for the disbelieving folk.”

“So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires, but beware of them lest they seduce thee from some part of that which Allah hath revealed unto thee. And if they turn away, then know that Allah’s will is to smite them for some sin of theirs. Lo! many of mankind are evil-livers.”

“O ye who believe! Whoso of you becometh a renegade from his religion, (know that in his stead) Allah will bring a people whom he loveth and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah, and fearing not the blame of any blamer. Such is the grace of Allah which He giveth unto whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.”

“Those who choose disbelievers for their friends instead of believers! Do they look for power at their hands? Lo! all power appertaineth to Allah.”

“Shall I tell thee of a worse (case) than theirs for retribution with Allah? Worse (is the case of him) whom Allah hath cursed, him on whom His wrath hath fallen! Worse is he of whose sort Allah hath turned some to apes and swine, and who serveth idols. Such are in worse plight and further astray from the plain road.”

“And when ye call to prayer they take it for a jest and sport. That is because they are a folk who understand not.”

“Your friend can be only Allah: and His messenger and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor due, and bow down (in prayer).”

“And whoso taketh Allah and His messenger and those who believe for friend (will know that), lo! The party of Allah, they are the victorious.”

“O ye who believe! Choose not for friends such of those who received the Scripture before you, and of the disbelievers, as make a jest and sport of your religion. But keep your duty to Allah if ye are true believers.”

“O ye who believe! Take not for intimates others than your own folk, who would spare no pains to ruin you; they love to hamper you. Hatred is revealed by (the utterance of) their mouths, but that which their breasts hide is greater. We have made plain for you the revelations if ye will understand.”

“O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them. Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.”

“Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them, taking (as it were) security. Allah biddeth you beware (only) of Himself. Unto Allah is the journeying.”

“They long that ye should disbelieve even as they disbelieve, that ye may be upon a level (with them). So choose not friends from them till they forsake their homes in the way of Allah; if they turn back (to enmity) then take them and kill them wherever ye find them, and choose no friend nor helper from among them.”

With these, and many such admonitions in the Quran, ‘the God’ seems to have succeeded in sustaining a large body of *Musalmans* to this day who strive to follow the ‘straight path’ laid down by Muhammad for them. What is more, should they ever feel wanting in their faith, they tend to suffer from a guilt complex, and that’s what tends to induce, as would be seen later, an inimical abnormality in the psyche of the *Musalmans*. But, in spite of the creed of intolerance and the streak of aggressiveness that their faith unmistakably inculcates amongst them, there is this hurt in the *Musalmans* that the rest of the world considers Islam as anathema to the peaceful coexistence of mankind!

Czar of Medina

Hijra changed it all – the aptitude of the Prophet, the content of the Quran, the character of the faith, and above all, the destiny of Islam. Had Muhammad, revealing the Quran, confined himself to Mecca, or had he continued with his meditation at Hira, probably, he would have ended up being the Bahira of Kabah. But, even as the rejection of the Quraysh steeled his will, the conversion of the Yathribs into Islam cemented his belief in himself. In the end, the Hijra with the accompanied submission of the Helpers turned the Prophet of Mecca into the Czar of Medina. However, it was in the Battle of Badr that he discovered his unique skills of man-management, which kindled his ambition to conquer Arabia. And that changed the destiny of Islam as well as the harmony of the world.

If in Mecca, it was the promise of the ‘Hereafter’ that attracted the faithful into the Islamic fold, in Medina, it was the spoils of war and the prospect of Paradise, which swelled the ranks of the *Musalmans*. It may be noted that it was Muhammad who led by example in looting the Jewish settlements of the oases, one after the other. In the process, wittingly or unwittingly, its prophet gave Islam plunder as its legacy. Much after his death, as the *Musalmans* ran over the nations of the world, loot became the single source of Arab income.

However, it was also Muhammad who had set the trend by providing for his faithful with the spoils of war. As can be expected, living out of ransom and

plunder wouldn't have shaped a work-culture amongst his faithful, and the nations of the West Asia, to this day, suffer from the lack of it. Thus, Muhammad's statecraft, based on parasitism, proved to be the economic nemesis of the Islamic world in the long run. And the Quran too played its part by deprecating the life 'here' and extolling the one in 'Hereafter'.

The politico-religious ascendancy that Medina afforded Muhammad enabled him to deal with the Jews, the Christians and the idolaters, read the Meccans, rather aggressively. The Medina revelations of the Quran provide ample testimony to the changed realities in Muhammad's political life and the altered goalposts of his religious ambition. Likewise, the socio-military consolidation that he could bring about in Medina finds reflection in his arbitrariness in dealing with his detractors. However, after pushing the Jewish settlers into Muslim subjugation, it's as though 'the God' left the Quran to Muhammad's care. After all, by then Jehovah was avenged well and true.

For his part, blessed with capable men to protect the faith he founded, Muhammad began to address himself to the administration of Medina, however, with an eye on Mecca. Living a frugal life, in spite of his one-fifth share of the ever-rising war booty, he was wont to tend the poor and the needy amongst the Helpers. However, in time, with his politico-religious consolidation well underway, Muhammad turned his attention to the possibilities of life 'here' itself. Though by then, he had Sawadh and Ayesha, both of whom he married after Khadijah's demise, maybe driven by the desire for an heir to take over the mantle from him, or pushed by the dictates of his passion, and/or both, he began seeking more and more women to cohabit

While Quran obliged him by waiving the four women ceiling for him, power, the magnet that draws women to men, fetched him nine more wives, not to speak of the slave girls that came with the spoils of war. After all, there was the divine sanction in place for the Semitic Prophets to keep the female slaves all for themselves. That might make the skeptics wonder whether these prophets of yore were but tribal heads who donned the religious garb to pursue their own agendas for better effect. That might make the skeptics wonder whether prophets were but tribal heads who donned the religious garb for better effect. Notwithstanding his fondness for women, Ayesha remained his favorite till the very end, though he was enamored of Mariyah, towards the end of his chequered life.

Those who won't vouch for Islam, in particular the Christians, tend to debunk Muhammad for his ways of the flesh, and by extension the faith he founded as well. To be fair to Muhammad, he never claimed himself to be a saint. Instead, he had all along maintained that he was, after all, human. Besides, while the culture of his tribe sanctioned polygamy, the proclivities of the war widows warranted it; and

thus to measure the libido of the Arabic prophet on the Christian scale of missionary celibacy would indeed be erroneous.

His personal philosophy concerning the pleasures of life is best illustrated in his own words when one of his followers wanted to seek his permission to become an ascetic.

“Hast though not in me an example,” said Muhammad, “And I go into women, I eat meat, and I fast, and I break my fast. He is not of my people who maketh men eunuchs or maketh himself an eunuch. For verily thine eyes have their rights over thee. And thy body hath its rights. As thy family have their rights, so pray, and sleep and fast, and break fast.”

More than the personal character, it is the public posturing of this singular man, who rules the minds of millions of *Musalmans* to this day, which is worth examining. That the *Musalmans*, most of whom were converts from varied cultures and from far off lands, should treat every word of his as the Gospel Truth, and take his prescriptions, based on medieval injunctions, as divine sanctions indeed make the faith of Islam but a creed of Mohammedanism! To the perennial hurt of the *Musalmans*, and paradoxically at that, all the while waging war against idolatry, he forever encouraged his followers to worship his persona, and revere his personal affects. Why the inimical effect of this is there for all to see in the Islam of the day. While all the while waging war against idolatry, he forever encouraged his followers to worship his persona, and revere his personal affects. And the affect of this is there for all to see in the Islam of the day.

Above all, this account of an ambassador of Quraysh reveals it all: “O people, I have been sent as envoy unto kings – unto Caesar and Chosroes and the Negus – and I have not seen a king whose men so honour him as the companions of Muhammad honour Muhammad. If he commandeth aught, they almost outstrip his word in fulfilling it; when he performeth his ablution, they well might fight for the water thereof; when he speaketh, their voices are hushed in his presence; nor will they look him full in the face, but lower their eyes in reverence for him.”

It's as though Muhammad had put the fear of 'the God' in his followers so that they come to revere him, His messenger.

Angels of War

It was not long before Muhammad in Medina had his eye on Mecca, and in the Battle of Badr, the Quraysh in disarray threw open its gates for him. Though the *Musalmans* to this day gloat over Muhammad's so-called victory in that battle of Islamic destiny, it is another matter that the Quraysh fought half-heartedly. Nevertheless, what distinguishes the battle that is celebrated in the Islamic folklore

is the unshakable belief that Allah, at the behest of Muhammad, had sent in warrior angels to assist the outnumbered *Musalman*s.

“When ye sought help of your Lord and He answered you (saying): I will help you with a thousand of the angels, rank on rank.”

“When thy lord inspired the angels, (saying) I am with you. So make those who believe stand firm. I will throw fear into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Then smite the necks and smite of them each other.”

Notwithstanding the euphoric feeling of the *Musalman*s about the angels of war, Muhammad, the military genius that he was, had commented to some of his companions after the Battle of Badr thus: “I know that men of the sons of Hashim and others have been brought out despite themselves, without any will to fight us.” Proving him right, the angels of war failed to attack Abu Jahl and his band that fought on with unabated ferocity till they all died in the battle even as other nobles deserted the cause and fled the battlefield with their folks. Be that as it may, in the annals of the Arab legend there was a battle extraordinary in ‘the Year of the Elephant’, entirely fought by birds to save the precincts of Kabah the then Temple of the Hubal. That was not far down the Arab memory lane as it happened in the reign of Abd al Muttalib, the grandfather of Muhammad. That fascinating episode is described by Martin Lings thus:

“At that time the Yemen was under the rule of Abyssinia, and an Abyssinian named Abrahah was vice-regent. He built a magnificent cathedral in Sana, hoping thereby to make it supersede Mecca as the great place of pilgrimage for all Arabia. He had marble brought to it from one of the derelict palaces of the Queen of Sheba, and he set up crosses in it of gold and of silver, and pulpits of ivory and ebony, and he wrote to his master, the Negus: ‘I have built thee a church, O King, the like of which was never built for any king before thee; and I shall not rest until I have diverted unto it the pilgrimage of the Arabs’. Nor did he make any secret of his intention, and great was the anger of the tribes throughout Hijaz and Najd. Finally a man of Kinanah, a tribe akin to Quraysh, went to Sana for the deliberate purpose of defiling the church, which he did one night and then returned safely to his people.

When Abrahah heard of this he vowed that in revenge he would raze the Ka’bah to the ground; and having made his preparations he set off for Mecca with a large army, in the van of which he placed an elephant. Some of the Arab tribes north of Sana attempted to bar his way, but the Abyssinians put them to flight and captured their leader, Nufayl of the tribe of Khath’am. By way of ransom for his life, he offered to act as guide.

When the army reached Ta’if, the men of Thaqif came out to meet them, afraid that Abrahah might destroy their temple of al-Lat in mistake for the Ka’bah. They hastened to point out to him that he had not yet reached his goal, and they offered him a guide for the remainder of his march. Although he already had Nufayl, he

accepted their offer, but the man died on the way, about two miles from Mecca, at a place called Mughammis, and they buried him. Afterwards the Arabs took to stoning his grave, and the people who live there still stone it to this day.

Abraham halted at Mughammis, and sent on a detachment of horse to the outskirts of Mecca. They took what they could on the way, and sent back their plunder to Abraham, including two hundred camels which were the property of Abd al-Muttalib. Quraysh and other neighbouring tribes held a council of war, and decided that it was useless to try to resist the enemy. Meanwhile Abraham sent a messenger to Mecca, bidding him to ask for the chief man there. He was to tell him they had not come to fight but only to destroy the temple, and if he wished to avoid all bloodshed he must come to the Abyssinian camp.

There had been no official chief of Quraysh since the time when their privileges and responsibilities had been divided between the houses of "Abd ad-Dar and Abdu Manaf. But most people had their opinion as to which of the chiefs of the clans was in fact if not by right the leading man of Mecca, and on this occasion the messenger was directed to the house of Abd al-Muttalib who, together with one of his sons, went back with the messenger to the camp. When Abraham saw him he was so impressed by his appearance that he rose from his royal seat to greet him and then sat beside him on the carpet, telling his interpreter to enquire if he had a favour to ask.

Abd al-Muttalib replied that the army had taken two hundred of his camels and he asked that they should be returned to him. Abraham was somewhat surprised at the request, and said that he was disappointed in him, that he should be thinking of his camels rather than his religion which they had now come to destroy. Abd al-Muttalib replied: "I am the lord of the camels, and the temple likewise hath a lord who will defend it." "He cannot defend it against me," said Abraham. "We shall see," said Abd al Muttalib. "But give me my camels." And Abraham gave orders for the camels to be returned.

Abd al Muttalib returned to Quraysh and advised them to withdraw to the hills above the town. Then he went with some of his family and others to the Sanctuary. They stood beside him, praying to God for His help against Abraham and his army, and he himself took hold of the metal ring in the middle of the Ka'bah door and said: "O God, thy slave protecteth his house, Protect Thou Thy House!" having thus prayed, he went with the others to join the rest of Quraysh in the hills at points where they could see what took place in the valley below.

The next morning Abraham made ready to march into the town, intending to destroy the Ka'bah and then return to Sana by the way they had come. The elephant, richly caparisoned, was led into the front of the army, which was already drawn up; and when the mighty animal reached his position his keeper Unays turned him the same way as the troops were turned, that is towards Mecca. But Nufayl, the reluctant guide, had marched most of the way in the van of the army

with Unays, and had learned from him some of the words of command which the elephant understood; and while the head of Unays was turned to watch for the signal to advance,

Nufayl took hold of the great ear and conveyed into it a subdued but intense imperative to kneel. Thereupon, to the surprise and dismay of Abrahah and the troops, the elephant slowly and deliberately knelt himself down to the ground. Unays ordered him to rise, but Nufayl's word had coincided with a command more powerful than that of any man, and the elephant would not move. They did everything they could to bring him to his feet; they even beat him about the head with iron bars and stuck iron hooks into his belly, but he remained like a rock. Then they tried the stratagem of making the whole army turn about and march a few paces in the direction of the Yemen. He at once rose to his feet, turned round and followed them. Hopefully they turned round about again, and he also turned, but no sooner was he facing Mecca than again he knelt.

This was the clearest of portents not to move one step further forward, but Abrahah was blinded by his personal ambition for the sanctuary he had built and by his determination to destroy its great rival. If they had turned back then, perhaps they would all have escaped disaster. But suddenly it was too late: the western sky grew black, and a strange sound was heard; its volume increased as a great wave of darkness swept upon them from the direction of the sea, and the air above their heads, as high as they could see, was full of birds.

Survivors said that they flew with a flight like that of swifts, and each bird had three pebbles the size of dried peas, one in its beak and one between the claws of each foot. They swooped to and fro over the ranks, pelting as they swooped, and the pebbles were so hard and launched with such velocity that they pierced even coats of mail. Every stone found its mark and killed its man, for as soon as a body was struck its flesh began to rot, quickly in some cases, more gradually in others.

Not everyone was hit, and amongst those spared were Unays and the elephant, but all were terror-stricken. A few remained in the Hijaz and earned a livelihood by shepherding and other work. But the main part of the army returned in disorder to Sana: Many died by the wayside, and many others, Abrahah included, died soon after their return. As to Nufayl, he had slipped away from the army while all attention was concentrated on the elephant, and he made his way unscathed to the hills above Mecca."

This miraculous incident, more fantastic than the one at the Battle of Badr, would illustrate the Arab penchant for the fanciful 'birds of war', much before the Quran gave them authenticity with its scriptural sanction. However, on the temporal plane, it is the profound statement of Abd al Muttalib - "I'm the lord of the camels, and the temple likewise hath a lord who will defend it." - that rightly deserves the attention of the *Muslims* of the day. Sadly though, for them and 'the others' as well, they fail to inculcate this 'truism of faith' in their

religious ethos, which makes them believe that their billion-strong religion is threatened even if a woman of their ilk intends to marry a man of another sect, and thus become paranoid that it is their bounden duty to guard their faith by preventing its happening. Well, the penchant of the *Musalmans* to perceive that Islam is in Danger over issues trivial, not to speak of matters prophetic, is the bane of social harmony in this world. Whatever, Allah didn't send the angels of war to help *Musalmans* at the next turn in the Battle of Uhud, even though things became too hot for them against the Quraysh; though, after a series of strategic compromises and winning maneuvers Muhammad could subdue them to usurp the Kabah for Islam. But, the fighting birds of Hubal were no where to be seen over the skies of Mecca as Muhammad pulled down the idols from their pedestals, and Islam sans the fighting angels could still spread its wings under the shadow of the swords where Muhammad said Paradise is beneath.

Privates of 'the God'

"Single robbers, or a few associates, are branded with their genuine name; but the exploits of a numerous band assume the character of lawful and honourable war. The temper of a people thus armed against mankind was doubly inflamed by the domestic licence of rapine, murder, and revenge." - So described Edward Gibbon, the condition of the Arab society into which Muhammad was born in the 6th century, in his 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'.

After the debacle at Badr, the Meccans led a great expedition to Medina which Muhammad joined battle at Uhud. Right after leading the prayer, as stated by Martin Lings, Muhammad addressed his seven-hundred strong troops thus:

"Verily this day ye are at a station that is rich in reward and rich in treasure, for him who is mindful of what he is about and who devoteth his soul thereunto in patience and certainty and earnestness and effort."

After drawing the battle plan, Muhammad chose fifty of his archers to man a strategic height in the battlefield and addressed them, "Keep their cavalry from us with your arrows. Let them not come upon us from our rear. Be the tide of battle for us or against us, stay at this post! If ye see us plundering the enemy, seek not to have a share in it; and if ye see us being slain, come not to our aid."

In spite of such express orders from Muhammad, forty of the archers, when they sensed the ground troops were on the verge of looting the enemy camp, deserted their post amidst the battle to share the spoils. Needless to say, the archers' eye on plunder helped the Quraysh zero in on Muhammad's men from the rear. And that resulted in an embarrassing reverse for the *Musalmans* in the mortal

combat that ensued. In that fight, Muhammad too was hurt in the mouth, and escaped death by the skin of his teeth.

The God above must have felt enraged at the conduct of the crowd, and felt the need for the Privates of His Own amongst them. Thus, he inspired Muhammad to inculcate the spirit of martyrdom amongst the *Musalman*s for raising a die-hard group in the service of him and Islam - "Hast thou not seen those unto whom it was said: Withhold your hands, establish worship and pay the poor-due, but when fighting was prescribed for them behold! a party of them fear mankind even as their fear of Allah or with greater fear, and say: Our Lord! Why hast thou ordained fighting for us? If only Thou wouldst give us respite yet a while! Say (unto them, O Muhammad): The comfort of this world is scant; the Hereafter will be better for him who wardeth off (evil); and ye will not be wronged the down upon a date - stone."

"They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when the revelations of Allah are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord."

"And whoso seeketh as religion other than the Surrender (to Allah) it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the Hereafter."

"Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not."

"Those who believe do battle for the cause of Allah; and those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols. So fight the minions of the devil. Lo! the devil's strategy is very weak."

"If thou couldst see how the angels receive those who disbelieve, smiting their faces and their backs and (saying): Taste the punishment of burning!"

"And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you; but be steadfast! Lo! Allah is with the steadfast."

"O ye who believe! When ye meet those who disbelieve in battle, turn not your backs to them."

"Whoso on that day turneth his back to them, unless manoeuvring for battle or intent to join a company, he truly hath incurred wrath from Allah, and his habitation will be hell, a hapless journey's-end."

"Relent not in pursuit of enemy, If ye are suffering, lo! They suffer even as ye suffer and ye hope from Allah that for which they cannot hope. Allah is ever Knower, Wise."

"And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease, then Lo! Allah is Seer of what they do."

“It is not for any Prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land. Ye desire the lure of this world and Allah desireth (for you) the Hereafter, and Allah is Mighty Wise.”

“Let those fight in the way of Allah who sell the life of this world for the other. Whoso fighteth in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward.”

“And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah “dead” Nay they are living, only ye perceive not.”

“Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision.”

“And what though ye be slain in Allah’s way or die therein? Surely pardon from Allah and mercy are better than all that they amass.”

“Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran. Who fulfilleth His covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph.”

“Enter the Garden, ye and your wives, to be made glad.”

“Therein are brought round for them trays of gold and goblets, and therein is all that souls desire and eyes find sweet, and ye are immortal therein.”

“This is the Garden which ye are made to inherit because of what ye used to do.”

“Reclining on ranged couches. And We wed them unto fair ones with wide, lovely eyes.”

The Quranic exhortation to die for Islam to gain the favours of Paradise makes a compelling mix for the Privates of Allah to turn *fidayeen* for the cause of the faith. It is thus, the religion of Muhammad that goads the faithful to *jihad* for the pride of Islam, and promises a voluptuous Paradise for those who perish in the process, was destined to play a disruptive role in the affairs of nations.

Playing to the Gallery

Muhammad, after all, came from an exalted family and all along socialized with the nobility of the Meccan tribes. Whatever were his childhood deprivations as an orphan, his marriage to Khadijah brought him recompense when still young. Thus, for over forty years, the chance of his birth shaped his sense of belonging to the higher crusts of society. On the other hand, as the circumstances of his life post-Hijra, forced him into the company of the poor, it can be seen that as the Czar of

Medina, Muhammad condescended to descend to the Helpers like the Quraysh of Mecca he was.

If any proof were needed for this proposition, here it is. The inconsiderable loot and ransom collected in the wake of the Battle of Hunan and the siege of Taif, for most part, was gifted away by him to the members of sixteen influential families of Mecca and the four chiefs of other tribes who all embraced Islam by then. Maybe, apart from his desire to please members of his own clan, Muhammad's magnanimity could no less be the aberration of his exhibitionism. Whatever, this tango of his with the Meccans that the four-thousand Helpers of Medina watched in dismay was not set to the tune of gratitude, was it? Of course, knowing that his move had caused distress, and raised doubts in the minds of his old faithful, Muhammad dealt with them memorably as recorded by Martin Lings thus:

"Men of the Helpers, word hath come to me that ye are deeply moved against me in your souls. Did I not find you erring, and God guided you, poor and God enriched you, enemies each of the other and God reconciled your hearts?" "Yea indeed," they answered. "God and His Messenger are most bountiful and most gracious." "Will ye not retort against me?" he said. "How should we retort?" they asked, in some perplexity. "If ye wished," he answered, "ye might say unto me, and say truthfully, and be believed: 'Thou didst come unto us discredited, and we credited thee, forlorn and we helped thee, an outcaste and we took thee in, destitute and we comforted thee.'

O Helpers, are ye stirred in your souls about the things of this world whereby I have reconciled men's hearts that they may submit unto God, when you yourselves I have entrusted unto your Islam? Are ye not well content, O Helpers, that the people take with them their sheep and their camels, and that ye take with you the Messenger of God unto your homes? If all men but the Helpers went one way, and the Helpers another, I would go the way of the Helpers. God have Mercy upon the Helpers, and on their sons, and on their sons' sons." They wept until their beards were wet with their tears, and with one voice they said: "We are well content with the Messenger of God as our portion and our lot."

This episode singularly illustrates the cunning of Muhammad to position his political necessity as human solidarity. After all, he could have surely known which side of the Islamic bread has butter. Deserting the die-hard *Musalman*s of Medina at that stage would have amounted to jeopardizing the future of Islam which he so painstakingly nurtured. Besides, that memorable speech should have made Muhammad to populism what Goebbels had been to propaganda. Thus, it's no wonder the despots of the Muslim States follow in their Prophet's footsteps by giving the poor their Islam, and the rich their goodies, all the while serving their own cause of staying in power.

Nonetheless, Muhammad's continuance of animal sacrifice, and his countenance in throwing stones at the devil at Mecca, and such other pre-Islamic

rituals, should leave one pondering whether his opposition to idolatry was a matter of conviction or a strategy to give a cause of action to Islam. Can't the origin of the so-called false revelation said to be in praise of Al Lat, Al Uzza and Manat be seen in this background? Maybe, it's an idea for the *Musalman*s to see whether or not these vexing as well as perplexing 'Satanic Verses', whose authorship Muhammad had denied, are indeed Quranic interpolations. And we have the Quranic challenge to go by for that - "And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We revealed unto our Slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside Allah if ye are truthful." Cannot the other *ayats* of the Quran that are taken as authentic by the *Musalman*s be the barometer to settle the issue once and for all?

Be that as it may, it should not be missed that the Quranic tirade is more vehemently directed against the Jews and the Christians than the idolaters. It is relevant to note that there is this tradition of worshipping the supposed relic of Muhammad's hair at Hazrat-Bal in Kashmir. And the commotion its theft, and the relief its retrieval, occasioned in the Muslim world once, might show that at heart man, even the *Musalman*, is by nature idolatrous, in spite of his religious conditioning to the contrary. The *dargas* at which the *Musalman*s revere their *fakirs* that dot the landscape of the Indian subcontinent is a pointer to this peculiar side of human nature. Nonetheless, the faithful of Islam wouldn't admit unlike the Christians of India who insensibly gave up that pretence for too long now.

In spite of his exalted position, power didn't go to Muhammad's head for he had too shrewd a mind to allow that happen. But, he seems to have betrayed his sense of power and unrivalled status in subtler ways. For one thing the ninth *sura* that proclaims the immunity from obligation towards the idolaters is the only one in the Quran, which is without the obligatory recitation - "In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful" and for another the proclamation itself was a joint command of Allah and His messenger, "Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and His messenger toward those of the idolaters with whom ye made a treaty."

"And a proclamation from Allah and His messenger to all men on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from obligation to the idolaters, and (so is) His messenger. So if ye repent, it will be better for you; but if ye are averse, then know that ye cannot escape Allah. Give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom to those who disbelieve."

"(How much more seemly) had they been content with that which Allah and His messenger had given them and had said: Allah sufficeth us. Allah will give us of His bounty, (and also) His messenger. Unto Allah we are suppliants."

Going by the aforesaid, the Quran seems to be indulgent towards Muhammad, having all the while condemning the Christians for ascribing partners to Allah, as can be seen from the following!

“We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve because they ascribe unto Allah partners, for which no warrant hath been revealed. Their habitation is the Fire, and hapless the abode of the wrong-doers.”

However, towards the end, Muhammad felt bold to write to the Roman Emperor, the Persian Prince and the Egyptian King, inviting them to join Islam. While the far off Caesar ignored his call, the Persian ruler tore off the letter, but the Egyptian neighbor felt it was wise to give an evasive reply, however, accompanied with enticing gifts. Thus received Muhammad, mounds of gold with Mariyah, and her equally attractive sister Sirin, the Coptic slave girls, for his dispensation. As anticipated by the wily neighbor, Muhammad marveled at Mariyah’s charms, and as Abraham did with Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl of Sarah, he readily took her under his amorous wings. It was only time before Mariyah, to Muhammad’s delight, presented him a son, whom he named, again at Gabriel’s behest, Ishmael, as did Abraham before him. It would have seemed then to Muhammad and his followers that the divine wheel turned a full circle, but not quite as the later development proved.

Be that as it may, Muhammad named his first son from Khadijah as Qasim, and of course that was much before the revelations at Mount Hira. And then, the forgotten Abrahamic pedigree of Arabs didn’t get Muhammad’s racial focus either. But, now that Islam was firmly in place in Mecca, and Abraham’s Kabah was rid of the idols, it was but natural that the heir of the Arabic Prophet should bear the name of Ishmael, the progenitor of them all. However, Muhammad’s filial joy ensured a reprieve of peace in the region till death snatched, first his infant son, and shortly thereafter, him as well. With the death of Muhammad, the Islamic sword that Mariyah managed to keep in its sheath was unsheathed, by the plunderers of his followers, on the nations of the neighborhood.

Soon, as Egypt was brought under the Islamic shackles, it was only time before the Islamic straight, but narrow, path was firmly laid in the land that nourished one of the earliest and greatest civilizations of the ancient world. And it was only the beginning of the end of the old world cultures in the adjoining continents. In time, wherever Islam pitched its tent, it was all about sporting a beard and wearing the skull cap. Oh, how Islam made the world poorer we would never know, but the glimpses of what is still extant on the ground and that which preserved in museums would make us sigh.

Some thirteen centuries after Muhammad revived the Abrahamic legacy of the Arabs, Adolf Hitler advocated the theory of Aryan racial superiority in Germany. It’s the strange fate of the Jewish people that they were the victims of both, first that of the ambition of Muhammad and then of the prejudice of the Fuehrer. If the Jewish posturing against Muhammad as an imposter earned them his wrath, his hostility towards idolatry unwittingly put his believers at odds with the Hindus in later centuries.

“This son of yours will be a wild one - free and untamed as a wild ass! He will be against everyone, and everyone will feel the same towards him.”, the prophecy of the Lord’s Angel about Ishmael finally seems to have come true, in as much as the faith of his progeny grew up in time to be a troubled child of the family of the world religions.

Perils of History

Napoleon was wrong when he said that kids must be taught history to enable them to learn from the past mistakes of nations. As history unerringly demonstrated, as a grown-up, man tends to grouse about the perceived wrongs of the past instead of learning from the wrongs of the history.

The history of man, as taught by the Torah, inculcated a sense of injustice in the collective Arab consciousness that was captured by Edward Gibbon thus:

“They pretend that, in the division of the earth, the rich and fertile climates were assigned to the other branches of the human family; and that the posterity of the outlaw Ishmael might recover, by fraud or force, the portion of inheritance of which he had been unjustly deprived.... If a Bedoween discovers from afar a solitary traveler, he rides furiously against him, crying, with a loud voice, “Undress thyself, thy aunt (*my wife*) is without a garment. A ready submission entitles him to mercy; resistance will provoke the aggressor, and his own blood must expiate the blood which he presumes to shed in legitimate defense.”

To this sense of Arab self-righteousness to plunder, the Quran accords it the religious sanction through the verses of ‘Spoils of War’.

“They ask thee (O Muhammad) of the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the messenger, so keep your duty to Allah, and adjust the matter of your difference, and obey Allah and His messenger, if ye are (true) believers.”

Thus, by a quirk of destiny, in Muhammad’s war against the idols, the Quranic creed of Islam and the mundane agenda of his warriors made a common cause. When the flag of Islam was finally hoisted on the Kabah, the progeny of Ishmael became a nation of the *Musalman*s. Besides, the old Bedoween resentment gave way to the Zeal of the *Musalman* even as the Arab greed for plunder underlined the agenda of aggression.

It was thus, the might of the Arab tribes, hitherto misdirected in internecine quarrels, was to become the force of Islam that dared the world to undo the historical wrong done to Ishmael. The capabilities of succeeding Caliphs and the Paradise of wine and women that Muhammad had promised the *jihadis* provided the cutting edge to the Islamic swords. Thus, in time, as considerable part of the old

world fell prostrate at the feet of the *Musalmans*, the posterity of Ishmael had had their revenge after all.

For years thereafter, the Arabs, the deprived race of Ishmael, ensconced in the conquered lands, went about their life as though to compensate for the lost generations. What is more, they had ensured to make the subdued peoples of the conquered lands the servants of their God. After all, Ishmael could have had the last laugh as his progeny planted Islam in the rich and fertile climates that were unjustly denied to him. At last, his tormented soul could have rested in peace, when, in the end, the *Musalmans* hoisted the flag of Islam in Jerusalem itself!

However, the hatred for the idols that Muhammad inculcated in his believers, though as a tool to conquer Mecca eventually, fetched the highest dividends for Islam in the landmass of India. Mahmud Ghazni, who opened the gates of India to the faith of Muhammad, would have had no reason to think of it at all, if not for the riches of its temples that the Hindu Deities of theirs occasioned. Alberuni might have had a correcting influence on Ghazni's mind regarding the so-called Hindu idol worship had he preceded him. And then, perhaps, the subsequent Indian history would have been less vicious! It is interesting to note Alberuni's observations regarding the religious beliefs and the philosophical orientation of the Hindus around the turn of the eleventh century.

"The main and most essential point of the Hindu world of thought is that which the Brahmans think and believe, for they are specially trained for preserving and maintaining their religion."

"Since, however, here we have to explain the system and the theories of the Hindus on the subject (*idol worship*), we shall now mention their ludicrous views; but we declare at once that they are held only by the common uneducated people. For those who march on the path to liberation, or those who study philosophy and theology, and who desire abstract truth which they call *sara*, are entirely free from worshipping anything but God alone, and would never dream of worshipping an image manufactured to represent him. A tradition illustrative of this is that which Saunaka told the king Pariksha in these words: -

"There was once a king called Ambarisha, who had obtained an empire as large as he had wished for. But afterwards he came to like it no longer; he retired from the world, and exclusively occupied himself with worshipping and praising God for a long time. Finally, God appeared to him in the shape of Indra, the prince of the angels, riding on an elephant.

He spoke to the king: "Demand whatever you like, and I will give it you."

The king answered: "I rejoice in seeing thee, and I am thankful for the good fortune and help thou hast given; but I do not demand anything from thee, but only from him who created thee.'

Indra said: "The object of worship is to receive a noble reward. Realize, therefore, your object, and accept the reward from him from whom hitherto you

have obtained your wishes, and do not pick and choose, saying, 'not from thee, but from another.'"

The king answered: "The earth has fallen to my lot, but I do not care for all that is in it. The object of my worship is to see the Lord, and that thou canst not give me. Why, therefore, should I demand the fulfillment of my desire from thee?"

Indra said: "The whole world and whoever is upon it are obedient to me. Who are you that you dare to oppose me?"

The king answered: "I, too, hear and obey, but I worship him from whom thou hast received this power, who is the lord of the universe, who has protected thee against the attacks of the two kings, Bali and Hiranyaksha. Therefore let me do as I like, and turn away from me with my farewell greeting."

Indra said: "If you will absolutely oppose me, I will kill you and annihilate you."

The king answered; "People say that happiness is envied, but not so misfortune. He who retires from the world is envied by the angels, and therefore they will try to lead him astray. I am one of those who have retired from the world and entirely devoted themselves to worship, and I shall not give it up as long as I live. I do not know myself to be guilty of a crime for which I should deserve to be killed by thee. If thou killest me without any offence on my part, it is thy concern. What dost thou want from me? If my thoughts are entirely devoted to God, and nothing else is blended with them, thou art not able to do me any harm. Sufficient for me is the worship with which I am occupied, and now I return to it."

As the king now went on worshipping, the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a man of the grey lotus colour, riding on a bird called Garuda, holding in one of the four hands the *sankha*, a sea-shell which people blow when riding on elephants; in the second hand the *chakra*, a round, cutting orbicular weapon, which cuts everything it hits right through; in the third an amulet, and in the fourth *padma*, i.e. the red lotus. When the king saw him, he shuddered from reverence, prostrated himself and uttered many praises. The lord quieted his terrified mind and promised him that he should obtain everything he wished for. The king spoke: "I had obtained an empire which nobody disputed with me; I was in conditions of life not troubled by sorrow or sickness. It was as if the whole world belonged to me. But then I turned away from it, after I had understood that the good of the world is really bad in the end. I do not wish for anything except what I now have. The only thing I now wish for is to be liberated from this fetter."

