

**ANCIENT RELIGION
OF THE
ARAB PEOPLE**

AHLE ARAB KA QADEEM MAZAHAB

BY

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(FORMERLY HAJI ABDUL RAHMAN)
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FOREWARD

We are living in an age of science, democracy and globalism. Science stands for reason and knowledge, democracy for freedom, equality and justice, and globalism for the unity of mankind. Together, the three stand for a united world of common values: universal love and peace, progress and prosperity, justice and enlightenment. To reach this common goal, we need a common code of positive and constructive values and total commitment to the principle of “one for all and all for one”. We need to hold us together and sustain us progressively on the path of freedom, discipline and happiness.

And now the paradox: All of us subscribe to the principle of unity, and yet many of us resent the application of it to our social and political life. We agree on Dharma, a common code of values, and yet we disagree on religion. We fight for some pressure group, some community or some nation to the violation of common humanity against the will of the One God of mankind and the world. We need to understand Dharma, religion, history and community in order that each unit, individual, community or nation, may have an identity of its own and yet a common identity of the world order.

Dharma is the law that sustains everything from the universe to the tiniest particle, from the whole living world to the smallest individual creature. Its operation in the particle and at the individual level is a unit of the pulse set in motion by the power at the heart of things. At our level, therefore, whether we are individuals, or communities, or nations, our pulse beat must be a local and temporal realization of the whole and the universal law. If we deviate in the interest of some particular identity of distinction, we do so at our own peril. This we need to realize in thought, word and deed, in faith.

The world is a living, breathing, intelligent, self-organizing system, the soul and spirit of which is Infinite – call it God, Allah, Ishwar, Brahma, Law, whatever you like. Dharma is the dynamic and operative principle of the presence of that Spirit. It is one, universal, inevitable, invariable, constant. Its local and temporal realization at the individual or community or national level is religion/yuga-dharma which is supposed to realize the eternal values of Dharma through the medium of history – history being an attempt at realizing the universal constant through the temporal variable. This way we practice religion and participate in Dharma at the same time. If we isolate our religion from the universal Dharma, we isolate ourselves and isolation is self-denial and death.

In religious history, therefore, an inviolable reference to Dharma must be maintained. It is through this reference, in history, that the unity of Dharma and the unity of a faithful humanity is maintained through the changing variety of religions. Hence also, in history, the continual reform and change in religion according to the needs of time and place. The values of Dharma are constant and absolute, but the values of religion are variable and relative, the reason being that the values of religion are medial and formal – they are the mode and medium of the realization of Dharma. The value of

these values has to be Dharmic, universal, essential. Religious values, therefore, must be kept on the right track through commitment to the universal values of Dharma. Otherwise they go off the track and cause division, isolation, dissension and violence.

In spite of science, democracy and globalism, the world of religion, today, is an organized chaos – suspecting, fighting, terrorizing. It has set in motion a new phase of war, war upon terrorism on a global scale, which, in the words of the other party, is global terrorism of the state upon the innocents. In short, there is no solution in favour of love and compassion, justice and equality, peace and progress easily in sight, given the values of isolative and conflictive religiosity.

Let us think in a mood of meditation rather than in a mood of politics: The world is one, its God is one, His creation is one, His law is one, humanity is one since it is the one God's family. Hence the law of humanity too is one, our code of values is and ought to be one. What appears to be various and diverse, is one at the core. Infact, all religions grow and branch out from the same one universal root, just as all races, nations and communities are members of the same one divine family. We should realize this essential unity of life, humanity and religion in faith and practice.

Sufi Gianendra Dev's Booklet in Urdu Ahle Arab Ka Qadeem Mazahab and its English translation is a valuable contribution to human understanding of religion especially in relation to Hinduism and the Vedas and the continuity of the Vedic way of thought and practice among the Arab people until the time of Prophet Mohammad. Quotations from the pre-Islamic poetry of poets such as Tarafa, Asmai, Lavi and others clearly point to the Arab people's faith in the Vedas, their worship of Shiva and their love and devotion to Lord Krishna. The Sufi promised to write a book on the Hindu-Arab relations in the matter of religion, but, unfortunately, he could not complete that work.

Evidence on the Hindu-Arab relations in the pre-Islamic era is scant, and whatever is available does not do justice to the Indo-Arab relations. In the light of the religio-political problems of the modern world, it is imperative that independent and objective research be conducted in the interest of universal understanding in a positive and unifying direction.

The Vedas are universal scriptures of mankind, they do not exclusively belong to any one particular community. In fact, all scriptures belong to mankind. Sooner than later, in our common interest, we owe it to God that we realize and pursue a common code of universal scriptural values with love to everyone and malice to none.

INTRODUCTION

BY

THE TRANSLATOR

Sufi Gianendra Dev's tract on the ancient religion of the Arab people is a revelation. The ancient Arabs were 'Hindus' by faith, he says. Their faith was Vedic Dharma, pure and simple, up to about as long as 4000 years ago. Later, it passed through all those changes which marked the change of Vedic Dharma into Buddhism, Jainism, Vam Marga and the other forms preached by the Puranas, until it recovered from the violence, enervation and superstition of its decadent age through the challenging message and hard struggle of Islam. Islam, too, for the first ten or twelve years of its growth, he maintains, was a simple and straight version of the original Vaidic message. Later it developed a character close to the Semitic tradition and, to that extent, grew as a parallel faith and an organized socio-political power – a 'religion' and a 'nation' at the same time.

The impact of this thesis, had it been supported with detailed historical evidence in a full length book – which the author promised and planned to write but could not complete – would have been revolutionary in the field of Hindu Muslim interaction and cooperation. Still the value of the Sufi's work as it is remains germinal: It is a seed which has the potential of growing into a banyan tree which can provide shade and rest and peace against the hot-bed of religio-ethnic conflicts of the modern time. What is needed is dedicated research and a liberal climate of freedom and mutual trust among the various sections of the modern society. In fact, it is a theme worthy of being taken up at a government or inter-university level of international importance.

Pundit Gianendra Dev Sufi, formerly Maulana Haji Maulavi Abdul Rahman, was born in a Muslim family. A devout Muslim and a scholar of Arabic, he had gone on Hajj Pilgrimage three times before 1917. But he never confined himself to a closed religious order. He kept an open mind. Religion is nobody's personal property. It is open and universal, free and fragrant for any one who cares to take to it. So while he admired the ancient grandeur of the holy Ka'aba in Mecca, he continued to raise certain questions and to find the answers: Why the holy attire which the pilgrims must wear during Hajj as if they were inmates of a Hindu school? Why the injunction against violence and meat during the four months of Hajj? And what is the mystery of Hajr-al-aswad, the sacred black stone consecrated in the north-east corner of the shrine from where the pilgrims start their circumambulations as the Hindus perform the parikrama of a temple? And while thus he meditated, thoughts arising as if from the depths of his unconscious, he came across a journal, Al Hilal of March, 1923, published from Dar-al- Hilal, Cairo. The journal carried couplets from a pre-Islamic Arabic poem in praise of Lord Shiva which said: "If a person is steeped in sin so deep that his very soul looks lost beyond repair, can he still hope to be redeemed? Yes, if he prays even once with a sincere heart to Lord Mahadeva (Shiva)!" The mystery was unravelled as if by a revelation from the deep: the

holy attire was common between the Haji (the pilgrim) and the brahmachari (the Hindu student). Vegetarianism is the ideal food especially in the holy season. Hajr-al-aswad is the link between the pre-Islamic Arabia and contemporary Hinduism specially Shivaism. Haji Abdul Rahman became Sufi Gianendra Dev, a strict monotheist as before.

