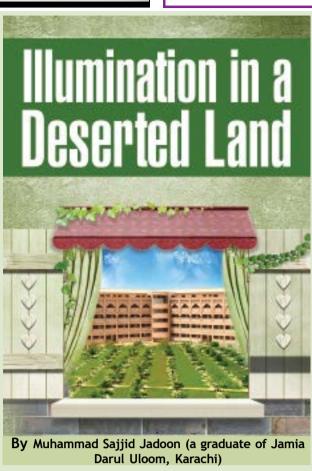
VOL-3 / ISSUE-1 / FEBRAURY 2014 intellect Bulletin

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, madaris have met all the needs of Muslims, and have stayed their course with the passage of time. They have played a pivotal role in making people religionconscious and have prevented the society from falling into moral degeneration prevalent in present times. One of these madaris is Jamia Bait-us-Salam. We had been planning to visit it for a long time, and finally we got a chance to do so during our vacations.

We set off for Jamia Bait-

us-Salam at the invitation of an old colleague, Mawlana Saeed Rahman, who currently teaches at the Jamia. He is a gifted man with admirable qualities and has always kept in touch with his class fellows and teachers. Visitors to the Jamia included some of his old class fellows, the administrator of Majlis Saut-ul-Islam, Pakistan, and the assistant editor of Aiwan-e-Islam, Mawlana Jameel Rehman ur Faroogi, a teacher, Mufti Usama, and a well-known journalist Abdul Jabbar Nasir. On a hot summer day, under the scorching heat of sun, we all assembled in Jamia Darul Uloom, Karachi, to set off for our trip to the Jamia. At the seminary, our honourable friend, Mawlana Saeed ur Rahman received us with hearty greetings. We were taken to his room, where we had a good time conversing with our old friend.

we were welcomed by the pleasing sight of little Jamia Bait-us-Salam is a angels lined up to ensure uniformity of act and word. These little children live under the affectionate institute providing people at peace in the calm and



supervision of their loving with and kind-hearted teachers. Jamia, for them, is a home seminary has turned over a away from home.

After Asr prayers, we set out to visit the various faculties of this seminary under the guidance of Mawlana Saeed-ur-Rahman. sight of the extremely well-constructed mosque made all of us admire the aesthetic taste of Mawlana Abdul Sattar Saheb (DB). A very pleasant and noteworthy aspect of the mosque was that it housed the academic classes of the students of Jamia. This was a feature which reminded us of the way educational activities were conducted in the early days of Islam, students would On entering the mosque actually sit in the mosque to acquire knowledge.

primary religious education. Now, this

new leaf and is benefiting

people day in and day out. One after the other, we visited all the faculties of the madrassah, especially the faculties of Arabic and English. In this seminary, teachers are highly qualified and well-trained. Students go through a well designed curriculum and they are taught a wide variety of English literature. Teachers pay full attention towards their students' contemporary and traditional education and are bringing them up in a way that they will never feel confused about bridging the gap between the East and the West. This Karachi, ages ago, was generation is our asset. We have to inculcate in minaret of light in these them patriotism, a sense despairing times. Before its of responsibility towards inception, people dwelling deen and the society they far away from their homes, in the nearby area were inhabit, and the spirit of sacrificing their childhood ignorant of their deen. exalting the word of Allah for the cause of Allah C There was not a single C. We felt spiritually

tranquil atmosphere of this madrassah.

Our guide told us that a weekly tarbiyah based assembly is held at the madrassah to develop a close association with students so that teacherstudent relationships thrive even beyond the classroom.

When asked about the facilities provided to teachers, we were told that they are given competitive salaries along with spacious and comfortable rooms for accommodation.

all, Jamia's administration is in the hands of nation's youth. We happened to meet Jamia's academic administrator. Mufti Tauheed sahib, while roaming around its beautiful campus. He had a cheerful disposition, and greeted us warmly. Later on, we visited teachers' residential building which is under construction and then the unique café constructed with bamboo sticks. Realistically those prefer the Hereafter to the materialistic life of this world deserve such facilities. Last but not least, Jamia's veritable and far reaching effects can be felt in urban areas and outskirts of the city. Many religious schools, under the influence of Jamia, have been opened in shanty villages, and many people living in the nearby area have come closer to the deen. This is indeed Allah's ⊂ blessing.

