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Editorial

The Beneficent. Taught the Quran. He created man, Taught him expression. The sun and the moon follow a reckoning, And the herbs and the trees adore (Him). And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the measure, that you may not exceed the measure, And keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short in the measure. (Al-Quran: Chapter 55, Verse 1-9)

We are happy to present the Volume V111, Issue No. 2, May 2026 of the *Islam and the Modern Age*. Firstly, we thank Professor Mazhar Asif, the brilliant Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia. The constant and conscious encouragement that we receive from him is indeed priceless and unmatched. His personal and professional excellence inspire us in many ways. We also thank the Registrar of Jamia Millia Islamia, Professor Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi. His selfless support for academic works is truly unconditional and unlimited. The Editor-in Chief, Professor Habibullah Khan ensures that we never compromise on ethics, erudition and enthusiasm. The editorial team looks up to him for benevolent guidance. The Assistant Editor, Dr Mohd Sayeed Anwar always polishes the publication by his dedication and a unique sense of sincerity. I thank all the members of the editorial board and the authors for their contribution.

The Quran was compiled way before the manifestation of AI (Artificial intelligence) in the world, nonetheless it addresses the ethical, ontological, epistemological and practical aspects of synthetic intelligence, cognitive computing and simulated cognition. Artificial Intelligence is a broad term which can imply Machine Learning; systems that use data to learn and improve automatically without being explicitly programmed, Deep Learning; which is an advanced sub-set machine learning that uses multi layered neutral networks to mimic the human brain, Algorithmic Automation; software driven by complex math to automate processes traditionally requiring human input, Autonomous Systems; software or machines that operate take

decisions and complete tasks independently. The Quranic teachings on the scheme of creation, human stewardship, pursuit of beneficial knowledge and ethical responsibility illuminate its perspective on AI.

According to the Quran, human intelligence and the capacity to innovate are gifts from God. It encourages the use of these gifts for the pursuit of beneficial knowledge. The use of intellectual reasoning is encouraged. Thus, the development of AI becomes an invention sourced through the divinely bestowed human intelligence. The Quran states that God is The Creator (*al-Khaliq*), The Inventor (*al-Bari*) and The Fashioner/Shaper (*al-Musawwir*). Thus, it is implied that it is He who brings things into existence with a precise plan and measure. He can create things out of nothingness if He wills and He gives a distinct form, shape and size to things. So, like everything else the emergence of AI is also a part of His creation, invention, designing and a larger plan which is gradually unfolding. It is a gift to the humans, like His other gifts. It is up to them to use it well. In fact, they will be held accountable if they don't.

The Quran instructs human beings to look at the universe as a collection of the signs of God and to reflect over them. The tools of AI can present information, process data, recognize patterns, and automate complex tasks with unprecedented speed and efficiency. So, in the context of observing the signs of God it gives us an opportunity to observe many more signs than what we could have observed in the distant past. It presents us with lots of opportunities to know our world and the worlds afar. This is aligned with the Quranic encouragement to explore and expand the horizons of knowledge so that the signs of God are understood and used as a guidance to walk on the straight path.

The Islamic jurisprudence draws attention to the distinction between divine creation and human manufacturing. No matter how advanced, generative, or autonomous the AI becomes, the matter of the fact is that it does not have a soul (*ruh*). This confirms the fact that AI is a product of human engineering and thus it is much lesser than human intelligence which is accompanied by a soul. The soul and its consciousness, which the Quran describes as a unique breath of life are granted to human beings by God. There is no way to make their duplicates. The absolute certainty of death testifies to the fact that even the most advanced labs can't manufacture souls. They are a mystery beyond the comprehension

of human intelligence. Therefore, while AI can simulate cognitive tasks, from an Islamic ontological perspective, it cannot replicate or replace the spiritual or metaphysical essence of the human brain.

The Quran designates human beings as trustees/stewards/successors (*khalifah*) on Earth. As stewards, humans are entrusted with the responsibility to maintain the balance (*mizan*) and the limits that God has set. They are warned against exceeding the limits and creating imbalance and corruption (*fasad*). This principle directly dictates how AI should be used. If humans use it to improve healthcare, optimize agriculture, alleviate poverty, and advance scientific understanding, it fulfils the mandate of *khilafah*. On the other hand, if it is used for weaponisation, warfare, spreading of misinformation, generating mass hatred, exploiting vulnerable populations, looting and cheating etc. it violates the Quranic prohibition against misusing a gift of God, exceeding limits and creating a destructive imbalance.

Islam has the concept of the trust (*al-Amanah*), which is a moral duty and free-will that human beings have received from God. Since they have a free-will, they also have an ethical responsibility to choose to do the right thing. The misuse of the free-will is bound to have repercussion and a cost that they will have to pay. The Quran promises that everyone will get a return for what they do. This is about justice and justice also entails punishing the unjust.

Paradoxically, despite its magical 'intelligence', the AI cannot be held spiritually or morally accountable for its actions. It has no soul or moral agency. Therefore, the Quranic principle of responsibility dictates that the developers, deployers, regulators and users of AI bear the ethical and legal weight of the technology's outcomes. If an AI algorithm produces biased, harmful, or deceptive outputs, the accountability will be traced back to the human actors who created, deployed or used the system. Quranic ethics demand transparency, fairness, and justice (*'adl*) in all human transactions, which translates modernly into the need for unbiased algorithms and ethical data governance.

Even though the Quran does not speak directly in the context of the mechanics of algorithms or neural networks, its holistic framework offers robust guidance for the digital age. It views technological advancement not as a threat to faith, but as a test of human responsibility. By positioning AI as a tool manufactured by human intellect rather than a new form

of life, Islamic thought emphasizes that technology must remain subservient to ethical values. It is quite obvious that the rapid growth of AI is posing profound ethical challenges, ranging from algorithmic bias, data theft, mass surveillance and the potential displacement of human labour; to name just a few. Ultimately, the Quranic view insists that the measure of AI's success is not its computational power, but its capacity to promote justice, preserve human dignity, and serve humanity. The Quran is clear that technological progress must never come at the expense of equilibrium; ecological, social, moral and ethical. The *mizan* is the magic charm for sustainable development and a successful life.

Herewith we present some of the most brilliant writings from human intelligence. Happy reading!

Farhat Nasreen

MAZHAR ASIF

The Intriguing Origins of Humanity: Was Prophet Adam Sent Down to the Indian Subcontinent After his Descent from Paradise

Nothing fascinates the human mind more than the question of humanity's true origin. Few subjects have generated much curiosity and debate throughout history. The discussion became even more compelling after Charles Darwin proposed his theory of evolution, offering an explanation of human origins that fundamentally differed from the accounts found in the Qur'an, the Bible, and many other sacred religious texts.

To understand this fascinating debate, let us first examine the Darwinian perspective and then compare it with the narratives presented in the major religious traditions. Such a comparison enables us to appreciate both the similarities and the differences among these worldviews. It also provides the necessary background for addressing the central question of this article: Did the Prophet Adam, after being sent down from Paradise, first descend upon the soil of the Indian subcontinent?

According to Charles Darwin:

'Human history on Earth began through a long process of biological evolution from common ancestors, driven by natural selection over millions of years.'

From this perspective, humanity emerged solely through natural biological processes rather than through a direct act of divine creation, as described in the Abrahamic scriptures.

Here, it is important to examine the religious perspectives on the origin of humanity. Doing so will present a clearer and more comprehensive picture of this enduring debate.

Let us begin with the Torah, which was revealed long before the Bible and the Qur'an.

The Torah states:

"God creates the universe in six stages (often described as six 'days') and rests on the seventh. Humans are created as the climax of creation. God creates Adam, the first man, 'in His image' (Tzelem Elohim), giving him a unique spiritual and moral status. God then creates Eve (Chavah) from Adam to be his companion. Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden, where they are given freedom to enjoy the garden except for eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After they disobey God's command, they are expelled from Eden, and human life thereafter is marked by labor, suffering, and mortality. All humanity descends from Adam and Eve, and later, after the Flood, from Noah and his family." (Genesis (Bereshit) 1–2)

Let us now turn to the Holy Bible. Its account closely corroborates the Torah, as the first five books of the Bible correspond to the Torah, although they differ in translation and in certain textual traditions.

The Bible states:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (Genesis 2:7)

"God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs to be his companion." (Genesis 2:21–22)

"Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, sin, suffering, and death entered the human condition, and they were expelled from the Garden of Eden." (Genesis 3)

Thus, the Bible, like the Torah, traces the genealogy of humanity from Adam through Noah and his descendants after the Great Flood.

Let us now consider the Qur'an, the last of the revealed scriptures.

The Qur'an states that Allah created Adam from clay or dust:

"Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust; then He said to him, 'Be,' and he was." (Al Qur'an 3:59)

After creating Adam, Allah breathed into him of His Spirit, signifying the unique dignity and life bestowed upon humankind (Al Qur'an 15:29; 38:72).

Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an does not describe the creation of Eve

in detail. Instead, it states that Allah created humanity "from a single soul" and created its mate from it (Al Qur'an 4:1; 7:189). Later Islamic tradition identifies this first pair as Adam and Hawwa (Eve).

Allah placed Adam and Hawwa in Paradise and permitted them to enjoy all that it contained, except for one forbidden tree (Al Qur'an 2:35; 7:19).

It is here that the well-known account unfolds. Satan (Iblis) tempted them to eat from the forbidden tree by falsely promising that doing so would grant them immortality and an everlasting kingdom. They succumbed to his deception and disobeyed Allah's clear command, despite His warning against approaching the tree. However, they soon realized their mistake, sincerely repented, and sought Allah's forgiveness. Allah graciously accepted their repentance, but decreed that they would leave Paradise and descend to the earth, where they and their descendants would live until the Day of Judgment, when every individual would be held accountable for his or her deeds and rewarded accordingly with Paradise or Hell (Al Qur'an 2:36–37; 7:20–25).

Unlike the doctrine of original sin in Christian traditions, the Qur'an teaches that every individual bears responsibility only for his or her own deeds (Al Qur'an 6:164; 53:38). Adam's lapse is not inherited by humanity, nor does it burden subsequent generations with original sin.

Another important point to note is that before passing judgment on Adam and Hawwa (Eve)'s folly, we should also consider their destiny. According to the Qur'an, their creation and subsequent descent to the earth was part of Allah's divine wisdom and plan for humanity. Long before Adam's creation, Allah had declared His intention to appoint a khalifah (vicegerent or steward) on the earth (Al Qur'an 2:30). According to Islamic tradition, this appointment came after the earlier inhabitants of the earth—the *jinn*—had spread corruption, mischief and disorder. Humanity was therefore entrusted with the responsibility of serving as Allah's vicegerent on earth and living in accordance with His guidance.

The Qur'an further declares:

"I did not create the *jinn* and mankind except that they should worship Me." (Al Qur'an 51:56)

Unlike the Abrahamic religions, Hindu scriptures do not present a single, uniform account of the origin of humanity. Rather, they comprise a vast body of sacred texts and philosophical traditions that

offer multiple narratives of creation. These accounts are generally theological and cosmological in nature rather than scientific.

Among the most prominent traditions is the account we find in the Puranas, where Brahmā, the creator deity of the Trimurti (Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva), is described as bringing the universe and all living beings into existence. According to these texts, Brahmā created the first humans and other creatures either from his mind or from his body. The first man is commonly identified as Svayambhuva Manu, while the first woman is Shatarupa. Humanity is believed to have descended from this primordial couple.

Interestingly, the figure of Manu bears a striking resemblance, in certain respects, to Noah in the Abrahamic traditions, particularly in his association with the continuation and preservation of humankind.

Another important account appears in one of the oldest creation hymns of the *Rig Veda*, the *Purusha Sukta* (*Rig Veda* 10.90). It describes the universe as originating from the cosmic sacrifice of *Purusha*, the Cosmic Person. Different parts of creation emerged from different parts of *Purusha's* body, and humanity, together with the four varnas (social orders), is symbolically portrayed as arising from this cosmic being. Most scholars regard this hymn as a symbolic and philosophical explanation of creation rather than a literal account of the biological origin of humankind.

Having briefly examined these creation narratives, we may now turn to another important question: if the first human beings—whether Adam and Hawwa or Manu and Shatarupa—were sent down to the earth from Paradise or heaven, where did they first descend?

Various traditions offer different answers. In this article, however, I shall confine my discussion primarily to the Islamic traditions and explore how they may be understood in relation to the cultural and historical ethos of the Indian subcontinent.

According to numerous Islamic historical and exegetical traditions, Prophet Adam—the first human being and the first prophet—had a profound connection with Hindustan, or the Indian subcontinent. Many early Muslim scholars maintained that when Adam was sent down from Paradise, he first descended upon the land of Hindustan.

The principal traditions may be summarized as follows.

Several eminent early authorities, including famous Islamic early days

historians like Ibn ʻAbbas and Hasan al-Basri, relate that Prophet Adam first set foot on the land of Hindustan after his descent from Paradise, while his wife, Hawwa (Eve), was sent down separately at Jeddah in present-day Saudi Arabia. Separated from one another, they searched for each other until they were finally reunited at Jabal al-Rahmah (the Mount of Mercy) on the plain of Arafat, near Makkah.

Another well-known tradition states that Prophet Adam descended upon a lofty mountain in present-day Sri Lanka, which in ancient times was often regarded as part of the broader Indian subcontinent. This mountain, now widely known as Adam's Peak, bears at its summit a large footprint-shaped impression traditionally believed by Muslims to be the Prophet Adam's footprints.

Adam's Peak, also known as Sri Pada, occupies a unique place in the religious traditions of several faiths. Rising to an elevation of approximately 2,243 meters (7,359 feet), it has been revered as a sacred mountain for centuries. Muslims believe that the footprint preserved there belongs to Prophet Adam after his descent to the earth. Buddhists regard it as the footprint of the Buddha, Hindus attribute it to Lord Shiva, while some Christians identify it as the footprint of either St. Thomas or Adam himself.

Because of these diverse religious traditions, Adam's Peak has remained an important place of pilgrimage for centuries, attracting hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from different faiths every year.

The traditions linking Prophet Adam with the Indian subcontinent are found in a variety of other early Islamic historical and exegetical works. At the same time, it is important to distinguish among the teachings of the Qur'an, authenticated *hadith*, and later historical reports (*akhbār*) and exegetical traditions (*tafsīr*). The Qur'an itself does not specify the place where Adam descended, nor is there any rigorously authenticated hadith identifying the exact location. Most reports associating Adam's descent with India or Sri Lanka originate from later Muslim historians and commentators.

Likewise, the Qur'an does not describe the precise manner in which Adam and Hawwa were brought down from Paradise.

Among later Islamic authorities, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir also accepted the tradition that Prophet Adam descended in India after leaving Paradise. According to reports attributed to him, Adam later

travelled on foot from India to Makkah to perform the Hajj. It is further narrated that wherever his blessed feet touched the earth, the land became green and fertile, whereas the places untouched by his feet remained barren and eventually turned into deserts.

The first chapter of the Shia work *Hayat al-Qulub* describes the expulsion of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) and Lady Hawwa (Eve) from Paradise. It relates that after Adam disobeyed Allah, He commanded the angel Jibril (Gabriel) to bring him down to the earth. According to this narration, as soon as Adam descended, his complexion became dark. Allah then instructed him to observe fasting for His sake. After Adam fasted for three days, his complexion returned to its original appearance.

Another interesting tradition concerns the Black Stone (*Hajar al-Aswad*) enshrined in the Ka'bah.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq is reported to have said that the Black Stone was originally one of the highly exalted angels of Allah. Allah transformed the angel into a stone and entrusted it with the responsibility of bearing witness on the Day of Judgment for those who performed the Hajj. According to this narration, when Prophet Adam was sent down to India, Allah subsequently sent this sacred stone to him. At that time, it resembled a radiant white pearl. Later, when Adam was commanded to build the Ka'bah, he placed the stone in its present position. Over the centuries, because it was continually touched and kissed by pilgrims, its colour gradually turned black. Thus, according to this tradition, the *Hajar al-Aswad* was first brought down from Paradise to India before being installed in the Ka'bah.

According to a narration attributed to Ibn 'Abbas, Prophet Adam descended upon a mountain in India known as Budh (or Nudh). It is further related that he brought with him flowers and fragrant leaves from Paradise and scattered them across the land of India, which, according to this tradition, explains why India possesses some of the rarest and most fragrant flowers in the world. This report is mentioned by the famous Islamic historian, Al-Tabari, while similar narrations have also been attributed to Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Abdullah ibn 'Abbas.

Similarly, Wahab ibn Munabbih is reported to have narrated that when Prophet Adam was sent down from Paradise, he descended upon a mountain called Basim in eastern India.

In *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, while commenting on *Surah al-Baqarah*, a narration from Rabi' ibn Anas states that when Prophet Adam descended from Paradise, he came to India carrying a branch from one of the trees of Paradise.

Another narration, attributed to Hazrat Aisha, states that after constructing the Ka'bah, Prophet Adam returned to India with his wife.

Likewise, a narration recorded by Ibn Sa'd (Vol. 1, Pt. 1:4:1) relates that when Prophet Adam was sent down from Paradise, he descended in India.

Another frequently cited narration appears in Hadith No. 3954 of Al-*Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn* by Al-Hakim, where Hazrat Ali reports that the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said:

"Cool breezes come to me from India."

According to some traditional accounts, the first two sons of Prophet Adam were Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain). It is further related that after Adam and Hawwa were reunited near Jeddah, Adam brought Hawwa back to India, where their two sons were born. Two long graves at Rameswaram are traditionally believed by some people to be the resting places of Habil and Qabil.

Hazrat Seth (Shith), regarded in Islamic tradition as the third son of Prophet Adam and the second prophet after him, is also associated with India in certain traditional accounts. Some reports claim that his grave is located in Ayodhya.

Similar traditions are also associated with Prophet Noah. According to some historical reports, Noah's homeland was in India, and after the Great Flood, his Ark came to rest in the Badri region of the Himalayas. The renowned poet-philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal alluded to this tradition in one of his patriotic poems, Bang-e-Dara:

Bande Kaleem jis ke, parbat jahan ke seena
Nooh-e-Nabi ka aa kar thehra jahan safeena
Riffat hai jis zameen ki baam-e-falak ka zeena
Jannat ki zindagi hai jis ki faza mein jeena
Mera watan wohi hai, mera watan wohi hai.

The land whose mighty peaks embraced the servant of Moses;
Where Noah's sacred Ark came at last to rest;

Whose lofty summits rise like steps unto the sky?
Where every breath is touched with the bliss of Paradise—
That is the land I call my own, my everlasting homeland.

Some traditions further maintain that the timber used by Prophet Noah in constructing the Ark was obtained from the Indian Aak (Calotropis) tree.

Another interesting thing to note here is that the famous Ram Setu is called Adam's Bridge because of two different religious and cultural traditions that both associated the same natural chain of limestone shoals between India and Sri Lanka with a legendary crossing.

In the ancient Sanskrit epic *Ramayana* (attributed to Valmiki), Lord Rama builds a bridge across the sea to reach Lanka and rescue Sita from Ravana. The Vanara (monkey) army, supervised by the engineer Nala, constructs it by writing Rama's name on stones that float and form the causeway.

In popular Hindu belief, the chain of shoals running from Rameswaram (Pamban Island, Tamil Nadu) to Mannar Island (Sri Lanka) is identified as the remains of that bridge. It is therefore called Rama Setu or Ram Setu ("Rama's Bridge").

Medieval Muslim geographers and travelers linked the same formation to the story of Adam. It is said that Adam descended from Paradise onto a mountain in Sri Lanka known as Adam's Peak (Sri Pada). And after his descent, he is said to have crossed from Sri Lanka to the Indian mainland (or vice versa) using this chain of shoals.

The specific name Adam's Bridge appears around the time of the scholar al-Biruni (c. 1030 CE) and reflects the belief that Adam used the crossing after his expulsion from Paradise.

In conclusion, although there is no conclusive historical evidence or explicit Qur'anic statement identifying the exact place where Prophet Adam descended upon the earth, numerous reports preserved in early Islamic historical works, *tafsir* literature, and later religious traditions associate his descent with the Indian subcontinent or present-day Sri Lanka. While these reports vary in their authenticity and historical weight, together they have contributed to a rich and enduring cultural and religious tradition of India. That links the earliest chapter of human history gloriously with this region.

HABIBULLAH KHAN

Translation of Indian Classics into Arabic

In this modest article, I shall briefly discuss the three key terms that constitute the title of this article: translation, Indian classics, and Arabic.

TRANSLATION

Translation is one of the oldest intellectual and communicative activities undertaken by humankind. It has been practised since time immemorial, and any attempt to determine its precise origin would be difficult, if not impossible, as scholars have yet to establish conclusive evidence regarding when and how translation first emerged. Over the centuries, however, the practice of translation has developed considerably and has acquired a wide range of definitions. These definitions are not necessarily based on any single rigid or universally accepted scientific framework; rather, they vary according to the perspectives of scholars, translators, and researchers engaged in the theory and practice of translation[1].

Translation may be regarded as having emerged with the development of linguistic diversity among human communities. Although we do not know precisely when different human groups began to speak distinct languages, it is certain that, as people settled in different geographical regions, linguistic differences gradually developed. At the same time, human societies continuously sought to improve their living conditions and advance intellectually, socially, and materially. In this process, they needed access to the knowledge, skills, techniques, and methods developed by other communities. Communication with people speaking different languages consequently became essential.[2]

The need to overcome linguistic barriers inevitably led to the development of various forms of interlingua communication, which eventually evolved into what we now understand as translation. In this sense, translation may be viewed as a product of the fundamental human

need to communicate, exchange knowledge, and facilitate mutual understanding. The well-known maxim, "Necessity is the mother of invention," aptly captures the circumstances that contributed to the emergence and development of translation[3].

INDIAN CLASSICS

India is one of the world's oldest civilisations and the cradle of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation. Four major religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—originated on the Indian subcontinent. These religious traditions have made significant contributions to the social, cultural, philosophical, and spiritual life of the people of India. In ancient times, India emerged as a vast repository of knowledge and learning, achieving remarkable advancement in diverse fields, including literature, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, music, and other branches of human knowledge.

The literary, intellectual, and scientific heritage of India attracted the attention of neighbouring civilisations. Indian stories, folklore, philosophical ideas, and scientific knowledge travelled beyond the subcontinent and were shared with and appreciated by peoples in neighbouring regions. The Arab world, situated across the Arabian Sea, may naturally be regarded as part of India's extended geographical and cultural neighbourhood. Arab merchants and navigators were well known for their extensive maritime activities and regularly travelled to the Indian subcontinent for commercial purposes.

Commercial and cultural relations between the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula existed for centuries before the advent of Islam[4]. Trade, by its very nature, requires communication, negotiation, bargaining, and interpersonal interaction, all of which involve some degree of linguistic competence and cross-cultural understanding. It is therefore reasonable to assume that some form of translation or interpretation existed between Indian and Arab communities during this period, facilitated by individuals who possessed knowledge of more than one language.

The precise nature of such early translation practices, however, remains difficult to determine. It is possible that communication took place

through a combination of gestures, body language, oral interpretation, and rudimentary forms of verbal translation. Unfortunately, such forms of communication were largely oral and ephemeral, leaving little documentary evidence for posterity.

The situation underwent a significant transformation following the advent of Islam and the subsequent expansion of Muslim contacts with the Indian subcontinent. Arab and Muslim travellers, merchants, scholars, and religious figures increasingly visited India, and their interactions with Indian society gradually assumed broader religious, intellectual, and cultural dimensions. The spread of Islam and the expansion of intellectual exchanges created a greater need for communication between speakers of Arabic and the various languages of India. Consequently, translation and interpretation acquired increasing importance as instruments of religious propagation, cultural interaction, and knowledge exchange.

Nevertheless, during the early stages, translation between Indian languages and Arabic appears to have remained relatively limited in both scope and form. With the passage of time, however, translation activities gradually expanded and became an increasingly important means of intellectual and cultural transmission.

A major turning point in the history of translation in the Islamic world was the establishment of *Bayt al-Hikmah* (the House of Wisdom) in Baghdad during the Abbasid period[5]. The institution became an important centre of learning and translation, particularly from Greek, Syriac, Persian, and other languages into Arabic. The translation movement associated with the Abbasid era significantly enhanced the status of translation as an organised intellectual enterprise and contributed enormously to the transmission, preservation, and development of knowledge.

The growing prominence of translation in the Islamic world subsequently created a wider intellectual environment in which knowledge from different civilisations could be exchanged through Arabic. In this broader historical context, the translation of Indian intellectual and literary works into Arabic assumes particular significance. Indian contributions to mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, literature, and other fields gradually became accessible to

Arabic-speaking scholars, thereby facilitating the transmission of Indian knowledge to the wider Islamic world and, eventually, to other parts of the world.

Thus, the history of the translation of Indian classics into Arabic is not merely a history of linguistic transfer. It represents a profound process of intellectual exchange, cultural interaction, and the transmission of knowledge between two great civilisations. The study of this history enables us to appreciate the significant role played by translation in connecting India with the Arab and Islamic worlds and in contributing to the development of global intellectual traditions.

