

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN BURMA

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The history of the spread of Islam in Burma is obscure, Arab, Persian and Gujarati merchants probably introduced their religion into the sea-port towns from the ninth century onward, but its most important expansion was due to the Gujrati, Bengali and Chinese (Panthay) Muslims.

In this paper it has been endeavoured to focus on the questions, from where, when and how did Islam come to Burma?

It is difficult to fix the precise date of the first introduction of Islam into Burma. It had been carried by the Arab traders in the ninth century of the Christian Era. The Arabs carried on extensive trade with the East and South East from very earlier times, while from the tenth to fifteenth century, until the arrival of the Portuguese they were undisputed masters of the trade with the East and South East.¹

The coming of Islam to Burma was part of a vaster movement, the penetration of Islam into the world of South East Asia (the Malay Archipelago). The advent of Islam in Burma must be seen in the wider context of Muslim commercial development, which had established a net work of relations extending from China to mediterranean, and of the accompanying spread of Indian (Gujrati Muslims) influence in South East Asia as a whole.² Commercial development served as the natural basis for the growth of Islam in Burma, which was sometimes

* Editor, Urdu Encyclopedia of Islam, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

- 7- Ibid, Westernization versus Muslims, 67.
- 8- Maryam Jameelah's unpublished interview.

Bibliography

- 1- Jameelah, Maryam, At home in Pakistan, Muhammad Yousuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1990.
- 2- Jameelah, Maryam, Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah, Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1986.
- 3- Jameelah, Maryam, Islam and Orientalism, Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1990.
- 4- Jameelah, Maryam, Westernization versus Muslims, Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1978.
- 5- Jameelah, Maryam, Western civilization condemned by itself, Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1990.
- 6- Jameelah, Maryam, Why I embraced Islam, Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, Lahore, 1978.
- 7- Unpublished Interview of Maryam Jameelah.

Maryam Jameelah is fully aware of the conspiracies of Western World and describes these with the perspective of her previous belief and experience. She compares the Islamic Civilization with Western Civilization with her great involvement in Islam. She discusses in detail western civilization and its impact, and defends Islamic teachings and values with arguments. She highlights the drawbacks of Western civilization and entices on its followers bitterly. In this regard, she depicts the issues of the Muslim World, Women's emancipation, modernism, cultural slavery, family disintegration, generation gap, birth control, drug addiction, white supremacy etc. She concludes that the solution of every so called modern issue and problem is found in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Besides this, she has written in some of her books about the Islamic Movements of Turkey, Sudan, Egypt and many other countries. She has also depicted the biographical sketches of the great men of Islamic history and made Muslim world know about their heroes and efforts for Islamic Renaissance. She has done her duty in this respect and deserves thanks from Muslim Ummah.

References:

- 1- Maryam Jameelah, Islam and Orientalism, 9.
- 2- Ibid, Western Civilization condemned by itself (Introduction), IX.
- 3- Ibid, Why I embraced Islam, 1-5.
- 4- Ibid, Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah, 73-75.
- 5- Ibid, At home in Pakistan, (Preface)
- 6- Ibid, 170-174.

- 25- Westernization and Human Welfare
- 26- Is Westernization Universal?
- 27- Modern technology and dehumanization of man
- 28- Islam and Modern Man
- 29- The resurgence of Islam and Our liberation from the colonial yoke.
- 30- Invitation to Islam, An Open Letter to My Parents
- 31- Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America (1934-1962)
- 32- At Home in Pakistan (1962-1989). The tale of an American Ex-patriate in her adopted country.
- 33- Shaikh Izz-ud Din Al Qassam Shaheed: A great Palestinian Mujahid (1882-1935) His Life and Works.

Two of her books "Invitation to Islam, An open letter to my parents" and "Memoirs of childhood and youth in America (1934-1962)" have not been published until now. She has written all her books in English because her books are especially directed to English speaking and Western educated people, and most of her readers are Western converts in U.S.A and U.K. However, some of her books have been translated into Arabic and Urdu.

Now a days she writes only in the Muslim World Book Review quarterly published by the Islamic Foundation Leicestershire, U.K. Each review is a mini essay on Islam or the Muslim World today. She has also explained the Islamic culture in some of her books for the preaching point of view. Therefore, she sells her books at low price, she says about this, "I wrote my books for Dawah and not for profit. In fact we have ended up giving most of them away."⁽⁸⁾

deep study and observation. She has written many books of which detail is as following:

- 1- Islam Versus the West
- 2- Islam and Modernism
- 3- Islam in Theory and practice
- 4- Islam Versus Ahl al-Kitab-Past and Present
- 5- Ahmad Khalil, The story of a Palestinian refugee and his family.
- 6- Islam and Orientalism
- 7- Western Civilization Condemned by itself (two volumes)
- 8- Correspondence Between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah
- 9- Islam and Western Society
- 10- Islam: Face to Face with current crisis
- 11- Why I embraced Islam
- 12- Islam and The Muslim Woman Today
- 13- Islam and Our Social Habits
- 14- Islamic Culture in Theory and Practice
- 15- Three great Islamic Movements in the Arab World of the Recent Past
- 16- Who is Maudoodi?
- 17- Shaikh Hassan al Banna and al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun
- 18- A great Islamic Movement in Turkey.
- 19- Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio: A great Mujaddid of West Africa.
- 20- Two Mujaddids of the Recent Past and their struggle for the freedom against Foreign role.
- 21- Western Imperialism Menaces Muslims
- 22- Family Life in Islam
- 23- The Generation Gap: Its causes and consequences
- 24- Westernization versus Muslims

family in Lahore, on March 31, 1962. Maryam Jameelah accepted the invitation and migrated to Pakistan **the** same year. ⁽⁴⁾ She declared this migration as *Hijra* because its sole cause was Islam. ⁽⁵⁾