From 1925 to 1931, the Sufi went round Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Morocco and visited various libraries especially in Jerusalem, Cairo and Constantinople. There he found poems in manuscript form on gold leaves, parchment and palm leaves which ranged from Lavi bin Tarafa (about 2400 years before Prophet Mohammad) to Abul Hakam, the prophet's contemporary. One extremely important collection of these was Sair-ul-Uqool which was later published by Beirut Publishing Company, Beirut, Palestine, and distributed in India by Haji Hamza Shirazi and company, Publishers and Book-sellers, Bunder Road, Bombay. Reference may be made in this connection to Dharma Dev, Vidya-martanda: Vedon ka yathartha swaroop (in Hindi), published by Gurukul Kangri University, Hardwar, U.P., India, in 1957.

With convincing evidence from various sources, the Sufi came to the conclusion which may be summed up as follows:-

1. The Vedas are the earliest, original and universal scriptures for all mankind revealed at the dawn of creation. Those treasuries of knowledge are the Sama and Yajur, Rik and Atharva. This was the Arab people's faith.
2. The worship of Lord Shiva was common between India and Arabia. 'Mahadeva' was the name of the deity in Arabia as in India.
3. Lord Krishna was the darling god of love for the Arabs as for the Indians.
4. As there was trade and communication between India and the Middle East and Egypt, teachers and preachers were sent from India. "King Vikramaditya, with love and kindness, deputed two pious and pure-hearted scholars and sent them (to Arabia). They showed us the path of truth and Dharma." This Vikramaditya was either the one with whose reign started the Vikrami era of India or the son of Samudra Gupta of the Gupta dynasty, commemorated by the Iron Pillar in the Qutab area of Delhi. In either case, the period would be from first century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. This period tallies with the period of the words quoted.

The Sufi suggests that not only did the pre-Islamic Arabs subscribe to the Hindu faith, they were also influenced by the religious developments in India. From the simple and straight monotheism of the Vedas, they came to polytheism, idol worship, hedonism, and even the cults of blood and cruelty of sacrifice in order to please the gods or goddesses of their choice. Almost every tribe had a god or goddess of their choice. Prophet Mohammad challenged this in order to retrieve monotheism in religion and unity in the society of his day.

In the Quran itself, in addition to other sources, there is ample evidence of idol worship. But the important thing is that these gods and goddesses were like the Hindu gods and goddesses. The Holy Book (Quran) 2, 80-82 speaks of “the people of the fire”. In 2, 91-92 it says that they “worshipped the calf”, which is like the reverence of the sacred cow among Hindus. In 27, 22-26 it describes a majestic queen possessed of every virtue, reigning from a splendid throne. “But she and her people worship the Sun instead of Allah”. “Nothing but Time destroys us” (45, 23) and, surprisingly, it is translated as the power that counts, which is literally the nature of time according to Hinduism (kalayatiti Kalah), i.e. the power which counts the moments of time till the end. Will Durant in his book The Story of Civilization, says that the idol of Allah was worshipped in Ka’aba (Chapter “Age of Faith”, p.161). Allah had three daughters: Allat (the sun goddess), Uzza (the dawn, like the Hindu Usha), and Manaat, and all these were worshipped as prime goddesses (53, 17). Even Nasr, the divine bird (Hindu Garuda) of the shape of the eagle was worshipped (71, 23). Hasham b. Muhammad Kalbi, usually known as Al-Kalbi (819-20 A.D.), has described the idols in his Book of Idols Kitab-al-Asnam which was extant up to 1682 according to Hastings: Encyclopedia of Religion And Ethics (see “Arabs, ancient”). Here was hero worship and worship of martyrs. In the temples, the style of worship was like that in the Hindu temples with clapping of hands, singing, etc. (8, 35). Going round the temple in circumambulation (Parikrama) was common and it is observed today during Hajj. Even the word Allah is found in Sanskrit (Alla) which means ‘The Mother’. The Book of Idols is now available in English.

In this context, another important question arises: If the Arabs and the Hindus were so close, is there any relation, or could there be some relation between the Vedas and the holy Quran? He says: Yes, there is. He says that the Quran itself bears the testimony to this fact by suggesting the source of the book. The Quran mentions the Kitab-e-Maknoon, and the Umm-ul-Kutub, which means the ‘Mother-Book’ of all the books of revelation given to mankind from time to time (as the verses quoted by him about Lord Krishna testify-which looks like a translation of the Gita, 4, 7-8). The ‘Mother Knowledge’ of the Quran is the universal knowledge ever existent in the Eternal Mind of God. The Quran itself affirms again and again the existence of the eternal and universal codex of the Divine Knowledge from which it is taken:

43, 1: “By the Book which makes plain (right and wrong), we have revealed the Quran in the Arabic tongue that you may understand. It is in the Mother Book with Us, sublime and full of wisdom”.

Again, 85, 22: “Indeed, this is a glorious Quran, in a guarded tablet”.

Again, 22, 70: “Are you not aware that Allah has knowledge of what heaven and earth contain? All is recorded in his Book”.

And still again, 56, 78: “I swear by the shelters of the stars--a mighty oath, if you but knew it--that this is a glorious Quran (inscribed) in a hidden book which none may touch except the purified, a revelation from the Lord of all creatures”. And the Mother Book is inexhaustible, because it is in the eternal and infinite mind of God. The Quran itself says: If all the trees on the earth were pens, and the sea, with seven more seas to replenish it, were ink, the writing of Allah’s words could never be finished. Mighty is Allah and Wise. (31, 27-28).

This infinity of divine knowledge is co-eval and coexistent with the infinity of God consciousness which can never never be contained in words. This infinity of knowledge can be felt from the Upanishad: Having described the Supreme in terms of the most beautiful and awful images—“like a flame of fire, like a white lotus, like sudden flash of lightning” the seer in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (II, 3, 6) continues: “Now therefore there is the teaching, ‘not this, not this,’ for there is nothing higher than this, that He is not this”. Again: This is that absolute indefinable Reality, Brahman, “Whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it” (Taittiriya Upanishad, II, 4, 1).

The key to the existence of universal and eternal knowledge in the Divine mind is found in Yajurveda, 34, 4, 5: That immortal eternal mind wherein all that is and was and will be is comprehended, and wherein the Risks, the Samans, the Yajus (and the Atharvans) exist together as spokes in the nave of the wheel, and wherein the intelligence of all the creatures is interwoven, may that mind be my inspiration in a state of purity.

From the universal and eternal mind of God, the light of the original revelation of mankind, the Vedas, came into the pure and immaculate soul of the sages at the very beginning of creation. The origin of this light is revealed in the Rigveda, 1, 164, 39 and Atharva-Veda, 10, 7, 20. The fact of Original Revelation of the Vedas is acknowledged in the ancient Arabic poetry.

