

More American Women Converting to Islam



Many American women still find themselves fighting for equality in boardrooms across the country. Others are trying to convince Congress they can fly combat missions. Even nuns have disinhabited their habits and are pushing for a more comprehensive role in

the Catholic Church.

So if one is a little shocked at the sight of two sky-blue eyes and wheat-colored brows peering out of a traditional Muslim head covering, one may perhaps be forgiven. While Jeanine "Aisha" Mirza admits her appearance evokes second glances, she says she's hardly unique even in Logan.

Mirza is one of an increasing number of American women who have converted to Islam. "I feel a lot of questions have been answered that I had before," she said in an interview at the home of local Muslim author Kais al Kalby. Mirza is secretary of al Kalby's Islamic Cultural Association.

Al Kalby, who is said to have made more than 3000 converts since he came to the

United States says women are his most willing audience. "All I have to do is show them the Qu'ran passages on women and divorce and they convert," he said.

It took more than that for Mirza, 32, who studied the Qur'an and talked with local Muslims for about six months before she decided to accept Islam.

Three things about the religion appealed to her—the fact that it has not changed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), it is family oriented and "it has very definite rules for men and women."

The latter two characteristics were also present in the DS Church to which she had converted from Lutheranism as a young adult. "But with the

Mormon church, I felt I had a lot of unanswered questions," she said. "Whenever they wanted to change something they just had a revelation like the revelation to let blacks hold the priesthood, which came during the Civil Rights Movement."

She also recalled being impressed by a passage in the Qu'ran that ascribes the formation of fetus from a "Clinging clot" to a baby in the mother's womb. "This was written in the seventh century when they had

no idea about how a fetus develops," she said.

Mirza eventually married the Pakistani student, Naseem Ahmed Mirza who had discussed the Qu'ran with her over coffee at Utah State University. While most American are under the impression that Muslim wives are "oppressed," Mirza said, she hasn't found that to be true.

"It's just a different division," she said. "Outside of home, my husband's the boss. But in my home, I'm the boss."

Former Black Panthers' Activist Converts to Islam

One of the most active members of the American Black Panthers Atlanta, Rap-Brown, who had once asked African-Americans to "get a gun and get their rights by force" converted to Islam and called himself Jamil Al-Amin. After learning Arabic he has become one of the popular promoters of Islam in the United States.

An American journalist writes "The FBI blacklisted the

black revolutionary activist, who had once wanted his people to set fire to all of America. He now prays to God to guide his people." According to Jamil, "for the prosperity of human beings the Holy Qur'an has absolute universality and those who follow its teachings will attain prosperity in this world. There is not anything above Islam, and even I myself seek God's shelter from the deceivers."

Today Jamil-Al-Amin is one of the prominent Muslims in Atlanta City and is always busy with propagating Islam throughout the United States. After converting to Islam, he does not call the whites "pigs" but now calls them the oppressors. He believed the whites have deprived the other inhabitants of the U.S. of their rights. It is worth mentioning that Islam is the fastest spreading religion in the U.S. today.

BOOK REVIEW

Book: Sehath Wo Marz Aur Islami Talimat

Author: Moulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari

Pages: 388 Hard Bound

Price: Rs.70.00

Publishers: Idara-E-Tahqeeq-O-Tasneef-E-Islami

Panvali Kothi -Dodhpur Road Aligarh - 202001

The Holy Quran attaches great importance to the code of health and hygiene. Islam has given precise instructions about permissible and the prohibited foods, the mode of dress to wear and the hygienic principles, which are essential for a healthy living.

The author, Moulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari, in this book has made a remarkable contribution by bringing out the scientific approach of Islam towards health

and hygiene. The hygienic and economic principles which underline Islamic commands and prohibitions are clearly brought out.

There is a medicine for every ailment such that if a right medicine hits a corresponding ailment, health is restored with the Will of God. The author has divided the book into two chapters. The first chapter deals with health and principles involved in maintaining good health like personal hygiene, diet that is permissible according to Islam and the mode of eating, drinking, different types of sports, exercises, rest and sleep. The second chapter deals with the treatment aspect of the diseased. The various types of treatment are mentioned here are cowardly acts like suicide to escape from pains are explained as being against the principles of Islam. For every disease there is a treatment except

old age and death. Islam emphasises that death may occur anytime by the Will of God and that there is treatment for disease and suffering. The so called spiritual treatment through prayer is not ignored by the author, as the body is greatly influenced by the state of mind. And the psychology of the diseased to be studied and catered according to his state of mind.