Just like Jamia Bait-us-Salam, Jamia Darul Uloom founded in a deserted with sincerity and optimism, but this repository of knowledge gave birth to many a pious scholars of this *Ummah*. Now in another deserted land, a ray of sunshine has emerged in all its grandeur and splendor, and that is Jamia Bait-us-Salam. The sun was setting in the Western horizon when we were served refreshment with hospitality. ceremonious we intended to leave for our places after Maghrib prayers, we were presented with two monthly Arabic and Urdu magazines. We have nothing but praise for the way we were received by the people at the Jamia. May Allah, the Almighty,

accept Mawlana Abdul Sahib and his companions' endeavor to serve deen-e-Islam. Allah, the Most Merciful, says in the Holy Qur'an, "and those who strive in our cause, we will certainly guide them to our paths. For verily Allah is with those who do right" (29:69).

There is a group of practices that we can consider as the twin sister of bid'ah. Like bid'ah they flourish on the twin foundations ignorance and outside influence. Like bid'ah they entail rituals. But unlike bid'ah the rituals have not been given an Islamic face. They are followed because are considered they an acceptable cultural practice or the hottest imported "in" thing.

Most of those who indulge in them do not know what they are doing. They are just blind followers of their equally blind cultural leaders. Little do they realize that what they consider as innocent fun may in fact be rooted

evil and yet somehow turn it to serve the purpose of virtue, has survived. Look at all those people who are still trying, helplessly, to use the formats of popular television entertainments to promote good. They might learn something from this bit of history. failed miserably) Christianity ended up doing in Rome, and elsewhere, as the Romans did. How can anyone in his

that you can preserve the

appearance of a popular

would be indifferent to practices seeped in anti-Islamic ideas and beliefs?

right mind think that Islam

The only success it had was in changing the name cards called--- what else--- valentines, in the 1840s, sold \$5,000 worth--when \$5,000 was a lot of money-the first year. The valentine industry has been booming ever since.

It is the same story with Halloween, which has otherwise normal human beings dressing ghosts and goblins in a reenactment of an ancient pagan ritual of demon worship. Five star hotels in Muslim countries arrange Halloween parties so the rich can celebrate the superstitions of a distant period of ignorance that at one time even included the shameful practice of human sacrifice. The pagan name for that event was Samhain

surrounded the person with laughter and joy on their birthdays in order to protect them from evil.

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How can anyone in his right mind think that Islam would be indifferent to practices seeped in anti-Islamic ideas and beliefs? Islam came to destroy paganism in all its forms and it cannot tolerate any trace of it in the lives of its followers.

Further, Islam is very sensitive about maintaining its purity and the unique identity of its followers. Islamic laws and teachings go to extra lengths to ensure it. Salat is forbidden at the precise times of sunrise, transition, and



in paganism. That the symbols they embrace may be symbols of unbelief. That the ideas they borrow may be products of superstition. That all of these may be a negation of what Islam stands for.

Christianity tried to stop the evil celebration of Lupercalia. Its only success was in changing the name from Lupercalia to St. Valentine's Day

Consider Valentine's Day, a day that after dying out a well deserved death in most of Europe (but surviving in Britain and United States) has suddenly started to emerge across a good swath of Muslim countries. Who was Valentine? Why is this day observed? Legends abound, as they do in all such cases, but this much is clear: Valentine's Day began as a pagan ritual started by Romans in the 4th century BCE to honor the god Lupercus. The main attraction of this ritual was a lottery held to distribute young women to young men for "entertainment and pleasure"--until the next year's lottery. Among other equally despicable practices associated with this day was the lashing of young women by two young men, clad only in a bit of goatskin and wielding goatskin thongs, who had been smeared with blood of sacrificial goats and dogs. A lash of the "sacred" thongs by these "holy men" was believed to make them better able to bear children.

