

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE FIRST ISLAMIC MISSION IN THE U.K. ESTABLISHED 1913 C.E. AS THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION

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March 2003 C.E. Meeting

Assalamu alaikum

Venue: *Dar-us-Salaam*

Date: **Sunday, 2nd March 2003**

Time: 3 pm

Topic: **Woking Mission in Pathe Newsreals**

by Dr Zahid Aziz

Regular Activities

Dars-i Quran: Every Friday at 2:30 pm.

Meeting of the Executive: First Sunday of every month at 2 pm.

Meeting of the Jamaat: First Sunday of every month at 3 pm.

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Who was Brahma?

By Jallal ud Din
Secretary AAII (Fiji)

(In response to an article on interfaith relations published in the Bulletin last year we were asked to forward the following letter to the author. The reply to which is published as the above article.)

Dear Jallal ud Din,

I liked to read your article and agreed with the overall intention of it. Only one sentence, in my opinion, damaged your effort to help improve relations between religions. When you mention the non-Abrahamic religions: 'Their differences are many.....'

while in your next sentence you blame people that they try to enlarge differences between Abrahamic religions.

You urge me to ask you, why? Why do you take this extreme view that there should be many and variable differences between the Abrahamic religions and all the rest? Your view here seems suddenly quite subjective focused on differences, but moreover not helpful in improving the Inter-religious Relations.

Don't you believe that Allah sent humankind all kind of instructions to find the way to serve God and to find It again, and that it's not about focusing on the 'differences' in instructions or worshipping, but about to serve Brahma well? With friendly greetings, Jael Bharat.)

Prophet Abraham is regarded to be the Patriarch or father of nations. Amongst our Hindu friends, Brahma or Brahmaji is regarded as the father of mankind. He was none else but Prophet Abraham.

Muslims are not restricted from reading and researching into other religious scripture – as may be the case with some religious groups. The Holy Qur'an imposes upon Muslims to read and gain wider knowledge, as stipulated at 96: 1-8 –

"1. Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates –

"2. Creates man from a clot,

"3. Read and thy Lord is most Generous,

"4. Who taught by the pen,

"5. Taught man what he knew not.

"6. Nay, man is surely inordinate,

"7. Because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient.

"8. Surely to thy Lord is thy return."

According to some *hadiths*, there were over 124,000 prophets who graced mankind as Messengers and Ambassadors of the Most High - since God Almighty created this planet. Abraham was the father of nations.

Brahma and Abraham have identical meanings. In Sanskrit, Brahma is derived from 'brih', which means to spread, flourish, gain strength. So Brahma stands for one who spreads forth and gains strength. The implied meaning here is that Brahma became the father of nations. Although in the Hindu community there is another name for Brahma. It is '*Pariyapati*' which means father of nations.

In the Hebrew language '*Ab*' means father and '*raham*' means multitude. This translates to the same meaning that Abraham was the father of nations. In the Arabic language, the meanings are very similar as in Hebrew.

In the Hindu scriptures of *Mundak Upanishad*, one of the authentic

Upanishads, it is stated that Brahma was the first of the gods. He taught his son Atharva, Bharm Vidya or the Divine Scripture, which is the source of all knowledge in Hinduism. *Bharm Vidya* is another name of Atharva Ved.

On a point of multi-ethnic and multi-religious connectivity, considering Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is essential to draw precise parallels between Abraham's references recorded in the Middle East and Brahma's references recorded in the Indian subcontinent. There are scripture records that Abraham lived a very long time.

Both Brahma and Abraham had children born to them in advanced age.

Prophet Abraham had two wives Sarah and Hagar from whom he had two sons Isaac and Ishmael.

Similarly, according to *Gopath Bharamana*, Brahmaji had two sons. They were Atharva and Angiras.

The Holy Qur'an reports on this incident at 14: 39-40 -

"39. Praise be to Allah, Who has given me, in old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer.

"40. My Lord, make me keep up prayer and from my off-spring (too), our Lord, and accept my prayer."

All prophets had wives and children to continue God's intention of procreation. The Holy Qur'an states at 13: 38 -

"38. And certainly We sent messengers before thee and appointed for them wives and children. And it is not in the power of a messenger to bring a sign except by Allah's permission. For every term there is an appointment."

