

When one is asked "What is the true meaning of Islam ?" This in relation to the accusation of the Non-Islamic content of our Holy Ginans! Nothing, but the usual faint and gloomy picture of the external ritualism of certain "Islamic" people of a certain geographical area is pronounced. The Holy Quran differs markedly with respect to the above.

The Holy Quran says :

"You are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoy right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah".

(Holy Quran III, 110)

"Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good;

(Holy Quran II, 112)

AND

"who believe in the unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that we have bestowed upon them;

"And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the hereafter".

"These depend on guidance from their Lord. These are the successful.

(Holy Quran II 3, 4 & 5).

"The logical conclusion to the evolution of religious history is a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-doctrinal universal religion, which Islam claims to be. For Islam is just submission to the Will of God".

This could in all respect be considered as a true definition of "Islam" and of "Muslim".

It can be noted that our Holy Gnan perfectly endorses and perfectly describes this definition of the Holy Quran, how then could anyone claim - if any at all - that our Ginans are contradictory ? On what ground exactly, can one describe our Holy Ginans as Non-Islamic ?

ON THE WORDINGS OF HOLY GINANS

History records the gigantic efforts undertaken by our Pirs to unveil the esoteric path and the mystical aspects of our faith through the medium of our Holy Ginans. And precisely, the Holy Ginans belong to the literary category which is generally defined as "anagogic" that is to say "Mystic or Esoteric" in the broadest sense, such as, that is esoteric in nature, the Ginans serve to penetrate to the inner (batin) signification of the Quran rather than the external (Zahir) aspects. On this basis was composed a whole system of hermeneutics (pertaining to interpretation), which metamorphosed positive religion with its external rules and obligations into a theosophy which constituted the true religion, that is the true meaning of Islam and Ismailism, leading the adherents through a process of intellectual and spiritual initiation to the truth, the Absolute Truth.

The Ginans then have played a most significant role at least for seven hundred years, all this in order to maintain our firm faith towards "Sirat-al-Mustakim" and have further generated most powerfully the Force to Divine Love, Will and Wisdom into the lives of All adherents.

Our Ginanic languages have an idiosyncrasy of their own, a mode of expression and a poetic style, which is unique and incomparable.

Because of this unique, artful, divinely inspired independent style and mode of expression, our Holy Ginans are also a Divine literary corpus in its own right, with all the honours and dignity that pertains to any other Divine literature. They express the eternal message of divine will and wisdom equally to any other expression of the kind.

Most unfortunately, in recent times, a tendency has grown to distort its poetic beauty and its meanings by changing or mutilating its Sanskrit - Prakrit - original words into Persian - Arabic base words. It is the general understanding and belief of those who have advocated such changes in our "Wonderful Tradition" that since the words originated from the Sanskrit language it must symbolise or must have a Hinduistic connotation and in order to correct the so called "Hindu element" and to prove themselves Non-Hindu or "Good Muslims" have switched or exchanged or even mutilated the Sanskrit based words to some Arabic or Persian substitutes.

In other words, it is their contention that in order to exhibit a so called "Islamic Spirit" in life or in the faith, Sanskrit words or terminologies from our Holy Ginans must be discarded, or replace such words or terminologies by some Arabic or Persian original words or if not able, then simply altogether reject the stanza or the Gnan as a whole, all this at the cost of the poetic and literary beauty but even more at the cost of the eternal message contained therein.

Regrettably, the advocates of this Arabic-Persian languages have failed to understand the fact that the mode of expression of any particular language, has in actual fact nothing to do with the Truth or the Message as expressed in any religion. If Arabic were the Only Divine language, The All Compassionate, The All Merciful Creator, Allahtala would not have sent His choicest messengers amongst Non-Arabic people.

IN THE HOLY QURAN ALLAH says:

"And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them".

(QURAN XIV, 4)

Hazrat Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah said in His Holy Firmans
that :

"It is not true to say that Allah knows Arabic language
and not any other language.

Allah knows the languages of all mankind".

In fact, the vast majority of mankind is unfamiliar with the
Arabic language. Islam with its original basis in the Quran has spread
far beyond the geographical limits of the Arabic language. When countries
like Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Iran, Turkey, China and parts of Russia
and South Eastern Europe are taken into account, the Arabs constitute
less than a fifth of the world's Muslim population. With this in mind,
the remaining 80% of the Arabic Muslim population seems to have understood
the message of the Holy Quran in their own indigenous language through
the medium of translation, and among these translations there contains
Sanskrit based languages like Bengali, Hindi and Marathi which reflects
their native characteristic linguistic expression just as we have in our

Holy Ginans. However, these indigenous translations have never been downgraded or rejected by the pious Muslims on the groundless base of the "so called" Hindu expression.

