

THE IMPORTANCE OF HADITH IN ISLAM

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Hadith has an important place in the ideological and practical spheres of Muslim's life. It is a body of vast literature covering matters relating to individual, collective, national and international fields. Religious, political, social and economic aspects of Muslim life are based upon the detailed information provided by *hadith* literature. Ethical values and moral standards of Muslim individual and society are traced through the voluminous literature of *hadith*. No legal judgement, jurisprudential or theological point of view is considered valid in the Muslim Community without a reference to the *hadith*. It becomes essential for a student of Islam or Muslim history to have basic information of *hadith* which played a vital role in shaping the psyche of the Muslim Community. It would be appropriate to present a few points to explain essential elements of the study of *hadith* literature.

HADITH

Hadith is opposite of *Qadim*, and means new. It also means saying, statement and speech. Qur'an has used the term in the sense of message and statement.

فَلَعَلَّكَ مَجِيعٌ تَفْسِكُ عَلَيَّ أَثَرَهُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this message.¹

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Then what message after that will they believe in??

The Qur'an has used it in the meaning of a story and communication:

فَدَرْزِي وَمَنْ يُكَذِّبْ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ

Then leave Me alone with such as reject this message (*hadith*)³

The term has also been used in the meaning of conversation :

وَإِذَا سَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَى بَعْضِ أَرْوَاحِهِ حَدِيثًا

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1. Al-Qur'an, 18/6
2. Ibid, 77/50
3. Ibid, 68/44

which the recognition of the paradise winners and hell choosers will be managed by one who will have equal storage of virtues and vices.

About *aṣḥāb al-a'rāf*, one school of thought claims, that they are those who belong to the high rank of the dignified persons, may be the messengers of God, the angels, the martyrs and the Muslim scholars. While the other group declares that they are the people belonging to the second rank of dignified persons, having equal account of virtue and vice. They may be the martyrs, who fought without the consent of their parents, the believers from Jinnāt, and illegitimate off spring of human being.

Both the groups of *aṣḥāb al-a'rāf* would be granted paradise according to their respective ranks. The Omniscient knows better.

Ibn Kathīr has discussed in detail the men on a'raf. According to him the different opinions of the different interpreters are converged to one point, which is the stance that the men having equal repository of good and bad deeds, would be awarded the status of a'raf. When asked about the persons having evenly balanced sheet of their virtues and vices, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) answered that they would be settled on a'raf. They would not be allowed to enter paradise, however, have some assurance.

Keeping in view, the traditions mentioned by Ibn Jarīr Ṭabari, regarding *aṣhāb al-a'raf*, we come to know that they are the people having balanced quantity of virtues and vices. They have neither so many good deeds that they may be awarded paradise, nor do they have so many evils that they may have been moved towards the Fire.

Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi, Syed Quṭab Shaheed and Syed Abu al-A'la Maududi are of the same view.¹³

Al-Qurṭabi has referred to as many as ten traditions regarding their different categories derived from the holy words of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). These include, the people having equal quantity of good and bad deeds, the pious scholars, the martyrs, the martyrs who have fought without the consent of their parents, the messengers of God, the angels and the illegitimate off-spring of human being.¹⁴

Ameen Aḥsan Iṣlahi has raised some objections about these categories. According to him the word *rijāl* means important personalities. He opines that only the Muslim scholars, who are struggling for the projection of virtue and goodness, deserve the elevated and exalted status of a'raf.¹⁵

The answer to the third question is unanimously propounded that *aṣhāb al a'raf* are to be awarded paradise later. Because the Holy Qur'ān assures that though they have not entered paradise, "They will have an assurance (thereof)". Again their salutation to the paradise owners is a sign that they will join them in the long run. They would be provided with the facility to observe paradise and hell, greeting the paradise winners and criticizing the hell choosers. After the decision of all the mankind they will be ordered to enter the Garden.

Keeping in view the precious opinion of Fakhr al-Rāzi¹⁶ we come to the conclusion that there are two versions about a'raf, firstly there are heights between paradise and hell, inhabited by some distinguished persons. Secondly, there is an exalted stage from

12. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (tr. Muhammad Memon : Nōor Muhammad Kutab Khana, Karachi) 2/168, 69.