Undoubtedly, the contribution of the Arabs to the preservation and transmission of ancient Greek cultural heritage through its translation into Arabic is widely acknowledged across the world. It is, therefore, aptly said: "لولم تكن الترجمة العربية لضاعت حكمة اليونان", meaning, "Had it not been for Arabic translations, the wisdom of Greece would have been lost." During the Middle Ages, the Arabs devoted considerable attention to translating the intellectual and cultural heritage of various civilizations, viewing translation as a bridge through which the knowledge and culture of one nation could be transmitted to another.

It is difficult to determine precisely when this intellectual and cultural bridge was established between India and the Arab world. Although people-to-people contacts between the two regions can be traced back to ancient times, the history of written translations of Indian works into Arabic, according to available research, dates back to 771 CE, during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur, who took a keen interest in the translation of works on astronomy and astrology. It is reported that, in 771 CE, a delegation from Sindh visited the court of Caliph al-Mansur. Among the members of the delegation was a scholar of mathematics and astronomy, whose name is believed to have been "Ganga," recorded in Arabic sources as "Kanka" (كنكة). He is said to have brought with him a Sanskrit work entitled Surya Siddhanta, an important treatise on Indian astronomy.

Caliph al-Mansur commissioned the renowned astrologer and astronomer Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Habib al-Fazari, who was well acquainted with Indian languages and astronomical traditions, to translate the work into Arabic. The resulting Arabic translation became

known as "السند هند" (al-Sind hind). The Indian scholar is also reported to have brought other works, including "الأركند" (al-Arkand) and "الجبهر" (al-Jabhār). These translations marked an important milestone in the transmission of Indian scientific and mathematical knowledge to the Arab and Islamic world.

During the reign of Caliph al-Mansur, the eminent writer and translator Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated the celebrated work *Kalila wa Dimna* into Arabic from its Persian version, which itself was based on the Sanskrit *Panchatantra*[6]. The Arabic version subsequently gained immense popularity and was later rendered into verse by Aban ibn Abd al-Hamid al-Lahiqi and Ali ibn Dawud.

Over the course of time, translation activities expanded considerably, and numerous eminent scholars made significant contributions to the development of translation and the transmission of knowledge across civilizations. Scholars such as Masʿud ibn Saʿd Lahori, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, and Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, among many others, played an important role in promoting intellectual exchange between India and the Arab-Islamic world. Owing to their profound interest in translation, the Arabs, particularly during the Abbasid period, succeeded in translating into Arabic a vast corpus of works on philosophy, science, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and other branches of knowledge.

The influence of Arabic translation can also be observed in the global transmission of literary works. The celebrated collection known in English as *The Arabian Nights*, based on the Arabic *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* (One Thousand and One Nights), ultimately reflects a rich tradition of intercultural literary transmission, with Indian narrative traditions such as *Hazār Dāstān* or *Hazār Afsāna* often cited among its early sources and influences. Thus, with a certain degree of qualification, it may be argued that at least two major Indian literary traditions achieved international prominence through the intermediary role of Arabic: the *Panchatantra* and the *Hazār Afsāna*. The Arabic versions and adaptations of these works received widespread recognition and subsequently contributed to their translation and dissemination into many of the world's major languages.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to recall the words of the great Arab prose writer al-Jahiz (776–868 CE), who, in his celebrated

work *al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, emphasized the importance of translation and the transmission of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries:

قال معمر أبو الأشعث، قلت لبهلة الهندي أيام اجتلب يحيى بن خالد أطباء الهند مثل منكة وبازيكر وقلبرقل وسندباز وفلان وفلان، ما البلاغة عند أهل الهند ؟ قال بهلة عندنا في ذلك صحيفة مكتوبة لا أُحسن ترجمتها لك، ولم أعالج هذه الصناعة فأثق من نفسي بالقيام بخصائصها وتلخيص لطائف معانيها، قال أبو الأشعث، فلقيتُ بتلك الصحيفة التراجمة فإذا فيها أول البلاغة اجتماع آلة البلاغة، وذلك أن يكون الخطيب رابط الجأش، ساكن الجوارح، قليل اللحظ، متخيّر اللفظ، لايكلّم سيّد الأمة بكلام الأمة، ولا الملوك بكلام السوقة، ويكون في قواه فضل للتصرف في كل طبقة، ولايدقق المعاني كل التدقيق، ولاينقح الألفاظ كلّ التنقيح، ولا يصفّيها كلّ التصفية، ولا يهذّبها غاية التهذيب، ولايفعل ذلك حتى يصادف حكيماً أو فيلسوفاً عليماً.[7]

Maʿmar Abū al-Ashʿath said: "I asked Bahlah al-Hindī, at the time when Yaḥyā ibn Khālid had brought Indian physicians such as Manka, Bāzīkar, Qalbarqal, Sindbāz, and others: 'What is eloquence according to the people of India?'

Bahlah replied: 'We have a written treatise on this subject, but I am unable to translate it for you adequately. I have not studied this discipline sufficiently to have confidence in my ability to convey its distinctive characteristics and to summarize the subtle nuances of its meanings.'

Abū al-Ashʿath said: 'I then consulted the translators concerning that treatise, and I found the following in it:

"The first principle of eloquence is the possession of all the requisite means of eloquence. This means that the orator should be firm and composed, calm in his bodily movements, sparing in his glances, and selective in his choice of words. He should not address the leader of the community in the manner in which he addresses ordinary people, nor should he address kings in the language of the common folk. He should possess sufficient capacity to adapt his speech to every class and level of audience.

Nor should he scrutinize meanings with excessive minuteness, nor refine his words to an excessive degree, nor polish them to the utmost, nor perfect them beyond measure. He should not do so unless he is addressing a sage or a learned philosopher."

This demonstrates that the Arabs' engagement with Indian

intellectual heritage was not confined merely to the translation of works on science, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. Their translation movement also extended to the fields of literature, language, rhetoric, and literary criticism. Indian works dealing with eloquence, the art of expression, wisdom, and literary aesthetics were likewise translated, studied, and transmitted into Arabic. This broader intellectual exchange reflects the Arabs' deep appreciation of Indian knowledge and cultural traditions and highlights the significant role played by translation in fostering cross-cultural dialogue and enriching the Arabic intellectual and literary heritage.

The same writer, al-Jahiz, who is said to have authored nearly two hundred books during his lifetime, of which only about thirty have survived, explored a wide range of subjects, including Arabic grammar, zoology, poetry, lexicography, and rhetoric. He also demonstrated a keen interest in India and its cultural and intellectual traditions. His appreciation of India is reflected in his work entitled *Risālat Fakhr al-Sūdān ʿalā al-Bīḍān*, in which he discusses and praises various aspects of Indian civilization and its people.

وأما الهنود فوجدناهم يقدمون النجوم والحساب ولهم الخط الهندي خاصة، ويقدمون في الطب ولهم أسرار الطب وعلاج فاحش الأدواء خاصة، ولهم خرط التماثيل ونحت الصور بالأصباغ تجد من المحاريب وأشباه ذلك، ولهم الشطرنج وهي أشرف لعبة و أكثرها تدبيراً وفطنةً، ولهم السيوف القلعية وهم ألعب الناس بها وأحذقها ضرباً بها، ولهم الرقى النافذة في السموم والأوجاع، ولهم غناء معجب ولهم الكنكلة وهي وتر واحد يمرّ على قرعة فيقوم مقام أوتار العود والصنج، ولهم ضروب الرقص، ولهم خط جامع لحروف اللغات وخطوط أيضاً كثيرة، ولهم شعر كثير وخطب طوال وطب في الفلسفة والأدب وعنهم أُخذ كتاب كليلة ودمنة، ولهم رأي ونجدة، وليس لأحد من أهل الصين مالهم، ولهم من الرأي الحسن والأخلاق المحمودة مثل الأخلة والسواك والفرق والخضاب وفيهم جمال ملح واعتدال وطيب عرق والى نساءهم تضرب الأمثال ومن عندهم جاؤا الملوك بالعود الهندي الذي لايعدله عود، وأصل حساب النجوم من عندهم أخذه الناس خاصة، وآدم عليه السلام إنما هبط من الجنة فصار ببلادهم (قالوا) ومن مفاخر الزنج حسن الخلق وجودة الصوت وإنك لتجد ذلك في القيان إذا كن من بنات السند وخصلة أخرى إنه لا يوجد في العبيد أطبخ من السند هو أطبع على طيب الطبخ كله، ومن مفاخرهم أن الصيارفة لا يولون أكيستهم وبيوت صروفهم إلا السند وأولاد السند لأنهم وجدوهم أنفذ في أمور الصرف وأحفظ وآمن ولا يكاد أحد أن يجد صاحب كيس صيرفي ومفاتيحه ابن رومي ولا ابن خراساني ولقد بلغ من تبرك التجار بهم أن صيارفة البصرة وبنادرة البربهارات لما رأوا ما كسب فوج أبو روح السندي لمولاه من المال والأرضين اشترى كل امرئ منهم غلاماً سندياً طمعاً فيما كسب أبوروح لمولاه.[8]

As for the Indians, we have found that they excel in astronomy and mathematics, and they have their own Indian script. They also excel in medicine; possess specialized medical knowledge for treating severe and difficult diseases. They are skilled in the modelling of statues and the carving of images with pigments, as can be seen in their *miḥrābs* and similar works. They have chess, which is the noblest of games and the one requiring the greatest degree of planning and intelligence. They possess the *Qalʿī* swords, and they are the most skilful and adept of people in wielding them and striking with them. They have effective incantations for poisons and ailments. They possess enchanting forms of music, and they have the *kankala*, a single-stringed instrument in which the string passes over a gourd and which serves in place of the strings of the *ʿūd* and the *ṣanj*. They have various forms of dance. They also possess a comprehensive script capable of representing the letters of different languages, as well as many other scripts.

They have a vast body of poetry, lengthy orations, and a tradition of medicine, philosophy, and literature. The book "*Kalīla wa Dimna*" was obtained from them. They possess sound opinion and assistance, and none among the peoples of China possesses what they have. They are endowed with sound opinions and commendable customs, such as the use of the *khilāl* (toothpick), *siwāk* (tooth-cleaning stick), *farq* [combing of hair], and *khiḍāb* (the application of hair dye). Among them are people of beauty, grace, moderation, and pleasant bodily scent, and their women are examples of that.

From them kings brought the Indian *ʿūd*, which are considered to be matchless. The foundations of astronomical calculation, in particular, were taken from them by other peoples. It is also said that Adam, peace be upon him, when he descended from Paradise, came to their land.

Among the distinguishing virtues of the Zanj are good character and the excellence of their voices, and you will find this particularly among singing girls if they are from Sindh. Another of their qualities is that, among slaves, there are none more skilled in cooking than the people of Sind; they are naturally gifted in all aspects of good cookery.

Among their points of pride is that money changers entrust their

moneybags and exchange houses only to the people of Sindh and their descendants, having found them to be the most astute in matters of currency exchange, as well as the most reliable and trustworthy. One would hardly find a money-changer—with his purse and keys—who is a Rumi or a Khorasani.

Indeed, the merchants' confidence in them reached such a degree that when the money-changers of Basra and the banādira of al-Barbahārāt saw the wealth and estates that Abū Rūḥ al-Sindhī had acquired for his master, each of them purchased a Sindhi slave, hoping to attain the same prosperity that Abū Rūḥ had secured for his master.

Maulana Ziauddin Islahi has authored a remarkable scholarly work entitled *Hindustan Arboon Ki Nazar Mein* (India from Arab's Perspective). The book, published in two volumes and comprising approximately 650 pages, offers a comprehensive and multifaceted account of India as viewed through the writings of 22 distinguished Arab authors. The study begins with the celebrated Arabic prose writer al-Jahiz and concludes with the eminent scholar and administrator al-Qalqashandi.

One of the book's major strengths lies in the diversity of its sources and perspectives. The authors discussed include eminent prose writers, historians, geographers, and travellers, thereby presenting a rich and varied picture of India and its civilisation from different Arab intellectual and literary perspectives. The work also sheds light on the historical and diplomatic relations between India and the Arab world by bringing to attention letters exchanged between Indian kings and rulers and their Arab counterparts, along with the replies to these correspondences.

In this respect, the book *Hindustan Arboon Ki Nazar Mein* constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of Indo-Arab intellectual, cultural, and historical relations. It provides researchers with significant insights into the ways in which India was perceived, described, and interpreted in the Arabic literary and historical tradition across different periods. These 22 eminent authors are:

1- الجاحظ، 2- ابن خرداذبة، 3- سليمان التاجر، 4- أبو زيد حسن سيرافي، 5- بلاذُري، 6- اليعقوبي، 7- ابن فقيه الهمذاني، 8- ابن رستة، 9- بزرك بن شهريار، 10- أبوالحسن المسعودي، 11- مطهر بن طاهر المقدسي، 12- الاصطخري، 13- بشارى

المقدسي، 14- ابن النديم، 15- عبد القاهر البغدادي، 16- القاضي صاعد الأندلسي، 17- عبد الكريم الشهرستاني، 18- القاضي رشيد بن زبير، 19- شريف الإدريسي، 20- ابن أبي الأصيبعة، 21- ابن بطوطة، 22- القلقشندي.

According to historians and bibliographers such as Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (ابن أبي أصيبعة), Ibn Sāʿid, Ibn al-Nadīm (ابن النديم), Ṭāshkubrīzāda (طاش كبرى زادة), and Ḥājjī Khalīfa (حاجي خليفة), as well as various English, Urdu, and French sources, approximately 35 Indian works are known to have been translated into Arabic. These works, which represent diverse fields of knowledge and intellectual traditions, include the following:

1- كتاب النمو في الأعمار، 2- كتاب أسرار المواليد، 3- كتاب القرانات الكبير، 4- كتاب القرانات الصغير، 5- كتاب في الطب مجرى الكناش، 6- كتاب في التوهم، 7- كتاب في أحداث العالم والدور (هذه الكتب كلها من تأليف كنكة الهندي) 8- كتاب سرد الهندي (نقله منكة)، 9- كتاب أسماء عقاقير الهند (نقله منكة لإسحق بن سليمان)، 10- كتاب استانكر الجامع (نقله ابن دهن)، 11- كتاب صفوة النجع (نقله ابن دهن)، 12- كتاب مختصر الهند في العقاقير، 13- كتاب علاجات الحبالى للهند، 14- كتاب رؤساء الهند في علاجات النساء، 15- كتاب السكر للهند، 16- كتاب التوهم في الأمراض والعلل، 17- رأي الهند في أجناس الحيّات وسمومها (لانعرف أسماء مترجمي هذه الكتب)، 18- كتاب كليلة ودمنة (نقله ابن المقفع نثراً، و نظمه أبان بن عبد الحميد اللاحقي، وعلي بن داؤود و سهل بن نوبخت)، 19- كتاب سندباد الكبير، 20- كتاب سندباد الصغير، 21- كتاب السند، 22- كتاب يوذاسب، 23- كتاب يوذاسب هزد، 24- كتاب أدب الهند والصين، 25- كتاب هابل في الحكمة، 26- كتاب قصة في هبوط آدم، 27- كتاب طرق، 28- كتاب دبك الهندي في الرجل والمرأة، 29- كتاب حدود منطق الهند، 30- كتاب ملك الهند في القتال والسباع، 31- كتاب بيدبا في الحكمة، 32- كتاب بيامز في الموسيقى، 33- كتاب سيرك الهندي (نقله من الفارسية إلى العربية عبد الله بن علي)، 34- كتاب علامات الداء ومعرفة علاجها (أمر خالد بن يحيى البرمكي بنقله)، 35- كتاب فيما اختلف فيه الهنود والروم في الحار والبارد وقوى الأدوية.[9]

The following is a list of prominent Indian scholars whose significant works in the fields of medicine, astronomy, philosophy, and other branches of knowledge were translated into Arabic. These translations played a vital role in transmitting Indian intellectual and scientific traditions to the Arab and Islamic world, contributing significantly to the development and enrichment of Arabic scholarship during the medieval period. The Indian scholars and their works translated into Arabic are as follows:

1- سالته (ابن صالح)، 2- ابندهن (ابن دهن)، 3- سنجهل (صنجهل)، 4- كدر (جورد، وله كتاب المواليد الذي نُقل إلى العربية)، 5- بهلا (بهل)، 6- كتاككا (كنكه) 7- نامك أو نهك، 8- ماركوم (ماركر)، 9- بجي كر (بازيكر)، 10- سده بار (سندباد)، 11- باكهر، 12- راجه، 13- سكه أومكا، 14- واهر، 15- أنكر، 16- زنكل، 17- أندي، 18- جياري، 19- أسكر، 20- نوكشنل، 21- رائي، 22- كبل، 23- ساوبرم، 24- برهم غبطا، 25- برهمر.[10]

As the golden age of translation drew to a close, the Arabs had emerged as the principal inheritors and custodians of the intellectual and cultural legacy of the ancient civilisations. They did not merely preserve and transmit the knowledge of earlier peoples; they also critically engaged with it, conducted original research, and made remarkable contributions to philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and other branches of knowledge. At a time when much of Europe had only limited access to the intellectual heritage of ancient Greece, the Arabic-speaking world became a major centre of learning and scientific inquiry. Following the fall of Baghdad in 1258, however, the intellectual and political landscape of the Arab and Muslim world underwent a prolonged period of decline, while Europe gradually entered an era of renewed intellectual and scientific advancement. European scholars, particularly during the Renaissance and subsequent centuries, drew extensively upon the rich corpus of knowledge preserved, translated, and further developed in Arabic. The history of translation, therefore, stands as a remarkable testament to the interconnectedness of civilisations and to the enduring role of the Arab and Muslim world in preserving, enriching, and transmitting humanity's shared intellectual heritage.

NOTES

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3. Safa Khallusi, Fan al-Tarjama, (Cairo, al-Haiya al-Misriyyah al-Amma Li al-Kitab, 2000), P11.
4. Mohammad Ismaeel Nadwi, *Tareekh al-Silat bain al-Hind wa al-Bilad al-Arabia*, Dar al-Fath li al-Tibaa wa al-Nashr, Beirut, page10-65

5. Omar Farrukh, *Tareekh al-Fikr al-Arabi* (Beirut, Dar al-Ilm Lilmalaeen, 4th Edition, 1983), P 273
6. Omar Farrukh, *Tareekh al-Fikr al-Arabi* (Beirut, Dar al-Ilm Lilmalaeen, 4th Edition, 1983), P 272
7. al-Jahiz, *al-Bayan wa al-Tabyeen*, Page No.40/ Ziauddin Islahi, Hindustan Arboon ki Nazar Mein, Vol. 1, Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy Azamgarh, 2009, Page 2-3
8. al-Jahiz, رسالة فخر السودان على البيضان, Page No.80-81/ Ziauddin Islahi, Hindustan Arboon ki Nazar Mein, Vol. 1, Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy Azamgarh, 2009, Page 4-7
9. Mohammad Sanaullah Nadwi, الترجمة الأدبية والدينية والتاريخية والفلسفية في الهند, Seminar proceedings, Faculty of Arts, University of Kuwait, 2007, Page No.502-503.
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FARHAT NASREEN

Khuluq Azeem: The Prophet's Etiquette and the Art of Not Treating People as Computers

Jonathan Haidt the author of the international bestseller and the currently super relevant book *The Anxious Generation-How the great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness,* looks into the mental issues which the youth of today face due to the overuse of social media platforms and disengagement from real-life interactions. He warns against mindless competitiveness and the urge to run socio-economic races which are not designed for the victories of the soul. People become very anxious about how they are perceived by others. They are forgetting that self-confidence derived from high ethical standards is a power in itself. [1] In an earlier work on happiness, he stated that when a computer breaks down it has to be taken to a specialist for 'fixing'. Some parts are replaced and the machine is reprogrammed for functioning normally. He asserts that over time the world has come to believe that psychotherapy is a kind of a repair shop of human beings where people can be reprogrammed, but that is easier said than done because humans are not computers. They are more like plants. You give them the right kind of environment then mental healing will occur without any distant external intervention or medication.[2] The healing of the soul has to come from within. American psychiatrist Anna Lembeck writes that the addictive potential of every experience is determined by the quantity of Dopamine (A neurotransmitter that plays a significant part in the brain's reward system) that it releases. She rightly asserts that today we are surrounded by high-dopamine stimuli like food, drugs, news, gambling, shopping, gaming, texting, sexting, Facebooking, Instagramming, You Tubing, tweeting and so on. She compares the smartphone to a hypodermic needle that delivers digital dopamine 24/7 to a wired generation. Lembke demonstrates that the higher the happiness side goes, the lower it will hit when it comes down.

To keep it high the dose of the stimuli will have to be increased, leading to addictive dependence on our drug of choice.[3] It is very interesting to note that the teachings derived from the everyday life choices of the Prophet (saws) can resolve many of the mental conflicts that we face in our daily life. They are bricks to build a society which will have an environment of quick and complete mental healing.

There are 3 prominent theories of happiness; The Emotional State Theory, the Life Satisfaction Theory and the Hedonistic theory of happiness. Daniel M. Haybron says that an individual's general happiness levels can be gauged by his overall emotional condition and not by an episodic feeling of elation or bouts of laughter. The visible markers of happiness could be the joy and confidence in their walk or the 'comfortable in their skin' kind of attitude etc. The other indicator could be what comes to them easily; laughter, anger, frustration, tears or whatever. People who are inclined towards sadness are likely to cry over minor frustrations. Thus, he says that a favorable emotional condition is a more generalized felling of happiness. It comes from living each day with joy and satisfaction. He calls this point of view the 'An Emotional State theory of Happiness.'[4] He rightly says that happiness does not have a so called 'correct' or 'final' definition; there is much more to being happy than just feeling happy. In a practical sense sustained happiness would imply having good stretches of time when you did what you loved doing. This stretch of happiness is sustained and mostly sustainable. It is not episodic; it is a regularity. The Life Satisfaction theory of happiness has to do with the cognitive overall evaluation of how much a person is satisfied with his life as a whole. This has to do with an individual's perception of what he has achieved. Some people can be satisfied and be happy with a lot lesser, than some others who may be dissatisfied with their life even if they have comparatively much more.[5] Satisfaction can be worked out in our mind. If we move away from episodes of joy and sorrow and focus on the temporary and illusionary nature of everything in this world satisfaction finds a way to our soul. No wonder this theory is loved by all religions and is frequently used by them to justify gratefulness and gratitude as spiritual qualities. Satisfaction is about the personal goals that you set for yourself. These goals may or may not be in alignment with the social expectations. A personal sense of purpose can be a big driving force for people to feel satisfied even

if they have to struggle a lot in working towards that purpose. Like a homemaker might be as satisfied in taking care of her family as would be a woman who has a highly paying career. It is about her personal perception of what is valuable. Every valuable thing is not expensive. The Hedonistic theory of happiness says that a happy life is the one in which pleasure is maximized and pain is minimized. According to this theory human behavior has to constantly target deriving more and more of pleasure from life. Pain is in a way unacceptable. Since this theory is about constant maximization it leads people to run the rat race. This way they end up on what is called the hedonic treadmill. This emotional treadmill is pretty much like the physical treadmill in a gymnasium on which people keep running. They get exhausted but don't reach anywhere different. On the hedonistic treadmill people remain static in the same state of desire and dissatisfaction.[6] The life and teachings of the Prophet explore all the aspects of these theories and show a way forward that is moderate and doable. He preaches neither absolute resignation nor absolute hedonism. It is about living a balanced life; for oneself and for others.

The Prophet's teachings were not meant only for the Quraish[7] or other residents of Arabia, who were his contemporaries, but it was meant for everyone in all spaces of time; the past and the present. Secondly, The Prophet's life itself was an extension of the message because he not just delivered it verbatim; he also lived each word of it literatim. Thirdly he was a man of mighty morality. Fourthly, he believed that good morals could be consciously cultivated and that everyone must cultivate a high moral standard.

In fact, it was the Prophet's mastery over humility which impressed people a lot. This write-up passes over the 'miracles' of the Prophet per se, instead it emphasizes the extraordinary in his everyday existence; his dress, conduct and interpersonal skills etc. They convey the miraculous power of being humane. I have played up the extraordinariness in his ordinariness or the ordinariness of his extraordinary life.[8]

Nun

By the pen, and that they write! By the grace of your Lord, you are not a mad man. Most surely, you will have a never-ending reward. For you are truly of a sublime character (Khuluq Azeem), Soon you will see, as will they, which of you is a prey

to madness. Your Lord knows best who has fallen by the wayside, and who has remained on the true path. Do not give into the deniers of truth. They want you to make concessions to them and then they will reciprocate. Do not yield to any contemptible swearer of oaths, or to any defamer or one who spreads slander, or to one who places obstacles in the way of good being done or to the wicked transgressor, who is ignoble and besides all that, base-born; just because he has wealth and sons, when Our revelations are recited to him, he says, 'These are just ancient fables.' Soon We will brand him on the nose.