The Lord spoke: "That you will obtain by keeping aloof from the world, by being alone, by uninterrupted meditation, and by restraining your senses to yourself."

The king spoke: "Supposing that I am able to do so through that sanctity which the Lord has deigned to bestow upon me, how should any other man be able

to do so? For man wants eating and clothing, which connects him with the world. How is he to think of anything else?"

The Lord spoke: "Occupy yourself with your empire in as straightforward and prudent a way as possible: turn your thoughts upon me when you are engaged in civilizing the world and protecting its inhabitants, in giving alms, and in everything you do. And if you are overpowered by human forgetfulness, make to yourself an image like that in which you see me; offer to it perfumes and flowers and make it a memorial of me, so that you may not forget me. If you are in sorrow, think of me; if you speak, speak in my name; if you act, act for me."

Again on the idol worship itself Alberuni's had this to say:

"... that such idols are erected only for uneducated low-class people of little understanding; that the Hindus never made an idol of any supernatural being, much less of God; and, lastly, to show how the crowd is kept in thralldom by all kinds of priestly tricks and deceits. Therefore the book *Gita* says: "Many people try to approach me in their aspirations through something which is different from me; they try to insinuate themselves into my favour by giving alms, praise, and prayer to something besides me. I, however, confirm and help them in all these doings of theirs, and make them attain the object of their wishes, because I am able to dispense with them."

On the subject of idol worship Alberuni's views as follows are worth noting by Muslims who tend to revere, if not worship, the symbols of Islam:

"It is well known that the popular mind leans towards the sensible world, and has an aversion to the world, of abstract thought which is only understood by highly educated people, of whom in every time and every place there are only few. And as common people will only acquiesce in pictorial representations, many of the leaders of religious communities have so far deviated from the right path as to give such imagery in their books and houses of worship, like the Jews and Christians, and, more than all, the Manichaeans.

These words of mine would at once receive a sufficient illustration if, for example, a picture of the Prophet were made, or of Mekka and the Ka'bah, and were shown to an uneducated man or woman. Their joy in looking at the thing would bring them to kiss the picture, to rub their cheeks against it, and to roll themselves in the dust before it, as if they were seeing not the picture, but the original, and were in this way, as if they were present in the holy places, performing the rites of pilgrimage, the great and the small ones."

Contrast this with what we have now. The Quran is not only venerated as the Holy Quran, but also handled reverentially in book form by every *Musalman* and his woman! The pictures of the Kabah adorn the walls of every Muslim home and business establishment! When it comes to Muhammad, it is hero-worshipping all the way, more fervent than any idol-worshipping ever. Besides, Muhammad's name in Islamic print must be obligatorily suffixed with pbhu, the short form of 'Peace Be

Upon Him'. For whatever that might suggest to the *Musalman*s, the skeptics would feel that given the strife in his life the practice could be apt.

Pitfalls of Faith

If the ecstasy of the Quran is the soul of Islam, the legend of Muhammad is the mind of the *Musalman*. The exalted sense of his pedigree could have made Muhammad fiercely honest, even in the state of deprivation. It is to be appreciated that neither his insignificance as an orphan affected his self-worth nor his poverty dented his self-esteem. While nature endowed him with a shrewd mind his destiny seems to have helped him cultivate a sense of purpose. Though unlettered, he obviously possessed native intelligence, and thus was alive to every opportunity that came his way. Above all, at some stage at least, he seems to have developed an unwavering faith in his own destiny. As can be seen, he was an uncanny man manager and mob manipulator extraordinary.

His exemplary personal courage in battle enabled him lead by example, and this single character of his played no mean a part in the battles his faithful fought to raise the standard of Islam in the nations of the world. Though he grew up in an environment of sentimentality, he imbibed a balanced outlook that his stint as the Czar of Medina turned into statesmanship. The frugal lifestyle he adopted at the height of his fame and fortune could be owing to his personal proclivity or the public posturing, and/or both. It was thus, he was known to avoid material comforts, save his fondness for perfumes, apart from women. And that his faithful didn't mind as their culture acquiesced in both. Traditionally, there appears to be an inbuilt advantage for its prophets in the Semitic faith in that while it granted them to indulge as humans, it ordained the believers to revere them as divine just the same.

While Muhammad's reconciliation with Abu Talib's refusal of Fakhitah, nay Umm Hani's, hand for him reflects his pragmatism, his marriage to Khadijah underscores his practicality. However, it would be erroneous to misconstrue his devotion to her as a necessary evil to ensure her munificence, for he remained faithful to her memory till the very end. It is worth noting that he considered his years with her as the happiest of his life. But what is remarkable was his fidelity to her in spite of her advanced age, and that too in the prime of his life. That was, notwithstanding his gusty libido. Needless to say, it reveals a rare strength of character and a great ability for self-sacrifice born out of a strong personal conviction. And, for all that, it might have been for a purpose. But, whatever it was, that served him well in sustaining his creed in spite of odds.

The very fact that in his otherwise well recorded life, there was nothing amiss in the lengthy chapter of Khadijah indicates that he could have led an amiable married life unmarred by scandal or quarrel. Sans Islam, still he would have had his place of honor in Meccan memory as Al Amin, and possibly remembered for long in his country. But that night of Ramadan, in a cave of Mount Hira, made all the difference to his memory. Given that the legend of Muhammad is memorized byline of the *Musalman*s, for the teeming multitudes of believers there is much in the Muhammad's life to give solace and hope in this world whose worth the Quran deprecates any way. It could be owing to Muhammad's influence on them that the poorer sections of the Muslim community, even in today's materialistic world, tend to lead as frugal a life as possible.

Thus, even as his billion strong faithful across the globe revere him as the Messenger of God, the rest of the world is wont to be skeptical about his personal ethics and question his credentials for prophethood. And what is worse, it decries his legacy for the fanatical intolerance and extremist adventurism of a band of his faithful. But then, one has to pay the price for power and fame. And if anything, so extraordinary a life like that of Muhammad would naturally earn the envy and suspicion of many. Whatever, in the history of man, there is no other man like Muhammad who vertically splits the world opinion about his character and legacy, and/or both.

However, even the genius of Muhammad could not have anticipated the antipathy of the Jews towards the Quran though he would have expected the hostility of the Quraysh on account of his attack on their idols. On the other hand, he could well have hoped for the Jewish support in his tirade against the Arab idolatry as the Quran co-opted the Torah and the Jewish Prophets alike. Unfortunately, the overbearing Jews made fun of Muhammad's prophethood and poked holes in his preaching beside.

This unexpected development gave rise to a unique situation in which Muhammad, while pursuing his agenda against Arab idolatry, had to defend Islam in the battle of dogma that the Jews forced upon it. After all, with the Jews being a formidable race who mastered the Torah for ages; Islam faced a theological crisis to Muhammad's chagrin, and that occasioned a schism amongst the Semitic religions. While the Quran accused the Jews and the Christians as renegades, the accused in turn called the Islamic Prophet an imposter.

This mutual acrimony has disastrous consequences for the human destiny, as the hostility that the Quran exhibits towards the *kafirs*, besides infusing a sense of separateness in its believers, inculcates a streak of aggression as well in them. Nevertheless, in the face of the Jewish onslaught, 'the God' tried to defend Muhammad thus:

"Or they say: He hath invented it? Say: Then bring a surah like into it, and call (for help) on all ye can besides Allah, if ye are truthful."

“Say: Verily though mankind and the Jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another.”

“And if ye do not and ye can never do it - then guard yourselves against the fire prepared for the disbelievers, whose fuel is men and stones.”

“And if they deny thee, say: Unto me my work, and unto you your work. You are innocent of what I do, and I am innocent of what ye do.”

As can be seen, the unceasing Jewish nagging seems to have had an unintended affect on the Quran itself, making it repetitive as if to drive home the issue rather desperately. Even otherwise, by and large, repetition is the characteristic of the Quran. Innumerable admonitions such as we have seen above, and elsewhere, get repeated, over and over again, in chapters and verses in similitude. It's as though 'the God' wanted to zero in on the human propensity of believing fervently what is repeated frequently.

Besides, wouldn't censure directed against those whom we tend to abhor sound music to our ears? The Quranic accounts of the verbal tussles that Muhammad had with the Jews, the Christians and the idolaters invariably colored its divine message itself. Moreover, the private conduct and the public campaigns of Muhammad that are integral to the Quran make it contextually mundane and temporally aggressive. Thus, the body of the Quran in its instructional mode accords Islam a code of conduct sans philosophy of discourse.

However, as love and hatred are the obverse and the reverse of the same human emotion, the feeling of alienation towards '*the others*', nevertheless, brings in the *Musalman*s a sense of rare togetherness. In turn, this tends to inculcate amongst them the lofty ideal of the Muslim Brotherhood, which, ironically, in modern times causes them so much emotional hurt. Herein lay the dichotomy of Islam in that while it tries to bestow peace on the believers, it pours out scorn on the nonbelievers. While many *Musalman*s, probably unaware of the genesis of the WE - THEY syndrome steeped in many a contextual Quranic verse or those who deliberately ignore these, conclude that the rest of the peoples are unfairly hostile to the Muslim populace, and thus come to grudge the *kafirs* for that.

On the other hand, and sinisterly at that, the misguided Islamists, by taking the many inflammatory verses of Quran out of context, would be able to indoctrinate the gullible *Musalman*s in *madradas* and the *masjids* to set them on the course of *jihad*. Well, in turn, to the dismay of the world, the cynical turn them into *fidayeen*. It is thus; one comes to hear two voices of Islam—the hurt voice of the well-meaning *Musalman*s that their 'religion of peace' is being unfairly dubbed as the 'doctrine of death', and that of the Islamic fundamentalists spewing venomous hatred on the nonbelievers.

Nonetheless, this dual dimension of Islamic reaction is not difficult to fathom either. That the Quran is recited in Arabic the world over, its *ayats* rendered to

rhythm would have no more than a reverential impact on the majority of the *Musalmans*. Thus, they would be unaware of the Quranic instigations against the *kafirs* in such *surahs* as Al-Baqarah, Ali-Imran, Al Ma'idah, Al-Anfal etc. Such of the run of the mill *Musalmans* in the know it, whatever their intellectual perception at finding such in a Holy Book, would not wager much on them. But the fundamentalists and the Paradise seekers swear by these very inimical verses of the Quran.

It is another matter, that such *surahs* of the Quran would only sicken the nonbeliever of a reader soon enough, though he might realize they are all contextually linked to Muhammad's life. Even a cursory reading of the Quran would bring to the fore the paradox of banning books perceived as offensive to the religious sentiments of a community in a country. Oh, how the Quran can afford to abuse the Jews and the Christians, and still have a free reign everywhere! And the poor *kafirs*, so roundly condemned, still have to contend with it being referred to as 'The Holy Quran' by the believers.

Be that as it may, the Muslim mind finds itself doubly squeezed by a wronged feeling on one side and the change of value system on the other in the modern era. It is the tragedy of the *Musalmans* that they would be trained to treat the contextual content of the Quran as the unalienable code of Islam. And that hampers the fluidity of their thought that is needed to cope up with the realities of the given times. Muhammad's autocracy and obscurantism that denied freedom of expressing what he himself had led them to believe, leave alone to thinking for themselves, might have inadvertently contributed to this debilitating Muslim inability. The following episode in Martin Ling's biography of Muhammad would be illustrative.

"At his ('Uthman's) funeral the Prophet heard an old woman address the dead man with the words "Be glad, O father of Sa'ib, for Paradise is thine." The Prophet turned to her somewhat sharply and said: "What giveth thee to know that?" "O Messenger of God," she protested, "It is Abu s-Sa'ib!" "By God," he said, "we know naught but good of him." Then, to make it clear that his first remark had been in no sense directed against 'Uthman' but merely against her for saying more than she had right to say he turned to her again and added: "It would have been enough for thee to say: "He loved God and His Messenger."

It was as if the purity of Islam would have been polluted even by the noble utterance of a pious believer. Just as Muhammad's Quran is averse to having partners to Allah in Mary and Jesus so it seems he himself kept out others from the legacy of his *hadith*. It's thus Muhammad saw to it that Islam is all about Allah and His Messenger unlike Jesus who thought it fit to Commission the Twelve for the sake of Christianity. It's as though the Seal of the Prophets imbibed the divine character of Jehovah the jealous God who couldn't stomach sharing the Jewish affection with any other god."

The Muslim dilemma about how to tread on the straight path in the ever changing world of every age owes to the constraints and contradictions of Muhammad's life in his quest to establish Islam. Needless to say, the *mullahs* who follow the Prophet's suit deny freedom of expression to the congregated faithful even in the precincts of the *masjids*. Try putting an inconvenient theological question, or air an unconventional Islamic view, and one should consider himself to be lucky if only he were to be debarred from the *masjid*, and not manhandled as debauched. Thus, the tune of the Quran came to be set in the "O ye believe" tone sans accompanying instruments of debate and discussion. It is no wonder thus; the intellect of a *Musalman* is measured on the scale of the Islamic theology.

Coupled to this is the ghetto mentality that only accrues the 'frog in the well' vision to the Muslim intellect, which furthers their inability to see things from the others' angle, and this makes it hard for the *Musalman*s to gain cosmopolitan insight to nurse an egalitarian mind-set amongst them. On the other hand, the Islamic emphasis of Muslim separateness insensibly leads to the stagnation of the *Musalman*s in the medieval Quranic age. This is about the burden of belief that Islam imposes upon its believers, and without a demur the *Musalman*s submit.

And that is something to say about how faith can condition the mind and the mood of its followers regardless of the change in the surroundings. True, the faith of Allah needed a band of blind believers to help Muhammad achieve his ambition to hoist the flag of Islam on the Kabah. But how the *Musalman*s are to progress in modern times without imbibing the process of inquiry that is so essential to acquire knowledge and wisdom? It is this trap of belief into which *Musalman*s are born and there is no reformist around any more, after Kemal Ataturk the Great to extricate them out of the Islamic mire.

Blinkers of Belief

Though Muhammad's religious constituency was the meek of the world, as Jesus had paraphrased, he seemed to have shaped Islam but to their detriment. Thus, it calls for the examination of the poor *Musalman*s as to how Muhammad's personal agenda would have influenced the ethos of Islam mirroring their life 'here'. More so, it is for the women of Islam, even the rich among them, to delve into the proclivities of their prophet that shaped the precepts and practices of their faith to their eternal hurt.

It is not too hard to see how the faith supposedly shaped for the poor in theory is heavily loaded against them in practice. On the other hand, the religious craft of Muhammad as enunciated in his address to the Yathribs - O Helpers, are ye stirred in your souls about the things of this world whereby I have reconciled men's hearts

that they may submit unto God, when you yourselves I have entrusted unto your Islam? – is seemingly designed to favor the privileged of the faith. What is inimical to the poor amongst the faithful is that the long and uncertain path to the ‘Hereafter’ is paved with the needles of *sharia*.

It was Muhammad’s ideal of a puritanical society that seems to have unwittingly pitted the poor of Islam against his penal code. After all, why should the well-to-do steal at all, to be on the wrong side of the *sharia*! Needless to say, the hands that feed the *sharia* would be but that of the poor. Likewise, where was the need for the resourceful male to resort to adultery? After all, the four wives quorum, not counting the divorces and remarriages, would entail the needed variety to spice up their life, wouldn’t it? As if that concession is not good enough for the lecherous rich, then there is the *sharia* sanctified instant *nikah* lasting but a single ejaculation, if one pleases. The world was the witness to it all at the height of the Islamic moral policing in Iran that brought brisk business to the *kazis*. And in what must be the height of hypocrisy, Islam frowns upon adultery and punishes the involved with savagery! And, sadly, it is those *Musalmans* without moolah to circumvent the *sharia* that have to face the harsh music of Islam.

Nonetheless, in the Islamic Paradise, for the poor who tend to be better *Musalmans* than their well-heeled brethren, it’s a different amorous game altogether! However, the only hitch is that it is a lifelong wait of drudgery for them to reach the ‘Hereafter’. And meanwhile, the *sharia* lets the rich and the powerful get away with murder even, albeit through the bribe route of blood-money. But then, why only blame the *sharia* when the modern penal code too leans heavily on the poor to ensure that they are kept at arms length from the privileged, not to spoil their party. Why doubt that? Well, for the theft of a thousand, the law is smart to catch up with the poor to put them behind the bars but when it comes to the embezzled millions under the white collars, it is slothful in sniffing at the scent.

Unjustifiably though, the *Musalmans* are proud that their faith grants equality to women vis-à-vis men, i.e. in spite of polygamy. It’s true that the Quran ordains that man should treat his wives equally. But, what sort of equality would polygamy entail for those four wives! Even in bigamy, a woman would be left pining when her fellow wife has their man? And in Islam, we are not even dealing with bigamy but polygamy, involving four women at that! And how the All Knowing God missed this female conjugal constraint is anybody’s guess. Not quite, for women too are granted their polyandrous time, well, that’s in the ‘Hereafter’. Even that wouldn’t make it a level playing ground for the female believers in the Islamic scheme of gender equality, would it? After all, while women have to wear their chastity belts all the while ‘here’, their men are not bound as such. And in the ‘Hereafter’, it’s not a case of role reversal either for men too have their *huries* for the asking. Besides, what if the rationed intimacy and limited emotionality of a polygamous marriage usher in female promiscuity ‘here’? What solace doth the

sharia provide for the pining females of polygamy if found in the wrong hands? Why, stoning to death!

Well, it's a different matter though that Islam has so much concern for the satiation of all those black-eyed virgins of Paradise who are wedded in their scores to the martyrs. Of course, Allah increaseth the vigour of the martyr a hundred fold to indulge with his harem of *huries seventy-two*. So, in the 'Hereafter', man's virility is not subject to the innate limitations biology imposes on him 'here'! And that could be no less an attraction for the believing *Musalman*s to crave the 'Hereafter'. But then, the *Musalman*s too have the Mirza Ghalib *sher* to ponder over here: *zannat ki hakikat hah'me maaloom hai lekin / dilko behalaane ke liye ye khayaal accha hai* (To hell with truth of heaven as such / Feels it good to think it's there.)

And what does veiling women in Islam mean? Won't it reveal the lack of male appreciation of womanly emotions? Oh, how the veil and all that goes with it stunt female sexuality! The embarrassment of Muhammad in desiring Zaynab, wife of his adopted son Zayd, could have caused him to stress upon veil for the female as a barrier against male frailty. Besides, he was extremely possessive about his women, in particular Ayesha. In fact, he hoped that she were dead ahead of him, in spite of the fact that wives of the prophet were barred from a fresh nuptial.

The Islamic veil thus, is the legacy of a man, who genuinely respected women while at the same time believing them to be objects of male possession, if not their vassals as such. And ironically, it is his dual attitude towards women that denies the fair sex of Islam the feel-good that a normal socializing would have afforded them! Though the medieval man's attitude towards women was no different from that of Muhammad, the *burkha* that Islam ordains them, deprives them whatever little freedom their sisters of other faiths have! Thus, if the globe were to become an *umma* as Muhammad had dreamed, and should its *mullahs* come to reign, as they would in such an eventuality, half of it would be reduced to walking tents for all that. On this score, can it not be said that Islam, exhibiting its lack of concern for the female well-being, is inimical to the development of half of its believers? And yet, some hypocritical apologists of the *burkha* would have it that what the Muslim women are hiding from the public view is not their persona but their poverty exemplified by the rags they wear!

However, the moot point that Islam misses here is the need for the male to develop self-restraint in the society of women and not to veil them. But then, if the veil is so vital for the *niyyat* (character) of the *Musalman*s, why Islam has no remedy for those male believers living in the non-veiling societies of 'the others'? The answer to this, as well as to other predicaments of the Islam is that Muhammad had devised Islamic code for the Arabic culture and society of his time and not beyond. But it's naïve to think it's the God's Will for He didn't ordain veiling of the Jewish and the Christian women. What is worse, while providing no clues for the Islamic adaptation to the changing times, the Quran and the *sharia* blindly bind the

*Musalman*s to the medieval values, don't they? Thus Islam has become 'a square peg in the round hole' syndrome for the *Musalman*s everywhere. Well, if veiling the fair sex is the cure for adultery, then it would have been still worth its cloth, if not for anything but to avert the exploitation of women. And it's not the case either. Thus, it's an irony of Islam that in veiling its women it veils the vision of its men as well. It is this mind-set of the *Musalman*s that made the word of a believing woman unequal to that of the male believer in the Islamic evidentiary value system! Nonetheless, Muslim women are wont not to complain about this and such gender biases of Islamic socio-religious practice and precepts. And that speaks for the potential for, or lack of it, to the mental development of women in the Islamic socio-religious fold.

Shackles of Sharia

"Say: O disbelievers, I shall not worship that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship, nor have I worshipped that which ye worship, nor have ye worshipped that which I worship. For you your religion and for me mine."

This revelation, which is endlessly repeated by the *Musalman*s to showcase the Islamic tolerance towards other religions, as is known, came to Muhammad when the leaders of the Quraysh tried to persuade him to agree to a compromise. And that was to avoid the schism his Quranic creed was causing in Mecca. Had the revelation revisited Muhammad after he broke Hubal's back at the Kabah, it is a different matter though that the history of religious strife would not have been what it is. The unique feature of the Quran as a Scripture is that its *ayats* are contextual in nature, linked as they were to Muhammad's life and mission, which characteristic the *Musalman*s seem to miss or are blind to it.

A large body of the *Musalman* masses probably would not have read, much less comprehended, much that is in the Quran save those faith-invoking *surahs* of obedience and submission. And it is these simple folks who habitually cling onto Islam, and live like frogs in the Muslim wells. These poor and pious *Musalman*s, largely illiterate, try to subordinate their lot 'here' to their faith in Allah, and look up to Muhammad for deliverance in the 'Hereafter'. However, it is on their religious dogma that the fundamentalist elements and their power hungry despots feed upon. These simple folks could be turned into street mobs, at will that is, by the unscrupulous elements amongst them with the false alarm of 'Islam in Danger', either from within or without.

Next in the list, numerically speaking that is, are the *mullahs* who, by training as well as by occupation, strive to keep Islam as pure and as straight as possible in this ever-changing world. The more the threat of dilution to their faith, all the more

fundamentalists they tend to become, and one cannot blame them for it is thus the *umma* brings them into being. In a way, the *moulvi-mullah* combine erects the Muslim dams that protect the faith from being inundated by un-Islamic currents, or so it seems, what with the masses that share alike the poverty of life as well as passion for the faith are incapable to sniff beyond their Islamic noses. So, together they stall modernization in the Muslim *umma*. Moreover, owing to their lack of modern education or personal moderation, their existence 'here' confines them to the economic fringes, even in developed societies in which they happen to live.

On the other hand, if anything, the *mullahs* would lose their spiritual eminence should the Muslim Brotherhood get exposed to rationality as happened with the Brahman supremacy in the ever-westernizing Hindu society. Thus, the ignorance of the faithful and the self-interest of the *mullahs*, and the rulers alike, help keep the faith the way it was fashioned by Muhammad well into our times, and into eternity as it appears, well, unless the Islamic world turns upside down at some point of time in the future that is!

The Muslim rich, like their counterparts in any religious group, wouldn't, any way, share the religiosity of 'the God mad' poor though they make pretence of it. But, all the while, they grab the joys of the 'here' with both hands without any compunction as the pleasures of the Hereafter are theirs any way, for the mere fact of their being born *Musalman*s. After all, they have the Islamic assurance that a crook of a *Musalman*, and not even the saint of a *kafir* like Mahatma Gandhi, has a slot in the Paradise. Thus, the privileged *Musalman*s live in the rarefied world of Islam as their own masters, however, pretending to be the servants of Allah.

That leaves the educated Muslim middle-class to complete the grand spectrum of Islamic dichotomy. Well, their education and occupation wouldn't be conducive to nursing the pure *Musalmanic* souls in their contemporary bodies, as per the Islamic tenets. Besides, while their middle-class earnings would enable them access the worldly goodies for mundane comforts that Islam is inimical to; their exposure to the secular outlook befuddles their religious belief. With the imbibed faith coming into clash with their acquired lifestyles, the middle-class *Musalman*s tend to suffer from a certain religious guilt. Though they realize the benefits of going easy on Islam, and wish as well that their community sheds the oppressive Arab cultural baggage that forms its religious burden, the accompanying guilt feeling makes them voiceless.

It is this impotency of the Muslim middle-class opinion that enables the obscurantist *moulvis*, *mullahs* and others amongst them to forever have a free rein on the Islamic bigotry and obstructionism. Contrast this with the reforms in the no less dogmatic Hindu society brought about by the liberals of the middle-class from time to time, which vibrancy came to serve well Hinduism in the late 20th century.

It is the paradox of the Islamic umbrella that under its Quranic shade the rich could indulge in an un-Islamic life, the clergy could exercise their religious license,

the middle-class could gloat over their material goodies and the poor could live on religious diet, of course, all in the name of Allah the All Knowing. It is thus, in the Muslim *umma* the resourceful would draw their own lines, the poor dare not cross the one drawn by the *mullahs* and the liberal minded get squeezed in between. In spite of it though, thanks to the pull of the Prophet, Islam emotionally unites the faithful against 'the others' while the *sharia* effectually divides them from them.

But then, what this *sharia* is all about, and why the *Musalman*s are so sensitive to it? We may as well learn from Roland E Miller's "Muslim Friends - Their faith and feeling, An introduction to Islam." published by The Orient Longman, Hyderabad.

"*Sharia* is the crystallization of the Quranic message and the Prophet's example into a body of livable law. Whereas other religious traditions may emphasize an individual's interior faith, Islam is more concerned with providing a unified structure for pious behaviour."

"The theological origin of the Law is the basic relation between God and humanity that is governed by the twin poles of Command and Obedience. God is al-Rabb, the Creator-Master-Lord-Ruler-Judge Who gives commands to His creatures, and His commands become laws for His creatures. God is the Master, and a master's will is made known in specific instructions. The opposite of master is servant (*abd*). Islam teaches that Muslims are the servants of God, who surrender to His will and obey His command. Moreover, there is an element of human need and divine mercy in the relationship. Servants need directions to guide them on the path of life, and God is a merciful master Who provides the needed guidance (*hidayat*). The sum of the guidance constitutes the clear road along which God's servants should walk. The ideas of Master-Command, servant-obedience, and guidance-direction combine to produce the strong Muslim sense of religious duty that underlies and gives birth to the *sharia*. Islam is a religion of law. The *sharia* is the formal expression of this reality, and Muslim obedience to the *sharia*, in turn, reinforces the reality."

"Even though ordinary Muslims cannot and do not pick up a book called the *sharia* and read it, the *sharia* has become the habit of Islam. Its intricacies are the concern of specialist scholars who can be called upon in time of need. The fundamental principle underlying the *sharia* is the idea that God is the Ruler and we human beings are His subjects. As Sovereign Lord, God must rule and does rule. He directly and actively governs His people. This is true both of individuals and the community. He rules through His power by which He exercises lordship over His creation, and He rules through specific commands by which He provides the needed laws for the correct conduct of life. "Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?" (75:36). Thus the Sovereign Ruler is also the Supreme Legislator. As Legislator, He gives His subjects adequate prescriptions to carry on their personal

and social lives. His subjects are dependent on His power and obey His commands.”

“The great divide owes to the Muslim belief that “the principles and institutions of Islam are all-comprehensive. They include the whole of human existence, emotions, thoughts, actions, economic deals, social relationships, bodily urges, spiritual demands, and every other value... Religion works as a complete code of life. The Muslim life consists of no dichotomy. In what a Muslim has to do in secular transactions, in his actions for social deals, individual interests, national demands, international brotherhood, nay, in all relations of human civilization, there is a complete direction, contained in the institutions which a Muslim follows... The name given to the whole system is *Sharia*.”

“Owing to the complexity of the *sharia* the intricacies are the concern of the Imams and this is the source of the strength and hold of the clergy on the Muslim society. Since the Muslims live in societies not governed as per Islamic tenets they appreciate that every land has a set of laws drawn from human experience, accepted by public agreement and defined in human legislation, which its citizens should obey. Muslims understand the necessity of such national laws and obey them.

But they generally do not think of the *sharia* as a human system. Human beings have certainly given the *sharia* language and force and have worked it out in practice, but the religious law of Islam is not viewed by Muslim believers as the product of human wisdom. It is founded on the Word of God and drawn from the example of the Prophet. The *sharia* therefore is sacred law, a higher law, the highway of God’s guidance along which Muslims should walk. As such this all-embracing code of life is also a code of religious duty. It is not the believer’s choice, nor the nation’s choice, but it is rather the imperative of *din*, the following of God’s will. We may therefore define the *sharia* as *the Muslim code of religious duty that embraces all of life*.”

It is as though, to deprive the *umma* any time-sense whatever, the *ulema* had conspired to stop the Islamic clock at Muhammad’s death, for them to grind their axes over the wheels of the *sharia*. While it’s okay with them that those inhuman penal provisions of the *sharia* are done away with everywhere, save in the land of Muhammad, they block every move at reforms relating to the Muslim Personal Law, which empowers the *mullahs*, besides catering to the male chauvinism. Moreover, there is an accompanying fear that a diluted *sharia* would obviously weaken the socio-religious hold of the *mullahs* on their community. Amidst this male clamor for the *sharia*, which is Muhammad’s diktat for the believers, which is so much in their favor, the interests of the Muslim females wouldn’t seem to count any way.

It’s a different matter though the women of Islam seem not mind their lot subjected as they were to the Quranic brainwash that Allah willed it that way for

them, and no more. It would be an idea to resolve the issue of the *sharia* by leaving it to the *umma* in a referendum - whether they endorse it in toto - the personal as well as the penal *sharia* - or opt for the law of the land sans reservations. It should be interesting to see how many *Musalmans*, even in their Islamic hibernation, would like to have the rigors of the *sharia* all for themselves. And the outcome could well be the harbinger of change in the Islamic community conditioned for so long by the medieval mind-set of the *mullahs*.

In the context of divinity of a religious message, it is worth recalling Jawaharlal Nehru's profound observation in 'The Discovery of India' thus:

"It has always seemed to me a much more magnificent and impressive thing that a human being should rise to great heights, mentally and spiritually, and should then seek to raise others up, rather than that he should be the mouthpiece of a divine or superior power. Some of the founders of religions were astonishing individuals, but all their glory vanishes in my eyes when I cease to think of them as human beings. What impresses me and gives me hope is the growth of the mind and spirit of man, and not his being used as an agent to convey a message.

Mythology affected me in much the same way. If people believed in the factual content of these stories, the whole thing was absurd and ridiculous. But as soon as one ceased believing in them, they appeared in a new light, a new beauty, a wonderful flowering of a richly endowed imagination, full of human lessons. No one believes now in the stories of Greek gods and goddesses and so, without any difficulty, we can admire them and they become part of our mental heritage. But if we had to believe in them, what a burden it would be, and how, oppressed by this weight of belief, we would often miss their beauty. Indian mythology is richer, vaster, very beautiful, and full of meaning. I have often wondered what manner of men and women they were who gave shape to these bright dreams and lovely fancies, and out of what gold mine of thought and imagination they dug them.

Looking at scripture then as a product of the human mind, we have to remember the age in which it was written, the environment and mental climate in which it grew, the vast distance in time and thought and experience that separates it from us. We have to forget the trappings of ritual and religious usage in which it is wrapped, and remember the social background in which it expanded. Many of the problems of human life have permanence and a touch of eternity about them, and hence the abiding interest in these ancient books. But they dealt with other problems also, limited to their particular age, which have no living interest for us now.

Many Hindus look upon the Vedas as revealed scripture. This seems to me to be peculiarly unfortunate, for thus we miss their real significance - the unfolding of the human mind in the earliest stages of thought. And what a wonderful mind it was! The Vedas (from the root *vid*, to know) were simply meant to be a collection of the existing knowledge of the day; they are a jumble of many things: hymns,

prayers, ritual for sacrifice, magic, magnificent nature poetry. There is no idolatry in them; no temples for the gods. The vitality and affirmation of life pervading them are extraordinary. The early Vedic Aryans were so full of the zest for life that they paid little attention to the soul. In a vague way they believed in some kind of existence after death."

Now the moot point for the *Musalmans* to address is, wouldn't Muhammad's genius be behind fashioning the faith of Islam, after all? Martin Lings picks up the threads of history after Muhammad had the honor of placing the Holy Stone at Kabah as it was rebuilt.

"It was not long after this outward sign of his authority and his mission that he began to experience powerful inward signs, in addition to those of which he had already been conscious. When asked about these he spoke of "true visions" which came to him in his sleep and he said that they were "like the breaking of the light of dawn." The immediate result of these visions was that solitude became dear to him, and he would go for spiritual retreats to a cave in Mount Hira, not far from the outskirts of Mecca."

After all, wouldn't the power of concentration insensibly nudge one's mind into the realms of divinity? Well, many scientists and artists had affirmed the divine inspiration they received in their mundane endeavors, didn't they? Why that couldn't have been the case with Muhammad as well? After all, didn't he say that his mind's eye would be awake even when his eyes sleep? It is in this context it is interesting to note that many Quranic revelations, such as the following one, mention his inspiration:

"And when thou bringest not a verse for them they say: Why hast thou not chosen it? Say: I follow only that which is inspired in me from my Lord. This (Quran) is insight from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy for a people that believe." 203. VII

As Nehru so convincingly argued, one can perhaps appreciate the real genius of Muhammad in shaping Islam if only the Quran is approached as the testimony of his inspiration. It is only then the Quranic injunctions could be seen in the given context for much of what is contained in it is contextual to the discerning mind. Thus, it would be interesting to note the breach of an eminently humane Quranic injunction even during the time of Muhammad.

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor -due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing."

Yet, all the believing *Musalmans* kept their share of slaves, got as spoils of war, without qualms, and even Muhammad, who claimed that Gabriel would come to him every Ramadan to make sure that nothing of the Revelation had slipped from his memory, only freed his slaves, among them women, just before his death! The tendency of the *Musalmans* to revere Muhammad, though he himself maintained that he was just human, and approach his life with a sense of divinity binds them to the *hadith* and *sunna* without regard to the context in which he said what he said, and did what he did.

The problem with the *Musalmans* is that they fail to reckon the motive behind Muhammad's moves in a given context. Even otherwise, it's worth noting that the *hadith* and *sunna* are based on what Muhammad's followers said that he said, and at any rate, they were all but an overawed crowd to be able to retain objectively in Muhammad's prophetic presence. Was it not possible, the hallucinations, if not inventions, of such folks might have made their way into the *hadith*? Besides, hearsay is the bane of best of the times, and what more proof is needed about the averment than its grip, even on the informed mind, in the transparent age of ours. That being the case, it is to be appreciated that the *Musalmans* are dealing with the *hadith* and *sunna* fashioned at a remote place of a bygone age.