13. *Jāmi al-Bayān* (Maktaba Mustafa al-Babi-Egypt-1968) 7,8/186, 87. *Bayān-al-Qur'ān*, Ibid.

Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān (Dar al-Shurūq, Beirut - 1980) 3/1293.

Tafhīm al-Qur'ān (Idara Tarjumān al-Qur'an, Lahore - 1990) 2/33.

14. *Jami' al-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān* (Cairo - 1967) 7/211 - 13.

15. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, Ibid.

16. al-Rāzi, Ibid.

Ashraf Ali Thanwi opines that there would be an interception (wall) the top of which is a'rāf, from where the paradise and the hell are seen clearly.⁶

Abu al-Kalām Azađ writes, "If two places are adjoining, and to be segregated, a wall is built between them, so is the demarcation between heaven and hell. If one step is forward it is paradise, and if one step is lost it is hell."⁷

Ameen Aḥsan Iṣlahi interprets, "A'rāf is a plural of 'arf, meaning the upper part of forehead of a horse or a cockscomb. That is why this word is used for tower, turret, and a seeing-sight, built on a high wall or on the top of a hill."⁸

A'rāf is also derived from 'Arf, which is used in the meaning of fragrance, sweet smell and perfume. 'Urf is terminologically used for custom, usage, practice and convention or tradition.⁹

Mufti Muhammad Shafi' has nicely explained a'rāf, going in details of meaning of this word and their implications or connotations. Muhammad Idrīs Kandhalwi also agrees with him in this connection.¹⁰

The essence of their arguments is that in the *ayāt-al-a'rāf* the fortification is mentioned which would exist between dwellers of paradise and dwellers of hell. This is also mentioned in Sura Al-Hadīd as *Sūr*.

The word *Sūr* is used for the wide city-wall, which has been built on solid and established grounds, and have entrenchments to defend the city remaining aware of the invaders. The top of this fortification is named as a'rāf, because it is plural of 'arf which means prominent and distinguished or an elevated surface.

The word *hijāb* (veil) means something obstructing the mixing of two. It also means interception, prohibiting entrance into something. It figuratively means the veil serving as demarcation of circumferences of paradise and hell but literally it stands for a wall prohibiting two communities to mingle with each other. It may be a glass permitting eyes to have a glance at the on-going scenario, and also a wall prohibiting mixing. The top of this wall is called a'raf¹¹

The second question is : Who are *Ashāb al-A'rāf*? To whom a'rāf is going to be allotted on the Day of Judgment.

The Holy Qur'an declares that they are *rijāl* (men) having the ability to recognize dwellers of hell and those of the heaven by their marks.

6. *Bayan al-Qur'an* (Sa'eed and company, Karachi) 1/4 - 16.

7. *Tarjuman al-Qur'an* (Islamic Academy Lahore - 1976) 2/11

8. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* (Faran Academy, Lahore - 1988) 3/266.

9. Dr. Rohi Ba'al baki, *Al-Mawrid* (Beirut - 1991) 758.

10. Ma'arif al-Qur'an (al-Ma'arif Karachi - 1992) 3/567.

11. *Ma'arif al-Qur'an* (Maktaba Uthmania Lahore - 1982) 3/50.

11. Fakhr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (al - Matba'a al-Bahiya al-Misriyah-1938) 13, 14/87

"One day will the Hypocrites men and women say to the believers ; "wait for us ! let us borrow (a light) from your light." It will be said, "Turn ye back to your rear ! then seek a light (where ye can)" So a *wall* will be put up between them, with a gate therein. Within it will be Mercy, throughout; and without it all alongside will be (wrath and) Punishment !"

Now, the question does arise ; What is *A'rāf*? who are the people on these *heights*? What is their next home (if any)?

The interpretations of the Holy Qur'ān are replete with differences, because the word *a'rāf* has different connotations.