Brahma's off-springs wrote books known as Veda. The book of the older one is known as Atharva Ved and that of the younger one is known as Angiras Ved, which is the second half of Atharva Ved.

Islam also recognises that guidance was sent to all nations. The Vedas are connected to Brahma, probably in the same way as the New Testament is connected to Jesus.

The Rig Veda has 10 *mandalas* and 128 *suktas*.

The Atharva Ved has 20 *kandas* and 759 *suktas*.

The Yajur Ved has 40 *Adiayes* and

1975 or 1400 *mantaras*. The Sam Ved has 1824 or 65 *mantaras*.

According to Hindu history, Brahma was childless. Brahma prayed to God most earnestly for a child like him to continue his work for God.

According to the Torah, Bible and Qur'an, Abraham was childless. Abraham prayed to God most earnestly for a child like him to continue his work for God.

It is also stated in the *Gopath Brahma* that these two sons of Brahmaji were born as "one of sweet water" and the other of "salty water."

Atharva was born of sweet water and Angiras was born of salty water.

In furtherance of drawing parallels, Ishmael's mother Hagar was a meek, patient and forbearing woman whereas Sarah, the mother of Isaac was harsh and sour-tempered.

In Hindu scriptures Sarah is known as Saraswati and Hagar is known as Parwati. Parwati was a very meek and gentle lady whereas Saraswati was of short temper and at times abrasive.

According to the Hindu, Hebrew, Christian and Muslim scriptures, Abraham (Brahma) had taken his wife Hagar (Parwati) and son Ishmael to a far away land and settled them there, near the ruins of the ancient house of worship (Kaba).

When Abraham was going back leaving them both in this wilderness, Hagar asked him, "Is it by Allah's commandment that thou art doing this?"

Abraham's reply was, "Yes."

Then said Hagar, "Allah will not leave us to perish."

Abraham then said the following prayer as reported in the Holy Qur'an at 14: 35-37 -

"35. And when Abraham said: My Lord, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.

"36. My Lord, they have led many men astray. So whoever follows me, he is surely for me; and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful.

"37. Our Lord, I have settled a part of my off-spring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our Lord, that they may keep up prayer; so make the hearts of some

people yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful."

The expressions of "salt" and "sweet" are deep-rooted parables seen in many scriptures. Sweet water and salt water mean the two great nations that developed downstream. They are the Ishmaelite and the Israelite. The parable of salty water is used in the Bible on several occasions. Their sacrificial offerings were seasoned with salt.

Even Jesus called his people as the salt of the earth. St. Paul did the same. The Bible quotes in II Chronicles XIII, 5 - *"Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and his sons by a covenant of salt?"*

The above references show that salty water represents Isaac (Angiras) from which evolved Isaac's progeny of the Israelites. This progeny includes the 12 tribes of Israel. The internationally famous book 'Jesus in Heaven on Earth' by Al-Haj Khwaja Nazir Ahmad in its incredible research scope proves that a part of Isaac's progeny settled in the Sind and Kashmir provinces of the Indian subcontinent, following the great Exodus of Israelites from Egypt under Divine guidance and the leadership of Moses with his brother Aaron.

In similar analysis, sweet water is taken to mean Ishmael (Atharva) and his descendants as the entire Arab populace. Prophet Muhammad said that a true believer is always sweet-tempered.

The Eastern and the Western nations, the Semitic and the Aryan races or the Ishmaelite and the Israelite are the two 'seas' of sweet water and salty water flowing side by side. The Holy Qur'an states at 25: 53 -

"53. And He it is Who has made the two seas to flow freely, the one sweet, very sweet, and the other saltish, bitter. And between the two He has made a barrier and inviolable obstruction."

This barrier and obstruction was removed by Prophet Muhammad who united mankind into a brotherhood by testifying to the truth of all preceding prophets and by making it obligatory on his followers by putting faith in them.

The Israelites believed in only their own tribal prophets, the Aryans

recognised only the truth of their own rishis, and, Jesus Christ came to collect the 'lost sheep' of Israel. Whereas - Prophet Muhammad came for the entire mankind and to unite all races of humanity.