After all, weren't there thousands of remarks attributed to Muhammad that were found to be incredulous while standardizing the *hadith* in a later period! Thus, even at the best, the *hadith* but contains what the eminent compiler felt were genuine utterances of Muhammad and for the *Musalmans* to make themselves hostage to the judgmental authenticity of a single scholar, eminent though human, and thus fallible, is extraordinary indeed!

It is also worth the consideration of the *Musalmans* that for all the awe his followers felt for Muhammad, many as well dissented his decisions on occasion. Besides, the success of his prophethood led to the birth of three more prophets - Musaylimah, Tulayhah and Aswad - and a prophetess, Sajah. What is more relevant, they all held sway over their own considerable following in competition to the Prophet of Islam. Obviously, the antiquity of history had lost track of the other prophets, leaving the legend of Muhammad to rule the roost as the 'Seal of the Prophets', and to mould the *sharia*, clouding the mind of the *Musalmans* in the bargain. Thus, the inability of the *Musalmans* to conceptualize the *sharia* in the context of Muhammad's life and times tend them on a path of blind alley.

Anatomy of Islam

'A single people refused to join the common intercourse of mankind,' so wrote Edward Gibbon about the Jews, and thought that 'the Jewish religion was

admirably fitted for defence'. If the Jews puzzled the medieval world, their religious cousins, the *Musalmans*, with their accent on separateness, perplex the modern world. What Nehru wrote in 'The Discovery of India' seems to prove the parody that is the Muslim Brotherhood.

"When Italy suddenly attacked Turkey in the Tripoli War of 1911, and subsequently, during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, an astonishing wave of sympathy for Turkey roused Indian Moslems. All Indians felt that sympathy and anxiety but in the case of Moslems this was keener and something almost personal. The last remaining Moslem power was threatened with extinction; the sheet anchor of their faith in the future was being destroyed. Dr. M. A. Ansari led a strong medical mission to Turkey and even the poor subscribed; money came more rapidly than for any proposal for the uplift of the Indian Moslems themselves."

One might contrast this hackneyed clamor of the *Musalmans* to the low-key Hindu murmur when Mahendra Choudhary was ousted in a coup in Fiji, and made captive besides. The ready explanation for the universal nature of the Muslim agitation is that in them it is cultivated that Islam in essence is a brotherhood of believers transcending races, cultures, and nations. Laudable though the Islamic precept is, what motivates the *Musalmans* to be so moved by it needs our understanding? It is, of course, the Muslim credo that Islam is a body of believers as well as belief, and admittedly, this belief could be sustained only by the collective compulsion of the community to stick to the tenets of its faith. And this practice invariably leads to paranoia of belief, which occasions a collective resistance to change, fearing that might insensibly weaken their faith that sustains that credo.

While religion is meant to mend man's soul and as human psychology tends his mind-set, it is imperative to probe into the psycho-cultural underpinnings of the Islamic upbringing, for which we have *I'm Ok - You're OK* (Avon Books, New York) of Thomas A. Harris, who, after synthesizing the theories of many a psychologist, had come out with a psychological connectivity of the Parent, Child and Adult in human beings in that famous book as under:

"The parent is a huge collection of recordings in the brain of unquestioned or imposed external events perceived by a person in his early years, a period which we have designed roughly as the first five years of life. This is the period before the social birth of the individual, before he leaves home in response to the demands of society and enters school.

While the external events are being recorded as that body of data we call the Parent, there is another recording being made simultaneously [that is of the Child]. This is the recording of the internal events, the responses of the little person to what he sees and hears. In this connection it is important to recall Penfield's observation that the subject feels again the emotion which the situation originally produced in him and he is aware of the same interpretations, true or false, which he himself

gave to the experiences in the first place. This evoked recollection is not the exact photographic or phonographic reproduction of past scenes or events. It is reproduction of what the patient saw and heard and felt and understood.

The Adult is a data-processing computer, which grinds out decisions after computing the information from three sources: the Parent, the Child, and the data, which the Adult has gathered and is gathering. One of the important functions of the Adult is to examine the data in the Parent, to see whether or not it is true and still applicable today, and then to accept it or reject it; and to examine the Child to see whether or not the feelings there are appropriate to the present or are archaic and in response to archaic Parent data. The goal is not to do away with the Parent and the Child but to be free to examine these bodies of data. The Adult, in the words of Emerson, 'must not be hindered by the goodness, but must examine if it be goodness'; or badness, for that matter.'

The Adult develops later than the Parent and Child and seems to have a difficult time catching up throughout life. The more one knows of the content of Parent and Child (in him) the more easily one can separate Parent and Child from the adult. The more sensitive one is to one's own Parent and Child, the more separated, autonomous, and strong becomes the Adult.

Ideally the P-A-C circles are separate. In many people, however, the circles overlap. The overlap of the Parent and the Adult would result in a contamination of the latter by the dated, un-examined Parent data which is externalized as true. This is called prejudice. Prejudice develops in early childhood when the door of inquiry is shut on certain subject by the security-giving parents. The little person dares not open it for fear of parental rebuke.

The contamination of Adult-Child overlap affects in the form of feelings or archaic experiences which are inappropriately externalized in the present. Two of the most common symptoms of this kind of contamination are delusions and hallucinations. A delusion is grounded in fear. A hallucination is a phenomenon produced by extreme stress, wherein what was once experienced externally - derogation, rejection, and criticism - is again experienced externally even though 'no one is there'. A recorded experience 'comes on for real' and the person 'hears' voices that existed in the past reality.

In addition to the contamination there is another functional disorder that explains how we differ: exclusion. Exclusion is manifested by a stereotyped, predictable attitude which is steadfastly maintained as long as possible in the face of any threatening situation. The constant Parent, the constant Adult, and the constant Child all result primarily from defensive exclusion of the two complementary aspects in each case.

And this is a situation in which an excluding Parent can 'block out' the child or an Excluding Child can 'block out' the Parent. Typical of the Parent - contaminated Adult with a Blocked -Out child is the man who is duty dominated.

It is as if, at some point in his childhood, he was so utterly quashed by serious, stern, duty-bound parents that he found the only safe way to proceed through life was to turn his Child off completely.

A more serious difficulty, particularly to society, is presented by the Child - Contaminated adult with a Blocked - Out Parent. This condition develops in the person whose real parents, or those who fulfilled the parental role, were so brutal and terrifying or, in the other extreme, so doltishly indulgent that the only way to preserve life was to 'shut them off.' or block them out. This is the typical of the psychopath.

The Decommissioned Adult is the psychotic who had a Blocked - Out Adult. His Adult is not functioning, and therefore he is out of touch with reality. His Parent and Child come on straight, frequently in a jumbled mixture of archaic data, a jumbled replay of early experiences that do not make sense now because they did not make sense when they were recorded."

Thus, considering every human being is a product of his own P-A-C, it would be interesting to study the psyche of the religious mind of the average *Musalman*. Perhaps, there could be no contradiction in the assumption of an 'average *Musalman*' since Mohammedans tend to be homogenous in the socio-religious sense, irrespective of their race, color, occupation and domiciliation.

'Most Christians might shrug if asked whether they really believed that Jesus turned water into wine, or raised Lazarus from the dead. Muslims by contrast do not doubt that Allah's angels helped the Prophet at the Battle of Badr. Allah is a living god to them, as palpable and meaningful as an ideal parent might be.' - M.J. Akbar in 'The Shade of Swords'.

This clearly indicates the prevalence of the Decommissioned Adult phenomenon, by and large, in the *Musalman*s all over. But how come such a large multitude of people, many of them living amidst other religious groups, in contemporary times at that, could be so dogmatic about their religious beliefs? And, that too, in a world which is being driven by modernity backed by information technology! It should be our endeavor to understand this unique Muslim intellectual stagnation in psychological terms by wedding the P-A-C theories of Thomas A. Harris to our Islamic borrowings from Roland E Miller's "Muslim Friends - Their faith and feeling, An introduction to Islam."

The Parent component of *Musalman*s, so well expostulated by Miller, comprises of Allah the Almighty, Muhammad His Messenger, the *ulema*, the Muslim clergy, and of course the biological parents or family guardian of an individual.

We have seen from the Quran that the relationship between 'the God' and the believer is that of the Master and the servant, which provides for a strict religious parentage. Thus, it is but natural, that the role of 'the God' as the Parent in the life of the *Musalman* is considerable as noticed by Miller thus:

“The entire religious context of Muslim life underlines the Reality of God, and is designed to make and keep Muslims aware of that Reality. From birth to death, and in all that lies between, the Reality of God encompasses Muslim life. Muslim faith and life are marked by an overwhelming sense of God. Muslims are the people who simply believe that God is Real, and really to be feared.

They live like people who are standing in the Presence of God. The ordinary Muslim sense of God may be defined as an attitude of deep respect rather than emotional extravagance. Their attitude towards the Almighty is deferential rather than presumptuous, austere rather than excited, devout rather than passionate. Behind that attitude of restraint lies the Muslim understanding of the utter greatness of God.

The Islamic emphasis on God’s transcendent power produces attitudes of awe, respectful fear and solemn praise among believers. Most Muslims are not very interested in attempting to probe further into the transcendent mystery of God’s being. It is a deep sea, venture not into it, said Muhammad, when asked about the decree of predestination. Thus Muslims prefer to bear witness to His greatness and mystery. A Muslim who is alive to God is alive to the praise of God and His power.

Sine the Muslims cherish an overwhelming sense of God, it is natural to speak of the fear of God. This does not imply fear in the sense of being afraid, although the emotion cannot be eliminated. It means a rather holy fear, a combination of profound awe and overwhelming respect that maintains the awareness of God in a seemingly godless world. “they only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned...(8.2). Perhaps at no time do Muslims feel this emotion more deeply than when they attend the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Finally it is the obedient service to God. The glory of humanity is to be the servants of God. Do not aspire to be more than that, for in being a servant of God you have achieved the highest thing. It’s enough to be faithful servants of God. Muslims do not wish to be less than that, nor more than that. The frame of reference for their obedience is the Law of God, for God the Master has prescribed a way of life, the path, the clear road that believers should tread.”

Millar continues his account of the Mohammedan mind-set thus - “The Muslims believe the God had chosen and called Muhammad to be the final and Universal guide for humanity as confirmed by the Quran:

“And those who believe and do good works, and believe in that which is revealed unto Muhammad... He riddeth them of their ill-deeds and improve their state.”(47:2)

““He (Allah) it is who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion... Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” (48.29)

“Since Quran calls Muhammad a noble pattern... for all who hope in God (33.21) to follow him, and to imitate him, is to be authentically on the path of God and it is every devout Muslim’s personal goal.”

“And make our calling down of blessing on him a key, and by it open to us, O Lord, the veil of acceptance, and accept, by the blessing of my Beloved... the litanies and vocations which I now recite, and my love and magnifying of Thyself.”

Further, as Miller found out, the respect for Muhammad’s role and character amongst the believers is so profound that it makes possible the saying: “To understand Islam is to understand Muhammad.”

“The affection for Muhammad is expressed in various ways - by the remembering of whatever he said and did (*Hadith*), by the celebration of his birthday (*milad al-nabi*), by the stories of his exploits that are recited in public and in homes (*mawluds*), but above all by the calling down of blessing upon the Prophet and his family (*tasliya*). You may have noticed an unusual phenomenon that takes place in Muslim groups whenever the name of Muhammad is mentioned. A sound ripples through the audience, the recitation of the Arabic phrase *salla llahu ala n-nabi*, that is, “May God bless the Prophet!” When Muhammad’s name appears in print in English-language publications, four letters, *pbuh*, are added in parentheses behind his name. The letters stand for “Peace be upon him!” The calling down of God’s blessing upon the Prophet is not only an act of due reverence, but it is also an action that brings great personal merit.”

Thus as neither age withers nor custom stale the appeal of Muhammad to the *Musalmans*, the *hadith* remains the sacrosanct parent to a Muslim child, the data of which is but the recollections of Muhammad’s followers of his actions and utterances. A few of them as quoted by Miller in his ‘Muslim Friends’ read thus:

“Ibn ‘Umar reported God’s Messenger as saying, ‘Islam is based on five things: the testimony that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger, the observance of the prayer, the payment of *zakat*, the pilgrimage, and the fast during Ramadan.

Al-‘Abbas b. Abd al-Muttalib reported God’s messenger as saying - ‘He who is well- pleased with God as Lord, with Islam as religion, and with Muhammad as messenger will experience the savour of faith.

Ubada b. as-Samit said: I heard God’s messenger say, ‘If anyone testifies that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God’s messenger, God will keep him from going to hell.

Ubad b. as-Samit reported God’s messenger as saying, ‘Five times of prayer have been prescribed by God. If anyone performs the ablution for them well, observers them at their proper time, and perfectly performs the bowing and showing of submissiveness during them, he had a covenant from God to forgive him; but if anyone does not do so, he has no covenant. If he wills He may forgive him, but if He wills not, He may punish him.

Malik b. Anas... reported God's messenger as saying, "As long as you hold fast to two things which I have left among you, you will not go astray: God's Book and His messenger's *sunna*."

Jabir reported God's messenger as saying. "To proceed: The best discourse is God's Book, the best guidance is that given by Muhammad, and the worst things are those which are novelties..."

Al-Miqdam b. Madikarib reported God's messenger as saying, I have indeed been brought the Quran and something like it along with it; yet the time is coming when a man replete on his couch will say, "Keep to this Quran; what you find in it to be permissible treat as permissible, and what you find in it to be prohibited treat as prohibited. But what God's messenger had prohibited is like what God has prohibited..."

However, contrast the above with the following quote in Martin Lings biography about Muhammad's conversation with Mu'adh on the eve of the latter's departure to Yemen as a judge:

"How will you decide when a question arises?" He replied: "According to the Book of Allah," "And if you do not find the answer in the Book of Allah?" "Then according to the *sunna* of the Messenger of Allah." "And if you do not find the answer neither in the *sunna* nor in the Book?" "Then I shall come to a decision according to my own opinion without hesitation." Then Muhammad slapped Mu'adh on the chest with his hand saying, "Praise be to Allah Who has led the messenger of the Messenger of Allah to an answer that pleased him."

The Mu'adh model of individualistic intellectualism might have played its role in the early stages of Islamic evolution, but as Miller noted, "As time passed, however, free and independent reasoning seemed to many Muslims to be a source of confusion and even threatening. It is pious obedience, not rational argumentation that is the Muslim way; after all, it was said the sin of the devil was that he had argued with God instead of obeying him! So as to avoid the possibility of Islam sinking into individual anarchism Muslim ethos got wedded to the *hadith*."

Herein lay the dichotomy of the *Musalmans*, as *hadith*, after all, is the record of the life and times of Muhammad, by no means an autobiographical account of his, but at best attributed to him by his followers, or at worst invented by the enamoured. Thus are caught the *Musalmans* between the Islamic deep sea of *hadithian hearsay* and the devil of the self-denied logic. It is one of the many ironies of Islam that its believers should sink into a collective anachronism trying to avoid individual anarchism.

It is another matter though, that the *Musalmans* fail to appreciate the logic of change, even though the Quran maintains that revelations are subject to amendments:

“Such of our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest though not that Allah is Able to all things?”

And abrogate Allah did, his original revelation to Muhammad about drink and dice. Verse 219. II reveals: “They question about strong drink and games of chance. Say: In both is great sin, and (some) utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness.”

However, the amendment contained in 90.V reads thus: “O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan’s handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed.”

Incidentally, Allah’s original revelation about the punishment to lewd women reads thus in 15. IV: “As for those of your women who are guilty of lewdness, call to witness four of you against them. And if they testify (to the truth of the allegation) then confine them to the houses until death take them or (until) Allah appoint for them a way (through new revelation)”

But, seemingly to address Ayesha’s predicament, when she strayed in the desert, and bought back to Muhammad by Safwan, the revelation (19. XXIV) has it that: “Lo! those who love that slander should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter. Allah knoweth. Ye know not.”

So, that being the case, the *sharia* would have the woman accused of adultery stoned to death when Allah seemed to have willed to the contrary.

Be that as it may, when Allah, the All Knower, the Seer and the Wise, with the experience of having given the Torah and the Gospel before, still admits in the Quran that there is scope for improvement for Him even, isn’t it strange that the *Muslims* should swear that the *hadith* is the be all and end all of all the worldly wisdom, divine as well as mundane, for all times to come! And, indeed, of life itself! Isn’t such a creed something like being more Christian than the Christ? Well, it’s for the *Muslims* to think about that.

Besides, it is beyond belief that the *Muslims* should believe that the All Knowing Allah could have suffered from selective amnesia when he was fashioning the straight path for them. After all, what does His modifying some *ayats* or rescinding the others suggest? Above all, how could have He erred in such a vital matter of man’s rebirth, on which He changed tack in the Quran! First of all, there is this *ayat*, 55.20, in an early *Mecca Surah*, Ta Ha - “Thereof We created you, and thereunto We return you, and thence We bring you forth a second time.”

What was this revelation if not about ‘rebirth’ that the God had done away with later on in Quran, and for what purpose?

Why, was not the Quranic foundation for a permanent Paradise, on which the edifice of the Islamic martyrdom was built, meant to serve the cause of Allah and His Messenger in their fight for the Kabah? After all, it’s the desire to reach the

Hereafter, and remain there forever thereafter without a bother, which is the motivating factor of martyrdom in Islam. Even otherwise, what sense does it make for the believers to come down 'here' again after having heard the Quran deprecating it in so many chapters and verses? Does it!

If one were to be skeptical about the proposition, then it is all there to see and hear in the pre-recorded audio-video cassettes of the martyrs perpetually aired on the Muslim TV Channels. Whatever, the contradictions in the Quranic *ayats* cited above are not all encompassing, and it is for the *Musalman*s to scrutinize their Scripture that is the fulcrum of their faith. However, *ulema* as the religious Parent of the *Musalman* can be seen from Miller's observations thus:

"In spite of the Islamic theory of equality, clergy not only developed in Islam but in the end their influence became as powerful as that of clergy in religions that maintain a priestly principle.

A traditional Muslim clergyman admires the Quran above everything else and dedicates his life to it, even though more often than not he has to work for very low pay. In terms of its explanation, he has the deepest respect for past authorities. His study of the Quran is therefore more related to what previous generations have believed about it, rather than to its fresh application to the present age. For him the Quran is the solace of Islam and the source of all true knowledge, and he gives equal respect to the traditional doctrines of the faith.

The second group of clergy and scholars may be called progressive teachers. They are those who wish to stress the authority of the Quran over human traditions, to go back to it, to make it a living Book, and to reinterpret it in the light of contemporary needs and conditions. Though these teachers are still in the minority, their number is increasing.

In *madrasas* that the clergy preside over are attended by the majority of the Muslim children, the topics of study include an introduction to the Muslim faith and practice, worship forms, biography of the Prophet Muhammad, and stories of other heroes of the faith. *Madrasas'* purpose is not so much to open the mind as to impress the spirit. They seek to set a tone and to provide some simple rules for being a Muslim.

Though new forms of *madrasa* education are developing the overall impact of the *madrasa* experience on Muslim faith and feeling is a powerful one. Above all, what Muslim boys and girls learn is respect for the Sacred Word. Combined with that, they also gain a sense of their identity as Muslims. The effect of this early concentrated exposure to the Quran is to leave a virtually indelible mark on Muslim spiritual consciousness."

No less, the Muslim parents, as the Parent of the *Musalman*, play their synchronizing part to the boot in Millar's picture of the life and times of a Muslim boy thus:

“The Islamic creed, the five fold call to prayer, the annual fast, the steady mutual exhortation of Muslims, in short, the whole of Islam emphasizes the place of God in human life. Immediately after he was born sacred words would have been breathed into its ear. From the age of five to thirteen he would have attended a religious school to be educated in the Word of God (Quran). As a youth he would have listened to the night lectures of religious leaders that he could have attended during the month of fasting (Ramadan). As adults, he and his wife would have shared in the activities of the community of believers that is dedicated to carrying the will of God, and they would strive to share this vision with their children, against the alternative visions that come to them from modern life.”

Thus, we see there is this external force, driven by the power and the fear of Allah, to impinge upon the mind of the *Musalman*. Besides, the admiration for and the desire to emulate Muhammad is omnipresent in the Islamic ghettos to rule his mind. And in the *masjids* and the *madrasas*, his imagination gets impregnated by the Quranic injunctions. It is this inculcation of belief in the doctrine of Islam within and without the Islamic home that occasions the all-consuming Parent of the religious subconsciousness of the *Musalman*.

What about the ‘Harris’ recording’ of the internal responses of the little *Musalman* to this unceasing religious conditioning by the society around?

As the external inputs he would be receiving from the parent subscribe to the environment in which he lives in and interacts with, there should be perfect spiritual harmony in the Child about Islamic religiosity. On the other hand, this imposition of religious regimen on the tender ‘freedom loving’ childhood might result in the subconscious resentment against the Islamist Quadruple Parent as named above. This unique fusion between the external inputs that make the Parent, and the internal responses to the same which make the Child, would ensure that the Child in the adult *Musalman* would be either of ‘righteous consciousness’ type in case of compliance or the one imperiled by ‘guilty subconsciousness’ sort in case of partially complying / non-complying childhood. And so, as Harris has theorized, the former leads to prejudice and the latter results in delusion.

However, it is the ‘Decommissioned Adult’ in the *Musalman* that shows a total lack of interest in contrary inputs that leaves no opportunity for processing the Parent-Child data for verification of its veracity. This is how, impervious to the realities of their surroundings, the *Musalman*s would be able to carve out their pan-Islamic Islands in every place they happen to live in. It’s thus; they find themselves out of sync with the national sentiments of their fellow countrymen, preoccupied as they are with their separate identity as *Musalman*s. It is as if they are simply indifferent to the happenings around that won’t concern Islam. The reality is, not that the *Musalman*s love their country of birth any less but they love the Muslim Brotherhood more!

Maybe, because of this abnormality in such a religiously conditioned Muslim mind-set, 'the others' too cannot be faulted for misconstruing their indifferent, if not hostile, behavior. More often, 'the others' tend to conclude that the *Musalman*s are unpatriotic, if not anti-national and it is this negative perception of 'the others' towards them that doubly hurts the *Musalman*s. But the 'Decommissioned Adult' in them would have rendered them incapable of seeing the other side of the emotional coin, and given their inability to adjust or adapt with 'the others', the *Musalman*s, somewhere or the other in the wide world, forever get embroiled in some dispute or controversy, and/or both. And that is good enough a reason for the *Musalman*s to believe that Islam is in danger, to protect which they feel no compunction to resorting to violence. Oh, in what ways this Islamic self-righteous aggressiveness, which its apologists make light as antics of Muslim frustration, the world has been experiencing to its hurt and dismay!

While 'the others' feel skeptical about the out-of-tune archaic Islamic personal laws, the *Musalman*s view that as poking into their religious nose, and their gut reaction is to retort that their *sharia* is their business as, in no way, it impinges upon the lives of 'the others'. After all, social contract is all about making the individual needs subservient to the family good, family good to that of the community welfare, and the community welfare to that of the national interests.

But living in the Quranic wells in the non-Islamic lands, the Mohammedan Decommissioned Adult fails to appreciate all this. Just to cite an example, population control is in the national interest of any over-populous country such as India, but the Decommissioned Adult of the *Musalman* approaches the issue with his Parent-Child perspective that family planning is un-Islamic, after all.

Likewise, polygamy and *talaq*, more so the triple-*talaq*, might well serve the Muslim male interest, but aren't they inimical to Muslim female well-being?

Well, the Mohammedan Decommissioned Adult of the *Musalman*, unfortunately for him and his family, and by extension to his community and to the nation in which he lives, is incapable of receiving new Adult data. Instead, he relies on the irrelevant Parent-Child inputs, which, any way, are obscurantist to say the least. It is these psychological aberrations among the *Musalman*s, never mind whether *madrassa* trained or convent educated, that produce Islamist terrorists, who became the scourge of the world, the Muslim world included.

Fight for the Souls

During the middle of the 1st Century A.D, St. Thomas reached India's west coast of Malabar to establish the Church of the Christ, and having succeeded in cementing the Syrian Christian Order there, the evangelist moved on to Madras to

spread the message of the Gospel. However, the temper of the Tamilians ensured a hostile reception to his missionary zeal, and his persistence to proselytize them regardless had ended in his martyrdom for the Christianity. And after that, all was calm and quiet on the Indian religious front till the Buddhist Sind was painted Islamic green by the hand of bin Qasim in the early 8th Century.

Notwithstanding Ghazni's sack of Somnath, religious status quo still held good in Hindustan till the end of the 12th Century, when the sword of Allah wielded by Muhammad Ghuri firmly grounded the religion of the Arabs in the soil of the *Aryavarta* by enabling his lieutenant to establish the slave dynasty in Delhi. Thus was heralded the Muslim rule in India that was to last till the British signed off Bahadurshah Zafar the Last Mogul in the mid 19th Century.

While the oppressive Hindu phenomenon of untouchability worked well for the religion of the Arabia, it was as much the 'social oppression' as the 'religious denial' that would have made these outcastes feel, as if they were living in a no-man's land in Hindustan. More so in Bengal, so it seems, where in droves, they had embraced the foreign faith of the *Musalman* that came with the alien cultural baggage of Arabia, which in the end assumed the proportions of a near exodus into the Islamic arena. After all, while the caste Hindus denied them gods by keeping them at arms length from their *Mandirs*, the *Muslimans* were prepared to share with them the precincts of their *Masjids* for common prayers for Allah's grace. This caste Hindu refusal to share even one amongst their pantheon of gods with the outcastes of *Aryavarta*, made the latter, as later-day *Musalmanans*, to shoulder the Islamic urge to grab its 'land wings' for Pakistan. Oh, what shortsightedness of Hindu pigheadedness!

Thus, by the time the political prop came to the Missionaries of the Christ in the form of the East India Company, in the late 18th Century, the homes of most of the disgruntled outcasts and vulnerable Hindus and / or both, were firmly in the Islamic fold. Even otherwise, the bottom-line of the alien religious appeal to the populace of Hindustan is that Islam and the Christianity could only impinge upon the fringes of its polity, that too when the rulers belonged to the respective religious dispensations. After all, this is understandable since man tends to weigh the temporal advantages more than the spiritual benefits when it comes to embracing a new religion, and depending on the state of evolution in a given society or commune, the factors that prompt one's conversion change from time to time.

Nonetheless, with not many souls left to harvest, as Pope John Paul II had paraphrased it in recent times, yet the Christianity made its Indian mark in remarkable ways, more so being instrumental in introducing secular education that eventually ushered in social reengineering in an otherwise stagnant society, the sad relic of a once vibrant *Upanishadic* polity. Eventually, what with so much reformist water having flowed down the untouchable bride, of course, pumped by the

western educated Hindus leading upto the independence struggle and beyond, the caste color of Hindustan began to acquire a new shade albeit imperceptibly.

It was only time before modernism became the *mantra* of upward mobility, and the Western education, the preferred route to social savvy in the Indian society, but as Islam is conceptually antagonistic to both, at last, it lost its erstwhile sway over even amongst the disaffected *harijans*, nay *dalits*, who had tended to opt for the Standard of the Christ as a benign brand equity. Thus, it is no wonder that the Christian salvation had become the natural selection for the Hindu fringes, if only seduced with the right inducements from the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, unlike the Brahmanic indifference of yore to those unabated conversions into Islam, the prevailing Hindu mood of the day is in no mood to brook the compulsive Christian urge to proselytize, by means fair or foul. This justifiable Hindu resentment against the Christian zeal to convert others into its religious creed had unfortunately led to unjustifiable atrocities on the evangelists on occasion.

All said and done the so-called revealed religions that supposedly preach the pure message, or purportedly show the straight path, have failed to touch the mainstream of the Hindu polity. And that is in spite of the unceasing efforts of their proselytizers and the presence of their converts in their midst for a millennium! It is thus, the surprising resistance of the Hindu dharma to the dogma of Semitic religions, unlike the political capitulation of India to foreign forces, would be worth probing for the fault lines in the proselytizing faiths.

The assumption of the Christians is that only the Gospel could enable man's salvation, and that Jesus, the Son of God, only could intervene on behalf of man on the Day of Judgment. The novel path of salvation through the Christianity that Jesus showed would have surely excited the Christian missionaries, and their desire to share their noble creed with the others is unexceptionable. But for the Christians to imagine that there could be no salvation sans the Son of God betrays the credulity of their minds at best, and their ignorance about the sophistication of the Hindu philosophy at worst. It is a different matter though, that for the orthodox Jews, Jesus was a Judaic renegade, and for the idolatrous Arabs, Muhammad was but a deviant, and so on, which brings to the fore the fallacy of prophetic glorification.

Though it was the unwavering belief in Jesus that enabled the Christian missionaries, in spite of centuries of persecution, to spread his word on the continent and elsewhere that kept the Christianity alive to start with, the eclipse of the Greco-Roman Gods in the heart of the Roman Empire at its expense was achieved more through the conversion of Emperor Constantine than by the miracles of the Son of God and his saints. Whatever, this Christian conviction of salvation coupled with the mistaken belief that the Hindu souls were languishing for want of the message from the Messiah, which could have brought St. Thomas to the Malabar Coast half a century after Jesus had died on the Cross

On the contrary, with the sword of Allah in one hand and Muhammad's Quran in the other, the Caliphs of Islam set out to pillage the world with an army of zealots who had their eyes on plunder or Paradise, and / or both. Whatever, it was the good fortune of Islam that its adherents encountered little or no resistance from the nations of the world, by then exhausted after centuries of wars, to spread its wings all across. Oh, how one religion's food had turned out to be other religions' poison!

If the credo of the Christianity is courting other religious souls in covetous ways, the creed of the *Musalman* has been to turn the *kafirs* of the world into servants of their God, and by extension admirers of their prophet. After the destruction of the idols of the Arabia, the *Mandirs* of India that the *Musalman*s might have heard about should have raised their hopes of mundane plunder, even as they would have outraged their religious sensitivity. Muhammad's allergy for the idols at the Kabah was to turn out, some three centuries later, to be the nightmare of the Hindu deities in their resplendent *Mandirs*. The anecdote quoted by M J Akbar in 'The Shade of the Swords', published by Roli Books, is illustrative.

"The story of the Muslim conquest of central India may have begun with a misunderstanding: one man's pronunciation can become another man's poison. The three most revered pagan goddesses of pre-Islamic Mecca were Al Lat, Al Uzza, and Manat, denounced in the Quran as false deities and the source of the infamous controversy about the alleged 'Satanic Verses'. According to an old belief, when the Prophet smashed the idols of the Kaaba, the image of Manat was missing: it had been secreted away, and sent in a trading ship to a port-town in India called Prabhas, which imported Arab horses. According to this belief, idol-worshippers built a temple to Manat, and renamed the place So-Manat, or Somnath. The warrior king Mahmud, who built an empire from the Afghan city of Ghazni, waged the first jihad in the heart of India. His most famous raid was the one in which he destroyed the idol at Somnath and carried away enough booty to appease avarice."

However, the very fact that Mahmud raided the temples of Mathura, Thanesar and Kannauj before plundering Somnath would leave one wondering whether it was not a Muslim rationalization of the gruesome killing of over 'fifty thousand' souls, possibly, including a thousand Brahman priests, in the temple of So-Manat? But, what is relevant is the reported hope of Mahmud that once the idol of Somnath was captured and destroyed, the Hindus would become Muhammadans, *a la Meccans*. But, that didn't happen, and as though to signify the symbolism of Somnath to the Hindu ethos, even the secular government of Nehru's India thought it fit that the temple should be rebuilt.

What was in the Hindu *dharma* that soured St. Thomas' dream to proselytize the polity and belied Mahmud's hopes to see a Muslim India? The logical and rational answer would be that the Hindus are neither heathens as assumed by the Christians nor are they idolaters as presumed by the *Musalman*s. On the other hand,

as against the single scripture wisdom of the Semitic religions and the dogma of their prophets, the Hindu *sanaatana dharma* is a spiritual way of life with an imbibed philosophical ethos that is steeped in deep-rooted culture and tradition. Thus, in terms of reach and approach, the straight but narrow paths of Judaism, the Christianity, not to speak of Islam, appear like by-lanes of bigotry compared to the Highway of Hindu Spirituality, exemplified by the dictum of *vasudhaika kutumbam* – the world is but one family.

However, the irony of Hinduism is that this laudable premise was neither passed on to the outside world, and what is worse, nor put in practice in its homeland either, if not why were there those untouchables and the downtrodden in the Hindu backyard? After all, notwithstanding their hallowed precepts, double-talk and double standards seem to be the common features of all religions. Be that as it may, while the Semitic religions are faith driven, the *sanaatana dharma* is philosophical in its orientation, and that enables the Hindus to probe the vicissitudes of life not bound by any scriptural dogma. And this has always been the strength of Hinduism notwithstanding its Achilles' heel of caste discrimination for possible course correction, all by itself, which, in time, led to the birth of the likes of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

It is in this context that the Roberto Baggio episode is to be seen. The Italian footballer, dejected as he was in the wake of the penalty goof that cost his country the World Cup, reportedly turned to Buddhism for solace for he felt that the Christian dogma had no philosophical inputs in it to face of the vicissitudes of life. After all, the feature of the Semitic religious faiths is the dogmatic belief sustained by habit while spirituality epitomizes the search for the self in this world and beyond.

Whatever others might say, the Hindus still believe, as Alberuni observed then - that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs - the tag of three thousand years old culture being the new addition in their Hall of Fame. Herein lay the Christian inability to proselytize India and the Muslim failure to attract the caste Hindus into the Islamic fold.

In his 'The Indian Musalmans' published by Rupa & Co, India, W. W. Hunter, aided by the Gibbonian insight, throws light on the nature of the mono and polytheism thus:

"Yet many English Officers have gone through their service with a chronic indignation against the Muhammadan for refusing to accept the education which we have tried to bring to every man's door. The felicity with which the rest of the population acquiesced in it made this refusal more odious by contrast. The plaint Hindu knew no scruples, and we could not understand why the Muhammadan should be troubled with them. But the truth is, that we overlooked a distinction as old as the religious instinct itself, the distinction which in all ages and among all

nations has separated polytheism from the worship of One God. Polytheism, by multiplying the objects of its followers' adoration, divides its claims on their belief.

What Gibbon finely said of the Greeks, applies at this moment with more than its original force to the Hindus: 'Instead of an indivisible and regular system which occupies the whole extent of the believing mind, the mythology of the Greeks was composed of a thousand loose and flexible parts, and the servant of the gods was at liberty to define the degree and measure of his religious faith.' The Muhammadans have no such licence. Their creed demands an absolute, a living, and even an intolerant belief; nor will any system of Public Instruction, which leaves the religious principle out of sight, ever satisfy the devout follower of Islam."