Al Quran 68: 1-16

The above cited *surah* (chapter of the *Quran*) is entitled, 'The Pen'. It was revealed at Macca and is one of the relatively early *surahs* of the *Quran*, in terms of revelation; however, being at number sixty-eight in the text, it is situated towards its end. It came at a time when the opponents of the Prophet had become openly contemptuous of him; they called him insane and ridiculed what he preached. The tide of antagonism was at a high.

The *surah* opens with the mysterious letter *Nun*, whose exact meaning could not be deciphered by anyone ordinary. In a way it symbolizes the limitations of human knowledge. It warns against intellectual arrogance and 'the know all' attitude. This automatically induces intellectual humility. Since an oath is sworn by the pen; a tool of literacy is elevated to a high status. It is a subtle and yet powerful call to read and write; to strive to acquire authentic knowledge. It steers the readers away from believing in gossip which just another tool of human reciprocity. At times truth cannot be rationalized with the magical quickness that the impatient nature of human beings often demands. Swearing by the Pen in the inceptive lines emphasizes the importance of acquisition of knowledge but the preceding mysterious *Nun* has already humbled knowledge before faith.[9]

It is interesting to note that the Prophet's ultimate victory which is being prophesized here would have seemed quite improbable to a contemporary onlooker but improbability was falsified by future events. However, till such time that those events unfolded the believers were to wait with unflinching faith, patience and humility. For those who have witnessed the veracity of this forecast from a distance in time, it becomes a reminder that they do not have to believe in rumors that are circulated about people. It happens so often that the mad call others

mad. The only test which can decide the sanity of a claimant is his slant towards high standards of lived morality and ethics. According to difficulty in understanding portions of our own and others' lives is compared to missing some portions of the movie of our life.

In a broader sense it comprises of three themes. The first lines address the Prophet; reassure him of his correctness, augment his self-confidence and reply to his enemies. They remind him to remain steadfast in his mission and not to make any compromises in his principles. Further, he is reassured that those who think that his words are a piece of fiction or fancy will eventually realize the miscalculation. In the second part people are warned by the example of conceited men who thought that they could harvest their orchard without the will and blessings of the Almighty. This section warns that the punishment which may befall them in this world, which itself would seem like a huge loss to them, would indeed be nothing in comparison to what sentence awaits the transgressors in the other world. Being certain that everything will happen exactly the way that we plan it can be quite a haughty presumption. Even if the knowhow of all the fields of knowledge is put together, yet events and their outcomes can never be predicted with absolute accuracy. A degree of uncertainty is certain. It is accepted by the physicists that the Quantum Mechanics show that events cannot be predicted with precision or absolute accuracy. Werner Heisenberg the German Noble Laureat propounded the Indeterminacy Principle/ Uncertainty Principle in 1927 and his theory still stands. He explains uncertainty against a backdrop of Quantum Mechanics and argues that: Firstly, the position and speed of an electron/photon cannot be known with perfect accuracy, secondly, the more you know about speed the less will you know about the position and thirdly, a lot about the sub-atomic level is yet to be known. The complexity of uncertainty in the human context is well captured by the physicist Stephen Hawking. He said that tapping the potentiality of predicting human behavior from mathematical equations remains a distant dream. We don't really know what we have. We might have found sorrow when we think that we have found happiness.[10]

The third section promises paradise to believers and reasserts monotheism as a fundamental principle of Islam. The spirit of the *surah* preaches the Prophet to be patient, and promises that despite the spells

of evil eye and accusations that 'He is certainly mad', in the end he will be victorious.

Verse four of this chapter which says that: *For you (The Prophet) are truly of a sublime character (Khuluq Azeem)*, is also translated as: S*urely thou (The Prophet) art upon a mighty morality* or as: *And surely thou (The Prophet) hast sublime morals* or as: *And verily, you (O The Prophet) are on an exalted standard of character*. At the level of linguistics and diction, the verse is rather simple. These lines are sharply focused on the personal moral and religious attributes of The Prophet, who is the addressee here and it therefore seemed likely that others would not feature at all in its interpretation, but interpreters have established a link of lessons between God and the commonest of believers through it. Therefore, the words *Khuluq Azeem* and personality of The Prophet for whom they were used, have become a cardinal scale to weigh morality of men.

The words *Khuluq Azeem* are sometimes understood to imply all aspects of conduct based on the *Quran* and sometimes as kind and generous nature, sometimes beautiful character and etiquette and are sometimes glossed even as Islam itself. In Al Tabari's commentary, the discussion focuses mainly on The Prophet's personal morality and attributes. He says: And the Most High says to his Prophet 'You are O The Prophet indeed on a great level of character and that is the character of the *Quran* with which you were taught by Allah' i.e. Islam and its laws. The Prophet was stationed so favorably in the eyes of Allah because of the internalization of *Quran*ic ideals in his mind as well as body.

Ibn Hisham recorded that when Aisha (the Prophet's wife) was asked to share something about his character, she said that 'his character was the *Quran*'. Ibn Kathir comments that the Prophet submitted to all the commands of Allah; be they concessions or prohibitions. He was quick and steady in walking on the path of righteousness. He honored commitments and agreements. He was kind and gentle with everyone in everyday transactions. His patience was rock solid. He not only conveyed His message in the face of grave opposition but actually lived by it to the last word; literally.

Khuluq implies the etiquettes which a person acquires due to his own efforts and he follows them with such conviction that he becomes a

personification of those mannerisms and morality. So *khuluq* is different from *al-khiyaam* which implies something that is inborn. *Khuluq* can be cultivated with conscious efforts; irrespective of anyone's predisposition towards righteousness. Imam Abu'l Qasim al–Junaid said that *khuluq* implicates being a strong adherent of Islam and therefore having qualities like, sense of justice, strength to forgive, generosity, humility, confidence, modesty, self-control, dignity, truthfulness, kindness, bravery and patience etc. According to him The Prophet's morality was called mighty because he focused exclusively on what was morally right despite being in a world which has an innate quality of being overtly material. Al Waasiti says that the Prophet had forsaken everything that eyes could see or the mind could imagine, in exchange for proximity to God and thus his morality becomes incomparable. He realized that it is only and only the Creator who is important, the created people and things are not worthy of devotion. Most of the interpretations of *Khuluq Azeem*, be they traditional or non-traditional, have been Prophet centric in nature.

Al Tha'labi adduces an anonymous exegetic who states that The Prophet's morality was described as mighty because he embodied in himself the noblest of attributes; *Makaarim al Akhlaaq*. The phrase *Makaarim al Akhlaaq* meaning noblest of moral attributes, resonates an old Arab classification. It is so believed that Arabs, even in times of rampant paganism acknowledged that there is a perfect moral code which should ideally be followed. As the *Quran*ic laws unfolded, the natural moral code which the Arab culture was distantly coherent with; corresponded perfectly with the Islamic moral code. The Prophet was the super perfection of this moral code. Al Tha'labi cites a *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) which states that the Prophet looked upon the perfection of the noblest of moral attributes as his responsibility. Another *hadith* is cited to the effect that he was a moral reformist. In this light Tha'labi overemphasizes the linguistic similarity between *Khuluq Azeem* and *Makaarim al Akhlaaq* and interprets that the Prophet was sent to complete the natural moral code. He cites yet another tradition in which the Prophet says that God Himself has been his mentor in moral matters. This establishes the link of tutorship, in which God taught the Prophet good behavior and he in turn was to teach it to others. He cites yet another *hadith* in which the Prophet said that a

believer can attain the rank of a sincere worshipper of Allah by good moral behavior (*husn khuluqih*) in everyday transactions. The one who displays excellent etiquettes towards all, at all times is as good as someone who worships Allah day and night, fasts regularly and fulfills all the rituals associated with faith. He claims that The Prophet had said that on the Day of Judgment the weight of good moral conduct will play a substantial role in determining a soul's final destination. He had urged people to cultivate good moral conduct to attain eternal peace and success. Al Tha'labi concludes his commentary by quoting another *hadith* which states that morally upright people are God's favorite. They are humble and amicable. God dislikes those who spread rumors, sow dissent and find faults where there are none. Thus, he declares that the mannerisms of the Prophet are central to the spirit of submission in Islam. Thus, the words *Khuluq Azeem*, used for The Prophet per se were to be an ideal. They place an unmistakable emphasis on observance of supreme morality in every way; every day.[11]

An account of The Prophet's life reveals that he was a man who lived what Rahner calls: 'Mysticism of the Masses' or 'Mysticism in ordinary dress.'[12] His life changed the world in no uncertain terms. A baby born after his father's death, who lost in quick succession, while still young; his guardians: his mother and grandfather. Brought up by an uncle, in a place rent with warfare, strife and uncertainties- The Prophet grew up seemingly uneducated and untrained for the task that he later took on. He lived up to the responsibility placed on him: the unmatched and testing responsibility of being the God's messenger and to impart a value system that would remain workable at all times. This was indeed a challenging task. In tandem with his persistence on humanism, The Prophet declared that the ancestry of all human beings is common. All are progeny of Adam and Hawwa. Segregation of man from man on any basis cannot be validated. In God's eyes respectability is proportionate to piety and it does not have anything to do with ones' external beauty or worldly possessions. Those who had earlier disbelieved the Prophet and called him a lunatic maniac and had heaped insults and allegations upon him, later waited upon him. Their rustic pride in their wealth and belongings was shattered. This change of could not be explained easily. It was almost unbelievable that the man who had literally been hunted out of Macca came back one day, victorious and in command and what

was even more remarkable was that, all this had not taken too much of time. Rise of Islam under The Prophet was not an evolution, it was a revolution.[13]

Following are extracts from Moulvi Ali's *Khuluq Azeem* which highlight the shift from Fear-centric religiosity to Love-centric religiosity. A scrutiny of The Prophet's persona reveals that in him was a congregation of the greatest individual attributes of all the earlier Prophets. Like Jesus he remained patient and thankful in the face of rebuke and rejection. Like Zakaria, he spread God's word through jungles and ravines. Like Ayyub he spent years in uncertainties and hardships and like Noah, he did not miss any opportunity of warning people. An incredible thing about the Prophet was his unexplained ability to win over opponents' hearts. Stories of conversion of sworn enemies of the Prophet to Islam are many; Khalid ibn al Waleed, 'Amr ibn al Aas, Usman ibn Talha, Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl, Safwan ibn Umayyah, Suhayl bin Amr and Abu Sufiyan are some of the oft cited names. It is indeed a tough task to reform value system and engineer a change of heart. One of the most remarkable accomplishments of the Prophet was that he made people revisit their souls and rethink the way they thought.

All the Prophets had been endowed with the capacity to perform some miracle. I feel that the greatest miracle of all was the Islamic revolution brought forth by The Prophet. Grace, kindness, patience and acceptance were the most commonly used applications. Ethnic and racial exclusiveness was set aside. Differences between the rich and poor were ignored. Ill-treatment of the vanquished was banned. Variations in color, language and nationality were set aside because they had no meaning for the servants of Allah. Arrogance and pride were given up to embrace humanism; the watchword of Islamic submission.

The *Quran* accredits the Prophet with being a true witness:

We have sent you forth as a witness and a bearer of good tidings and a warner, so that you may believe in God and His messenger and may help him and honor him and so that you may glorify God morning and evening. Behold all who pledge their allegiance to you indeed pledge their allegiance to God: the hand of God is over their hands. Hence, he who breaks his oath, breaks it only to his loss. Whereas he who remains true to what he has pledged to God, shall have a great reward bestowed upon him by God.

Al Quran 48:8-10

The above cited words of the *Quran* are resounded in all lands and skies at all times through one mouth or another.

Allah hu Akbar is another powerful testimony. Times of *namaz* fall at different hours in different places in the world, because they are related to the movement of celestial bodies; the sun and the moon and since this term is used in the *azan*, its sound reverberates ceaselessly and is practically undying. The Prophet, who bore witness to these widely accepted beliefs, was known to be immaculately truthful even before he was granted prophet-hood. His opponents might have considered him to be a lunatic at one point in time but they too were sure that he wasn't a liar.

The *Quran* states that he was sent as a sign of God's kindness and grace upon mankind:

We have sent you (The Prophet) as a mercy to all mankind.

Al Quran 21:107

The Prophet wanted peace and harmony for everyone in the world. In fact, the dispersal of peace was not meant to be just external, physical, political or military; he taught people to be at peace with themselves and made them believe that if there is peace within, peace outside would spontaneously eventuate. Internal and external domains operate in coordination with each other. His words and works act as a counselor; he remained steadfast through the paradox of poverty and wealth; age and youth, war and peace, hope and despair, restraint and ease, sorrow and happiness. His demeanor made people readdress themselves.

Socio-political changes triggered by the Islamic revolution were equally amazing: sultans became slaves and slaves, sultans. Together with the rising political and economic power of the Muslims, rose the Prophet's insistence on justice and equity. The Muslims were never to be sly in launching attacks or making treaties. He did not permit humiliation or ill-treatment of even the worst of his opponents. Once a beggar approached him but since he had nothing to give the fellow, he instructed the man to take a loan in The Prophet's name and he promised to pay off the debt later. He questioned the need to be miserly in our daily life. Morgan Housel in his book *The Psychology of Money- Timeless Lessons on Wealth Greed, and Happiness* explains that humans actually have a relationship with money just like the way they have with human

beings and why they should manage this relationship with humility and wisdom for the best outcomes.[14] He insisted on being useful to others and told that that the cruel should not expect mercy from any quarter, because our deeds are reverberant and their results keep coming back to us in varied forms. He said that if a Muslim assaults a non-Muslim, with whom a covenant of peace exists, the former will not catch even a whiff of the fragrance of heaven. He encouraged followers to clear the debts of those who had died in a state of indebtedness. Facilitation of smooth transference of assets to deserving heirs was another thing encouraged by him. He professed unfailing adjustment with the non-Muslims by reducing the elasticity of religious application and limiting it to individual and personal boundaries in a big way. The *Quran* states:

Say, 'You who deny the truth, I do not worship what you worship. You do not worship what I worship. I will never worship what you worship. You will never worship what I worship. You have your religion and I have mine.'

Al Quran 109: 1-6

He advised everyone to counter ill deeds with goodness; goodness of such pure intent that its potency would convert foes into friends. According to Jonathan Haidt we are ultra social beings.[15] He called love and peace the manifestations of God's mercy. He urged that evaluations be made in all fairness, irrespective of likes and dislikes and all other kinds of affiliations. He taught people to be steadfast on the path of justice and fairness and cautioned them against adversaries who may try to lead them astray. He proclaimed that being just at all times ensures piety and closeness to God. According to him, being revengeful in a personal capacity was just not worth it. However, belief in divine intervention was essential and in fact without the belief that God's justice would ultimately prevail, it would be really difficult for people to stop themselves from seeking immediate revenge for supposed wrongs done to them. He ticked off association with sinners and people unafraid of divine power and just legal boundaries. He insisted that each and every life is valuable and killing a single human being is tantamount to killing of the whole humanity. Correspondingly the whole humanity is saved by saving a single life. When a man murders another; the human element within the murderer automatically gets killed, so in a way he kills himself as well. He prompted that just as we desire forgiveness for

ourselves, so should we confer it on others. A way to implore God to forgive us is to forgive others in our humble capacity. He condemned violent wars; wars fought for the accumulation of administrative power and wealth. Strife for creation of separate states or settlement of vengeful scores was disapproved by him. As a rejectionist of conflicts, he indeed was a mercy on mankind.

The Prophet was called the *Ramat al alameen*, at the ideological level. It would not be out of place to say a word about his everyday mannerisms. All accounts corroborate that he was intelligent, accessible, humble, honest, and composed. God was central to his conversations. Things which never touched his mind and tongue were vulgar thoughts and words. He was immaculately fair in the dispensation of justice and promised to judge fairly even if the accused were to be his own family.

Once a Jew lender came to recover his money from him before the due date and tugged violently at his shawl and collar. This person was interrupted with reactionary hostility by Umar Farooque who happened to be there. However, The Prophet was quick to censure Umar for his aggressiveness and pointed that by bullying the Jew he had lost an opportunity of gently teaching someone a lesson on being a good transactor. To compensate for Umar's blunt dealing, he decided to pay the Jew over and above what was due to him. He always tried to initiate greetings and pleasantries, irrespective of the other persons' age or status. He was unhesitant in taking the first step towards commencing friendships and bonds. He never distanced himself from anyone unless the visitor took leave. He found nothing wrong in sitting on a clean floor. Never did he spread his legs in public and always insured the comfort of the people seated near him. Arabs, Africans or Turks, rich or poor, powerful or weak; it was just not his style to discriminate against anyone. He greeted non-Muslims with equal enthusiasm. If someone dropped by to meet him while he was in the midst of a *nafil namaaz* (voluntary prayer), he shortened it to attend to his visitors. He responded to every call with prompt attentiveness. Despite his meager resources, guests were welcome. Even a momentary interaction with him left an indelible impression of his goodness. Acquaintances, who did not really know him too well, also doted on him. He extended generosity to everyone and expected nothing from anyone. He led, but with humble evenness. Never did a rude word or an abuse, had the

audacity to malign his pristine parlance. Silence bedecked his tongue as he never indulged in worthless talk. Never ever did he raise his voice to a pitch which could shock or scare his audience; soft and calculated speech was the hallmark of his conference. Powerful conversationalist, that he was, his arguments forced all listeners; friends or foes to attention. Perhaps this is what his opponents labelled as sorcery. He chose each word with sagacious precision and exactitude. His laughter was hardly audible; it is generally believed that he had an omnipotent smile which was amazingly persuasive. While offering prayers he got so engrossed that tears ran down his cheeks; a manifestation of his unpretentious emotionalism. He was such a zealot of humanism that any sight of human suffering moved him. He respected the poor and relished their company, their invitations were accepted and he not only broke bread with them, but also praised whatever they offered him. He indoctrinated that anyone's economic state should not be the criterion for determining his respectability.

As a householder, he helped his relatives with daily chores; cleaning or buying groceries were things that he routinely undertook. He repaired his clothes and shoes, milked his goats and took care of all the animals that he had. He preferred carrying his loads himself, in fact he was always willing to extend a helpful hand to anyone who was in need and did not hesitate in sharing his meal with the needy. He advised people to eat lesser than what they felt like. Great emphasis was laid by him on guarding one's health. As a reminder to their great responsibility, he cautioned inefficient doctors against practicing medicine and prescribing forbidden foods for medical purposes. He said that whatever had been prohibited by Allah, could not be curative in any way. He made it a point to visit the sick and speak comforting words to them. In context of advocates in civil disputes, he proclaimed that there are people who have such expertise in advocacy that they can make any falsehood seem like truth. Incidentally both Plato and Al-Farabi write a lot about this aspect. Gaining anything by unfair means is like consuming a piece of raging fire which burns from within. He said that in case of a dispute, no matter what the official judgment is the contending parties should sit in judgment over themselves. This was an advice to listen to the call of conscience. He said that we wrong ourselves by being unjust with others. Later Al Farabi labels this as 'an accident of the soul'.

In case if anyone's folly had to be highlighted for guidance of others; he never mentioned the defaulter's name in public. A generalized terminology was used to make the point, so that the person concerned may not feel embarrassed. Despite the demanding responsibilities that he was shouldering, he desisted from delegating personal work to others. He was particularly concerned about prisoners of war and ensured their well being. His distinctive goodness was acknowledged even by the worst of his opponents. Kindness and empathy were two of his basic teachings. The character of the early Muslims was such that if water was offered to a battalion of thirsty soldiers, the first recipient would pass it to the next; so that his colleague may drink before him and so the water would just pass to the next and the next, and the next, till it came back to the one, who was offered it initially.

Once, a list of Muslims was prepared when conversions were in a nascent stage. About a thousand and five hundred names featured therein. This data was a matter of celebration for the Prophet and his colleagues. All those who featured there felt happy, confident and secure. They recalled that there were times when congregational prayers could not be held at all and n*amaz* was offered in seclusion or under constant fear of assault by enemies. Today the paradox is that even though the Muslims are large in numbers, neither do they have the ideological cohesion that they had in the earlier days of Islam nor do they reflect on their comparatively large numbers and correspondingly poor state.

Woe to every fault-finding back-biter, who amasses wealth, counting it over, thinking that his wealth will make him live forever. By no means! He shall surely be cast into the crushing torment. Would that you understood what that crushing torment is like. It is a Fire kindled by God. Reaching right into the hearts of men, it closes in on them from every side in towering columns.

Al Quran 104:1-9

Have you seen one who denies the Day of Judgement? Who turns away the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the poor? So woe to those who pray but whose hearts are not in their prayers. Those who do things only to be seen by others. Who are uncharitable even over very small things.

Al Quran 107-1-7

Do you admonish others to do good and forget this yourselves? Yet you read the Book. Will you not then understand?

Al Quran 2: 44

Believers! Why do you say one thing and do another. It is most hateful to God that you do not practice what you preach.

Al Quran 61: 2-3

The Prophet taught every aspect of good living. His lessons were practical and un-abstracted, because he led by example.

The Prophet said that two people are indeed enviable: The one who receives wealth from Allah and is also endowed with the sagacity to spend it intelligently and secondly the one who has wisdom and uses it for his own good and also for the good of others. He warned that it is mandatory for the one who believes in the Day of Judgment to use his tongue if he has a good word to say, or else it is best for him to choose quietude. He assured that the one who never violates what lies between his jaws and thighs can surely hope to get a place in heaven. He said that if one notices someone better than oneself in looks or wealth, then he should also take a corresponding note of those who are not as well endowed as himself. Cognizance of the plight of others would make us more thankful in our own situation. Peace and mirth usually follow gratitude.

He said that those who control themselves when angry are brave indeed. A liar, a robber, a violator of custodianship, the one who hurls vulgar abuses in the midst of an argument and the one who breaks his promises is a double-dealing hypocrite. While the following are a blessed lot: A just ruler, a youthful devotee, one who remembers God with such intensity that his eyes are moistened, one who is honestly devoted to his work/profession, those who reject an alluring temptation because it would have displeased God, those who do charitable work with such secrecy that their left hand would not know what their right hand gave. However, he advised that in charity such balance should be maintained that the philanthropist's progeny should not encounter any undue scarcity of economic resources.

He said that one must remain patient even upon receiving an oppressive order from one's administrator. A rebel who unjustly transgresses beyond the limits of obedience even to the quantum of a miniscule measure would be in the wrong. He advised that in transactions, it is preferable to draw a contract in writing and strengthen it by witnesses. Any action taken to deliberately pressurize or harm the scribe of the contract or the witnesses thereof would be a great sin. If one lends and the debtor is

really going through a rough phase, grant of extra time for repayment is advisable and if the lender can possibly afford it, forgoing payment would be a meritorious option. If big sums of money or long period of repayment was in question, then he advised for the formalization of terms and conditions to avoid bitterness later. All contracts were to be drawn with honestly. In case if the debtor was a minor, senile or invalid a legal representative was to be deputed to understand the terms of the contract. Ideally in legal matters there should be two male witnesses or one male and two females. It is the witness' duty to depose truthfully before competent authorities. Testimony should be truthful even if it is against ones' parents or loved ones, or the rich or powerful. The witness should be detached from the impending judgment; his job is to convey the truth fearlessly besides this, he should not be swayed by arguments of kindness or leniency. He should be steadfast on truthful facts with conviction and strength. Any weakness in testifying implies a weak value system. Gauging our own conscience is a good way to keep a check on ourselves.

The Prophet recommended taking prior appointments for social calls and refusal of the same was to be understood with empathy. Mutual respect for privacy and priorities of others had to be accommodated in relationships. Since these periods were considered ideal for physical and mental rest; he said that it is avoidable to disturb even the closest of relatives between *Esha* and *Fajr* (last prayer before night fall and first prayer at dawn, respectively) and for a short span after *Zuhar* (afternoon prayers). He advised against being part of groups which were contemptuous and sarcastic towards each other. He said that those who have the faculty to distinguish the right from wrong and yet chose the wrong, are truly wicked and should be shunned. He said that time is too precious and it should not be wasted in spying on others or judging them. He advised strictly against back biting and being critical or judgmental about people behind their back. This he said; was like eating your dead brother's meat. He warned against making suspicion a habit, that he said, was like slow poison, which kills the suspicious who feed themselves with it. He said that holding grudges, is like holding a piece of burning coal in your hands. Look for common threads of brotherhood and connect with humans as humans. Don't criticize gods of other faiths. Avoid company of those who criticize your faith.

Advocate harmony through the brotherhood that Islam propagates; use the *Quran* for this purpose. Do not contribute towards creating systems where people criticize each others' religion. Forgiveness and patience are the best way but if you cannot stop yourself from being vengeful then do not exceed limits of a fair revenge, do not punish a person more than he deserves because then you will become an oppressor and it is definitely better to be oppressed than to be the oppressor.