Why then, might be asked, that we reject the same divine eternal message in our Holy Ginans because of its own typical linguistic expression ? What is the fundamental cause for this rejection ? Or might we have a short sightedness in understanding the meaning of Islam or of our Holy Tradition ? Or is it an inferiority complex vis-a-vis the Arab speaking Muslims or others ?

Are we not in a position to educate our community, our members of the jamat with the correct meaning and the original status of our Holy Ginan ? Might we add, are we, then going to implicate to the present generation and the forthcoming and also to the generation yet to be born that Our Divinely Inspired Pirs have made fundamental mistake in their compositions, which necessitated corrections or modifications in the Holy Ginans ?

Is this the wisdom that must persist in our community with respect to this "Wonderful Tradition"? One may pose a similar question about the Holy Quran, could any parties insinuate that our Holy Quran contains words from the Jewish or Christian tradition or contains terminologies of Pagan origin ? Also, if the Mathnavi of Jalaludin Rumi is for the persian, "The Quran" in persian language, can one accuse Rumi of using Zoroastrian terminology ? The ability of Ismaili writers to integrate into their systems a variety of strands is well known. Just as we find in the Fatimid schemes the use of Neoplatonic emanationist outlook to propound the doctrine so also in Nizari works we find attempts to weave into their doctrine as many ancient traditions as possible to "project the Cosmic vistas sought by the authors, if so, can Nasir Khushro or Sayyedena Hamidudin Kirmani be accused of using Greek terminologies in their philosophical or theological works, further, can they be classified as Non-Islamic ?

Precisely by the same token, why then are our Holy Ginans being downgraded as Non-Islamic or containing objectionable Hindu elements ?

The following is an explanation of some words that have either been replaced, rejected or sometimes the whole stanza has been removed :

SAMI : This has been one of the most victimized word in our Holy Ginans. Instead of this word, Mowla has taken its place. This in spite of the fact that SAMI is a pure Arabic word and in the dictionary of Arabic language the meaning of SAMI is "The Hearer - Listener" further, the Dictionary of Islam traces back the root of this word with one of the 99 beautiful names of Allah as expressed in the Holy Quran.
Why then was this word substituted ?

HARI : One of the meanings in the Sanskrit dictionary is "to take away or remove evil or sins", and accordingly who else save the true bearer of the Noor of Allah - The Imam of the time - can take away or remove evil or sin ?

The Other Meaning as described in the same dictionary is "Charming and Beautiful". This adjective also modifies the noun to HARA, conveys the meaning as "One who brings, forward seizer, destroyer

remover, etc. which is synonymous to the Quranic attributes of Allah as AL-MUSAWWIR, AL-KABIZ, AL-RAFI, AL-MUJILI, AL-JAMIH, AL-JABBAR.

What is then wrong with "HARI" or where is the so called "Hindu element" here ?

SHRI : A Sanskrit word which means "light, luster, radiance, splendour, glory beauty, grace, loveliness, prosperity, high rank, power, might majesty, royal dignity, possessors of dignity, people of high rank, etc. Our Pirs used this honorific title in the glory of the Holy Names of the Imam. This word has been replaced with "SHAH".

Since SHRI is also synonymous with the Quranic terms AL-LATIF - AL-MAJID - AL-NOOR - why is this word being objected to ? And can any parties assert any "Hindu" connotation with this word ?

TRIBHOWAR : Master of the three worlds - earth, heaven and whatever is between them - this is synonymous to :

RABBI SAMAWATI SABBİ, W RABBİL

ARZINA SABBİ, W MAFIHINNA

W MA BAIN HUNNA, W RABBİL

ARSHİL, AZİM

BRAHMA OR BHIRMA : The Sanskrit dictionary explains this word as growth, expansion, evolution, development, one, self, existent, impersonal spirit, the one universal soul, or one divine essence and the source from which all created things emanate or with which they are identified and to which they return, the self existent; the absolute, the eternal. Our Pirs have used this word to describe the "NOOR-E-NABUWAT" of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S.).

Certain stanzas or sometimes the whole gīnan has been discarded because of this word, as being accused of belonging or pertaining to some Hindu Deity!