In conclusion it may be said that the author has made significant contribution by focusing on the scientific and hygienic approach of Islam in dealing with health and a proper code for a moral, healthy long life. The book beautifully throws light on the Islamic approach to human life that can be read by any reader of any religion be it a Muslim or non Muslim.

Dr. Raziuddin Ahmed

Shura (Mutual Consultation)

Shura is the first principle of Islamic leadership. Muslim lead-

ers, if they are harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about

Obviously, the leader is not obligated to engage in shura in

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Bridging Centuries of Hatred

Recently, a grand mosque was opened at the very heart of Rome, not far from the Vatican, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. In its own way this symbolizes the efforts that are being made to foster better understanding between what, for many centuries, have come to be seen as two fiercely antagonistic and mutually opposed religions.

Every year since 1967, the President of the Catholic Church's Secretariat for Non-Christians, set up by Pope Paul VI in 1964, sends out a message of greetings of goodwill on behalf of all the Catholics of the World to all Muslims on the conclusion of their month of fasting, Ramadhan. The church has come a long way, it seems, from the dark days of the Crusades when the Popes had blessed the Frank hordes as holy warriors and exhorted them to fight to the finish the Saracen 'infidels'.

Christian writings on Islam, the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) continued to be deeply prejudiced and greatly distorted till the early decades of this century and even today more subtle traces of this remain. However, what is interesting to note is that by about the end of the nineteenth century, many Western Scholars and even Christian missionaries increasingly came to realize and even appreciate the positive worth of certain Islamic values and teachings, though none of them went so far as to recognize the legitimacy of Islam after Christianity, of Muhammed (Pbuh) after Jesus and of the Qur'an after the Bible. Miguel Asin Y. Palacios, a Spanish Catholic Priest (1871-1944), was the first to show how Islam and Christianity are unavoidably linked together in the history of mankind. Never before had a Christian in full loyalty to his own religious tradition been so

aware of this. Another influential scholar who made a significant contribution to the modern Christian appraisal of Islam was Father Louis Masignon (1883-1962), who accepted the Muslim connection to Abraham via his son, Ismail.

By Yoginder Sikand

The years immediately after the Second World War witnessed a considerable rethinking in Christian theological circles about non-Christian faiths. By far the most influential in this regard were theologians such as the German Jesuit Karl Rahner. They began to see the history of mankind as a whole as the general history of salvation. In defending this view, they made a distinction between what they called 'general' and 'special' revelation. By 'general' revelation they meant the means by which God has communicated with humanity, the setting for this being the various religions of the world, including Islam. They considered these religions to be the ordinary ways of salvation for humanity and the message of their founders to be revelations from God, although incomplete. Christianity, on the other hand, they saw as 'special' revelation. While still affirming the supposed superiority of Christianity this marked a significant shift from earlier Christian thinking. Religions other than Christianity, Islam included, were now at least granted legitimacy in Christian eyes and were seen as positively desired by God in the general history of the salvation of mankind.

The Catholic Church did not remain unaffected by this process of rethinking in theological circles. In the early 1960s the Second Council of the Vatican (Known more commonly as Vatican II) addressed the question of religious pluralism. Its "Dogmatic Constitution of the Church" abandoned the

Church's earlier negative attitude towards non-Christian faiths and made it official teaching that all religions can be God's instruments of salvation. Speaking of Islam in particular, it went on to declare that God's "plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us, adore the one and merciful God". The Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions" went so far as to assure Muslims that the Catholic Church looks upon them "with esteem". Vatican II, it seems, marked a major watershed in Christian-Muslim relations. The Council had implicitly recognized the claim of Muslims that Islam is the fruit of a personal, divine word and, therefore, a revelation from God.

Vatican II may have settled the question of the legitimacy of Islam in Christian eyes but it provided no explicit answer to whether or not Christians could regard Muhammed (Pbuh) as a prophet and the Qur'an as the word of God. A significant development in this regard came in 1977 when Cardinal Tarancon, President of the Spanish Catholic Bishops Conference, while addressing the second Christian-Muslim Conference in Cordoba, appealed to the Christians to recognize that the Holy Prophet Muhammed (Pbuh) had "walked in the path of the prophets". If Christians could agree with that, then it seems there would be no difficulty for them to recognize that God speaks through the Qur'an. This would be in keeping with the distinction made by many Christian theologians between 'general' and 'special' revelation.

While still remaining true to their faith, many Christians, as the

dramatic developments in the Catholic Church show, seem to be moving towards a more open and accommodative approach to Islam and Muslims. At a time when fears are being expressed in some quar-

ters of an impending bloody clash between the Muslim world and the West-between the Crescent and the Cross this cannot but be seen as a very welcome development.