The following extract is taken from the Bible, at Genesis 12: 2-3 -

"The Lord said unto Abraham... And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and curse him who curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The prophecy in the Bible implies the birth of a nation from the progeny of Abraham who will inherit blessings and the distinguishing mark of that people will be that they will always bless Abraham. Just as the Bible identifies the promised advent with the appellation of Abraham, so does the Rishi of Bhavishia Puran, with that of Brahma; and Zoroaster also promised to the same effect.

Thus the scriptures of the Aryans, Zoroasterians, Jews and the Christians uphold humanity in pointing out the above commonality with Abraham.

Compare the above parallels to the Holy Qur'an. It was Abraham who when settling Hagar and Ishmael near the Sacred House (Kaba) laid the foundation of the city there. At that time the area was unproductive of fruit and vegetables and therefore also devoid of primal necessities of life. Prophet Abraham said the following as part of his prayer, given in the Holy Qur'an at 2: 128-129 -

"128. Our Lord, make us both submissive to Thee, and (raise) from our off-spring, a nation submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully); surely Thou art the oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

"129. Our Lord, and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."

Islam, as a universal religion, requires the acceptance by Muslims of all prophets who were raised for the regeneration of men. Hence the denial of any one of the prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'an takes a Muslim out of the categories of believers and places them amongst the unbelievers!

Islam recognises and respects the

historic existence of Brahma as a prophet of his time - in similar distinction as Prophet Abraham.

Therefore, to make a clear distinction between Allah and His messengers implies to believe in one and not in the other. This is expounded in the Holy Qur'an and shows the two streams of people, of those who make distinction and those who do not, at 4: 150-152:

" 150. Those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and desire to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others; and desire to make a course in between -

" 151. They are truly disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers an abasing chastisement.

" 152. And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them, to them He will grant their rewards. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful."

Prophets were raised among all nations. The Holy Qur'an testifies at 10:47:

" 47. And for every nation there is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, the matter is decided between them with justice, and they are not wronged."

This powerful statement is further strengthened with the quotation in the Holy Qur'an at 16: 36.

" 36. And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger, saying: Serve Allah and shun the devil. Then of them was he who Allah guided, and of them was he whose remaining in error was justly due. So travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejecters."

The cosmopolitan nature of a Muslim's belief is not limiting only to the prophets of Israel but imposes upon Muslims to believe in all prophets who appeared before Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Qur'an states at 2:136 -

" 136. Say: We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit."

To further cement the Ordinance of the Holy Qur'an in acceptance of all previous prophets (previous to Prophet Muhammad) by Muslims, a broad doctrine is given that a prophet was raised among every nation.

Islam states that God has sent prophets as His messengers to every nation in this world.

No nation has been denied this Divine privilege.

It is important to recognise and accept the raw fact that the Holy Qur'an was revealed over 1,500 years ago when many nations did not know that so many other nations existed around the globe. The Holy Qur'an states further on the issue at 35: 24 -

" 24. Surely we have sent thee with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them."

Many prophets have served their tenure as Allah's messengers but have not been mentioned by names in the Holy Qur'an. This is because the Holy Qur'an is a religious scripture and the names mentioned are only as referrals to incidents or to exemplify an Ordinance action from God.

The Holy Qur'an is not a Register of prophets' names and dates. This is stated at 4:164.

" 164. And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to thee before and messengers We have not mentioned to thee."

It is noteworthy to underline a few points of differences between the major Abrahamic groups. Jesus belonged to the house of Jacob and was an Israelite and not an Ishmaelite. Prophet Muhammad was in direct line of descent from Ishmael. It is for this reason that Abraham has been described as the progenitor of Arabs. The Holy Qur'an records the prayer of Abraham given above at 2: 128.

"128. Our Lord, make us both submissive to Thee, and (raise) from our off-spring, a nation submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully); surely Thou art the oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

"129. Our Lord, and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."

The Holy Qur'an sends peace on Abraham and so did Prophet Muhammad, in a prayer known as *Darud Ibrahim*. The Muslims say this prayer at least eleven times in their five daily prayers, in which

Abraham and his descendants are blessed, all over the world!

Ishmael and Isaac, being sons of the same father, Abraham, were brothers. The descendants of one would be the brethren of the progeny of the other. The term of their brethren has been applied to the progeny of Hagar and Ishmael.

The Holy Qur'an says at 25: 1-2 –

"1. Blessed is He Who sent down the Discrimination upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations –

"2. He, Whose is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Who did not take to Himself a son, and who has no associate in the kingdom, and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure."