In the light of the divinity of the Vedas quoted by Sufi Gianendra Dev, it can easily be imagined that the Mother Book in existence in the eternal mind is the Vedas. This is a matter for serious interfaith dialogue in the interest of mutual understanding and universal harmony.

According to the Indian tradition, the first and original revelation is Shruti, the voice of Divinity expressed in the first and original language of mankind. In the Indian tradition, all the other works of knowledge (Books) described as revelations are called Smritis which relate to particular time and place and people. The original revelation has no history in it because at that point of time history hardly begins. It is pure and universal knowledge, what the Quran itself describes as “the knowledge of what heaven and earth contain”. But a smriti can have, and quite often has, a lot of history. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the Quran, and others are all Smritis and would be better understood

as such. The Quran itself has a lot of history, history of kings, tribes, tyrants, heroes, martyrs, prophets and the stories of historical revelations. A Smriti draws a lot upon the original revelation, the Mother Book as the Quran says. There is nothing new, that is, nothing entirely new in it. The Quran itself says: “Nothing is said to you what has not been said to other apostles before you” (41, 43).

Smriti in fact means ‘a reminder’ of things earlier known but later forgotten. The Quran itself says in 16, 45: “And we revealed to you the Reminder (Quran) so that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that they may give thought”. For the sake of experiment, compare the Quranic concept of paradise (Bahishta) in 13, 35 and 47, 15 with the same concept of Bahishtha in Atharva-veda 4, 34.

As a test case, let us try an experiment in understanding: take away the Vedic ideas from any scripture of any religion, and see what remains. It will be a bold exercise, but the result will be awfully rewarding too. The result of the subtractive exercise will be: only the historical facts. Thus the real value of a historical religion is value of the old but eternal truth in the new circumstances, the new relevance of the old, Sanatan, original, eternal, universal, which never grows out of date. A new revelation comes in a new language at a time when people move away from the original, but again it is a revelation of the universal so that people may understand and think in the new context. It is a Reminder with fresh insistence on clarity.

Religion is a matter of personal choice. It is a serious matter of one’s conscience. True. Anyone might change his or her religion. But can he change his forefathers? Can he deny the existence of his past history? If not, why the socio-political conflicts between the new converts of the fundamentalist brand and the original brotherhood of the same community. Why can’t people coexist and cooperate as human beings? Why not recognize the broken link and maintain the bond of natural piety?

Let us say certain things as reasonable people ought to: If there is a God as we believe there is, it is one, not two or more, it cannot be more than one. If God is one, His creation is one, His law is one, humanity is one, its law is one, and the revelation of the law and truth is one. All so-called differences and varieties are differences and varieties of form and structure and not of the spirit. We should hold on to the unity of the spirit and the integration of all life with the environment rather than fight for self-determination in isolation, or for the integration of the household of God as against the tribes of Satan. As children of one God, we should discover for ourselves the one universal revelation and one universal code of values across the various statements of truth through the course of history. “Truth is one, its statements, many” (Rigveda).

The Sufi’s work is small in volume, but it is really great in value. It is unique indeed, and if the truth of what he says is pursued at higher social and academic levels, the world would be greatly benefited. Living in an age of science, democracy and globalization,

unity and cooperation in faith and action is the need of the hour. Let our interfaith dialogue be fair, frank, and bold, not stage-managed. Some of the subjects could be:-

1. Revelation is either non-historical--one, original complete and final, or, if it is historical, it is successive, open-ended, relative and non-final. Can revelation be historical and yet final even though history continues open-ended?
2. What is dharma, the universal law which governs the universe, the earth, the environment and humanity? What is Yuga-Dharma (religion, which is a temporal paradigm of Dharma)? And what is history (which is a search for definition rather than the definition itself)?
3. In a situation where reform becomes imperative, should reform be an existential synthesis of spirit (Dharma) and form (the new Yugadharma/religion), or should it be an essential antithesis of form against form?
4. Can the new ever be an absolute severance from the old? Is there a continuity of the common core? What is the common core?

Ultimately, reason and goodwill, love and compassion, friendship and cooperation will prevail—because, basically and essentially, the One is many and the many are One.

ANCIENT RELIGION OF THE ARAB PEOPLE
BY
SUFU GIANENDRA DEV

What was the religion of ancient Arabia? This is a question so complicated that even the historians of Islam can only say that the people there were idol-worshippers. But what kind of idol worship was that? To this question they have no definite, correct and authoritative answer. That is: What sort of idols did the inhabitants of Arabia worship? What was their idol-worship like? Did it resemble the idol-worship prevailing in India for the last two thousand years? Did it have any influence of Egypt or Greece? On these questions the historians of Islam are silent. Of course, the Western scholars who have researched into these questions tell us that the inhabitants of Arabia belong to the Semitic race, their culture and civilization also is Semitic, and there is not even a distant relationship between the Arabic people and the Vedic culture and civilization (of the people of India). Thus Washington in his Life of Mohammad, writes (p.82) that a study of the principles of Islam and the ideas of Prophet Mohammad proves that the man who spread Islam was a follower of Semitic culture and belonged to the Semitic race.

I felt surprised at this opinion of Washington's because merely on the basis of stories associated with the Quran as it is he concluded that the Arabic people are Semitic, although the teachings of the Quran are Vedic, and their source is Vedic Dharma and Vedic culture, and the forefathers of the Arab people were followers of Vedic Dharma, as would be clear from this tract. The opening chapter of the Quran, "Al-Fatiha" which is considered to be the essence of the Quran is a literal translation of a Veda-mantra.

It is mentioned more than once in the Quran that this book is taken from Umm-ul-Kutub (the Mother Book) and Kitab-e-Maknun (the clear book) which no one can touch except the pious people of a pure heart. I shall discuss this matter in detail in some other tract. (The question arises: What is the Mother Book ?)

Here I shall refer to two customs of Islam in practice at the present time which will lead the reader to conclude as I did.

The greatest difference between the Hindu and the Semitic culture is this: while the Hindu community regards Ahinsa (non-violence) towards any living being as the prime tenet of their dharma (religion), the Semitic race regards Qurbani (sacrifice), that is, the killing of animals in the name of God, as the means of attaining God. In connection with this difference I shall describe one principle (practice) of Islam which will show how far the Hindu community influenced Islam and the Arab civilization and culture.

When our Muslim brethren go on Hajj they have to put on a special kind of dress before they enter the territory of Arabia. The pilgrims who travel by sea have to change their clothes near a hill called Lim Lim close to Jeddah which is the port of

disembarkation. This dress consists of two chadars (wraps) one of which they wear on the upper part of the body and the other they use to cover the lower part. The head they keep uncovered. They cannot use a sewn garment (for the purpose of Hajj), they use only the two wraps. There is a particular way of wearing the upper wrap: the cloth is wrapped from below the right arm over the left shoulder whereon it rests. This precisely is the way brahmacharis (students of an ancient Hindu school) wear their two wraps. This way of covering the body is called Ahram which every pilgrim has to follow without exception. He has to observe this until the observance of the last Hajj ritual is over. The Hajj is performed on the day of Afara, a day before the festival of Bakra-Eid. According to the commandment in Al-Maida (the Table), Ruku 13 (95), during the period of ahram (Hajj proper, the period of piety), it is a sin even to think of causing pain to an animal—killing is far too much. If a person commits this sin of violence, he has to feed the poor or observe fast by way of repentance and expiation:

Kaffaratu ta'amu masakinu au adl zalika
Siyamanu labazuqa wabali amr.