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The Prophe (Pbuh) said " Trustworthy marchantts will be raised with the prophes, martyrs and the truthful on the resurrection Day"



ഇസ്ലാമിക് സെമിനാർ തുടങ്ങി

കോഴിക്കോട്: മതപ്രബോധനത്തിന് തടസ്സം സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ മാത്രമേ ഇസ്ലാം യുദ്ധത്തിന് അനുമതി നൽകുന്നുള്ളൂവെന്ന് കെ. എൻ.എം സംസ്ഥാന ജന. സെക്രട്ടറി എ.പി. അബ്ദുൽഖാദിർ മൗലവി പ്രസ്താവിച്ചു.

അക്കാദമി ഫോർ സ്റ്റഡീസ് ആൻറ് റിസർച്ച് മർക്കസുദ്ദുഅ്വയിൽ സംഘടിപ്പിച്ച കേരള ഇസ്ലാമിക് സെമിനാറിൽ, ഉമ്മത്ത് സെഷൻ ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്യുകയായിരുന്നു അദ്ദേഹം. മതപ്രബോധനരംഗത്ത് മുസ്ലിം സമൂഹം കൂട്ടായ്മ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്നത് സ്വാഗതാർഹമാണെന്ന് അദ്ദേഹം പറഞ്ഞു.

1921-ലെ കലാപം മാപ്പിള ലഹളയാക്കി മാറ്റിയതിനുപിന്നിൽ ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് ബുദ്ധിയാണെന്ന് ചടങ്ങിൽ അധ്യക്ഷത വഹിച്ച ടി.എം. സാവാനുകുട്ടി അഭിപ്രായപ്പെട്ടു.

പ്രൊഫ. ടി. അബ്ദുല്ല, കരുവള്ളി മുഹമ്മദ് മൗലവി, ചെറിയമുണ്ടം അബ്ദുൽ ഹമീദ് മദനി എന്നിവർ പ്രബന്ധങ്ങൾ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചു.

ഇന്ന് നടക്കുന്ന ചരിത്രസെമിനാർ പ്രശസ്ത ചരിത്രകാരൻ ഡോ. കെ. എൻ. പണിക്കർ ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്യും.

കുറിയവർക്ക് പാവേണവും ലോകത്തിലുപ്രമുഖ യൂണിവേർസിറ്റി ക്ലിംഗ് യൂണസ്കോ പോലെയുള്ള അന്തർദ്ദേശീയ സമിതികളും താൽപര്യം കാണിക്കുന്നത്. അമേരിക്കയിലേയും യൂറോപ്പിലെയും സോഷ്യലിസ്റ്റ് രാജ്യങ്ങളടക്കം ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ ബഹുഭംഗം മുന്പോട്ടുപോയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഇസ്ലാമികപഠനത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ചു പായകയാണെങ്കിൽ വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയായ നിരവധി പണ്ഡിതന്മാർ നേതൃത്വം കൊടുക്കുകയും പരിപോഷിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്ത ഇവിടങ്ങളിലെ ഇസ്ലാമികപഠനകുറ്റുകൾ ഈ വിജ്ഞാനശാഖയെ തനിച്ചിനിറഞ്ഞ ഗവേഷണങ്ങൾക്കാണ് സമ്പന്നമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ടു്. അവരുടെ ചില നിഗമനങ്ങളിലെ നിഷേധാത്മകമായ വശം ഇവിടെ വിസ്മരിക്കുന്നില്ല. പക്ഷെ എ. ജെ. ആർബറി, കാനിൻ സ്മിത്ത് ആർ. എ. നിക്കോസൺ തുടങ്ങിയവർ ഇസ്ലാമിയ വിജ്ഞാനീയങ്ങൾ പാശ്ചാത്യർക്ക് പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തിയതിൽ വഹിച്ച പങ്ക് കൂറ കൂടുകാണുന്നത് കൃതജ്ഞതയായിരിക്കട്ടെ.

ഇന്ത്യയിലെ മിക്ക യൂണിവേർസിറ്റികളും യൂണിവേർസിറ്റി ഗ്രാന്റുകൾക്കിടയിലും ഇസ്ലാമിക പഠനത്തിനു പ്രോത്സാഹനം നൽകുന്നുണ്ട്.

നിർഭാഗ്യകരമെന്നു പറയട്ടെ കേരളത്തിൽ സർവ്വകലാശാലാ തലത്തിൽ ഇസ്ലാമിക പഠനം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയ വിഷയമായിട്ടാണ് കരുതപ്പെടുന്നത്, അപരിചിതത്വം ശത്രുതക്കുറിമിത്തമാക്കുമെന്നതു ശരിതന്നെ. പക്ഷെ യൂണിവേർസിറ്റിപോലെയുള്ള ഉന്നത വിജ്ഞാന പീഠങ്ങളുടെ നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങൾക്കു പരിചിതമാകേണ്ട കാര്യങ്ങൾ അപരിചിതമാകുമ്പോൾ വ്യസനിക്കേണ്ടിവരുന്നത് സ്വാഭാവികമാണല്ലോ?