Gait and body language of a gentleman exudes humility. Do not tread on the ground with such pride and haughtiness as if you could split the earth or surpass a mountain in height. God dislikes the proud. Do not argue with the uncouth. Cut the conversation short, say parting greetings and leave. Do not make loud noises like the braying of a donkey. While speaking, keep the tone and volume of your voice low and soft. Do not hesitate even for fraction of a second, in leaving a seat at a social gathering if the host asks you to; do it happily without feeling offended or resentful. Do not associate with habitual liars, fault finders, promise breakers, backbiters and wealth loving: misers; who think that their money can keep them alive forever. Beware of people with hard and sharp tongues, who break peoples' heart and mince their soul. Do not be harsh with women. Like curved bones of the ribcage, they are not meant to be straight and if you try to straighten them perforce, they would break. Your relationship with them will work if you let them be. There is symbolism in the idea that wives are 'made' out of the rib bone of their husbands- it is floated so that acceptance of wives becomes easy for husbands and the latter do not treat them with insensitivity and harshness. God has decreed that men and women have rights of equity over each other. The advantage of greater physical strength that men have over women is to be used to protect them. Do not ever be adulterous and shameless-these traits are so bad that they are sure to complicate your life and rob it of peace.

You have indeed in the Prophet of God a good example for those of you who look to God and the Last Day, and remember God always.

Al Quran 33:21

Karl Rahner says that in every human person there is something like an anonymous, theme-less, perhaps repressed basic experience of being oriented towards God which can be repressed, but not destroyed

altogether; which is mystical or has its climax in what the classical masters called 'Infused Contemplation'.[16] It is this kind of a basic instinct towards mysticism that the Prophet wanted to awaken in the common man.

The Prophet preached through actions of daily living. He could not only handle criticism well but was also adept at handling self-criticism with absolute honesty. Everyday, in everyway he showed that humans are not computers and all of them have to be treated with humanness. This includes our treatment of ourselves as well.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation-How the great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, Penguin Books, UK, 2024.
2. Jonathan Haidt, The Happiness Hypothesis, Penguin Random House, UK, 2021, p. 219.
3. See Anna Lembke, *The Dopamine Nation Finding Balance in the Age of indulgence*, Dutton, New York, 2021.
4. Daniel M. Haybron, Happiness A very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, Great Britain, 2013, pp. 16-17.
5. Haybron, pp. 11-12, 32-35.
6. Jonathan Haidt, The Happiness Hypothesis, Penguin Random House, United Kingdom, 2021, pp. 86-87.
7. The name Quraysh may have been derived from *taqarrush*, meaning accumulation or gaining. Jurham and Khuza'ah the tribes which preceded the Quraish in looking after the Kabah were not able to abandon *badawah*. The Quraish acquired a capital surplus which made a settled life possible. They made the north-south trade their monopoly and were the only ones allowed to serve the foreign traders. They also regulated the commercial activity within. However, despite their success they knew that they were vulnerable because their economy and their new found wealth, both were dependent on the flow of trade since the land of Macca was rocky and completely uncultivable. So, they built a completely commercial ethos that took them away from many of the traditional values of *muruwah*. They refused to engage in tribal warfare and maintained a position of aloof neutrality because that was the only way they could ensure regular flow of trade and their own prosperity. Cf. Karen Armstrong, *The Prophet Prophet for Our Time*, Harper Perrenial, London, 2006, pp. 30-31.

8. See Moulvi Ali, *Khuluq Azeem*, 1947, Patna. Edited and translated by Farhat Nasreen, *Khuluq Azeem-Sublime Morals*, Bestsellers, Gurgaon, 2015.
9. Tariq Ramadan, *The Messenger, The meanings of the Life of The Prophet*, Allen Lane, Penguin Books, London, 2007, p. 31.
10. See Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam, 1988.
11. Walid A Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition: The Quran Commentary of Al'Tha'labi*, Koninklijke Brill, Netherlands, 2004, pp. 115-118
12. Harvey D. Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life*, Crossroad, New York, 1998, pp. 47-48.
13. See Reynold A. Nicholson, Routledge, Kegan Paul, London, 1914, p. 14.
14. Morgan Housel, *The Psychology of Money*, *Timeless Lessons on Wealth Greed, and Happiness*, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, 2020.
15. Haidt, pp. 224-226
16. Rahner, *Faith in a Wintry Season*, cf. Egan, op. cit., p. 44

NISHAT MANZAR

The Advent of English Christian Missionaries and the Communalization of Indian History and Islam

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Portuguese were the first European nation that had arrived in Asia, specially the Indian subcontinent, at the close of the fifteenth century. Till the end of the sixteenth century they grew in power. Not only that their interests mainly remained confined to the commercial, they were equally enthusiastic about their proselytizing activities. Portuguese officials and adventurers have left behind a huge corpus of material related to their experiences in the Indian subcontinent, specifically the coastal areas.[1] They also had shown some interest in the Indian history when they came in the direct contact with the Mughals, specially Akbar and Jahangir. Their successors like the Dutch and the English too did not show any concern with the history of the country, but some freebooters seem to have touched upon the subject while trying to investigate about the lineage of their contemporary rulers in India. A French traveller Jean de Thevenot (1666) and an Italian Giovanni Gemelli Careri (1695) were the first two travellers who tried their hand at writing about the historical developments in the country in the near past. Some of them wrote about the history of religious traditions of the people also. Somehow, their descriptions were full of flaws and most of the details were based on hearsay. Although two Englishmen Alexander Hamilton (1688-1723) and then Robert Orme (1728- 1801) were more careful about the details on the history of the country, but their information was not based on comprehensive research of the Indian sources. Such works did not fulfil the requirements of the historiography either.

In the second-half of the eighteenth century, after the battle of Plassey (1757) English Company acquired political power and subsequently

they got down to writing a systemic history of India. Although, Robert Orme was the first official historiographer appointed by the English Company in India in 1769, most successful in this endeavour was James Mill (1817) who compiled his *History of India* in three volumes as textbooks for aspirants willing to join civil and military service under the English East India Company. In some way, in his approach James Mill added a strong communal angle to it for which he is criticized greatly.[2] Interestingly, until the early years of the nineteenth century the Company was successful in blocking the path of the Anglican missionaries as they wanted to avoid any hindrance in their commercial accomplishments.[3] By that time, in view of Company's huge success in Asia, British Parliament was flooded with requests, and on-going debates forced the government to make a vital decision vis-à-vis the sending of Evangelical missions to India. By 1813, as a result of a Charter passed in the English Parliament, Company was forced to allow English Christian missionaries belonging to the Anglican Church/Church of England (established in 1534) to propagate their religion in India and convert people to Christianity. Missionaries, full of religious zeal, to convince people, projected the picture of India's past in a manner that people would find Christianity and Christian rulers as their saviours. Hence, a fresh wave of attacks on the policies of India's rulers, especially their immediate predecessors, began when India's past and its religious traditions were targeted in a manner that increased the feeling of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims.

This paper aims at highlighting the role of the English Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century India in projecting India's past, especially Islam and the Muslims, in a strong communal tone. Although Hindu religious practices and Hindu rulers were equally targeted, Islam and Muslims specifically came under the attack as the English fought against them relentlessly since the past many centuries.

UNDERSTANDING THE 'EAST'

The quest to understand the history of the descent of the contemporary Indian rulers had already begun with the arrival of the Christian missionaries of the Jesuit Order in the court of Akbar. Prior to it, Portuguese had been into writing about the events of war and their

engagements with the contemporary rulers and people of Asia, but rarely did they touch the histories of the past rulers of a given country. Father Monserrate, perhaps for the first time, touched upon the account of Chingiz Khan and Timur with an aim to understand the genealogy of Akbar whose court he visited between 1580 to1582 along with Rudolf Aquaviva. As Monserrate was directed to record the developments of the journey and proceedings of the court, he took upon himself the pleasant duty of preparing an account of the family of Akbar. Although he claims to have heard it all from the mouth of Akbar, he made certain avoidable mistakes in terms of wars fought by Chingiz and his descendants against the rulers of China, Central Asia and Persia.[4] However, it is a brief but comprehensive account of the ancestors of Akbar down to his reign and devoid of any criticism or historical evaluation. Subsequently, for many adventurers the theme became somewhat favourite as they and some of the Company merchants would venture into the past history of the 'Great Moguls' and their lineage. Their approach differed from each other due to their personal inclinations and interests. Monserrate's near contemporary Ralph Fitch, who stayed in Asia between 1583-1591, also visited the Mughal court at Fathpur Sikri and Agra sometime in 1585. It is but strange that he does not write much about Akbar. However, he noted important aspects of life in some selected cities he passed through from Goa to Agra and further towards Bengal.[5] History of the Mughals became a favourite subject for the travellers and merchants arriving in India in the next century. One of these was an English East India Company servant John Jourdain (1608-1617), who visited Agra from Surat and back. He discussed the life in Agra and routine of business at the Emperor's court, but did not go into details on the history of the Mughal rulers.[6] However, his brief account of Jahangir's 'kingdomes' suggests a sense of enquiry he possessed which was commonly shared by his contemporary Europeans also.

Pietro Della Valle during his brief stay on the western coast of India between Gujarat and Malabar, did not get a chance to witness the actual grandeur of the Mughal court. However, he too seemed quite interested in knowing about 'Sciah Selim'[7] the 'King of greater part of India', who in Europe was called 'the Great Mogul'. That he belonged to the race of Tatars called Moghols and Timur. He briefly discussed the line of rulers from Timur to Shah Salim (Jahangir), his chief wife and sons,

but without passing any judgement on them.[8] Similarly, a Frenchman Jean de Thevenot (1666-1667) prepared a long report on the kingdom of the Mughals- 'Mogolistan', with substantial details on its various provinces.[9] Somehow, his description is not purely political in nature. Thevenot also included the description of important cities and people in these provinces, especially those which he happened to visit himself. Although, a good description of the court, arms and armed forces, festivals and life in different cities has been given a suitable treatment, history of the Mughals is summed up in less than three pages, which seems to be just aimed at tracing the lineage of the Mughal rulers. He seems to be a critique of Aurangzeb on account of his role in the war of succession-

> In mounting Throne, this Prince (Aurangzeb) imitated the crimes of his Father; for he put to death Dara his Eldest Brother, imprisoned Mourad his other Brother who confided in him, and clapt up his own father in Prison, who died Five or Six Years after, about the end of the Year 1666.[10]

Thevenot's information about various provinces of the Mughal Empire was based on the memoirs of his other contemporaries, especially two of his countrymen Tavernier and Bernier. He also wrote about the Kingdoms of Deccan which were yet to fall to Aurangzeb. Subsequent to him was an Italian adventurer Gemelli Careri (1695), whose account is quite similar to that of Thevenot, as he too drew much on the travelogues of others to give a comprehensive account of the famed Empire of the Mughals. He met Aurangzeb in Galgala in Deccan where he was campaigning in and 'left a fairly good pen-picture' of the Emperor.[11] Apart from usual discussion on the different provinces, cities, revenues and riches of the empire, his focus on the personality of the Emperor Aurangzeb and his camp is worth reading. He uses the adjectives 'Dissembler and Hypocrite' for him in relation to a ruling of a *qazi* given in response to Aurangzeb's query about invading Bijapur. He criticises Aurangzeb for his role in the war of succession. He equally blames Shahjahan for occupying the throne in the same manner. His account of Aurangzeb's genealogy is brief which he traces from Timur. Interestingly, he differentiates between the attitude of the Emperor during his early years and in the old age. That in his old age:

he ceas'd to be Bloody as before, and on the contrary became so mild, that the Governors and Omrahs did not pay him the Duty they ought; knowing his Mercy would never suffer him to punish them. Thus poor were oppress'd by the great Ones without knowing who to have recourse to;...[12]

Careri, however, blames the king for being soft on his nobles as an act of appeasement. At the same time he 'honestly' admits that Aurangzeb never gave himself even in his youth to sensual pleasures, speaks truth and lives a life of a saint.[13] A semi-contemporary of Careri, an Englishman called John Ovington (1689) is a big critique of Aurangzeb and blames him for being harsh to his Gentile population. But his bitterness finds best expression in his discussion on the war of succession and how Aurangzeb betrayed his own family. Otherwise, he has been put in the category of like any other eastern monarchs whom Ovington identifies generally 'cruel' by nature. There is also a brief account of the background of the Mughals with an emphasis that Aurangzeb was a successor of Timur.[14] Almost similar is the account of Alexander Hamilton (1688-1725) who visited various parts of Arabia Felix, Persia and important towns of coastal India from Sind to Bengal. He found it somewhat fascinating to present before the readers a biographical sketch of Aurangzeb with an emphasis on 'some of his Actions'.[15] Although his description of Shahjahan marrying the mother of his sons (Arjumand Bano, later Mumtaz Mahal) is thoroughly fictitious, he correctly places the sons of Shahjahan in their assignments and posts. Apart from other events, partially true, Hamilton narrates the events of war of succession and the developments till the end of Aurangzeb's reign. He is, however, quite impartial in his evaluation of Aurangzeb, saying that:

He was a Prince every Way qualified for governing. None ever understood Politicks better than he. The Balance of distributive Justice he held in an exact Equilibrium. He was brave and cunning in War, and merciful and magnanimous in Peace, temperate in his Diet and Recreations, and modest and grave in his Apparel, courteous in his behaviour to his Subjects, and affable in his Discourse. He encourages Virtue, and discountenanced Vice, and studied the laws of Humanitiy, and observ'd them as well as those of Religion, for in that Part he inclined to Superstition.[16]

A NEW BEGINNING

First half of the eighteenth century is best represented by Robert Orme (born on 25 December 1728, Anjengo, Tranquebar; died 13 January 1801) who not only discussed the contemporary history of Hindustan but also made an evaluation of the military strength of the Mughal rulers vis-à-vis the Europeans (especially the English). He joined the English East India Company in 1743 and continued serving the Company till 1758. He had been a witness to the military operations in Carnatic and the famous battle of Plassey (1757) as he had recommended the name of Clive to command expedition against Siraj-ud Daulah of Bengal. After his departure to England he was appointed as the historiographer by the Company. He wrote very important works on India entitled as- *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1663-1678) and *Historical Fragments of the Mogol Empire, the Morattoes and the English Concerns in Indostan from 1769* (1782). While the first contains the discussion on the general and brief history of Hindustan from the days of Mahmud of Ghazni and some information on Hindu religion, the second is purely dedicated to the English affairs in Carnatic and Malabar. Somehow, the author still did not seem to have any inkling that the English were going to emerge in future as the sole power in India. Hence, his tone is not harsh and he is quite indifferent towards recording the personal characteristics and policies of the medieval rulers.

Second half of the eighteenth century, however, is the period when success in Bengal and eastern India made the English more conscious of their pedigree and superiority in terms of military strength. Early eighteenth century saw the significant developments in terms of historiography with the publication of James Mill's *History of British India* (1817). Modern historians generally trace the origin of communalisation of Indian history in the work of James Mill that he was the one who identified the so called ancient period of Indian history as 'Hindu India' and medieval era as 'Muslim India'. Sections on both the periods were entitled as – 'Of the Hindus' and 'The Mahomedans'. While so called 'Hindu' period was not divided dynasty wise, rule of so called 'Mahomedans' was discussed by dividing it into

'Gaznavides', 'Gaurian' dynasty and 'Mogol Dynasty'. A comparison was also made in a subsequent section about the differences between the 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' rule.[17] It is of much interest that Mill did not find much difference between the rule of the Hindus and Muslims and simply identified both equally 'despotic'. However, to him, one thing that could differentiate between the two was that the Muslims were culturally superior to the Hindus. Mill also emphatically acknowledged that Mughals, though foreigners but Indianized as they became a part and parcel of the Indian society. People, looking for 'communal' element in James Mill's history would be disappointed to see that that the most condemned rulers in subsequent era like Mahmud of Ghazni and Aurangzeb are projected as any other despotic monarch of their period.

The period when James Mill was busy writing the *History of British India*, debates in the British parliament were going on regarding the East India Company's discouraging attitude towards the English Protestant/Anglican missionaries' settling down in India. Those sympathetic towards the missionaries ultimately succeeded in convincing the Parliament on the issue in their favour and in the late 1820's missionaries started arriving in India. Prior to it, those who had arrived privately were confined to the Danish stations like Tranquebar and Serampore and regulating their activities mainly in the coastal areas of India. With the British occupation of Allahabad (1801) and Agra (1803) and installation of their Agents in the court of Lucknow and Delhi, missionaries also picked these towns for propagation of their religion and proselytizing activities. While they picked debates with the scholars, especially Muslim *ulama*, missionaries also issued pamphlets on various themes, particularly Muslims and Islam. Many missionaries had sympathisers among the English bureaucracy and at times were also patronised by them. Banaras, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra and Delhi became the centres of such polemics and publication of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim literature. It was gradually becoming a part of the British ideology too, to justify and legitimise their occupation of India. Missionaries on the one side and British civil servants on the other were busy compiling histories of India, Islam or Indian Muslims.

POLEMICS: AN INSTRUMENT TO ESTABLISH THE PARAMOUNTCY

It is quite strange that when a modern scholar Thomas R. Metcalf wrote a comprehensive account of various forms of expressions of the 'ideologies' of the Raj (i.e., the British), he missed on the issue of role of missionaries in the nineteenth century in legitimising the British efforts in India.[18] Thomas Metcalf scrutinised the problem from the view point of 'differences' identified by the British between the Europeans and Asians on account of scientific knowledge, history and religion (Christianity VS other religions). Completely (rather deliberately) ignoring the issue of role of missionaries, Metcalf looked at the church architecture as an expression of British ideology as churches were built extensively, especially in in post 1857 era, in a specific design aimed at displaying their grandeur in terms of the English supremacy.[19] Similarly, Avril A. Powell in her work on polemics between the Muslim scholars and the missionaries also avoided any discussion on the nature of historical material coming out either from the side of the missionaries or under the state patronage.[20] Powell rather added the angle of 'educational reforms' introduced by the missionaries in India in her book- *Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Education and Empire* (2010). However, in the works of both- Thomas Metcalf and Avril Powell, there are clues to the issue which indicate that different kinds of writings were replacing the old ones compiled by the Europeans on the history of Islam, and more specifically in the context of India and its people.

Now, the works began to be compiled keeping in mind the requirement of the missionaries in the course of debates with the *ulama*. As early as 1804, attempts were made by 'Serampore Trio'[21] to translate the Bible into Arabic, Persian and Hindustani with an aim to reach out to people. Responsibility of distribution was assigned to Company's military chaplain in Bengal Henry Martyn. Martyn in his official position had superficial knowledge of Islam, but was inclined towards reading George Sale's *Preliminary Discourse to the Quran* and Lodovico Marracci's refutation of Quran; and then began 'to consider his own principle of refutation'.[22] Later, he also prepared a 'Controversial Tract' that was published by one Samuel Lee at Cambridge in 1824.[23] Notable

point of this 'Tract' was that it was dedicated to the then Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and as an acknowledgement to the services of a former Governor General of India Lord Teignmouth. It clearly suggests that authorities were exceptionally sympathetic towards such attempts being made by the missionaries in the subcontinent. Actually, the Company in 1807 was quite annoyed because of this pamphlet- entitled 'Muslim Tract', published from the Serampore Mission, a place of shelter for most of the English missionaries prior to 1817. It was pretty close to the medieval notions about Islam that denounced the Prophet as a 'tyrant'.[24] English Company was quite concerned that it would tarnish their reputation in India and create disturbance in society. Missionaries were steadily moving westward and initially targeted Banaras and Allahabad for the purpose of conversion of people, as being pilgrimage centres these two places attracted large number of people throughout the year. Gradually, sympathies of the English bureaucracy towards the missionaries and newly converts superseded the discouraging behaviour of the Company officers. After the occupation of Agra by the English in 1803 and its consolidation of power in the second decade of the nineteenth century, missionaries consequently made it their base of operation to evangelise people. The greatest success came in the form of one Muslim christened as Abdul Masih in Agra who belonged to a respectable family of Lucknow. He had protection of the English officers, especially while he was on a visit to Lucknow where he got involved in debates with Muslims and scholars. British Resident in Lucknow protected him from any eventuality which made Abdul Masih admit on one occasion in 1825 that 'the current Resident was much more ready to protect him than had been his predecessor ten years ago'.[25] Even Catholic missionaries, like Joseph Wolff, were also patronised by the British officers in India. Wolff was well connected in Europe and reached Lucknow in 1833. He had already befriended Lady and Lord William Bentinck. Bentinck himself was considered sympathetic towards the missionaries. In Delhi, Wolff received warm welcome from the English Resident William Frazer. Here he met Shah Akbar II and in one of the engagements with the *ulama* of Delhi, William Frazer was also present. Interestingly, this discussion took place at the residence of the 'Agent/Resident' itself.

In one of the debates that took place in Lucknow on 30 January 1833

between a Shi'i *mujtahid* Saiyyid Mohammad and Wolff in the presence of the Nawab, English Agent John Law was also present to extend moral support to Wolff. In 1840s a German Pietist missionary Carl Pfander (1803-1868) initiated a series of debates with the *ulama* in Agra. He was influenced by the writings of Samuel Lee (Cambridge) and wrote *Mizan-ul Haq* in support of Christianity for the purpose of tackling the issues that would come up during the polemical debates in Agra. He also acknowledged the influence of George Sale on his person, and benefitted from Sale's translation and commentary on Quran. Sale had called Islam as a 'false religion' and *Hadis* (Prophet's Traditions) as 'gross fiction'. Pfander also made special mention of a contemporary German Jew scholar of Islamic history- Gustav Weil who began to publish on Islam in 1840s. Pfander in his writings never acknowledged the scientific and cultural achievements in the medieval Islamic world and never drew comparisons with the contemporary Western Christendom or those of his own days. Throughout his arguments, Pfander placed great emphasis on the technological superiority of the West and progressive society of the Occident 'ensuring the eventual success of the Gospel'. Pfander also came close to the then Lieutenant Governor of NWP based in Agra- James Thomson who was later replaced by William Muir. Thomson himself was the son of a missionary close to the EIC military chaplain Henry Martyn in Bengal.

Among the prominent works on Islam and Indian Muslims and rulers that left an indelible mark on the society of the nineteenth century, were compiled by William Muir and W. W. Hunter. Elliot & Dowson's names can also be put in this category as they translated those renowned works, mostly in Persian, which were compiled between 1000 to 1750 CE during the medieval era of the subcontinent. William Muir, an East India Company servant and a fervent evangelist himself, was also influenced by Gustav Weil and developed friendship with Carl Pfander also during his posting in Agra as the Lieutenant Governor of NWP. Muir not only corrected and arranged material for Pfander, but also wrote *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam*. Muir also contributed certain evangelical tracts for distribution among the Muslims during his posting at Agra. During his long stay in NWP, almost forty years, Muir in his official position extended support to the missionaries. Muir collected Biographies of Mohammad and wrote

Mohammedan Controversy; Biographies of Mohammed, and *The Life of Mahomet* in two volumes. One of his contemporaries in Delhi Dr Aloys Sprenger, an Austrian associated with Delhi College, aiming at writing a 'philosophical history of Islam' wrote a biography of Prophet. However, he ended up with an evaluation of Prophet's personality quite negative, saying that 'he (Prophet) shared the same amiable foibles and selfish virtues as other men of his age'. Company also tried to change the syllabi of the Oriental department at the Delhi College, made indirect attempts to close down it- especially the Arabic department. On the other hand Englishmen teaching at the Delhi College were appreciated as 'religious men'.[26] Elliot and Dowson's English translation of the historical accounts of the medieval period of Indian history in eight volumes with their introductory remarks has been a subject of criticism among the modern scholars. It was aimed at widening the gap between the two Indian communities- Hindus and Muslims by way of presenting partial translations of these works and a subjective approach. Introduction of the first volume specifically targets the Muslims and the nature of their historiography in the following words:

> Hindus slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them, show us that this picture is not overcharged, and it is much to be regretted that we are left to draw it for ourselves from out the mass of ordinary occurrences, recorded by writers who seem to sympathize with no virtues, and to abhor no vices. Other nations exhibit the same atrocities, but they are at least spoken of, by some, with indignation and disgust. (vol. I, p. xxi

However, most important observation on the contribution of Henry Elliot is that he had been evaluated by one of his contemporaries Francis H. Robinson in 1853 as- 'his evangelical traits tended to "criminate" those about whom he wrote'.[27] W. W. Hunter's *The Indian Mussalmans* (1871), is also a link to this series where he subjected the Muslims with all kinds of criticism and condemnation. The book was compiled in response to a question of Governor General Lord Mayo on 30 May 1871, whether the Indian Muslims were 'bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen'. On Hunter's part the response was

very quick and by the next month he completed his report, and in the month of August 1871 it was published in the form of a book. Apart from voluminous work in the form of Imperial Gazetteers of India, Hunter produced a series of works during his stay in India and the last days in England. Though not a missionary himself, he also wrote a novel *The Old Missionary* (1895) which is considered one of the best of all his compilations. In his *The Indian Mussalmans*, Hunter suggested the government to differentiate between the 'fanatical masses' and 'landed and clerical interests', while evaluating the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi.[28] Thomas Metcalf is, somehow, certain of his religious affiliations when he says about Hunter that 'expressing his own protestant sympathies, Hunter compared the Wahabis, engaged in the "great work of purifying the creed of Muhammad" to Hildebrand's monks, who had purged the Church of Rome'. Hunter also believed that western education among Muslims would make them less fanatical, 'and propel them away from a "mistaken" religion to a "higher level of belief" in Christianity'.[29] He is also criticised for 'representing the official mind of the bureaucratic Victorian historians of India'.[30]

Post 1857 scenario definitely affected the tradition of historiography in India. Although, the revolt originated in the army comprised of people both Hindus and Muslims, it was widely viewed as the result of animosity of Muslims towards the British. Alfred Lyall, John Lawrence and William Muir condemned Muslims as 'fanatics' who 'showed the characteristics of their race during the rebellion'. Alfred Lyall, who was young at the time of Rebellion, wrote to his father in England that- 'the whole insurrection is a great Mahometan conspiracy, and the sepoys are merely tools in the hands of the Mussalmans'. He went on, differentiating between the Hindus and Muslims that- *for Hindus plunder always seems to be their chief object, to attain which they will perform any villainy, whereas the Mahometans only seem to care about murdering their opponents, and are together far more bloddy minded*.[31]

The theme about the arrival of missionaries under the aegis of the English East India Company and their role in communalising the whole atmosphere has been discussed by few scholars. As far as their influence on the contemporary English civil servants, or support in their endeavours from the bureaucracy is concerned, much is not written by the modern scholars. The theme needs to be explored further. Here an

attempt has been made to link the missionary activities with the newly emerging tradition of historiography, usually identified as 'Colonial' and that did great harm to the understanding of not only the contemporary society, but also the medieval polity in Indian history including the history of Islam.