Why not, the caste Hindus, prone to be biased against those borne into the so-called lower castes, yet are not abhorrent of the lesser gods worshipped by these very men and women, though they themselves ascribe no divinity to these minor deities. While that portrays the religious tolerance of the Hindus to differing faiths, sadly it betrays their cultural intolerance towards the unprivileged fellow-human beings, upon which the Islam and the Christianity, espousing an egalitarian doctrine, had made inroads into the Indian religious milieu.

On the other hand, it is the paradox of the Semitic faiths in that while vouching for the selfsame God, who is believed to have enshrined the Torah, inspired the Gospel and gave the Quran, it was the Christians that ran the Crusades against the *Musalman*s, who had earlier oppressed the Jews. While the unfortunate Jews suffered again at the Christian hands in the European lands in several pogroms before the Holocaust, given the Hindu tolerance for other religious dispensations, all through it was in India that they could breathe easy without let or hindrance nonetheless pursuing their faith. But when it comes to the peoples of the Books, it is not enough that the others too have faith in the selfsame God but their dogma too should be no different from their brand of dogma of a given sub-faith, and in what can be said as the acme of the Semitic religious intolerance, the Ahmadis / Shias of Pakistan and the Shias of Iraq have come to suffer at the Sunni hands as the worst victims of the Islamic dogma. Wish the Semitic scriptures contained some philosophy as well!

India in Coma

The zeal of the Arabs to spread Muhammad's word that catered to their innate urge to plunder, which for Edward Gibbon made Islam the profitable religion of Arabia, obliterated the great cultures of the time, occasioned by his thesis that "the Koran inculcates, in the most absolute sense, the tenets of fate and predestination,

which would extinguish both industry and virtue, if the actions of man were governed by his speculative belief.”

Whatever, after the initial fanatical momentum, the Arabs, bereft of any political culture to name, began to yield the pan Islamic temporal ground to the very peoples - the Turks, the Persians and the Afghans - they had coerced into their faith. It's the irony of history that these very peoples, subjugated by the Arabs to the detriment of their gods, had furthered the cause of Islam with the swords of their own, of course, fired by their ambition and fuelled by the newfound religious zeal. No less paradoxically, as these converts came to undermine the Arab authority in the emerging *Umma*, the purveyors of the faith retreated into their tents, which deprived them of any further partake in the affairs of the Islamic world, that is till the petrodollars made them the masters of the domain of the *Musalmans* once again.

On the other hand the Brahmans, the authors of the Aryan caste system that inflicted grievous wounds on the body polity of the grand land, continued to hold sway over the Hindu social consciousness with their intellectual savvy and religious orthodoxy that is well after the Arabs had resigned to their inglorious fate. Besides, in the Vedic times, the Brahmans were well adept at warfare too, as the exploits of the Dronacharyas, Aswathamas et al in the epic battle of *Maha Bharata* would illustrate. Even in the earlier *Ramayana* times, Parasurama, the Lord's avatar as a Brahman, emphasized the Brahmanic ethos of the Vedic times thus:

*agratas chaturo veedan
prushtash saran dhanoo
idam kshatram idam brahmayam
sepaadapi saraa dapi*
Spar at not a Vedic soul
Armed to the teeth as well,
Brain 'n brawn as thus combined
Curse I might or subdue thee.

While the Aryan political fabric in myriad social colors, woven with the wharf of *varna* and the weft of *dharma*, was worn by varied caste groups in their accorded custom (*swadharmā*), ordained by the country code (*sanaatana dharma*), the power of the Hindu State willed in enforcing the *dharmic* order in all its manifestations. If each caste were to adhere to its own *dharma* without let or hindrance, so it was assumed, all was well with the State itself.

However in time, what with the gradual decline of the great Aryan empires giving way to tiny kingdoms and banana republics, internecine battles for the domination of the no man's land of *Aryavarta* became the norm rather than an exception. Understandably, the Brahmans could not have remained immune to the

political turmoil around, which would have threatened their cultural hegemony that they had inherited, and so were embroiled in intrigues with a view to retain their hold on the political handles of what they came to call as the *karmabhoomi*. But with the diminishing stature of the rulers of the land, their own political diminution was not far off, and so they too ceased to be the wise ministers they used to be. So, when Mahmud's father was building border roads in Afghanistan to enable his son to war his way into Somnath, there was no Chanakya in the Brahman ranks then to build the political bridges in India. And adding to the woes of the Aryavarta, its *kshatriyas* too, for far too long weren't producing Vikramaadityas of yore.

Thus, the decline of the Brahmanic sagacity and the pettiness of the *kshatriya* princes, together weakened the Indian political State further, setting in motion the Hindu socio-political degeneration that insensibly led the vexed multitudes into their regional shells of self-destruction. It was into this India in coma that the Afghan Armageddon of Mahmud of Ghazni had a cakewalk for unleashing an era of loot and plunder in the land of Hindustan.

The episode that changed the psyche of the Hindus forever is thus narrated in Romila Thapar's "A History of India" published by Penguin India.

"Temples were depositories of vast quantities of wealth, in cash, golden images, and jewellery - the donations of the pious and these made them natural targets for a non-Hindu searching for wealth in northern India. Mahmud's greed for gold was insatiable. From 1010 to 1026 the invasions of Mahmud were directed to temple towns - Mathura, Thanesar, Kanauj, and finally Somnath. The concentration of wealth at Somnath was renowned, and consequently it was inevitable that Mahmud would attack it. Added to the desire for wealth was the religious motivation, iconoclasm being a meritorious activity among the more orthodox followers of the Islamic faith. The destruction at Somnath was frenzied, and its effect was to remain for many centuries in the Hindu mind and to colour its assessment of the character of Mahmud, and on occasion of Muslim rulers in general. A thirteenth-century account from an Arab source refers to this event.

'Somnat - a celebrated city of India situated on the shore of the sea and washed by its waves. Among the wonders of that place was the temple in which was placed the idol called Somnat. This idol was in the middle of the temple without anything to support it from below, or to suspend it from above. It was held in the highest honour among the Hindus, and whoever beheld it floating in the air was struck with amazement, whether he was a Musulman or an infidel.

The Hindus used to go on pilgrimage to it whenever there was an eclipse of the moon and would then assemble there to the number of more than a hundred thousand. They believed that the souls of men used to meet there after separation from the body and that the idol used to incorporate them at its pleasure in other bodies in accordance with their doctrine of transmigration. The ebb and flow of the

tide was considered to be the worship paid to the idol by the sea. Everything of the most precious was brought there as offerings, and the temple was endowed with more than ten thousand villages. There is a river (the Ganges), which is held sacred, between which, and Somnat the distance is two hundred *parasangs*. They used to bring the water of this river to Somnat every day and wash the temple with it. A thousand Brahmans were employed in worshipping the idol and attending on the visitors, and five hundred damsels sung and danced at the door - all these were maintained upon the endowments of the temple.

The edifice was built upon fifty-six pillars of teak covered with lead. The shrine of the idol was dark but was lighted by jewelled chandeliers of great value. Near it was a chain of gold weighing two hundred *mans*. When a portion (watch) of the night closed, this chain used to be shaken like bells to rouse a fresh lot of Brahmans to perform worship. When the Sultan went to wage religious war against India, he made great efforts to capture and destroy Somnat, in the hope that the Hindus would become Muhammadans. He arrived there in the middle of ... December A. D. 1025.

The Indians made a desperate resistance. They would go weeping and crying for help into the temple and then issue forth to battle and fight till all were killed. The number of slain exceeded 50,000. The king looked upon the idol with wonder and gave orders for the seizing of the spoil and the appropriation of the treasures. There were many idols of gold and silver and vessels set with jewels, all of which had been sent there by the greatest personages in India. The value of the things found in the temple and of the idols exceeded twenty thousand dinars.

When the king asked his companions what they had to say about the marvel of the idol, and of its staying in the air without prop or support, several maintained that it was upheld by some hidden support. The king directed a person to go and feel all around and above and below it with a spear, which he did but met with no obstacle. One of the attendants then stated his opinion that the canopy was made of loadstone, and the idol of iron, and that the ingenious builder had skillfully contrived that the magnet should not exercise a greater force on any one side - hence the idol was suspended in the middle. Some coincided others differed. Permission was obtained from the Sultan to remove some stones from the top of the canopy to settle the point. When two stones were removed from the summit the idol swerved on one side, when more were taken away it inclined still further, until at last it rested on the ground."

Shocked did Mahmud the Hindus into dejection, as Romila Thapar picks up the historical debris of Somnath thus:

"The raids of Mahmud did not make India aware of the world to her northwest or of the events taking place there. Confederacies had been formed, but not with a view to organizing defence on a national scale, utilizing resources from various parts of the subcontinent or even northern India. Defence was linked to the

immediate purpose of assisting kings to maintain their kingdoms; the significance of Mahmud's raids as paving the way in northern India for further attacks from the north-west was not fully grasped. Mahmud was just another *mlechchha* as had been the Shakas and the Huns. They had been absorbed and forgotten, as so too presumably would Mahmud and his armies.

The death of Mahmud in any case removed the need for vigilance on the north-west, especially as his successors were less interested in the plains of northern India. The Indian rulers returned to their internal squabbles. When the second attack came from the north-west under the leadership of Muhammad Ghuri at the end of the twelfth century India was, for all practical purposes, as unprepared as she had been for meeting the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni."

Besides, what Alberuni saw around the time of Mahmud's onslaught on India corroborates Thapar's account of it.

"... From that time dates their aversion towards the countries of Khurasan. But then came Islam; the Persian empire perished, and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country; for Muhammad Ibn Elkasim Ibn Elmunabbih entered Sindh from the side of Sijistan (Sakastene) and conquered the cities of Bahmanwa and Mulasthana, the former of which he called *Al-mansura*, the latter *Al-mamura*. He entered India proper, and penetrated even as far as Kanauj, marched through the country of Gandhara, and on his way back, through the confines of Kashmir, sometimes fighting sword in hand, sometimes gaining his ends by treaties, leaving to the people their ancient belief, except in the case of those who wanted to become Muslims. All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts.

Now in the following times no Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sindh until the days of the Turks, when they seized the power in Ghazna under the Samani dynasty, and the supreme power fell to the lot of Nasir-addaula Sabuktigin. This prince chose the holy war as his calling, and therefore called himself *Al-Ghazi* (i.e. *warring on the road of Allah*). In the interest of his successors he constructed, in order to weaken the Indian frontier, those roads on which afterwards his son Yamin-addaula Mahmud marched into India during a period of thirty years and more. God be merciful to both father and Son!

Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources."

Well, to add to this tale, there was the old Muslim misconception about Hinduism as an idol worshipping paganism, against which Muhammad infused hatred amongst the believers that the *Musalman*s nursed. Hence, once Islam happened to reach the other side of the Hindukush, it was in no mood to either suffer the scent of the sanctums sanctorum of the Hindu deities or allow the *kafirs* a free reign over their monumental *mandirs* across those mountain ranges. So, again and again, for the satiation the greed of the Ghazanis and Ghuris, the marauders of a *Muslimans*, Hindustan became a logical destination for rapine not to speak of manslaughter. Thus, over time, *Aryavarta*, the Hindu *karmabhoomi*, was reduced into fiefdoms of the Nawabs of the *Musalman*s.

The unique features of faith, as well as prejudice, are that they are subject to the cascading effect brought about by the tendency of the protagonists for enthusiastic one-upmanship. If the Islamic faith became a dogma of the *Musalman*s akin to paranoia, then the Brahman haughtiness was transformed into the Hindu insensitivity. The fate meted out by the insensitive Hindu polity, molded in Brahman orthodoxy, to those of their ilk taken as prisoners by the *Musalman*s in the battles for the Indian domain would illustrate the tragedy of the times. That these valiant men, who staked their lives in guarding their ancient land from falling into the alien hands, were not readmitted into the parent fold even after their release by, or escape from, their captors for their association with the *mlechhas*, their enforced confinement occasioned! And those valiant men, rendered hapless by the prejudices of the Brahmans, had nowhere else to go in their own land but to the Islamic camp. What rank Hindu ingratitude to those patriots out to protect their homeland and its ancient way of life! Wonder if there is any parallel of such a social cruelty in the annals of human history!

Arguably, the curse of those hurt Hindu souls, which were cruelly driven into the Islamic bodies that could be forever restless in their Muslim graves, could be behind the tragedies the Hindus faced for centuries on. Oh, what an eternal shame and won't the Hindus of the day, and those who would follow, owe an apology to the progeny of those. But then, even now do we really care for, much less value, our men in the uniform as we should be doing? Wish the Hindus, instead of gloating over the wisdom of the Upanishads that they fail to imbibe, any way, would try to develop a historical sense of their cultural aberrations for a social course correction.

While Ghazani and Ghuri subjected Hindustan to their raids and runs of plunder, the Sultans who came in their wake had set up their domains of self-aggrandizement. The wealth of the land was misused for the grandeur of their courts and the upkeep of their harems, needless to say, to the detriment of the populace. The opulent palaces built for their living and the grandiose tombs erected for their dead that dot the Indian subcontinent bear testimony to the

callousness of these settlers of *Musalman* rulers. It is as if they hadn't any value for life other than their own.

So, with the remnants of the Hindu State yielding ground, first to the Sultanate Rule and then to the British Raj, the *swadharma* of various *varnas* began to degenerate into varied caste creeds to the hurt of the Indian social unity and purpose. Thus it can be said in hind sight that it was the concept of *swadharma* that was the undoing of India for it negated the growth of a unifying religion for all to live by and die for. But it was the near millennia reign of the alien settler races, devoid of concern for the public good and lacking a stake in the welfare of the State, which for centuries on put India in a state of social coma. What is worse for the unfortunate citizens, as if the foreign rulers of yore had laid down the norms for ruling *Aryavarta* for all times to come, the politicians of free India have stuck to the ethos of the aliens in governing their own country.

Double Jeopardy

It may be interesting to follow the Islamic fate of those unfortunate untouchables and other marginal caste groups of *Aryavarta* that embraced the bigoted faith of Muhammad. True, the Hindu fringes, at last, got their God that the Brahmans so cruelly denied them, even one amongst their three crore deities, and what if the God was an alien One for they were never allowed to feel like the natives in the land of their own ancestors? Nevertheless, as the enshrined caste edifice was too strong even for the Almighty Allah to pull it down, and since their Mohammedan masters would have only condescend to descended with them, the early converts might have been truly squeezed in their new religious ghettos. But still, for the pain of circumcision, Islam afforded them the solace of faith and the hope of the hereafter.

Moreover, for them, the Sufi sop of allowing them to nourish their new Islamic ethos in their old Hindu habitats was like having the cake and eating it too. But for the caste Hindus, they became *mlechhas*, apart from being the outcasts, while the alien circumcision brought upon them the ridicule of a *katua*. And making matters worse, it was only time before the Wahabi zealots forced the progeny of the Sufis' soft converts to shed their loose Hindu habits, and adopt the strict Mohammedan customs, which were cumbersome to the core. Thus, the double jeopardy of the Islamic religious rigidity and the Hindu caste prejudice would have insensibly pushed those hapless converts into the 'circle of hazard' for life, and, what is worse, tied their progeny to an alien lifestyle for all times to come.

This unjust happenstance should be a cause of regret for the caste Hindus that their progenitors so mistreated the ancestors of these folks that forced them into an

alien faith with a slavish ethos to God and a narrow vision of life that is firmly coupled with burdensome religious precepts and practices. So, ironically, Islam, which attracted many outcasts of yore with its egalitarian tenets, should tend to reduce their progeny into incorrigible obscurants of our times. Whereas, their religiously removed caste cousins, aided by the times, are now riding on the high tide of modernity, be it those who had retained the identity of their forefathers (may the Hindus be thankful to them), or such who were, or are being sucked into the Christian Church. This alone calls for an unqualified apology from the Hindus to the Indian *Musalman*s and their sub-continental cousins before the Subramanian Swamys want them to own up their Hindu origins to usher in the laudable integral Indian nationalism.

Be that as it may, the unabated profligacy of the Sultan-Nawab nexus of the Islamic order should have depressed the Indian economy sooner than later, which any way wouldn't have improved the economic lot of the native *Musalman*s for the *alien* rulers suffered no qualms for their lack of concern to the new but lowly additions to the grand *umma*, not to speak of their *kafir* subjects. But as the general economic condition of the Hindustan further deteriorated in time, being the poorest of the polity, the plight of the progeny of the *Musalman*s would have only got worsened. And yet, as the Islamic brainwash would have made them believe in their eternal bliss in 'the hereafter', they could have derived a vicarious pleasure for the economic plight 'here' too of their former tormentors, who had no scope to hope for a paradise that any way bars the *kafirs*. And in the modern era, as the naivety of a Nehruvian socialistic pattern of society perpetuated the Islamic legacy of celebrating poverty, Mother India remained a pauper in the vice-like grip of the State, tightened further by his self-serving daughter Indira, till Narasimha Rao unshackled it by the Manmohanamic wrenches!

Whatever, we may delve into the factors that kept Islam going in India, and that too with certain vigor; to start with, the mundane condition of the marginalized Hindus had admirably fitted into Muhammad's Quranic glove that is Islam. Besides enhancing their self-worth, the creed of Allah promised them a certain heaven that Hinduism denied them any way. While their social depravity was addressed by the equality before the God, their economic poverty was solaced by the Islamic deprecation of 'here' and its extolment of the 'hereafter'. While they were kept out of the Hindu social fold as untouchables or retained as retinues at the social fringes, their religious transformation as *Musalman*s would have enabled them to develop a sense of solidarity in their ranks easing the burden of their former social exclusion. All this could have inculcated a 'feel good' in the converts about their newness 'here' all the while assured of the mouthwatering 'hereafter' owing to the happy circumstance of their having become *Musalman*s.

How remarkable that the temporal condition of a set of people and the religious dogma of a faith that makes deprivation a virtue should serve the cause of

both! Their new found religious status could have enabled those converts to perceive themselves no longer as Hindu outcasts but as *Musalman*s in a pan-Islamic fold. Above all, the satisfaction of belonging to the religion of the ruling class, not only in India but also of the best part of the world, would have countervailed the plaguing caste Hindu contempt for them. So, their religious conversion should've enabled them to gloss over the drudgery of 'here' aided by the hope the 'hereafter' would have embedded in their belief.

Besides, the converts could have perceived every humiliation of the Hindus, at the hands of their coreligionists, alien though, as an Act of Allah dispensing His poetic justice for their unjust oppression of the past. While Muhammad exploited the Arab psyche of deprivation to nurture Islam in Arabia, providence helped sync it with the hurt of the outcasts of *Aryavarta*, which had afforded the faith of Allah an unabated growth in Hindustan. And it was not long before Muhammad's Arabic socio-religious mix, facilitated by the Brahman follies and abetted by the Rajput foibles, made the land of the Hindus the most populous Muslim part of the planet. Thus, with no change in the ground realities, and in spite of the burden of a religious dogma coupled with a tedious culture that the faith imposed upon them, the converts remained enthusiastic about their lot, illustrating the power of Islam over the minds of the poor, to be precise on the poor men.

Why not, on the personal front, Islam has a lot to offer to the men of its faith, and sadly for the outcaste woman, as is the case with all womanhood, it was her man who calls the conversion shots for her and her children as well. And variety being the spice of life, one of the Islamic appeals to the enamored male converts could have been its appetizing 'four wives' regimen as opposed to the monogamous *dharma* of monotony. Wouldn't Islam grant its men three extra mates, at any given time that is, and could there be a better 'here' for them leave alone 'the hereafter'? And for the divorce that is an anathema to the *sanatana dharma*, the alien faith of Arabia gives the Indian *Musalman* a free hand to get rid of any or all his wedded wives. With no questions asked that is and naturally, that would afford man a sway in his home with the wife or wives in thrall, which is bound to pep up the ego sag of the economically poor *Musalman*. Thus, while Islam gives its poor males a sense of invincibility within their homes, in spite of their vulnerability in the society around, it accords its privileged men the 'license of levity' for an unabated indulgence in the ways of the flesh. Sadly though, Islam, save the 'hereafter', has nothing on offer for its women, who in the confines of the burka take the whims of their man as the diktats of the God, and thus subject themselves to their inimical Islamic order in perpetuity, so it seems.

It would be interesting though to speculate about the course Islam would have taken in Hindustan had the *Musalman* rulers made *sharia* - civil as well as penal part of it - mandatory for all the converts. Wouldn't then the rigors of Islamic penal code - chopping off the hands for theft, stoning to death for adultery, lashing the

backs for breaking the laws – have been repulsive even to the hapless outcasts? Would there have been even one willing convert to Islam by vouching that “There is no God except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,” to face the music of the *sharia*? Doubtful, isn’t it?

On the other hand, while being enamored with the civil *sharia* that affords them medieval conjugal privileges and affords them deliverance from a nuptial contract of demising returns through *triple talaq*, the Indian *Musalman*s of the day wouldn’t lament for the shelving of the *penal sharia* in India and elsewhere as well. Isn’t it a blessing in disguise for the Indian *Musalman*s that the *kafirs* have left the *penal sharia* alone to let them save their errant limbs and remain the masters of their homes, of course, contrary to what Allah had willed for them? That is about the hypocrisy of the Indian *Musalman*s regarding *sharia*’s immutable divinity that is touted as the unalienable essence of Islam!

Paradise of Parasites

With the discovery of a submerged city off the Gulf of Cambay dated back to 7500 B.C.E, it would seem Mohen jo daro and Harappa of 3500 B.C. E were modern times for the ancient Indians. As the North America and the Europe have proved in the modern times that economic well-being and social development are but the obverse and the reverse of the coin of healthy work ethics, it can be inferred that without a sound work culture, the Cambays and Harappas wouldn’t have happened in India in the antique era. But then, how come the Indian of the day bade goodbye to the moral values of yore and came to yearn for easy money in the corridors of corruption!

The Aryans, who came well after Mohen jo daro, in spite of their emphasis on spirituality, didn’t seem to have hampered the work ethos of yore as would be evident from the prosperity of the populace in the bygone eras of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Maybe the *karma siddhanta* that exemplified the Brahmanical concept of linking the fate of men to the deeds of their past births could have even encouraged the have-nots to strive for bettering their lot in the birth to follow that is through good deeds in the life on hand. By the same token, the *karmic* theory guarded man from the debilitating affects of envying the better-off, and that helped one and all build a society of happy souls striving to better themselves in word and deed, never mind their economic lot, well, till the mid 20th Century or so before the ‘why not me’ phenomenon began to boot out the age-old Hindu wisdom from its *karmabhoomi*.

That being the case, we might search for the possible influence of the Islamic religious credo on the Indian work culture exposed as it were to it for a

millennium. The Islamic way of life is best described by Freeland Abbot in his 'Islam and Pakistan' of Cornell University Press, New York, as quoted by Mayram Jameelah in her book, "Islam and Orientalism" (Adam Publishers & Distributors, Delhi).

"The community held that the important thing in life was not to improve one's well-being but to get to heaven when one's earthly life was over. And the road to heaven was chartered as a clear path. That path, preserved and sharply defined by the traditionalists, included prayers and creed but it did not include so living as to avoid measles and small pox. The basic premise of Islam is that the faithful are the servants of Allah who are ordained to pray Him five times a day. This concept of faith presupposes that Allah is the provider to the faithful He being their Master. As though to make the prayer regimen a viable proposition the Hereafter was advocated as the be all and end all of life. As though to keep up the morale of the faithful to stick to prayer at the cost of the benefits of life that hard work entails, their eternal existence in the Hereafter is made peaceable and enjoyable."

In Martin Lings' biography the following account of Muhammad's meeting with Moses in the wake of his ascent to *the Lote Tree of the Uttermost End* along with Archangel Gabriel emphasizes the stress on prayer in Islam.

"At the Lote Tree the Prophet received for his people the command of fifty prayers a day; and it was then that he received the Revelation which contains the creed of Islam: *The messenger believeth, and the faithful believe, in what hath been revealed unto him from His Lord. Each one believeth in God and His angels and His books and His messengers; we made no distinction between any of His messengers. And they say; we hear and we obey; grant us, Thou our Lord, thy forgiveness; unto Thee is the ultimate becoming.*

They made their descent through the seven Heavens even as they had ascended. The Prophet said: "On my return, when I passed Moses - and what a good friend he was unto you! - he asked me: 'How many prayers have been laid upon thee?' I told him fifty prayers every day and he said: 'The congregational prayer is a weighty thing, and thy people are weak. Return unto thy Lord, and ask Him to lighten the load for thee and thy people.' So I returned and asked my Lord to make it lighter, and He took away ten. Then I passed Moses again, and he repeated what he had said before, so I returned again, and ten more prayers were taken from me.

But every time I returned unto Moses he sent me back until finally all the prayers had been taken from me except five for each day and night. Then I returned unto Moses, but still he said the same as before; and I said: 'I have returned unto my Lord and asked Him until I am ashamed. I will not go again.' And so it is that he who performeth the five in good faith and in trust of God's bounty, unto him shall be given the meed of fifty prayers."

What might be interesting in this extraordinary 'divine encounter' is that while Moses felt that even a five-prayer regimen is a weighty thing, Muhammad, in the first place, didn't even deem it fit to seek from his Lord any relief for his believers from the self-defeating quota of fifty prayers a day. Viewed in this context, the *Musalman*s should consider themselves indebted to Moses not only for the reduced *namaazi* burden but also for the well-being of Islam itself.

Would fifty congregational prayers in a twenty-four hour cycle leave any time 'here' for a *Musalman* to sire his progeny to carry the faith forward! Even if he were to scrape through on the procreative front, where was the time left for him for some gainful occupation needed for tending his family! Maybe, Muhammad missed the point as, any way, he was providing for the *Musalman*s with all that loot and ransom that the Quran ordained him to share with them. But how the All Knowing God had failed to realize that His faithful wouldn't be able to subsist for long on a daily diet of fifty prayers is the question that the *Musalman*s should ponder over!

Be that as it may, it was Moses' concern for the *Musalman*s - "the congregational prayer is a weighty thing, and thy people are weak" - and his advice to Muhammad to bring some sense to that which saved the day for them all for all times to come. Shouldn't that make a case for the indebted believers to concede a little more of the Promised Land to the Jews the people of Moses! Contrast this with the Hindu path to their gods; the Brahmans shoulder the burden of worship on behalf of their co-religionists to free them from their own religious chores thereby letting them pursue their temporal endeavors for public good. Is Brahmanism wise or vainglorious? One can only surmise!

It is as if to sustain the 'five prayers a day' regimen of Islam that Muhammad had continued his campaigns of plunder that satiated the need as well as the greed of his followers, and the Caliphs and the despots, who succeeded him, kept up the precedent set by their God's own messenger, well, till all that could be plundered from the subdued nations was plundered. Just to cite one example, as a case point, the royal palaces in Hyderabad Deccan and the chest of the Nizam's family jewels stand in stark contrast to the social backwardness and the abject poverty even of his *Musalman* subjects in the erstwhile State of His Highness. So it was no wonder that the Nizams were the richest of men in the world well into the middle of the 20th century. And won't their famed collection of the priceless jewels give a measure of the poverty into which they had pushed the hapless populace of their province?

If only the 'Fortune 500' was in compilation in the times of the Mohammedan rule in India, it would have been no surprise that the *Musalman Nawabs*, leave alone their Sultans, would have taken the cake, leaving the Hindu Rajas a few crumbs to satiate themselves with. Why for the *Musalman* parasites Mother India, the Hindu land of milk and honey, became the Islamic paradise 'here' itself. And yet, the *Musalman*s are ever averse to having *vande mataram* as the Indian national anthem for it would require their veneration of her! What rank ingratitude for a land that

contributed to Islam its *Musalman*s in their millions! But in catering to their Islamic whim, Gandhi's Congress gave India a national anthem that salutes Sind, a province of Pakistan! What should be India's objection if its neighbor accuses her of hegemonic designs to set up an *Akhand Bharat*?

However, while the Quran had revealed how to share the 'Spoils of War' and Muhammad had stipulated the 'Code de Distribution' of the ransom, Islam has no clue about the generation of national wealth. Added to the ingrained Arab belief in their moral right to loot, the religious sanction that Islam accords them to plunder the *kafirs* might have led the Mohammedan marauders to believe in their divine right to live off the wealth of the idolaters. It is another matter though; that the example set by Muhammad to distribute the loot among the faithful was diluted by the Sultans of yore for its despots of the day to appropriate it all to indulge in a life of vile luxury.

Besides, preoccupied as it is with the 'hereafter', Islam has no time to deal with the nation building 'here', and thus the *Musalman* rulers were at a loss as to how to bring the conquered countries back into economic health after their plunder rendered them into wastelands. What with the lands that came under their reign having become unyielding, and lacking the old *jihadi* zeal to embark upon plundering the European kingdoms, in time, the Islamic world sunk into economic decay and dissipation. That was the moment in waiting for the West, industrialized in the meantime, for the wholesale colonization of the Muslim world that it coveted for so long. Well where the Christian crusades failed, the Western enterprise succeeded in subjugating the *Musalman*s!

The Number Game

"If the Mughal monarchs had assumed their responsibilities as Muslim rulers and organized intensive *tabliq* or missionary work, the majority of Indians would have embraced Islam and hence the necessity for partition and all the disasters that followed in its wake, never would have arisen." This fascinating proposition of Maryam Jameelah in *Islam and Orientalism*, Adam Publishers, New Delhi, would deserve the indulgence of any historian.

It might be so that even as man's strengths would have the affect of weaknesses, his debilities might turn out to be blessings in disguise for him, something akin to the Shakespearean assertion that "virtue itself turns vice being misapplied and vice sometime by action dignified". And by extension, this paradoxical mirror effect of a people's strengths and weaknesses that tend to shape the history of their nation, seemed to have saved *Aryavarta* from becoming a Sunniland. Whatever, the political plight of the Aryans that paved the way for the

Islamic onslaught on their sacred soil probably served the cause of their religion in the long run!

It was the political fragmentation of Hindustan into minor kingdoms and tiny principalities that enabled the Turko-Afghan juggernaut to overrun its Western and the Northern parts to begin with. However, it was one thing for the invaders to turn parts of *Aryavarta* into their pocket burrows and another to make the whole of it as an Islamic State, to achieve which they would have to run over many a Hindu kingdom spread far and wide. That would have entailed unremitting jihad in umpteen battles, but probably, as the unlimited riches of the limited land they conquered would have satiated the urge of Allah's soldiers to reach paradise, the Sultans too staid put in their grand palaces annexed with vast harems.

Besides, they would have been alive to the problems logistics pose in fighting wars far off from their Afghan backyards, and so desisted from venturing farther into the grand landmass that is Hindustan. Hence the invaders would have been averse to the risk of defeat in expansionist wars and thus, for long, their political domain was confined to the Northern parts of *Aryavarta* till in later years Akbar the Great ushered in the Mughal Empire in Hindustan. But then, he tried to reconcile the subjects of his communally divisive empire through his Din-e-Ilahi, shaped by the best of Islam and Hinduism, which set the religious tune for his successors.

Though Aurangzeb, the Muslim zealot of his lineage, might have dreamt of an intensive *tabliq* to Maryam Jameelah's approval, but owing to the impediment of a Shivaji and his Marathas, he could do no more to Islam in India than to sack its sacred temples at Kashi and Mathura. Thus, for centuries, the pleasure seeking Sultans, militarily constrained to boot, failed to bring about the Islamic *tabliq* in Hindustan unlike the Arab conquests in other parts of the planet. Besides, the concept of *swadharna* that insidiously weakened the Hindu polity seems to have served as an obstacle for the Islamic *tabliq* in ways unexpected.

While the religious dogmas *per se* are a set of beliefs, mistrust is an accomplice of human nature that enables one to sow the seeds of doubts in the minds of the believers about their own beliefs. That done, it would only be a matter of time before their minds become conducive for infusing a set of new religious beliefs into their mental arena. That's what enabled the Christ, with a new 'Code de Conduct' that was ingeniously sourced to the Ten Commandments, to induce some of the Jews to turn their backs on the Laws of Moses.

Later, borrowing the Christ's idea, Muhammad in his "O ye who believe" refrain came up with a newer set of dogmas handed out to him by none other than Jehovah, spelled as Allah, to alter the belief system of the entire Arabia to start with. Wiser to this human proclivity that enabled him to cement his new faith in the minds of the *Musalman*s, and to ensure that the mind of man would never be able to play the spoilsport for Islam, Muhammad had positioned himself as the Seal of Prophets and declared that the Quran is the God's final guidance to man for all

times to come. Why, didn't Guru Gobind Singh likewise proclaim *Guru Grandh Sahib* as the final Guru of the *panth*?

It's no wonder then that when the statues of Zeus were pulled down all over the Roman Empire; its Pagan subjects had earnestly hoped that the Father of their Gods would destroy the Christians for the sacrilege. But as none of that happened, they lost faith in the religion of their forefathers and, thereafter, they needed no great persuasion from the evangelists to change their faith, more so as their Emperor Constantine had become a Christian Himself. Nevertheless, the Pagan fate didn't visit Hinduism as Mahmud Ghazni hoped his destruction of the temple and the desecration of the Deity of Somnath would, but why? Well, the answer lies in the social ethos of *Aryavarta*.

Unlike the Semitic religions that are steeped in the realms of belief, the Hindu *swadharma* is a 'way of life', that at once is habit forming as well as pride inducing. As an illustration, if not as an analogy, we now have this American Way of Life, regardless of its ethno-cultural diversity, which the politicians of all hues in the U.S. vow to safeguard regardless. And since habits, unlike beliefs, die hard, the habituation of various caste groups to their own *swadharma* would have thwarted any Islamic attempt to uproot Hinduism from the social soil of *Aryavarta*. It is a measure of the sway *swadharma* had on the Indian populace that the Imams of Islam were constrained to let the *Musalman* converts from the outcastes to retain their Hindu dress code and social mores in their new religious habitats. Yet one may wonder, if not for this Sufi softening of the Islamic rigidity, how many outcastes, in spite of their ill-treatment by the caste Hindus, would have embraced Islam in the first place? Long live *sanatana dharma* sans *swadharma*.

Why won't it be interesting to speculate as to what would have happened had there been an expansive Hindu kingdom in place in *Aryavarta* when the Ghaznis and Ghuris eyed it for plunder? Maybe, the might of such an empire, might have stopped the marauding *Musalmans* in their tracks at the foothills of the Hindu Kush itself. And probably Islam would have never been able to set its bigoted foot on the Indian soil to communalize part of its populace enabling its eventual bifurcation, which Maryam Jameelah lamented though for a lack of 'intensive *tabliq* by the Mughal monarchs'.