"One schools thinks that the men on the heights are angels, or such men of exalted spiritual dignity (e.g. the great apostles) as will be able to know the souls at sight as regards their spiritual worth : The heights will be exalted stations from which they will welcome the righteous with a salutation of peace, even before the righteous have entered heaven; the salvation to those whom they solute.

Another school of thought thinks that the men on the heights are such souls as are not decidedly on the side of merit or decidedly on the side of sin, but evenly balanced on a partition between Heaven and hell. Their case is yet to be decided, but their salutation to the righteous is a wistful salutation, because they hope for God's mercy.

The third line of interpretation is close to the first one, with this exception that the partition and heights are figurative. The higher souls will rejoice at the approaching salvation of the righteous." ²

We will deal with the three questions one by one respectively. First question is : What is *A'rāf*?

Etymologically *a'rāf* is plural of *'arf* meaning height and top. It is used for everything exalted.

According to the interpretation of Raghīb Iṣfahānī and Jubran Mas'ood, it is referred to the wall between the Hell and the Heaven.³

Ibn Manẓoor maintains that *a'rāf* is plural of *'urf* meaning top and elevated surface - especially top of the wall between the Garden and the Fire.⁴

Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam quotes R. Bell pronouncing *a'rāf* as *ī'rāf* meaning (the people able) to recognize. He translates the verse as, "Some people are to identify (as supervisors or guards) and they identity."⁵

2. 'Abd Allah Yusuf 'Ali; Translation and Commentary on Qur'ān (Amana Corp. USA) 352.

3. *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* (tr. Muhammad 'Abduhū, Sh. Shams al-Haq Lahore - 1987) 2/690.

Al-Ra'id (Dar al-'Ilm Lilmalāyīyin, Beirut - 5th Edition - 1986) 1/170.

4. *Lisān al-'Arab* (Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi 1st Edition Beirut - 1988) 9/156

5. University of the Punjab, Lahore - 1980. 2/879.

Al-A'rāf.

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Al-A'rāf used in Sura *al-A'rāf* is plural of 'arf or 'urf -- meaning height, top, tower and peak.

When it is derived from 'Urf it means to be recognized, to be known and to be introduced.

It also means tradition, convention and recognized virtue.

'Arf means prominent, distinguished and popular -- also used as 'arīf -- meaning representative figure of a group or a tribe.

Sura *al-A'rāf* in the verses, where it relates the life in paradise and life in the hell, reveals that there is a wall or veil between the hell and the heaven for the demarcation of their circumferences. The top of this wall is called *a'rāf*, which means heights.

These heights are inhabited by some people having the facility to observe the companions in paradise and those who are in the hell.

"The companions of the Garden will call out to the companions of the Fire, "We have indeed found the promises of our Lord to us true. Have you also found your Lord's promises true? "The shall say "yes"! But a crier shall proclaim between them "The curse of Allah is on the wrong doers! Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah, and would seek in it something crooked; they were those who denied Hereafter.

Between them shall be a veil, and on the heights will be men who would know every one by his marks. They will call out to the companions of the Garden, "Peace on you"

They will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof).

When their eyes shall be turned towards the companions of the Fire, they will say "Our Lord! send us not to the company of the wrong doers."

The men on Heights will call to certain men whom they will know from their marks saying, "Of what profit to you, were your hoards and your arrogant ways? Behold! are these not the men whom you swore that Allah with his Mercy would never bless?"

Enter ye the Garden; no fear shall be on you, nor shall ye grieve."¹

The veil mentioned in these verses is also described in Sura *Al-Hadeed* - (13) as *Sūr* meaning wall.