O you who believe! do not kill game while you are on pilgrimage, and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally, the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge, as an offering to be brought to the Ka'aba or the expiation (of it) is the feeding of the poor or equivalent of it in fasting, that he may taste the unwholesome result of his deed; Allah has pardoned what is gone by; and whoever returns (to it), Allah will inflict retribution on him; and Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution.

The readers may themselves realize that if the influence of Semitic culture were there on Islam, why and from where this insistence on non-violence could have come except from the Hindu community which observes it. No other community has a trace of it (in its culture or religion).

The other principle: Our Muslim brotherhood holds Mecca as a very sacred and holy place. Mecca for them is the most venerable of all the Islamic shrines in the world because it is regarded as the very house of God. In the city of Mecca, the biggest mosque is called Al-Ahram. It is not the kind of mosque as we have in India. It is a square structure with double verandahs on all four sides. In the inside there is a very large open court, in the middle of the court there is a rectangular building which is 35 ft. in length and 28 ft. in breadth. This is known as Ka'aba, The word 'Ka'aba' is derived from 'maka'ab' which means 'four-sided' (compare 'cubic' or 'cube'), otherwise its real name is Bait-allah, that is, 'the house of Allah'. Every Muslim over the world has to face towards Ka'aba while saying his prayers. Therefore, the Muslims of India face westward while they pray. But when the Muslims pray in Al-Ahram itself, everyone faces toward

the Ka'aba. The pilgrims go round the Ka'aba seven times as part of the Hajj rituals, and this going round is of very special importance.

The going round starts from the northeast corner. There in the wall is a circular niche in which is placed a very holy and sacred stone which is called Hijr-al-aswad, the holy black stone. The Muslims believe that the person who kisses this stone has all his sins absolved. For this reason there is so heavy a rush for the stone that one cannot have an easy access to it. This stone is about seven inches long and about three inches in diameter. All round it is covered with a silver cover (for the maintenance of its strength and shape). Only the upper part of it is open to view. It appears to be of dark hue. It is said that it had got broken; therefore, to keep its parts together in position, it was reinforced with a silver cover. The niche in which it is placed is circular like halo of the moon. Anyone who has seen the temple icon of Lord Shiva cannot say that it is not the same icon but something else.

Now the question is: Who were the people who made the Ka'aba of the shape and design as it is? From the reading of history we come to know that the ancient Arabs were idol worshippers and the shape in which they got it built remains intact today as it had been then. The Muslims have brought about no change in it. Sources as authentic as Bukhari: Kitab-al-tafsir, chapter 'Inna Fatahana' and Tirmizi: Kitab-al-Hajj and Carlyle: Life of Mohammad proves this view.

When the Muslims conquered Mecca and took the Ka'aba into their possession, the first thing that the prophet did according to his faith was to break the idols and 'redeem' the Ka'aba. According to the Muslims of Arabia there were 360 idols in the Ka'aba. The faith of the prophet and his followers was that the kafirs (infidels) had taken possession of the Ka'aba and 'desecrated' it with the curse of idolatry. Therefore, the first thing to do on the conquest of Ka'aba was taken to be the liberation of it from the idolaters and the idols.

While the idols were being broken, one of the military officers advanced up to the Hijr-al-aswad and was just going to break it when the prophet happened to see what the officer was about to do. He immediately went up to the officer and stopped him by hand and said, "Don't break this because this was sacred for our forefathers. So is it for us too, sacred and holy". In the Tirmizi it is clearly written that he stopped his followers from effecting any changes or alterations in it. From a history of Mecca written by a well-known Muslim scholar of Egypt we come to know that during 1300 years this shrine has suffered damage three times. But whenever it was felt that it was necessary to repair it, the orders of the prophet as mentioned above were respected in letter and spirit, and no change or alteration was allowed in the old shape and structure of it. Indeed, even the marks on the walls were strictly restored in the same old style. This proves one thing at least: that, of the ancient idols worshipped in Arabia, there was at least one which resembled the Hindu icon of Shiva and even during the Muslim era no change in it was

allowed to be effected. Thus Washington's view that the idol worship of the Arab people was like the idol worship of Egypt and Greece is far from the truth.

Keeping the above stated facts in view, one can conclude that the ancient Arabs were people having faith in Vedic culture and the Vedic way of life. Of course, it can be said that this conclusion is based more on inference than on direct evidence of facts which can persuade the other party to accept it without question. While I sat in this mood of reservation and deep thought, I chanced upon a copy of March 1923 issue of Al- Hilal, a monthly journal published from Cairo. On the first page of it were printed a few verses from an old (pre-Islamic) poem with a note by the editor. Below is given a translation of this note:

“Last year, Allama Abdulla Azhari, an eminent professor of Jamia Azhar, well known college and University of Egypt, came on Hajj pilgrimage to Baitallah (Mecca) and stayed as a guest with his friend and classmate who was chief of the House (literally ‘tribe’) of Bani Quais. At the time of departure, the chief offered him a few presents, one of which was an old manuscript written on parchment. It was a poem by a famous poet of Arabia. The Allama brought it with him to Egypt where the department of research and antiquities of the University scientifically examined it with great care. The department came to the conclusion that the writing and the manuscript could not have been less than one thousand years old in any case. Because of careless handling and frequent use the parchment had worn off at many places. Therefore the poem which consisted of about seventy couplets could not be read clearly in its entirety. There were certain verses of which full sentences could not be read. Therefore, only those verses have been copied here which have been read clearly and correctly.”

This poem is by Umar bin Hasham kunniat Abul-Hakam. In all eighteen couplets were reproduced. But before I quote some of those couplets here I wish to say who this poet Umar bin Hasham was and when he lived.

Umar bin Hasham was a famous poet of Arabia. By virtue of his knowledge and ability, he was known as Abul Hakam, ‘the father of knowledge’. He was a contemporary of Prophet Mohammad, and he was the younger brother of the prophet's father. But on account of strong differences on matters of religion, there was not only a distance but also direct hostility between the uncle and the nephew. He was regarded as the leader and policy-maker of the prophet's opponents and, at the end, he was killed in battle against the Muslims. The Muslims call him ‘the father of ignorance’ in stead of calling him ‘the father of knowledge’. I quote here only four of the couplets, the rest I shall reproduce in a full-length work which is going to be published shortly and in which a photo of the verses will also be given.

Qafa banaki zikran amni uloom taba'ashiru
Quluban amatatul hawa wa tazzakkaru

One who has polluted the purity of the mirror of his mind so much with vice and greed that there is nothing left of love and sensitiveness.

Wa tazkirahu ba'udan innil barai bilwara
Walqayani zatullahi yaumu tabashiru

Having lived in vain in this way a whole life time, can he, at the very end, if he wants to return to dharmā (truth and goodness), find God? Yes, surely, he can find God.

