The Sheikh’s triumphal return from exile was synonymous with unique benefits and exclusive favors from the Almighty. These statements by the Sheikh are noteworthy: “O my Lord You have made my exile full of Felicity for my people”; “O my God You have made my exile the receptacle of all coveted things” “O my God You have favored me in the month of Safar [2nd month in the Muslim calendar] with benefits that can neither be acquired nor secured through a journey nor by using arms,” Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba indeed started his exile on Saturday August 10 1895 – he was then in a small village called Mbacké Bâry (located in the center of Senegal). He left Senegal on September 21 1895 to be exiled by the French colonizers for seven years to central Africa (Gabon) and other areas like Dahomey, Cote d’Ivoire etc. During that period, he was victim of several unsuccessful assassination attempts. On November 11 1902, he came back to Senegal safe and sound. But the French colonizers sent him again to Mauritania where he stayed from 1903 to 1907. When he came back to Senegal, he was put in custody from 1907 to 1912 in Thieyeen and from 1912 to 1927, he was under house arrest in Diourbel where he departed from this world on July 19 1927.

The Magal was institutionalized by the Sheikh himself as a way of giving thanks to Allah for the incommensurable Graces He favored him with. As a matter of fact, God does like people being thankful to Him. In the Koran, He emphasized the gratitude of His Prophets: “Verily he [Noah] was a devotee most grateful” (Surat 17/Verse 3); “Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah (and) true in faith, and he did not join gods with Allah. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah Who chose him and guided him to a Straight Way” (S16/V120-121); “Exercise thanks, sons of David but few of My servants are grateful!” (S 34 /V 13).

Notwithstanding Allah warned us: “And remember! Your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): ‘if ye are grateful, I will add more (favors) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed’” (S14/V9). Accordingly The Magal is an opportunity for the Sheikh and for the Mourids to give thanks to God. In this respect, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba confided in some of his relatives and followers: “I have secured exclusive Graces for which I must express my profound gratitude to God; now I cannot do it alone; therefore I ask all those who share with me the happiness I am feeling to join me in celebrating the Magal”. In other respects, it is noteworthy that this event is a good opportunity for Senegal to boost its economy, to strengthen the social relationships among people and foster its diplomatic relations with many countries which send their ambassadors to the official ceremony of the Magal. It is also an opportunity to popularize the educational and philosophical teaching of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba which can be instrumental in fostering peace, love and tolerance in this chaotic world.

Cheikh Amadou Bamba SEYE,
Teacher of English in Senegal, Fulbrighter at Arizona State University, USA and former member of the Magal English Set.
E-mail: khadimulfadlu@hotmail.fr
are too Great to be revengeful, shower Your Mercy on all Your creatures." In fact Islam is a religion of peace, love, mercy, compassion, tolerance and acceptance of all human creatures no matter their religion, beliefs, origin or color. This true face of Islam is at odds with the negative image often associated to it in some Western media which only view this religion through acts of bloody terrorists and fanatics.

The Islamic religion frowns upon fanaticism and regards human life as highly sacred.

The human values promoted by the Mourid brotherhood have earned it international acclaim and recognition. In the U.S for instance each July 28th Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day is celebrated by the Mourid community in New York and in other U.S cities; during that event a peaceful march is organized in the streets of Harlem so as to promote peace and foster friendship and mutual understanding among people from different horizons. Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day proceeds from a decree issued in 1988 in New York City by David Dinkins, Borough of Manhattan President.

Other Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Days are proclaimed in the U.S and annually celebrated (July 23 in Los Angeles, July 26 in Washington DC). The Italian authorities followed suit by proclaiming Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day on June 8 which is annually celebrated in Rome.