

# ISLAM IN ENGLAND

BY

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**OF GADIA**



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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A PERSIAN was the first to think of spreading Islam in England. He used to publish a magazine also for this purpose. But there is no account of any actual conversions to Islam by him of any natives of the country. In the British Museum there is an English coin of the reign of King Offa which bears the Islamic motto in Arabic characters. This means that either the King himself was secretly inclined towards Islam and was enlightened enough to like the formula of Oneness of God, and taking advantage of the ignorance of the Arabic language of the people had it embossed on the coin, or it was only an imitation of Muslim coins. The world situation then was quite the reverse of what it is to-day. Now the Eastern people and rulers try to imitate Europe in every way, whether good or bad, because they have acquired a slavish mentality and have been overcome by the surface glitter of the European civilisation. In those days it was the ignorant and superstitious Europe that had to bend its knees before Muslim teachers and civilisers and felt forced to copy and imitate Musalmans. So it might have been that the English King copied the coin of a Muslim Monarch without probably

knowing the meaning of the legend which contradicted the belief of his people in the Trinity.

The first open conversion of an Englishman that took place in the British Isles was, as far as known to me, that of Mr. Quilliam of Liverpool. He had the courage and nerves to declare himself openly and ostentatiously as a convert to Islam. About the same time a Peer of the realm and a high rank military official also became converted to Islam, but their conversions, although extremely sincere and rigidly based upon the intrinsic merits of that glorious faith, were not demonstrative. Mr. Quilliam was a man of position in the town - being a solicitor. He was a man of acknowledged ability, and a very good speaker. When I met him, he was far from being in the ascendance of his world-fame as a Muslim, but the impression he made with his long well-trimmed beard and his Islamic affability and courtesy was by no means ineffective. Mr. Quilliam and his followers received sympathy and financial help from Muslims abroad. A magazine was started by the gifted solicitor and a sum of money was also collected to build a mosque - the first mosque in the British Isles. Alas! the enthusiasm of the Liverpool converts proved ephemeral. Mr. Quilliam himself had to leave Liverpool and that unfortunately under a shadow. Later on, about fourteen years ago, when Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din visited Liverpool to

find out if there was any trace left of the result of Mr. Quilliam's work, he found only one house where a lady still professed Islam. The family of Mr. Quilliam, who appended to his name the grand title of Sheikh-ul-Islam of the British Isles, were no more demonstrative of their faith. No sign of any mosque could be found. In fact, no mosque, as such, had ever been built at all. It was a private house where a few Muslim converts and the family of Mr. Quilliam congregated and said their prayers, and it was to that house that the name of a mosque was wrongly given and money was received for that "mosque." It was a very sad end to a very glorious endeavour. Such a great regard I have for the courageous effort made by Mr. Quilliam to further the cause of Truth in the far-off Island that I deliberately avoid going into details of the downfall and collapse of that movement, but I feel that I owe it to those of my brothers who love Islam and wish to see it propagated all over the world to say that *history is repeating itself*. A residential house, much smaller than the Liverpool one, has been acquired in a very remote corner of huge London—Peckham, S. E., and to one of its rooms of the basement the name of a "mosque" seems to have been given and the money is asked for it with that attractive name. A small paper is also irregularly published. Even a "Sheikh-ul-Islam" has somehow come into existence, although the Khalifa who alone had a right to confer that

distinguished title has himself been deprived of his Khilafat. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet that a Muslim never allows himself to be bitten twice from the same hole. The Musalmans of India should re, and yet, re-double their support and their zeal to have their ever conquering and deathless religion presented to the West, but they should not allow the same mistake to be made which was made at Liverpool. While giving all the possible help to the new converts, they should keep the organisation in their own hands and concentrate all their money, capable men and administrative ability only to *one* mission, because, for the present, any way, there is no room in England for another one. In fact, more than one mission at this juncture will prove harmful.

To return to the history of the progress of Islam in England it was fortunate that after the collapse of the Liverpool movement Dr. Abdullah Almamoon Suhrawardy arrived in England to study for the I. C. S. His love of Islam over-powered at once his mundane ambitions. A man of uncommon ability and learning and in the full vigour and enthusiasm of youth he whole-heartedly devoted himself to further the cause of Islam. He grasped the situation correctly and applied himself enthusiastically to meet it. He saw that the Muslims, and more particularly the Muslim states, had altogether forgotten the essential and unique element of Islam—*i.e.*, the close and real brotherhood of all

Muslims. He also realized that progress and expansion which the Muslim nation possessed from its very birth had been completely checked. With a view to regain the lost ground in those respects he formed a society and gave it the most suitable name of Pan-Islamic Society. London being the hub of the world's wheel, it was most suitable for the Society. This Society made quite a stir in the world, particularly in Europe, as Europe was more alive to the inherent power and possibilities of Islam than the degenerated Islamic countries themselves.