As usual, Christianity tried, without success, to stop the evil celebration of Lupercalia. It first replaced the lottery of the names of women with a lottery of the names of the saints. The idea was that during the following year the young men would emulate the life of the saint whose name they had drawn. (The idea

(pronounced sow-en). Just from Lupercalia to St. Valentine's Day. It was done in CE 496 by Pope Gelasius, in honor of some moorings. Saint Valentine. There are as many as 50 different Valentines in Christian legends. Two of them are more famous, although Christmas their lives and characters

are also shrouded in mystery. According to one legend, and the one more in line with the true nature

of this celebration, St. Valentine was a "lovers" saint, who had himself fallen in love with his jailer's daughter. Due to serious troubles that

accompanied such lottery, French government banned the practice in 1776. In Italy, Austria, Hungry, and Germany also the ritual vanished over the years. Earlier, it had been banned in England during the 17th century when the Puritans were strong. However in 1660 Charles II revived it. From there it also reached the New World, where enterprising Yankees spotted a good means of making money. Esther A. Howland, who produced

one of the first commercial

American Valentine's Day

as in case of Valentine's Day, Christianity changed its name, but not the pagan

Christmas is another story. Today Muslim shopkeepers sell and shoppers buy symbols in Islamabad or Dubai or Cairo. To engage in a known religious celebration of another religion is bad enough. What is worse is the fact that here is another pagan celebration (Saturnalia) that has been changed in name ---and in little else--- by Christianity.

During joys and sorrows, during celebrations and sufferings, we must follow the one straight path --not many divergent paths.

the celebration considered most innocent might have pagan foundations. According to one account, in pagan cultures, people feared evil spirits - especially on their birthdays. It was a common belief that evil spirits were more dangerous to a person when he or she experienced a change in their daily life, such as turning a year older. So family and friends

sunset to eliminate the possibility of confusion with the practice of sun worship. To the voluntary recommended fast on the tenth of Muharram, Muslims are required to add another day (9th or 11th) to differentiate it from the then prevalent Jewish practice. Muslims are forbidden to emulate the appearance of non-Muslims.

A Muslim is a Muslim for life.

During joys and sorrows, during celebrations and sufferings, we must follow the one straight path --- not many divergent paths. It is a great tragedy that under the constant barrage of commercial and cultural propaganda from the forces of globalization and the relentless media machine, Muslims have begun to embrace the Valentines, the Halloween ghost, and even the Santa Claus. Given our terrible and increasing surrender to paganism the only day we should be observing is a day of mourning. Better yet it should be a day of repentance that could liberate us from all these days. And all this daze.



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Egypt in 1826. It was about a quarter of a century since Napoleon's invasion. Egypt was under the control of Muhammad Pasha, an ambitious, power-hungry Albanian who sought to establish his own empire in these Ottoman lands. Caught in the tangle of European networks of power, he sought to enhance his own standing amongst them by putting Egypt on the path of modernization industrialization. Like so many others since then, who have been and continue to be enthralled by European power, he aspired to learn and apply their secrets to power and

sophistication.

It was thus perfectly logical for Muhammad Pasha to send groups of students to Paris in the 1820s, to study the sciences of Western civilization. Accompanying one of these batches in 1826, was Imam Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi. Imam Tahtawi had been educated at Jami'at Al-Azhar in Cairo, and his role in this batch was primarily to provide religious guidance to the rest of the students. Nevertheless, his own thoughts and ideas began to evolve as he witnessed and participated in French culture. He kept a diary that was later published to much acclaim from the governing elite (whom Tahtawi had also praised). His diary was interestingly very "pro-Western" for the day, even if it still retained a somewhat critical approach. He criticized the moral debauchery that he saw amongst the French, but he remained mostly awe-inspired by the learning and the civil, political, and educational institutions that existed in France. Thus, he praised the modernization activities that Muhammad Pasha initiated in Egypt, including his efforts to industrialize and establish new, modern schools. Once he returned, Tahtawi busied himself

with heading many of

these new schools and in

translating French works

into Arabic. This was

unsurprising - obviously,

the fastest way to learn

from Europe would be

directly translate

and teach its treasures. I lay underneath the silent and harmony but I was human rights and the sky, temporarily beaten by the dust, the stink of the open sewers flanking the slum and the scorching heat outside my palmroofed hut. I watched in silence; the kids were playing barefoot with a ragged football. I was lost in thoughts, reminiscing about my past. I had not known that my days with my family would end so fast, let alone end in such brutal, heart-wrenching way. Then I imagined what this place would have been like with clean air and water, with playgrounds, with the lights lit up in houses, where no child was born with birth defects and no child dying of respiratory diseases. My contemplation had been just brewing when sudden commotion broke my train of thought. I turned my head to where the kids had been playing and saw the place full of the bloody, shredded body parts of the kids... must've been a grenade, I thought. I had become somewhat impassive to this everyday-massacre.