Wa ahli neha azhu narima mahadevahu
Wa manazil-i-ihmuddin min hum wa sayattaru

If he, for the sake of himself and his children, even once prays to Mahadeva (Lord Shiva) with an honest and sincere heart, he can reach the highest goal on the path of dharmā (religion).

Ma' asairu akhlaqan hasana kulluhum waya akhi
Nujuman azayatu summa kaghasab-ul-hindu

God, when will that time come for me when I shall go on a pilgrimage to Hindustan, the treasure-land of good conduct and, like a divine guide, the teacher of eternal dharmā.

The reader may please note that Mahadeva and Hind are original words in the Arabic language.

On reading these couplets, can any reasonable person deny that, in Arabia, there was influence of Vedic (i.e., Hindu) civilization and culture which was wide-spread too? The day I read these verses I felt convinced that if the ancient history and literature of Arabia were studied critically in order to ascertain the truth of its character and genius, it will be proved that the ancient inhabitants of Arabia were followers of Vedic Dharmā (Hinduism) and as such they were Hindus. For want of sufficient material on the subject I remained in a state of uncertainty for two years and could not work further in this direction. But if a person has a strong will and firm conviction, God certainly helps, as He helps all those who help themselves. In such a situation, the man receives help which is wonderful indeed. Under the orders of the divine, circumstances were favourable and in 1925 I set out on a journey of pilgrimage to Arabia and other Islamic countries. I am not narrating here the story of my travels because on this subject I am writing another book in which I shall describe my experiences in full detail.

From 1925 to 1931 I continued travelling in Islamic countries. I travelled over Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Morocco, etc. As I travelled I propagated Vedic Dharma also. I continued my research work also. But during my travels across all these countries, I had a very strong desire to travel in Hijjaz, the very core of Arabia and the birth-place of Islam. I wanted to see it with the eyes of a non-Muslim. Of course, even before 1917, I had visited Mecca and Medina three times and had travelled around but then I had done so as a Muslim in order to fulfill my religious obligations. At that time I had complete, unquestionable, even blind, faith in everything Islamic and Arabic which all was a passion with me. I had no will and desire to understand and confirm the propriety of anything. No question but faith. This time I had the ambition to look at everything with the eye and understanding of a non-Muslim in order to study critically the culture, civilization and polity of those countries, especially Hijjaz. But I dare not do so. By law of the land and under the commandment of religion, no non-Muslim could go to that sacred holy place. This prohibition is not new; it has been there for the last 1300 years. When the Prophet captured and occupied Mecca as the holy seat of Islam, only one and a half years later, this prohibitive order was promulgated through the Quran.

Ya ayyuhal lazina amanu innamal mushrikuna najisun
Fala yaqrabul masjidil harama ba'ada amahum haza

That is: “The Mushriks (non-Muslims) are unclean. They must not come to the holy Mosque Al-Aharam” (Sura Tauba, ruku 4, para 10). Although according to this commandment, the non-Muslims were debarred from the Mosque Al-Aharam only, Prophet Mohammad, according to Hadith Bukhari and Muslim, extended it in his time to the whole of Arabia. Thus it is said in the Hadith:

Ikhrhajul yahudu va annasara min jaziratul Arab

Which means: “Let all the Jews and Christians (non-Muslims) be out of the Arabian Peninsula”.

In this Hadith, there is mention only of the Jews and the Christians. The only reason is that, towards the end of the time of the prophet, only the Jews and the Christians among the non-Muslims had not converted to Islam. The rest of them, specially the followers of the ancient religion of the country had been converted. Thus there were no non-Muslims except the Jews and the Christians. For this reason, these two sects have been mentioned specially. Consequently, during the time of the second Caliph, Umar, all the non-Muslims were expelled from Arabia, and since then this prohibitory order has been in force. No non-Muslim can openly go there and declare his identity.

Years ago there was the Khilafat Movement in India. One reason for this agitation was this: During World War 1 of Europe, the Governor of Arabia, Sheriff Hussein, rose in revolt against his ruler, the Sultan of Turkey, and joined the British power. The British army entered Arabia as Sheriff Hussein's allies. There were Muslims and non-Muslims both in the British force. There was a great agitation among the Muslims against this and they turned against Sheriff Hussein demanding independence for the Arabian Peninsula. Ultimately, Sheriff Hussein was defeated and turned out by Ibn Saud who occupied Arabia. Because of the Khilafat Movement the British allies withdrew support from Sheriff Hussein who by himself was not strong enough to withstand Ibn Saud. Thus during the time of Ibn Saud, the prohibitory order was again enforced, and this time it was enforced so strongly that non-Muslim ambassadors too could not go there. The ambassadors had to keep their office in Jeddah, but Mecca being the capital of Arabia, they had to keep a Muslim assistant there. On April 12, 1933, the legal representative of Saudi Government in Karachi issued a warning in the newspapers, Inqualab and Zamindar, etc., to the following effect:

Warning: Last year, seven non-Muslims tried to enter our territory in disguise. But they were detected and shot dead. Therefore this warning is hereby issued that no non-Muslim should try to enter our territory in disguise or in any other manner. If any one tries, he shall be liable to the same punishment.

This notice too is a proof of the fact that the entry of non-Muslims into Hijjaz is prohibited. Of course, western tourists have gone to Arabia and also written books about the various conditions there. But they entered Arabia via Islam: First they came to non-Islamic countries such as Egypt, converted to Islam, and as Muslims they travelled to Mecca on Hajj pilgrimage. But I did not want to adopt this way. Nor did I want that as a follower of Vedic Dharma and as an Arya missionary I should deceive people by converting to a religion in which I had no faith and that too temporarily only to travel to Arabia. But God helped me and I found a way. I did travel through Arabia safely to my satisfaction and as a guest of the government of Hijjaz. The details cannot be described in this short tract, these will be described in a bigger book.

The purpose of my travel in Arabia was to research into the ancient religion of the Arab people. And I got good success too in this mission. I found such poems by ancient poets of Arabia as prove clearly and unmistakably that the people of Arabia in the pre-Islamic era were Hindus. Around 2500-2000 years before Islam, the Vedas were well known there and the Arabs followed the Vedas just as we do in India today. The faith of the Arabs in the Vedas was the same as that of the Aryas (Hindus) in India. But after the war of Mahabharata, Bharat Varsh (Hindustan) suffered a revolutionary change for the worse, and the Arya nation disintegrated into fragments. People fell a victim to superstition. Then arose and spread the religion of the Puranas and all ritualism, and then arose the principles and philosophy of Buddhism. The peninsula of Arabia too could not

remain untouched by those changes. The preachers continued going from India to Arabia from time to time and they continued spreading their ideas there until the advent of Prophet Mohammad. By that time, there was complete take over by Vam Marga and Tantra-ism. The prophet raised a strong voice against Vam Marga and the Tantrics and took up the challenge of redeeming the ancient Vaidic Dharma and restoring it among the people. The principles which he preached for the first twelve or thirteen years were in tune with the faith and principles of the Vaidic Dharma of their forefathers and completely different from the principles of modern Islam. Our Muslim brothers should seriously think on this. They should rise above prejudice and narrow-mindedness and turn their attention to those facts (of history and culture) which the historians, because of prejudice and self-righteousness, either ruled out of history or hid them in the dark to their personal satisfaction, believing that they would never come to light.