When still in India I cherished the ambition of going to England to help Dr. Suhrawardy in his services to the cause of Islam, and just as I arrived in London in 1904, I joined the Pan-Islamic Society. The Society was not a Missionary body in the Christian sense. Our object was to disperse the smoke with which the priests in Europe for selfish ends had surrounded the history of the most illustrious man known to the world. They had very mischievously but very cleverly misrepresented Islam. In fact, the character of the most historic person, who ever treading on this earth and who had undoubtedly been a blessing for the worlds, was painted exactly the reverse of what it really was. So we paid greater attention to present the Holy Prophet Muhammad in his true colours. The sayings of Muhammad by Dr. Suhrawardy and the Miracle of Muhammad (a lecture delivered by me on the celebration of the Birthday of

the Prophet, which we began to celebrate annually) were well appreciated. We celebrated both the Eids—once we said our prayers in the Hyde Park in pouring rain. Occasionally we utilised the Mosque at Woking built by Dr. Leitner from the money donated by the then Ruler of Bhopal and thus saved it from becoming the personal property of Dr. Leitner and passing from the hands of the Indians, as a very grand and spacious mansion built as a hostel for Indian students from subscriptions of Indian Rulers had already been lost to Indians and sold as the private property of Dr. Leitner. We cherished the idea of building a grand mosque in London itself to become a centre of Islamic light and learning all over the West.

The result of our activities was not only that many misrepresentations regarding the Holy Prophet and Islam were removed but also that several persons were attracted towards Islam and made open professions of the faith. Among them was a boy, not out of his teens and not in very affluent circumstances, who became a convert to Islam. This young man had no position, no wealth, no high family connections, but he was rich in his faith and we began to cherish great regard for him. He stuck to Islam and later on was employed as a clerk at Woking by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, but was removed not long after by Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din when head of the Mission because he was a little too ambitious. Then he was plain Khalid

Sheldrake. Now he is a full-fledged "Doctor" (?), "Sheikh-ul-Islam" (?), "Monsieur le Count de le Force" (?), "Imam of the Peckham 'Mosque'" (?), and what not. My advice to him is to remain humble in the Service of God and seek reward and high position in His Kingdom. Anyway Muslims of India cannot now leave the administration and working of the Muslim Mission to any one but an experienced Indian Muslim.

Not long after the return of Dr. Suhrawardy to India the Islamic movement in England took quite a new turn when Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din arrived.

I am far from being a follower of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, but I cannot but give him credit for having fired English educated Musalmans with a Missionary zeal for Islam. Khwaja Kamal-ud-din, B. A., LL. B., Advocate, is one of those men who were, so to say, reclaimed to Islam by the Mirza Sahib, and that to this extent that he gave up his flourishing practice at the Bar and voluntarily accepted to be an exile and came to England with the sole object of preaching Islam. The credit of being the first to organise a regular Mission in England belongs to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. He is a marvellous preacher and can hold his own among the learned theologians of any religion. Even before he came to England he had built up a great reputation for himself as an orator. The educated Muslims of India

were captivated by his discourses on Islam and there is no doubt that in England also he, in a very short time, thoroughly established his position. There is no question of any new convert being fit to take his place in England when even among the seventy million Muslims of India I do not know of any other man who could have accomplished the self-assigned duty in a better way. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din is not only a good preacher, but he is also an accomplished writer. The literature he has produced on Islam is in itself a valuable treasure. He recovered the Shahjehan Mosque at Woking and established the head-quarters of the Muslim Mission there in 1913. His monthly Islamic Review has a world-wide circulation and has done immense service in removing many old established prejudices of the English people against Islam. The secret of the success of his Mission is his sincerity and non-sectarianism. I found that it was pure and simple Islam that was preached at Woking.