ഇസ്ലാം പതിനഞ്ചാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലേക്കു പ്രവേശിച്ചതിനോടനുബന്ധിച്ചു ഡൽഹിയിൽ നടന്ന ആഴ്ചപ്പാട് പരിപാടി ഉൾപ്പെടെയെല്ലാം ചെയ്ത ശ്രമത്തിൽ ഇതിനുശേഷം ഇസ്ലാമിക പഠനത്തിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യത്തെ കുറിച്ചു പ്രസ്താവിക്കുകയുണ്ടായി.

ഇന്ത്യൻ ജീവിത മണ്ഡലങ്ങളിലേക്കു ശതകങ്ങളിലൂടെയുള്ള ഇസ്ലാമിന്റെ സജീവ സംഭാവന ഇന്ത്യയിലെ ഇന്നത്തെ മുസ്ലിം സമുദായത്തിന്റെ വലിപ്പത്തെക്കാൾ എത്രയോ കൂടിത്തന്നെ പ്രാധാന്യം അർഹിക്കുന്നതാണ്. ഇതരഘടകങ്ങളെ പോലെ ഇസ്ലാമിക ഘടകവും നമ്മുടെ രാജ്യത്തു പ്രവേശിക്കുകയും മാനവ വ്യവഹാരത്തിന്റെ സകല ശാഖകളെയും സാധാനിപ്പിക്കുകയും എല്ലാ ശാഖകളിലും അതു സാധാനിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്തു. തത്പരസ്യം, ആദ്ധ്യം

മോ, ഗൗരവാവഹകമായ പഠനം നടന്നിട്ടില്ല. ഒരു കേരളീയ ചരിത്രകാരന് ഇസ്ലാമിനെ അനുകൂലിക്കാതെ എഴുതുകയാണെന്നു കഴിഞ്ഞേക്കും. പക്ഷെ ഇസ്ലാമിനെ അവഗണിക്കാൻ എത്ര ശ്രമിച്ചാലും അയാൾക്കു കഴിയുകയില്ല. അതുകൊണ്ട് ഇസ്ലാമിന്റെയും കേരളത്തിന്റെയും ചരിത്രങ്ങൾ പരസ്പരം ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

കേരളത്തിന്റെ ഭൂമിശാസ്ത്രപരമായ അതിരുകൾ പരിമിതിപ്പെടുത്തിയ ചൈതന്യവും അതിന്റെ ഭാഗ്യവശം രൂപപ്പെടുത്തിയതിലും അതിന്റെ ചരിത്രഗതി തിരിച്ചുവിട്ടതിലേക്കു അതിന്റെ സംസ്കാരിക പാഠമാണെന്നു ഭാജസ്സു നമിയ്ക്കലും ഇസ്ലാം പ്രത്യേകം പരോക്ഷമായൊ ചൈതന്യ സാധനം സുവിതമാണല്ലോ?

ചേരമാൻപെരുമാളു ഇസ്ലാംമത സ്വീകരണവുമായിലേക്കുള്ള തീർത്ഥാടനം പെരുമാൾ വാഴ്ചയുടെ നന്മയും കറിക്കുക മാത്രമല്ല, നാട്ടിന്റെ ചരിത്രപരമായ ന്യായം നിർണ്ണയിക്കുകയെന്നും ഒരു മഹാസംഭവമാണെന്നും മലയാളികൾക്കു സന്ദേശം കലണ്ടർ ലഭിക്കുന്ന അഥവാ കൊല്ലവർഷം പരിഷ്കരണം ഈ സംഭവം സംഭവിച്ചുവെന്നോടുകൂടി നാം കേരള ഭരണമന്ദിരത്തിൽ അതു സൂക്ഷ്മിച്ചു നോക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുമല്ലോ?

ഈ സംഭവം കേവലത്തിലും കേരളപര്യം ചില ചോർത്തും സ്പാഷിപ്പിച്ച് ഗ്രന്ഥവും പ്രതിപാദിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടു്. അതിന്റെ വസ്തുതയെ വിശദവിവരം നമ്മുക്കു നൽകുന്ന പതിനാറു ഞലിലെ ചരിത്രപഠനാനുബന്ധിയിലെ സൈനുദ്ദീൻ ബിൻ അബ്ദുൽ ഗനിം മരയ്ക്കു ത്തരുത്തുമുജാഹിദിനന്നാണ്.