But what if, had the *jihadi* zeal of the *Musalmans* to plunder 'here' or die for the joys of 'the hereafter' overwhelmed the imperial might of an immense Aryan army in a Mahabharata-like war? Why the command of the Indian landmass then would have passed into the merciless hands of the *Musalmans* leaving the Hindus with the Hobson's choice. So to say, with the cessation of the *kshatriya* power to protect their *dharma*, the Hindus would have been forced to decide whether to embrace Islam or death on offer, and probably India would have gone the Mohammedan way of Egypt, Persia and Mesopotamia to its eternal hurt. Maybe, the accursed Hindu

disunity, exemplified by myriad kingdoms, would have frustrated Maryam Jameelah's Islamic cause even during Aurangzeb's formidable Mughal rule.

What if the *Musalman* imposters, prompted by their religious obligation, crossed the Hindu Rubicon and tried to Islamize India by force? Maybe in all probability, it would have proved counterproductive in the land of the *sanaatana dharma* for such a Muslim *tabliq* would have forged the Hindu unity to the detriment of Islamic continuance in *Aryavarta*. As history bears witness, the policy of restraint, more so the expediency, of the Sultans, ensured tranquility in India that enabled the Sufis to continually spread the faith of Islam on the peripheries of Hinduism. All the same, it is worth probing the causative factors that helped Islam to have a firm foothold in *Aryavarta* that eventually enabled it to carve out Pakistan, for its *Musalmans*, from what is emotionally a Hindu land.

It would seem that the '*mleccha* apathy' of the Brahmans and the Aryan indifference for the 'outcasts' were, in deed, the contributing factors for the Islamic outreach in Hindustan. The aborigines, the original titleholders of the land, made outcasts by the Aryan settlers in later years, became ready pickings for the Islamic *tabliq*, and being the victims of the Brahman social suppression besides the Aryan cultural oppression for so long, those native souls might have felt avenged by the Islamic intrusion into Hindustan. More so, they could have embraced the alien religion of Islam as a means to assert their birth right in their own land. Could human history get ironically better? Not even, when an African-American becomes the President of the United States! Maybe it is this very psychic glee of the Indian *Musalmans* that could be behind their eagerness to see the Italian born Sonia Gandhi ascend the Delhi *gaddi*.

Moreover, fortuitously for Islam, by the time the Sufi saints spread themselves out into the Indian countryside to sow the seeds of the Islamic faith in the hamlets of the untouchables; Buddhism became a spent force in Hindustan. Thus, these erstwhile Buddhists devoid of the guidance of the monks for their Nirvana could have been too eager to seek the paradise Muhammad had promised for the *Musalmans*. The proposition of the Quran that the purpose of life 'here' is not for happiness and enjoyment as its true significance lies in its being a means to reach the 'hereafter' through the Islamic straight path, could have been irresistible for the deprived outcasts of *Aryavarta*. More over, the Aryan society was averse to attach any value for their lives 'here' and the precepts of Hindu *punarjanma* held no hope for them in the births to follow. Oh how well the psyche of Islam did sync with the deprived souls of the Indian social fringes, and how the Hindus, in the loss of their land, are condemned to carry the cross of their sins against their fellow humans into eternity!

Sadly thus, the Brahmans, living in the sanctified arenas of their *agrahaaraas*, were impervious to the happenings in their backyards so long as their privileged position in the polity was ensured. Whether the *chandaals*, living on the Hindu

fringes, became Buddhists or embraced Islam, was not something to disturb the Brahman sleep, and it was owing to their intellectual apathy that failed to foresee the demographic catastrophe in the making that the political cross of Pakistan was eventually crafted in the *karmabhoomi* of the Aryans. Added to this was the Aryan complacency that the Muslim invaders too would eventually settle down in one of the caste corners of the pan Hindu fold for, after all, weren't the alien intruders of yore neatly tucked into the native caste network at some stage? All this combined to make the Hindus in general and the Brahmans in particular to pay a deaf ear to the *adhans* of the *muezzins* from the *masjids* around, wanting the faithful to come over for the congregational prayers.

But the conventional Indian wisdom tends to attribute the initial sustenance and the later day spread of Islam in India to the convenient myth of Hindu religious tolerance. While the false proposition might help massage the long nursed Hindu hurt by rationalizing their defeatist past, the minorities grab it as a tactical stick to beat Hindutva with that is regardless of its endorsement by the highest judiciary of the land. And in spite of the bigotry-egging exhortations as opposed to the human-development expositions of the naïve media-*wallahs*, the silent majority on either side of the communal divide seems to be becoming one in its aversion to their pseudo-secular averments given the headway of the nationalists, maliciously dubbed as the saffron brigade, in the Indian political landscape.

However, the *Musalman* rulers' inability to attract the elite of the land into the Islamic fold could have been two fold; for one, the Brahmans didn't condescend to descend to suffer their *Musalmanic* society though some of the Rajputs, as a political expediency, kept them in good humor. And for another, either owing to their inability to rope in the Brahman ministerial talent or being intellectually apathetic towards them, and/or both, the Turkish Sultans and their Afghan minions brought in nobles from their, or the Persian, lands to administer their Indian fiefdoms. So, by and large, this parochial policy of the alien rulers precluded the possibility of the native eminence to embrace Islam even for their self-promotion, and thus, the nepotism of the *Musalman*s and the prejudices of the caste Hindus led to a lopsided Islamic growth on the caste fringes, save some sections of the *vaisyas*, of the Indian social setting. Well, the *vaisyas*, who always felt aggrieved at being deprived of their rightful exaltation, commensurate with their wealth, in the Aryan polity were ever prone to look for the greener social pastures; first in the Buddhism and thereafter under the Islamic banner. Moreover, their business interests would have been better served if aligned with the religion of the rulers.

Whatever, by and large, while the foreign nobles manned the Indian Islam, the native converts remained just that, which divide still manifests itself in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Thus, even after eight centuries of rule of the *Musalman* in Hindustan, and in spite of the lack of an Aryan backlash against its spread in its midst, Islam couldn't become the majority religion in the Indian subcontinent. But

still even as the Turkish rule ruined the body economy of the land, owing to the Wahabism, Islam became cancerous in the end causing the contentious partition of Hindustan.

Winds of Change

The Mohammedan downturn in the 18th Century that enabled the dawn of the British Raj in India turned out to be a Godsend to the Hindu upswing. Historically, the political ethos of the Rajas of the land always was devoid of a sense of belonging to the motherland, which continues to plague the political system of the Union of India that is Bharat. In the chequered history of Hindustan, its Rajas and their *Samantas*, who came by dime a dozen all, saw the adjoining territories as but pieces of real estate to be usurped to boost up their vanity or to satiate their greed, and/or both. So, ironically, Mother India, in its myriad political dominions, would have been a no man's land to its provincial potentates, and in later years, the Mohammedan usurpers saw its riches as their personal endowments to cater to their pleasures 'here' and to perpetuate their memory 'forever'. And that was the final nail in the coffin of the Indian economy.

The next victim of the Mohammedan misrule rule in India, of course, was the intellectuality, the prize factor of the Hindu civilization, nursed from the time of the Aryan migration. With the advent of the Sultans and the eclipse of the Rajas, short of royal patronage, the Brahman intellectual pursuits took a back seat. Besides, the overall downtrend of the Indian economy, brought about by the profligacy of the *Musalman* rulers, dried up the wells of charity affecting the Brahman well-being. Moreover, their self-imposed taboo for undertaking any economic activity contributed to the Brahman financial gloom, which eventually led to their intellectual decay as well. And their collective sense of despair could have led to the feeling of dissipation that inexorably put them onto the path of laziness and prejudice. What with the *kshatriya* power too on the wane, the traditional Aryan leadership was dispirited and disjointed under the Mohammedan rule in India, and the Hindus, as though to seek a mass escape from life's hardships had turned to spirituality, which distanced them even farther from the social realities.

However, all that changed under the aegis of the British Raj that lasted long enough to make a difference to the Hindu self-worth, and when India celebrates its hundredth year of freedom from the British yoke in 2047, its Hindus might heartily wish 'God bless the Great Britain'. But what could be the feelings of the Indian *Musalman*s towards the British, who dethroned the Mughals to signal the end of the Mohammedan rule in India, and yet gave the parting gift of Pakistan to their brethren across the borders, time only would tell. Maybe the plight of Pakistan then

could shape the mind of the Indian *Musalman* but one should be wary of the Muslim penchant to blame the *kafirs* for the Islamic ills of their own and of their God's making. Whatever it may be, the undercurrents of the centuries-old coexistence of the Hindus and the *Musalmans* in India are their bi-polar interests that even Akbar's *Din-i-Illahi* failed to reconcile.

Be that as it may, the Great Britain had wide opened the Indian windows to the developed world, closed for centuries by the Brahman social prejudice and the Islamic religious paranoia, which enabled its populace, the Hindus in particular, to breathe a whiff of fresh air of contemporary Western ideas. Above all, the British bestowed upon India their English that gave class to its middle class, and all this led to the advent of the cosmopolitan India. But, on the flip side, the vested interests of the 'nation of the shopkeepers', so as to bolster up their commercial interests had ensured that whatever left of the Indian enterprise was truly undermined.

Whatever, after their initial skepticism about the liberal ways of the British, the Hindus, led by the Brahmans, stepped out of their *sanatana* cocoons to expose themselves to the Western outlook, which eventually resulted in their kids embracing the English secular education in numbers. But on the other hand, the Mohammedan elite allowed themselves to be drawn into the closets of self-recrimination, and fearing religious dilution, shied away from the secular ideas and ideals and kept their children away from the convent education. That's how, as the Hindu masses ventured out of their caste closets, even the *Musalman* elite staid put in their mental ghettos and held on to the fundamentalist tenets of Islam all the more. And in this dual response to the Western cultural infusion lay the revival of the Hindu intellectuality and the beginning of the Muslim despondency.

Thus, while the Muslim dominance of India caused its stagnation, the British deliverance from the same heralded the Hindu political resurgence. The emotional relief of the Hindu to be rid of the political yoke of the *Musalmans*, after nearly eight centuries, evoked a feel-good in the country's majority. With the mainstay of the population, so to say, enamored of them, and they too having come to value the ancient Hindu philosophy, which got reduced to mere prejudice by then, the British loved India as best as their own interests would allow them to do. And having succeeded in subduing the squabbling Nabobs and the disjointed Rajas, the British slowly but steadily unified the country to usher it into the modern era; they built roads and bridges, brought in the radio and the railways, and the telegraph and the telephone.

But, to the chagrin of the *Musalmans*, the British banished Persian, the language of the Mughal Court, and introduced English to administer India, which turned out to be a boon to the Hindus for it facilitated a secular education that herald the community into the new age. Even though the evangelists failed to take the Hindu souls *en masse* on the Christian path of salvation, yet the British had

introduced modern medical practices into the India's hitherto neglected healthcare system for the public good. But it was the Western educationists, who had injected contemporariness into the thought process of the Hindus that inexorably energized their latent intellectualism exemplified by the Ramans, the Boses and the Ramanujans. Besides, the secular education that McCauley introduced produced a body of Hindu reformers, mostly the Brahmans, and predominantly Bengali at that, which laid the seeds of equality in the Indian soil at long last. Maybe the critics would aver that McCauley's education turned India into a nation of clerks, of course not without some justification, and as history tends to repeat itself, the skeptics of the day aver that the IT upsurge and the BPO boom in the end would reduce us all into a bunch of keyboard operators. But then, there is a price to pay for a millennium of stagnation, isn't it?

However, the Brahmans, as though to make amends for the sins of their forefathers, strived hard to clear the social debris that Brahmanism had left on the Indian soil. The Hindu reformist zeal, with due help from the Western Samaritanism, which put the Brahman orthodoxy on the back foot enabling the community to contain the abominable practices such as the *sati* and the child marriage, besides opening up the altars for the widow marriages. With the momentum so gained on the social front as the Hindus began to dream about changes in the political arena, Mahatma Gandhi forged the masses into a non violent force to oust the British that stunned them no end. While the world marveled, India showed to it as to how an ancient nation of peace loving people, with a dominant religion of philosophical orientation, can successfully shape its struggle against foreign rule in the modern world through nonviolent means. How well, Pearl S. Buck captured it all in her assertion that only a religion like Hinduism and a country like India could have produced a Gandhi!

Nonetheless, India's struggle for freedom had had its righteous streaks of aggression as well as the pacifist stances of Islam for even as Subhas Chandra Bose and others opted for an armed struggle, the Indian *Musalman*s stuck to the Gandhian course of nonviolence with the majority of the Hindus. That is, till Muhammad Ali Jinnah fired the Muslim imagination with the call for the creation of Pakistan, the separate homeland for the *Musalman*s of Hindustan. Thus, as the Hindu hopes for freedom rose, so did the Muslim fears about the domination of their religious rivals in free India increased, and it seemed as if the wheel was about to turn the full circle for the Hindus and the *Musalman*s as well. While for the Hindus, the end of the British Raj would seemingly herald a *Rama Rajya*, i.e. after a thousand year interregnum, for the *Musalman*s, whose domain of eight centuries the British had ended; it portended the worst – the Hindu domination of them. That was after the baneful land reforms of the British, which had already proved to be the last nail in the coffin of their parasitic life of leisure and luxury. Besides, given the propensity of the *Musalman*s to live by their glorious past, the prospect of

a *Rama Rajya* would have seemed a setback for Islam in Hindustan. Since the religious loss of face is something that the *Musalman*s dread the most, so, what would have salvaged the Islamic prestige than a separate nation for the *Musalman*s? Besides, a 'here' they can call their own would enable the Indian *Musalman*s to take home their fond memories of the past glories that the two-hundred-year Mughal rule symbolized. Besides, as the notion of a Muslim nation would restore the loss of power and pelf under the British Raj, the craving of those *Musalman*s for Pakistan cannot be faulted.

On the other hand, after centuries of inimical Muslim misrule the Hindus have had to endure, they should have a reason to feel indebted to the British for having given them a modern nation, though truncated. Maybe, the *Sangh Parivar's* nationalist lament over a lost *Akhand Bharat*, patriotic though, is misplaced for with one *Musalman* for every two Hindus in it; Islam would have erected enough roadblocks for the undivided India to modernize itself. Moreover, if not for their grant of Pakistan as the homeland for the Indian *Musalman*s, the British could have unwittingly Balkanized India or worse! So, notwithstanding the unpalatable partition of their ancient land, the Hindus have every reason to be grateful to the British for releasing them from the Muslim shackles that their Brahman-*kshatriya* duo willy-nilly put them into. And for the same reason, the *Musalman*s are wont to grudge the British for having divested them of the Delhi's *gaddi* in spite of ensconcing them in Rawalpindi, which they see as a small consolation for them. Won't the Indian *Musalman*s' resentment of the British validate the adage that "one's meat is another man's poison"? It's another matter though that in hindsight it appears that the Pakistani capital-shift from Rawalpindi to Islamabad was a forerunner into its Islamic disaster!

Ant Grows Wings

Never in the history of Islam after Muhammad the destiny of the leader was so providentially coupled with the fate of his people as that of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Indian *Musalman*s. And like Muhammad before him, Jinnah, peace be upon him too for his soul must be restless in his grave, also did not survive long enough to bring about the political consolidation of Pakistan, and to the like effect. While the grand religion of Muhammad rendered itself into sub-faiths so soon after his death, Quaid -e- Azam's Pakistan, as if to prove the truism of the Italian saying, 'to its own hurt that ant grows wings', sundered itself into two nations that was before it could celebrate the Silver Jubilee of its coming into being. But by then it had amply exhibited the brutality of the intra-Islamic intolerance on the Bangladeshi stage for all to see, and for any of those who might have missed it, it was reenacted

in the Iran-Iraq war by Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. Well if anything, their legacy of Shia-Sunni strife is sought to be perpetuated in all its cruelty in Iraq and Pakistan, seemingly forever.

However, the roots of the Islamist separation of Hindustan lay in the political ambitions of the Mohammedan aristocracy and the economic interests of the middle-class *Musalman*s, who wished to have it easy in a country of their own bereft of any Hindu competition. But the separatist sentiment propelled by the *mullahs* and the self-interest of the elitist groups needed political fusion to facilitate Pakistan, and the leadership for that came from an unexpected source, in the persona of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whom Muhammad, if not banished him as an infidel, would have certainly branded him a hypocrite. Like the hostility of the Quraysh motivated Muhammad to capture the *kaaba* for Islam, so was Jinnah's zest to take up the cudgels of Pakistan for the Indian *Musalman* arose from his desire to settle scores with Gandhi's Congress that sought to sideline him.

But unlike Muhammad, who provided for his faithful of Medina with the 'spoils of war', Jinnah was handicapped to prop up Pakistan for Islam has no wherewithal for nation building, intellectually speaking that is. While Allah in His own wisdom withheld that from Muhammad, he too did not survive long after the conquest of Mecca for him to have a grasp of the complexities of managing the politico-economies of nations. So the *Musalman*s have no *hadith* on that count to fall back upon, and even otherwise, Muhammad's methods would show that he believed in the adage of 'ends justifying the means', rather than in the 'merits of the means applied'. Even with whatever exists in the *hadith* and the *sunna*, the *Musalman*s are forever in a quandary as modern life takes one through the pathless woods. True, they pore over their Islamic texts in the hope of finding a clue here or a hint there but to no avail; well how were Muhammad to know about the complexities of modern life in his desert times of yore. That is about the Muslim habit of viewing the ever-changing world through Muhammad's medieval lenses, and what they divine in the *hadith-sunna* combine is there for all to see. After all, one only finds what one looks for, isn't it?

Moreover, being an autocrat that he was, besides being their sole arbiter, Muhammad had no compunctions in endorsing the principle of equality amongst all the *Musalman*s! Do as I say but don't do as I do, is it right? And so it is but natural for the Caliphs who succeeded him to follow on his convenient footsteps to the detriment of their *umma*, and, as if to ensure that it is forever saddled by the medieval yoke, the rulers of the Islamic world, Saudis downward, emulate Muhammad's autocratic ways. And true to form, the modern democratic nation of Pakistan that Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisaged for the Indian *Musalman*s first came into the Quranic domain and, in the end, ended up being the fiefdom of its *fauzis*. And in time, thanks to Zia ul-Huq's political expediency that ushered in the *sharia* to humor the *mullahs*, the 'land of the pure' was turned into the backyard of the

jihadis as well as the launching pad for the *fidayeen*, the martyr missiles of Islam. Well, as if to add insult to injury, Zia famously declared that democracy wouldn't suit the Muslim genius, never mind their theologians proclaim from the rooftops of the world that Islam as a religion is essentially democratic! While that only shows how far the 'frog in the well' vision can take one, Pakistan failed to infuse Iqbal's muse to better his *saare jahaan se achchaa hindoositaan hamaara*, which he penned for India before he pitched in for Pakistan

But much before Pakistan was tilled in the Islamic fields of Hindustan; its seeds of failure, as observed by W. W. Hunter in *The Indian Musalmans*, lay in the Wahabi roots of the Indian Muslims at the loss of their imperial power to the British.

"The Wahabis, now a scattered and a homeless sect, profess doctrines hateful to the well-to-do classes of Muhammadans. In formal divinity they are the Unitarians of Islam, they refuse divine attributes to Muhammad, forbid prayers in his name, and denounce supplications to departed saints. It is their earnest, practical morality, however, that contains the secret of their strength. They boldly insist upon a return to the faith of the primitive Muhammadan Church, to its simplicity of manners, its purity of life, and its determination to spread the Truth, at whatever expenses of the blood of the Infidel, and at whatever sacrifice of themselves.

Their two great principles are the unity of God and the abnegation of self. They disdain the compromises by which the rude fanaticism of Muhammad has been skillfully worked up into a system of civil policy, and adapted alike to the internal wants and foreign relations of Musalman States. They exact from every convert that absolute resignation (*Islam*) to the will of God, which is the clue to the success of Muhammad.

But while, like other reforming sects, they ceaselessly insist on this fundamental doctrine, they weaken their cause among the learned by their Unitarian divinity, and among the simple by a rude disregard of established rites and hallowed associations. In the greater part of Asia, the Wahabi convert must separate himself from the whole believing world. He must give up his most cherished legends, his most solemn festivals, and his holiest beliefs. He must even discontinue the comforting practice of praying at his father's tomb."

About the state of Islamic Educational institutions in India during the British Raj, Hunter had this to say in his well-researched work:

"Even the few among them, who, if left to themselves, would try to do well, had no means for obtaining any sound or practically useful knowledge. In the first place, the time daily devoted to teaching was too short. The fixed hours are from ten to two, from which about twenty minutes must be subtracted in order to allow masters and students to smoke a *hooka*, known in the College slang as Moses' Rod; and about half an hour for calling the roll - a ceremony which had to be performed

twice a day, as many of the students disappeared finally at twelve O'clock. Some of the more diligent supplement the meager College curriculum by reading 'religion' in private Musalman schools outside.

Such external studies consist chiefly of the Muhammadan Tradition (*Hadis*) and law books of the fanatical medieval stamp - a sort of learning which fills the youthful brain with windy self-importance, and gives rise to bitter schisms on the most trivial points within the College walls. Not long ago, as the English Resident Professor was going his evening rounds, he heard a tumult in the students' rooms. 'Your religion is all wrong,' and similar phrases, resounded through the corridors, and fierce were the denunciations on all sides.

He hurried to the scene of the uproar, and found that one of the students had found in a law-book that during prayer the heels should be joined, else the petition has no effect in heaven or on earth. Those who had said their prayers with unclosed heels denounced the discoverer of the new mode as a pernicious heretic; while he and a little band of followers consigned all who prayed in the old fashion to the eternal torments of hell.

Three hours' instruction is as much as they could possibly obtain from the College teachers in the day; - one who has practical acquaintance with it, tells me that the actual time of teaching seldom exceeded two and a half hours. Anything like preparation at home is unknown, and indeed is opposed to Mohammedan ideas. Each master reads out an Arabic sentence, and explains the meanings of the first, second and the third word, and so on till he comes to the end of it. The diligent student writes these meanings between the lines of his textbook, and by easy degrees learns the whole sentence and the interpretation thereof by heart.

To teach him how to use the dictionary at home, or to reason out the meaning of a passage on his own account, is an altogether foreign invention, possibly dangerous to his religious faith, and at any rate unknown in the Calcutta College. At the end of seven years the students know certain books by heart, text and interpretation; but if they get a simple manuscript beyond their narrow curriculum, they are in a moment beyond their depth. Such a training, it may well be supposed, produces an intolerant contempt for anything which they have not learned. The very nothingness of their acquirements makes them more conceited, they know as an absolute truth that the Arabic grammar, law, rhetoric, and logic, comprise all that is worth knowing upon earth.

They have learned that the most extensive kingdoms in the world are, first Arabia, then England, France, and Russia, and that the largest town, next to Mecca, Medina, and Cairo, is London. *Au reste*, the English are Infidels, and will find themselves in a very hot place in the next world. To this vast accumulation of wisdom what more could be added? When a late Principal tried to introduce profane science, even through the medium of their own Urdu, were they not amply justified in pelting him with brick-bats and rotten mangoes."

Then, the ultimate Muslim response to their loss of power, which possibly led to the blind alley of the Hindu-Muslim disaffection, is captured, again by Hunter thus:

“During the last forty years they have separated themselves from the Hindus by differences of dress, of salutations, and other exterior distinctions, such as they never deemed necessary in the days of their supremacy.”

This new craving of the Indian *Musalman*s for separateness might have naturally led to the clamor for more *madrasas* for the intensification of religious education to the young things to make them more Muslim. About the reluctance of the zealous Muslims to send their children to secular schools, Hunter states thus:

“The truth is, that our system of Public Instruction ignores the three most powerful instincts of the Musalman heart. In the first place, it conducts education in the vernacular of Bengal, a language which the educated Mohammedans despise, and by means of Hindu teachers, whom the whole Mohammedan Community hates. The Bengali school master talks his own dialect and a vile Urdu, the latter of which is to him an acquired language almost as much as is to ourselves. Moreover, his gentle and timid character unfits him to maintain order among Musalman boys. ‘Nothing on earth’ said a Mohammedan husbandman recently to an English official ‘would induce me to send my boy to a Bengali teacher.

In the second place, our rural schools seldom enable a Muhammadan to learn the tongues necessary for his holding respectable position in life, and for the performance of his religious duties. Every Muhammadan gentleman must have some knowledge of Persian, and Persian is a language unknown even in our higher class District schools. Every Musalman, from the peasant to the prince, ought to say his prayers in one of the sacred languages, Persian, or Arabic, and this, our schools have never recognized. It was lately asserted on high authority, that the prayers of the Musalmans find no acceptance with God unless they are offered in the prescribed tongues. In the third place, our system of Public Instruction makes no provision for the religious education of the Muhammadan youth.

It overlooks the fact that among the Hindus a large and powerful caste has come down from time immemorial for supplying this part of a boy’s training, while among the Muhammadans no separate body of clergy exists. Every head of a Musalman household is supposed to know the duties of his religion, and to be his own family priest. Public ministrations are indeed conducted at the mosques; but it is the glory of Islam that its temples are not made with hands, and that its ceremonies can be performed anywhere upon God’s earth or under His heavens. A system of purely secular education is adapted to very few nations. In the opinion of many deeply thinking men, it has signally failed in Ireland, and it is certainly altogether unsuited to the illiterate and fanatical peasantry of Muhammadan Bengal.”

Why the *Musalmans* failed to recover the lost ground, and how the Hindus regained the same was conceptualized by Hunter thus:

“Without interfering in any way with their religion, and in the very process of enabling them to learn their religious duties, we should render that religion perhaps less sincere, but certainly less, fanatical. The rising generation of Muhammadans would tread the steps which have conducted the Hindus, not long ago the most bigoted nation on earth, into their present state of easy tolerance, such a tolerance implies a less earnest belief than their fathers had; but it has freed them, as it would liberate the Musalmans, from the cruelties which they inflicted, the crimes which they perpetrated, and the miseries which they endured, in the name of a mistaken religion.”

What all this proves is that in an open society, not constrained by religious dogma, there could be pro and contra view points for debate and discussion, leading to the eventual crystallization of public opinion and political mandate. But the bane of the closed Islamic societies is that there cannot be any contrary view of life than the pro Quran-*hadith-sunna* dogma, as all the *Musalmans* share common beliefs and imbibe the same prejudices. How sad, there is no countervailing political force to the religious dogma in the Islamic nations. Won't the universal unrest in the Muslim world against the U.S., and the Jewish State, that is allowed to brew into destructive *jihadism* by its despots, explain this phenomenon? Thus, it could be said without any contradiction, that only a religion like Islam and a country like Afghanistan, with *madrassaic* help from Pakistan, could have produced Taliban that suffered no qualms in debasing their own people in the name of their own faith!

Bernard Shaw, though, was unfair to the *Musalmans* when he remarked that Islam is the best religion with the worst followers. But as might be seen, in reality, the *Musalmans* are the unfortunate victims of the Islamic dogma shaped by Muhammad's hostility towards 'the others' that was unambiguously aided and abetted by Allah through the Quran. Why is not Islam but Mohammedanism, shaped to serve the personal needs and the political ends of its prophet, and not the religion designed for the enlightenment or the emancipation of its followers? But, the *Musalmans* cannot see the reality as the bigotry of the community ensures that the Islamic blinkers are put on the young early on.

What is worse, there seems to be no way out for them as the *umma* goes to lengths to keep it that way for all times to come that is. Thus, it can be said that the *Musalmans* are the victims of a mind-set conditioned by the proclivities of their prophet, vicissitudes of his life, attitudes of his detractors and the credulity of his followers, which the mechanism of their *umma* perpetuates.

Constitutional Amnesia

Mohammed Ali Jinnah got what he wanted for the *Musalman*s of Hindustan, though in time, their religious fervor turned Pakistan into a Rogue State.

What of India, the product of an irony of a partition? While the Hindu nationalists lamented about the loss of the country's land, the *Musalman* intellectuals were alarmed at their reduced numbers vis-à-vis the Hindus. Even as the Golwalkars articulated the Hindu frustration in shrill voices, the Maulana Azads voiced the Muslim fears in secular tones. Whatever, as Pakistan became an Islamic nation for the *Musalman*s, India remained a habitat of varied interest groups the *Musalman*s included! While the Indian political classes were beset with a sense of loss that partition brought in, in its wake, the Hindu intellectuals were upset by the age-old caste guilt that the reform movement occasioned in their collective consciousness.

It was in such a setting that India ventured to formulate a constitution for itself, of course, piloted by Ambedkar, the intellectual from the oppressed sections of the polity. And the end product, touted as the bulkiest of the written constitutions in the comity of nations, turned out to be an exercise in selective amnesia.

"WE THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, reads the preamble of the Constitution of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of status, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

And to promote among all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION."

None can fault the lofty ideals of this august document but for the politicization of the testament itself, i.e. by the induction of socialism into it. Strange it may seem, won't the socialistic slant negate the economic justice that it seeks to provide? After all, socialism, as per the COD, is a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the community as a whole should own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange. How could there be an economic justice for an individual enterprising Indian then? However, mercifully in the end, Narasimha Rao could extricate the country from the Nehruvian socialist grip to leave his legacy of a SOVEREIGN SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of India. But that was not before socialism wrecked

Indian industry and ruined its economy so much so that the country, for servicing its national debt, had to pledge its gold for all those sterling pounds.

What about the sloganeering of a secularism of India? To be secular, again going by the COD, is to be concerned with the affairs of this world; not spiritual or sacred, and in matters of education etc. not concerned with religion or religious belief. Yet the constitution of our secular democratic republic in the name of the 'Right to Freedom of Religion' dabs in all matters religious!

The article of the Indian Constitution with regard to "Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion" exhorts thus:

1. Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.
2. Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law-
 - (a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;
 - (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus."

Agreed, the right of the citizen for the profession and practice of one's religion is unexceptionable as it constitutes the birthright. But, why an ordinary Indian citizen should be concerned about the propagation of his faith for the constitution to grant it to him? Besides, where does the right of an Indian citizen for propagation of his faith leave his fellow citizen's cultural need for preservation of his own faith? After all, the right of propagation is but the right to spread one's religion, and one cannot do that without coming into conflict with another's religious faith, can he?

Hence, one citizen's right to propagate his faith vitiates the right of another to profess and practice his religion. Unwittingly thus, the Constitution of India, in granting the right for propagation of one's religion *per se* takes away another's implied right for the preservation of his own faith. Besides, to what avail is the right to propagate one's religion for the citizen rather than to fuel the zeal of the religious zealots for converting?

And what about the 'FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation' that the constitution provides for! What of the *individual dignity* of those Hindus who fall prey for the inducements, known to be offered by the Church, for them to embrace the Son of an alien God! Thus, is not the creed of the Church to propagate its faith that causes the poor of the land to lose their dignity is at odds with our constitutional spirit itself?

Besides, as the *raison d'etre* of religious propagation is conversion, wouldn't that individual right prove inimical to *the unity and integrity of the Nation*? However,

going by the hell raised by the missionaries and the *mullahs* and their political cohorts at any move by the State to disfavor fraudulent conversions, the popular belief is that the right for propagation is without any constitutional strings attached to it! Only when the clamor for the future partitions of India on religious lines picks up, would a Western historian be able to spot the constitutional blind spots that gave rise to the development! Yes, it needs Western intellectuals even to see it all in the hindsight even, for India's left leaning political analysts are notoriously blind to the realities of the Indian life and times.

Be that as it may, what's the rationale of religious propagation based on which the framers of the constitution granted that to its citizens? Though Hinduism and Judaism, the world's oldest surviving religions, are content with their constituencies, it is the Christianity and Islam, the new brands in the religious marketplace that hanker for conversions, of course, having come into being through propagation. Indeed, their religious spread worldwide is owing to their creed as enshrined in their Scriptures *per se*. If not all, many a Christian missionary and the *Musalman mullah* strive to turn the world all Christian or all Muslim as the case may be. After all, that's what their scriptures ordain and their religious creed obliges them to do so.

It thus defies logic as to how our constitution makers, who went about the exercise in the immediate wake of the country's partition on religious lines, deemed it fit to endorse the propagation of one's faith, read the Christian and the Islamic, in the Hindu midst! Well, it's the illusionism of Gandhi that became the idealism of the Congress which influenced the Constituent Assembly of the just-partitioned India. And that shows, isn't it?

How strange that the Constitution exhibits a singular lack of application of mind of its framers to secure India's integrity as a constituent country for all times to come. Sadly thus, the wise-heads then, not to speak of the foresight, lacked the hindsight even. God forbid, they seemed to have unwittingly laid the seeds of a future partition of the Hindustan whose wings Jinnah had truncated. But, would this religious error ever be erased from our statute before history gets repeated!

If all this were Ambedkar's idea of a religious safety valve for the disenchanting *dalits*, the then *harijans*, then it would be a betrayal of India's cause. Of course, one can understand Ambedkar's hurt when he vowed not to die a Hindu, and, indeed, kept his word by embracing Buddhism before his death. But then, the true *dalit* emancipation might lie in bringing about the Hindu reformation from within and not in opting out of the faith, only to remain in the domain of the Indian social discrimination.

Now, over to the "Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions" that the constitution stipulates.

- (1) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.
- (2) Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.
- (3) No person attending any educational institution recognized by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto."

The sum total of freedom of religious instruction is that the State, in true secular spirit, is expected to keep itself away from it in the physical sense. Thus in a nutshell, religious education is fine so long as the government funding is not involved! And thus the State is allowed to retain the secular pretence by keeping itself overtly out of religion. One would have expected the constitutional makers to address the content of the religious education and the need for the same to serve the needs of the communities concerned without compromising the general public order and good.

Of course, all communities need some amongst them to undergo religious education to help facilitate their lives in accordance with the tenets of their faith. That should at once be the scope as well as the limitation of the religious education, isn't it? To cater to these legitimate needs of a given religious group, the required religious education with or without the government funding forms a fundamental communal right of the members of that group.

Right, but what if in the name of freedom of religious instruction, the dogmas of such faiths, given to deride the religious beliefs of fellow citizens, are sought to be inculcated in members of that community? Won't such a move hamper the secular charter of the country besides inculcating religious bigotry in the mind-set of any given community?

Obviously, the framers of the constitution didn't delve deep enough into the vexatious subject of religious intolerance of the practicing faiths in the country. What is worse, this supposed constitutional religious goodness came in handy for the ugly politician to turn it into an exploitative mask for the Muslim Vote. It is one thing to espouse the cause of the *Musalman* and another to abet the whims of Islam. Sadly, for the minorities, our politicians tend to be on the right side of the wrong issues, i.e. to curry the Muslim favors to the benefit of none, save themselves. Is it not time for WE THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, nearly sixty years after our fathers, or be it grandfathers had adopted the constitution, to factor the new realities into a more equitable document? After all, isn't the level playing field the theme song of the

world today? And the Hindu emotional grievance is that they are denied just that in the religious plane in the country that their forbearers made their own before all else'

The Stymied State

The Indian State with its dominant Muslim minority and its shortsighted Constitution was bound to be politically stymied to the hurt of its Hindu majority. And the politics of the country as it evolved only compounded the Hindu emotional misery. It was not long before the majority interest became subservient to the stakes its politicians developed in the minority franchise. Besides, the way the Indians went about using and abusing their hard earned freedom makes no rosy reading either.