The above is one of very early revelations (at Mecca) and shows that the message of Prophet Muhammad was meant for all nations from the very beginning.

The Holy Qur'an also claims that it is nothing but a reminder to all nations from the very beginning and was also meant for those who received the Books before the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an also says at 21: 107:

"107. We have not sent you (Muhammad) but as a mercy to all nations."

And Prophet Muhammad is commanded at 7: 158 as:

"158. Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He; He gives life and causes death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided aright."

Again, The message of Prophet Muhammad was meant for all because God's mercy encompasses all and because He is the Creator of all the worlds. Thus Prophet Muhammad was a prophet for all nations and communities and had come to remove all barriers and limitations of nationality and colour.

That Prophet Muhammad succeeded in his mission is testified by Islamic history and through to the present day.

Abraham was a great prophet

whose history and referrals are made 70 times in the Holy Qur'an. The importance of Abraham was due to his acceptance by all the different communities, especially those who resided in Arabia. They are mainly the Jews, the Christians and the idolaters (most of whom later converted to Islam).

Abraham was thus in a way the link that united them, notwithstanding the divergence of their religious views.

Abraham's religion was not the religion of any of them, notwithstanding the fact the righteousness of Abraham with those communities. The Holy Qur'an states at 3:67 –

"66. Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists."

The common existence between the three communities of Jews, Christians and Muslims is the belief in the existence of One Supreme God. Abraham appears in the Holy Qur'an as the most forceful preacher against idolatry and polytheism of every kind, and his zeal to rid humanity of superstitions and other false beliefs, gives present humanity a picture of what Prophet Muhammad experienced as difficulties during his lifetime in Arabia.

However, Abraham went beyond preaching and destroyed idols!

Abraham's submission to God was so intense and perfect that, when he received the commandment from God to sacrifice his only son Ishmael, he did not hesitate to approach his son and tell of his intentions. However, after the test Abraham was commanded to substitute a ram for sacrifice instead of his son. It was only after this incident that Abraham received good news of having another child, Isaac. It was conventional in those days to sacrifice the first born male. Ishmael was 12 years senior to Isaac and the first born to Abraham's progeny from Hagar whereas Isaac was Abraham's second son but Sarah's first child. In the early stages of their life, Sarah was barren.

The above paragraph is proved correct with the quotation from the Holy Qur'an at 2:125:

"125. And when We made The House a resort for men and a (place of) security. And: Take ye the place of Abraham for a place of prayer. And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My House and for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves."

The above incident was exemplary; and from that moment onwards sacrifice of first-born male child has been completely prohibited and replaced by sacrifice of best quality healthy animals.

In giving this article its full potential, views and ideas were considered from internationally illustrious writers such as:

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali

Hazrat Maulana Sadr Ud Din

Hazrat Al-Haj Khwaja Kamal Ud Din

Al-Haj Nazir Ahmad

Maulana-Hafiz Sher Mohammad

Hazrat Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarti

ISLAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by *Mustaq Ali*

(This is the complete text of a speech made by one of our young members at the Dar-us-Salaam, London.)

The last decade has seen an escalation in environmental degradation. It has been a subject on every political agenda of almost every government of the world and has received much coverage in the press and media. Despite some countries coming together on various occasions to try to resolve these problems those which call themselves "Superpowers" have shown their true colours and refused to join the rest of the world to curb this disastrous problem.

While politicians play games with peoples lives and the environment, not many have looked to religion to investigate if it offers any solutions. This paper will look at what the religion of Islam says about the environment, how to use it and how to protect it.

As a direct result of environmental

degradation, today such words as biodegradable, energy saving, green house gases, noise and light pollution, deforestation, carcinogens, ozone depletion and environmental friendly have become a part of everyday conversation.

More and more the people of the world now share a common concern for the manipulation and degradation of the environment. Changes in weather patterns, depletion of the ozone layer, pollution of rivers and the oceans, and the use of genetically modified food have disturbed the natural balance which has been created by Allah.

The Quran says

"Glorify the name of thy Lord the Most High Who creates and gives order and proportion And who measures then guides" (Ch 87 vs. 1-3.)