NOTES

1. Vasco de Gama (1497-1499), Alvares Cabral (1500), Duarte Barbosa (1500-1516) and Tome Pires (1511-12) are the pioneers who left behind their memoirs in the form of travelogues and journals. Jan Van Linschoten (1583-1589) was a Dutch in the service of the Portuguese at Goa. Ludovico Verthema (1504) was an Italian traveller who witnessed the Portuguese rising in power on the western coast of India.
2. He divided the Indian history into three phases—ancient as 'Hindu'; medieval as 'Muslim'; and modern as 'British' (not Christian). They laid an emphasis that prior to the coming of the English in India, Indians fought amongst themselves on the question of religion, i.e., Hinduism and Islam; and that they themselves were above the religious bias.
3. The Company regularly employed priests in their settlements to conduct religious rituals, but propagation of Christianity in an organized manner was avoided as it could arouse the anxiety of the merchants, rulers and craftsmen who facilitated the trade between the Europeans and the Indians.
4. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, (tr.) J. S. Hoyland, ann. S. N. Banerjee, London, 1922. Reprint, Delhi, 1992, pp. i-xlii.
5. Ralph Fitch, *England's Pioneer to India and Burma*, (ed.) J. Horton Ryley, London, 1899, pp. 92-120.
6. *The Jouranl of John Jourdain, 1608-1617*, (ed.) William Foster, Cambridge, 1905, pp. 141-190.
7. Shah Salim.
8. Edward Grey (ed.), *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, 2 volumes, London, 1892; reprint, Delhi, 1991. Vol. I, pp. 48-59.
9. *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, (tr. & ed.) S. N. Sen, Delhi, 1948., pp. 5-120.
10. S. N. Sen, *Indian Travels*, p. 6.
11. S. N. Sen, *Indian Travels*, p. xxiv.
12. S. N. Sen, *Indian Travels*, pp. 235-236.
13. S. N. Sen, *Indian Travels*, p. 236.

14. *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, H. G. Rawlinson ed., pp. 107-128.
15. Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies from the Year 1688-1723*, 2 volumes, London, 1739. Reprint, Delhi, 1995, pp. 166-180.
16. Hamilton, *A New Account*, p.176
17. *History of the British Empire*, Book II and Book III, pp. 91-624.
18. *Ideologies of the Raj*, CUP, 1998.
19. Thomas R. Metcalf feels that Robert Orme and Alexander Dow projected the Muslim rulers as the most despotic and fanatic in contrast to the 'ancient Hindoo constitution'. *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 139.
20. *Muslim and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, London, 1993.
21. They were three missionaries- Carey, Marshman and Ward. Avril Powell, pp. 81-82.
22. Avril Powell, pp. 91-92.
23. Samuel Lee, *Controversial Tract on Christianity and Mohmmedanism* by the late Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D. of St. John's College, Cambridge, and some of the most eminent writers of Persia translated and explained: to which is appended an additional tract on the same question; and, in a preface, some account given of a former controversy on this subject, with extracts from it.
24. It was prepared as a Translation of an address from the missionaries at Serampore to all persons performing the Mohammadan religion and an account of a certain 'Tyrant'from his birth to his death, published in the Proceedings relativd to the missionaries. Avril Powell, p. 82 & n
25. Avril Powell, p. 116.
26. Avril Powell, pp. 120, 122, 125-126, 145, 147, 152, 155, 164, 180, 183, 199, 202, 217.
27. Peter Penner, Sir Henry Miers Elliot (1808-1853), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008.
28. Thomas Metcalf, *The Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 141.
29. Thomas Metcalf, *The Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 142.
30. Satish Chandra Mittal, *India Distorted: A Study of the British Historians on India*, 1996p, p. 170.
31. Thomas Metcalf, *The Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 139-140.

SYED SHAHID ALI

Jannah as Humanity's Ultimate Destination: A Qur'anic Study of Its Nature and Ethical Framework

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive Qur'anic investigation of *Jannah* (Paradise) as the ultimate destiny of humankind. Drawing upon relevant Qur'anic passages and Prophetic traditions, the article addresses three foundational questions: What is *Jannah*? How is *Jannah* portrayed in the Qur'an? And what are the prerequisites for attaining it? The study contends that the Qur'anic conception of *Jannah* transcends material and sensory imagination, functioning not merely as a promised reward, but as the culmination of holistic human fulfillment—encompassing physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and existential dimensions. Through a thematic and analytical reading of the Qur'anic discourse, the article demonstrates that *Jannah* represents the highest form of success (*al-fawz al-ʿaẓīm*), grounded in divine pleasure (*riḍwān Allāh*) and a life shaped by God-consciousness (*taqwā*). The paper concludes that the Qur'anic vision of Paradise operates simultaneously as an eschatological promise and a normative ethical framework, guiding human conduct and moral orientation in this worldly life.

Keywords: Jannah; Taqwa, Qur'anic Eschatology; Post-death Life; Islamic Ethics

INTRODUCTION

In Islamic theology, *īmān* (faith) is understood as a composite reality comprising three inseparable elements: verbal affirmation (*iqrār bi'l-lisān*), inward conviction (*taṣdīq bi'l-qalb*), and embodied action

(ʿ*amal bi'l-arkān*). Within this framework, Islam is founded upon three fundamental articles of belief: *Tawḥīd* (the absolute oneness and uniqueness of Allah), *Risālah* (Prophethood), and *Ākhirah* (the life of the Hereafter).

The doctrine of the afterlife occupies a central and indispensable position in Islamic thought. Among its most significant components is *Jannah* (Paradise), which the Qur'an portrays as the final abode of the righteous and the ultimate realization of human longing and purpose. Far from being a peripheral doctrine, belief in *Jannah* shapes Islamic moral consciousness, ethical responsibility, and existential orientation.

The Qur'an conceptualizes human existence as unfolding across two distinct yet interconnected phases: the transient worldly life (*al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*) and the everlasting post-mortem life (*al-ḥayāt al-ākhirah*). Death, therefore, is not construed as annihilation or cessation, but as a passage from temporal existence to eternal reality. Within this theological framework, the present study undertakes a systematic examination of *Jannah* by addressing three interrelated questions:

What is Jannah? 2. How is Jannah ? 3. How can a person attain Jannah?

METHODOLOGY

This research article fills a key gap in Islamic studies by presenting Jannah not merely as a physical reward, but as a holistic realm of human fulfillment encompassing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions.

This study employs a qualitative, text-based methodology grounded in thematic analysis of the Qur'an and authenticated Prophetic traditions, primarily drawn from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Saḥīḥ Muslim, and other reliable ḥadīth collections. Relevant Qur'anic verses are examined within their theological, ethical, and eschatological contexts, while Prophetic traditions serve as qualitative interpretive data that elucidate and expand Qur'anic concepts related to *Jannah*. The primary emphasis remains on direct engagement with foundational texts, with the interpretation of the Qur'an conducted through the Qur'an itself. This qualitative approach facilitates a systematic and coherent understanding of the Qur'anic portrayal of Paradise.

WHAT IS JANNAH?

Human Existence and the Purpose of Life

God created human beings as eternal creatures, according to the Qur'an. Human life is divided into two distinct phases: life before death and life after death. The former is transient, while the latter is eternal. The first phase serves as a period of trial and testing, whereas the second constitutes recompense in the form of reward or punishment- Hell or Paradise. Death is thus created as a means of transition from the temporal world to the eternal realm.

Jannah (Paradise) as the Final Abode and Supreme Success

Paradise is an ideal and eternal society characterized by peace and pleasure. It is the final abode of the faithful, where those who live righteous lives will reside after death. The Qur'an describes Paradise as a garden of delights and identifies it as the ultimate expression of human success:

"Every human being is bound to taste death: and you shall receive your rewards in full on the Day of Resurrection. He who is kept away from the Fire and is admitted to Paradise, will surely triumph; for the life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment."[1] "Whoever attains Jannah has attained the "Supreme Success."[2]

Paradise as a Realm of Eternal Reward

Paradise is a place of reward in which every human need, desire, and aspiration is fully satisfied. It is a realm of eternal life:

"They will enter Gardens of Eternity, where rivers will flow at their feet. There they will have all that they wish for. Thus God rewards the righteous."[3]

"For them therein is whatever they wish, [while] abiding eternally. It is ever upon your Lord a promise [worthy to be] requested."[4]

"You will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish]."[5]

The Limits of Human Reason and Comprehension

Certain fundamental points must be kept in mind when discussing Paradise. Human beings are inherently limited in their capacity for reason and intelligence, which function within the constraints of time and space.[6] As a result, Paradise lies beyond full human comprehension. The Prophet, as reported by Abu Huraira, said:

"Allah the Exalted and Glorious, said: I have prepared for My pious servants which no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever perceived but it is testified by the Book of Allah. He then recited: Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden (in reserve) for them- as a reward for their (good) deeds."[7]

Sahl b. Saʿd as-Saʿidi reported:

I was in the company of Allah's Messenger that he gave a description of Paradise and then Allah's Apostle concluded with these words: There would be bounties which the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard and no human heart has ever perceived them. He then recited this verse: "They forsake (their) beds, calling upon their Lord in fear and in hope, and spend out of what We have given them. So no soul knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did."[8]

Language, Metaphor, and the Invisible World (ʿĀlam al-Ghayb)

Human language is limited and often relies on symbolism and metaphor to convey experiences that transcend ordinary perception. There exists no linguistic vocabulary capable of fully describing the Invisible World (*ʿĀlam al-Ghayb*), to which Paradise belongs. Consequently, the Qur'an contains two categories of verses: *Muḥkamāt* (categorical verses) and *Mutashābihāt* (allegorical verses):

"It is He who has sent down the Book to you. Some of its verses are clear and precise in meaning they are the basis of the Book (categorical) while others are allegorical…"[9]

Paradise and Allegorical Qur'anic Discourse

The subject of Paradise in the Qur'an is closely associated with allegorical verses, as the unlimited nature of Paradise cannot be fully

grasped through limited human knowledge, language, or experience. Humans, therefore, are unable to fully and accurately comprehend its reality. According to Abu Huraira, the Messenger of Allah said:

"I have prepared for My pious servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has perceived apart from what Allah has informed you of."[10]

Names of Paradise in the Qur'an

The Qur'an refers to Paradise by numerous names, reflecting its diverse dimensions and qualities. These include: *Firdaus*, *Jannah*, *Dāru al-Salām*, *Dāru al-Khuld*, *Dāru al-Muqāmah*, *Jannat al-Maʾwā*, *Jannat ʿAdn*, *Dāru al-Ḥayawān*, *Muqām Amīn*, *Jannat al-Naʿīm*, *Maqʿad Ṣidq*, and *Qadam Ṣidq*.

HOW IS JANNAH? (A THEMATIC ANALYSIS)

Qur'ānic and Prophetic Conceptions of Jannah (A Portrait of the Abode of Ultimate Fulfilment): Human nature has long been understood as comprising four interrelated dimensions—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. In a parallel way, Jannah, being the ultimate abode designed for humans, reflects and fulfills these dimensions in perfect harmony.

The Holy Qur'ān consistently portrays Jannah as the perfected and final abode prepared for the righteous, an eternal realm entirely free from deficiency, suffering, decay, and limitation. It is described as "Gardens of Pleasure", wherein believers will dwell forever, enjoying "all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in …".[11]

In essence, Paradise may be understood as a Super World, where human beings inhabit transformed bodies endowed with extraordinary capacities, liberated from pain, mortality, and exhaustion, and immersed in absolute abundance and joy.

"Therein you shall have (all) that your inner selves desire, and therein you shall have all for which you ask. An entertainment from Allah, the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."[12]

THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION OF JANNAH
(Material environment, bodily pleasure, sustenance, dwellings, transport, and immortality)

Vastness, Structure, and the Supreme Rank of Al-Firdaus

Paradise is immeasurably vast, comprising multiple domains and hierarchical levels. The highest and most excellent of these is Al-Firdaus. "There are 100 levels for the Jannah. If the whole creations are gathered in one level it will host them."[13] "When you ask Him then ask for the Firdaus. It is in the middle and the top of the Jannah and above it the throne of Allah from which the rivers of the Jannah come."[14] "In Paradise, there are a hundred levels, between every two levels is (the distance of) a hundred years."[15] The Prophet explained that Paradise is not singular, but consists of many levels. He emphasized that the highest and most superior among them is Al-Firdaus.[16] The Prophetic guidance encourages believers to aspire to the highest grade of Paradise:If you ask of Allah, ask Him for Firdaus."[17]

Qur'ānic Pedagogy: Parabolic Representation

The Qur'ān presents Jannah through parables to facilitate human understanding and spiritual preparation: "(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it (for them) are…"[18]

Gardens of Eternity, Rivers, Mansions, and Natural Splendour

"For them will be Gardens of Eternity; beneath them rivers will flow."[19] "They shall enter the eternal Gardens of Eden."[20] "Such is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: it is watered by running streams: eternal is its fruit, and eternal is its shade."[21] "But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow…"[22] "As for those who believe and do good works. We shall admit them to Gardens through which rivers flow; wherein they will abide forever…"[23] "But those who believed and did righteous deeds… Those are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally."[24] "Indeed,

for the righteous with their Lord are the Gardens of Pleasure."[25] Jannah's inhabitants will live in beautiful mansions surrounded by gardens with flowing streams.[26]

The natural environment of Jannah includes flowing springs[27] dense shrubbery[28], extended shade[29], and fruit hanging low within reach[30]. Among its marvels are trees of gold[31], shade stretching a hundred years of travel[32], and the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary adorned with golden butterflies[33]. Jannah is described as vast as the heavens and the earth combined[34].

Food, Drink, and Unlimited Provision

The Qur'ān emphasizes abundance without harm, intoxication, or satiation: "Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent forth (good deeds) in days past!"[35] "…Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: 'Why, this is what we were fed before.'"[36] "And fruits in abundance never-ending and unrestricted."[37] "They will call therein for every kind of fruit, in peace and security."[38] "Enter Paradise… And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes…"[39]

Among the rivers of Paradise are: "Rivers of water incorruptible."[40] "Rivers of milk of which the taste never changes."[41] "Rivers of wine – a joy to those who drink."[42] "Rivers of honey – pure and clear."[43] "All kinds of fruits."[44] "Ye shall have therein abundance of fruit, from which ye shall have satisfaction."[45] "Our provision for you will never be exhausted."[46] They will drink from pure water rivers, milk, wine, and honey[47]. The people of Jannah eat fruits and meat as they desire[48], and drink wine that is crystal-clear, delicious, and free of intoxication[49].

Bodies of Perfection: Youth, Beauty, and Immortality

"The people of Paradise will enter Paradise hairless, beardless with their eyes anointed with kohl, aged thirty or thirty-three years."[50] "They would neither pass water, nor void excrement… their sweat will be musk… and their form would be alike as one single person… sixty cubits tall."[51]

No Disease, No Death, Everlasting Health

"Nor will they there taste death, except the first death."[52] "They (the people of paradise) will never fall ill, blow their noses or spit."[53] "So enter it in peace. This is the Day of everlasting life."[54] A divine proclamation announces: You will be healthy and never fall ill; you will live and never die; you will remain young and never grow old; and you will enjoy blessings and never experience hardship.[55] Death itself is permanently abolished[56], and fatigue never touches the inhabitants[57]. "They will not taste death therein, save the first death."[58]

Clothing, Climate, Architecture, and Luxury

One of the most vivid descriptions appears in Sūrah al-Insān: "They will see there neither the sun's excessive heat nor excessive cold… vessels of silver and goblets of crystal… garments of fine silk and heavy brocade… a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent."[59] The inhabitants wear silk garments[60], bracelets of gold and pearls[61], recline on raised thrones and adorned couches[62], and enjoy a perfectly balanced climate[63] "Dressed in fine silk and in rich brocade…"[64] "They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their garments therein will be silk."[65]

Movement, Transport, and Extraordinary Facilities

"You shall be brought a horse of rubies with two wings… it will fly you to wherever you want in Paradise."[66] "If Allah admits you into Paradise, you will have in it whatever is desired by your soul and pleasing to your eye."[67] "A palace of jewels in Paradise wherein there would be no noise and no toil."[68] The Prophet said: "I saw Ja'far flying in Paradise with the angels."[69]

THE EMOTIONAL DIMENSION OF JANNAH
(Peace, joy, security, social harmony, absence of grief)

Peace, Security, and Emotional Tranquility

One of the names of Paradise is Dār al-Salām: "And Allah invites to the Home of Peace."[70] "For them will be the Home of Peace

with their Lord."[71] "'Peace!' a word from a Lord Most Merciful."[72] "Enter therein in peace and security!"[73] "Those mindful of Allah will be in a safe place (Paradise)…"[74] "Enter Paradise, you and your kinds, delighted."[75] Angels will wish Jannah's inhabitants peace[76]. "They will never hear a bad word; only peace greetings."[77] "We shall cleanse their hearts of all traces of ill will."[78] There is no noise, grief, fear, or toil[79]. Jannah's people will have no resentment in their hearts. They'll feel like brothers and sisters to each other.[80]

Companionship, Family, and Social Joy

"Companions of equal age."[81] "They have therein companions pure (and holy)."[82] "Enter ye the Garden, ye and your wives, in rejoicing."[83] "They shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses, and their offspring."[84] "We shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes."[85] The companionship of pure spouses will be enjoyed by the people of Jannah[86]. People will enter Jannah with their righteous kin[87].

Removal of Sorrow and Absence of Fatigue

"Praise be to Allah who has taken away all sorrow from us."[88] and removal of all ill feelings from their hearts.[89] "They will not be affected by any weariness there."[90] "There no sense of fatigue shall touch them."[91]

THE MENTAL DIMENSION OF JANNAH

Contentment, permanence, fulfillment, freedom from anxiety:

Eternal Settlement and Psychological Finality

There will be permanent settlement there; they will neither leave Paradise nor be asked to leave. This is affirmed in the words; "Which is better, this (Worldly life) or the Paradise of immortality…"[92] "Their eternal Home."[93] "They will abide therein eternally."[94] The Jannahites will never want to leave Jannah[95]. There will be permanent settlement there; they will neither leave Paradise nor be asked to leave: "They shall not desire removal from them"[96] "They will have no desire for relocation

from there"[97] and "They will not be affected by any weariness there, and they will never be made to leave"[98]

Fulfillment Without Desire for Change

"That is the great salvation, (the fulfillment of all desires)."[99] "Whatever is desired by your soul and pleasing to your eye."[100]

Absence of Mental Distress and Toil

"Wherein there would be no noise and no toil."[101] Extended depictions in Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah[102] and Sūrah al-Ṭūr[103] portray banquets, dialogue, reflection, and joy, entirely free from vain or sinful speech.

The Market of Jannah

According to authentic Hadith, there is a market (gathering place) in Paradise visited by its inhabitants every Friday. A northern wind blows fragrance and musk on them, enhancing their beauty and radiance. Upon returning, their families notice their increased beauty and loveliness. This market is not for buying or selling in the worldly sense but is a place of joy, blessings, and social gathering.[104]

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF JANNAH
(Divine pleasure, salvation, faith, obedience, and proximity to Allah)

Divine Pleasure and Supreme Success

"Grace from their Lord."[105] "But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah."[106] "Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and His pleasure and gardens of eternal bliss."[107] "Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah."[108] "That will be the supreme triumph."[109]

Vision of Allah (Ru'yat Allāh)

"Some faces that Day shall be shining and radiant, looking at their Lord."[110] The Qur'an describes the believers as having radiant faces

while looking toward their Lord The Prophet stated that nothing would be more beloved to them than looking at their Lord.[111] The Prophet said that Allah has a veil of light, and if He were to remove it, the splendour of His Face would burn everything within His creation that His sight reaches.[112]

The Meaning of "Even More"

"For those who have done good is the best reward and even more."[113] This is explained by the Prophet[114] and reaffirmed[115].

Company of the Elect

"They will be in the company of the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous."[116]

HOW CAN A PERSON ATTAIN JANNAH? (PATHWAYS TO JANNAH)

In Islamic theology, Jannah represents the ultimate reward, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional dimensions. Access to Paradise is conditioned upon both divine blessing and human effort. The primary requirement is Iman (faith), defined as the unity of verbal affirmation, inner conviction, and righteous action. Humans qualify for Paradise only when right beliefs are combined with right deeds:

"As for those who believe and do good works. We shall admit them to Gardens through which rivers flow; wherein they will abide forever. This is a promise from God; and whose word could be truer than God's?"[117] "Those who believe and do good works shall have the gardens of Paradise for their abode. They shall forever dwell in the Gardens of Paradise, desiring no change."[118] "Give the good news to those who believe and do good works, that they will have Gardens through which rivers flow: whenever they are given fruit to eat they will say, This is what we were provided with before, because they were given similar things. And there will be pure spouses for them, and they will abide there forever."[119]

Right Belief and Righteous Action

Entry into Jannah demands sustained effort in righteous deeds, tempered by self-control, patience, and correct faith. The Prophet (PBUH) stated:

"Paradise is surrounded by hardships / disliked things, while Hellfire is surrounded by desires and temptations".[120] Avoidance of sinful behavior is essential: "If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Jannah]."[121]

God-Consciousness (Taqwa) and Muttaqeen

Jannah is reserved for the God-conscious (Muttaqeen), those who maintain moral vigilance over their inner and outer selves: "Say: 'Shall I tell you of better things than those [earthly joys]? For the God-conscious there are, with their Sustainer, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and spouses pure, and God's goodly acceptance.' And God sees all that is in [the hearts of] His servants."[122] "And vie with one another for your Lord's forgiveness and for a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been prepared for the God-Conscious."[123] The Prophet emphasized moral self-discipline: "Whoever can guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jaw-bones and what is between his two legs (i.e., his tongue and private parts), I guarantee Jannah for him."[124]

Truthfulness (Sidiq) and Sincerity (Ikhlas)

Truthfulness is a central virtue leading to Paradise: "It is obligatory for you to tell the truth, for truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to Paradise, and the man who continues to speak the truth and endeavours to tell the truth is eventually recorded as truthful with Allah, and beware of telling of a lie for telling of a lie leads to obscenity and obscenity leads to Hell-Fire, and the person who keeps telling lies and endeavours to tell a lie is recorded as a liar with Allah."[125] Sincerity (Ikhlas) in words, intentions, and actions is fundamental to spiritual elevation.

Fulfillment of Divine and Human Rights (Huqooq-e-Allah & Huqooq-ul-Ibad)

Paradise is attained by fulfilling both divine and human obligations. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "A Bedouin came to the Prophet and said, 'Tell me of such a deed as will make me enter Paradise, if I do it.' The Prophet said, 'Worship Allah, and worship none along with Him, offer the prescribed prayers perfectly, pay the compulsory Zakat, and fast the month of Ramadan.' The Bedouin said, 'By Him, in Whose Hands my life is, I will not do more than this.' When he (the Bedouin) left, the Prophet said, 'Whoever likes to see a man of Paradise, then he may look at this man.'"[126] Obedience to Prophets from Adam to Muhammad (PBUH) is equally pivotal: "All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse... Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses (to enter it)."[127]

Practical Deeds Leading to Paradise

Multiple Hadith emphasize accessible actions that secure Paradise, including ethical conduct, social responsibility, and pursuit of knowledge: "Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Jannah."[128] "Whoever visits an ailing person or a brother of his to seek the pleasure of Allah, an announcer (Angel) calls out: May you be happy, may your walking be blessed, and may you be awarded a dignified position in Jannah."[129] "Indeed, truthfulness leads to righteousness and indeed righteousness leads to Jannah."[130]

The Two Enemies: Nafs and Shaitan

Two primary obstacles impede the human journey to Paradise: the human soul (nafs-e-ammara) and Shaitan. Humans are endowed with free will and a dual potential for good and evil[131]. Shaitan merely suggests evil; sin occurs when human desires align with these suggestions. The Prophet (PBUH) highlighted human responsibility in overcoming these forces: "God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves."[132]. Qur'anic injunctions emphasize seeking divine refuge: "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men; The King of men; The

God of men. From the evil of the whisperings of the slinking (Shaitan) who whispers into the hearts of men from among the jinn and the men."[133].