Maryam Jameelah got married to Mr. Muhammad Yousaf Khan, a whole time worker for Jamaat-e-Islami on August 8, 1963 who later became the publisher of her books. She described the circumstances in which she married to Mr. Muhammad Yousaf Khan in her book "At Home in Pakistan" that she was astonished at his proposal because he was already married. He told her that in Islam a man can have upto four wives. Thus they got married after the permission of Maulana Maudoodi and lived a happy life with her co-wife and extended family of her husband. She became the mother of four children. Most unusual for a woman after marriage, she continued all her intellectual interests and literary activities. ⁽⁶⁾

Maryam Jameelah's aim in life is to do each and every task in the light of Qur'anic commands for the pleasure of Allah instead of self-indulgence in sinful deeds. She believes in the reward in the hereafter. She convinces the fellow beings to abandon all vain and useless activities which distract them from the real reward in the life after death. She thinks that materialism, modernism and atheism are destroying the roots of the Muslim World and to act upon these things is not a way to "progress" but can only result in failure degeneration and doom, both individually and collectively. ⁽⁷⁾

Her Services for Islam:

Her services for Islam are very special because she grew up in a non-Muslim society. Islam was in her nature which was discovered by herself afterwards. She started writing after her

without learning of Islam and as soon as she discovered that it was not the Arabs which had made Islam prevail in the world but vice versa, she wanted to know as much about this faith as she could. Gradually, she began to find faults with the irremediable defects of her ancestral religion. She grew convinced that the narrow parochial nationalism of the Jews had spiritually impoverished Judaism beyond repair. Christianity never appealed her. She was attracted by Islam, and after listening Surah Maryam recited by Umme Kulthum, she became deeply impressed with the Holy Qur'an without knowing its meaning. After great struggle, she found luckily the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Marmaduke Pickthall in a book shop in the form of a cheap paper back edition. It proved a blessing for her and she was answered about the questions of death, life after death, reward in Paradise and punishment in Hell. Allama Muhammad Asad's two books "Road to Mecca" and "Islam at the Crossroads" ignited her interest in Islam. ⁽³⁾

In 1960, she corresponded with the Muslims scholars of the world especially sayyid Qutb, Syed Abu Ala Maudoodi, and received erudite letters and exchanged with them the articles, reviewed the burning issues of the Muslim World and suggested solutions of different problems of the Muslim World in her articles and letters.

She embraced Islam in 1961 at the Islamic Mission in Brooklyn, New York, at the hand of Shaikh Daoud Ahmad Faisal, who then changed her name from Margaret Marcus to Maryam Jameelah.

In the spring of 1962, Maulana Maudoodi invited Maryam Jameelah to migrate to Pakistan and to live as a member of his

anything she considered as frivolous, superficial or vulgar. For this reason, she shunned radio, television, cinema and could never appreciate western literature, art, music or dancing. She was always repelled by any ostentatious display of wealth or indulgence in luxury.

She received ordinary education at the local public school. Her favourite subjects in school were the study of history and languages in which she excelled.

Her activities, during her adolescence, were quite different from those of her classmates. She remained away from illicit relations, smoking and drinking. She didn't conform herself to the teenage fashions and paid full penalty of social ostracism. She was deprived of friends of her own age but she became increasingly absorbed in books and a variety of strong intellectual interests.⁽²⁾

She began to suffer physically as well as mentally and her illness defied all attempts at medical treatment. She became ill in 1953 and she had to discontinue her studies without earning any diploma. Her condition became steadily worse and she was confined to private and public hospitals for two years (1957-1959). After gaining health, her parents were most concerned that she would earn her own living. But she had no market value as she says about herself. Thus she had become misfit with no hope of normal married life, no friends and no beneficial and remunerative work.

She was passionately fond of reading books, especially those written on Arabs. At first, she had been attracted to this subject because of the close historical ties between the Arabs and the Jews. She found that she couldn't learn about the Arabs

MARYAM JAMEELAH HER LIFE AND SERVICES FOR ISLAM

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Maryam Jameelah formerly Margaret Marcus converted to Islam from Judaism and contributed a lot in the struggle for Islamic renaissance with her writings in the form of eleven full length books and more than twenty pamphlets. After embracing Islam, she migrated to Lahore from a suburb and prosperous area of New York (U.S.A.), and still lives in Sant Nagar, Lahore. She impresses any visitor with her decent style, simple dressing, polite humble and co-operative manners. She observes *purda* strictly and follows the teachings of Islam with interest and devotion. One can not avoid from paying homage to her for her services for Islam after reading her books.

Biographical Sketch of Maryam Jameelah:

She was born on the 22nd of May 1934 in Westchester, the U.S.A. Her ancestry was German and her family had become entirely assimilated to American life. Her great grand parents migrated from Germany to America more than a century and a half ago seeking brighter economic opportunities. Although of Jewish origin, neither her father nor her mother was observant. Their "Jewishness" being purely nominal, thus she was raised in a typical American secular environment. ⁽¹⁾

Her childhood was uneventful, she vehemently reacted against

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