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## News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the  
Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

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Series XVI

No. 5

May, 1928.

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1st May = 10th Zu'l Qadah (11th mo.), 1346, A.H.

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### **The Psychology of the Jew and the Muslim.**

IN a suggestive article in the January issue of *The Moslem World* Sir Leon Levison, a Jewish Christian, shows with good reason that "the psychology of the modern Jew is worthy of study on the part of those who are trying to present the Gospel to Moham-medans."

He points out that the Jew has always sought the divine within himself. He is a subjectivist, and Jewish subjectivism reached a climax in Spinoza, who was a pantheist. A similar tendency of thought is to be traced in Islam, with a reaction, noticeable too in Jewish thought, towards theistic philosophy.

Subjectivism dominated Jewish thought. While the Greek sought perfection outside himself the Jew, as has been remarked, sought it within himself, and so any outward image of the Deity was forbidden. The Greek gloried in his sculptural art; the Jew found in the Psalms a finer means of self-expression. Muhammad was controlled by ideas very similar to those of the Jew.

The writer then dwells on the inevitable effect of this pronounced point of view upon Jews who considered the claims of Christ, and says:

"Just because the Jew is essentially a subjectivist he could not accept a realization of his ideal in the objective and the external. Jesus was the fulfilment of Jewish hope and ideal, and yet just because He was this, the Jews could not accept Him. Much has been written on Jewish Messianism but what the writers upon the subject have failed to grasp is the fact that it was our ideal of the heart which the Jew never hoped to realize externally; hence their repudiation of

Jesus. Thus they missed the mark of their calling and rejected the glory of their destiny. The Cross became their cul-de-sac; without Christ the subjective search for perfection was at a dead end. Again we have something similar in the search of Mohammedan mystics for *al insan-ul-kamil*, "the perfect man."..... "The Jews failed to see that in the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ the "All-great is the All-loving too," and that the All-loving alone can make us know and love the All-Great, *i.e.* the God of Israel. *The Moslem doctrine of Allah suffers from the same defect; it also has no room for the incarnation.*"

But multitudes of modern Jews are beginning to find, he says, that the Cross of Christ is the only hope of humanity. May we not expect that Islam will find that out, too?

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### The Bohras of Bombay.

**W**E have received a copy of a fifteen page pamphlet on the Bohras of Bombay and Western India, in which the Rev. H. J. Lane-Smith of the Diocesan Hindustani-Mission, Bombay, has gathered together in compact form the results of his inquiries into the origin, history and characteristics of this sect.

In the course of his residence in the Bombay Presidency for over a quarter of a century Mr. Lane-Smith has had exceptional opportunities for studying these people, and we are grateful to him for having thus made his notes available for all who are interested. The pamphlet is reprinted from an article that appeared in *The Indian Witness*.

The Bohras are a sect of Shia Mohammedans, mostly traders, and are, generally speaking, easily distinguishable from other people by their dress and turbans. They are very active in business circles, affable and polite in conversation. They are also keen on the performance of the observances of their religion, but their pre-occupation with business affairs, and the supremacy of their religious Head in all matters pertaining to religion, render them somewhat indisposed to enter deeply into religious discussion.

The history and precise classification of the Bohras as a sect are matters dealt with by Mr. Lane-Smith, but we cannot touch upon them here. They are for the most part converts to Islam from Hinduism, and are divided into two main sections, Daudi and Sulaimani.

The present spiritual Head of the sect, the Dai-ul-Mutlaq, generally called "The Mullaji Sahib", has his seat in Surat, and claims to rule over some 300,000 followers, his kingdom extending from Singapore to Zanzibar.

This man is profoundly venerated by his followers, who pay him regal honours. He is allowed to be the absolute disposer of the bodies, souls and property of his people.....He is believed by his followers to be

infallible and immaculate, because he is the divinely-appointed representative of the "concealed Imam," who in turn is the chosen vehicle by which the divine will, as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad, is made known.

Among their personal habits, the following are interesting: They do not shave or trim the beard; but many of them shave the head clean. They do not smoke tobacco in any form, or use intoxicants, nor even smell them if they can avoid it.

They live, as a rule, in a quarter of the town or city apart from other communities, and they prefer that others should not come to live near them. They allow no outsider to be a partaker in their ceremonies of joy or grief. They neither give nor take in marriage sons and daughters of other communities. They are fond of fire-works displays, and music, but they will have nothing to do with dancing.

Although they keep strictly apart from the Hindus, yet there are some traces of Hindu customs still clinging to them through their Hindu origin; e.g., they openly give and take interest; at Divali time, they even excel the Hindus in their illuminations and other manifestations of joy; and they also change their old account books for new ones at that time, as do the Hindus; and their women wear skirts, and keep but very little *pardah*.

They will not take sweetmeats from the hands of a Hindu; and, if a Hindu *dhobi* washes their clothes, they will purify them, by sprinkling some holy water on them.

They have separate Mosques, *Jamaat-khanas*, and Cemeteries, for the use of their own people exclusively. Their religious calendar is two days in advance of the regular Muslim calendar. They bury their dead as do other Musalmans, but they do not place a board over the corpse to prevent the earth from falling upon it.