VISHNU : Aspect of God which sustains the whole world, all pervader, vibhoo (that is to arise, be developed or manifested, expand, appear to cause, to arise or appear, to make clear, establish, prove, decide). (This is synonymous with the Quranic terminologies such as Hujjtil Amr, Burhan or Noorun Mubin). Our Pirs have described the light of Allah that is the NOOR-E-IMAMAT as Vishnu in our Ginans.

MAHESH : Highly distinguished or eminent. (This title is given to ADAM - ABDUL BASHAR by our Pirs).

We then realise that Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara are but the three Manifestations of the same essence.

RIKHISAR : Highest amongst sages, saints or pious person (Siddikin wash Shahed Wasalehim of QURAN IV 69).

AVATAR : To make or let one descend, Descendant. (This word has been referred to the descendants of Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.S.) that is the Imam of the time.

DARSHAN : Seeing, observing, looking, noticing, perception,
(cf. HOLY QURAN II 272, Xlii, 22; XVIII, 28, XXVIII, 88; VI, 52)

MURARI : All pervading or all containing, omnipresent.

ISHWAR : Capable, Highest, Supreme Being, Supreme Soul, Master,
Lord (AL-WASI, AL'ALA, AL-MALIK, AL-JALIL, AL-AZIM). These are
but a few words which conclusively indicate that the words used in
our Holy Ginans by the Pirs have a definite purpose and a very
significant meaning and it is these that have been discarded,
substituted or mutilated under the label of "Hinduism". Moreover,
any words or terminology in our Ginans have no connection with any
cult, creed or religion per se. Besides each word as used
accompanied with its idea or argument is complementary to the
Holy Quran. If this were not the case, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah
would not have said in His Holy Firmans:

"Pir Sadardin has composed and narrated Holy Ginans out
of the interpretation of the Holy Quran"

July 13, 1899

On one occasion Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah S.A.S. said :

"If some faithful amongst you would come to me - One who has studied the Quran and also has a complete understanding of Holy Ginans - I would match before him each and every verse of the Holy Ginans with the "ayats" of the Holy Quran, and who would testify this fact to you, but there is no such person amongst you".

Zanzibar, July 13, 1899

The time for this challenge is long overdue, but nevertheless the fact remains unchanged, i.e. our Holy Ginans are the living commentaries of the Holy Quran. In this respect, it is wrong and unwise to judge its Islamic Spirit simply with the words of certain languages or with the inhabitants of a certain geographical area.

As a result, therefore, it is hereby respectfully and most humbly suggested, that no attempts should be made to change, switch, replace, mutilate, modify or discard any word whatsoever from our

Holy Ginans. Since this action of ours considered as anti-islamic would destroy the beauty, the charm, the originality and more importantly the actual meaning of the Ginans.

We humbly and strongly suggest that printed copies of Holy Ginans containing un-original and modified version should be withdrawn from circulation, and Members of the Jamat should be informed to refrain from reciting such un-authorized version. Moreover, all concerned who have advocated such changes in our Ginans be informed to refrain from making or producing any further changes, modifications or even publication.

"SO CALLED" OBJECTIONABLE REFERENCES :

As is the case with the Holy Quran and other religious scriptures, our Holy Ginans are enriched with stories, metaphors, allegories, parables and symbols which reveal and teach the eternal message of truth and eternity. These stories, metaphors and parables including all the narratives appear in the Holy Quran and in addition many more narratives of ancient people and religions which are not mentioned in the Holy Quran. These have become the victims of abbreviation, alteration,

or total rejection, because it is held, by some, that there is no Islamic background but only so called Hindu connotation.

If so, then what is the fundamental or the basis of this rejection and on what account can it be proven that such notions are Islamic or non-Islamic ?

There is no doubt that the real definition of "Islam" can only be found from the source of Islam, i.e. the Holy Quran, then, there should not in any case remain a doubt on this definition, since the Holy Quran is the real source of eternal truth, divine knowledge and spiritual inspiration for Muslims. "The Quran states that the truth of God is but one and is meant for all and was indeed given to every one. But in implementing it mankind had divided themselves into numerous groups. The Quran desires to bring everyone back to the universal and common truth. And what is this universal and common truth ? It is success in life or salvation achieved only through devotion to God and righteous living. It is the law of life which is the religion prescribed by God and it is this which the Quran styles Al-Islam". (Mowlana Azad).

There exists a misconception in the minds of some that Islam came into existence only after the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S.) and flourished only in the Arabic peninsula, also, that whomsoever follows the Arabian customs, wear dresses and adopt a life style akin to the Arabian people, who chant Arabic slogans in their vocabulary are in all respect the only ones to be considered or treated as Muslims. Furthermore, that other revealed religions in the world are false and fictitious including those who brought these revelation to mankind are to be considered as non-Muslims.