പെരുമാളുടെ മക്കൾക്കു മുന്നും നൂറുണ്ടെന്നു പ്രസ്താവിക്കുകയും അവർക്കു നൽകിയ അന്ത്യം സംഭവിച്ച കൈ അറബുയിൽ കടൽ തീരത്തുള്ള ഉൾനാട് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. [ഇന്നത്തെ സൗദി അറബിയിലെ സലാലാ ഉൾനാട് തുറമുഖം] യെന്ന പേരിൽ ഈ പ്രാദേശം ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന പേരുമാർ അവർക്കുള്ള ഉൾനാടുകാർ പുണ്യകനിലയിൽ സന്ദർശിക്കുന്നതിനും സൈനുദ്ദീൻ കമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

രണ്ടു മാസങ്ങൾ സലാല സന്ദർശിച്ചു ലേഖനം, ജനാബുമാ

കുറിയവർക്ക് പാവേണവും ലോകത്തിലുപ്രമുഖ യൂണിവേർസിറ്റി ക്ലിംഗ് യൂണസ്കോ പോലെയുള്ള അന്തർദ്ദേശീയ സമിതികളും താൽപര്യം കാണിക്കുന്നത്.

അമേരിക്കയിലേയും യൂറോപ്പിലെയും സോഷ്യലിസ്റ്റ് രാജ്യങ്ങളടക്കം ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ ബഹുഭംഗം മുന്പോട്ടുപോയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

പ്രതിലോപനം

വി. കെ. ഇ. എസ്. എൻ

കുഞ്ഞബ്ദുള്ളക്ക് 'വിശ്വദീപം' അവാർഡ് 'ഡോ: സുകുമാർ അഴീക്കോട്, ജ: കെ. ടി. തോമസ്' പവനൻ എന്നിവരുടെ സഹായം കയ്യാറിയാണ് അവാർഡിന് 'മറുന്ന്' തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തത്.

— വാർത്ത
മറുന്ന് ഫലിക്കും.

കോൺഗ്രസ് രണ്ടും മാറാൻ വേണ്ടി രാഷ്ട്രീയ മോർച്ചകൾ വേർതിരിക്കേണ്ടതു് പല്ലുവേദന മാറാൻ വേണ്ടി തല വെട്ടിക്കളയുന്നതിന് തുല്യമായിരിക്കും.

— കൃഷ്ണവാര്യർ
തലവേദന മാറാൻ പല്ലു പറിച്ചാൽ മതിയെന്ന പക്ഷം രൂമുണ്ട്.

ഇന്നലെ രാത്രിയിൽ ഞാനൊരു പൂവിന്റെ മരസ്മിതത്തിൽ കിടന്നുറങ്ങി എന്നത് ഗദ്യമാണെന്ന് പക്ഷെ, മരസ്മിതത്തിൽ അത് ഹൃദയഹാരിയായ കവിതയായി മാറുന്നു.

— എം. കൃഷ്ണനായർ
കൃഷ്ണനായർ ഈ പൂവിന്റെ പൂഞ്ചിരിയിൽ ഉറങ്ങാൻ തുടങ്ങിയിട്ട് കാലമേറെയായി.

തലക്കു പ്രാന്തം കാലിന് മന്ദം വരാൻ എന്താണ് കാരണം എന്നുറങ്ങാൻ, തലക്കു മന്ദം കാലിന് പ്രാന്തം വരാതിരിക്കാൻ എന്നാവും നോക്കേണ്ട പ്രാന്തം മാറുപടി.

— കുഞ്ഞുണ്ണി മാസ്റ്റർ
ഇടത്തെ കാലിലെ മന്ദം വലത്തേക്കാലിലേക്കു മാറുന്ന മന്ദമരയുടെ പ്രതിരോധിതയെന്നു നോക്കേണ്ട പ്രാന്തം എന്നും കൂടി ഓർക്കുന്നതാണ്.

എനിക്ക് കമ്മ്യൂണിസത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് നല്ലതോ ചീത്തയോ പറയാനില്ല, എനിക്ക് പകലിനെക്കുറിച്ച് നല്ലതോ ചീത്തയോ പറയാനില്ല; രാത്രിയെക്കുറിച്ച്, എനിക്ക് പറയാനുള്ളത്; പകൽ പകലും, രാത്രി രാത്രിയുമാണെന്ന് മാത്രമാണ്.