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1. *al-Qur'ān, al-A'rāf* / 44-49. (Translation by 'Abd Allah Yusuf Ali, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Aibak Road, Lahore-1990)

34. Manchip White, *Ancient Egypt*, London, 1970, p.21.
35. Ayat No. 92 of the tenth Surah (Al-Yunus) is noteworthy. It lays down the verdict of Allah : "But this day We save thee in the body that thou mayest be a portent (example) for those after thee." This Quranic statement was made fourteen centuries ago about the preservation by mummification of the corpse of Rameses II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus (who was drowned about thirteen centuries before Christ). His mummy was recovered in 1881 A.D., and exhibited in Cairo Museum as mentioned at p. 482 of the *Egyptian Antiquities* by Baikie (London, 1932). This furnishes a still further sure proof of the Quran being a revealed book as contrasted with the existing Bible. Verses 6,8,10,23 of Chapter 14 of its Book of Exodus read with verses 11 and 15 respectively of Psalms 106 and 136 clearly state that pharaoh and his hosts perished by drowning. Allah in His Inscrutable Wisdom revealed the ultimate fate of the pharaoh's body not to his contemporary, Moses, the leader of Exodus, but reserved this Revelation to Muhammad (peace be upon him), as his greatest living miracle.
36. *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, New York, 1948, Vol. IV. p.170.
37. *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, London, 1903, Vol. V, pp. 235, 236.
38. *Interpreters One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, London, 1972, pp.239.
39. *Interpreters' One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, London, 1972, pp. 233.
40. *The New Bible Dictionary*, Leicester, England, 1977, p.393.
41. *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, London, 1901, Vol. II, Columns 1400-1407.
42. *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, New York, 1948, Vol.I, p.137.
43. Webster's Biographical Dictionary, Springfield, U.S.A, 1958, p.17.
44. De Bunsen, *Islam or True Christianity*, London, 1889, p131.
45. Thomas Carlyle, *Hero-worship*, London, 1889, p.48
46. Thomas Carlyle, *Hero-worship*, London, 1889, pp.40,41.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Verses 4 - 6 of Surah Al-Qasas (XXVIII) of the Qur'an
2. Verse 8 of Surah Al-Qasas (XXVIII) of the Qur'an
3. Verse 38 of Surah Al-Qasas (XXVIII) of the Qur'an
4. Verse 39 of Al-Ankabut (XXIX) Qur'an
5. Verses 23 - 25 of Al-Mu'min (XL) Qur'an
6. Verses 36 - 37 of Al-Mu'min (XL) Qur'an
7. Rev. Ludovico Marraccio, Arabic Text with Latin Translation of the Qur'an together with Refutations, Padua (Italy), 1698, p. 526. Rev. Marraccio was Confessor of Pope Innocent XI.
8. George Sale, Translation of the Qur'an London, 1825, p. 239 of Vol. II, and Rev. Wherry's Commentary. p. 154 of Vol. III, London, 1896.
9. Prof. Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York, 1933, pp. 117 & 119.
10. Prof. H. Lammens, *Islam : Beliefs and Institutions*, translated into English from French by Sir S. Denison Ross, London, 1929, pp. 38 & 39.
11. Raphale Patai : *The Arab Mind*, New York, 1973, p. 71.
12. Maxime Rodinson : *Muhammad* : pp. 122-123 Pelikan Book, 1973.
- 12a. P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1964.
- 12b. Dr. Walter Kaufmann, *Religion In Four Dimensions*, New York, 1976, p. 186.
13. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 13, 1929, p. 483 and Vol. 13, 1960. p. 279.
14. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. II, 1927, pp. 244, 245.
15. *Shorter Encyclopadia of Islam*, by Gibb and Kramers, Leiden, 1961, p. 244.
16. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, 1971, p. 110
17. Prof. Sir Flinders Petrie, *Religious Life in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1924, p. 21
18. Prof. W.H. (Later Sir) Flinders Petire, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1908, p. 30.
19. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh, pp. 294, 295, Vol. X.
20. Sir Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Religion*, New York, 1959, pp. 105, 106.
21. Prof. Jaroslav Cerny, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, London, 1952, pp.100 - 101.
22. The variants of the name Amen as Aman, Amon, Amun, Ammon have appeared in quotations given by authorities mentioned at 17 & 18 above. The initial vowel i.e. "A" in these names is interchangeable into 'Ha' so as to give the variants Hamen, Hamon, Hamun, Hammon, etc., as per illustrations given on pp.100, 101 of Wall's 'Proofs of the Interpolation of the Vowel Letters in the Text of the Hebrew Bible' published in 1857 in London indicating how Habel first became 'Habel' and ultimately 'Abel'. 'Harun' is similarly a variant of 'Aaron'. Page 223 of the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, 1944, gives also the bariants Humman and Humban. p.44 of Smith's Classical Dictionary, London, 1858 may also be referred to.
23. Prof. James Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, New York, 1950, p.244.
24. Prof. James Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, New York, London & New York, 1950, pp.96 and 97.
26. Prof. Sir Flinders Petrie, *Religious Life In Ancient Egypt*, London, 1924, pp. 54, 55.
27. Prof. James Breasted, *Development of Religion & Thought in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1912, p.153.
28. Prof. Sir Flinders Petrie, *Religious Life in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1924, pp. 84, 208, 209.
29. Prof. George Rawlinson, *Moses : His Life & Times*, New York, 1887, p.90.
30. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1974, Vol. III, p.163.
31. John A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt*, Chicago, 1951, p.37
32. A.Lucas, *Egyptian Materials and Industries*, London, 1948, pp.63, 64.
33. Prof. George Rawlinson, *Moses : His Life & Times*, New York, 1887, p.88