One inattentive moment of unconsciousness and the entire scene changed

his lifetime, he translated works ranging from military science to geography and from history to political science - showing not only his wide scope, but his near complete adulation of French intellectual works.

ultimately Tahtawi carved out an important legacy as a key pioneer of the Nahda - the Arab cultural and intellectual "renaissance" that saw many new "modernist" reinterpretations

Islam. Disoriented by the weakening political clout of the Muslims, many of these thinkers focused on the issue they and leave the "bad" of Western civilization in order to "progress and modernize."

The persistence of this rhetoric today poses an extremely important question: Why haven't succeeded "advancing" or "modernizing" in these centuries Tahtawi? Why have the efforts of educators and intellectuals like Tahtawi failed to bring the Muslim world into a "modernized" state of being?

In reality, this "failure" simply testifies to the longevity and powerful grip of Western notions of

understanding. the core, he was still attempting to adapt Islam to Western notions of progress and modernity, without even probing the value of such notions in the first place. Much of his thought, from his emphasis on education as a means for the ideology of development, to his endorsement of parliamentary stemmed from worldview which had not completely interrogated its Western underpinnings. It was Islam that was transformed - not Western learning. Thus, in reality,

systems it was Islam he ultimately political

interrogated with Western lens, as seen underlying scientism. in the efforts to "open" This is not to set up the minds of those who new walls or boundaries opposed between what is Islamic education. and Western. This is only to suggest that we must be aware of the powerbroking inherent in the act of "learning from" of the "modernizing" tching up." power-broking "catching importing centuries have not seen this process completed, not because this process somehow still needs more time, but because this process is precisely set upon concepts and categories which Muslims forever sustain these imbalances. For long, Muslims have been political sociology, imprisoned by the idea that their Present is simply the West's Past, and that their Future can global only lead to the West's Present. To actually fulfill Tahtawi's real vision, we must tap into the deep, rich bodies of knowledge produced by Muslims over the centuries, and unchain ourselves from Western hegemonizing categories of understanding. This is how we can produce a fresh and liberating engagement with Western

> eat sweets and chocolates or at least have a healthy meal. Instead of looking for my school bag, books and toys, I look in the garbage cans for leftover food. The nightmares, the fear and the distress have made me an insomniac. I starve but witnessing the massacres makes me lose my appetite. I want to sit on my father's lap and feel protected. I want to play around with him, giving me a piggyback ride. I want to lie in my mother's warm embrace at night and sleep while she's in the middle of a bedtime story. I want to wake up with the voice of my mother telling me I'm getting late for school. I want to know what it is like to be an elder brother. I want to ask my mother to make me my favorite dish and wait impatiently for it. But what I get is living the hardships no adult wants to imagine himself in. The severe brutality has diminished my spirit to struggle even to get myself something to eat. But then again nobody cares as I engage in this monologue with myself. I too will die the deaths I have witnessed. And the world will watch all this in silence for God knows how

question every single task that we set forth before ourselves - and we must question the tools and concepts that we use to judge them. To avoid making the mistakes that have been made countless times in the last few centuries, we must interrogate them and chart out their scope, to see if they lead like Tahtawi's did to a self-perpetuation of foreign categories of understanding, or if they lead to something more organic and integrative at the same time. In practical terms, we have to understand the deeper implications of what it means to be engaged in anthropology, in film in women's studies, in media, in science, economics, in anything. We have to realize that every time we embrace these, we cross real epistemological zones and embrace different paradigms of conceiving and living life - just as we did, with disastrous consequences (and still do) with science and its