— വിഷ്ണുനാരായണൻ നമ്പൂതിരി
വാക്ക് ഉറച്ചവന്റെ നീക്കുപോക്കില്ലാത്ത ഉറക്കുള്ള വാക്ക്.

ഞാൻ സംസ്കാരിക ചൈതന്യം എന്ന പത്താംതരം പാഠപുസ്തകം തുറന്നു നോക്കി. നാലാം താളിലെത്തിയപ്പോൾ നിന്നു അവുടെ അഗ്രാലോചനം 'സൗന്ദര്യം' എന്ന് കണ്ടു കണ്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചു. 'സൗന്ദര്യം' എന്നാണ് വേണ്ടത്. ഇങ്ങനെ തിരച്ചെടുത്തു, പരിശോധിച്ചു. 'നീതിശാസ്ത്രം' 'വൈരാഗ്യ ശാസ്ത്രം' 'ശൃംഗാര ശാസ്ത്രം' 'കണ്ടു കണ്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചു. (നീതി ശതകം വൈരാഗ്യ ശതകം ശൃംഗാര ശതകം എന്നാണ് വേണ്ടത്)

— ഡോ. ടി. പി. സുകുമാരൻ
വെറുതെയല്ല നമ്മുടെ സംസ്കാരിക ചൈതന്യം കണ്ട് കൂട്ടിക്കളയുകയും വിശേഷിതയുടെയും കണ്ണു തള്ളുന്നത്.

ആർ. എസ്. എസ്. ആക്രമണത്തിൽനിന്ന് മുസ്ലിംകളെ രക്ഷിക്കുമെന്നു പറയുന്ന ഇ. എം. എസ്. ബാബറി മസൂജിദ് മുസ്ലിംകൾക്കു വിട്ടുകൊടുക്കണമെന്നു പറയാൻ നട്ടെല്ലു കറുപ്പിപ്പിക്കാൻ.

— എം. വി. രാഘവൻ
നട്ടെല്ലു കാണില്ല.

റഷ്യൻ കമ്മ്യൂണിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടിയുടെ 19-ാം ദേശീയ സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ പാർട്ടി നേതൃത്വത്തെയും ഭരണ നേതൃത്വത്തെയും വാനോളം പുകഴ്ത്തി പ്രസംഗിച്ച ഒരു പ്രതിനിധിയെ മാറ്റി പ്രതിനിധികൾ കൂവിയീരുത്തി.

— കെ. ചാത്തുണ്ണി മാസ്റ്റർ
ഇവിടേയും കൂവിയീരുത്താറുണ്ട്. ഇക്കഴിഞ്ഞു നവംബറോടുകൂടി മാത്രം.

The Light of Understanding

The Third World War, some influential thinkers in the West have come to believe, will soon be upon us as a fall-out of what they call a global clash of two civilizations, the Islamic Versus the Christian. The on-going and seemingly never-ending bloody strife in Bosnia between the Muslims and the Christian Serbs is said to be only just the beginning of this fight to the finish that shall eventually engulf the entire world.

The Prophets of doom may not, however, turn out to be right if a recently conducted two week summer camp on Islam at Coonoor in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Hills is any indication. The camp, organized by the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, a Christian research institute based at Hyderabad, provided a unique opportunity for over fifty Christians (Most of them students of theological seminaries) Muslims as well as a few others to live together and to learn more about what is admittedly a much misunderstood and reviled religion.

Various issues related to Islam and the Indian Muslim community were discussed at the

camp in a remarkably balanced and sympathetic manner. Every effort was made to understand these issues from the Muslim

By Yoginder Sikand

point of view itself. The participants were familiarized with the early history of Islam, the life of the Prophet and the development of Islamic philosophy, jurisprudence and mysticism. Particular stress was laid on combating widespread negative stereotypes about Muslims. The role of the Western media and political interests in reinforcing these distorted images came in for sharp criticism.

The students were encouraged to familiarize themselves with Islam through the writings, works of Western orientalis. A total of

Sixteen classes were devoted to the study of Arabic and *tafsir* (commentaries on the Qur'an). Interestingly, the teacher employed for this purpose was a young Muslim *Maulvi*, a graduate from a leading Islamic seminar (*Madrasa*) in Makkah and himself a staff member of the Henry Martyn Institute.

Morning classes began with an inter-religious prayer meeting in which verses from both the Qur'an, as well as the Bible, on a particular theme, generally on inter-religious harmony, were read out. The Christians students were taught how to say *Namaz*, the Muslim form of prayer. They were taken to Mosque at Coonoor on Friday to participate in the congregational *Jumma* prayers

alongwith the Muslims of the town.