'Oppression' of the Israelites in Egypt and also during their 'Exodus' from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. What is most remarkable is the fact that whereas the Old Testament makes mention of only the perishing of the Pharaoh by drawing, it is to the unique credit of the Qu'ran which revealed fourteen centuries ago that the Almighty Allah had that fateful day ordained the recovery of his corpse, its mummification and exhibition in Cairo Museum about thirty-one centuries after the memorable event. Of course, no human author of the Bible could have foretold so numerous centuries in advance as the revealed Qur'an did, about this significant event which is in fact most striking. Evidently, to say nothing of the rabbis or monks of old whose knowledge was confined to their scriptures, even the present day learned editors of the relevant articles on the subject appearing in Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as Encyclopaedia of Islam, and even eminent historians like Hitti have blundered in this respect.

It is remarkable that what the indefatigable labours of Western archaeologists of Egyptian antiquities and irrefutable researches of historians of ancient Egypt discovered in modern times, was already revealed in the Qu'ran fourteen centuries ago. That Christian and Jewish scholars or Scriptures had nothing of note to lend to or to teach Muhammad or Islam in this behalf, is absolutely clear as stated by Dr. Bunsen and Carlyle. We reproduce hereunder their views on the subject which form an interesting and enlightening reading :

- (a) "We cannot accept the vague and contradictory traditions about Mohammad having been instructed by a Christian monk alternatively called Bahira, Sergius, Georgius, and Nestor, or by a slave Jabr."⁴⁴
- (b) "I know not what to make of that Sergious, the Nestorian monk whom Abu Thaleb and he (Mahomet) are said to have lodged with; or how much any monk could have taught one still so young."⁴⁵
- (c) "The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man (Mahomet) are disgraceful to ourselves only. When Pococke inquired of Grotious, where the proof was of that story of the Pigeon, trained to pick peas from Mahomet's ear and pass for an angel dictating to him, Grotious answered that there was no proof. It is really time to dismiss all that."⁴⁶

Thus is fully established historical proof of the genuineness of the Revelation of the by the All-Merciful Allah to His Prophet Muhammad. It would no doubt be appreciated that the Qur'an has been revealed essentially not as a book of history or a story book but as a religious Guide to mankind, and that whenever it makes mention of an historical event or person, the objective is to bring home to mankind religious teachings and articles of the Universal Faith, Al-Islam.

Artaxerxes III, Cambyses, or even Darius I. Hoshiander has made elaborate argument in favour of Artaxerxes II (404 - 309 B.C.E.) suggesting that the other name was used because the Jews did not want to offend the Greeks whom Artaxerxes had assisted.⁴² This is a concrete case of deliberate anachronism and ahistoricity.