It also says in chapter 13 vs. 8

" Verily all things have we created by measure"

Allah Ta'ala's wonderful creation, namely the heavens, the earth and the oceans all carry within them a testimony that it is a creation of a unique artist. The existence of completely harmonious order and arrangement within the gigantic universe together with systems that support life lead us to the belief of an All-Powerful Being, described in the Quran as *Rabb al Alamin*, the Nourisher and Sustainer of all the worlds, the one who originates the creation then takes the creation from stage to stage until it reaches perfection.

A brief look at the history of the developed world reveals a subtle irony which is, just as the western world saw wealth and prosperity as a result of the Industrial revolution, third world countries saw a rise in poverty, disease and death.

How and why has this happened and how has the natural balance been disturbed?

The Quran answers this question quite beautifully when it says

" Corruption has appeared on the land and the sea on account of that which men's hand have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done so that they may return. (Ch 30 vs. 41)

Commenting on this verse, Maulana Muhammed Ali says that this verse bears testimony to the history of

mankind before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad and the religion of Islam, i.e. there was corruption all over the world even in Arabia. The reason he gives, for the scale of corruption was that the other religions had failed to have a positive impact on its followers and that with the light of Islam and the torch of knowledge a new era was to be ushered in over the world. However a glance at the world today would reveal that things have not changed much, it may have even got worse.

The Qur'an goes on to admonish us in the very next verse when it says,

" Say, travel in the land and see what was the end of those civilisation before!

Many of them were polytheists". (Ch 30 vs. 42)

Here the All-knowing God is telling us that despite the advances made by the great civilisations in the past i.e. before Islam, they all fell to pieces and perished.

The verse also contains a prophecy, which indicates that one of the reasons for the downfall of the great civilisations of the past was that "most of them were polytheists".

We see 1400 years later a similar picture. The great nations of the west with all the wealth and might, weapons of mass destruction and political influence has its economy based on polytheism, atheism and corruption.

As God-conscious individuals we should respond to this lesson of the past and give monotheism a chance to save our environment and our children's future.

The Quran says in CH 29 vs. 20

" Say: Travel in the earth then see how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation, Surely Allah is the possessor of power over all things."

The Gracious God also tells us in His Holy book how he made the first creation:

" Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up?

So we rent them and we made from water everything living,

Will they not then believe"? (Ch 21 vs. 30)

Here the Quran tells us how the environment in which we exist was first created, i.e. with a great explosive force, the Big Bang, a theory that was first put forward in

the 1930's. The Quran also reveals to us another scientific truth, which is all living things, at some point in their evolution, had their origins in water.

The latter creation, the Quran tells us were created in pairs, it says in *Ch 36 vs. 36*

"Glory be to Him who created pairs of all things,

of what the earth grows

And of their kind and of what they know not."

Allah in his infinite mercy has indicated to us not only how the universe originated but also the humble origins of plant and animal life on which we depend for our existence and without which the environment as we know it today would not be.

Furthermore the Quran tells us that man is at the top of the ecosystem and that everything was created for and made subservient to him. It says in *Ch 16 vs. 12*

"And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon"

And again in Ch 16 vs. 14

"And He it is who has made the sea subservient to you

that you may eat fresh flesh from it and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear"

The question still remains unanswered and that is, is it a religious obligation on us as Muslims to protect the environment?

This question is answered very simply if we consider the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammed " the whole world is a masjid (a place of worship)". How simple is this expression, if you clean yourself and your masjid before prayer then shouldn't we keep our environment clean as well.

It is mentioned in the Quran that we are created in the likeness of God and one of the attributes of Allah is *Al-Muhit*, or Divine Environment and as *Al-Haseeb*, the one who takes perfect account. We sometimes forget that we are part of the environment and think that we are above it but if it were taken away from us for a few minutes we would not last very long.

The environment consist of land, water, air, animals, birds, humans and plants and the Quran and hadith has outlined how we should utilise and protect them.

Islam and Plant Life

Islam prohibits the indiscriminate destruction of trees and plants unnecessarily and encourages its followers to protect and increase plant life. Plants provide us with food, timber, paper, oxygen, medicine and they replace nutrients lost from the soil. They efficiently harness the sun's solar energy and provide food for the entire ecosystem. They also glorify Allah in their own way.

The Quran says in Ch 17 vs 44

"The seven heavens and the earth and those in them declare His Glory.