Multidimensional Attainment of Jannah

The attainment of Jannah is a multidimensional process, requiring: Correct belief (Iman), Righteous deeds (Amal-e-Salih), God-consciousness (Taqwa), Moral integrity and truthfulness, Fulfillment of human and divine rights, Vigilance against nafs and Shaitan etc. The Qur'an and Hadith collectively demonstrate that Paradise is accessible through a combination of internal transformation, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and divine guidance.

CONCLUSION: JANNAH AS COMPLETE HUMAN FULFILMENT

Jannah represents the ultimate realization of human purpose, achieved through faith, righteous action, and divine mercy. It embodies perfection across all dimensions: physically free from decay and death, emotionally secure and peaceful, mentally fulfilled and engaged, and spiritually oriented toward closeness to Allah. Social harmony and pure interaction prevail, while provision and satisfaction are unlimited and eternal. In this way, Paradise is the consummation of moral, spiritual, and existential fulfillment—a state of everlasting salvation where human aspiration reaches its highest expression.

REFERENCES & NOTES

1. The Quran, 3:185
2. The Quran, 9:89
3. The Quran, 16:31
4. The Quran, 25:16
5. The Quran, 41:31
6. Limitation of Human Intelligence: Among the faculties bestowed upon humans, one of the most remarkable is intelligence. However, this intelligence is neither perfect nor absolute. It cannot operate beyond specific constraints of time and space. For instance: A person may say, "A battle was fought between Japan and America. However, it occurred

neither before nor after the 18th century, and it was not fought in any other century." Another may claim, "There is a country that exists neither on earth, nor on water, nor in the sky, yet it does exist."

Such phenomena cannot be comprehended by human intellect. Intelligence cannot conceive a circle without a center or a triangle without an angle, nor can it visualize a fourth dimension beyond length, width, and depth. In fact, intelligence is so limited that it cannot perceive unusual combinations—for example, a song that smells like roses or a perfume that is blue in color.

Moreover, human intelligence is incapable of fully understanding the past, present, and future. It is so restricted that it cannot even comprehend the true nature of man, namely the spirit. When a person reflects on existence and contemplates the ultimate questions of life, two possibilities emerge: either to believe in a Creator or to deny the existence of a Creator.

Human intelligence recognizes that almost everything in the world—pens, notebooks, tables, chairs, cars, airplanes—has a creator. Therefore, it follows that man, being more advanced and sophisticated, must also have a Creator. Furthermore, our intelligence observes that, despite the passage of millions and billions of years, humans are always born as humans, not as other species. This demonstrates that the creation of man is deliberate and well-planned. Consequently, the first finding of intelligence is that humankind has a Creator.

Further reflection raises a subsequent question: is the Creator singular or multiple? Intelligence examines analogous situations: a country with one Prime Minister versus two, a classroom with one teacher versus three, or a car with one driver versus four. In each case, the first option ensures order, while the second introduces chaos. Hence, the second conclusion is that humankind has only one Creator.

Intelligence then considers the matter of communication with the Creator: should man establish contact to learn the purpose of life, or should the Creator initiate contact to inform man of this purpose? Human reasoning concludes that the first option is impossible, as humans lack the means to contact their Creator. The second option is both feasible and just. The Creator, being supremely powerful, must inform humans about the purpose of their existence. Consequently, intelligence concludes that the Creator must contact humans.

Continuing reflection, intelligence considers two methods of communication: should the Creator contact every individual directly, or select certain people to convey the message to humanity? Human

reasoning observes that direct communication with all would undermine free will and invalidate life as a test. Conversely, communication through chosen individuals allows a fair examination, preserving human freedom to believe or disbelieve. Thus, intelligence reaches the fourth conclusion: the Creator revealed His message to select individuals (Prophets), who were then entrusted with conveying it to humanity, thereby making life a meaningful test while preserving human choice.

Next, intelligence recognizes the need to identify God's true Messengers. It critically evaluates the claimants based on two criteria: (1) historical credibility, and (2) harmony between the divine message and human nature, since God, as Creator, would not deliver a message contrary to His creation.

After thorough investigation, human intelligence arrives at the sixth and final conclusion: it must follow the message conveyed by the Messenger without further questioning or doubt, i.e., with complete obedience.

6. The Quran, 32:17 / 17:85
7. Sahih Muslim; 2825 a, Book 53, Hadith 6) https://sunnah.com/muslim/ HYPERLINK "https://sunnah.com/muslim/53"53
8. The Quran, 32:16-17
9. Sahih Muslim: Book 40, Number 6781
10. Sahih Bukhari;7498, Sahih Muslim; 2824
11. The Quran, 43;71
12. The Qur'an, 41:31-32
13. Sahih al- Bukhari
14. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; 2790
15. Sahih al- Bukhari Anas reported that when Haritha ibn Suraqah was killed as a young boy in the Battle of Badr, his mother came to the Messenger of Allah and said that she knew how dear Haritha was to her, and if he was in Paradise she would remain patient and hope for reward from Allah, but if not, she would react strongly. The Prophet responded by reassuring her and correcting her assumption about Paradise, saying that Paradise is not a single, undifferentiated place but rather has multiple levels or gardens. He then informed her that her son was in the highest level, the Paradise of Al Firdaus. (Sahih al Bukhari)

    The Quran, 35: 34-35
16. The Quran, 15: 45-48
17. The Prophetic guidance teaches believers to aspire to the highest level of Paradise: 'When you ask Allah, ask Him for Al-Firdaws, for it is the best and highest part of Paradise." (Sahih al-Bukhari, 2790 / Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi 2530)

18. The Qur'an, 47:15
19. The Qur'an, 98:8
20. The Quran, 18:31
21. The Quran, 56: 32-33
22. 82. At-Tirmidhi, Vol,4, Book 12, Hadith 2524
23. The Quran, 57:122
24. 94. The Quran, 18:107-108
25. The Quran, 68:34
26. The Quran, 39:20
26. The Quran, 9:72
27. The Quran, 4:57
28. The Quran, 76:14
29. The Quran, 38:51
30. The Quran, 52:22
31. At. Tirmidhi
32. At. Tirmidhi, Vol,4, Book 12, Hadith 2525
33. At. Tirmidhi
34. The Quran, 3:133
35. The Quran, 69:24
36. The Quran, 2:25
37. The Quran, 56:32-33
38. The Quran, 44:55
39. The Quran, 43:71
40. The Quran, 47:15
41. The Quran, 47:15, Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2545. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 7928
42. The Quran, 47:15
43. The Quran, 47:15
44. The Quran, 10:25
45. The Quran, 43:73
46. The Quran, 38;54
47. The Quran, 18:31, Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2545. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 7928
48. The Quran, 52:22
48. The Quran, 37:46-47
49. The Quran, 37:45-47
    The Quran, 15:48
50. Sahih Muslim 2834, Book 53, Hadith No. 18/ Book 40, Hadith No. 6795
51. Sahih Bukhari

52. The Qur'an, 44:56
53. The Quran, 56:19
54. The Qur'an, 50:34
55. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 2837
56. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Hadith 6548; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 2850; Qur'an, 44:56
    (The Prophet said: "Death will be brought on the Day of Resurrection in the form of a black-and-white ram. Then it will be slaughtered…" A caller will announce: "O people of Paradise, there is no death for you; O people of Hell, there is no death for you.")
57. The Quran, 35:35 / 15:48
58. The Qur'an, 44:56
59. The Quran, 35:33
60. The Quran, 43:70-71
61. 94.62. The Quran, 35:33-34
62. The Qur'an, 56:34 / 88:13
63. The Quran, 44:53
64. The Qur'an, 18:31 / 76:21
65. The Quran, 76:21
66. At Tirmidhi
67. 100.Sahih Muslim
68. The Qur'an, 56:25
69. Sahih Muslim
70. The Quran, 10:25
71. The Quran, 6:127
72. The Quran, 36:58
73. The Quran, 15: 45-48
74. The Qur'an, 44:51
75. The Quran, 43:70
76. The Quran, 13:24
77. The Quran, 56:25-26
78. The Qur'an, 7:43 / 15:47
79. Musnad Ahmad & Sahih Muslim
80. The Quran, 15:47
81. The Quran, 78:33
82. The Qur'an, 2:25
83. The Quran, 43:70
84. The Qur'an, 13:23
85. The Qur'an, 44:54
86. The Quran, 2:25

87. The Quran, 15:45
88. The Quran, 35:34
89. The Quran, 15:47
90. The Quran, 15:48
91. The Quran, 18:108
92. The Quran, 25:15
93. The Quran, 29:64
94. The Qur'an, 4:57 / 98:8
95. The Quran, 4:122
96. The Quran, 15:48
97. The Quran, 18:108
98. The Quran, 56:18
99. The Quran, 9:72 / 3:185 / 5:119 / 61:12 / 64:9.
100. The Qur'an, 43:71
101. Musnad Ahmad & Sahih Muslim
102. The Quran, 56:19
103. The Qur'an, 4:122
104. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 2833
105. Sahih Muslim
106. The Qur'an, 9:72
107. The Quran, 4:122
108. The Quran, 15:48
109. 64. 38.74. 85. and 58. The Quran, 18:31
110. Sunan ibn Majah, Vol.1, Book 1, Hadith 186
111. The Quran, 75:22-23/ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 181
112. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 179
113. The Qur'an, 10:77
114. The Quran, 4:69
115. The Qur'an, 10:26 "For those who do good is the best reward and even more".
116. The Quran, 9:72
117. The Quran, 2:25
118. Sahih Muslim, 2822
119. The Quran, 2:25
120. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith 2822 / Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Hadith 6487
121. The Quran, 4:31
122. Sahih al- Bukhari
123. Sahih Muslim 2607, Book 45, Hadith 136
124. Sahih al-Bukhari 1397, Book 24, Hadith 3
125. Sahih al- Bukhari

126. Sunan Abu Dawood
127. Sunan Abu Dawood
128. Sahih al-Bukhari
129. Sahih Muslim
130. Sahih al-Bukhari
131. The Qur'an, 12:53, 35:6, 17:62-64, 91:7-10, 18:29
132. Sunan Ibn- Majah
133. Sahih Muslim

Note: The English translations of the Qur'an cited in this research paper are taken from the works of Muhammad Asad, M. M. Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Dr. Mustafa Khattab, Safi Kaskas, Wahiduddin Khan, Shakir, and others, consulted in print editions and, where applicable, through www.islamawakened.com. The Hadith references are sourced from https://sunnah.com.

JAVED AKHATAR

A Socio-Cultural Analysis of M. Mujeeb's Concept of the Indian Muslims

ABSTRACT

This paper critically analyses Chapter 1 of M. Mujeeb's *The Indian Muslims* and explores its complex identity, addressing the central question, "Who are the Indian Muslims?" Mujeeb highlights the community's diversity, shaped by historical, sociological, and cultural factors, challenging simplistic census-based definitions. Drawing on sources like the Imperial Gazetteers of India, despite their biases and gaps, he examines the interplay of urban and rural Muslim life, revealing a blend of Islamic and local traditions. Urban Muslims often emphasize high culture, marginalizing rural communities where syncretic practices, such as saint worship and pre-Islamic customs, prevail. Mujeeb's regional case studies—spanning North, South-West, East, South and South India—illustrate diverse beliefs, from heterodox sects to folk Islam, underscoring the community's unity in diversity. He attributes the Muslim presence in India to conquest, immigration and conversion, with the latter being the most significant, often driven by Sufi influence or social marginalisation. Despite social stratification mirroring Hindu caste structures, Islam's egalitarian ethos fosters unity, rooted in a shared faith and the concept of the global Ummah. Mujeeb acknowledges the limitations of historical records, particularly the underrepresentation of Sunni Hanafis and Shi'ahs, emphasizing the fluid, evolving nature of Indian Muslim identity. This analysis portrays Indian Muslims as a dynamic religious community, not a monolithic or political entity, continually shaped by historical processes and plural lived experiences.

Keywords: Cultural Synthesis, Diversity, Indian Muslims, Identity, M. Mujeeb

INTRODUCTION

Muslims living in the Republic of India today face a unique need to reflect on their identity, their loyalties and their future. In his work 'The Indian Muslims,' M. Mujeeb does not attempt to provide direct answers to these questions. Rather, he presents a rich body of data, encouraging each reader to derive their own understanding.

The chapter opens with a question— "*Who are the Indian Muslims?*"—and immediately points to the complexity and diversity of this community. While the census offers a superficial answer[1]—*any Indian who identifies as a Muslim*—Professor Mujeeb seeks to explore the deeper sociological, historical and cultural dimensions of what it truly means to be an Indian Muslim.

M. Mujeeb underscores that defining Indian Muslims is particularly challenging due to the community's intricate blend of social, cultural and religious practices. This paper, therefore, aims to critically analyse the foundational data and arguments presented by Mujeeb in order to engage more deeply with the central question —*Who are the Indian Muslims?*

I

PROFESSOR MOHAMMAD MUJEEB

Mohammad Mujeeb, the *Padma Bhushan* awardee was an eminent historian, educationist and scholar. Born on 30 October 1902 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh in a reputed family, Mohammad Mujeeb had the privilege to acquire education in the best national and international institutions. Committed to secular and democratic ethos, Mohammad Mujeeb served the nationalist cause through his commitment to academics and education and serving Jamia Millia Islamia (Delhi based Central University) since 1926 as Professor of History and as Vice Chancellor from 1948–73. Mohammad Mujeeb mastered several languages including Urdu, English, Russian, German and French. *The Indian Muslims* is his *magnum opus* though Mohammad Mujeeb has many more books, dramas and articles in Urdu and English to his credit. Mohammad Mujeeb widely travelled and represented India at the UNESCO and UN General Assembly. He was the member of several

prestigious institutions including *Taraqqui Urdu Board*, *Hindustani Talimi Sangh* and the *Sahitya Akademi*. The Government of India honoured him with the *Padma Bhushan* in 1965 for his contribution in the field of literature and education.[2]

THE INDIAN MUSLIMS: MAGNUM OPUS

The Indian Muslims by Professor Mohammad Mujeeb is a significant and thoughtful work in the field of Indian Muslim historiography. Authored by one of the founding members of Jamia Millia Islamia and an influential scholar of Indian history and culture, the book offers an insightful and interpretative account of the evolution of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Rather than confining his study to political events or dynastic histories, Mujeeb explores the broader dimensions of Muslim life in India—cultural, social, ethical and intellectual. His primary objective is to examine the historical experiences of Indian Muslims in the context of the Indian civilization and to establish that they are not foreign elements, but rather, an integral and inseparable part of the Indian social fabric.

He traces the early contact of Islam with India and explains how Indian Muslims gradually evolved a distinctive identity in response to their surroundings. Mujeeb emphasises the transformative encounter between Islamic principles and Indian traditions, highlighting how this interaction led to the development of a unique Indo-Muslim civilization. He reflects on the impact of Sufism, the contributions of educational institutions like madrasas and the role of scholars and ulama (religious leaders) in shaping the intellectual and moral landscape of Indian Muslim society.

What makes this book stand out is Mujeeb's interdisciplinary approach. Drawing from history, ethics, sociology and philosophy, he creates a narrative that is rich in thought and reflective in tone. He does not rely on scientific data or extensive documentation; instead, he offers insights born from a lifetime of experience, observation, scholarship and engagement with Indian Muslim culture. His writing style is literary, elegant and at times meditative, giving the book a timeless quality that goes beyond mere academic analysis.

Among the most powerful themes in the book is the integration

of Muslims within Indian society. Mujeeb challenges the notion that Muslims were mere conquerors or outsiders; instead, he argues that they became active participants in the cultural and moral evolution of the Indian subcontinent. He draws attention to the deep-rooted connections between Islamic and Indian traditions and underscores the contributions Muslims have made to the shared heritage of India. At the same time, he does not shy away from addressing the internal crises that afflicted the Indian Muslim communities, particularly during the colonial period. He discusses the intellectual stagnation and the moral dilemmas faced by Muslims under British rule and critiques the failure of leadership that led to the partition of the country.

Mujeeb's reflections on the partition are especially thought-provoking. He considers it a tragic and avoidable event, brought about by a combination of fear, miscommunication and short-sightedness. He had a firm belief in cultural coexistence and saw the division of India as a rupture in a long-standing civilizational unity. His analysis is not simply political—it is deeply moral. He speaks of the need for introspection, reform and a commitment to ethical values within the Muslim community as a path forward.

The strengths of the book lie in its balanced tone, philosophical depth and literary quality. It avoids sectarian biases and instead calls for unity, understanding and dialogue. However, it also has its limitations. Since the work is more interpretative than empirical, it lacks statistical data and thorough referencing. Some of the discussions on contemporary issues may appear dated to modern readers and the narrative reflects the personal worldview of the author, which may not satisfy those looking for objective historical accounts.

Despite these limitations, *The Indian Muslims* remains a landmark work. It offers a refreshing and humanistic perspective at a time when historical narratives are often used for political ends. Mujeeb's emphasis on ethical responsibility, cultural synthesis and civilizational continuity continues to offer guidance in a fractured world. His work urges both Muslims and non-Muslims to understand the past not as a catalogue of conflicts, but as a shared journey marked by collaboration, mutual influence and common aspirations. Professor Mohammad Mujeeb's *The Indian Muslims* is, therefore, not just a historical study but also a philosophical meditation on identity, belonging and the moral

challenges of modernity. It is a compelling read for scholars, students and general readers alike and remains a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand the deeper dimensions of Muslim existence and their identity in the Indian context.[3]

II

SOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE LIFE OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

M. Mujeeb truly writes that the ideal analysis of Indian Muslim life would demand systematic records over twelve centuries, but what exists are incomplete political narratives and subjective travel accounts, which often miss socio-cultural nuances. He acknowledges the lack of objective records in constructing a comprehensive account of Indian Muslim society. Reliable sources are sparse and existing data are often subjective, limited to elite and hardly concerned with folk religion or daily Muslim life.

If I interpret a series of complete records analysed by M. Mujeeb covering about twelve centuries, as a source of study in his book, it would look like beneath in the chart:[4]

S. No.	*Types of the records*	*Nature of the data*	*Explanation*
1.	Chronicles	Incomplete	The chronicles of political activities primarily focus on rulers and events, offering limited insight into social structures. As such, they are often considered unreliable sources for understanding the sociological character of Indian Muslims throughout history.
2.	Accounts	Subjective	The accounts of travellers and observers are illuminating and offer valuable snapshots of specific periods; however, they are often selective in focus and tend to

			overlook important socio-cultural nuances.
3.	Gazetteers	Biased Yet Valuable	The Gazetteers of India, as a resource, offer fragmented but localised insights into Muslim life. Though they suffer from inconsistencies, colonial biases and the subjectivity of their compilers, they remain valuable for revealing regional diversity and local religious practices.

Chart Analysis: The Challenges for Historical and Sociological Study

THE ENIGMATIC IDENTITY OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

1. Beyond Simple Definitions

M. Mujeeb begins by noting the difficulty in precisely defining who Indian Muslims are, despite their self-evident presence in India across history. It critiques the simplistic identifiers such as census approach—labelling anyone who identifies as an Indian Muslim as such—arguing that this fails to capture the essence of their true identity.[5] Identity here cannot be reduced to merely religious profession or demographic labelling.

2. Unity in Diversity

The Indian Muslim community demonstrates a paradoxical blend of unity and diversity, reflecting variations in beliefs, practices, regional customs and degrees of religiosity. Understanding this complexity requires examining historical evolution rather than static definitions.

3. Role of the Imperial Gazetteers of India

The Imperial Gazetteers of India, compiled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, serves as a primary source for understanding Indian Muslim life. Despite its piecemeal nature and occasional biases from compilers (colonial officers' prejudices), it provides valuable data on

beliefs, practices and demographic trends. The Gazetteers highlight the complexity of Indian Muslim identity, particularly in rural and urban divides and reveal cultural developments, syncretic traditions and variations in Islamic observance that pose questions for historians and sociologists.[6]

4. Urban Vs. Rural Dichotomy

Professor Mujeeb also underscores a significant divide between urban and rural Indian Muslims. Islam has, in all countries, promoted urban life, and Muslim civilization has everywhere been essentially urban in character. No study of the Indian Muslims can be objective, and, of course, no information about them can be complete, unless we consider both the urban and the rural population.[7]

Urban-Centric Self-Perception

Educated urban Muslims often view their community through the lens of city life, placing emphasis on urban cultural standards and contributions in literature, art and manners. This urban bias tends to marginalise the rural Muslim population, which, despite constituting a substantial portion of the community, remains underrepresented in cultural narratives. As a result, urban Muslims:

- Have historically associated with city life, literature, and high culture;
- Have often ignored rural Muslims, despite their numerical significance;
- Have perceived themselves as upholders of Islamic urban civilization.

Overlooked Rural Realities

This outlook marginalises the rural Muslim population, whose practices often reflect a fusion of Islamic elements and pre-Islamic or regional customs. The rural and lower-class Muslim population:

- Retained elements of pre-Islamic customs, blending Hindu and Muslim traditions;
- Frequently practiced forms of folk Islam, including saint worship and participation in local festivals;

- Often lacked access to formal Islamic education, resulting in syncretic religious expressions.

Hence, a comprehensive study must include both urban and rural expressions of Islam.

5. Diversity in Beliefs and Practices

Professor Mujeeb provides a panoramic overview of varied Muslim communities across India, highlighting local adaptations, syncretism and heterodox practices. The analysis draws on examples from the Imperial Gazetteers of India to illustrate the diversity in beliefs and practices, particularly among rural and lower-class Muslims. These case studies challenge the monolithic view of Indian Islam. He forms an idea of the diversity of beliefs and practices on the basis of random samples from the Gazetteers, fixing Delhi as the centre, and preceding in different directions, one after another.[8]

Sample 1: North of Delhi (Haryana, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir)

Muslim agriculturists practiced folk religiosity, combining Islamic rituals with magical and superstitious elements. They often retained pre-Islamic practices, such as worshipping village deities alongside Islamic rituals like reciting the *kalimah* and *khatnah* (circumcision). Superstitions, reliance on saints and belief in miracles were prevalent, reflecting a syncretic blend of Hindu and Muslim traditions.

To illustrate this point, I present the following excerpt from his work:

In Karnāl, not far to the north of Delhi, a large number of Muslim agriculturists were, till 1865, worshipping their old village deities, though as Muslims they repeated the kalimah, the Muslim profession of faith, and practised circumcision. In the Panjab, the North-West Frontier, and Jammu and Kashmir State, most of the uneducated and many of the educated were superstitious and disposed to running to dead and living saints for the fulfilment of their desires or for relief from suffering. They were spiritually dependent on miracles and magic to a degree incompatible with genuine belief in an omni-potent God.[9]

Sample 2: South-West of Delhi (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Sind)

The Me'ōs and Minas tribes exemplified syncretism, celebrating Hindu festivals like Diwali and Janmashtami and worshipping local deities

like Panch Pira, Bhairon, Hanuman. Their practices, such as building platforms for Hindu gods and venerating saints like Salar Mas'ud Ghazi and Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, blurred religious boundaries. Marriage customs and inheritance laws also mirrored Hindu traditions like Parihar Minas avoid cow meat but followed Hindu marriage customs. Jā'ōrā Muslims incorporate Hindu rituals in weddings (toran, wooden parrots), worship disease goddesses and used symbolic torans. In Palanpur (Ahmedabad), the Mahdawis, a persecuted sect, believing the Mahdi had already come and practiced *taqiyah* (dissimulation) to conceal their heterodox beliefs, while tribal groups like Kolis and Bhils retained pre-Islamic superstitions. Sindh is depicted as a hotbed of spiritual fusion. Sindhi Muslims blended orthodox Islam with local river and vegetation cults, resulting in practices centred on the worship of rivers and vegetation. Examples include traditions such as the Darya Panth and Pir Jhariyon, as well as veneration of crocodiles and virgin female saints like Mai Pir. They also integrate dual Hindu-Muslim identities—for instance, Uderolal (also known as Shaikh Tahir) is revered by both communities. Moreover, gendered spiritual authority is present, with women serving as religious leaders in tree cults.