> He hastened after her, in the purposes and will too





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TheWoman

By Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller

A man was walking through the marketplace one afternoon when, just as the muezzin began the call to prayer, his eye fell on a woman's back. She was strangely attractive, though dressed in fulsome black, a veil over head and face, and she now turned to him as if somehow conscious of his overlingering regard, and gave him a slight but meaningful nod before she rounded the corner into the lane of silk sellers. As if struck by a bolt from heaven, the man was at once drawn, his heart a prisoner of that look, forever. In vain he struggled with his heart, offering it one sound reason after another to go his way—wasn't it time to pray?—but it was finished: there was nothing but to follow.

turning into the market of silks, breathing from the exertion of catching up with the woman, who had unexpectedly outpaced him and even now lingered for an instant at the far end of the market, many shops ahead. She turned toward him, and he thought he could see a flash of a mischievious smile from beneath the black muslin of her veil, as she-was it his imagination?beckoned to him again. The poor man was beside himself. Who was she? The daughter of a wealthy family? What did she want? He requickened his steps and turned into the lane where she had disappeared. And so she led him, always beyond reach, always tantalizingly ahead, now through the weapons market, now the oil merchants', now the leather sellers'; farther and farther from where She gestured carelessly at

they began. The feeling within him grew rather than decreased. Was she mad? On and on she led, to the very edge of town.

The sun declined and set, and there she was, before him as ever. Now they were come, of all places, to the City of Tombs. Had he been in his normal senses, he would have been afraid, but indeed, he now reflected, stranger places than this had seen a lovers' tryst.

were scarcely There twenty cubits between them when he saw her look back, and, giving a little start, she skipped down the steps and through the great bronze door of what seemed to be a very old sepulcher. A soberer moment might have seen the man pause, but in his present state, there was no turning back, and he went down the steps and slid in after her.

Inside, as his eyes saw after a moment, there were two flights of steps that led down to a second door, from whence a light shone, and which he equally passed through. He found himself in a large room, somehow unsuspected by the outside world, lit with candles upon its walls. There sat the woman, opposite the door on a pallet of rich stuff in her full black dress, still veiled, reclining on a pillow against the far wall. To the right of the pallet, the man noticed a well set in the floor.

"Lock the door behind you," she said in a low, husky voice that was almost a whisper, "and bring the key."

He did as he was told.

the well. "Throw it in."

A ray of sense seemed to penetrate for a moment the clouds over his understanding, and a bystander, had there been one, might have detected the slightest of pauses.

on," she said "Go laughingly, "You didn't hesitate to miss the prayer as you followed me here, did you?"

He said nothing.

"The time for sunset prayer has almost finished as well," she said with gentle mockery. "Why worry? Go on, throw it in. You want to please me, don't you?"

He extended his hand over the mouth of the well, and watched as he let the key drop. An uncanny feeling rose from the pit of his stomach as moments passed but no sound came. He felt wonder, then horror, then comprehension.

"It is time to see me," she said, and she lifted her veil to reveal not the face of a fresh young girl, but of a hideous old crone, all darkness and vice, not a particle of light anywhere in its eldritch lines.

"See me well," she said. "My name is Dunya, This World. I am your beloved. You spent your time running after me, and now you have caught up with me. In your grave. Welcome, welcome."

At this she laughed and laughed, until she shook herself into a small mound of fine dust, whose fitful shadows, as the candles went out, returned to the darkness one by one.

Source: http://www. masud.co.uk/ISLAM/nuh/ parable.htm



progress and civilization.

The persistence of this

considered to be of utmost importance: of reconciling Islam and modernity, as if these were somehow two distinct, monolithic entities that had fought battles. Tahtawi arguably precipitated many of these newfound campaigns and efforts.

