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Man's Ultimate Responsibility

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

If human beings subjugate themselves to the supremacy of material things and become slaves to their selfish desires, life on earth will become hellish and unbearable. Man has to remember that his place in the scheme of creation is that of God's vicegerent. As the Quran bears testimony, Allah ordered the angels to bow down in front of man as a mark of respect. This clearly establishes that it is highly humiliating for man, God's deputy on earth, to bow down in front of anybody except his Creator. Had there been any such scope, Allah should have allowed man to bow down in front of the angels as they carry on Allah's orders on the earth: they, for instance, bring rain and make the wind blow. By making the angels bow down in front of man Allah clearly revealed His will that the world has been given to the care of man as His vicegerent and that he himself is created for the worship of Allah the Almighty. Man must look at his present miserable lot and tell himself that he is supposed to do better. He must rise to his appointed position as Allah's vicegerent, take none else except Allah as his Lord, and save himself and the world from eternal suffering. ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

Indeed, We have now sent a Book to you wherein is your mention. Will you not think?

Commentary:

Mujahid believed in the meaning expressed in the translation. But Sufyan (Ibn 'Uyaynah) thought—to which meaning Ibn Jarir is inclined — that the term “*dhikr*” here alludes to “honor”. That is, it is a revelation that promises to ennoble those who follow and live by it (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi), as Allah said, adds Zamakhshari (43:44), Surely, it (the Qur'an) is a (thing of) honor: for you and your people.”

Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna also explained, as in his biography, “The Qur'an was revealed to a people who regarded qualities such as good neighborliness, fulfilling oaths, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc., as noble qualities and which they themselves tried to live by. The Qur'an reminded them that by promoting the same values it was mentioning them” (Au). Hasan however understood the term “*dhikr*” of this occurrence as “religion (Ibn Kathir).

Asad's commentary is on the same lines, “..the above phrase contains, apart from the concept of 'reminder', an indirect allusion to the dignity and happiness to which man may attain by following spiritual and social precepts laid down in the Qur'an.”

If we take the standard meaning, then Mawdudi's comment explains what the verse means, “What was so exotic about the Qur'an which drove its opponents to hold such a collection of mutually conflicting opinions about it (as expressed in verse 5 above: au)? The Qur'an should have been familiar material to them for its discourses centered on the human psyche and on human affairs; on man's nature, man's beginning and end.” ■

How many towns We destroyed that were transgressors, and brought forth after them another people? When they felt Our chastisement (coming) they began to run from it.

Commentary:

The textual word “*yarkudun*” is richer in meaning than simply running away. Zamakhsari points out that the word “*rakada*” is used for spurring a riding beast with the heels, in an effort to make it gallop. At another place Allah used the word in the sense of “rubbing.” He said (38:42), ‘Rub (the ground) with your foot.’ ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

(1) *Abu Hurairah relates that the Apostle of God said: No believing man hates his believing wife. If there is a bad quality in her, there will, also, be a good quality.* “

- Muslim

Commentary: It tells that if a man disliked his wife for some reason, he should not adopt an attitude of hatred or indifference towards her and start thinking in terms of divorce, but look for the good qualities in her and learn to admire her because of them. This is the claim of Faith on a believing husband and the privilege of a believing wife, As the Quran says: *But consort with them in kindness, for if ye hate them it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good.* - (1V:19).

(2) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Among Muslims his Faith is more perfect whose behaviour towards (everyone) is good, and, (particularly) towards his wife is of love and kindness.”*

- Tirmizi

(3) *It is related by Ayesha that the Apostle of God said: “Good among you are those who are good to their wives; and I, (on my part), am very good to my wives.”*

- Tirmizi

Commentary: It shows that a special mark of goodness is that a man treated his wife lovingly and well. To make the advice more effective for the Muslims, the Prophet added that, by the grace of God, he was most kind and considerate to his wives himself. The attitude of the sacred Prophet towards his wives was perfect, indeed, a few examples of which are contained in the narratives given below. ■

Zakat

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. This is an economic issue which helps rich person to assist economically poor members of his community. It is a bond between a Merciful and Benevolent.