The Henry Martyn Institute's efforts through this camp to bring about dialogue between different communities, in particular between Christian and Muslims, is a reflection of the changing attitude of the Christian churches towards other faiths. In the past, Christian Missionaries were taught about other religions to facilitate their efforts to convert others to the Christian fold. This approach is today, however, being replaced by a far more accommodative and tolerant attitude towards other religions, especially after the Vatican authorities publicly recognized that religions other than Christianity also contain rays of divine truth.

"We no longer give much stress to conversion," says Edward, a participant at the camp who is presently training to become a priest at a Catholic seminary in Tamil Nadu. "The focus is now on helping people become better adherents of their own faiths for that way, too, they can attain

God," he adds.

Another participant, Thomas, also a seminarian, said that dialogue between Muslims and Christians can only come about if both of them truly and firmly follow their own religions, in the right spirit. People of various religions he says, should come together on the basis of the common religious values they share, the most salient of which is a fierce opposition to oppression of all forms. "Leave theological differences aside and let us unite to face issues of common concern, such as poverty, communal riots and the nuclear threat," he says.

The fortnight-long camp may have helped change the perceptions about Islam and Muslims for the better. Yet, if this little experiment is able to inspire similar efforts on a wider scale it may be that the world can be spared the horrors of a bloody clash between the Cross and the Crescent. ■

Book Review

Author : Abdul Ghani
Publisher: Damal Varati,
14, Mazzafar Ahmed (Ribon)
Street, Calcutta 700016,
Price:Rs.150/-

Quite often biased tendencies are reflected in books written on extremely sensitive issues, with particular reference to Hindu-Muslim social interactions. Courage of conviction gets subordinated to threats that might emerge consequent to publishing articles and books on such issues.

India, a mighty Nation, suffers today not because of poverty and unemployment or lack of natural resources, but because of lack of proper understanding among people of different religious groups. Wrong perceptions are so much deeply rooted in the heart and mind of these people that they often get involved in criticism, hatred and suspicion. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims pause for a while, collect unbiased documentary evidences and then formulate their opinions and attitudes. It means that the so called intellectuals as well as mass-media have also become victims of such dangerous social context.

It is generally said, quite often, that the British had adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' and successfully created hatred and

I am for India, India for me

a few earlier pages, of this book. Mr. Abdul Ghani's emotional appeal for unity and understanding among human beings is very well reflected in his book. He pleads for peace and while doing so firmly pens that animals and birds are better than Indians. The book has valuable contribution in removing the hatred between the Muslims and Sikhs, and also between Muslims and Hindus because of the calculated mischief played by the British whose only goal was to firmly establish British Raj on a permanent basis.

Some of the wrong perceptions created due to historical sketches are presented by Mr. Abdul Ghani. These are:

There is a growing tendency of hatred between the Muslims and Sikhs because of persecution of some of the Sikh Gurus by the Muslim rulers. But the book points out the efforts of the Sufi Saint Hazrat Mian Mis who laid the first brick of the Golden temple.

Hindus are made to believe that the Muslims practise polygamy recklessly and this would result in disproportionate growth of Muslim population. Mr. Ghani produces evidences to prove that the situation is not so. Between 1931 and 1961, Hindus accounted for higher percentage of such



lim women's participation in freedom movement is another startling piece of information. The book also points out the role of Islam in spreading peace, human understanding and also solutions to Aids, drugs etc.

As one goes through this book which has limited information on many significant issues, one definitely feels that this book needs to be re-edited with more and more information. It is perhaps not out of context to say that Mr. Abdul Ghani should produce four to five volumes of this great book. It reminds me of Hindi poet, Bihari Lal whose poems contain so much of substance in a nutshell. In Hindi it is characterised as "Gager

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"Those that devour the prey"

Towards a Better World

It is the fastest growing ideology in the west-it outstrips any other religion and any other 'ism'. Western men and women are turning in their thousands to Islam and this trend is occurring in every European Country, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Finland, America and the United Kingdom are witnessing a growth in the number of people embracing Islam. People in the west are rejecting western values in favour of Islam. Submission to the will of the Creator.

Why are people turning to Islam globally?

To Muslims, the answer should be obvious. Converts have spoken of many things that guided them to Islam-To the straight path. Allah guides whom He wills in so many different ways.

The strongest reason, as accounts of people who have embraced Islam indicate, is the influence of the Qur'an - the Holy book speaking to mankind with absolute awareness of the nature of humanity. The Qur'an - "This is the guidance of God. He gives this guidance to whom He pleases."

Fame, Glory, adoration and money- striven for by so many, but rejected by the Pop megastar Cat Stevens. He was the superstar of the seventies and his photograph lined the walls of girls' bedrooms all over the world. Yet his lyrics always displayed a searching and in 1978 that search finally came to an end, for on the 4th of July, 1978, Cat Stevens became Yusuf Islam.

