

their joys and sorrows, to suffer for them and with them. Therefore, Allah always made His intention clear that He desired that at every stage men should in their dealing between themselves should not only maintain equality and fellow feelings, but also the element of reciprocity must be there.

Allama Yusuf Ali further goes on to say:— "Who were fit to be vehicles of this light?—not men intoxicated with words and mysteries, men whom politics had debauched or tyranny had subdued, men whose refinement had ended in vice, who saw Nature only through books or artificial conceits, or in moods which bred softness, indolence, or luxury, who spoke of love and justice, but practised gross selfishness between class and class, sex and sex, condition and condition: and had perverted their language, once beautiful into fargons of empty elegance and unmeaning futility".

From the above note, it is clear that men who were said to be intoxicated, i.e., who indulged in mere words and vocabularies in explaining mysteries of nature; where people who in order to attain political motive, have indulged in perversion leaving virtue or morality or for that matter where tyranny had subdued; and where men whose refinement has ended with vices and where people failed to realise the true lesson of nature and misled themselves in artificial imagination and remained in indolence or in luxury. And those who speak of love and justice but themselves practice to the contrary and thus try to divide the people ingeniously by distorting the fact and languages. From all these, one thing is clear that there was no relation between our mysteries as a Muslim and the word that we spoke to our fellow brethren. The interpretation of the Holy Quran as given by Allama Yusuf Ali in this connection is clear, that where an attempt had been made to prevent the language of the people which must be beautiful to them, must be treated as an un-Islamic act.

Of language the Quran says in paragraph 22, section 3 of Sura XXX (Rum: The Roman Empire) of Holy Quran which runs as follows:—

"And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are signs for those who know".

From the above Sura it is clear that the variations in languages and colours must be viewed from the geographical aspect or from the aspect of periods of time. All mankind were created of a single pair of parents; yet they have spread to different countries and climates and developed

different languages and different shades of complexions. Nevertheless their basic unity remains unaltered. They feel in the same way, and are all equally under Allah's care. We can observe from the pages of history that old languages die out and new ones are evolved. As the time went on new conditions of life and thoughts are constantly evolving including new words and expressions, new syntactical structures, and new modes of pronunciation. Even old races eventually die and new races are born. So there is a continuous process of Nature and one must be willing to accept Nature as such wholly and completely. But one must remember the unity that Islam has preached which is the unity in diversity and in this connection I mention paragraph 163, section 19 of Sura II of Holy Quran which runs thus:—

"And your God is one God: there is no god but He, most gracious, most merciful".

Where the terrible consequences of Evil, i.e., the rejection of Allah, are mentioned, there is always stress laid on Allah's attributes of grace and mercy. In this case unity is also stressed, because we have been told about the

Quibia being the symbol of unity, and are about to pass the theme of unity in diversity, in Nature and the social laws of human society. But whatever may be our speaking language whether Bangla, Punjabi, Pashtu or Urdu, etc. there can be no dispute about the revelation of Holy Quran which was sent down by Allah in a specific language, that is, in Arabic. In this connection I mention paragraph 2, section 1, Sura XII (Yusuf or Joseph) of Holy Quran which runs as follows:—

"We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran, in order that ye may learn wisdom".

If Quran has to be read, it has to be read in the language of Arabic only, i.e., it has to be read in Arabic, it has to be recited in Arabic and pronounced in Arabic language.

This may apply to a verse or a Sura or to the Whole Book of Revelation for that matter. But towards understanding of Islam I can not see any reason why it could not be explained in the language

of any people which is indeed a sensible idea in all circumstances. However, the prayers or nama and other religious Islamic rites must be recited in the language of Revelation, that is Arabic only.

I have given by analogy the Quranic directives as has been understood by me in so far the language of the people is concerned and therefore I wish in all fairness that those who are linguistic minorities and speak other than the language of the region, should not only have respect for the language of the majority people but also try to learn the language of the people so that the communication gap with the majority people of the region may be narrowed down and mutual understanding could grow and the bond of fellowship and friendship thus securely cemented.

While considering the cultural and economic aspect of the subcontinent it occurred to me that I should write my commentaries about the Bangla language. In 1945 when I was travelling from Rawalpindi to Lahore on my way back to Dacca, an Englishman sitting by my side in the aircraft remarked that there existed a very poor link between the two wings of the then Pakistan. According to him only the religion of Islam and PIA served as link. He told me that besides these two there was nothing in common between the two wings of Pakistan. It is however, interesting to consider in the context of his remarks in order to find what went wrong and to what extent Bangla language played its part for the emergence of Bangladesh.

Social forces then existed between the two wings of Pakistan have very little in common for the national integration.