And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise but you do not understand their glorification.

Surely He is forbearing, forgiving."

Hazrat Abu Bakr, the first caliph of Islam instructed his soldiers while despatching them to war not to destroy trees as acts of vengeance. So important is the status of trees in Islam that the Holy prophet Muhammed is reported to have said "if one realised that the day of judgment was only a yard away and he had a palm tree-seedling in his hand he should plant it."

On another occasion the prophet said that if one plants a tree and birds and animals were to eat from it and even if fruits were stolen from it, on the day of judgement it is counted as charity on his behalf. (Muslim)

Orchids, roses, anthurium and heliconias are all aesthetically pleasing and so are the several garden programmes that provide us with ideas on how to beautify our garden and provide us with therapeutic horticulture.

Also many events today are marked by the planting of a tree.

Islam and Land

Protecting the land from pollution is indicated in the many ahadith that encourage people to keep it clean. One hadith states that Allah like cleanliness, goodness and generosity.

The same hadith reported by Tirmidhi ends with the Prophet asking Muslims to keep clean their courtyards. Another hadith reported by Tirmidhi (2799) states that faith has seventy branches the highest being "there is no God but Allah" and the least is removing an obstacle

from the path of people. This hadith indicates the removal of any solid waste (banana peel, soft drink can or pebble) and is an important instruction from the prophet and serves to prevent pollution.

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet Muhammad said:

"Beware of two things that bring curse the first being relieving oneself in the path of others and the second being relieving oneself in the shade where people rest." The Prophet Muhammad has also said that "if the landowner is unable to cultivate the land himself he should lend it to another person who is able to cultivate it by employing the owners equipment, helpers, seeds, and animals".

Thus providing jobs, wealth, food for animals and men and thus alleviating poverty.

In addition it is reported by Al-Darimi (560) when Abu Musa was sent to Al-Basrah as the new governor, he addressed the people saying:

"I was sent to you by Umar ibn Al-Khattab in order to teach you the Book of your lord (Quran), the Sunnah of your Prophet and to clean your streets."

This report thus tells us that it is the responsibility of both government and the people to clean the streets thereby reducing disease, pest and pollution.

Islam and Noise pollution

In the Quran surah Luqman, the wise advised his son saying:

"lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass! (Quran 31:19).

However today we are bombarded by much more than this, from loud motorcycles to increase in air traffic.

Islam and Water Pollution

Oil spills, sewage and garbage are found on beaches all over the world. The oceans have become a dumping ground for toxic chemical waste and a testing ground for nuclear weapons. The prophet Muhammad said that at the time of Dajjal "Rain would no good as it will fall out of season". Today acid rain falls and destroys crops. Miles and miles of drift nets destroys marine life and chemicals, sewage and pollutants kill coral reefs. Yet when you go to the market place you are spoilt for choice by the

many variety of fruits and vegetables.

Because of the scarcity of water in Arabia at the time of the Prophet, much emphasis was placed on the proper use of clean still water.

The prophet Muhammad said "No one should bathe in still water when he is junub (defiled)," reported in Muslim.

The prophet was also a conservationist and went so far as to say "There will be a people amongst this ummah who will transgress in their supplication and ablution" (meaning they would waste water when performing wudhu).

Islam and Air Pollution

Islam instructs its followers to purify themselves five times daily for prayer. This serves two purposes, the first being self-purification and the second to provide an environment free of offensive odours in order for the devotee to be able to concentrate on their prayer.

The prophet Muhammad suggested to his followers that they should not come to the mosque if they had eaten onion and garlic until the smell had gone away.

Therefore if the prophet did not want his followers to pollute the atmosphere with even this minor smell it goes without saying that he would certainly have forbade the pollution of the air with exhaust and factory fumes. These pollutants have had such an effect on the health of children that, in the UK 1 in every 5 now suffers from asthma.

The ozone layer is much talked about today and scientist has suggested that it protects the earth and the environment from the harmful rays of the sun. In relation to this is the effect of "green house gases" the chlorofluorocarbons or CFC's which break up the chemical structure of the ozone layer and causes the retention of heat in the earth's atmosphere thus causing melting of the polar ice-caps and changes in weather patterns.

The Quran in CH 21 vs 32 says

"And We have made the heavens a guarded canopy :yet they turn away from its signs".