In what was left as the secular India, the princes of democracy have come to rule the land as per the age-old Hindu political credo - unto each his own province. The Westminster system of governance that the Union of India adopted and its political devolution that the regional aspirations demanded, brought Bharat into the domain of a Raja in Delhi, Sultans in its State capitals and *Sarpanchs* in its *Panchaayats*, of course with their hangers on, vying for its politico-economic pie. Besides, the democracy brought into positions of power the *jaagirdaars* of the National Parliament and the *thanaedaars* of the State Assemblies with their minions in tow for a like calling. And lest the favored lot of the powers that be should miss to savor the creamy cake of the world's most populous democracy, there are the councils of ministers, chairmen politicians for assorted boards and umpteen bodies. Thus, even as the interests of the minor deities of the Indian politics are well served, the democratic temples of Bharat are being ruined by their political parties, which, barring exceptions, are but family owned hereditary setups. That being the case, isn't it stupid even to murmur that we are a democracy, leave alone proclaim that ours is the world's biggest democracy?

Though Hindustan got rid of the Islamist misrule, it is as if the politicians of free India retained the governing ethos of the *Musalman*s as the *sarkari* legacy for posterity. After all, now as ever, it's the personal interest of the regional political masters that prevails over the national interest, and what is worse, in the Indian democratic domain, the high ideal of 'nursing the constituency' though marketed in ugly packages of parochialism is considered even a virtue! Maybe, the presidential form of democracy on the American model would have served the nation better but then that would have made so many sundry politicians redundant, a scary thought for the political class, which turned politics into the best business that there is. Maybe for that very reason, the founders of the nation State

chose the survival route that every generation of politicians would find it expedient not to deviate from. So, one can expect the political satraps to keep the parliamentary circus on, for everyone knows whose interest in the end prevails in the mobocracy of India. After all, in the land of *Aryavarta*, the privileged class had always been apart, and that came to be a part of its socio-political ethos, and since the Brahmans are, any way, out, let the politicians be in, so seems the rationale of the Indian democratic process.

But this faulty political model lifted the morale of the depleted stock of the Indian *Musalman*s in an unexpectedly way! Since their vote mattered in numerous constituencies, the politicians grasped the electoral merit in playing the Islamic fundamentalist footsie with the *Mullahs* and the *Maulvis*. However to start with, the Congress political lenience towards the Muslim religious sentiment, conceived by the Nehruvian naivety could have been well intended to reach out to the masses of the Indian *Musalman*s, orphaned by the exodus of their classes to Pakistan. It was as though Nehru wanted to be a Jinnah to the *Musalman*s of Bharat, oblivious to the fact that the Hindus too were sorely in need of a leader to address their hurt at the loss of a large chunk of their ancient land to Pakistan. Though for centuries, the gods, who paid a deaf ear to the Hindu prayers to get them rid of the Mohammedan rule, granted them their 'man for the moment' in Sardar Patel but they had to contend with Gandhi the autocrat, who by then was deified by them as the Mahatma of the time. Well, Gandhi had cleaned the public toilets alright but did he not force his wife to do the same against her will, and in embracing celibacy prematurely had he not deprived Kasturba the warmth of his marital embrace. Won't that make food for thought?

Whatever, Patel, who filled the Hindu emotional space like a colossus, should have made it to the Delhi *gaddi*, but Gandhi's undemocratic weakness to Nehru had ensured that it didn't happen. That was, in spite of the overwhelming support the Sardar received from the congressmen and women of that era, from all over India. That's about Gandhi's democratic ethos, and fondness for the favored, not discounting his prejudice towards an upright Prakasam. Wonder how in the Gandhi thrall, we all gloss over the fact that while his steely resolve helped India to get rid of the British yoke, yet his naivety of Hindu Muslim amity had imposed many an Islamic constraint on free India.

While Nehru's foolhardy in taking the Kashmir issue all the way to the United Nations and his credulity of a plebiscite pledge therein, it was Patel, who had coerced the recalcitrant Nizam and other vacillating Rajas, into the Union of India. While the Sardar was not destined to live long to see Mother India bear the fruits of his sagacity, Nehru had survived to witness the divisive affects of his plebiscite folly in the valley that gave Pakistan a potent stick to beat India with at every international forum that was till his daughter Indira forced Bhutto to revise the rules of the Kashmir game at Shimla. Thus, while Nehru deservedly earned the

disregard of the Indian nation, Patel became a living legend of its nationalist sentiment.

If Jinnah couldn't consolidate the gains for Islam in Pakistan, Nehru failed to formulate a socio-political code in India that took into account the Hindu sensitivities and the Muslim interests in the same nationalistic vein. And to add insult to the Hindu injury, the Nehruvian foreign policy was fashioned to address the fundamentalist ethos of the Muslim minority rather than to serve the national interests of the new India. Thus at best, Nehru was a sophist in shaping the foreign policy that understandably became a political Veda for the Congress party, and at worst, it can be said that he eyed for a secular slot in the pan-Islamic history, but to no avail. Nonetheless, his place in the Indian history should be secure as the founding father of its democracy, though he could have become the Caesar, and what is more, besides diligently nursing it in its infancy, he meticulously guided it into its adulthood; if Gandhi got freedom to India then Nehru mothered it into a democracy, which later his daughter Indira had set on a dynastic course.

When Nehru died broken-hearted, after the demise of his pet *Panchsheel* in the ignominy of a defeat at the Chinese hands, the Indian democracy had had its first triumph as the humble Lal Bahadur Shastri made it to the premier post. After his brief rein though, the Congress and India came into the dynastic clutches of Nehru's devious daughter, delivered to her on a platter by the petty Syndicate to deny Morarji Desai his due. Predictably, Indira stretched her father's Muslim leanings to ludicrous lengths in claiming the membership for India in the Organization of Islamic Countries on the premise that it was the home for the largest body of the *Musalman*s in the world! Naturally, the Rabbat snub, engineered by Pakistan, rubbed salt into the wounded Hindu pride, which the Congress party didn't mind to amend.

However, Indira exhibited both courage and statesmanship at times, and became the apple of the Hindu eye and the solace of the Hindu hurt for the way she exploited the Bangladesh crisis to dismember Pakistan. And that even made Vajpayee deify her as Durga, even as the media dubbed her as the Empress of India. But her maternal weakness for her roguish younger son Sanjay, in time, afflicted her personal character and affected her political judgment pushing Mother India into the political abyss of her Emergency Rule. That was before Sanjay's death, and it was only a matter of time before the 'political *devi*' became the 'devil's advocate of graft' by infamously stating that corruption was a global phenomenon.

Whatever, her death was as poignant as her life itself, which had put the thoughts of the East and the West on the same philosophical page. While her destiny of a violent death could have led her into nurturing the Frankenstein Monster of a Saint Bhindranwale to politically browbeat the Akalis, proves the *karma siddhaanta* - governs destiny the actions of man, her insistence to retain her Sikh bodyguards in the aftermath of the 'Operation Blue Star', to set an example of

a secular conviction and the personal courage, would prove the Western philosophy true that – man's destiny is but his nature.

However, her Islamic gimmicks for electoral withdrawals from the 'Vote-bank de Mohammedan' that became the political ethos of the Congress party, while not helping the Indian *Musalman*s, economically or otherwise, had only succeeded in earning for them the Hindu resentment in fair measure. Never mind, it had always been the electoral calculus of the Congress party that given the caste divisions in the Hindu majority, politically it pays to cater to the Muslim religious proclivities to win over their votes *en block*. Whatever, the final nail on the Nehru dynastic coffin seems to have been struck by her credulous son, Rajiv Gandhi, whom the sycophantic Congress culture imposed upon the nation that is notwithstanding his son Rahul's late entry into the foray. If it was Rajiv's naivety in allowing himself to be caught between two emotive stools - that of Shah Bano's *sharia* and Ayodhya's *Ram mandir* - which caused his political fall, Rahul's vacuousness, coupled to his dithering 'to be or not to be' persona that was a psychic byproduct of his mother's initial 'daughter or son on the throne' dilemma, might forever handicap him for Sonia to realize her dream of seeing him in Delhi's *kursi*. God forbid, should he make it to it, who can say how boundless our voters' stupidity could be, then he is bound to make Muhammad bin Tughlaq seem the personification of pragmatism in comparison.

But, sadly for Rajiv, in the end, his naivety in allowing himself to get entangled in the vicious web of Tamil separatism seems to prove, as in the case of the *Musalman*s of Pakistan that *to its own hurt that ant grows wings*. After all, it was his Sri Lankan military misadventure, meant to tame the Tamil Tigers, which outraged the ruthless Prabhakaran, the overlord of the Tamil Elam, and it was only time before Dhanu, the human-bomb, exploded in Rajiv's face at Sriperumbudur. And that would have put paid to the Nehruvian Dynasty in the normal course but then India had to contend with the Italian Sonia, Rajiv's power-hungry wife, who, after a short hiatus as a widow, took the reins of the Indira Congress.

That was before Narasimha Rao's post-Rajiv Congress, having had a reprieve from the dynastic dominance, did what it was otherwise capable of doing to the country. The intellectual pragmatism of Rao had seen the imperative need for reforming the style and structure of the Indian economy that Nehru thought it fit to mold in the socialistic pattern. However, instead of giving him a second term to clean the socialistic stables and rid the Congress party, and thereby India, of its baneful Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, the ignoramus masses of Hindustan, egged on by the antique socialists and caste crusaders, ousted, rather unceremoniously, the Architect of Change from the *gaddi*. So the ungrateful nation was saddled with, though for a while, by a non-Congress *kichdi* cabinet of notional *netaas* headed by Deve Gowda with the backing of regional satraps like Chandra Babu Naidu.

Meanwhile, what with the Congress party having been reduced into a flag bearer of Sonia's self-interests, if anything, the electoral tactic of Muslim appeasement was turned into the party's obsession to keep her at the helm of the political power. Nevertheless, as she failed to surmount the Hindu emotional obstacles for her Italian ascent to the *gaddi*, she chose to catapult the wily but silly Manmohan Singh to the *gaddi* as her proxy. What a tragedy that Narasimha Rao's aide-de-reforms had allowed himself to be reduced into Sonia's camp clerk, well, as the adage goes, one gets what one deserves, and so 'we the people of India' have her family retainer as our Prime Minister, sworn to serve the corrupt Congress household to our disservice.

However, the dynasty's real disservice to India lay in denying the due political space for the leadership of the backward classes in the Congress arena, and that hurt the Indian democracy, rather, grievously at that. The independence that saw the beginning of the end of the Brahmanical order and with it the advent of the universal literacy, in time, raised the hopes as well as the abilities of the teeming millions of the backward classes and the other backward castes. If only, their legitimate aspirations of political ascendancy were allowed to come to fruition under the Congress banner, the politics of the day would not have degenerated into caste combinations and communal permutations. While the dynastic order blocked the top slots for the emerging leaders of the backward castes, and what is worse, it blotted the lower rungs of the party with the sycophantic upper caste men and women.

It was thus, the dynamic leaders from these overwhelming classes began to float their own political outfits to fashion their own caste suits to which the two wily Yadavs, Mulayam and Lalu, added the 'Ace of Islam' to stump the Congress in the strategic cow belt in the Hindi heartland. After all, it doesn't require the brains of an Einstein to realize that an electoral alliance between the Yadavs and the *Musalman*s would ensure political dividends in many a constituency in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. What with these two Yadavs successfully calling the minority bluff of the Congress at the hustings, the secret was out; that it is the 12% or so Muslim vote of the Indian democracy, which is vital to the Hindu politicians to enter into the portals of power. That the Mayawatis and the Nitish Kumars too have come to master the winning formula and what is worse; down the Vindhyas too as the politicians are not taking chances any more with the miniscule of a minority vote that is there, it gives no hope for the progress of democracy in India.

Now that the cynical Hindu politicians made the time-tested tactic of the Mohammedan despots their own - give the poor *Musalman*s more of Islam that keeps them calm, the franchise of the backward castes combined with the Muslim vote came to dominate the Indian politics, debilitating the country's democratic vitality, hampering its social integration and degrading its citizens' intellectual integrity. What might even be worse for the country is that as calamities follow the

follies of man, more and more of India's political future could be mortgaged in the Muslim Vote Banks, and the bankers do become confiscators for their defaulting clientele.

When the minority vote swells up to a healthy 20% or more, as it may be sooner than later, this 'power at all costs' electoral pursuit of the shortsighted politicians is bound to boomerang on them not to speak of the Indian nation. Why vote for a Hindu when we have the numbers to elect our own, so could be the logic of the Indian *Musalman*s at some point of time in the years to come. Who cares about that, any way, as the Hindu wisdom was never known to factor the Islamic expansionist ethos into the Indian *realpolitik*. So, the majority community's cynical 'minority politics' is bound to facilitate the growth of Muslim separatism, which in turn would bring about the inevitable disorder of the Indian political order. And nearer to our times, we might as well see the spectacle of the de facto merger of the six Districts of Assam namely Nagaon, Dhubri, Cachar, Barpeta, Sonitpur, and Kamrup with Bangladesh, which to build the Muslim vote-bank, the Congress Party allowed them to be infested with the illegal Muslim immigrants. That being the case, why should the Indian politicians of the day bother about the later-day travails of Mother India?

It is another matter though, that all this has robbed the Nehru-Gandhis their invincible sheen and the Congress of its pan India winning ways. While it was Annie Besant, the English woman, who helped the Congress form, Sonia Gandhi, Dame de Italian, might help in its eventual liquidation, of course, with the helping hand from an uninspiring Rahul, her political heir apparent! If not the maturity of the Indian electorate, at least the public allergy for the Congress' insensitivity to the national ethos could ensure that, and as and when it happens, it could be one of the many ironies of the chequered history of Hindustan.

Why blame the Brahmans of yore for messing up things on the socio-political front? We all are human after all, the Brahmans included, and what about the current intellectual state of theirs, who once gave the Upanishads to the world? The Hindu intellectualism, spearheaded by them, is stymied by their ignorance of Islam as a cult even as the hypocrisy of the *Musalman*s misleads the gullible Hindu secularists. And the so-called educated Hindu of the day, ignorant as he is of the nuances of his own dharma, is oblivious of the insatiable urge of the Christianity on one hand and Islam on the other to proselytize regardless.

And the less believing *Musalman*s, instead of resorting to self-introspection over the inimical aspects of Islam, tend to gloss them over with such clichés as, 'Islam is a religion of peace', and of late, 'terrorists have no religion' *et al*. But the gullible Hindu intellectual bites the bullet and ends up joining the Islamist chorus that it's all the fault of 'the others', the Hindu fundamentalists included. Wish the moderate *Musalman*s apply their minds to the rights and wrongs in their faith to separate the wheat from the chaff of Islam, and then try to distribute the grain

amongst the *umma* for a proper religious diet. More so, only when the educated Hindus familiarize themselves with the ways of Islam to engage the *Musalman*s in an informed debate would there be a dawn of the genuine secularism in India, but that is unlikely to happen, at least in the foreseeable future, and till that happens, India would remain a stymied state

The Wages of God

The WE-THEY obsession of the Islamic ethos debilitates the *Musalman*s with troubled minds. While the *ayats* of Quran spell out who THEY are - the Jews, the Christians and the idolaters (read Hindus, in later centuries) - the Islamic theology defines who THEY are, the Sunnis, the Shias and the Sufis *et al.* And the political divide too is clear as to who THEY are - the Iranians and the Iraqis, the Pakistanis and the Bangladeshis, all *Musalman*s though.

Well, for those perceived as WE, Islam is all green but it turns blood-red when it comes to those who are seen as THEY. This is the moral code of Islam, which in Arabic means peace, and also surrender. While Muhammad taught his medieval flocks to surrender to Allah to serve his cause, insensibly the *umma* got stuck in the obsolete Islamic era of servitude, not only to 'the God' but also to His messenger. Well Allah's covenant for the 'hereafter' might be eternal for the *Musalman*s but sadly for them, or so it seems, the way of life 'here' is forever altering for them to comprehend it. What with Muhammad having convinced them, once and for all, that the succor of 'the hereafter' is the solace of the *Musalman*s, they tend to disregard life 'here', which makes them oblivious of the realities of the world

This as was seen is owing to the Decommissioned Adult, the Parent-contaminated Adult and the Child-contaminated Adult, prevalent, by and large, amongst the *Musalman*s, in some degree or the other. While the Decommissioned Adult of the Mohammedan is incapable of analyzing the current realities, his Parent-contaminated Adult harps on the past glories of the *Musalman*s, and the Child-contaminated Adult lives in delusions of a rosy future for Islam. More so, when it comes to the Jews, their religious cousins, it is as if the *Musalman*s have got stuck in the time zone when their life and limb, not to speak of their faith, depended on the whims and fancies of Muhammad. However, before Muhammad came up with the Quran, the progeny of Isaac, having been driven out from their Promised Land, lived in peace and prosperity amidst the posterity of Ishmael by the oases of Arabia. But as the Straight Path of Islam came to be laid by Muhammad, the Jews got a bumpy ride on it even though the Quran endorsed their Moses as a Prophet of yore. The enduring hatred of the Jews that Muhammad

had inculcated in the followers of his cult would forever stymie the psyche of the Arabic towards their cousins in Israel, so it seems.

It was thus, the boasts of Gamal Abdel Nasser that he would push the Israelis into the Red Sea sounded like music to the Muslim ears the world over for Allah's faithful then, Nasser seemed like the Pharaoh of Islam about to enslave the hateful Jews. But the unmitigated Arab disaster that was the Six-Day War left the shell-shocked *umma* clueless about the Islamic calamity, and though the Yom Kippur war that followed, which had initially raised the tempo of the *Musalman*s, yet left them sullen in the end, well, owing to the brilliance of the Jewish military prowess.

But the Mohammedan Decommissioned Adult of the *hadith* vintage wouldn't realize that the world had changed beyond recognition since the time of Muhammad and his Caliphs, who conquered much of their neighboring lands and forced all of THEM into Islam. If only the *Musalman*s could deviate a little from their believing course of the 'Angles of War' that Muhammad had charted for them, they would realize that those were the days of mortal combat, when the Islamic creed of *huris* for the *shahid* and a fair share of the 'spoils of war' for the survivors that gave the cutting edge to the Muslim swords. Well in those battles of yore, the *jihadis* vied with each other to die for the joys of the Paradise that Muhammad had promised them, which earned laurels for the Muslim arms, but sadly for the Coats of Muslim Mail, the modern warfare is as much about machines as men behind them that THEY have come to master on both counts. So, in battle after battle, and war after war, in the modern era, whenever the *Musalman*s itched for a fight, the patriotic sense of THEY, alien to the Muslim ethos, had been proving to be much more potent than the religious zeal of the faithful to die for Islam.

Besides, in the modern warfare, of what avail is the famed Arabian horse, the swiftest breed on earth that served the *Musalman* marauders so admirably in their plunders of yore in the Islamic folklore? On the contrary, the heaps of shoes that Nasser's soldiers rid themselves with so as to run faster to safety in the Sinai desert give an unerring account of the martial decay of the once dreaded Mohammedan Armageddon. What with the battles of the day being fought on the borderlands that dampen their spirits for the 'spoils of war', the material incentive 'here', it is as if the *fauzis* of Islam have lost interest in making it to the Paradise that Muhammad said was laid for the martyrs amongst them.

Thus as the Decommissioned Adult of the Mohammedan wouldn't be able to grasp even the apparent military might of the non-Islamic world of the day, so the *Musalman*s are ever prone to wait in perpetuity for a Saladin to appear on the Islamic horizon that only turns gloomy by the day. Hence, the *umma* mistook the bravado of Saddam Hussein, in leading up to the fiasco of the 'Mother of All Battles', for the bravery of Saladin at the Horns of Hattin. '*Dekhiye Saab, O Saddam hai, Saddam* - 'Look he's Saddam but Saddam', many a *Musalman* in India proudly proclaimed thus with a boding sense of an impending doom to the Great Satan.

However, as the anticlimax of a swift Saddam surrender became a shocking reality to the *Musalmans* the world over, the *umma* was crestfallen once again, and began to sulk all the more. It seems as though the psyche of the *Musalmans* is that of the front-benchers at the cinemas, who visualize the unreal on the reel as the real in life to relieve themselves of the drudgery of the reality though momentarily.

Nonetheless, Anwar Sadat, Nasser's successor, who made peace with Israel to get back their Sinai, would have been another Ataturk of Egypt, if only its *Musalmans* were less hostile towards their own visionary. But as the unbound hatred towards 'the others' rules the demented minds of the *Musalmans*, they made him pay with his life for their blind prejudice of the Jews. It's as though the *jihadi* Arabs wouldn't mind Israel keeping their land so long as they have a cause to hate the Jews and hope to annihilate them in the end, let it be just before the end of the world! In what could be the greatest irony of their faith, the Arabs eye the Promised Land that their own God gave the Jews, not prepared even to share it with them. But then, what 'the God' gave the Jews as Jehovah, the messenger of His, in His avatar as Allah, ordained the *Musalmans* to snatch it from them but to no avail.

So having failed to have their way with the Jews with their warmongering, the Palestinians could have pored over the *hadith* for an alternate strategy to hurt the enemy. And find they did that lies in the following episode from Muhammad's life sketched by Martin Lings.

"About the same time news came of the danger of another projected raid from further south; but in this instance the Prophet divined that the hostility against Islam was all concentrated in one remarkably evil man, the chief of the Lihyanite branch of Hudhayl. If they could be rid of him, the danger from that quarter would become negligible; so he sent 'Abd Allah ibn Unays, a man of Khazraj, with instructions to kill him. "O Messenger of God," said 'Abd Allah, "describe him to me that I may know him." "When thou seest him," said the Prophet, "he will remind thee of Satan. The certain sign for thee that he is indeed the man will be that when thou seest him thou wilt shudder at him." It was as he had said; and, having killed the man, 'Abd Allah escaped with his life."

So to the chagrin of the Israelis, Yasser Arafat resurrected the ghost of 'Abd Allah ibn Unays in the form of Al Fatah to infuse his *jihadi* in the disgruntled minds of the Palestinians. Well, the Israelis did find ways and means to counter the Islamic terror tactics in due course, for after all, hasn't history proved that while the *Musalmans* turn desperate in defeat, the Jews steel themselves in adversity? Pushed to the wall, Yasser, by fusing the Quranic diktats and the Muslim hurt with *hadith* as the catalyst, developed the deadly *fidayeen* in the Islamic laboratory of the Palestine. Confronted with the martyr missiles being thrown at them by Arafat's desperados, the Jews responded by decimating their dwellings and deporting their families. Maybe, the Israeli hope was that the potential martyr might give up, realizing that his loved ones in this world would have it tough even as he's having

a heck of a time in 'the hereafter'. But right 'here', the Israelis had to face the barrage of protests from human rights activists, morons all, who fail to grasp the rights of legitimate offensive and the wrongs of a misguided aggression. What is worse, in support of the extremist causes, they second fiddle from a safe distance, either owing to their naivety or vested interests, and/or both, and thus end up being insensitive to the sufferings of the victims of the so-called armed struggles they espouse.

Whatever the Israeli calculation, the *hadithian* response on the ground was a mixed one. While it might have brought sanity into many a Palestinian home, there were enough shelters in the refugee camps for the Hamas to rope in the *fidayeen* in numbers. After all, isn't martyrdom too tempting a proposition for the *shahid* what with the promised company of all those black-eyed virgins? Lest there should be any doubt in the minds of the prospective martyrs about the capacity of man to enjoy so many women, lo, the Quran had clarified that their own virility increaseth a hundred fold to be able to have them all! Oh, Muhammad! The uniqueness of the Mohammedan faith is that the belief enables the believer to endure the hassles of Islamic dogma 'here' while conditioning himself to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the rewards of 'the hereafter' guaranteed for the martyrs.

Given the Israeli ascent, maybe vexed with Palestinian excesses, 'the God' had tilted the Divine Scales towards the Jews, His originally Chosen People, all again, at the cost of the *Musalman*s as He warned them thus in the Quran:

"O Ye who believe! Whoso of you becometh a renegade from his religion, (know that in his stead) Allah will bring a people whom He loveth and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah, and fearing not the blame of any blamer. Such is the grace of Allah which he giveth unto whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing."

Delusions of Grandeur

Peace being the 'supposed message' of Islam, the religion that the Palestinians and the Pakistanis together profess, strife seems alike to be their political fate. While it is apparent that the Arab hostility towards Israel is steeped in the legality of tenancy, it can be envisaged that the Kashmir quagmire is rooted in Pakistan's delusions of Islamic-grandeur. Whatever, it is the paradox of the creed of Mohammedanism that it provides a common ground for the Palestinian need, and the Pakistani greed, for land to facilitate their self-destruction.

Even before the ink was dry on the deed of Indian partition, Pakistan surreptitiously pressed the tribal *Musalman* hordes into Kashmir to usurp the Paradise on Earth for itself. What with Raja Hari Singh, the Hindu King, having

had no army to name, the *mujahideen*, armed to the teeth by Pakistan, could overrun a large chunk of the land, but owing to their *jihadi* habit to plunder and the acquired vice of rape, these marauders had senselessly antagonized even the Kashmiri *Musalman*s, who came under their sway.

However, before the *mujahideen* could turn the fabled valley into a Pakistani trophy, Hari Singh's Hindu sentiment and Sheikh Abdullah's patriotic fervor saved the day for Kashmir as the former, acquiesced by the latter, aligned the State with the Union of India. Though the Indian forces entered the scene and stalled Pakistan's progress through its proxy rogues into the heart of the valley, yet, stymied by the cease-fire call of the comity of nations, the Indian State couldn't reclaim all of Kashmir to itself. The geo-political strategies of the Western nations in those cold war days enabled Pakistan, which teamed up with them against the Soviet Union, to usurp the thirteen-thousand-odd km square area, which is ironically called 'Azad Kashmir'. Thus lying divided in the laps of the adversaries, Kashmir became an arena of strife for the Pakistani *Musalman*s, and the rest, of course, is a continuing history with many sub-continental twists. Whatever may be the Pakistani brief over all of Kashmir; it cannot harp on the legality of its accession to India for after all, Raja Hari Singh derived the power to accede his kingdom, the way he willed it, from the same document that created Pakistan!

So be it, but what is the motivating factor that underscores the 'core issue of Kashmir' as Pakistan would put it - welfare of the Kashmiris or annexation of their valley?

Maybe for the right answer, the question is better addressed to the *muhajirs*, the *Musalman* migrants from the Gangetic plains into the Pakistani Sind. Why didn't Pakistan fail them by not letting them feel at home in the homeland of the *Musalman*s of Hindustan that it was supposed to be? So also, the Bihari *Musalman*s, though they were cohorts with the Punjabi *Musalman*s in the massacre of the Bengali *Musalman*s in the then East Pakistan, yet fail to get entry visas into what was left as Pakistan. Won't it serve the separatists of the valley to ponder over why the Pakistanis, unwilling though to suffer the presence of these alien *Musalman*s in their 'land of the pure', are so fond of the Kashmiri *Musalman*s living beyond their borders? Unless they had turned morons by the Islamic death wish to sink with the failed state of Pakistan, it should be apparent to them that unlike the Bihari *Musalman*s, they have a fabled valley to add to the Pakistani territory. And that is about the Pakistani land greed camouflaged in the Islamic green to seduce the Kashmiri *Musalman*s into its inimical fold.

That, after all, is history, and it was also a fact that the Portuguese wrested Goa from the *Musalman*s, and got rid of the believers, way back in the 16th Century, and if not, Pakistan would have an irrefutable claim on it *ab initio*, but that again is history! Whatever, the urge of the *Musalman*s has always been to expand the Islamic territory on the world terrain, and thus the Mohammedan Decommissioned

Adult of Pakistan fails to take India's Kashmiri perspective into account, much less analyze it to see if any course correction is needed in his thinking.

The two-nation theory by which the ancient land of *Aryavarta* was partitioned was an illusion of the Indian *Musalman*s that was not subscribed by the Hindus of India, and had they wanted a country for them only, wouldn't they have ceded some more land to Pakistanis, if that were needed, as a quid pro quo for ridding the Islamist presence from their Indian midst. But, rightly or wrongly, that was not the way Hindustan was partitioned, and if so, what's the rationale for those millions of *Musalman*s to stay back in India even after Pakistan came into being? So, any Pakistani argument for wanting Kashmir, citing its Muslim majority would be untenable to any reasonable mind and likewise, the urge of those Kashmiri *Musalman*s to merge the valley with the Islamic Pakistan wouldn't sync with the spirit of partition. If not, won't it make a case for the Indian *Musalman*s seeking the merger of those areas, wherever they are in majority, with Pakistan, and let their brethren, wherever they are in minority, continue to live in India that is until they cross the half-way mark! Thus, when push comes to shove, the moral right of the Indian *Musalman*s to live in India would become questionable, and if Pakistanis, in the spirit of their pan-Islamic credo, wish the Indian *Musalman*s well, then they should become wiser to their 'hate India' campaign, which keeps the Hindu-Muslim apathy alive in India.

The same applies to the Bangladeshi *Musalman*s, likewise afflicted with the Decommissioned Adult syndrome of their erstwhile Pakistani masters. Why at the dawn of the 'original partition', even before the celebrations for having seen the back of the hated Hindu Bengalis were over, the ugly reality that is the Punjabi *Musalman*s stared the Bengali *Musalman* in his face as the Islamic creed of equality before Allah was of no avail to the poor Bengalis in the Pakistani version of Islamic democracy! And in the hour of the Bengali glory, Bhutto's political greed and the Punjabi *fauzis'* prejudice to their dark skin upstaged their right to have their man, Mujibur Rahaman, as the head the Islamic Pakistan. Their agitation for their democratic right to see Mujibur as the Prime Minister of Pakistan made the Bengali *Musalman*s appear like idolaters to the Generals of Pakistan, and they treated them likewise - massacring the men and raping their women. This about speaks for the hypocrisy of the Muslim Brotherhood, not to speak the way the *Musalman* expatriates from Pakistani and India are treated in the land of their Prophet.

Where did the hapless Bengali *Musalman*s flee to escape from the repression of their fellow *Musalman*s than to Hindustan! It is another matter though that all this was 'the Godsend' to India to grind its own Pakistani axe in helping the oppressed Bengali *Musalman*s' freedom struggle. In what was a unique instance in the Islamic saga, so as to oust their Punjabi *Musalman* brethren, the Bengali *Musalman*s welcomed the Hindu *kafirs* into their *dar-ul-Islam*! Of course, India did oblige them, and Bangladesh came into being, and this one gesture could have been sufficient

for the Bangladeshi *Musalman*s to shed their old Hindu hatred and hold the hand of eternal friendship to the Indians. Why not? In the ever changing world, that is what the 'nations at odds once' are doing now and that's what the Bangladeshis would have done in the normal course. But then, for them there is the Islam to contend with, isn't it?

Before long, the initial euphoria of the Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*, occasioned by their Bengali sense of gratitude, gave way to the Indian animosity brought to the fore by their *Musalman* upbringing on the staple diet of Hindu hatred, which goaded them to murder their own savior, Mujibur, perceived to be India friendly, and to wipe out his kith and kin in cold blood to boot. In what could be termed as the great human tragedy, Muhammad could inculcate the bigoted faith of Islam that his faithful religiously adhere to, whose ethos is inimical to the innate human quality of gratitude that the Bangladeshi *Musalman*s would otherwise were capable of possessing. Thus if not for their Islamic bigotry, the Bangladeshis, as a people, would have appropriately responded to the gesture of the Indian goodwill, as any other peoples of the world. So, it's one of the ironies of Islam in that it gives with one hand and takes away with the other, and thus it is the destiny of the *Musalman*s to suffer on that score, even as they make 'the others' to suffer as well.

As for the truncated Pakistan, obsessed as it was with its idea of a strategic depth against India, when the time came, it thought it was jolly well holy to foster terrorists on its Islamic soil to play the American cold war game in the Soviet occupied Afghanistan. What with the eventual Russian withdrawal under the Islamic duress, and the Taliban coronation that followed, Pakistan had reassigned the *mujahideen* to serve its Kashmiri cause. And by then, Osama bin Laden too had set up the international terror network of Al Qaeda for Muhammad Atta and others to exhibit the Islamic derangement on 9/11/2001 for the world audience.

When came the American pressure on Pakistan, its Generals have chosen to hunt with the hounds and run with the hares in their terrorist badlands but wouldn't Washington know that the *jihadis* of Pakistan meant for Srinagar might go astray and attack New York all again? After Iraq wouldn't it be Pakistan's turn to face the American music after its Al-Qaeda ghost is exorcized? However, till recently, one would have thought that the fate of the Islamic militancy would be decided in the Promised Land but meanwhile, it is as if the Sunnis are at the Shia-throats in Iraq and Pakistan to snatch the terrorist standard of Islam from the Hamas.

Meanwhile, the un-Islamic world is unable to counter this lose cannon of a *fidayeen* but would it forever like to remain a hostage to the Islamic terrorism? How long would 'the others' bear with the unpleasant task of clearing the human debris that the Islamic terrorists would be leaving behind in their midst? Won't the world lose its patience with the *Musalman*s at some point of time? Would the *umma* be able to take on the rest of the world without their Angels of War, which, any way,

never returned to aid the *Musalmans* after their brief appearance at Badr to rescue Muhammad?

Ways of the Bigots

The *Musalmans'* fundamentalist self-destruct is a weird phenomenon as Islam has the compelling character of infusing in the believers a frenzied religious madness of total blindness? Didn't the Wahabis even dig up Muhammad's grave once in order to make Islam purer! But, now, what of the growing trend of the Islamic car-bombings even in Muhammad's land, not to speak of the conquered ones, aimed at fellow *Musalmans*? It's as if the Islamic terrorism, willy-nilly nursed by the *umma*, like the Frankenstein Monster, has begun to devour the Islamic Hypocrites of *dar-ul-Islam*. As one cannot farm in a desert, fundamentalism wouldn't have been the mind-set of the *Musalmans* without the *masjid-madrassa* cultivation of it, and it helps the *umma* to realize that the Satan that misguides the believers comes in the guise of child psychology. Well, won't the *Musalmans* unwittingly ensure that the tenets of Islam are injected into their toddlers in adult dosage to habituate them to adhere to the supposedly straight path that the Quran laid for them that Muhammad had cemented for the *umma* to tread on into the eternity?

Why, Islam proves a point; a religion that brainwashes its faithful into believing that life for them begins only in 'the hereafter' is bound to be at odds with the possibilities of life 'here'. And this can be visualized from the news report in 'The New York Times' quoted by M.J. Akbar in 'The Shade of Swords'.