- (b) Webster's Biographical Dictionary contains the following note on Ahashuerus : "Name, as used in the Bible, of two unidentified kings of Persia : (i) the great king whose capital was at Shushan, modern Susa, sometimes identified with Xerxes the Great, but chronological and other data conflict ; (ii) the father of Darius the Mede."⁴³

There is thus no denying the facts that :

- (i) the integrity of the text of the Book of Esther was violated by subsequent additions,
- (ii) Our worthy critics unjustifiably adopted the fictitious Haman of this Book of Esther as their model of historicity to adjudge historicity of the Haman of the Quran. And no wonder their judgement was grossly erroneous not only in the context of historicity but also of chronology.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of recent historical researches and archaeological discoveries made by independent and impartial world-famous authorities quoted above, we hope we have convincingly established historicity of the Haman of the Qur'an who enjoyed an eminent position in the court of the Pharaoh who was confronted by Moses (peace be upon him). In this connection, there is no question of any anachronism or ahistoricity. Statement made in the Qur'an as far as fourteen centuries ago are thus quite unassailable. Of course, Muhammad, the Unlettered Prophet ('An-Nabi-ul-Ummi, peace be upon him) was not the author of the Qur'an, which was, of course, revealed to him by the Omniscient and Omnipotent Allah.

In this connection verse No:99 of Surah Ta Ha (xx) states : Thus do We related to thee (Muhammad) some stories of what happened before; We have sent thee a Message from our Presence".

It will not be out of place to add that some orientalists have been making groundless allegation about Jewish and Christian foundations of Islam or about the 'pretended inspiration' of the Prophet of Islam. This concrete instance of the Haman of the Qur'an as discussed above proves to the hilt the utter untenability of all such allegations. One is struck with wonder to find that the current Jewish and Christian Scriptures make not even a passing mention of the Haman in question, although he figures so prominently in the

given as Persian appear to be rather Semitic than of Persian origin.....In the view of all the evidence the authority of the Book of Esther as a historical record must be definitely rejected."³⁷

- (c) "Various historical and chronological inaccuracies and improbabilities lead to the conclusion that the book is something less than dependable history....Significant also is the fact that as yet no fragment of the book has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, produced by the Qumrah community that existed ca 150 B.C - A.D. 70, nor is there any quotation or allusion to it in the N.T."³⁸
- (d) "Neither Jews nor Christians, however, have been happy with the presence of the book in the canon of the holy scripture. Its status was hotly debated by the rabbis all through the first two centuries A.D. and they obviously accepted it only because of the demand by the masses. Among Christians also there was question about its status. Martin Luther declared that he wished it did not exist. It must be admitted that without the popularity of the festival of Purim the book would have had little to recommend it for a place in the canon."³⁹ This is too profane a criterion for determining canonicity of a sacred book like Esther of the Bible.
- (e) "The story as such has not been confirmed by any Persian records, and it is often supposed that it cannot be fitted into what is known of Persian History".⁴⁰
- (f) Above all the story of the Book of Esther has been adjudged as a "tissue of improbabilities and impossibilities..... "Further, notwithstanding the dates which he gives us, the author had in reality no notion of chronology,....That the Book of Esther cannot be regarded as a genuine historical work is avowed even by many ecclesiastical traditionalists....The most essential parts of the story.....are altogether unhistorical and we are forced to the conclusion that the whole narrative is fictitious".⁴¹

- B. (a) From the foregoing quotations it is quite clear that no historian can place any reliance on the fable of the Book of Esther and no scholar can say that its characters, particularly the Haman of Esther, had any historical existence. The scene of the romantic fable of Esther was laid in the reign of the so-called king named Ahasuerus. There is wide divergence of opinion among the authorities as to the correct identity even of this allegedly Persian king. Some authorities are of the opinion that he was Artaxerxes others assert with much confidence that he was Artaxerxes I, while still others would have us believe that it was Artaxerxes II,