Could this "guarded canopy" be the ozone layer and "its sign" be the protective function of this part of the

heavens?

Islam and Animals

While groups and organisations have been formed in the recent past for the protection and rights of animals, Islam and its Prophet had enjoined upon Muslims the correct relationship with animals 1400 years ago. Muslims have been asked to treat animals well and are not allowed to kill them except for food. This permission has to be carried out in accordance with the *shari'ah*. Only in limited cases some animals are allowed to be killed when they endanger human life.

Several incidences in the Hadith point to the relationship that humans should have with animals. One such incidence was when a woman took off her head covering and dipped it into a well in order to give a dog dying of thirst a drink. When this news reached the Prophet he remarked " *all her past sins would be forgiven as a result of this act*". Another incident involved the removing of a young bird from its nest much to the distress of the mother, the prophet Muhammad instructed the individual to return the young to its nest. (related by Abu Dawud)

It is ironic that in the developed, civilised world today we seek humane methods by which to slaughter an animal but the most diabolical ways to kill our fellow human being.

Shaddad Ibn Aws reported that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said ".... *And excel in slaughtering; sharpen your blade [so you may] relief your slaughtered [animal].*" (Muslim)

However animal rights group deem this method as "barbaric" but Islam goes a step further and takes the psyche of the animal into consideration. Ibn Abbas (RA) reported that once a man laid down a sheep whilst still sharpening his blade; the prophet [SAW] saw and asked him " *Would you like it to die twice? Why didn't you sharpen your blade before laying it down?*" (Al Hakim)

Another area in which Islam stands out is that of protection of rare and endangered species. While some people kill and use parts of wild cats and seahorse as aphrodisiac, the prophet Muhammad said " *Do not ride on silk and tiger fur*" (Abu Dawud, #

4129) The prohibition of the use of silk and tiger fur for seating, whither on saddles or in homes is to prevent pompous life styles. One can deduce, by analogy, that the fur of all wild cats cannot be used.

The prophet Muhammad (UWBP) said " *Created beings are the dependents of God, and the creatures dearest unto God is he who does most good to God's dependent's*". (Miskat al Masabhi).

Thus, if all that has been created by Allah is interdependent on each other for its existence, this could be best described as a universal symbiosis (takaful). Allah has testified in the Quran that man can learn from the nature of things around him.

He says in CH 16 vs 10-13

"He it is who sends down water from the clouds for you; it gives you drink and by it you grow the trees on which you feed.

He causes to grow for you thereby herbage and olives, and date palms, and the grapes and all fruits. Surley there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.

And he has made subservient to you the night and the day.... Surley in this is a sign for a people who understand.

And what he has created for you in the earth is of varied hues. Surley there is a sign in this for a people who are mindful."

The Quran further says that man would travel in outerspace and see the signs of environmental degradation in the heavens and the earth but would ignore it in CH 12 vs 105

"And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth do they pass by! Yet they turn away from it".

As Muslims it is obligatory on us to protect our environment. We have been given all that is necessary to do this. Mankind should unite if only for this purpose to protect the future of the world.

Man has not been left in need of any thing, no wonder Allah asks the question in the Quran " *Which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?*"

Children Section

What is environmental degradation?

This is an expression used to mean the destruction of the surroundings i. e. the oceans, land and air in which plants and animals live. Several things cause this to happen such as

the waste products from factories, which include chemicals and smoke, and the fumes which are generated from cars and trucks.

How do these cause the environment to be destroyed?

They form green house gases. These gases such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide traps the heat from the sun and causes the temperature of the earth to increase. This rise in temperature causes the melting of the polar ice caps and thus a rise in oceans levels. This has a direct effect on changes in weather patterns. These gases also cause the break down of the earths protective layer, the ozone layer.

Is the ozone layer a type of chicken?

No, this is a layer or section of ozone molecules that is found high above the atmosphere and it absorbs the harmful ultraviolet rays found in sunlight. If this layer is broken down then these harmful rays would not only destroy plant and animal life but cause skin cancer to increase.

How could we prevent environment degradation?

In 1992 all the governments of the world came together to answer this question. They suggested several things could be done such as

- 1) Recycle paper, cans, bottles and old cars
- 2) Reduce the cutting down of trees (deforestation)
- 3) Stop fishing with nets that catch and unnecessarily kill everything in the ocean
- 4) Reduce emissions of green house gases

They have suggested that this will reduce environmental degradation and would enable the earth to sustain life, a concept which they called "Sustainable Development".