A good number of Britishers were and are being attracted towards Islam and many of them have openly accepted Islam as their religion. Most notable among these is the Irish Peer, Lord Headley, who is a nobleman not only by birth but also by personal character. Lord Headley is one of the best, if not the best, fruits of the Khwaja Kamal-ud-din's Mission. The sincere love which his Lordship bears to the democratic Faith is based upon his knowledge

of Islam. It was the same love of Islam which took Lord Headley, in the hottest time of the year, to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, and now service to the cause of Islam seems to be the only occupation of Lord Headley. He is the head of the British Muslim Society. He has made long journeys to further the cause of Islam. He knows Christianity well, and that is why his arguments against the present-day Church-conception of Christianity are very telling. This makes his Lordship a very valuable asset to the proselytizing movement.

The Muslim Mission received great cultural support from the monumental works of the late Mr. Ameer Ali. In recent years he was in fact a pivot of almost all Islamic movements in England.

When considering the success of the Woking Muslim Mission, the services rendered by Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din at a very critical time cannot be ignored. Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation of the Holy Quran was printed and published when he was in charge of the Mission.

Now, the Mission work in England is well established. Thanks to the foresightedness and self-sacrifice of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the finances and administration of both the Islamic Review and the Muslim Mission are in the hands of the Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, which is a registered association. Of course, there never has been any question as to his honesty; besides the accounts of Mission have always been

published monthly in the Resala Ishaat-i-Islam ; but with the advancing years it was desirable that the control of the finances of the Mission should be placed on some permanent basis. Like a true Muslim, this has already been done by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din of his own accord. A Muslim Literary Trust was also organised in 1925 under the Chairmanship of Lord Headley and was registered in England. This Trust controls the publications in England of the Mission. The literature produced at Woking has succeeded to a large extent in removing the misrepresentations against Islam. The degradation of women by Christianity and their elevation by Islam have both been exposed ; the services rendered by the Last Prophet and the Final Testament to humanity in every walk of life have been made clear on the one hand and the pagan sources of the so-called Christianity and its impracticability and uselessness to an advanced society and irrationality to a thinking mind on the other hand have been made bare. There is sufficient literature now to satisfy every person who may desire to find out the truest aspect of Islam.

It will not be long that England, nay Europe, will realize that it cannot live many more generations if it does not impose a check upon its present day material and Godless civilisation and its moralityless and animal-like social system, and that it cannot impose the necessary check except by seeking the

guidance of that Ever-living Exampler whom European writers admit to have been a three-fold founder—of a religion, a nation and an Empire. Those who indiscriminately copy the West should not ignore the fact that Europe itself is doomed to a collapse if it does not Islamise its civilisation and particularly the political, social and moral part of it. The fatal germs of tuberculosis, so to speak, have attacked Europe, and those who are devouring its vomit should beware of contagion. The moral depravity, the class-war, the economic upheavals, the greed of money and exploitation, the jealous and fiery struggle for supremacy, the callous blood-sucking of the weak are all symptoms of the dire disease, and the only cure known to man is Islamisation. The truth is that the religion meant for the people of Europe was Islam, as it had anticipated the lines of its development and outlined a constitution which, while strengthening those lines, eliminated all curves and weak points. The greatest factor which has made it comparatively easier now to establish Islamic principles in the West is the gap which has been made in the religious thought of the people there. The religion of the West was by mere accident Christianity, but now that is almost dead. The Churches are mostly vacant. Though for political reasons several states in Europe, and Britain particularly, adhere to Christianity, the people feel extremely dissatisfied with it. Russia which

was under the full yoke of the priests and where Christianity had its firmest grip has not only itself become atheistic but has spread its influence in other countries also. But even Russian leaders would hail Islam if they were made to understand the marvellous communistic constitution of Islam. They will find that without using force they can achieve through Islam all those objects of theirs which have any real abiding value in them.

I have had a long experience of the West, particularly of England. As far as Islamic movements in Europe are concerned I have been in touch with them probably more than any other Indian. In England itself I worked with Dr. Suhrawardy, Khwaja Kamal-ud-din and Maulvi Sadr-ud-din. Throughout the War and a few years after it I was at the Mosque at Woking. After this long experience and in spite of the discouraging circumstances I am far from being pessimistic as to the future of Islam in the West. The Missionary work so nobly begun by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din should at all costs be continued. It should be worked on the same lines on which it has so far been conducted—*i. e.*, broad, rational, enlightened, progressive and *non-sectarian* lines. The financial, the administrative and the religious control or headship of the mission shall have to remain for long time to come in the hands of Indians, but full scope should be given to the converts to serve their new faith. Nevertheless

those who have axes of their own to grind should be exposed and discouraged. I have no doubt that those among them who are sincere like Lord Headley will themselves not stretch their hands to grasp full responsibility just yet. In fact it is a test of the new converts' sincerity not to be assertive or greedy. Lord Headley has already done yeoman service in the cause of Islam, but he has never been pushful, so much so that he has not undertaken any of his journeys in the service of Islam—not even the pilgrimage—without taking Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din with him and without profiting by his experience and advice.