As a matter of great importance, the Holy Quran totally rejects these notions :

"Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His Will guided those who believe unto the truth of that

concerning which they differed. Allah guideth whom
He will unto a straight path"

(Holy Quran, II, 213).

"And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless
it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them
as do wrong; and say : We believe in that which hath been
revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your
God is One, and unto Him we surrender".

(Holy Quran, XXIV, 46).

Who are the people of the Scripture ?

The Quran says :

"And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger
(proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. Then
some of them (there were) whom Allah guided, and some
of them (there were) upon whom error had just hold. Do
but travel in the land and see the nature of the
consequence for the deniers!

(Holy Quran XVI, 36).

"And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them".

(Holy Quran XIV, 4)

"Lo! We have sent thee with the Truth, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them."

(Holy Quran XXXV, 24).

These Quaranic ayats clearly indicate that Islam is a universal religion. It came into being from the very inception of this world. In all ages and in every part of the world to every nation Allah sent His messenger to proclaim the eternal truth, this in the language of people.

The Prophets who declared this truth, was none but the Truth of Islam.

"The Muslim position is clear, the Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view, ALL religions are one, for the TRUTH is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier Prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired books. In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the will and plan of God and a joyful submission to that will and plan".

(Yusuf Ali footnote 418).

We might add that the point of view adopted here is one that risks being regarded as reactionary. It is however not reactionary precisely and only in so far as it is in conformity with TRUTH. With the same promise it is also not progressive, for TRUTH is neither the one nor the other, being wholly independent of human attitudes. Truth does not change because it is expressed in a different way, nor because opinions change, nor because it may not fit in with individual or collective likes and dislikes. It remains what it is and was and always will be, whether man remembers it or not.

In a particular sense Islam refers to the religion revealed through the Quran but in a more general sense it refers to religion as such. Some Muslim sages in fact see three different levels of meaning in the word "Muslim". Islam is actually like a several storied mountain and everything in it has different degrees: and levels of meaning including the concept Muslim itself. Firstly, anyone who accepts a Divine revelation is a "Muslim" in its most universal sense, be he a Muslim, Christian, Jew or Zoroastrian. The Islamic point of view did not take into account the Indian religions until historic contact was made with them but this definition would refer to them as well as Hinduism came to be called by certain later Muslim sages the "religion of Adam". In its first meaning, therefore, Muslim refers to that human being who, through the use of his intelligence and free will, accepts a divinely revealed law.

(S. H. Nasr).

"All Islamic schools of thought accept it as a fundamental principle that for centuries, for thousands of years before the advent of Muhammad, S.A.S. there arose from time to time messengers, illumined by Divine Grace, for and among those races of the earth which had sufficiently advanced intellectually to comprehend such a message. Thus Abraham, Moses, Jesus and all the Prophets of Israel are universally accepted by Islam. Muslims indeed know no limitation merely to the Prophets of Israel; they are ready to admit that there were similar Divinely inspired messengers in other countries - Gautama Buddha, Shri Krishna and Shri Ram in India, Socrates in Greece, the wise man of China and many other sages and saints among peoples and civilisations, trace of which we have lost. Thus man's soul has never been left without a specially inspired messenger from the soul that sustains, embraces and is the universe".

Sultan Muhammad Shah, S.A.S.
48th Imam.

One might ask, if all religions were divinely inspired or revealed and if all prophets were the prophets of Allah, why then the names and their stories as mentioned by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah, S.A.S. and S.H. Nasr, the popular and renowned Islamic scholar, are not referred to in the Quran ?

The Quran says :

"Of some apostles we have already told thee the story; of others we have not; And to Moses God spoke direct".

(Holy Quran IV, 164)
Yusuf Ali.

"This verse gives room to believe in the truthfulness of the apostles who have not been mentioned in the Holy Quran. A Muslim has been enjoined to believe 125,000 apostles of God whereas the names of all the apostles are not given in the Holy Quran. By this verse one has to believe that the great sages and the Divines, the founders of the great religious orders sent in those places, preached only goodness in life and prohibited evil, must have been the apostles of God sent in those places".

(.S.V. Mir)

In consideration of the above, it is logical enough to understand that the names that appear to us non-Islamic within the context of our Holy Ginans are nothing but the names of the great sages, great divines and the founders and followers of great religious order. According to the Holy Quran, their faith was "Islam" and their followers were "Muslims". They had never preached or followed anything but the faith of Islam throughout their life times. However many of their followers in later course had forgotten the eternal message of Islam and became idol worshippers and made polytheism their religion and were known as the followers of the present day Hindu religion.