There is no distinction of rank among Daudi Bohras, such as Sayyid, Shaikh, Mugal, Pathan, etc. If, e.g., a Sayyid becomes a Bohra, he has to give up his boast of descent from the Prophet's family.

### Peculiar Religious Observances.

1. *The Misâq.* This is an oath of allegiance to be faithful to the precepts and practices of the faith, and to abstain from evil; and to be obedient in every way to the Dai-ul-Mutlaq, as the representative of the Imam. Every Daudi Bohra, on attaining the age of about 15, has to take this oath in the presence of the Amil, or Deputy, and the usual date for taking it is the 18th of the month Zu-Hijjah. An offering is made at the time, of which one-fourth is the Amil's perquisite, and the rest goes to the general treasury of the Community, which is in the charge of the Mullaji Sahib. It is claimed that the custom of taking this oath began before the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

2. *The Prayers.* Daudi Bohras pray only at three stated times in the day, morning, noon, and night, instead of five times like other Muslims. The number of prayers which they say is, however, the same as those said by other Mohammedans in the five times. The "azân," or call to prayer, is somewhat different from that of other Mohammedans, in that it contains, in addition to the usual formulas, the following words:—"Muhammad and Ali are the best of mankind, and their fragrance is above that of perfume. Ali is the favourite of God, the Executor of the Apostle, and his undoubted Khalifa."

Daudi Bohra Mosques contain no "mimbar," (pulpit or preaching platform). The Mulla preaches, if at all, from a moveable platform, which is wheeled into place for the occasion. They do not meet on Fridays, as do other Musalmans, for public and united prayers; they say their usual mid-day prayers, "Zuhar ki Namáz," privately as on other days.

3. *The Rugga*. This is the name given to a document which is buried with every Daudi Bohra corpse. It is in two parts; the longer one is placed on the breast, and the shorter one in the right hand of the dead person. These are written in Arabic, by the Mullaji Sahib or his Deputy, and consist of a humble prayer that God would have mercy on the soul of the deceased who is in great need of His mercy, grant him forgiveness of his sins, and a place in heaven along with the souls of Prophets, holy men, and martyrs; and that the Prophet Muhammad, Hazrat Ali, Bibi Fatima Zuhra, and all the Imams (the full list of names being given), who are acknowledged by the Daudi Bohras as true Imams, and also all the Dais up to the present one, and their Deputies, may be looked upon as means to this end in the Court of God. The documents are alike for males and females, with the necessary alterations on account of gender. This custom is universal in this Community, and is peculiar to it, as far as is known.

4. *Saints and Tombs*. There are a number of Saints revered by the Daudi Bohras, at whose tombs they pray, make vows and offerings, and ask the Saint to intercede with God for them. The principal ones in Western India are the following:—

*Bombay*. Seth Chándábhái's Tomb, in the Fort. Nathúbhái's Tomb, at Marine Lines. Ibráhim Núr-ud-Dín's Tomb, near Crawford Market.

Adamji Pirbhái's Tomb, at Charni Road.

*Surat*. Mullá Wahidbhái's Tomb.

*Ahmadabad*. Dáúd bin Qutubsháh's Tomb.

The income from Seth Chandabhai's tomb, and also from other tombs, is said to amount to a considerable sum yearly. It is at the absolute disposal of the Mullaji Sahib, and it is claimed that no one has any right to question him about what he does with it. Some few years ago there was an action in the High Court to compel the Mullaji Sahib to render an account of these monies, just as the trustees of any other public fund are expected to do. The result was that the Mullaji Sahib was declared to be "trustee" and therefore, as other trustees, liable to be called upon to render an account of his trust; yet, since there is no one better fitted to hold the office of trustee of these particular funds, he is to remain undisputed trustee of them, and, since the majority of his followers are satisfied with his disposal of the funds, the Court would not interfere further in the matter.

### Reform Movements.

The High Court Action described above seems to have been inspired, in the first place, by some members of the Daudi Bohra community who desired to dispute the claim of the Dai-ul-Mutlaq to absolute power over his followers, regarding such claims as were not in keeping with the spirit of the times. Those who instigated the action were ex-communicated from the Daudi Bohra community.

Recently, a number of young men of the community have started a "Young Men's Bohra Association," the objects of which are, in their own

words, "to benefit their community by progress and reform, which are now rendered necessary consistently with the times." From conversation with their Secretary, I gather that the means by which they hope to achieve this end is the establishment of hospitals, high schools, and such like institutions. They are in rebellion against many of the old-established customs of their community which they hold are a hindrance to progress. The most important point, on which they are at variance with the leaders of the community, is the claim of the Mullaji Sahib to absolute authority over all matters, spiritual and temporal. They are willing to admit the former, but not the latter. They say that he is necessarily surrounded with a body of close attendants and counsellors, whose interest it is to oppose movements in the direction of modern progress and improvement. These "Young Bohras" are making their plans entirely without reference to His Holiness, with the result that they have incurred his displeasure and that of his inner council.