A word about our Sanatan Dharmi brothers. Out of ignorance and lack of information and knowledge they not only oppose the work-programme of the Arya Samaj but also create obstacles in the work. They should think how far it is correct and appropriate on their part to oppose the Arya Samaj mission of the propagation of Vaidic Dharma and create obstacles in the way of the re-admission of the Muslims and the Christians into the Hindu fold. About 2000 to 2500 years ago our missionaries used to preach our religion in other countries. These things are confirmed by the poems of the ancient poets of Arabia. Indeed, even those who believed that Rama and Krishna were incarnations of God and those who worshipped Kali and believed in the Puranas travelled to other countries to preach their religion and spread the eastern Vaidic light over the west. These are not stories spun out by us, these are truths recorded by the poets of the foreign countries in their poems thousands of years ago. Our own brothers, our own countrymen, are bent upon opposing us and yet proclaim that they are following in the footsteps of their forefathers. But they should know that Arya Samaj is doing exactly what their forefathers had been doing. Will they then refrain from opposing us? Can we hope that they will help in our programme of a common Vedic mission?

Here we shall quote only parts of certain poems, because in this small tract there is no room for the whole poems. I went to Jerusalem to visit the sacred mosque (Bait-ul-Muquaddas). Jerusalem is the famous capital city of Palestine (now of Israel), and a holy place for the Muslims, Christians and the Jews. In fact, for the Christians and the Jews, it is as sacred as Mecca is for the Muslims. The Muslims regard it as most holy after Mecca. Since the last European war (World War 1) it has been under the British Government. In Jerusalem, there is a famous library which was founded and established by a Governor during the Turkish rule after the name of Sultan Abdul Hamid. It is a magnificent library which in many ways compares with the modern libraries of Europe. The building is majestic and it must have cost about eight to ten lacs of rupees. It is just like a royal palace fitted and furnished with the most modern facilities. It contains thousands of ancient manuscripts written on parchment and palm leaves. It has hundreds of specimens of Arabic, Syrian, Egyptian and Iberian languages and literatures of

different times. It has, especially, about fifty specimens of the changes and variations of the Arabic script. Here I got to see in book form a manuscript written on a camel parchment. It is about 800 years old. The title of the book is Sairul-Uquool which is a history of the ancient poets of Arabia. In the history of Islam there was a famous ruler, made more famous by the stories of Alif Laila. His name was Caliph Haroon Rashid the Great. In the court of this ruler, about 1200 years ago, the writer of this book occupied the prestigious position of a poet laureate. His name was Asmai. He collected and edited this book with immense hard work, competence, intelligence, objectivity and extreme degree of courage and liberalism. There is no trace of religious partiality and prejudice although all the poets whose poems he collected had been non-Muslims. Some of these poets had been contemporaries of the prophet and they had opposed him strongly too. But even their account has been given fully and correctly which is really amazing.

From the editor's introduction to the book, a few facts are quoted below to help the readers understand and appreciate (the value and importance of this work). He writes:

“In the city of Mecca there was a temple which the inhabitants of Arabia regarded as holy and sacred. Pilgrims from far off places came to visit the shrine and pay homage. Arabia then suffered from internal disorder, violence and lust. Therefore, the pilgrims suffered terrible hardships on way to the shrine; they were waylaid, robbed and even murdered. As a result, the number of pilgrims went down day by day. The income of the people of the country depended on the number of the pilgrims going up or down. As a result they could not bear the losses from the fall in the numbers. Consequently the people mutually agreed and decided that four months in the year should be set apart for the pilgrimage, and during that period all fighting and violence should be stopped by law. These four months were declared as the sacred months of holiness called “Asshahar-al-haram” (during which everyone observed peace and maintained goodwill). During this period, they held a big fair in Mecca which they called the festival of Akaz. People from every part of Arabia came to join this fair and festival. As there was peace and order all over the land, and the highways in every part were safe, a large number of pilgrims gathered in Mecca. In the fair, there were all kinds of fun and entertainment. Especially there was held a great poetic symposium in which all the able and eminent poets of Arabia joined to entertain the lovers of poetry and display their ability and intelligence in the field of art and literature to win fame and honour. In this symposium ten best poets of the land were selected for national honours and award for the best quality of poetry and performance. The poet who recited the best poem was awarded the first prize and honour. His poem was written on a ‘paper’ of gold and displayed on the temple wall. For the next one year until the next symposium this poet was recognized as the Supreme among poets of Arabia, and in matters of literature, his judgment and decisions were regarded as just and unquestionable. The people of the country recognized and honoured

him as the man of learning without objection or reservation. The other nine poets were judged as the next in order of merit, but among themselves they were equals. Their poems were written on parchment of camel or sheep and were displayed on the upper walls of Ka'aba. In this way, every year, ten selected and best poems of the country were added to the treasure-house of learning maintained in the temple. This tradition had been there for thousands of years. The known history of literature and learning has nothing definite to show in relation to its beginning or its founder. In this (impersonal but collective and national) way the people of Arabia had treasured a wealth of invaluable knowledge and literature and kept it safe in the sacred treasury of the temple.

“Then came the conquest of the city of Mecca by the forces of Islam. The forces cleared the temple of the idols, and in this operation these poems too were destroyed. Had these poems not been destroyed, the people of Arabia would have been rich with a treasure of literature and knowledge unique among the languages of the world. But alas! That treasure collected and preserved over years and years was destroyed in a matter of moments. However, in the force of Islam, there was one famous poet of Arabia, Hasan bin Thabit. He could not bear this destruction. He caught hold of some of the invaluable poems he could lay his hands upon and kept them safe with himself. This sacred trust (of knowledge, culture and literature) lay safe in his custody and, even after his death it remained safe in his family for three generations. Then came the time of Caliph Haroon Rashid, patron of arts and knowledge, protector of his people and friend of the pious and the God-fearing. The news of his love of arts and knowledge had spread not only in Arabia, it had also travelled to the other countries around. In the third generation of Hasan bin Thabit, Maslam bin Aslam bin Hasham, started from Medina for Baghdad with these poems, and here (that is in Baghdad) he met me (that is, Asmai) and showed all the poems to me. I took him with me to the Caliph, the Amir of the pious and the God fearing, and in return, received rich rewards. The poems which Maslam presented are eleven in number. Three of these are on gold leaves, and they are of the poet Lavi bin Akhtab bin Tarafa. The rest are on parchment and they are by different poets”.

From part of the Introduction quoted above it is clear that arts and learning in pre-Islamic Arabia were on the height of progress. The writings of other historians also prove that at that time in every home in Arabia, everyone young or old, man or woman, talked of art and learning. The people then were all deeply interested in arts and knowledge – although our Muslim friends describe that time as an age of ignorance and darkness. But the lovers of knowledge and poetry among the readers may themselves decide the question whether the nation and country which was on that height of culture and knowledge could be called ignorant and uncivilized during the pre-Islamic period. The

answer is NO. But if the Muslims say that since they did not live according to their view of life and vision (i.e., the Islamic way), those people were uncivilized and their time, an age of darkness, the argument is not acceptable. Also, if they say that as their social organization was not in accordance with the teachings and principles of Islam, and therefore they were uncivilized, this too is not reasonably acceptable. Or, again, if the Islamic historians say that they indulged in lawlessness and mutual warfare and were addicted to drinking and other vices, and thereby they want to get it confirmed by the world that they (pre-Islamic Arabs) were uncivilized, this too is not the right argument. The reason is: Is there any civilized nation in the world today which is free from all these manners and habits? (And if they are accepted as civilized people, why not the pre-Islamic Arabs?).