In line with this, M. Mujeeb writes:

In the south-western direction from Delhi, in the native states of Alwar and Bharatpür, lived the Me'os and the Minas. They had purely Hindu names or tagged on Khăn to a Hindu name. They celebrated not only Divāli and Dasehra but also Janamashtami, the birthday of Shri Krishna. When intending to dig a well, they first built a chabūtrā, or platform, dedicated to Bairuj or to the monkey-god, Hanūmān. Few could recite the kalimah. Their shrines or places of worship were the Panch Pira, the Bhayya or Bhomiya, and the Chahunda. The Panch Pira was a stone set up near a tank and dedicated to the Five Saints. The Bhayya consisted of a platform with stones placed on it so as to protect a lamp and was sacred to the guardian spirit of the locality. At the Chahundă, also called the Khērā Dĕ'o, which was also a platform, bloody sacrifices were offered to the goddess Mahādēvī. However, it was Sālār Mas'üd Ghāzi, believed to be a son of one of the generals of Sultan Mahmûd of Ghazni, Madar Şahib, an equally mythical figure, and Khwajah Şahib, (Shaikh Mu'inuddin Chishti) of Ajmēr whose heroic or semi-divine personalities loomed largest in the religious consciousness of the Mĕ'ōs. The Salar, or banner, of Mas'üd Ghāzi was worshipped in every Me'ō village during Shabbarat. The Me'ōs, like the Hindus, did not marry within the gōtra, and their daughters were not entitled to inherit.

The Minas, an allied tribe, practised dharēchā[3], worshipped Bhairon, a form of Shiva, and Hanūmān, and swore by the Katar. In the native state of Bündi lived the Parihar Mīnās, who considered the meat of the cow and the wild boar prohibited, but no other. They received money for a daughter given in marriage. Muslim cultivators in the native state of Jā'ōrā, about fifty miles north of Ratlām, mainly followed Hindu customs in their marriages, worshipped the goddess of smallpox and, for the marriage ceremonial, fixed the tōran, a wooden arch, putting the wooden figures of a parrot in the middle and a plough over the door.

In and around the native state of Palanpür, to the north of Ahmadābād, there was in evidence another phenomenon, the sect of the Mahdawis, whom persecution had forced to close their ranks. They practised taqiyah, which means dissimulation, or concealment of belief, passing as orthodox Muslims while they really held that, as the Mahdi had already come, there was no further need for repentance from sins or for praying for the souls of the dead. They were organized in da'irahs or circles, under spiritual heads, whom they called Sayyids, and they married only within their own sect. In the same area were Kōlis, Bhils, Sindhīs, and Thakurdārs, whom conversion to Islam had not weaned away from criminal practices or the superstitions of the aborigine.

Across the deserts, in Sind, while there were people of unimpeachable orthodoxy, like the Sunni Mēmans, the beliefs of the vast majority of the population were more or less tainted with credulity, an inordinate reverence for living and dead saints and Sayyids, and practices which looked like survivals of the worship of trees and rivers. 'The fundamentally Sindhi cults are based on the two principles of a male fertilizing element in River and a female producing element in Nature or vegetation.' There was the cult of Shaikh Ţabari or Tahir, to whom God was believed to have appeared in the form of a camel, and whose shrine was visited on appointed days by a large number of engaged men and married women. He was called Udērōlāl by the Hindus, and was considered as an incarnation of the river god, who emerges as an armed chieftain in times of stress to rescue his people. The cult of the river Indus, Darya Panth, consisted of a simple ritual and was peculiar to the Sindhi Lohānās. The formal address to the deity was, 'Master of the waves, grant a favour.' The cult of the River at Sakkhar had become the worship of Khwajah Khidr, and near Thatha adoration of Shah Jhando, the saviour ferryman. There was the cult of the Crocodile, which was found, not uncommonly, to be related to the veneration of the Pir, or Saint. The vegetation cults were closely associated in several ways with the feminine. Midway between Thatha and Mirpür Sakrō was the central place of the cult of Pir Jhariyōn-a feminine plural noun meaning 'trees'. The Pir's khalifah was always a woman of the Hingōrā clan. An independent form of this same cult was found in the Ghorbari district, just outside the boundaries of the modern Deh Jhārīyōn. Near the river Richhal was the shrine of Ma'i Pir-Mother Saint. It lay

within a coppice enclosed by a low bank of earth, about 100 yards in circumference, inside which no man was allowed to set foot, for Ma'i Pir was a virgin. The shrine itself was a rude hut from the roof of which a score of cattle bells were hung". Apart from these cults, there were in Sind several sects, some of moderate, others of extreme heterodoxy.[10]

Sample 3: Eastwards from Delhi (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal)

In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, semi-converted tribes and sects displayed syncretic practices, such as worshipping Kali alongside Allah and venerating shared deities like Devata Maharaj. Many Muslim households have Khudai Ghars, where both Allah and Hindu deities are invoked. At Maner, the fair of Ghāzī Miyan—held around a water tank—included a mock marriage procession, musical festivities and ritualistic dancing by possessed women. Participants consume *toddy* (an alcoholic drink) and the celebration featured non-Islamic elements, such as eunuchs performing parental roles in ceremonial rites. In the Sundarbans, Muslim woodcutters and fishermen venerate Mubarak Ghazi, a saint depicted as riding a tiger. Their rituals involve invoking both Islamic and Hindu deities, including Mahadev, Manasa, Kali and various jungle spirits, reflecting strong animistic and local cultural influences.

This M. Mujeeb narrates in these words:

Eastwards from Delhi, in what is now the State of Uttar Pradesh, and in the central part of Bihar, south of the Ganges, there were sects and sectarian differences, and a belief in the miraculous powers of saints, living and dead. In some areas, there were fairly large semi-converted 'neo-Muslim' tribes. Ghāzī Mīyāṇ's fair, held around the tank of Maner, might be quoted as an example of a greater lapse from orthodoxy than the numerous 'urs, or death anniversary celebrations at the tombs of the saints. Here, in summer, a mock marriage procession, starting from the town with music and men carrying the banners of Ghāzi Miyan, went to the tank. Eunuchs performed the duties of the parents of the mock bride and groom. At a shrine on a mound near the tank women and girls supposed to be possessed by evil spirits prostrated themselves, fell into a trance and danced hysterically.

North of the Ganges, in the district of Purnea, while there were educated and orthodox Muslims also, the dividing line between the religious beliefs and practices of the lower class Hindus and Muslims was very faint indeed. In every village could be found a Käli-asthān, a shrine dedicated to the worship of the goddess Käli, and

attached to almost every Muslim house was a little shrine called Khudā'ī Ghar, or God's House, where prayers were offered in which the names of both Allah and Käll were used. A part of the Muslim marriage ceremony was performed at the shrine of the goddess Bhagvati. Goats, fowls, pigeons and the first fruit of trees and crops were offered to purely Hindu deities, in particular the village godling, who was generally supposed to live in the most convenient tree. The most popular deity, among both Hindus and Muslims, was Dēvatā Mahārāj, with his door-keeper, Hadi. His abode and temple consisted of nothing more than a bamboo planted in the ground, from which were hung an old winnowing basket, a bow, an old fishing net and a hook. The 'Bengali' sub-caste of Muslims living in the Kishanganj sub-division built little shrines for Hindu deities, generally for Baishāhārī, the snake-goddess. They explained this by saying that according to the custom of their forefathers they had both a Khudā kā Ghar (God's house) and a Baishāhārī Mā'ī ka Ghar (house of Mother Baishāhārī).

In the Bararat and Bashirhät sub-divisions of the 24-Parganas the Muslim woodcutters and fishermen venerated Mōbrāh (Mubarak) Ghāzi. He was believed to be a faqir who had so overawed the wild beasts of the jungle that he went about riding on a tiger, and the Zamindar or Rājā of the area in consequence ordered that every village should have an altar dedicated to him. These altars were very common in villages in the vicinity of the Sundarbans, and wood-cutters never went into the jungle without invoking Mōbrāh Ghāzi's protection.[11]

Sample 4: Southwards from Delhi (Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra)

Several Muslim communities in central and western India adopted local Hindu customs, names, dress and deities, forming unique syncretic traditions. Groups like the Husaini Brahmans, Madarīs, Shaikhdas, and Kamāliyās blended Hindu and Islamic elements in belief and practice. Many rural Muslims maintained Hindu rituals, avoided beef, and secretly worshipped Hindu deities. These hybrid identities reflect a regional Islam shaped by social integration, historical legacy and cultural accommodation rather than strict orthodoxy.

In this regard, M. Mujeeb writes:

Southwards from Delhi, around Indore in central India, Muslim Patēls and Mirdhās had Hindu names, dressed exactly like the Hindus and some of them recognized Bhavānī and other Hindu deities. The Nayatās of Khajrānā, a rural population looked down upon by Muslims in the towns, were the descendants

of Pindāri free-booters and the prisoners whom they had converted. They had amalgamated completely with their Hindu neighbours.

The Gujarat region has been, it seems, a melting-pot of races and beliefs. It would not be correct to say that heterodoxy in various degrees was the characteristic feature of Muslim beliefs in Gujarāt, but there were forms of it which were not so evident elsewhere. Apart from the Khōjahs and the Mahdawis (or Ghair-Mahdawis, as they were also called), who have been mentioned already, there were a number of tribal or sectarian groups whose beliefs and practices could not be fitted into any Islamic pattern. Among the tribal groups, the outstanding were the Sidīs, the Mōlislāms, the Kasbātīs, the Räthors and the Ghanchīs; among the sectarian groups were the Husaini Brahmans, the Madarīs, the Shaikhdas or Shaikhs, and the Kamāliyās.

Among the sectarian groups, the Husaini Brahmans called themselves followers of Atharvavēda and derived their name from Imām Husain, the grandson of the Prophet. It could be said that they were not really converts to Islam, but had adopted such Islamic beliefs and practices as were not deemed contrary to the Hindu faith. Except beef they ate secretly all other kinds of meat. The men dressed like Muslims, but put the tilak, or browmark, on their foreheads. They did not practise circumcision, their marriages were performed by a priest of their own class, and they buried their dead in a sitting posture. At the same time they fasted during Ramadan and followed other Muslim practices. They held the saint, Khwäjäh Mu'inuddin of Ajmēr, in special reverence. The Madārīs proclaimed themselves believers in the celibate saint, Badi'uddin Madar Shah, whom they held to be still alive in his tomb at Makanpür, near Kaipür. They worshipped Hindu gods as well as Muslim saints.

The Shaikhdas, or Shaikhs, were devotees of Bālā Muhammad Shah, one of the minor saints buried at Pirānā, near Ahmadābād. They were not circumcized, they put the tilak marks on their foreheads and did not eat with the Muslims. Many of them, in fact, belonged to the community of the Swaminārāyans. But in marriages they adopted both the Hindu and the Muslim ritual, employing the services of a faqir and of a Brahman, and buried their dead like the Muslims.

Of the Kamaliyas the Mir'at-i-Ahmadi says, 'In the sub-district of Chunval, forty miles to the north of Ahmadābād, in the village of San Khānpür, under Pattan, is a temple wherein is no idol, but a niche which is named after Bahūcharā, one of the names of the goddess Bhavānī. The worshippers are divided into two classes, the Pavaiyās (eunuchs) and the Kamāliyās. The Kamāliyäs are men of the military profession who always bear the emblem of Bahücharā, which is a trident. Both classes are Mussalmans. They sacrifice buffaloes at Bahūchara's shrine and mark the forehead with the victim's blood'. They did not circumcize, and except that they buried the dead (after branding the breast), all their ceremonies were Hindu.

Of the Muslims living in the rural areas of what was formerly known as the Central Provinces and Birar, and in the districts of Thānā, Ahmadnagar and Bījāpūr, it could be said generally that they were more than three-fourths Hindu. The Muslim Bihnās, or cotton-carders, practised in all seriousness what was a parody of the prescribed manner of killing a fowl for food. The formula they repeated was:

'Father and Son, Shaikh Faridullah, kill the fowl. It is the order of God that the fowl should die by my hand.' The egg was also killed ceremonially. While slicing off the top of the egg, the bihna would say:

'White dome, full of moisture, I know not whether there is a male or a female within. In the name of God, I kill you.'

Some Deshmukhs and Dëshpāndēs of Buldānā professed the Muslim religion, and employed Brahmans in secret to worship their old tutelary deities. The Qaṣā'īs of Thānā, Ahmadnagar and Bījāpūr had strong Hindu leanings. They abhorred beef-eating to such an extent that they would not even touch a beef butcher, and they avoided mixing with Muslims, though a qādi was engaged for marriage ceremonies and funerals. In Ahmadnagar, the Qaṣā'īs or Baqar Qaṣābs and the Pinjārās still worshipped Hindu Hin gods and had their idols in their houses. In Bījāpūr, in addition to these two communities, the Baghbans (gardeners), Kanjars, poulterers, rope-makers, pindhrās and grass-cutters, though professing to be Muslim, had such strong leanings towards Hindus that they did not associate with other Muslims and openly worshipped Hindu gods. The Chhaparbands, who were originally highwaymen, also continued to worship Hindu gods in spite of their conversion.[12]

Sample 5: Southern India (Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala)

In central India, Muslim Patels and Mirdhas adopted Hindu names and deities. Gujarat showcased tribal and sectarian groups like the Sidhis and Husaini Brahmans, who blended Islamic and Hindu practices. In southern India, Arab-influenced Muslims maintained doctrinal orthodoxy but assimilated local customs in dress, food, and inheritance laws.

Southern India presents a curiously different picture. Here Islam came directly from Arabia through Arab traders, and in matters of doctrine the Muslims remained very largely unaffected by the environment. On the other hand, in dress, in food, in manners and customs and in the laws of inheritance their assimilation with the non-Muslims has been quite considerable, specially along the sea-coast. The South does not, of course, form a homogeneous unit, the Muslims of Mysore and Bangalore being much closer culturally to those of Haidarābād than to the Mōplāhs

and Navāyats of Kerala, who are geographically much nearer. But the divergence is in manners and customs, which we shall deal with later, and not in belief.[13]

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF INCOMPLETENESS

Professor Mujeeb acknowledges the limitations of the existing historical or ethnographic records—particularly the exclusion of Sunni Hanafis, who were dominant in the urban and landholding strata, as well as other Sunni sects and the Shi'ahs. This candid admission is crucial, as it reveals his awareness of methodological gaps and sectarian diversity within Indian Islam. By doing so, M. Mujeeb signals the importance of inclusivity in the representation of religious communities. Moreover, the mention that the description may not be representative of actual conditions of a century or two earlier reflects a historical consciousness. It reminds the reader that religious and social landscapes are not static—they shift across time due to political, economic and cultural transformations.

He alludes to the fluid nature of religious identities by suggesting that current observations might not apply to past centuries and that even within the 20th century, significant changes have occurred. This is particularly significant in the context of conversion to Islam, which the author later describes as an ongoing process rather than a historical event that concluded in the medieval period.[14]

STRATIFICATION AND EGALITARIANISM: FORMATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN INDIAN MUSLIMS

The line — "*In social forms also we see variety*" — sets the tone for the discussion on the internal diversity within the Muslim communities in India. M. Mujeeb recognises that while Islam promotes an egalitarian social order, real-life social practices reflected a more complex and stratified structure, especially after Islam's political entrenchment in India.[15]

He explains how, although Islam teaches that all Muslims are equal, Indian Muslim society developed some social divisions over time. When Arabs and Turks first came to India, they seemed united and

equal. But after the Delhi Sultanate was formed, politics influenced social relationships, especially among the rulers and elite classes. Still, no one openly denied the Islamic principle of equality.

Many people from lower-status groups in Hindu society converted to Islam and gained a higher status. However, within the Muslim community, people started identifying themselves by different labels like *Sayyid*, *Shaikh*, *Mughal* and *Pathan*, based on claimed ancestry. Some families even made-up stories to fit into these respected categories. These groups often avoided intermarriage and tried to keep their family "pure" to maintain social respect.

Lower-class converts also kept some caste habits from before and sometimes avoided mixing with other Muslims, thereby reproducing Hindu caste distinctions within an Islamic framework — a phenomenon often refer to as "*Ashraf-Ajlaf*" dichotomy. Still, the upper-class Muslims helped maintain unity, and overall, most Muslims saw it as their duty to mix socially, pray together and eat together. Islam and public opinion generally reject social divisions, and Muslim hospitality is seen as a core value of Indian Muslim life.

CONQUEST, MIGRATION AND CONVERSION: SOURCES OF MUSLIM PRESENCE IN INDIA

How did Muslims come to India?

To answer this question Professor Muhammad Mujeeb outlines three primary sources of Muslim presence in India— similar to the patterns seen in other parts of the world:

a. Conquest:

Muslim rulers such as Muhammad bin Qasim, Mahmud of Ghazni and Shihabuddin Ghori entered India through military campaigns. However, these conquests mainly led to changes in political control rather than large-scale population movements. The armies were relatively small, and the primary impact was political, not social or religious. While conquests provided an entry point for Muslims to settle in India, they were not the main reason for the growth of the Muslim population.

b. Immigration:

Muslim immigration to India occurred in several waves. Traders, particularly along the coastal regions of South India, had established contact long before major invasions. Later, after the conquests, people from Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan migrated—often driven by conflict or poverty in their homelands. These migrations were generally gradual and involved small groups or families. For example, "Pathans" from the northwest settled widely and became a significant component of India's Muslim population. Internal migration within India was also common, as people moved from one city or region to another in search of livelihood, safety, or better opportunities.

c. Conversion:

The majority of Indian Muslims are descendants of local converts rather than immigrants or conquerors. Conversions happened for various reasons. While forced conversions did occur, they were neither widespread nor particularly effective. More often, people converted because they were marginalized in the existing social hierarchy—due to their occupations or military associations. Many were drawn to Islam through the influence of Sufi saints, who preached with compassion and spiritual depth. Entire communities such as the Khojas, Bohras and Memons embraced Islam through peaceful missionary work. In other cases, urban life and Muslim rule created social and economic incentives that made conversion more attractive or convenient.[16]

WHAT KEPT INDIAN MUSLIMS TOGETHER?

Despite their diverse origins and backgrounds, what brought Muslims together?

Muslims in India came from diverse regions and backgrounds, yet a strong sense of unity persisted among them. This unity was not primarily the result of political power—empires like the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal Empire may have offered authority and structure, but their benefits largely favoured the ruling elite rather than the common people. Nor was economic interest a unifying factor, as Muslims

occupied varied roles in society—some served under rulers, while others engaged in independent trades or professions.

What truly bound Indian Muslims together was their shared faith—Islam. Religion gave them a sense of belonging to a global Muslim ummah (brotherhood), creating a spiritual and emotional connection even among strangers. This sense of unity, though often dormant, could awaken powerfully in response to specific events or challenges. It served as a foundation for reform movements and fostered social cohesion.

However, this religious unity did not completely erase internal differences. Sectarian divisions, personal ambitions and diverse interpretations of faith continued to exist. Thus, while Indian Muslims did not form a single political nation, they constituted a religious community linked by a common identity and shared spiritual aspirations.[17]

Who are Indian Muslims?

But if we are to define Indian Muslims in the context of the foregoing discussion, we may say that "*Muslims are Indians who identify themselves as Muslims, believe in the unity and fraternity of Muslims as a religious and social community, and are capable of demonstrating in practice their adherence to this belief, notwithstanding their differences in doctrine and religious observances*".[18]

Indian Muslims can be defined as people who:

- Are Indians,
- Follow Islam,
- Believe in Muslim unity and the idea of one Muslim community (ummah),
- And show this belief through their actions—even if they differ in religious practices or beliefs.

CONCLUSION

The closing lines reinforce the idea that Indian Islam is not monolithic or frozen in time. Rather, it is presented as a living tradition, undergoing gradual change and adaptation through centuries of interaction with the local context.

"*As a religious community the Indian Muslims have been continuously and still are in the making*."

This line is especially significant. It resonates with the view that religious communities are formed through historical processes—involving conversion, acculturation, negotiation, and sometimes syncretism. The phrase "still are in the making" indicates an unfinished character to Muslim identity in India, thereby de-centring orthodoxy and emphasizing plural lived experiences.

Indian Muslims were never completely alike. They had different origins, social backgrounds and belief systems. Yet, this diversity helped strengthen the idea that they were still united under Islam. Some people confused this religious unity with the idea of being a separate nation, but Indian Muslims never were and never aimed to be a political nation in themselves. The ideal was to be an equal and united community, living by Islamic values in everyday life. Political power, whenever it came, was not something natural for them—it was an external thing, not the core of their identity.

Indian Muslims, though diverse in origin and practice, shared a common religious identity that gave them a sense of unity—but this unity was cultural and spiritual, not political or national.

NOTES

1. Mujeeb, M. *The Indian Muslims*, George Allen & Unwin, 1967, p. 9. (Census definition fails to capture the nuances of their lived experiences. Historical and regional variations complicate any unified understanding.)
2. For more detail see: Meher Fatima Hussain, *Makers of Indian Literature: Mohammad Mujeeb*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2016; and Ziya ul Hasan Faruqi, Shahabuddin Ansari, Mushirul Haq, Abdul Lateef Azmi, eds., *Mujeeb Sahab: Ahwal-O-Afkar*, Maktaba Jamia Limited, New Delhi, 1984; Javed Akhatar, *Jamia Millia Islamia and its Contribution to Islamic Studies*, Writers Choice, New Delhi, 1920.
3. For more detail see: Mujeeb, M. The Indian Muslims, George Allen & Unwin, 1967.
4. Ibid., p. 9.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 10.

8. One may also see: A.R. Uganwi, *The Indian Muslims: Cankered by Casteism*, Labbaik Publications, New Delhi, 2013; M.N. Sriniwas, *Jadid Hindustan mein Zaat Paat aur Dosrey Mazamin*, NCPUL, New Delhi, 1974.
9. Mujeeb, M. The Indian Muslims, George Allen & Unwin, 1967, 10.
10. Ibid., pp. 10-13.
11. Ibid., pp. 13-15.
12. Ibid., pp. 15-18.
13. Ibid., p. 18.
14. Ibid., p. 19.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., pp. 20-22.
17. Ibid., p. 22.
18. Ibid., p. 23.

ABIDA KHATOON

The Muslim Women's Movement for Empowerment in India

ABSTRACT

This article interrogates the Muslim women's movement in India through the prism of empowerment[1]: educational, legal, political, spiritual and digital. Drawing on a systematic review of scholarship from the colonial era to the present, the paper argues that Muslim women in India have developed diverse, layered, and resilient strategies to assert agency in the face of intersecting pressures arising from patriarchy, communalism, media stereotyping, and structural marginalisation. Their movement is neither monolithic nor passive; rather, it constitutes a heterogeneous enterprise that combines Islamic feminist ideology[1] with constitutional rights frameworks, grassroots organising with digital activism, and personal piety with public protest. The paper traces the history of empowerment from its precursors in reform movements of the colonial period to the institutionalisation of organisations such as the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), landmark protests such as Shaheen Bagh and contemporary contestations over the Uniform Civil Code and the Triple Talaq legislation. It argues that Muslim women's empowerment in India needs to be viewed on its own terms: anchored in faith, influenced by context, and led by the women themselves.

Keywords: Muslim women Movement, Shaheen Bagh Case Study, Feminism, Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Indian Muslim women are at a unique and complex conjuncture of gender, religion, minority rights and democratic citizenship. As the

country's largest religious minority, they live within a pluralistic society where communal conflicts and judicial contests over personal laws are recurrent, while persistent prejudices continue to portray them as victims of an authoritarian religious order. However, there is a growing body of literature that shows a very different reality: that Muslim women in India are active, vocal and more organised agents of social and political change.

This paper examines the continued marginalisation[2] and stereotyping of Muslim women in both mainstream feminist discourses and their own communities, which erases the diversity of their experiences and undermines their political subjectivity. At the same time, empowerment is undertheorized and devalued in the existing literature as not a release from religion but as Muslim women's capacity to set their own parameters of freedom in and with their faith.

The main argument of this study is that the Muslim women's movement in India is primarily a movement for empowerment in multiple dimensions: educational, legal, political, media-representational, spiritual and collective. These dimensions are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. They are not separate. Legal literacy grows from education, political engagement grows from legal reform, media stereotypes are challenged by political exposure and spiritual reinterpretation affirms feminist demands from within the community. In this study we trace these characteristics across time and thematically through a systematic review of qualitative, historical, anthropological and legal studies from the early twentieth century to 2026.

THE EMPOWERMENT IN COLONIAL PERIOD

The roots of Muslim women's empowerment in India can be traced to the social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that challenged seclusion, advocated female education, and began to contest the patriarchal structures present in colonial and community law. In Bengal and northern India, Muslim reformers and women activists took part in discourses that connected religious identity to women's education and social mobility. Lambert-Hurley (2004) studied the likes of the All India Ladies' Association[3] who sought to

combine colonial and indigenous models of reform and maintain the autonomy of Muslim women across sectarian boundaries. Education was the first and most basic tool of empowerment in this era.

In Mitra (2006)[4], for instance, the movement for women's emancipation among the Bengali Muslim community was not separate from the movement for female literacy. Behind the purdah women developed a feminist consciousness that would flourish in later decades. Ali (2000) and Burton document Muslim women's active participation in the fight for voting rights and social reform between 1920-1947, challenging colonial paternalism and patriarchal community leadership.