Our Pirs, however, neither have they preached this present day Hinduism in their Ginans nor have they asked us to follow the same. It is an incontrovertible fact of history that, in practical religious terms, one of the most significant achievements of our Pirs have been their contributions to the teaching and the spread of Islam in the sub-continent. Their contributions and efforts are best reflected in the wonderful heritage they left behind, of which the most important constituent element is the Holy Ginanic literature.

At the time of the revelation of the Holy Quran, the religion of Moses (i.e. Hazrat Moosa A.S.) was in a most deteriorated condition, in spite of this fact ALLAH in the Quran, endorsed, Moses (A.S.) as the rightful Prophet and his religion as the rightful revealed religion and stories and examples are cited. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the Holy Quran has preached the present day belief of Judaism or invited mankind to follow Judaism.

The same case may be cited with the religion of Jesus. It was also at that time in a most appalling condition, there was nothing left except polytheism and agnosticism in the practice of their religion the true message of Jesus was entirely lost. Nevertheless, the Quran has accepted Jesus (Hazrat Issa A.S.) as one of the divinely guided Prophet and given many stories and cited examples of the people of their time, similarly this does not imply the Holy Quran's preaching about Christianity of today (which we might call Paulism) by endorsing and accepting the founder of his religion. Precisely in the same way, our Holy Ginans are the source of divine guidance. Why

have we then adopted a negative attitude towards the mentions by our Pir about the names, examples, parables, metaphors, stories and allegories, in our Holy Ginans and have downgraded them as teaching Hinduism ?

An unbiased study of the Holy Quran and the verses of our Holy Ginan, containing therein the hidden message, will be sufficient to remove all allegations and all doubts about the Hindu content.

Therefore, it is proved beyond a shadow of doubt that Pahlaj mentioned in our Holy Ginan was a Muslim and his religion was Islam.

HARISCHANDRA, TARA RANI AND ROHIDAS mentioned in our Holy Ginans were Muslims and their religion was Islam.

The Pandvas, Kunta and Dropadi were all Muslims and their religion was Islam. The same may be said about all other characters mentioned in our Ginans.

Through Divine guidance they had accepted the Godly revealed true path and had submitted their whole being before ALLAH. They were all pious and believers in the Unity of God and were all wayfarers of "Siratal Mustaqim".

Because of their act of piety and noble deeds and purity as prescribed by Allah and Islam, they became the object of examples in our Holy Ginans.

It may be argued that Hindus follow and mention some of the names cited above, and since they appear in our Ginans, they should be rejected or the Ginan should be discarded !

Similarly, in our Ginans we have the mention of Moses (Hazrat Moosa (A.S.) but his followers are Jews and we do not follow Judaism - are we therefore going to discard Hazrat Moosa's name from our Ginans?

The same may be said about Jesus (Hazrat Issa), and Christianity; are we also going to discard or reject the name of Hazrat Issa in our Ginans ?

If our answer is "yes", then we would be known as a half believer according to the Holy Quran.

If we were to believe in some of the Prophets and reject others, and if we were to make any distinction between one group of messengers and another, then we have adopted a middle way, and for those who adopt such a way, the Holy Quran has proclaimed a warning in the following words :

"Those who deny God and His apostles, and those who wish to separate God from His apostles, saying : "We believe in some but reject others" : And those who wish to take a course midway,

They are in truth (equally) unbelievers; and we have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

To those who believe in God and his apostles and make no distinction between any of the apostles, we shall soon give their due rewards; for God is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

(Holy Quran IV, 150 and 152)
Yusuf Ali.

"The truth of God is but one and has always remained one, and the Prophets have sponsored, one and all but one and the same truth. To accept only some of these Prophets is meaningless. It is nothing short of perversity".

(Mowlana Azad) .

Hence, this is a clear message of the Holy Quran and this is the purest essence of the religion of Islam. Our Pirs had understood this spirit and through the guidance of the Imams of their time, they have conveyed it to us in accordance with the principles of the Holy Quran. As such, instead of rejecting this eternal message of truth, we should be proud to possess such a literary divine corpus and proclaim that we are the true followers of the Holy Quran, and all the parables, stories, metaphors, allegories, which appear in our Holy Ginans are nothing but the true message of the Religion of Islam.

Keeping these principles in mind, we should realise once and for all, that in any circumstances whatsoever no attempt should be made to change, modify or reject any word of stanza or Gnan or part