Let the Muslims look around and see their cousin brothers, the Christians (as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan Sahib, proprietor of the newspaper Zamindar of Lahore regards them). The Indians, especially the Muslims, are trying to imbibe the culture and manners of the Christians and all this with pride and confidence. Do the Christians not have all these manners and habits? Yes, the Christians have all this and yet they are accepted and regarded as the leaders and teachers of civilization. People follow their way of life with pride. All this shows that when the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era are called uncivilized and ignorant, no reason but religious prejudice alone is at work. Otherwise, those people were not uncivilized.

Now we present a few verses of the poem which, according to the Introduction written by Asmai, was copied from that on the gold-leaf presented by Maslam to the Amir-ul Mominin (Haroon Rashid, the ruler of the pious and the God-fearing, the Muslims). In that book (i.e. Sair-ul-Uqool), the poet mentioned at no.1 is Lavi bin Akhtab bin Tarafa. He says: “ In Arabic literature and learning, this poet was the inventor (i.e. the maker) of the Quasida form of poetry He was also the first poet to have brought the rules of poetry under one central principle. He also moved the Arabic literature and learning into the direction of progress. He was also the inventor of various forms of art and literature. (In short, he was a genius in the field of art, literature and learning). He lived and wrote about 2300-2400 years before Prophet Mohammad”.

Having written this, the editor has presented five couplets as specimens of the poetry of Lavi. When I read these, I say with all the honesty and sincerity at my command. I was transported into a state of ecstasy for fifteen to twenty minutes away into an unearthly heaven. What a matter of wonder and amazement that the historians have converted Arabia, once a follower of the Vedas and Vaidic Dharma, to a worshipper of the Semitic culture and manners!

Now I reproduce below those five couplets for the information and interest of the readers:-

Aya mubarakal arzi yushanniha min-al-hind
Wa aradakallah manyyunazzilu zikratun.

O blessed land of Hind (India)! Worthy art thou of reverence,
For to thee did Allah reveal the true knowledge of Himself.

Wahal tajalliyatun ayanaka subahi arba' tunzikruhu
Hazahi yunazzilar-rasulu minal hindatun.

What a pure light do these four revealed books afford to our mind's eye
like the lust of the dawn! These four, God revealed unto His Prophets in
Hind.

Yaqulun-al-allah ya ahalul arze alamini kulluhum
Fattabau zikratul Veda haqqan malam yunazzilatun.

And Allah thus teaches all races of mankind that inhabit His earth:
“Observe (in your lives) the knowledge I have revealed in the Vedas”.
For surely Allah has revealed them.

Wahuva alamu-al-Sama wal Yajur min-allahi tanzilan
Fa-ainama ya akhi tubbya-an yubashshiri najatun.

Those treasures (of knowledge) are the Sama and Yajur which Allah
has revealed. O my brothers! Revere these, for they tell us the good
news of salvation.

Wa isnayna huma rik athar nasahini ukhuwatum
Wasnata ala udan wahuwa mush-aratun

The next two, of these four, Rik and Athar(va) teach us lessons of
brotherhood. These two are the beacons of light which call us to that
goal.

These verses quoted are self-expressive. They need no explanation, comment or criticism. Every word shows that the poet Lavi bin Akhtab bin Tarafa had complete faith in the Vedas. His mind was inspired with the love of the Vedas in reverence. Nor can anyone say here that these ‘Vedas’ were not the Vedas we know but they were different. The names of all the four Vedas have been given clearly, and it has been said that they were revealed in India to God's prophets. These verses were written about 2400 years before Prophet Mohammad, and the prophet arose on the scene about 1350 (sic.) years ago. Thus the time of the poet was about 3750 years ago. This time schedule clearly supports and confirms Swami Dayanand's view that at the time of the Mahabharata Vaidic Dharma and Vaidic culture was prevailing all over the world.

Of all the poems of the ancient Arabic poets which I have been able to find, those which have been referred to above are the oldest, and they are the ones which mention the Vedas most clearly and directly. The others are of later time. They are of a time within one thousand years before the prophet Mohammad. These later poets write of the principles of the Puranas, gods and goddesses, incarnations and idol-worship instead of celebrating the Vedas. This proves that even after the advent of Buddhism, when India had been taken over by idol-worship, the scholars and preachers of this country continued to go abroad to preach and propagate their religion. Thus I got quite a few poems of Arabic poets a reading of which clearly proves that the scholars and preachers of India had been going to Arabia also.

In the public library of Cairo I came across a poem written by Ajiz bin Hamza of Arabia about three hundred years before Prophet Mohammad. He clearly mentions in his poem that, having fallen victims to ignorance and darkness, the Arabs had gone far away from the true (Vaidic) Dharma (religion). At that time, king Vikramaditya, with love and kindness, deputed two pious and pure hearted scholars and sent them there (Arabia). They showed them the path of truth and Dharma and removed their ignorance and darkness. (The poem in original with block-photo will be published in a full-length work shortly). This proves that the religious preachers of India had always been visiting foreign countries for religious teachings and propagation. In fact even after the decline of Buddhism when faith in divine incarnation and Vam Marga (Hedonism) had spread in the country, the preachers of this version of religion too continued to visit Arabia and other countries to preach their ideas. So much so that by the time of the birth of Prophet Mohammad, the people of Arabia had become followers of Vam Marga. They had accepted the belief that drinking liquor, eating meat and free sex were means of salvation. It was against these that Prophet Mohammad raised his voice.

The fact of the matter is that up to the time of Prophet Mohammad the religious and cultural contact between India and Arabia had continued. The proof of this fact is the verses of Abul Hakam (Umar bin Hasham) which we have earlier quoted. There in those verses the poet prays for the time when he would have the opportunity to visit India. This deep and sincere desire to visit India is a proof of the love and faith which the people of Arabia had for India. And if they had this deep faith in India and her people, it was but natural that every change and development in India would have its effect in Arabia. When the people of India lost contact with knowledge, gave up the true knowledge of the Vedas and the Vedic principles of life and conduct, and instead, accepted the Puranas and books of tantra, it was but natural that all those countries which accepted India as the teacher and guide and followed it in everything should follow it in Puranas and tantra also. And it did happen to such an extent that idol worship became accepted as the means of salvation. In place of Ahinsa (non-violence) followed violence (hinsa). The sacrifice of innocent and helpless animals became the means of pleasing God.

In this small tract there is no space for detailed proofs or description of all the facts and circumstances. Nor can we reproduce all the poems in their entirety. I shall reproduce only one poem of 500-550 years earlier than the advent of Prophet Mohammad. This was the time when idol-worship and faith in divine incarnation was on top of religion. Every home in every village was the house of one god or goddess in idol form. Thousands of animals were sacrificed to these idols. The worshippers did not refrain even from human sacrifice, because that was regarded as the highest act of piety. This poem in manuscript form is preserved in the Government Public Library of Constantinople.