- (a) "The majority of scholars, however, regard the book as a romance reflecting the customs of later times, and given an ancient setting to avoid giving offence. They point out that the 127 provinces mentioned are in strange contrast to the historical twenty Persian satrapies; that it is astonishing that while Mordecai is known to be a Jew, his ward and cousin, Esther, can conceal the fact that she is a Jewess; that the known queen of Xerxes (AMESTRIS) can be identified with neither Vashti nor Esther; that it would have been impossible for a non-Persian person to be appointed prime minister, or for a queen to be selected except from the seven highest noble families; that Mordecai's ready access to the palaces is not in consonance with the strictness with which the Persian harems were guarded; that the laws of the Medes and the Persians were never irrevocable; and that the state of affairs in the book, amounting practically to civil war, could not have passed unnoticed by historians if this had actually occurred. The very tone of the book itself, its literary craftsmanship and the aptness of its situations, point rather to a romantic story than a historical chronicle. "Some scholars even trace it to a non-Jewish origin entirely; it is, in their opinion, either a reworking of a triumph of the Babylonian god Marduk (Mordecia) and Istar (Esther) over the Elamite god Human (Haman) and Mashti (Vashti), or the suppression of the Magians by Darius I or even of the resistance of the Babylonians to the decree of Artaxerxes II.

According to this view, Purim is a Babylonian feast which was taken over by the Jews, and the story of which was given a Jewish coloring.

"The Book of Esther did not get into the Biblical canon without a struggle. The apocryphal additions to Esther, now combined in the Rest of Esther, seem to have been added by the Hellenistic Jews of Egypt to supply the lack of religion in the Biblical book of Esther which the rabbis of Palestine had noticed....These additions are similar to the liberties which the Hellenistic Jews took with other books of the Hagiography, such as Daniel and the Chronicles. They represent attempts to round out the story and to give a more religious tone to the narrative."⁵⁶

- (b) "Comparatively few modern scholars of note consider the narrative of Esther to rest on an historical foundation. The vast majority of modern expositors have reached the conclusion that the book is a piece of pure fiction, although some writers qualify their criticism by an attempt to treat it as an historical romance. Most of the proper names in Esther which are

of Moses, though in his heart of hearts he (the Pharaoh) believed that Moses was a lying sorcerer.

Confrontation Between The Pharaoh And Moses

The next question that arises is : Why did the Pharaoh and the Haman reject the Divine message of Moses?

- (a) "It is an indisputable fact of history that by the long usage of the country, the Pharaoh was looked upon as a 'god upon earth' - netar nefer, 'the good god', and netar aa, 'the great god' - 'son of the sun', 'The living *Horus*', who inherited from his father the idea that he was actually on a par with the greatest of the recognised divinities, with Re and Tum, with Phthah, and Ammon and Horus.....No pure monotheism (as preached by Moses) would for a moment have been compatible with such an intense exaltation",³³ and with the number of gods and goddesses included into "the pantheon running over two thousand".³⁴
- (b) The high priest of Amon (i.e, Haman) himself impersonated the most influential god (Amon) and often deputed for the Pharaoh (who was in fact the chief priest). The Divine message of Moses from the one and only Allah, the Sole Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe, therefore, was a threat to the authority of the two who marshalled all their stratagem and stupendous resources to defeat it.

But wonderous are the ways of Allah who worked miracles to smash the designs of the Pharaoh and the Haman and ultimately drowned them both with their hosts. The corpse of the former was, however, recovered and mummified, and this mummy which was excavated in 1881 A.D. is now exhibited in the Cairo Museum, fulfilling the revelation made fourteen centuries ago in verse 92 of Surah. Al-Yunus (X)³⁵.

Unlike the Bible, the Quran is surely the greatest miracle of all time.

Critical Examination of (i) The Controversy Raised by Orientalists

And (ii) Historicity Of the Haman Of The Bible

- A. We hope we have adduced impartial corroborative evidence to establish historicity of the Haman as mentioned in the Qur'an. Let us now proceed to examine historicity of the sources of information of our worthy orientalist with a view to assessing the validity of their criticism which draws its inspiration only from the Book of Esther as incorporated in the Old Testament. We cite below the comments of well-known Jewish and Christian authorities on its spurious historicity which unfortunately our critics adopted as their model of historicity (their gospel truth).

stairway. The question arises ; was the suggestion to ascend to the sky to survey if there really existed Allah of Moses made by way of sarcasm or it conformed to the prevailing Egyptian religious notions of that hoary past?