Yusuf Islam was born in 1948. His father was a Greek Cypriot and his mother was Swedish. He was named Steven Dimitri Georgian and brought up a Christian. His childhood was cosmopolitan, but lonely as he was shy, which isolated him. In 1966 he shot to fame with the song - 'I love My

Dog'. He was just 18. By the summer of 1967 he had three hit records and was earning 1000 pounds per week. He admits that he was materialistic and thought that money could buy him everything. But two years of a Pop star life style took its toll on the young Cat Stevens who had to drink himself drunk just to go on stage.

Ms. Nigar.Ataulla

In 1968 he contracted tuberculosis and spent months in hospital. As he lay in his hospital bed, he contemplated his life - "death was on my mind," he said. He lost faith in Christianity, of which he says: "it takes away the responsibility all human beings feel for their own existence and puts it on Jesus", but he did not lose the need for spiritual fulfillment and thus started meditating.

Two Albums became massive hits that relaunched his career after a two year absence due to his illness. He had the finest of everything, and yet he kept searching "you have to believe in yourself - that's very important," he told Chris Welch, a music business big shot. This train of thought along with his intentionally low profile meant that he escaped much of the "show biz trap" and this made it easy for more personal contemplation.

Guilt at much of his life-style led him to temper it somewhat and he began giving large sums of his money to charity. He also made a promise to God, one that he was to forget for sometime. Whilst swimming off California beach he was swept out, struggling to keep above the water - "everything flashed in front of my eyes, my whole life. 'Oh God', I said, 'if you save me, I'll work for you! Immediately a wave came from behind and pushed me forward. All of a sudden, I was swimming back- God never forgets. If somebody makes a promise, that promise, in God's sight has to be fulfilled."

And fulfilled it must be for, it



Yusuf Islam in the office of the Islamic primary school in northwest London

was receiving the Qur'an as a gift from his brother David, that was the real turning point in his life. "It was unlike any other book I'd come across. The words seemed to be speaking straight at me- loud and clear. It made me stop and listen," he said. Yusuf carried the Qur'an with him everywhere not letting anyone else touch it. He began to pray to God every morning and evening." But in my own way, I didn't know one Muslim who could teach me- I had never seen anyone practising Islam. I began to feel like I was the only Muslim in the world-just me and the Qur'an."

He was still living his life as a musician, but "bit by bit I was changing, though. The Qur'an was opening my eyes to so many things, but I was still functioning in the mechanical sense of being a musician". But he had to choose his path "either I was to go fully my own way making music and just pleasing my own desires, or I was to submit myself fully to Islam." He chose the latter path and on 4th July 1978 Cat Stevens became Yusuf Islam.

After discussing things with the Imam at the Central Mosque in London, he gave up giving public performances, then he gave up

making records.

Yusuf Islam then committed himself to Projects such as the Muslim Aid and the Muslim schools project. His embracing Islam had a big impact on his family- his father died believing in the One True God, his mother lived her life as a Muslim, his brother David took Shahada as have other members of his family. Yusuf Islam uses his fortune to give in charity, and he is dedicated to the Islamia School in Brent, London.

Talking about Islam in Britain, he emphasises that "Britain has a great deal of potential in its opinions and opportunity for debate and we should utilise this freedom as much as possible."

Yusuf Islam feels that there are still a lot of people who are in need of knowing the message of peace and truth which Islam brings, more Islamic schools and institutions are needed.

Let us remember that there are approximately 1000 mosques in Britain and this is a great source of strength for the future-

Insha-Allah, and many people are now questioning British (Secular) culture, including Prince Charles himself.

Yusuf Islam now works in Muslim Aid which is a charitable Muslim Relief Organisation, established in November 1985, charity is supported by all major Muslim organisations and Mosques in the United Kingdom. Muslim Aid aims to seek the pleasure of Allah by raising funds through Zakah, sadaqah and other donations to needy Muslims worldwide. The charity responds to emergencies caused by wars, famines, floods, drought, by distributing food, medicine, shelter, clothing, drinking water to the people in need through relief missions sent from London. Muslim Aid is now also establishing developmental schemes, orphanages and schools.

Donations to Muslim Aid can be addressed to Muslim Aid, Dept AR4, P.O. Box 3, London N7, 8 U.K. Tel: 0171-6094425. Fax: 0171-6094943. ■

"Answer al Salamu alaykum with a complete wa' alaykum al salam wa rahmatu Allah wa barkatuhu. Do so with a cheerful, inviting and engaging voice"

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