Perhaps Tahtawi's story could have ended right there, but given our challenges today, it simply cannot. It is extremely striking how similar the concerns Tahtawi had are to our own concerns. Although Tahtawi lived in the 19th century, it is commonplace to still hear such rhetoric today regarding the to progress and build bridges between Islam and modernity. Indeed, the student group which Tahtawi accompanied to Paris perhaps can be said to have been 19h century manifestations of the "we must learn the Western sciences to progress and modernize" paradigm that continues thrive. Tahtawi himself then represented those who tried to apply an Islamic filter - the idea that Muslims must take the "good"

no longer expecting to

find one. I was yet again

overcome with fright after

watching these innocent

kids' blood spattered as

I was furious, hopeless and

helpless. We did nothing

far as I could see.

rhetoric today is not an accident or a mistake - it separated basic of their made un-modern at the same "advancement" established modernized?

in the cause of Egypt or Islam, Tahtawi Still remained entrapped

stems directly from the problematic nature of the quest to modernize itself. Few seemed to realize the very exercise of building a bridge itself can create its own ruptures, that it could perpetuate forever the fundamental differences between two artificially entities. Even fewer seemed to reevaluated the underpinnings visions. What something modern and something if they existed simultaneously. Who decided what it meant to be advanced civilized anyways? Why was "progress" or even such a pressing concern? How had one culture its own monopoly of what it meant to be advanced and Thus, despite all his efforts to utilize and filter Western knowledge

Western categories

liberty of the people to

live in serenity in their

own country? Why are

they watching in silence

the physical, emotional

oppression that we are

enduring? Why are they

so indifferent to this

psychological

remained Western Tahtawi serves as an important reminder the risks inherent engaging within Western epistemologies, Western sciences. Indeed, it is common nowadays to hear Muslims from almost all segments of society speak about the need to give the social sciences and humanities proper attention and importance. must go into history, psychology, communications, international relations, marketing, fashion, film, gender studies, studies, literature, English into every study and discipline that is in the Western academy. This, many argue, is not only how we will tap into the joys and fruits of Western learning, but how we will make Muslims up to par with the Western world in terms of culture and civilization.

In reality, we must

they have for that? What possible harm could she have done to them that they shot her with twenty bullets! What answer do they have to make me a homeless vagabond? Why the restricted road movements, the physical maltreatment, the severe

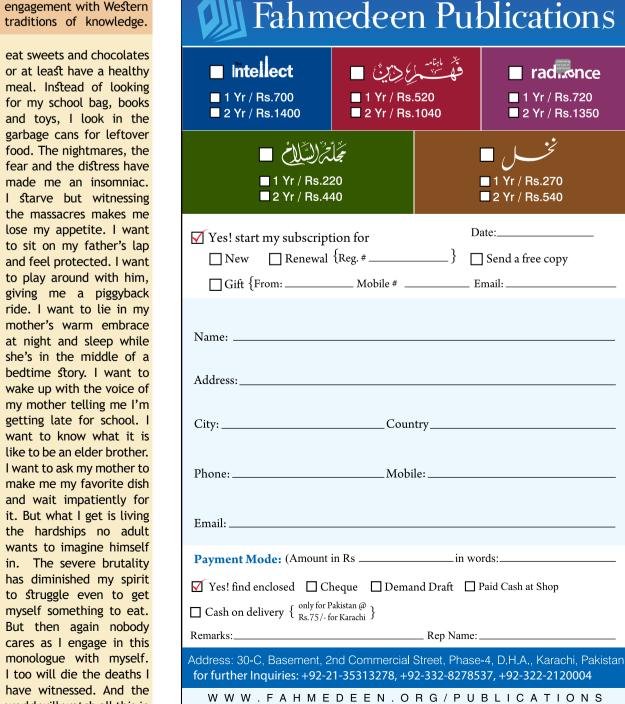


soldiers, and yet they bombed us. Why do our kids keep paying the price for the regional conflicts? Those children who suffer because of natural disasters get rescued. Why doesn't anyone come and liberate us from this manmade calamity? Where are in a split second. I was in a the humanitarians who daze; I have been thinking talk about civilization, of a place with tranquility who declare to protect from her. What answer do

cruelty? What answer do they have for imprisoning my father? Do they have an answer to my mother giving birth to my stillborn sister at a checkpoint? Or shooting my mother at a checkpoint? They weren't satisfied with two bullets so they ran near her and shot two bullets in her head just one step away

the families subjected to murder and injury?

Growing up in the Israeli occupation, witnessing these killings and enduring the oppression have made me lose my childhood and innocence. I'm just a twelve-yearold boy who wants to play outside freely, without any fear, who wants to



many decades...