- (a) The idea of the Pharaoh going up the ladder to reach the sky to see the God of Moses, is in consonance with the mythology of ancient Egypt. "The ladder leading to the sky, was originally an element of the Solar faith."²⁷
- (b) "The desire to ascend to the gods in the sky"²⁸ was an article of ancient Egyptian religion.

(B) A critical reader would naturally ask the question :

Were mud bricks made and burnt in Egypt in those remote times? It is a well-known fact borne out by archaeological research that mud bricks and baked bricks were manufactured in those remotes ages in Egypt and Babylon as is clear from the following facts culled from the works of well-known authorities:

- (a) When Moses accompanied by Aaron (Harun) confronted the Pharaoh with the Divine message, he (the Pharaoh) dismissed them with the sharp phrase : "Get you unto your burdens' implying thereby that they "ought to be at work at the kilns or in the brick fields."²⁹
- (b) Burned bricks, no doubt, had already been produced simply by containing a fire with mud bricks. In Ur the potters discovered the principle of the closed kiln, in which heat could be controlled.³⁰ That there existed inter-communication between UR and Ancient Egypt is borne out by the travels of Abraham and his tribesmen to and back from Egypt much earlier than the times of Moses.
- (c) "The elements which Egypt borrowed from her eastern neighbour (Mesopotamia) are quite clear.....There was monumental architecture, using bricks in a decorative panelling, a technique which can be traced back to its origins in Mesopotamia but which appeared fully developed in Egypt at this final pre-dynastic period."³¹
- (d) "Several most unusual occurrences of burnt bricks in buildings of the 19th and 20th dynasty"³² were discovered at Nabeshah and Defenneh by Sir Flinders Petrie. It is thus in the very nature of things for the Pharaoh to have commanded the Haman, i.e. the High Priest of Amen, who as mentioned in preceding Paragraph 5 (c) was the "Great Superintendent of Works" to prepare mud bricks and then to bake them so as to build a sky-high tower with a ladder in order to enable him to go up into the sky to see of there really was the God

(c) Professor Steindorff has written :

"Thus the 'First Prophet' or the high priest of Amon was at the same time the 'Great Superintendent of Works', and in this capacity was required to take under his charge the extensive building operations connected with the temple, and 'to provide splendour in his sanctuary'. As 'General of the Troops of the God' he commanded the military forces of the temple, like a medieval archbishop and as 'Prefect of the Treasury' had under his control the by no means simple administration of the finance. Nor did his authority extend only over the Amon temple and its priesthood,

He was also 'Prefect of the Prophets of the Gods of the Thebes' and 'Prefect of the Prophets of all Gods of the South and North'. This can mean nothing else than that all the priests of the country were subordinate to him and that he was the supreme spiritual authority of the realm. Of this power he knew how to make good use; and it not frequently happened that the office of high priest in other temples, for example, that of the sun-god of Heliopolis, together with his special subordinate members of the college of Amon, were filled in accordance with his choice. In this manner not only was great political power concentrated in the hands of the Theban priesthood but real material advantages accrued to it as well, since the rich revenues of the old temple lands flowed into the chest of a single body of priests."²⁵

History does not mention that the Pharaoh appointed the then Haman as his Vizir (That).

(d) We would like to add the following extract from Professor Sir. Flinders Petrie's "Religious Life in Ancient Egypt":-

"The priesthood of Amen received a seventh of the cultivated land of Egypt, a fiftieth of the population as foreign slaves, and half a million of cattle. This was in addition to all that previous kings had bestowed. As all this property was free of taxes the strain on the rest of the country must have been very heavy. It is no wonder that the high priests seized the office as an hereditary possession, and that they ruled Upper Egypt. There was practically no independent king after Ramessu-III, the rest of the family were increasingly in the hands of a dominant hereditary priesthood, which was the wealthiest force in the land".²⁶ Later the High Priests (i.e., the Haman first became Pharaoh-makers and then themselves usurped the Pharaohship.

Creed of The Ladder To The Sky

(A) Let us now proceed to examine the significance of the command of the Pharaoh to the Haman to burn the (mud) bricks and to erect therewith a skyhigh tower with a