What can children do to help sustain the environment?

- 1) Do not waste water
- 2) Turn off lights and television when not in use so as to save energy
- 3) Recycle old newspaper, books, bottles and carrier bags
- 4) Have parents use one vehicle to pick up friends to and from school or get the bus
- 5) And try to plant a tree if you have the space.

For the younger readers
(continued from the last issue)

Introduction to Islam

By

Dr Zahid Aziz

3. Beliefs:

3.4 Books of God

"(Muslims) believe in that which has been revealed to thee (O Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee." (The Holy Quran 2:4)

"He has revealed to thee (O Muhammad) the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel before, a guidance for the people, and He sent the Discrimination (the Quran)." (3:3)

43. What is a Book of God?

To the various Prophets that God sent for people's guidance, He revealed His teachings. The Prophets made this revelation public, and their followers learnt it and passed it down to their children, and they in turn passed it down to the next generation, and so on. This is how we come to have the 'scriptures' or 'holy books' of various religions today. Islam calls the original revelations of the Prophets as "Books of God" because they were meant to be preserved in a collected form (whether orally or written, or both).

44. Please name some of the Books of God which exist today?

The revelations granted by God to the Prophets before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, such as Moses, Jesus, Krishna, and Buddha, cannot be found today in their full and original form. However, the present-day scriptures of the followers of these great prophets do contain some fragments of the original teachings, although they are mixed up with later additions and interpretations. Some of

these scriptures are: the Torah of the Jews, the Gospels of the Christians, the Vedas of the Hindus, and the Zend Avesta of the Zoroastrians.

On the other hand, the word of God that came to the Holy Prophet Muhammad is to be found fully intact and completely preserved in the Muslim scripture, which is known as the Quran.

45. Do Muslims have to believe in Divine scriptures other than their own?

Muslims have to believe that the original teachings of all the Prophets, including Moses, Jesus, the Prophets of India, those of China, etc., were revealed by God. On that basis, they respect the scriptures of other religions because some of the original revelations can still be found in them. So Muslims are required to believe that the religions that came before Islam, such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., contain many truths, even as they exist today.

46. In what relation does the Holy Quran stand to other Divine Scriptures?

The Holy Quran claims to be:

- i. a "verifier" of previous scriptures: "a Book from Allah verifying that which they have" (2:89).
- ii. a "guardian" over them (5:48).
- iii. a "judge" to decide their differences: "We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou may make clear to them that wherein they differ" (16:64).
- iv. to "make manifest" and to "perfect" their teachings (26:1; 5:3).

47. Please explain the four points above a little further.

- i. The Holy Quran verifies that all the scriptures revealed to various nations of the world are of Divine origin.
- ii. It has guarded and preserved those of their original teachings that were of permanent application, after these had become obscure due to loss and alteration in their texts.

iii. All scriptures were from God, but they had changed so much as to become totally different from each other, even in terms of their basic teachings. The Holy Quran came as a "judge" to decide these differences, and to sort out the original teachings from later changes.

iv. The Holy Quran shed full light on all essentials of faith, many of which had not been fully dealt with in the earlier scriptures. It also replaced those of their teachings which were only local or temporary by perfect and universal teachings applicable to all nations and all times.

3.5 Life after death

"We have ordained death among you, and We are not to be overcome, so that We may change your state and make you grow into what you know not." (The Holy Quran 56:60-61)

"O soul who is at rest, return to thy Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him). So enter among My servants, and enter My garden." (89:27-30)

"It (hell) is the fire kindled by Allah which rises over the hearts." (104:5-6)

48. What does Islam teach about life after death?

It teaches that a human being not only has a body, but also has a 'spirit' given to him or her by God. The spirit is the seed from which a higher form of life grows within man, higher than physical life, just as the body has developed from a small 'seed'. Just as in the world around us higher forms of life evolve from lower ones, similarly from the life of the individual in this world is evolved his higher 'spiritual' life. During his life, man's deeds shape and mould his spirit, for better or worse, according to his deeds. When a person dies, the physical body is finished, but the spirit remains, as he or she had moulded it by their deeds when alive. That is the life after death.