Little in the manner of Ijaz Khan Hussein betrays the miseries he saw as a volunteer in the war in Afghanistan.

Mr. Khan, a college-trained pharmacist, joined the jihad, or holy war, like thousands of other Pakistanis who crossed into Afghanistan. He worked as a medical orderly near Kabul, shuttling to the front lines and picking up bodies and parts of bodies. Of 43 men who boarded a truck to travel with him to Afghanistan in October, he said, 41 were killed. Now with the Taliban and Al Qaida routed, have Mr. Khan and other militants finished with jihad?

Mr. Khan, at least, said he had not.

'We went to the jihad filled with joy, and I would go again tomorrow,' he said. 'If Allah had chosen me to die, I would have been in Paradise, eating honey and watermelons and grapes, and resting with beautiful virgins, just as it is promised in the Quran. Instead, my fate was to remain amid the unhappiness here on earth.'

Khan Hussein's fanatic account should have gladdened Muhammad's heart no end, peace be upon him, but it would have grieved the parents of those 41,

unless they too were psychic *Musalmans*, believing in the Paradise and all. It would be an idea to know how the parents of all those children whom Ayatollah Khomeini, in his fight against Saddam Hussein, consigned to martyrdom by promising Paradise. Moreover, in a cruel example of the exploitation of their faith that the *imams* inculcates in them, he ironically gave the hapless kids those 'Made in Japan' plastic keys of its gates! Maybe, at the influx of Khomeini's boy-martyrs into the Paradise, it was the pity even Muhammad might have felt for the Iranian youth at that time, which could have prompted him, as depicted in the Danish Cartoon, to pronounce "Stop stop we ran out of virgins." But instead of divining the irony of the Islamic martyrdom that the cartoon highlighted, the *Musalmans* the world over reacted in a way that validates the Persian adage - *Ba Khuda diwaana basho, Ba Muhammad hoshiar*, which means, *Were it about 'the God', rant as thou want, Weigh thy words if it comes to Muhammad*. And this servility of the Mohammedan cult towards its prophet that goads the *Musalmans* into turning Islam into a weapon to defend Muhammad's manner and protect his honor against any perceived slight, maybe inadvertent though unintended.

But then, Khomeini only followed Muhammad's example, though as an exception, as the following episode on the eve of the battle of Badr illustrates, into a rule.

"At the first halt, which was still in the oasis, the Prophet's cousin Sa'd of Zuhrah noticed his fifteen-year-old brother 'Umayr looking troubled and furtive and he asked him what was the matter. " I am afraid," said 'Umayr, that the Messenger of God will see me and say I am too young and send me back. And I long to go forth. It might be that God would grant me martyrdom." As he feared, the Prophet noticed him when he lined up the troops and said he was too young and told him to go home. But 'Umayr wept and the Prophet let him stay and take part in the expedition. "He was so young." said Sa'd, "that I had to fasten the straps of his sword-belt for him."

It goes without saying that owing to the long-term implications for the *umma*, the right thinking *Musalmans* might apply themselves to the task of eliminating the *jihadi* mind-set amongst their young men and women, which requires the cleaning up of the *masjid-madrassa mess* before it is too late for their faith. Why, in this 'neutron bomb era', Islam seems to be really in danger for once, and the *fidayeen* of the Osama School might be bringing the Mohammedan D - Day closer to our times.

As the Upanishads aver, the Satan but resides in one's mind, and the way to control him is through self-restraint, but, unfortunately, the *Musalmans* sow wild psychic seeds in the minds of their kids, which in time grow into fundamentalist trees of obscurantist species as Harris had observed. Thus, the noble but naïve desire of the *Musalmans* to inculcate the Islamic faith in their kids with the Quranic drill in the precincts of the *mohalla-masjid-madrassa* combine comes to grief seemingly by the Satanic Design. Why, Islam that prohibits drink to the believers

yet inebriates them with a heady mix of religious indoctrination; how would the Mohammedan Decommissioned Adult know that while the alcoholic inebriation brings the drunken back into normality in time, the Islamic elixir would keep the believer inebriated forever!

But dawns not reason on the bigoted minds; *Inshah Allah*, if the child were to pick up the Islamic threads religiously and grow up into a believing *musalman*, still he would have developed a prejudiced psyche that stymies his awareness in our age of openness. But God forbid, if the child turns out to be a Hypocrite, his tedious religious drill would have implanted the Quranic guilt feeling in his troubled consciousness, and where the pious Muslim parents would have left, the disgruntled Islamic fanatics would take over. While the prejudiced psyche of the *Musalman*s could be cultivated into *Islamic zeal* against the *kafirs* by the misguided *mullahs*, the guilt feeling of the Hypocrites could be re-engineered as martyr missiles in the *Jihadi* workshops of Al Qaeda and Hamas, not to speak of the terrorist camps at the Af-Pak border.

It is a psychological possibility to work on the subconscious guilt of those youth, who have strayed from the Straight Path, to induce a conscious desire for martyrdom to atone for their past sins as the ideologues of Al-Qaeda had demonstrated; didn't Osama's plane loads that struck the 'Satanic Towers' on 9/11, as the world watched in awe, come from this deceptive source. Isn't there a method in the apparent madness of the *mullahs*, who to try to convert the gaoled Christian convicts of the West into Islam? While the truly devout could be averse to the suicide missions for they were brought up to believe that it was a sin in Islam, nonetheless their prejudice could come in handy to rouse them to *jihad* in the cause of Islam with Paradise as the destination. After all, whatever 'the others' might say about his conduct, Ayatollah Khomeini had his *hadith* right, didn't he? Whatever, it would be interesting to see why Allah seems to have deserted His faithful in spite of their undiluted faith in Him.

"And this is a blessed Scripture, which we have revealed, confirming that which (was revealed) before it, that thou mayst warn the Mother of Villages and those around her. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe herein, and they are careful of their worship."

"And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing."

Thus, while Quran willed that Allah's Message should be spread in Mecca and its environs, the disciples of Muhammad, against the Will of 'the God', had plundered the lands and ravaged the world in the name of Islam, besides imposing their manners on the converted peoples. But then, why blame them as Allah modified His covenant, many a time, and thus, there is no way of knowing for the *Musalman*s about the change of His mind, if any, and moreover, the Quran wasn't arranged either in the chronological order of the *ayats*.

Whatever, in the current glut the *Musalmans* are in everywhere, they are prone to reminisce about the past glories of the Islamic architecture and science. If by 'Islamic', they mean Arabic, we may note that the *Musalmans* of Arabia, by and large, including Muhammad, were illiterate and lived in tents for the most part. And the mosque-cum-private quarters that Muhammad got it built for him and his wives in Medina was not an architectural wonder by any stretch of imagination. Indeed, the so-called Islamic achievements were owing to the contributions of those nations with advanced cultures such as Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt that Islam had appropriated for itself with brute force. It is another matter that Islam, in time, reduced all of them into mediocrity as V. S. Naipaul elucidates how the Mohammedans, with their socio-religious intolerance, destroyed the indigenous cultures of Southeast Asian nations?

Well amidst all this Islamic chaos, the Indian *Musalmans* have reason to thank their forefathers for their foresight or lethargy, and/or both, in not moving over to Pakistan. But, how to convince the *umma* that the only way to save Islam for the coming generations is for the current believers to be less believing! It would help the *Musalmans* to ponder over Sigmund Freud's observation that 'when a man is freed of religion, he has a better chance to live normal and wholesome life'. As the Islamic straight path which Muhammad showed them is leading the *umma* to the precipice; it may be an idea for the *Musalmans* to take the Freudian Road of wholesome Life. But would the *Musalmans* ever be able to do that!

The Rift Within

Based on the finding of its opinion poll, *The India Today* (August 26, 2002) had averred that - "In the past six months communalism and Pakistan-sponsored terrorism have grabbed the national headlines. On these issues there is a definite Hindu-Muslim rift. Take the on-again-off-again Ayodhya dispute. On this issue, there seems to be a hardening of stand in favour of building a Ram temple immediately - 43 per cent were in favour six months ago, today it is 47 per cent. Even among Congress voters, 43 per cent want the temple now. Predictably, this is not a solution favoured by Muslims. Equally, support for the temple isn't as enthusiastic in the South and East as in the North and West.

Likewise, while 70 per cent of Hindus regard Pakistan as an enemy - a rare expression of national unity - only 37 per cent of Muslims do so. Indeed, 49 per cent of Muslims have a rather charitable view of Pakistan as an estranged brother, a friend and a future ally. What complicates matters is that among Muslims who are aware, Mohammed Ali Jinnah is regarded as a hero, along with Mahmud of Ghazni

and Aurangzeb. The weight of Hindu opinion treats these historical figures as villains.

These are worrying signs and pointers to the emotional gulf between the majority community and the most significant minority. Nor is this rift a persisting relic. The poll indicates that it is the youth (18 to 24-year-olds) that is more aware and belligerent than their elders. This raw, untapped energy is yet to find focus. A positive outlet may take India to new heights; in the wrong hands, it could plunge the country in civil strife. A divided India can swing either way."

Why, this schism is the legacy of the Muslim religious expansionism the 'all Knowing' and 'the Wise' Allah wished to avert as ordained by Him in the Quran thus:

"And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them. The Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Wise." (4.9)

But the will of Allah was ignored by His faithful and forced His message in Arabic on the peoples of other tongues creating the conflict of interest that 'the God' had foreseen. So, the glorification of the Indian *Musalman*s of the historical figures, who had been inimical to the Hindus or had undermined the Hindustan, as heroes of Islam, was not the will of Allah but the making of His disregarding believers of yore. Whatever, during the 'unauthorized' Mohammedan expansion down the Quranic journey, the Islamic straight, but narrow, path began to lead the *umma* onto the narrower by lanes of bigotry, or so it seems. Hence, it's for the Indian *Musalman*s of the day to ponder over this *ayat* that made their 'alien God's' intent clear, and try to search for the 'right path' in the Indian setting albeit with the Islamic ethos.

Whatever, when the U.S tasted the madness that is the Islamic fundamentalism on 9/11, one Western social scientist wondered what it might take the Jews and the Hindus to live in the Muslim surroundings! Why it is for the Indian *Musalman*s to think whether that image is okay with them; they might as well ask themselves the valid question - instead of leading a harmonious life in the Indian society, how come they provoke the disinterested, if not docile, Hindu majority into a retaliatory mode? Well, the *Musalman*s, obsessed as they are with growing beards and wearing burkas, so as to keep their Islamic identity intact, don't seem to care two hoots for what others think about their separatist attitudes. But they might realize that their emotional attachment to everything Mohammedan makes them fish in the Islamic waters that wouldn't survive on the lands of reality. Why, their inability to vibe with the cultures in which they live as minorities makes them blind to the beatitude of life 'here' right there, and if only they could see beyond their Quranic noses, they would realize that Islam is the only religion where the agenda of the founder and the aspirations of his followers were mutually

exclusive. Understandable though the Muslim pride in Muhammad, what they fail to see is that he was not the only blessed soul on earth.

What about the phenomenon of Sathya Sai Baba, whom millions of his devotees, the world over, revere as an avatar of God, and experience his 'presence' wherever they are; a *la affair Musalmans!* Lo, that too without a scripture of his own or the swords of his faithful to spread his creed, the Baba attracts peoples of all faiths in today's world, with the expectable exception of the *Musalmans!* Moreover, without any promise of an exclusive Paradise to his devotees, he inspires them for a voluntary service 'here' to the humanity at large. Of course, like Muhammad, he too was reviled and faced calumnies in spite of it all and thus, it's for the *Musalmans* to review their Prophet's achievements in the light of Baba's contributions.

Yet another Muslim fallacy is that none but them feel the like faith in 'the God', and it is for them to know that as an overindulgent sweet tooth could be nauseating, so also their Quranic overdose would be debilitating. And making it a triple jeopardy for the *Musalmans* is their penchant to gloat over the prowess of the Islamic warriors of yore, who subdued much of the old world, coupled with the delusory await for the advent of their Savior-in-Chief, who would paint the entire world with the Islamic green! No wonder that the desperate *Musalmans* take the demented Osama bin Ladens for the upholders of Islam and the suicide vests of the deluded *fidayeen* as the Coats of Muslim Mail.

Maybe a slight brushing up of the world history, not just the Islamic victories of yore, might enable the *Musalmans* to come out of their cocoons of bitterness in the wilderness of dogma into which they had insensibly pushed themselves into. Better they come to know that the Christians of Abyssinia sheltered the early Mohammedans troubled by the Quraysh and the Hindu's too didn't chase away the *Musalmans* when they came to Malabar for trade. When it comes to their misplaced notions about Hinduism, who were to tell them that the idols Muhammad was hell-bent upon breaking were those that supposedly polluted the Kabah, and not the deities that inspire millions of devout Hindus in *Aryavarta*? Even after living for a thousand years in Hindustan, if the Indian *Musalmans* were to believe, as Mahmud Ghazni did, that the Hindus are idolaters, it speaks for their lack of awareness about the culture of their own forbearers albeit their pre-conversion one; oh how they shy away from accepting a Hindu *prasadam* for the fear of polluting their Islamic body and deviating from the Quranic credo:

"O ye who believe! Take not for intimates others than your folk, who would spare no pains to ruin you: they love to hamper you. Hatred is revealed by (the utterance of) their mouths, but which their breasts hide is greater. We have made plain for you the revelations if ye will understand."

"Wed not idolatresses till they believe; for lo! a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress though she please you; and give not your daughters in marriage

to idolaters till they believe, for lo! a believing slave is better than an idolater though he please you. These invite unto the Fire, and Allah inviteth unto the Garden and unto forgiveness by His grace, and expoundeth thus His revelations to mankind that haply they may remember.”

The Indian *Musalman*s might realize that these and many such Quranic injunctions exhorting them not to mix with the Jews, the Christians and the idolaters (poor guys who are denied even a capital I in Islam) are but contextual for they were meant to address Muhammad’s compulsion to keep his meager flock together against their being poached by ‘the others’ in the formative years of Islam! That the faith got more than cemented in the minds of the *Musalman*s for so long now, would these Quranic exhortations still be valid? It is as well the Indian *Musalman*s realize that Islam is more than safe in Hindustan, in spite of its Quranic partition, and thus they might as well venture out of their ‘ghettos of faith’ to interact with the Hindus, who have no agenda for reconverting them into Hinduism. Maybe, it’s the problem of the Mayawatis of the Indian politics to herd their legislators into posh retreats, away from their poaching political opponents, and not of the *mullahs* of the numerous *umma* to keep the Indian *Musalman*s in the dark Quranic alleys.

That apart, when his believers were far and few between, it was imperative for Muhammad’s Islamic cause not to give away Muslim women in marriage to ‘the others’. But would it be valid still, when the *Musalman*s are more than a billion strong, and going strong, and it is not as if the Hindu men are itching to seduce Muslim women into Hindu motherhood. So, when the neutral Cupid fancies an odd Hindu-Muslim nuptial, what for the *Musalman*s treat it as a case of ‘Islam in danger’, and attack the hapless couple! Well, if the Quran erects Islamic barriers for interfaith love matches, the Hindu prejudice places hurdles to inter-caste marriages, and it is high time that the *caste panchayats* that kill the transgressing lovers are wound up once and for all.

The way the *Musalman*s of the day feel about themselves is the replica of what Alberuni noted of the Hindus of yore gloating about themselves; they feel Islam is the most glorious faith, their conquests are the greatest ever, their culture is the best on earth, their architecture is the marvel of the world, and so on and so forth. Maybe it is time that the *Musalman*s have a balanced view of their victories and defeats over the centuries, but in their desperation for the advent of a Saladin to subdue the hated infidels, they have reduced themselves into gloating over the Osamas and Nasrallahs as the modern-day Islamic saviors. Oh, what a fall! Though their methods are reminiscent of Muhammad’s *realpolitik* of ‘ends justifying the means’, it pays for the *Musalman*s to know that he was a pragmatist with a singular mission, while their new heroes are but bigots chasing un-achievable goals. After all, one must be a moron to aim at making the world a *dar-ul-Islam*, which Omar and Saladin, not to speak of Muhammad, failed to do so!

The Way Around

While the wise use their abilities as the building blocks of life, the bigots turn their dogmas into its stumbling blocks, and same is the case in building a nation or causing its ruination, Pakistan being a living example of the latter. However, in what is left of Aryavarta, it is a socio-political reality that even as the Hindus cannot wish away the preponderant Muslim presence in it, there is no way the *Musalmans* can turn it into a *dar- ul-Islam* either. So as the Union of India, Allah willing, would forever remain a place of the Hindu Muslim conglomeration, it is only wise for the Indians, irrespective of their religious affinities, to realize that their future is firmly rooted in this common communal ground.

To begin with, the Hindus should not misconstrue the soft centre the Indian *Musalmans* tend to nurse for Pakistan in their hearts as a synonym of their anti-Indian ethos for their minds are conditioned by the *umma's* Quranic paranoia. So, they get habituated at seeing things from the pan-Islamic prism, which stymies their Indian vision besides sullyng their national image, and sadly for them, there would be incessant alerts of 'Islam in danger' from around the world, which keep their psyche forever stressed by their *kafir* enigma. It is another matter though that this Islamic mess into which they habitually allow themselves to get into would only enable 'the others', whom they, any way, keep at an arms length, to become even more apathetic towards them. Well, there seems to be no end to the psychic dichotomy of the *Musalmans*, and Kemal Ataturks and Anwar Sadats, in their scores, are to be born in every Muslim *galli* to make it right for them. That, perhaps, is too much to hope for, any way.

But for now, the *Musalmans* are ever on the look out for the ways and means to assert their Islamic separateness, which, for the muse of a poet would seem: Oh goddamn faith, how thou divide 'the God' from gods and 'the *Musalmans*' from other humans! Why if only the *moulanas* approach Muhammad's life, not in awe but with insight, for a solution to their vexatious separatist inhibitions, pointers are aplenty in Martin Ling's biography of his. They would then realize that Muhammad's ability to compromise made him what he was, and enabled him to take his faith to the Kabah. The social compromise devised by Muhammad for the Muslim-Jewish amity and his concessions to the theological demands of the Quraysh cited here could guide the Indian *Musalmans* in fashioning a Hindu - Muslim compromise.

"It was to be hoped that these two parties would be strengthened by a third, and the Prophet now made a covenant of mutual obligation between his followers and the Jews of the oasis, forming them into a single community of believers but allowing for the differences between the two religions. Muslims and Jews were to have equal status. If a Jew were wronged, then he must be helped to his rights by

both Muslim and Jew, and so also if a Muslim were wronged. In case of war against the polytheists they must fight as one people, and neither Jews nor Muslims were to make a separate peace, but peace was to be indivisible. In case of differences of opinion or dispute or controversy, the matter was to be referred to God through His Messenger. There was, however, no express stipulation that the Jews should formally recognize Muhammad as the Messenger and Prophet of God, though he was referred to as such throughout the document."

Of course, this gesture by Muhammad was in his early Yathrib days, which was much before the Quran poured venom on the Jews, and he, his wrath on them in the neighborhood. Leaving that aside, the all-important religious concession of Muhammad as recorded by Martin Lings makes an interesting reading.

"Quraysh now sent Suhayl to conclude a treaty (*with Muhammad*), and with him were his two clansmen Mikraz and Hwaytib. They conferred with the Prophet, and the Companions heard their voices rise and fall according to whether the point in question was hard to agree upon or easy. When they had finally reached an agreement the Prophet told 'Ali to write down the terms, beginning with the revealed words of consecration *Bismi Llahi r-Rahmani r-Rahim, in the Name of God, the Good, the Merciful*, but Suhayl objected. "As to *Rahman*," he said, "I know not what he is. But write *Bismik Allahumma*, in Thy Name, O God, as thou wert wont to write."

Some of the Companions cried out "By God, we will write naught but *Bismi Lalhi r-Rahmani r-Rahim*," but the Prophet ignored them and said "Write *Bismik Allahumma*," and he went on dictating: "these are the terms of the truce between Muhammad the Messenger of God and Suhayal the son of 'Amr"; but again Suhayl protested. "If we knew thee to be the Messenger of God," he said, "we would not have barred thee from the House, neither would we have fought thee; but write Muhammad the son of 'Abd Allah."

'Ali had already written "The Messenger of God," and the Prophet told him to strike out those words, but he said he could not. So the Prophet told him to point with his finger to the words in question, and he himself stuck them out*. Then he told him to write in their place "the son of 'Abd Allah," which he did.

The document continued: "They have agreed to lay down the burden of war for ten years, in which times men shall be safe and not lay violent hands the one upon the other; on condition that whoso cometh unto Muhammad of Quraysh without the leave of his guardian, Muhammad shall return him unto them; but whoso cometh unto Quraysh of those who are with Muhammad, they shall not be returned. They shall be no subterfuge and no treachery. And who so wisheth to enter into the bond and pact of Muhammad may do so; and who so wisheth to enter into the bond and pact of Quraysh may do so."

Well, every *Musalman* could be privy to this episode but few, if any, would have delved deep into it to question the unquestionable. What does that Suhayl's

protest - "If we knew thee to be the Messenger of God, we would not have barred thee from the House, neither would we have fought thee." - mean? Won't it go without saying that none in the Arabia heard Allah announce that He had sent Muhammad as His messenger to them, but it was Muhammad who had proclaimed himself as the Messenger of 'the God' for them? If not, Suhayl and others would not have said what they said to Muhammad about his divine claim without a mundane witness to name.

Even beyond the boundaries of belief, it is the penchant of the faithful, not just the *Musalman*, to assert that all that is there to know can be found in between the covers of their religious scriptures. While nothing can be farther from the truth, the Quran portrays many a divine contradictions, one of which is refreshingly welcome in that as against its averment that it carries for man the final message of the God, it states that "if all the trees in the end were pens, and if the sea eked out by seven seas more were ink, the Words of God, could not be written out into their end." Besides, it further affirms that: "Such of Our revelations as we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest though not that Allah is able to do all things." And above all else, underscoring the need for a periodic Islamic update, Muhammad had also said, "Islam began as a stranger and will become once more as a stranger", and promised to his flock that 'the God' would not abandon them, "God will send to this community, at the head of every hundred years, one who will renew for it its religion."

But, as Muhammad prophesied, none was sent by Allah for fourteen centuries now to renew Islam for the guidance of the *Musalman*s in the ever-changing world, and it is another matter that the *mullas* scorn the very idea of broadening the narrow path of their faith. So, it is imperative for the *Musalman*s of the day to understand that a review of Islam is overdue, which, their prophet himself felt that it would need from time to time. Why not the *moulanas* of the Muslim Personal Law Board of India take the lead in not only reviewing the 'out of tune' features of their faith but also in seeking an honorable compromises with the Hindus on all contentious issues as Muhammad had done with the Quraysh. Well, a little give and take shouldn't upset them as Muhammad himself had said 'verily ye are in an age when whoso omitteth one tenth of the law shall be doomed. But there will come an age when whoso fulfilleth one tenth of the law shall be saved.'

That being the case, wonder why the *Mullas* should be so paranoid about what is Islamic and what is un-Islamic for the *Musalman*s in these modern times! What to say about the apathy of the Indian *Musalman* towards the native cultural connotation that is in spite of the fact that some of their ilk had showed how to fuse the Indian ethos with their Islamic souls. Why can't they take a leaf out of the life of that incomparable paragon of the Hindu-Muslim synthesis, the music maestro Allauddin Khan of Maihar *gharana*. Here was an outstanding exponent of the Hindustani classical music who, being a devout *Musalman*, and in spite of the

Quranic injunctions against idol worship, was wont to sing in ecstasy before the Deity of Sarada, the goddess of learning, in the hill temple at Maihar! Though his religious dogma would have him not to bow but to Allah, his theological wisdom enabled him to grasp the truth that the Omnipresent Allah would be present in the Hindu Deities as well; and so he had seen the falsity of the Muslim fallacy in making the Omnipotent Almighty a captive of Islam. Moreover, neither did he suffer any Quranic qualms in naming his daughter Annapurna nor had he undergone any Islamic pangs in giving her hand in marriage to Pandit Ravi Shankar, his disciple, much before he became illustrious.

Hadn't Naushad Ali, Shakeel Badayuni and Mohammad Rafi, all believers though, proved that while reveling in the Hindu devotional music, yet they could be practicing *Musalman*s? Won't every Hindu soul forever be moved by their combined effort of the *Baiju Bawra* song - *man tarpat hari darshan ko aaj* - that impelled a *sadhu* of Rishikesh to rush to Bombay for the *darshan* of Shakeel Badayuni, the lyricist! Why, one Yusuf Khan Sarwar Khan as Dilip Kumar, the peerless thespian of the Indian silver screen, could fervently pray before assorted Hindu deities on the celluloid and yet remain a *Musalman* by heart and soul! Besides, didn't President Abdul Kalam prove that a *Musalman* could draw as much spiritual solace from the Quran as well as from the Bhagvad-Gita.

As for the Hindus, don't they love the continuance of the Indo-Islamic culture, exemplified by the Hindustani music that is resplendent with the Bismillah Khans, Bade Ghulam Ali Khans, Begum Akthars and others? What a void the Indian romantic hearts would have been sans those *ghazals*, *qawwalis* and *mujras* that ooze so much eroticism? Can one ever come across any Hindu youths in the North Indian campuses, who had not by hearted some *sher shairie* or the other? Don't the Hindus toast the Abdul Hamids who sacrificed their lives fighting for the country, and the Abdul Kalams who design missiles to deter Pakistan from attacking the Mother India? Needless to say, the Hindu-Muslim amity depends on the Muslim willingness to address the Hindu national concerns and the Hindu understanding of the Muslim religious fears. And, as the communal peace is a two-way lane, one would wish that the Muslim genius, at last, might come up with new alignments for their straight path in the Hindu environment for a smooth ride 'here' on their way to 'the hereafter'. Wish in the coming years, India would be blessed with an Anwar Sadat to dare defy the bigotry of the *Mullahs*, and/or a Kemal Ataturk to cross swords with the Islamic fundamentalists to make a lasting difference to the Hindu - Muslim coexistence .

But meanwhile, would the *Musalman* bigots and the Hindu sophists, who aid and abet them in feeding their folks with a religious diet, apply their minds to bridge the Hindu-Muslim economic divide? By and large, the Indian *Musalman*s are economically worse off than even the Hindu *dalits*, their erstwhile caste cousins, since they tend to lead a ghetto-like life in isolated pockets in abominable

conditions, compared even to the substandard amenities available in the Hindu localities. And compounding their misery is their penchant to rear more children than their means would will, and that either forces them to reduce their progeny into child labor or consign them to the *madrasa* education, which only cultivates the fundamentalist mindset that is inimical to their economic wellbeing. Besides, the Muslim leadership of the *Jama Masjid* vintage is so Quranically oriented as to appreciate that a fair share of the country's economic cake, by the right of their birth and citizenship, is that of the Indian *Musalman*s. Their depravities and the disparities are real but the Indian *Musalman*s don't seem to mind as long as Islam is not in danger, and egging on them to remain that way are their Hindu detractors in their pseudo-secular garbs, who routinely shed crocodile tears to score Brownie 'secular' points; if the *Musalman*s were to imbibe liberal attitudes, of what relevance could be the pseudo-secular platitudes of the media savvy Satan's?

However, the real indicator of the Indian *Musalman*s' backwardness is their collective inability to agitate for the undoing of their economic plight. Why should they, when their Quran dissuades them against all that, "naught is the life of the world save a pastime and a sport. Better far is the abode of the Hereafter for those who keep their duty (to Allah). Have ye then no sense?" That being the case, would ever the Muslim masses question the conventional wisdom of their community in investing their children's future in Islam through the *madrasa* modules? After all, they should realize that their economic wellbeing would forever remain a mirage on the Islamic straight path as the *madrasas* lead their children onto the misery 'here' though with a promise of joys in the 'hereafter'. What are the *madrasas* if not the pillars of the *masjids* to keep the faith going the way it was from Muhammad's time; they are no more than the Islamic wells of dogma and what else could be the vision of its *moulvis* than their resident frogs, at best, helping the pupils memorize the Quran and at worst making bigots out of them. Even otherwise, of what avail is the secular education to them; the sight of the few middle-class Muslim girls going to the Indian temples of higher education wrapped up in *burkas* only proves that no course material can make the Indian *Musalman*s' Arabian outlook acquire a new look. Let the *Musalman*s be beware, in the running chapter of Islam, it is the winds of Wahabism that are airing the *madrasa* environment and the Indian *Mujahideen* is on the prowl, recruiting for its terror outfits. What is more, as the Muslim Holy land had become the breeding ground of the Islamic terrorism, to make it right for the *umma*, the *musalman*s should ensure that the Haj of their progeny is put on hold till they are on the wrong side of their forties.

So be it but the *moulvi-mullah* combine's apathy for modernity and the appeasement of these obscurants by the Hindu pseudo-secularists for their political gain, together subject the *Musalman*s to a double squeeze. Moreover, the Hindu dominated Indian media, controlled by those that are naïve about the Islamic dogma, in its eagerness to be on the right side of secularism; runs a tirade against

the Hindu nationalist forces and ends up perpetuating the Muslim obscurantism. What is worse, as if to light up every minority household with its naïve Hindu torch, it infuses in the Indian *Musalman* a sense of neglect by the Indian nation itself; why, won't its glamour boys and girls attribute their economic backwardness to the Hindu biases rather than exposing the age-old Muslim apathy for secular education? Wonder how these fail to see the children of the Hindu maids and the Christian coolies everywhere walking up to the English-medium schools in their uniforms. Was it not proved beyond doubt that the Muslim educational backwardness is sourced in the abdominal fear of the *umma* to expose the *Musalman* children to non-Islamic education, lest they should lose their faith in the outdated ideas that Islam represents. It is to be noted that to the *umma*-molded *Musalman* mind-set anything that is non-Islamic amounts to un-Islamic. If one were to be skeptical about the findings of W. W. Hunter about this peculiar feature of the Indian *umma* as recorded in 'The Indian Musalmans', well, what would they have to say about the state of affairs in Saudi Arabia, with riches beyond Indian imagination.

If anything, the Saudi ruling family seems to be alive to the threat the modern education poses to the set of Islamist beliefs that are the pillars of its Royal Dictatorial House. So, the curriculum of the secondary schools, set aside the primary stuff, is Islamic all the way, of course with Muhammad's life and times as interregnums; the *madrasa* academic drill comprises of Islam, the Quran, the *Hadith*, the *Sunna* with mathematics for a change. Maybe it's time the Hindu apologists realized that it's not the lack of means but their Islamic attitude that keeps the Indian *Musalman*s educationally and economically backward. Didn't Martin Lings note how Muhammad had encouraged this anti-progress ethos amongst the believers?

All took part in the work, (the construction of a mosque in Medina) including the Prophet himself, and as they worked they chanted two verses which one of them had made up for the occasion:

*"O god, no good is but the good hereafter,
So help the Helpers and the Emigrants."*

And sometimes they chanted:

*"No life there is but life of the Hereafter.
Mercy, O God, on Emigrants and Helpers."*

Sadly for the *umma*, the gullible Arabs of yore catapulted their 'cult of Muhammad' onto the altar of faith as the 'religion of Islam', which deludes the deprived 'here' by dangling the doles in 'the hereafter', and that takes the poor *Musalman*s neither here nor there in the modern 'world of opportunities'. Why for sure Islam in the original form had outlived its utility to the poor believers, and if only the stilted media gets its act right to drive home this point into the minority

minds, the interests of the Indian *Musalman*s would be well-served that its sophism is fouling.

The Hindu Rebound

The Hindu fundamentalism is a misnomer, coined by the cunning and subscribed by the naïve, which had come in handy to the Semitic proselytizers to undermine the Indian nationalism. Why, it should be apparent to the discerning that while the Brahmanism is orthodox, the *sanatana dharma*, exemplified by *swadharma*, is amorphous, and in them lay the social diversity of the Hindu spiritual ethos.

By the time India gained independence, what with the *gurukuls* having given way to the missionary schools for long, the Brahmans, by and large, were an unemployed lot for in spite of their depleted landholding, their exalted position in the polity precluded them from engaging in non-traditional activities. What with the deprived social patronage adding to their economic woes, they became moribund to end up being the parasites and it is probable that the prejudices that bedevil the Hindu spirituality might have been the products of the idle minds in those lazy Brahman bodies.

However, after the trauma of the partition was lived down, the Brahman exodus to the urban centers started in earnest, which eroded their village presence, and with it their social influence as well. Nevertheless, settling in the urban settings, they, as McCauley's *chelas* (what a fall for the Hindu gurus of yore), began bracing themselves to take up the clerical spaces that were up for grabs in Bharat's administrative corridors. Consequently, while the weakened Brahman hold on the village grassroots began to dent the power of the *Manu dharma* on the Hindu fold as its guardians had begun to desert their *swadharma*. Finally, as the Nehru's public sector undertakings, supposed pillars of the Indian economy, began to absorb the Brahmans in their numbers, which turned their economic tide, *sanatana dharma* became a relic of the *Aryavarta*.

Exposed to the liberal ideas that held sway all over the world during the sixties of the last century, the Brahmans in towns began distancing themselves from the orthodox ways and the social prejudices of their forefathers. That was the beginning of the modern Hindu middle class phenomenon shaped by them that set the trend for the great Indian social upsurge of the later days. However, the cow belt in the Gangetic plains has been slow in catching up with the changing times, maybe because the Brahmans in numbers held on to their village land and their old values alike to retain their socio-religious hold on it. Whatever, with the easing of the Brahman social-yoke, even though the backward castes have come to breathe

easier, yet they had to bear the brunt of the centuries-old neglect of India's economy that was till the Green Revolution, which had put more money into more of their hands for most of them to think in terms of educating their children. Moreover, even as the modern economy occasioned a fusion of the four *varnas* that helped the once segregated Hindu society shed part of its past caste prejudices, thanks to Gandhi's crusade for their uplift, finally the *harijans*, nay *dalits*, too began to get under the shade of the Hindu urban socio-religious umbrella. Yet, it was the pragmatic policy of positive discrimination, adopted by the polity to lend *dalits* a helping hand with reservations in education and employment, which enabled them to emerge on the Indian economic scene as well. That's about the leveling of Mother India's lopsided socio-economic ground for making it a level playing field for its hitherto neglected children.

However, on the Hindu political ground, slowly but surely, the Congress party that began catering to the Islamic whims of the Indian *Musalman*s in the guise of secularism had started losing its electoral hold. Meanwhile the backward classes with a pie in every sphere of the national activity began foraying into the political arena on their own; though their elders habitually defaced the Congress symbol on their ballot papers, the younger voters, perceiving it as Brahman dominated, began to put their franchise to good use against it. Nevertheless, the opposition plants sprouted by these backward caste-seeds couldn't survive for long under the banyan tree of a political party that the Congress had been that was till the regional parties began to have their electoral sway outside the Hindi-heartland. What with the coming of age of the educated voters from the forward castes, they began to abhor its dynastic odor; Rajiv Gandhi's Congress started losing its electoral grip on the Indian political stage.