New challenges arose in the post-independence era. The Shah Bano case in 1985[5], when a divorced Muslim woman's claim for maintenance was overturned through legislative intervention under pressure from conservative religious groups, was a watershed moment. It did not silence Muslim women; it galvanised collective empowerment. The case crystallised the tension between state secularism, community patriarchy and women's rights, and sowed the seeds of organised Muslim feminist activism that would bloom in the 1990s and beyond.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN INDIA, 1990S AND 2000S

In this period there appeared dedicated organisations, which combined grassroots mobilisation with participation in religious and legal reform. Most notably, the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA)[6], established in 2007, emerged as a key advocate for Muslim women's rights through an Islamic feminist lens. According to Jones (2024), groups like BMMA took a dual approach: reinterpreting Quranic principles to promote gender equality and using constitutional rights to challenge discriminatory practices in Muslim personal law.

The empowerment of these organisations stemmed from Islamic feminism, which viewed religious texts as sources of gender justice instead of tools of patriarchal oppression. This was not a dismissal of Islam but rather a reinterpretation of its principles. In India, Islamic feminism was a local movement and a dialogue with transnational feminist networks which brought together scholars, activists and ordinary women to contest male-orientated readings of the Quran and Hadith (Schneider, 2009). It generated a kind of spiritual empowerment that validated

women's claims in the very moral fabric of the community and made it much more difficult for religious leaders to dismiss.

Formed in 2000 by a group of concerned Muslim women and men, including Dr Syeda Hameed, Mrs Saeeda Khurshid, Dr Sughra Mehdi and Aziz Qureshi, Muslim Women's Forum (MWF) is a not-for-profit organisation. The Forum is dedicated to empowering, including, and educating Muslim women. The forum's main role is to offer Muslim women a venue to voice their hopes and opinions on issues that directly touch their lives.

The organisation enjoys a unique position where it plays a catalytic role with many stakeholders to raise and deal with various concerns related to Muslim women in the Indian setting. Any reform movement must have the essentials of educational upliftment, economic self-reliance, social development, legal reform and political empowerment. MWF advocates for a comprehensive programme that includes all Muslim women.

What makes MWF unique is that its foundation is based on the most liberal, gender-sensitive and compassionate view of the Quran first and subsequently the Hadith and Sunnah. We think that, like the core and fundamental concept of Islam, which is also written in the Constitution of India, men and women are equal in rank and worth. The Forum is dedicated to facilitating constructive dialogues among the government, religious scholars, civil society, and project beneficiaries, especially to support women in self-empowerment. The organisations also created independent spaces for women, such as community forums, legal aid networks, and alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. Muslim women began networks to challenge religious patriarchy and the limitations of the mainstream women's movement, which had largely overlooked the particular concerns of Muslim women.

With that, there is also the recent organization the All India Muslim Women's Association, which was founded in 2023, propagated the ideas of women's autonomy and women's formal education across geographical and sectarian boundaries and served as a forum of debate on issues such as purdah, age of marriage, childcare, health, polygamy and others related to women's questions. However, it is still in the process of gaining momentum. There is still much work to be done in order to fully realize the goals of women's autonomy and education.

As noted by Kirmani (2009)[7]. Muslim women have established their

own institutions, leading to a self-sustaining collective empowerment within their communities. Interestingly, there are emerging organisations and foundations which are touching the issues which were left usually unaddressed, such as the low visibility of Muslim women in the corporate world and business leadership. Led By Foundation, founded by Ruha Shadab in 2019, is a professional leadership incubator for Indian Muslim women that provides world-class free training programmes and is a Harvard-incubated start-up. It aims to elevate the corporate and entrepreneurial space in India by closing the opportunity divide for Indian Muslim women through skills, experience, and support. The foundation offers free programmes like the "Corporate Leader Fellowship" in collaboration with Harvard University, the "Shepr eneur programme" for Muslim women-owned businesses, and the "Accelerator programme" for the fresher. The foundation also aims to challenge stereotypes and promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace; their study on Muslim women's hiring bias on entry-level jobs provided an eye-opening picture of the exclusion of Muslim women from corporates.[8]

EDUCATION AS A PATHWAY TO EMPOWERMENT

Across all time periods and regions in the literature, education has been the most consistent enabler of Muslim women's empowerment. C. P. (2025)[9] notes that the rising participation of Muslim women in local governance and public life in Malabar, Kerala is closely associated with the increasing female literacy as well as access to formal education. More education brought with it a greater political and legal awareness and a willingness to challenge patriarchal norms.

Legal literacy is a very powerful form of educational empowerment. Knowledge of rights under Muslim personal law and constitutional legislation leads to improved access to redress for Muslim women and their participation in social reform initiatives, as demonstrated by Dhingra et al. (2023)[10]. Educational programmes that include legal awareness do more than educate women, they change women's relationship with institutions of power and prepare them to negotiate, challenge and reform those institutions.

Other dimensions of educational empowerment are highlighted by Rasheed (2023). She argues that Muslim women's activism is based on an ethic of self-cultivation that goes beyond the secular modernity/religious heritage dichotomy and stresses personal growth and self-understanding. Education here is not the acquisition of certificates but the acquisition of intellectual and moral agency to claim one's true place in society.

MEDIA REPRESENTATION: FROM VICTIM TO AGENT

One of the most persistent obstacles to the emancipation of Muslim women has been the representation of their identities in the mainstream media. Indian and Western media have historically represented Muslim women in simplistic tropes, such as victims of an oppressive religion, passive objects of male authority, or exotic others, as widely documented by Fatima (2026)[11]. These representations are not only inaccurate accounts of the everyday of Muslim women, but also a deliberate denial of their political subjectivity through the denial of their position as agents who are able to speak for themselves.

Digital and social media have redefined the representational empowerment of Muslim women. Jaiswal and Kapoor (2024)[12] talk about the counter narratives constructed by Muslim women on social media which bring out their activism, humour, intellect, spirituality and participation in politics on their own terms. Counter-narratives disrupt the dominant clichés, increase the visibility of Muslim women's agency, and build networks of solidarity across geographic borders.

The 2019–2020 Shaheen Bagh protests, where Muslim women held a continuous sit-in against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), was a watershed moment of representative empowerment. Bhatia and Gajjala (2020)[13] show how the images of Muslim women, many of them old, many of them in hijab, sitting calmly but determinedly in public space, contradicted every media cliché at once. "They were visible, they were audible, they were defiant and they were in control. To Biswas (2024)[14], Shaheen Bagh was more than a political protest; it was a reclamation of public space and public narrative by Muslim women who refused to be spoken for.

LEGAL EMPOWERMENT: ISLAMIC FEMINISM AND REFORM OF PERSONAL LAWS

Legal reform was arguably the most contentious and significant arena of Muslim women's liberation in India. For years the Muslim Personal Law, which governs marriage, divorce and inheritance among Muslims, has been a battleground between orthodox religious authorities, secular feminists and Muslim women activists who want to change the law within the Islamic framework.

The criminalisation of triple talaq in one go in 2019[15] was a major, if controversial, victory in the legal emancipation of Muslim women. The law followed years of activism from groups like BMMA, which has campaigned against the practice for years. However, as Sur (2018) notes, the political context of reform – under a Hindu nationalist government – has raised questions about its empowerment credentials, and whether state intervention in personal law was for the benefit of Muslim women or to instrumentalize them for majoritarian ends. Debates about the Uniform Civil Code[16] add another layer of complexity, with some Muslim women's groups tentatively supportive of codification as a means of legal consistency and clarity, and others sceptical about what it might mean for Islamic identity (Parveen et al., 2024).

Among the more innovative developments has been the emergence of women-led Sharia courts and alternative dispute resolution forums. These institutions are a form of legal empowerment deriving from within Islamic jurisprudence and not from outside it, as demonstrated by Schrago (2022)[17] in her ethnography of women's Shari'a courts in India. The courts challenge male dominance in religious legal authority. They train women as arbiters and adjudicators of marital disputes, providing Muslim women with a gender-just alternative to state courts and male-dominated religious tribunals. Dequen's work on the All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board (AIMWPLB)[18] shows a similar pattern and reveals the potential of women to re-work ideas from the Quran to produce gender just legal outcomes.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT: PARTICIPATION, PROTEST AND CITIZENSHIP

Political empowerment, the ability to participate actively in the governance of one's society, is a great success and a continuing problem

for the Muslim women of India. The literature indicates increasing, but uneven, participation, with significant gains in local governance and protest politics, but persistent under-representation in formal electoral institutions.

P.O. (2025) documents the slow but sure march of Muslim women from the periphery to the mainstream of local politics in Malabar. It narrates how education, social reform and organisational capacity have combined to create a generation of Muslim women who are involved in local governance, community decision-making and political advocacy. Fayiza (2022)[19] links this rise in political subjectivity to significant legal cases that transformed the relationship between Muslim women and the state. She contends that each legal struggle produces new forms of political consciousness and participation.

The most spectacular recent manifestation of political empowerment of Muslim women has been the anti-CAA protests, especially Shaheen Bagh. Sharma and Singh (2023) read these rallies as intersectional political mobilisations where Muslim women confront the patriarchal institutions of their communities and the discriminatory policies of the state. It was not a reactionary resistance but a creative resistance that produced new forms of democratic citizenship and political identity. Hussain (2024)[20] extends this argument to the case of Muslim girls, showing how the political environment of the post-CAA era has generated a new generation of young Muslim women activists, who are changing the terrain of Indian democratic politics.

But these achievements have not come without profound deep structural obstacles. Muslim women are under-represented in formal electoral politics, relative to their share of the population – in state assemblies and the national parliament. For many Muslim women, especially those from rural and low-income backgrounds, community polarisation, economic marginalisation and cultural expectations remain barriers to political participation.

INTERSECTIONAL EMPOWERMENT: RELIGION, GENDER, AND CITIZENSHIP

The most theoretically significant contribution of the Muslim women's movement to feminist philosophy is perhaps its articulation of intersectional empowerment, the capacity to hold together multiple,

sometimes contradictory, identities and to draw strength from all of them at the same time. Muslim women in India do not see their identity as only Muslim or only women or only Indian citizens, they see it as all of these at the same time and their empowerment has to be seen from this multi-dimensional perspective.

Sagnik (2025)[21] brings in the idea of 'everyday ethics' to understand the practices of empowerment of Muslim women in Mumbai ghettos through bodily practices, ethical choice and local activism. They are outside the usual scope of feminist analysis. However, they are very important in context. Sur (2022) also refers to the production of 'third spaces'[22] by Muslim women activists – spaces of identification and activity beyond the binary of Islamic conservatism and secular feminism, of victimhood and resistance.

That paradigm of intersectional empowerment is Islamic feminism. As Jones (2024)[23] points out, Indian Islamic feminism is a combination of Quranic principles and constitutional rights. This hybrid is neither religious nor secular but draws on both to make claims for gender justice that are intelligible both to the community and to the state. This combination is an empowerment in itself, it is a negation of the false dichotomy of faith versus rights, of Muslim identity versus feminist aspirations.

Digital activism has emerged as an important site of intersectional empowerment, particularly for young Muslim women. According to Jaiswal and Kapoor (2024), social media sites are sites of identity making, political expression and solidarity construction, enabling Muslim women to connect across geographic, class and generational lines. These digital communities are real in terms of organising, advocacy and mutual aid, not virtual in the sense of being unreal.

CHALLENGES TO EMPOWERMENT

However, even with some significant strides, considerable and constant obstacles remain to the empowerment of Muslim women in India. Hossain (2022)[24] describes how structural marginalisation restricted access to quality education, economic precarity, residential segregation continues to restrict Muslim women's ability to engage in the public sphere in large parts of the country. In communities, patriarchal

religious leadership continues to resist reform, sometimes employing legal and social punishment against women who challenge the status quo.

There are major gaps in the literature itself which constrain the understanding of the empowerment of Muslim women. The geographic bias towards urban centres like Mumbai, Delhi and Lucknow means that the experiences of rural Muslim women and their forms of activism remain largely unreported[25]. The focus on headline protest movements and court cases may obscure the everyday, localised modes of empowerment which make up much of Muslim women's day-to-day experience. Longitudinal data is not available to analyse the age and generational changes in empowerment strategies. Limited intersectional analysis—often falling short of religion and gender to embrace class, caste and regional identity—limits the depth of knowledge of the myriad issues Muslim women face.

Future research should involve comparative studies between rural and urban contexts, longitudinal ethnographies tracking empowerment over time, and quantitative data on political engagement and socio-economic status. A deeper consideration of the community as a whole, especially the part played by male supporters, the age gap and sectarian difference, would contribute to an understanding of the forces that empower and disempower Muslim women.

CONCLUSION

At its heart, the Muslim women's movement in India is a movement for empowerment. It is not a singular destination but an ongoing, pluralistic and context-sensitive process through which Muslim women claim their rightful place as full citizens, equal believers and autonomous individuals. The Muslim women in India have consistently refused the roles assigned to them by the community patriarchy and the condescending state, from the early twentieth-century reformers who challenged purdah and demanded education, to the Islamic feminists who reinterpret scripture to advance gender justice.

Their strength is through their faith, not in spite of it. It is expressed in education, legal change, political protest, digital activism, and organization institution-building. Skilful and resilient, it investigates

the intricate intersections of religion, gender, class, and citizenship. And it invites all of us—scholars, policymakers, feminists, and fellow citizens—to broaden our imagination of what empowerment is and what it may look like when it comes from inside a community on its own terms.

A review of the extant knowledge exposes the extent of Muslim women's agency and the endurance of the institutional constraints to which they are subjected. It highlights the critical need for policy measures that promote women-led legal institutions, increase access to education, amplify Muslim women's voices in the media, and develop political structures that really incorporate them. Above all, it requires that we listen: to the many diverse, nuanced and powerful voices of Muslim women themselves, who are already writing the next chapter of their empowerment.

NOTES

1. The term 'empowerment' as used in this paper draws on the multidimensional framework proposed in feminist development literature, where empowerment encompasses agency, access to resources, and the capacity to make strategic life choices. For Muslim women in India, empowerment must be understood as operating simultaneously within religious, legal, political, and cultural spheres. See also Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. Development and Change, 30(3), 435–464.
2. The marginalization of Muslim women within mainstream Indian feminist discourse has been documented by several scholars. Kirmani (2009) argues that the mainstream women's movement in India has often treated Muslim women's religious identity as an obstacle to emancipation rather than a resource for it, thereby reproducing the very exclusion it seeks to challenge. See: Kirmani, N. (2009). Claiming their space: Muslim women-led networks and the women's movement in India. Journal of International Women's Studies, 11(1), 72–85.
3. The All India Ladies' Association (AILA), founded in 1918, was one of the first organizations to bring together women across religious and regional divides in colonial India. Lambert-Hurley's study is particularly valuable for its recovery of Muslim women's active leadership within the AILA, which has been largely overlooked in nationalist historiography. See: Lambert-Hurley, S. (2004). Fostering Sisterhood: Muslim Women

and the All-India Ladies' Association. Journal of Women's History, 16(2), 40–65.

4. The Bengali Muslim community's reform movement, documented by Mitra (2006), is particularly significant because it demonstrates how Muslim women's empowerment in the early twentieth century was not simply imposed from above by male reformers but was actively shaped by women themselves. Women's writings, poetry, and organizational activities in this period reveal a feminist consciousness operating within Islamic frameworks. See: Mitra, S. (2006). The Movement for Women's Emancipation within the Bengali Muslim Community in India. Women's History Review, 15(3), 413–422.
5. The Shah Bano case (Mohammed Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, 1985) is among the most consequential legal decisions in the history of Muslim women's rights in India. The Supreme Court upheld Shah Bano's right to maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, but the subsequent Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, passed under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, effectively overturned this ruling under pressure from conservative Muslim leadership. The political controversy around the case has been extensively analyzed. See: Sur, E. (2018). Triple Talaq Bill in India: Muslim Women as Political Subjects or Victims? https://doi.org/10.20896/SACI.V5I3.299
6. The Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), founded in 2007 by Noorjehan Safia Niaz and Zakia Soman, is widely regarded as the most significant Muslim women's organization in contemporary India. Its campaigns have included advocacy against triple talaq, for Muslim women's right to enter mosques, for the codification of Muslim personal law, and for women's leadership in community institutions. See: Jones, J. (2024). Muslim Feminism as Islamic Modernism: Women's Activism in India between the Quran and the Constitution. Modern Asian Studies, 58(2), 421–447.
7. Kirmani's comparative analysis of Muslim women-led networks in India reveals significant diversity in organizational strategies, ranging from networks that work within religious institutions and engage directly with male religious authorities to those that explicitly challenge religious patriarchy and build entirely secular alliances. This diversity reflects the heterogeneity of Muslim women's communities and the different political contexts in which organizations operate. See: Kirmani, N. (2011). Beyond the Impasse: 'Muslim Feminism(s)' and the Indian Women's Movement. Contributions to Indian Sociology, 45(1), 1–26.
8. To access full report see here https://www.ledby.org/hiringbias.

9. The Malabar region of Kerala has historically had relatively higher rates of Muslim female literacy compared to other parts of India, linked to the Mappila Muslim community's traditions of education and the particular social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. C.P.'s (2025) study traces how this educational base has translated into increasing political participation for Muslim women in the region. See: C.P, M. S. (2025). From Margin to Mainstream: Muslim Women in Malabar Politics. Lex Localis, 23(S5), 2643–2651.
10. The relationship between legal literacy and empowerment is particularly significant in the context of Muslim personal law, which is governed by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, and various judicial interpretations thereof. Many Muslim women in India are unaware of their rights under this law, including rights to *mehr* (dower), maintenance, and divorce (khula). Dhingra et al.'s study across India and Indonesia finds that legal awareness programs significantly improve women's capacity to assert these rights. See: Dhingra, R., Teckchandani, J., & Narang, P. (2023). Cultural and Social Empowerment of Muslim Women in Context of Personal Law in India and Indonesia. Innovative Research Thoughts, 10 (1), 131–140.
11. Fatima's (2026) comprehensive study of media representations of Muslim women in India identifies several recurring stereotypes: the oppressed victim needing rescue from Islam; the dangerous 'other' associated with terrorism or separatism; the exotic, sexualized figure; and, more recently, the 'good Muslim woman' who endorses state interventions against Muslim men. All of these stereotypes, despite their apparent differences, deny Muslim women political agency. See: Fatima, M. (2026). Beyond Stereotypes: Muslim Women's Representation and Resistance across Media and Movements in India. International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research. https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2026.v08i01.66171
12. Jaiswal and Kapoor's (2024) analysis of Muslim women's social media presence focuses particularly on Instagram and Twitter/X, where Muslim women have developed distinctive visual and textual languages for asserting their identities. The study notes that Muslim women often navigate complex negotiations between representing their religiosity (through hijab, references to Islamic practice) and asserting their modernity, humor, and political engagement — refusing the binary that mainstream media imposes. See: Jaiswal, Y., & Kapoor, A. R. (2024). Representation of Muslim Women in Social Media. Journal of Communication and Management, 3(02), 173–182.
13. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed in December 2019,

fast-tracks Indian citizenship for religious minorities (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians) from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh — but explicitly excludes Muslims. Critics argued the Act, combined with a proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), could render millions of Muslim Indians stateless. The anti-CAA protests that followed were among the largest in post-independence India. See: Bhatia, K. V., & Gajjala, R. (2020). Examining Anti-CAA Protests at Shaheen Bagh: Muslim Women and Politics of Hindu India. International Journal of Communication, 14.

14. The Shaheen Bagh protest (December 2019 – March 2020) was a sustained sit-in protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) led primarily by Muslim women in a neighbourhood of South-East Delhi. At its height, thousands of women occupied a public road for over 100 days, creating a remarkable experiment in feminist public space. The protest was forcibly cleared during the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. See: Biswas, M. (2024). The Shaheen Bagh Strike: Muslim Women and Political Protest in Contemporary India. Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies. https://doi.org/10.7202/1109375ar; Sharma, Y. P., & Singh, S. (2023). Shaheen Bagh and the Politics of Protest in the Anti-CAA Movement in India. Feminist Encounters, 7(1), 10.
15. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, criminalized the practice of instant triple talaq (pronouncing the word 'talaq' three times in one sitting to effect an immediate divorce), making it punishable with up to three years' imprisonment. The legislation was passed following the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017), which declared the practice unconstitutional by a 3:2 majority. See: Sur, E. (2018). Triple Talaq Bill in India: Muslim Women as Political Subjects or Victims? https://doi.org/10.20896/SACI.V5I3.299
16. The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) debate refers to the long-standing proposal to replace religion-specific personal laws (governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption) with a single, secular civil code applicable to all Indian citizens regardless of religion. The debate is politically charged: Hindu nationalist governments have championed the UCC as a secularization measure, while many Muslims view it as an assault on religious identity. Muslim women's organizations are divided on the issue. See: Parveen, N., Sanyal, U., & Soman, Z. (2024). Uniform Civil Code and Muslim Women's Quest for Justice. South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal, 32.
17. Women's Shari'a courts — also known as dar-ul-qazas run by women —

represent a significant institutional innovation in Muslim women's legal empowerment. Schrago's ethnographic study of these courts in India shows how women trained in Islamic jurisprudence adjudicate marital disputes using gender-equitable interpretations of Islamic law, offering women an alternative to both state courts (which many Muslim women find alienating) and male-dominated religious tribunals (which often reproduce patriarchal outcomes). See: Schrago, S. (2022). Reclaiming Religious and Legal Authority: An Ethnography of the Women's Shari'a Courts in India. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 47(2), 499–523.

18. The All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board (AIMWPLB), founded in 2005 as an alternative to the male-dominated All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), has been a pioneering institution in developing gender-just models of Islamic jurisprudence. The AIMWPLB has drafted a model nikahnama (marriage contract) that includes stipulations protecting women's rights to divorce, financial security, and education. See: Dequen, J. (n.d.). Justice for Muslim Women in India: The Sinuous Path of the All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board. https://doi.org/10.7146/nnjlsr.v0i3.111107
19. Fayiza's (2022) analysis of the evolution of Muslim women's political subjectivity traces a trajectory from legal cases (Shah Bano, Shayara Bano) that positioned Muslim women primarily as legal subjects and objects of state protection, to the post-CAA moment in which Muslim women emerge as fully political subjects who define their own terms of citizenship and resistance. This evolution represents a qualitative shift in the nature of Muslim women's political agency. See: Fayiza, U. (2022). The Evolution of Muslim Women's Political Subjectivity in India. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244912-12
20. Hussain's (2024) study of Muslim girls' political agency in the post-CAA period is particularly significant for its focus on a demographic — young Muslim women, many still in school or college — who are rarely studied as political actors. The study finds that these young women are developing sophisticated analyses of citizenship, democracy, and resistance that challenge both patriarchal community norms and authoritarian state politics. See: Hussain, S. (2024). Feminist Counter-Authoritarian Political Agency: Muslim Girls Regenerating Politics in India. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102850
21. . Sagnik's (2025) concept of 'everyday ethics' draws on both Foucauldian ethics of the self and Islamic traditions of ethical self-cultivation (tarbiya) to describe how Muslim women in Mumbai ghettos practice empowerment

through daily choices about dress, speech, bodily comportment, and social relations. This micro-level analysis reveals dimensions of agency that are invisible to studies focused only on formal politics or legal reform. See: Sagnik, D. (2025). In the Shadow of Minority Rights: Decolonising Gender, Liberalism and the Politics of Difference. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009582025

22. The concept of 'third spaces' in the context of Muslim women's activism draws on Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the 'third space of enunciation' as a site where dominant cultural norms are negotiated and transformed. Sur (2022) applies this concept to Muslim women's activism to describe how they create spaces of identity and practice that are neither purely Islamic nor purely secular-feminist, but hybrid formations that draw on both traditions. See: Sur, E. (2022). Revisiting Muslim Women's Activism. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003360964
23. Jones's (2024) framework of 'Islamic modernism' describes a mode of feminist thought that treats the Quran and the Indian Constitution as complementary rather than contradictory sources of authority for women's rights. This framework is significant because it refuses the secularist assumption that religion and rights are inherently in tension, and instead argues that Islamic principles of justice (adl) and equality (musawat) are foundational resources for feminist politics. See: Jones, J. (2024). Muslim Feminism as Islamic Modernism. Modern Asian Studies, 58(2), 421–447.
24. Hossain's (2022) study of Muslim women as 'unequal citizens' documents the cumulative effects of multiple forms of marginalization: residential segregation in urban ghettos, limited access to quality schools and healthcare, economic discrimination in labor markets, and political underrepresentation. These structural disadvantages are compounded by communal violence and the psychological effects of living under conditions of insecurity and stigma. See: Hossain, I. (2022). Unequal Citizens of a Liberal Democracy. International Journal on Minority and Group Rights. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10077
25. The geographic bias of existing research toward urban centers is a significant limitation noted by multiple scholars. C.P. (2025) points out that even within Kerala — a relatively progressive state — the experiences of Muslim women in rural and semi-urban areas differ substantially from those in urban centers. Studies that generalize from urban case studies to 'Muslim women in India' risk obscuring the majority of Muslim women, who live in small towns and villages. See: C.P, M. S. (2025). From Margin to Mainstream: Muslim Women in Malabar Politics. Lex Localis, 23(S5), 2643–2651.

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