This Government Public Library of Constantinople was once the private library of the ruler of Turkey. But with the establishment of the democratic form of government in the country it was converted into a public trust library. Close to the Constantinople University hall there is a magnificent royal palace which one of the past rulers had got constructed for his Sardin queen. That palace now is used for the library. Even in its form and appearance and its style of writing this poem is a rare piece of art wonderful to see. This manuscript is about 1250 years old. Caliph Ibn Abdul Mulk Amavi in his time got it written by a Greek artist. It is written on leaves of gold. It has eleven leaves which have been bound together in book form. How can I describe the form and beauty of its art and craftsmanship! It is not possible to reproduce its beauty and craftsmanship with the strokes of my pen. The leaves of gold are hardly thicker than paper. Each two of them are pasted together with a piece of red parchment in between to hold them. The leaves are so cut in letter forms that on both sides the letters form into words. Because of the red parchment the words are visible bold and clear as if they are written on both sides of paper. On the margins on both sides of the writing there are decorations, matchlessly beautiful, so wonderful to see. Some of these are so fine that, together with the artistic writing, the beauty grows manifold brilliant. The detailed history on these leaves is written in Turkish of the time of King Suleman Azam who had been a famous ruler of Turkey, and this history too is bound with the leaves. I am not writing this history here, I want to say only this much that Caliph Ibn Abdul Mulk heard an Arabi (a countryman) recite a few verses from an ancient poem and so ecstatic was his experience that he was inspired with deep interest and love for more: he selected a team of his best court poets and commissioned them to travel from tribe to tribe to collect the poetic compositions of ancient poets, as many as possible, from Hijjaz. After two years of hard work and research they were able to collect seven complete poems and more than a hundred couplets of different poems. Caliph Ibn Abdul Mulk, the ruler, then got them written by a Greek or Sardin craftsman.

We reproduce here a few couplets from poem No.3 in this collection, not the whole poem for want of space. This is a poem by Arbin Uns bin Manat whose time according to Sair-ul- Uquool is three hundred years before Prophet Mohammad, and four hundred years before him according to the history attached to these leaves. In these couplets the poet prays to his god of love and worship, the Lord of Truth, and sings the praises of His wondrous works and incomparable powers. But the verses do not speak of the name of

that god by which the people of Arabia called and worshipped him. However, the description of his divine attributes, powers, and especially the wonderful acts of his is nothing unknown and mysterious to Indians. Even a child among the Hindus, when he hears of these, can immediately say which god in the Indian tradition these describe and praise. But we should remember that the god which the poet celebrates in the verses is the God Supreme for him. He also accepts and believes that in order to remove human suffering and destroy the chains of sinfulness of (in order that humanity may rise to freedom and salvation) the divine power appears in human form as an incarnation of God.

The poet says:

Ja-ana bil-amr-i-mukarramatum fidduniya innissama
Wa mukhzil kafirina kama yaquluna fil kitaban.

O Lord of mine, with your divine grace and love for humanity, you appeared in human form upon this earth at a time when sinners ruled supreme in possession of world. You have said so yourself in your book:

Ayana ayana tabra't din-al-sadiq fil ins
Jana't tabarral muminina watattakhizil kafirina shadidan.

When Dharma (righteousness) goes down and sin goes up and rules high, I take birth in human form for protecting and saving the devotees and punishing and destroying the sinners.

Rabbana mubaraka baldatun nozilat masruratun
Wa takulul arza baqratun fil hubbi masruran.

O Lord, blessed is that place where you appeared in human form and blessed is that land where you grazed and tended the cows and where you played with your friends.

Wal huna fissurat-il-maliha kama ja'ana fissurat-al hasni
Nayana tattakhizi yadaha fissama-i-la qarara subhan.

When I look at the fallow beauty of your form it appears as if the beauty of the world has taken a single human form in your person. When you play upon the flute, the sweet and enchanting notes of the music possess the hearers, men and women all, with admiration and ecstasy.

Ra aytu jamal-il-hazatun fil-malbusi yadahu fayana
Rasahi hulli fizzatiun min-al-insi masruran.

O Lord of the Universe, show me once that divine form dressed in yellow robes, with flute in hands, crown on head, and pendants in the ears – the devotees see the form and forget their earthly existence in ecstasy.

Wa jannat-ul-huri tunji va tattakhizi bil ayanati jabalun
Wal ibad-al salihin-al-hubbi hal kuntu masrura.

O lord, with a touch of your feet you redeemed an apsara (nymph) of paradise, and raised a mountain on your finger. You did everything for your friends and devotees. Pray, will you not save me, Lord!

Having read the couplets above, the readers will have no doubt about the god and incarnation to whom they are addressed and dedicated, and what they say in prayer. All that is said in these lines is so simple and clear, there is no scope at all for doubt. Spontaneously does the reader proclaim that these lines have been written in praise of Lord Krishna and no one else. It is clear from the lines that the Lord in command of the powers and attributes cannot be any other than Lord Krishna. Even today this very form of the power and works of Lord Krishna is the form worshipped by the devotees.

The verses quoted above prove and confirm that about four hundred years before the advent of Prophet Mohammad the inhabitants of Arabia had come to believe firmly that God takes human form for His incarnation on earth. Although thousands of years earlier, the poems say, it was believed that the Vedas were the only revelation of God, and following the teachings of the Vedas was the only way to freedom and salvation, yet the story of religious beliefs did not end with faith in incarnation. The poets of the country about a hundred years before Prophet Mohammad show that drinking and eating meat was the gateway to paradise and worshipping gods and goddesses in idol form was the way of worship of the Divine Power. Killing of animals for sacrifice and offering blood and flesh was regarded as virtue, as much as the cherished love of the goddess and offering liquor to her was an indispensable part of the ritual of worship. All this shows that about a hundred years before the Prophet, Arabia had become the home of Vam Marga (Hedonism). Meat and drink had so enervated the people of the land that they had fallen victim to various weaknesses of character and social abuse. At this critical stage of social change in the worse direction, the Prophet appeared (as a challenge and as a new path-maker).

What ideas did the Prophet preach and what principles of life and conduct did he proclaim for the people? These are the questions to be answered. These problems we shall take up in the next write-up. People often ask that if the people of Arabia were so

close to Arya and Hindu religion and civilization, then, how is it that, on their religion, which was a branch of Hinduism, there is such a powerful influence of Semitic civilization and the Jewish and Christian religion instead of the influence of Vedic culture and Hindu Dharma? If the inhabitants of Arabia were Hindus, then on Islam too there should have been the seal of influence coming from Hindu culture and civilization just as there is the influence of Hinduism on Buddhism, Jainism and the Sikhs. On the contrary, Islam and the Muslims are closer to the Jews and the Christians. In the holy Quran, there are pages and pages taken from the Old Testament. The answer to these doubts and questions you will get from the second tract. You will then know how close the Prophet was to Vedic teachings and what principles he preached to the people of Arabia. And then under the influence of the Jews and the Christians, the whole plan and programme changed. All these things will be presented to you in the light of new and modern researches which have so far been lying unknown in the dark.

OM SHUM