They want to discourage and abolish the custom of giving expensive caste dinners on the occasion of marriages and funerals, as they think the thousands of rupees thus wasted might be used to much better advantage. They shave their faces clean, which is an offence to the old-fashioned; they adopt the western style of dress, which is most unusual among their people. But, in spite of opposition, the movement is bound to grow, as the ideals underlying it are sound. There is much ignorance in their community and these young men are out to dispel it, and to let the light of knowledge in. They are meeting with encouragement from a few wealthy members of their sect, but are looked on with suspicion by most. We may well remember these young men in their noble efforts to get rid of deeply-rooted superstitions and useless customs, and pray that God will bless them, leading them "by paths that they know not" to a new view of Himself, so that they will benefit their community in ways that they do not dream of now.

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## All-India Women's Conference

as reported in the Muslim Press.

**P**RESIDING over a recent gathering of the All-India Women's Conference, Her Highness the Begum-Mother of Bhopal said that the chief objective of the Conference was to bring about reforms in the present methods of female education, and to remove the various drawbacks and deficiencies inherent in the system. The main cause of the present unsatisfactory condition of female education was that, until now, whatever had been done, had been done by men and although they ought to be thankful to them, they could not ignore the fact that men could not fully realise women's needs or look at them from the same view point as they could.

The obstacles in their way were many. While on the one hand, the poverty of the people of India, and their prejudices, stood in the way of a proper settlement, on the other, there were the old and antiquated customs clothed in the sanctity of religion, which retarded educational progress.

Her Highness vehemently denounced early marriage which resulted in disease and mortality, fall in the average length of life, poor physique of children and physical and intellectual degeneration. She averred that people

had themselves come to realise the evil effects of the custom, and she thought Government would not be wrong in finding out the proper way of dealing with it in a manner which would satisfy all. (The meeting eventually passed a resolution demanding that the legal age of marriage for girls and boys be made 16 and 21, respectively).

Referring to the purdah system, the President observed that there could be no denying the fact that the present strictness of purdah among Mussalmans did not form part of their religious obligation. It was based on purely local considerations. If the system were re-modelled according to the peculiarities of the environments, and placed on a reasonable footing, most of the evil effects which it had on female education would disappear, while at the same time they should be spared from the situation that was causing a great deal of anxiety in the West.

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## The Islamics Studies Circulating Library

(Under the auspices of the M. M. League)

**T**HIS Library came into existence through the very generous donation of an anonymous friend who, keenly interested in the evangelization of Muslims, realizes that many missionaries cannot afford to purchase books they would otherwise like to read.

The Library, which now contains some fifty volumes, is in the custody of the Secretary of the M. M. League. Membership is open to all members of the League residing within the Indian Postal area on payment of an annual subscription of One Rupee. The League Committee has further agreed that members ordinarily resident outside India, shall be entitled to take advantage of the Library whenever, by coming to reside for a time in India, there are in a position to do so. We would ask members working in Arabia and Mesopotamia to bear this in mind.

Members can if they prefer, become 'Life members' of the Library by making a single payment of fifteen rupees.

The Library contains most of the text-books prescribed for the "Course of Study in Islamic Subjects" approved by the N.C.C. (India).

In all cases those borrowing books will pay postage both ways. Books may be retained for one month, and may be renewed for a further month by letter, provided always that the volumes are not in demand elsewhere.

Gifts of books to the Library will be welcomed. All correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary of the League.

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## Correspondence

*A member in the homeland writes:—*'It is a great help in the service of prayer here in the home-land to have the *News and Notes* month by month, and the way we have the names of members day by day in the

*Prayer-Cycle* I find invaluable. It is such a help in keeping one in touch with friends, and it also inspires one to get information about other members as one occasionally comes in contact with people who know them.....'

'I am very keenly interested and much concerned about three young women, still professedly of Islam, though at the same time more strongly influenced than they quite realise by the years of Christian teaching in school and college which they had in India, who are now studying for degrees in this country. Some of us are earnestly asking that they may find Christ and confess Him before they return to India.'

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### For Praise and Prayer.

**T**HE position in the barred provinces of Nigeria is improved and there is cause for gratitude for evidence of God's working. The position will be closely watched to see whether pledges of equality in religion will be sustained. There is need still to watch and pray and will be for years to come.'

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There is cause for praise that in the remote villages in the Barisal district in Bengal, a new door is opening for approach to Muslim women—it is an answer to definite prayer—pray that the work may grow and that the Christian women may be eager to take advantage of the opportunity.

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PRAYER is asked "for three sisters from the Panjab studying for degrees in London and Edinburgh, still professing Islam, though seemingly also not far from Christ—that they may find and yield wholly to Him."

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PRAY for 'a Moslem lad aged sixteen (in Bengal), a scholarship winner, who has had long connection with our Mission. We covet for him the best gift.'

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### NEW MEMBERS

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*The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s.) The Secretary will be glad to send spare copies of this issue to addresses mentioned by members, with a view to securing new subscribers. News and requests for prayer will always be welcome and should be sent early in the month to the Hon. Secretary :—*

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Edited and published by Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Dacca, Bengal, and printed  
at the Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, by S. F. Robinson,  
Superintendent.