Due to the unequalled generosity and love of Islam of the Ruler of Hyderabad (Deccan), it has been made possible now to have a worthy Islamic centre in the heart of London. This Muslim Sovereign not only donated a large sum of money to build a grand mosque in London, but also constituted a Trust consisting of The Rt. Hon. Lord Headley, H. H. the Aga Khan, The Hon. Nawab Nizamat Jung, Sir Abbas Ali Baig and Kh. Kamal-ud-Din.

The Trust Deed was registered in Bombay in April 1928, and subsequently with the Charity Commissioners in London in August 1928. It was also registered with the Imperial Bank of India, London and Calcutta Branches and with the Lloyds Bank, Ltd., London. The recognition of the Trust by the Charity Commissioners of London, in itself, apart from other facts, en-

sures the proper use of the Trust funds, which at present consist of just over eight lakhs of rupees. Five lakhs of these are locked up in a fixed deposit for a year with the Imperial Bank of India, Hyderabad ( Deccan ) Branch, three lakhs are similarly deposited with the Lloyds Bank, Ltd., London, and the remaining few thousands are deposited with the Imperial Bank of India, Lahore Branch.

The Muslim Mission at Woking has already received help and support from H. H. the Aga Khan. It should try to enlist the sympathies of His Highness still more. I say this after long intimate personal experience that there is no man in India who in recent years has rendered greater services to the Muslim Nation at a critical stage in its history than the Aga Khan. No Indian can claim such a mature, versatile experience of the West as he possesses, and he combines with that experience a remarkable love of Islam and the Muslim Nation unfettered by any trace of narrow sectarianism.

In the end my advice to the workers for the cause of Islam in the West is that they should preach more by practice than by precept and should at every step seek guidance and inspiration from the only immortal and ever-living Man known to the world. What Europe, nay the whole world, needs to-day, as it did over thirteen centuries ago, is the guidance of the Hero Prophet who is as alive to-day as he was over thirteen centuries back.

The Muslim Mission can do no better than put the life of the Holy Prophet before the West. At least I personally cherish this ambition of writing in English in several volumes the life history of that ever-living Guide and Benefactor who has been rightly called "the Mercy for the worlds."

Never before was Muslim Missionary work more necessary in Europe than what it is at the present moment. Even the Hindus of India are organising an European Mission. The Sikhs have already built a Gurudwarah in England.

While Europe itself is awakening to the danger of its material civilisation and almost all the thinking statesmen in Europe have expressed their anxiety as to the impending War, certain Muslim rulers are forcing their people to blindly adopt that very civilisation instead of getting ready to take the vacant place when Europe has destroyed itself. It is an irony of fate that the valiant saviour of Turkey is himself allowing that complete conquest by Europe of the Turkish nation, which Europe had failed to achieve notwithstanding its centuries and centuries of united and ceaseless military efforts.

The Turks must not forget that a non-Muslim Turkey even at its best would be no more than an insignificant tenth rate state, but as a Muslim Power it would take the lead of the whole of the awakening East towards progress and reforms and have its prestige established over Europe also. Ghazi Mustafa Kamal would then

be at the head of a nation not only of fourteen millions but of four hundred millions.

The Turks, heroic Turks, gentlemanly, noble Turks should be saved from obliterating with their own hands the glorious pages of their history which were one and all written in Islamic characters. The reforming spirit they have shown lately is laudable. The spirit of advance is essentially Islamic as the Muslim nation began to advance from the very first day of its birth. It was the Islam of ignorant Mullahs and Hodjahs that was responsible to a great extent for the stagnation of the Muslim nation. Kamal-ud-Din's Mission preached the true Islam—the religion of culture, of progress, of conquest, the religion that expects its followers to make not only air and water their subservient, but also the sun and the moon—the religion not of dream, lethargy or passivity; but of moral excellence and material grandeur increasing day by day in its glory.

Blessed will be the people who will assist the Woking Muslim Mission in impressing upon Europe that its salvation lies in Islam and nothing but Islam, the Islam of Muhammad (Peace be upon him!) and the Islam of his servant and disciple Omar Al-Farooque. My faith in that Islam is undying. Islam, in truth, is an everlasting blessing for Humanity.

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