This may be partly due to the fault of the authority either consciously or subconsciously. Further due to the existence of natural phenomenon, the then East Pakistan was visited by more natural calamities than West Pakistan and the economic gap was ever on the increase. Economic disparity therefore between the two wings of the then Pakistan was noticeable. Similarly before imposing a language not common to the people of the then East Pakistan, the rulers of Pakistan should have taken a general consensus of the people of East Pakistan. At least the first declaration made by them making Urdu as language of Pakistan was definitely a political blunder. This must have hastened the process of mistrust misunderstanding which ultimately resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country. Religion of Islam was used merely as lever to perpetuate the inherent wrongs committed by those in authority. Nothing was done to foster fellow feelings as is ordained in the Holy Quran, far less implementation of the Islamic principles which although were talked about but actually never intended, and therefore remained a myth. As a result the mutual distrust went on unabated. Had these in authority been sensible, then they ought to have looked back to the ancient history of Bengal. History will tell us that Bengali revolted against many Hindu tyrants but gladly accepted something which was proposed to them by way of persuasion. Later attempt of 1854 where both Bangla and Urdu were recognised as national languages, did not gain a substantial acceptance in the both wings of the then Pakistan.

If the interplay of social forces is taken in its chronological sequence, the development that took place first after ousting the Rajput rulers of the north—the Khattriya caste—was the liberation of the spoken languages of the north-east from the domination of Sanskrit and the Brahmins. This was evident in a

Bangla: the people's language

TAMIZUL HAQUE

typical form in Bengal where, till the removal of Hindu rulers, the Brahmins had succeeded in denying recognition to Bengali or Bangla, the language of the people. Later when the Muslims who established their rule in Bengal had to learn the spoken language to fulfil their political as well as their daily administrative needs; they had no reason to learn Sanskrit. As a result, they patronised Bangla and very soon began the process of translation which made the religious as well as the classical and secular literature in Sanskrit available not only to Muslim with literary taste, but also to Bangla speaking Hindus who did not know Sanskrit. Bengal is perhaps an extreme case. But Muslim rule everywhere led to recognition of the spoken language, which acquired a status equal in fact if not in theory, to that of Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit as the number of Muslims in the subcontinent origin increased. I have already said in my earlier commentaries on the subject "Effect of culture on economy and Muslims of the subcontinent" that the question arose whether the people should learn the language of religion or religion should learn the language of people. In order to fulfil the two-way demand of both, it was necessary to have reciprocity and mutually coupled with understanding between the people speaking Arabic and the spoken language of each region. About the tenth century onwards the Sufis initiated movement taking Islam to masses and therefore in order to attain the much needed success of their mission they gave due respect and in fact used the spoken language of the people side by side their own language, i.e., Persian or Arabic, as the case may be as otherwise the message of the Sufis would not have reached to the general masses of the subcontinent. Rightly the Bangla language claims the distinction of having been in the vanguard of the literary renaissance. The people of Bangladesh were and are intensely attached to and in fact are proud of their language. I quote a few lines from Rounaq Jahan's book titled as "Pakistan's failure in national integration" which reads as follows:—

"The linguistic traditions in the two wings also differ. Bengali claims the distinction of having been in the vanguard of the literary renaissance in modern India. The Bangladeshis are intensely attached to and proud of their language and often

mysticism, its secular renaissance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was very largely due to the contribution of Hindu authors. Arguing that Bangla was permeated with Hindu imagery, the Pakistani policy-makers initially rejected Bangladeshi people's claim for recognition as a national language and attempted to make Urdu—a minority language, but one closely associated with the Indian Muslim heritage and the Pakistan movement—the only national language. The attempt was abandoned in 1954 after strong Bangladeshi opposition, and both Bangla and Urdu were recognised as national languages. But neither tongue gained a substantial acceptance in both wings. Though English is the official language, it still remains very much the language of the elite".

Rounaq Jahan while writing about society and culture further speaks in the following terms:—

"Pakistan was established on the promise that Indian Muslims needed a separate state, where 'they could rule according to their own code of life and according to their own cultural growth, tradition, and Islamic laws'. This argument presupposed the existence of one Indian Muslim society and culture and overlooked the very real regional variations in Indian Muslim society. It is true that society and culture in both East and West Pakistan are based on Islamic principles; and Islam, to its followers, is not mere set of beliefs, but a way of life which colours every aspect of the believer's daily existence. Within this broad common context of Islam, however there are certain basic disparities between the society and culture of East and West Pakistan—disparities which are of special significance from the view point of nation-building".

I quote from the introductory part of Allama Yusuf Ali's translation and commentaries of the Holy Quran a few lines in respect of eternal unity:—

"And so this light of eternal unity has shone in all ages and among all nations, through chosen apostles of God, who came as men to dwell among men, to share their joys and sorrows, to suffer for them and with them—eye, and to suffer more than falls to ordinary mortal lot,—that so their message and their life might fulfil the eternal and unchanging purpose of the Most High,—to lead man to his noblest destiny".

Allah in His wisdom and infinite mercy has sent His messages through His chosen apostles to show the light of eternal unity and these chosen apostles have come with the messages of Allah in all ages and among all nations. His apostles were sent as men to dwell among men and to share

reveal a sense of linguistic nationalism. But though the Bangla language developed under the patronage of Muslim rulers and was greatly influenced by Islamic thought, albeit in the form of Sufi