Finally, the *dalit* resentment against the caste Hindus too found its expression in Kanshi Ram-Mayawati combine with the electoral slogan, *tilak taraaju aur talwaar, sabko maaro jote chaar – Brahmins, Baniyas be Thakurs, bash them all with no respite*. Why that the old Hindu outcasts could resort to such sloganeering on the soil of *Aryavarta* underscores the changed Indian caste reality; isn't it the payback time of sorts for the caste Hindus for their one time suppression of the outcasts? This *dalit* resurgence in the end proved to be the undoing of the stranglehold of the Congress Party on the Indian polity. Whatever, in India today, the backward classes that form the teeming Hindu multitudes, whose backs the Brahmanism had broken, no longer have to blame their *karma*, and instead they have every reason to thank the Hindu gods for their improved lot, which changed their religious attitude as well. What with the ever-growing middle class component from these castes making the bulk of the devout, in a curious phenomenon, the Hindu society began to unite itself religiously even as it retained its fractured caste quality. That was how the once insular Brahmanism had given way to the open-end Hinduism with an expanded mass base to maintain its identity and protect its interests. This

newfound religious orientation amongst the backward classes and the other backward castes brought in, in its wake, the fellowship of *Hindutva*; it's no longer the India of old where the Brahmans lived in their *agrahaaraas* and the *kshatriyas* in their forts, both insensitive to the happenings around. These new Hindu breeds have come to believe that the country is theirs own, and thus are in no mood to concede further demographic ground to India's minorities so it seems.

True, for centuries, the hapless Hindu masses had to share the land of their forefathers with the antagonistic *Musalman*s, to whom their classes had foolhardily conceded it but the new concept of the Indian nation-state occasioned in them an emotional attachment to it that the minorities don't seem to recognize. Why for the new Hindu masses, India is no longer a mere piece of land that they happen to share with the *Musalman*s but it is a nation of theirs, which they would like to cherish and protect for all times to come. And it is in this mind-set that the Hindus are increasingly becoming sensitive to the omissions and commissions of the Indian *Musalman*s; more so, the Mohammedan excuse for family planning under Islamic pretexts makes them wary of the Muslim intentions. Rightly or wrongly, the Hindus have come to believe that the *Musalman*s are out to multiply themselves with a long-term demographic goal that demonically suits the short-term vote bank politics of the self, or family serving parties! What baffles them is that if checking the country's population growth is in the national interest, then why do the Congress-led band shies away from encouraging the *Musalman*s to exercise restraint on the family front? Moreover, the obduracy of the Indian *Musalman*s in adhering to their personal laws, abandoned even in the Muslim countries, in the Indian secular setting is increasingly earning them the Hindu ill-will in good measure.

Moreover, the apathy of the *Musalman*s for a planned family betrays their insensitivity towards their own women; won't their persistent refusal to adopt the family planning methods that avert the health-hampering carriages and miscarriages render their fair sex into despondency? Oh how the *Musalman*s burden their women with a child in the lap and another in the womb till they can bear no longer, and as the *moulvis* aver they have a duty to procreate for the sake of Islam regardless that is. Yet, the women don't seem to be complaining either, well if they don't comply, how they could ever be believers? Though the *moulvi* imposed religious obligation to numerically strengthen Islam is at odds with the welfare of the *umma* itself, for the religiously blinded *Musalman*s, the deprivation that large families bring to their members is not something to lose sleep about! After all, for the believing souls, the life 'here' is of no avail and the purpose of being born a *Musalman* is to hope for the 'hereafter', isn't it? Thus, as the religious bigotry of the Indian *Musalman*s besides hurting their standard of living is upsetting the Indian demographic order, the Hindu patience with the Muslim obstinacy is seemingly

running out as can be seen from Narendra Modi's, *ham paanch, hamara pachhis – We're five and ours twenty-five* – taunt.

Maybe, the ideology of M.S. Golwalkar, the Brahman nationalist with a Mohammedan bias has begun to appeal to more and more Hindus owing to this Muslim indifference to matters of national interest. It was at this juncture of increasing Hindu misgivings about the Muslim intentions that Rajiv Gandhi so naively surrendered Shah Bano to the Islamic obscurantism, and the *Sangh Parivar*, of Golwalkar's creed, sensed the outraged Hindu mood and went for the Congress kill. As if fortuitously, the decrepit *Babri Masjid* in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Sri Rama, which was neither a functional *masjid* nor a structured *mandir*, came in handy for them to bring it onto the national agenda as *Ram Janma Bhoomi* movement. Yet it might not have made any impact on the Hindu minds, long reconciled to the demolitions of their temples of yore, had not the appeasement brigade, who saw electoral dividends in this local dispute, egged on the *Musalman*s not to yield an inch of the land to the Hindu sentiment. But for the ensuing Muslim objection to the *Sangh Parivar's* floater, the *Ram Janma Bhoomi* issue could have never snowballed into a Hindu national movement that it turned out to be. And as if to direct the Hindu resentment in his tracks into the ballot boxes, Lal Krishna Advani, *a la Bhagirath*, flagged off his *Rath Yathra* from Somnath, the temple town once ransacked by Mahmud Ghazni, but rebuilt by the independent Hindustan. Needless to say, this master move was meant to remind the Hindus, just in case they forgot about the age-old *Musalman* habit of pulling down the Hindu temples, nay the derogatory *buth-khanas*.

Advani almost pulled the rabbit out of the Congress hat for the Bharatiya Janata Party, but almost; mid-course the elections, the sympathy the Indian voters felt for Rajiv dead whom they had ignored when alive, spoiled the party for the *Sangh Parivar*. Narasimha Rao, whom circumstances ascended to the *gaddi*, believed it was his destiny to be remembered as the 'father of economic reforms' in the Indian history, but, as the *Sangh Parivar's*, *mandir wahi banaayenge*' clamor and the *Musalman's* *banaane nahi daenge* crusade were diverting the national political focus and the public attention from his 'reforms agenda', he might have wished that Allah would somehow shift the *dilapidated masjid* to Pakistan for renovation. However, his wish to be rid of the vexatious problem was fulfilled, not by divine means but by temporal tools of the *kar sevaks* who pulled down the contentious structure that 6th December 1992.

Not surprisingly, the said opinion poll of 'The India Today' revealed the Muslim aversion for building the *Ram Mandir* at the disputed site; what is more, 21% of them, who are aware of the India history, consider Mahmud a hero, notwithstanding his vandalism at the venerated Hindu temples of that time. And yet, the *Musalman*s think that the Hindus, who pulled down the dilapidated *Masjid*, are the villains, never mind the *mandir* demolition creed of Islam, and so religiously

observe 6th December as a Black Day! That itself speaks for the twisted sense of the Muslim logic and proves that they think with their Islamic heart but not with the Indian mind. It's time the Indian *Musalman*s contemplate whether they could hero-worship the marauders of the Hindu *mandirs* (Aurangzeb, the despoiler of the Kashi Viswanath temple, the next most revered after Somnath, has a Muslim approval rating of 39%) and in the same vein condemn those that pulled down the decrepit *Babri masjid*! Well, all this won't be amusing to the Hindus; the mind-set of double standards is troublesome even in the majority community but it would be eminently unwise for the minorities to develop the proclivity of reading the Indian history from the Pakistani text books.

However, Ram Lalla, sheltered under a *shamiana* over the *Babri debris*, is made to wait for the Indian judicial verdict to grant or deny him a *Bhavya Mandir* that the Vishva Hindu Parishad is itching to build. What if the Lordships fail to construe something as incontrovertible evidence for or against Lord Rama's abode of yore; then should not the established Muslim guilt of demolishing many a Hindu *mandir* make a compelling case for Sri Rama's entitlement to 'the benefit of doubt'? But, that, any way, is in the realms of the judicial discretion, amounting to inaction, in the times of its activism!

When the *jihadi* driven amongst the Indian *Musalman*s, in lieu of the *Babri debris*, turned some of Bombay's buildings into rubble, the equally bigoted *Shiv Sainiks* rioted to pay them back with Islamic body bags. Be that as it may, one wonders whether it was the Hindu apologia, the Muslim hypocrisy or the Indian intellectual naivety that is on display in the media in the wake of the communal riots! One of the reasons why the communal riots raise their ugly head at intervals in India is the tendency of the intellectuals, from both the communities, to push the issue of the Hindu-Muslim divide under the carpet lest their honest views should be misconstrued as the anti other. Whatever, the Decommissioned Adult of the fanatic Mohammedan, for his part, wouldn't appreciate that the Hindu-Muslim disputes tend to be subjected to the Moses' Law Square - two eyes for an eye, two teeth for one and two slain for one killed.

However, after a relatively long lull on the communal front, a bunch of fanatical, thus stupid, Indian *Musalman* zealots targeted some *Ram Sevak*s, returning from a rally at Ayodhya, for the cause of the Ram temple, which lost its momentum by then that was before its eventual dissipation. Reminiscent of their Naokhali barbarity, the *Musalman* mob torched a railway coach at Godhra in which 58 Hindus, 40 of whom were women and children, had perished; it's as if these bigots had for inspiration Mahmud's butchery of the Hindus at Somnath in the same province. But unlike in the times gone by, led by the *Sangh Parivar*, the Gujarati Hindu retaliation that followed accounted for 790 *Musalman*s (falsified by the Congress *chamchas* in the TV circuit as 2000-odd to politically hurt the irrepressible Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of the State) in which rioting 254 Hindus too

were dead, which fact was equally glossed over by the pseudo-secular media. Yet in a weird way, some of the body bags had revealed the changed face of the *Hindutva*; that the backward *dalits*, ever averse to the Hindu cause, and more so, the tribal poor, hitherto lukewarm to the same, too participated in the carnage against the *Musalmans* had put the Hindu consolidation on display for all to see.

Why, didn't Ashok Singhal of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, echo all this by blowing the *Sangh Parivar's paanchajanya* thus: "It was for the first time in thousand years the Hindus got united and gave a befitting reply to those who attacked them in Godhra". He further thundered that the Gujarat incident was just the beginning and sounded ominous when he declared, "the valour showed by the Hindus in Gujarat is unprecedented. If they are attacked again they will stand in self-defence. This will not end here. The VHP will take this message across the country through its *Ram Naam Jap* and other programs." So it seems, history has its own ironies, for Gujarat, where Mahmud Ghazni started it all for the *Musalmans*, became the first retreat of the Indian *Musalmans*.

Before the Moses' Law Square comes into reckoning again in their communal equation, isn't it incumbent upon the Hindus and the *Musalmans* alike to honestly admit to their differences, and see how appropriately they could be addressed? But what could be the possible response of the *Musalmans*? The natural temptation would be to get lulled into a religious slumber by the lullabies set in pseudo-secular tunes by their vote-bank eying Hindu politicians that are fine-tuned by the self-serving *media-wallahs*. Thus, the Muslim knee-jerk reaction could make them re-embrace the Congress party, being headed by the wily Sonia Gandhi, the Italian born non-Hindu.

But, would the Hindu majority, recovering from the humiliation of a thousand years of alien rule, suffer a foreigner taking the capital seat of Hindustan? The Congressmen, and more so women, though seem not to mind, unmindful of the perils of having a person of foreign origin as the country's Prime Minister! Wouldn't every nation be a hostage of its own history that lends itself to color its people's thinking towards the other countries and their peoples? Could an Israelite origin Prime Minister be objective in India's ties with the Palestine? What about India's relations with the Western world under the premiership of some naturalized Iranian or an Iraqi? Wouldn't an Indian political head of Bangladeshi origin, nursing a grouse of his sister's molestation by some Punjabi *fauzis* during the crisis in his parent country be tempted to settle scores with Pakistan with India's military might? Why, could any such one be what he or she should be as India's Prime Minister; without a native Indian at the helm of affairs, won't India's detractors exploit the handicaps of a foreign origin numero uno to jeopardize the Indian national interests?

More ominously, what about war and peace that national leaders may be called upon to make, especially in India, which had fought many a war in its short

independent history? Isn't that a Capital decision with emotive element and tactical content attached to boot? Wasn't India at a warlike situation with Pakistan in the wake of the terrorist attack on its parliament on 13th December 2001? Would have a foreign origin Prime Minister served India's interests judiciously? Why, wasn't the overwhelming public opinion was to take the plunge; what if Sonia Gandhi on the *gaddi* went with the popular mood for fear of being perceived as unpatriotic for inaction? If attacking a hostile country seems to serve the long-term Indian national interests, can the foreign origin Premier, unsure about the outcome of the adventure, have the nerve to act? Didn't Lal Bahadur Shastri, even as Pakistan crossed the Line of Control in Kashmir in 1965, order the Indian troops to cross the International Boarder near Lahore, which none thought India ever would, and what fuss the Great Britain and other Western powers made of that Indian military move.

Whatever, would the Hindus in India, or of the diaspora, breathing free after their thousand years' history of slavery, savor a Sonia *sarkar*? Here is an Italian woman whom destiny made the daughter-in-law of a household that had a dynastic grip on the democratic India with the clasp of the Congress party; to achieve which, her mother-in-law, by then, had castrated the party men into enervation as family eunuchs, and it was the quirk of her fate that brought about the untimely death of Sanjay her brother-in-law, her mother-in-law's chosen heir apparent to rule the country. While the dynastic compulsions of her mother-in-law put the party's reins in her husband Rajiv's hands, the brutal killing of the old despot by her own bodyguards gave her man the reign of the land. Why, that brought her closer to the seat of political power than ever before, and as if it is her twisted destiny to get ever closer to power over the dead of her family, tragically, she lost her husband in the midst of an election that, anyway, was about to undo his Congress. Though the sentimental turnaround at the hustings put the Congress back into the reckoning, her decency as a widow kept her away from the *kursi* that was hers for taking, but only till decency demanded.

But, as time is the great healer of grief for the living, and, besides, the dead too wouldn't be taking away with them the proclivities of their dears, this 'foreign child of Indian destiny' found the purpose of her life, and wrested the reins of the Congress party from the ungrateful hands of that Sitaram Kesari, who by then had back-stabbed Narasimha Rao his mentor. At the hustings thereafter, though she led her party to defeat, yet, abetted by the anti-Bharatiya Janata Party elements, beguiled by the age-old Indian *realpolitik* of settling the native scores with foreign hands, she staked her claim to become India's Prime Minister. However, in the end, it was the principled opposition from a handful of otherwise self-serving Congressmen that put paid to her eagerness to ascend the *gaddi*. However, the next time around, thanks to the anti-incumbency vote in a couple of States, she nearly came to power at the Centre that is, just nearly. Maybe, the public outcry at her

impending coronation or the troubled conscience of the country's President, and/or both, made her retreat, albeit, in the halo of sacrifice that the morons in the media and the sycophants of her party vied with each other to accord her. Thus, going by her twice aborted attempts at taking on the reins of the nation, it would appear that the Hindu EQ at last scored over the media IQ as well as the Congress SQ, i.e. the Sycophancy Quotient.

Nevertheless, it was not long before her 'destiny of power' overpowered the will of the nation, what with the caste factor of the Hindu franchise, the communal color of the Muslim vote and the political compulsions of the regional parties playing their part in putting the wheels of the democratic omnibus of India into the Congress hands albeit with the regional political masters seated in the backseat. Thus acquiesced by the colluding partners to share the spoils of power, she began ruling the country through proxy, and as if to validate William Congreve's "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned / Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned", she made Mother India pay the price for that 'indigestible' political slight by her children. Oh how she has been wrecking her vengeance on Hindustan by taking the Indian political morality to new lows by corrupting everyone and everything in her sight that is whatever her mother-in-law left uncorrupted in the country's systemic vitals!

What with the Bharatiya Janata Party having lost some of its nationalistic sheen in the corrupted national social stream, the 'Hindu Rebound' all but seemed a 'political thud' that was before the coming-of-the-age of Narendra Modi, the 'action man' from Gujarat, the land of Saradar Patel the 'iron man'. What is more, unlike Mahatma Gandhi the Gujarati, whose 'inclusive ideology' degenerated into the Indian political expedient of Muslim appeasement, Modi's redefinition of 'secular ideology' as 'India first' has begun to capture the middle-class Hindu imagination. But then the fate of the Indian politics has always been in the votes of its masses, and if only they can grasp what the future portends for them and the nation in the 'Modi vision' that is before they are called upon to cast their votes the next time. If such a Hindu Rebound could spring out of Hindustan's caste amalgamated political ground, which, perhaps, is dependent on Sonia's dynastic destiny, then that might herald India's turnaround like never before.

Wait for the Savant

While Krishna in the *Bhagvad Gita* sought man to shed his 'fear of death', Muhammad by the Quran made the *Musalman*s fall in love with 'the hereafter'; and for a prophetic paradox, he pursued his passions with gusto even as he trivialized the 'life here' for his flock, which dichotomy would forever dismay his believers.

Why, haven't the Quran-bred *jihadi* chickens let loose on Israel come home to hatch the Islamic *fidayeen* in Iran and Iraq not to speak of Afghanistan and Pakistan? However, the Sunni *muftis* and the Shia *ayatollahs* have yet to come up with a *fatwa* to stop the internecine killings on the sacred soils of Islam. Maybe, one cannot really fault them for their grand inaction, notwithstanding the alacrity with which they tend to issue religious decrees on all matters mundane for there is no guidance to be found to stop the divine discord either in the Quran or in the *sunna*. So the sectarian slaughters were on for over a decade now that saw so much Muslim blood shed on the 'straight path' and the *umma* remains clueless about how to bring that to an end. Yet, as it came to light in India, on the *fatwa* front, some *Musalman*s do 'mange the *muftis*' for suitable diktats to grind their axes!

If one were to count the maimed Shias and the mutilated Sunnis; the vicious nature of the self-directed Islamic terror would be apparent, but won't the silence of the *maulan*as eloquently expose the hollowness of Islam that is touted by the *umma* as the religion that has everything to know, whatever is there to know? But, try as they might, the *moulvi-mufti* combine would find nothing in the Quran-*hadith-sunna* trilogy that remotely can be seen as a clue to the worst challenge Islam had to face more than ever now; that is, given the penchant of the *Musalman*s to take every illusory in 'the trilogy' for a lamppost on the 'straight path' of life. Whatever, their plight is for the real at the bewildering development about which their political leadership too maintains its studied silence! Why not, for the despots of the Sunni-Arab heartland, who are ever wary of the growing clout of the non-Arab Shia Iran, their *fidayeen* are only stopping the adversary's democratic takeover of Iraq. Let it be the calamitous juncture of Islam, but won't a Sunni retreat on the terrorist front usher in a powerful Shia nation in their neighborhood, an unwelcome development for the Arab hegemony of Islam. What if, some Sunnis too perish in the process, for, after all, won't they all go to the cherished 'hereafter'?

But whither gone the *umma* there; what with the shepherds of the faith thus stymied, the *Musalman*s of the region have no clue either. These very faithful who fear Islam is in danger whenever a Muslim girl weds a *kafir* are seemingly cool to the nemeses knocking at their religious doors. The believers who take a cartoon of their prophet with a 'bomb in the turban' as an affront to their 'religion of peace' don't feel scandalized at all by the suicide bombers of Islam. The fanatical who take to the streets at the death of a faithful at the hands of an infidel are yet to hit the road when the *Musalman*s are killing the *Musalman*s in the *masjids* of Islam. The bigots who burn the effigies of Uncle Sam fail to come up with one for the Satan's of Islam; why this all-round silence, when the Muslim world is burning in its sectarian hatred? Maybe it's possible that the *Musalman*s who have come to jump for joy at the infidels' death in the martyr missions of the faithful had insensibly lost their sensitivity after all.

What of the Asian contingent of Islam; though numerically superior, it forever played the Islamic second fiddle to the Arab *umma*, and thus the intellect of these *Musalmans* is not attuned to apply its mind to the affairs of the people whom Allah chose to reveal what all He revealed through their own man. Of course, they do compensate for this handicap by being the first to take up the cudgels for Islam against the infidels whenever Muhammad was perceived as slighted. Why not, as if to assert his self-worth and show it to the world besides, the inferiority complex of man goads him to adopt aggressive postures! Maybe it is the fate of the Asian *Musalmans* to remain servile to Allah as well as His Arab servants, so it seems.

True that Islam had dwelt all about the *jihad* against the *kafirs* to the last detail, even of splitting the 'spoils of war' among the believers; but then, how even the All Knowing Allah were to know that the *Musalmans* one day would wage *jihad* against their fellow *Musalmans*, and that which 'the God' couldn't foresee, how His Messenger would have seen! Besides, Muhammad, gloating over the sycophantic antics of his flock, any way, would have been too overwhelmed to visualize the impending schism for airing an opinion as otherwise that would have surely found its way into the Islamic folklore. So, bereft of Allah's *ayat* and Muhammad's *hadith*, the *muftis* and the *Musalmans* alike have reached the dead end of the Islamic guidance, or so it seems, as they are unable to find a bend to steer them clear of the mundane quagmire. After all, the *Musalmans* had long since ceased to apply their minds, that is, in all matters religious as they allowed themselves to believe there is nothing in the life, which is not governed by their faith that any way had laid out the 'straight path' for them! Sadly, that's the Catch 22 of Islam now, as ever.

However, it may be interesting to speculate about the pathological separatist urge that bedevils the Muslim mind-set; in Muhammad's fight against the idolaters, it was his compulsion to co-opt 'the God' of the Jews to gain authenticity for Islam, and so he had averred that 'the God' revealed to him what He had earlier revealed to Moses and other prophets, Jesus included. But then how the adoption of 'the God' of the neighborhood, save the idolaters, would entail an identity of its own to Islam; so for according a separate identity to the new faith, the ensign of its Prophet was made the standard of Islam. While Muhammad had established the Muslim separateness thus, fearing dilution of their faith in interaction with the Jews and 'the others', the Quran ordained the *Musalmans* to insulate themselves from the rest of all. Why, the ethos of the Muslim separateness fitted Muhammad's interests like a glove and served the cause of Islam to the hilt, that was, till the Persians were forced into its fold; seen in the hindsight rather foolishly.

The people of Persia, which became the Iran of Islam, were culturally suave and numerically superior to the tribal *Musalmans* of Arabia, and it was no wonder that they wished to have a separate identity of their own in the alien religion; the ill-fate of their country had forced them into. But by having to share the prophet and the faith with the Arabs they despised, they were in the same boat as

Muhammad was once with Islam having a coparcener God with the Jews and the Christians. However, as the Quran had disowned the Jews and the Christians as if to bestow upon the *Musalman*s their Islamic identity, the discord of the faithful over Muhammad's successor could have been the godsend for the Islamic separateness of the Iranians. So they sided with Muhammad's progeny and began to swear by Ali, of course, besides Muhammad for after all it is the essence of being a *Musalman*, and thus the unitary path of Islam that Allah envisaged for the believers came to be forked into the Sunni right and the Shia left with a Quran to boot in Persian.

And yet vouching for the Quran, and revering the Prophet, they both tend to nurse a sectarian animosity generated in the battlefield of Karbala. It is these conflicting precepts of the religious righteousness of these sects that make each 'the other' to the other. Needless to say, the zealots amongst the Shias and the Sunnis imbibe the dogma of the doctrinarian differences of their respective sects, and it is the fanaticism nurtured by their exclusionist visions that nurture sectarian antagonism amongst them. What about the dream of the *Musalman*s to make all humanity embrace Islam ever coming true; would that bring the inter-religious strife to an end in the all-Islamic world; be sure, the Shia-Sunni intra-faith animosity is bound to spoil the grand Islamic party. What if it were in a bad taste, if not for this Shia-Sunni animosity, wouldn't the *Musalman*s, unified in their hatred towards 'the others of the Quran', have made them the exclusive targets of the unfolding Islamic terror?

Going back into the Islamic history, bereft though they were of the Ariel support from Allah's War Birds, the Mohammedan infantry of yore with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other conquered much of the old world. Needless to say, while the inspiration to fight came from the Quran, much of the military tactics were but the products of Muhammad's campaigns against the Quraysh and the others. But soon, the spiritual zeal to impose Islam on the infidels gave way to the temporal zest of the *Musalman*s to indulge in the vices of life. Thus, the eventual eclipse of the Islamic power was on account of the socio-intellectual downslide of the *Musalman*s and if anything, during the colonial period, the Muslim world was pushed more onto its back foot than ever.

Given the associated pride of their dominance of yore, the *umma's* hurt at the Islamic decline is understandable, and at the end of the colonialism, the idea of reviving the glory of the Muslim arms first dawned on the Punjabi Generals of the newborn nation of Pakistan. Going by the past history of Muslim conquests in Hindustan that were to portend an easy victory, the Islamic army of Pakistan waged a full-fledged war over Kashmir with gusto. However, as against the hoped for the Muslim military cakewalk over the hated Hindu enemy, perceived as non-martial, soon enough, the Pakistanis woke up to find the Indian army at the gates of Lahore, the pride of Punjab, in their land of the pure, which sent the Pakistani

fauzis running for cover that forced Field Marshal Ayub Khan, their despot, to send SOS to the U.N for a cease-fire.

Even before the *umma* could recover from the Hindu shock, the Nasser misadventure that followed in the Middle East, instead of resuscitating the power of the Arab Sword ended in the fiasco of a Six Day War with the hated Jews. Well, after a prolonged Christian humiliation that was the colonization of the Muslim world, what these two military defeats might have done to the Islamic psyche is not hard to imagine. Then the Bangladeshi war in which Pakistan irrevocably lost the eastern wing of its country should have signaled to the *Musalman*s that the Sword of Allah had lost its cutting edge after all. And later, as if the Great Satan's capture of Saddam Hussein from a hole was not the final nail in the coffin of the Muslim valor, the Navy Seals gunned down Osama bin Laden in his Pakistani hideout.

However, nowhere else the *umma* places its Islamic military honor at stake than in the Promised Land of the Jews that it hopes the Palestinians, ousted from there, would somehow recapture for the eternal glory of the *Musalman*s. So fathered by their hatred for the Jews and mothered by the delusions of 'the hereafter', both brought up by the Quran, the child of the Islamic terror was born in the womb of Palestine to the joy of the *Musalman*s. It was as if it appeared to the desperate *umma* that, at last, it could get hold of the stick with which they could beat their hateful infidels, who came to dominate them; why at the apparent success of the terrorist acts, as the *Musalman*s watched in awe, the Jews began collecting their body bags. So the *umma* came invest in Arafat's *Al-Fatah* in right earnest as *Leila* Khalid, the female face of Palestine terror then, famously commented to the world media that there were no innocent people as such, for everyone either supports a cause or opposes it, ideologically or otherwise. And the rest is the continuing history of the Islamic terror taken over by Hamas after Arafat's death with each chapter unveiling a new facet of it.

But, the hypocrisy of the *Musalman*s and the naivety of their apologists tend to link the phenomenon of the Islamic terrorism to the vexations of a hurt pride. Granting that the hurt was good enough for the faithful to hurt the infidels, how can one explain their intra-sect slaughters? Given the propensity of the *umma* to blame 'the others' for the debilities of their faith, the *Musalman*s seem to show no intellectual inclination to redress this self-destructive phenomenon that was plaguing Pakistan, to begin with, for so long. Even though the Shia-Sunni killings, clearly rooted in the sectarian dogma of the Islamic divide, were to be shrouded by some ethnic animosity attached to them, the Sunni slaughter of the sub-continental Shias in Iraq begs for answers. And in them lie the alleviation of the inherent dangers of the separatist dogma that bedevils the mind-set of the *Musalman*.

It is true that either by intellect or by inclination, the tendency of the *umma* is to fashion its faith in the pre-*Hijra* Quranic stream of love and compassion for fellow *Musalman*s. True the silent majority of their simple living *mullahs*, sailing in

the benign boats of Islam, help these *Musalman*s seek succor in their faith, but their grievance that 'the others' dub their 'religion of peace' as the 'doctrine of death' is sham for they too believe in the martyrdom of the *fidayeen* that blow up the *kafirs*. If anything, it is this dual mind-set shaped by the Quran that underscore the dilemma of the *Musalman*s and the dichotomy of Islam. However, when the *fidayeen* began to target 'the other *Musalman*s', the stunned *umma* started deluding itself that it is the Satanic America and the Zionist Israel that force their youth to don their suicide jackets.

But, where these 'nice *Musalman*s' can hide the 'not so nice' Medina stream of the Quranic diktats that were meant to aid Muhammad's endeavor to establish the Islamic standard over the Kabah? At best, they might be turning the pages when they come across those inflammatory *ayats* in their scores in the Quran, meant to incite the *Musalman*s against 'the others', who do not subscribe to Muhammad's creed. But, how were they to hide the inimical *ayats* that incite hatred towards the infidels from their kids that might put them on the path of fanaticism or worse, martyrdom? Why only the Quran, even the *hadith* and the *sunna*, not to speak of *sharia* seem to play no less a role in shaping the separatist, intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos of the *Musalman*s. Oh how insignificant would Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' seem when compared to the moral dilemma of the nice *Musalman*s burdened by these divisive diktats of their faith? Sadly, the majority of them prefer not to take the 'not to be' route that leads to the hazards of apostasy that could be the gallows, and thus end up being the hypocrites of the 'religion of peace'.

Be that as it may, the *Musalman*s should ponder over as to why the Medina *surahs* contain what they contain - religious venom - of what avail is submission and tolerance for embarking upon a conquest as one needs to name the adversaries and inculcate in the followers a sense of separateness so as to stir them into a state of aggression. Logically approached, those Quranic exhortations were primarily to serve Muhammad's agenda, first of subduing the neighborhood Jews and then for avenging himself upon the Meccans by subduing them into his creed that they had earlier spurned; and viewed even from the Islamic angle, it could have been the will of Allah to stir his Prophet into action to gain ground for the faith in the sands of Arabia. That done, and it being truly in place in much of the world, for the faithful to still cling on to those Quranic verses of 'the otherness' betrays a lack of theological as well as rational understanding of Islam.

So the *Musalman* zealots would imbibe those very ideas to take their religious separateness to the frontiers of intolerant exclusivity, and inherent in their psyche is the need to uphold the primacy of their faith above all else. Of course, their upbringing enjoins on them to live and die for the supposedly holy causes of Islam, and attendant to this maxim is the righteousness of aggression against all those perceived as antagonistic to their dogma. Understandably, those anointed as the Islamic religious preachers and teachers, take it upon themselves the onerous task

of indoctrinating the faithful to the dogmas of their own upbringing. It is this religious conditioning of the believers that fortifies their animosity towards the deviant, and that comes in handy for the fanatically deluded among the *umma* to set them on suicide missions. Maybe it is for the *maulvis* to consider whether Allah willed for His faithful strife without respite.

When the Sunni's slaughtered three of their Shia cousins on a pilgrimage to Karbala in the strife torn Iraq, it had signaled that the storm of the Islamic terrorism had drawn the Indian *Musalman*s too into its vortex. While that should have woken them up to the perils posed by the double-edged sword of Islamic separateness, going by the talk on the street and the rhetoric in the *maidaan*, it didn't seem to be the case. In seeking for the causes of the killings that included eleven Pakistani Shias as well, the Indian *umma* seemed to lack the needed vision to comprehend the problem; after all, it had ever been the theme of the *Musalman*s and the logic of their apologists to couple the Israeli intransigence in Palestine and the U.S indifference to the Muslim sensitivities for the birth of the Islamic extremism. While that doesn't wash as the 'Indian Mujahideen' has raised its ugly head making Manmohan Singh eat his premature words, naively uttered in the wake of 9/11 that the Indian *Musalman*s would never take to terrorism.

Better, the *umma* instead of pushing the *fidayeen* filth under the Islamic carpet should sit up and think as to how to insulate their wards from the perils of the paranoia of Muslim identity, the forerunner to the Islamic intolerance and all that follow. Maybe they would realize that the Sufi cosmopolitanism, and not the Wahabi fundamentalism, was the motivating factor for the oppressed Hindu castes of yore to have embraced Islam in Hindustan. What with the surging radicalism across the Muslim Brotherhood, there is a real danger of a deluge of the Indian *Musalman*s into the murky stream of the Islamic terrorism. So is it not the time for them to go back to the Sufi roots of Indian Islam before the Shia-Sunni bad blood of Pakistan starts spilling over the Pakistani borders into their separatist *mohallas*? But the moot point is can they make the desired course correction? Of course, not as long as they hold the double-edged religious sword of separateness nearer to their heart; but then, if religion is opium, there is no opium like Islam.

Whatever, the fond hope of Islamic religious collaboration in India expressed by Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith in 'Islam in Modern History', Princeton University Press, New Jersey, as quoted by Maryam Jameelah in her 'Islam and Orientalism' is worth noting:

"The question of political power and social organization, so central to Islam, has in the past always been considered in yes or no terms. Muslims have either had political power or they have not. Never before have they shared it with others. Close to the heart of Islam has been the conviction that its purpose includes the structuring of a social community, the organization of the Muslim group into a

closed body obedient to the law. It is this conception that seems finally to be proving itself inept in India. The Muslims in India, in fact, face what is a radically new and profound problem: namely how to live with others as equals. Yet it is a question on which the past expression of Islam offers no immediate guidance. Imperative is the willingness to admit that there are problems waiting to be solved.

This awareness has been rare in recent Islam, which has tended to believe that problems have been solved already. That the answers have somehow, somewhere been given and do not have to be worked out afresh with creative intelligence - this idea had deeply gripped, almost imprisoned the minds and souls of many Muslims. The Quran has been regarded as presenting a perfected pattern to be applied rather than as an imperative to seek perfection. Islamic law and Islamic history have been felt to be a storehouse of solutions to today's difficulties to be ransacked for binding precedent rather than a record of brave dealing with yesterday's difficulties, to be emulated as liberating challenge. Religion has seemed to confine behavior rather than inspire it. The fundamental fallacy of Muslims has been to interpret Islam as a closed system. And that system has been closed not only from outside truth but also from outside people.

The fundamental hopefulness about Indian Muslims, and therefore Indian Islam, is that this community may break through this. It may be forced to have the courage and humility to seek new insights. It may find the humanity to strive for brotherhood with those of other forms of faith. In the past, civilizations have lived in isolation, juxtaposition or conflict. Today we must learn to live in collaboration. Islam, like the others, must prove creative at this point and perhaps it will learn this in India."

Never did Islam become such a stranger in this world as of now, and sorely needs a savant, whose advent Muhammad had promised to his believers. Maybe as Cantwell Smith had theorized, hope 'that one' would somehow be an Indian *Musalman* to suitably renew Islam and rid it from the clutches of its *fundamentalist-fanatic-fidayeen* nexus, and make it a peaceful faith for the faithful and 'the others', notwithstanding the hatred that these spread. What else 'the others' can do than to wait for the advent of the savant for the well-being of the world.

Om Bismillah: Bismillah Om.

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