The holy Quran Says:

“Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers, and who shun vain conversation and who are the payers of Zakat.”

God in his wisdom describe for it a precise and clear cut “Nisab” i.e. arrangement for Zakat, which left nothing undefined as regards its quantity, assessment, and time and mode of payment. The ‘Nisab’ (lowest taxable limit) is neither so high that people of average means may find it unreasonable nor so that it may lose its significance for the rich and the generous hearted.

The principles regulating the expenditure of Zakat have been prescribed by the Quran in the following terms:

“Verily the ‘Sadqat’ (obligatory alms) are only for the poor, and the needy and those who work for these (state revenues) and those whose hearts are to be reconciled and to free the needs (i.e., slaves and prisoners of war) and the heavily indebted and in the path of God and for the wayfarer - a duty imposed by God; God is knower, wise.”

Presently we are very particular in paying the Income Tax on our income to the government. The fear of penalty and prosecution deter them to clear the tax by June 30 of every year, Alas Muslims are quite ignorant of the punishment they will get in hereafter if they do not pay Zakat. It is considered well if we pay the Zakat during Ramadhan. ■

S.A.

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Knowledge And Learning

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Iqbal's views on knowledge and learning were typically his own. They stemmed from his own mental and spiritual awareness. About poetry and literature he felt that the aptitude for it and the refinement of taste were God-given gifts by which a revolution could be brought in the lives of men. People could be roused through them to launch a heroic struggle against the depravity of the environment and to revive and establish sound and healthy values and traditions. The pen of a poet or writer should, therefore, possess the quality of the 'rod' and the 'luminous hand' of Moses and of the 'breath' of Jesus. He should be willing and able to perform the duty of the guidance and upliftment of mankind through love and compassion as well as anger and sternness.

A literature produced merely for emotional satisfaction or induced by avarice or any other unworthy sentiment is a waste of time and energy. It serves no useful purpose. It is misconceived as well as misdirected. In a poem he says that he is not indifferent to the appreciation of beauty, he does not deny it, for it is an inborn urge, a natural instinct, but what good can a sickly literature do to the society which is incapable of evoking a positive and energetic response in the people. For what transforms poetry into magic and

magic into a miracle is the restlessness, warmth and vitality of a living heart. Unless the rich, warm blood of life flows through the lines of a poem it can neither move the hearts nor inspire the minds. With deep anguish he asks poets, writers and artists of what worth is the thirst for knowledge that does not go beyond the apparent and fails to reach the reality of things. What purpose can the passionate lyrics of the poet or the magical compositions of the musician serve if they do not awaken the hearts and impart life to the atmosphere? The morning breeze blows in vain if it does not carry the message of spring to the garden.

Valuable is the taste for Art, ye men of vision;

But vision that perceives not the Reality is worthless.

The goal of Art is the flame of immortal life,

Not a spasm or two that vanish like sparks.

O 'rain of spring' if thy produce no tumult in the ocean's bosom,

What is the worth of that shell and pearl?

The song of the poet or the minstrel's strain—

Worthless is the zephyr that makes the

garden depressed.

Without a miracle nations do not rise in the world,

What Art is devoid of the striking power of the Rod of Moses?

Such is the sublimity of Iqbal's art that when he observes the intellectual poverty and hollowness of his contemporaries he is forced to conclude that like the whole of the East, the Muslim World, too, is obsessed with sex. The poets and writers of the World of Islam are constantly engrossed in the thought of woman, the musicians never tire of singing her praises, the sculptors carve her images in clay and stone and the artists see the reflection of her beauty at all places. A new intellectual concept of Wahdatul Shuhud (the Unity of Manifestation) has replaced the traditional pantheistic doctrine of Wahdatul Wujud (the Unity of Being) in which the world begins and ends with the fair sex. The vulgar sensualism of the intellectuals and artists has been condemned by Iqbal in these words:

Their fantasy the death-bed of love and passion,

In their dark brains the nations lie entombed;

In their studios Death's portrait is made,

The art of these high priests sickens of life;

They hide from mortal eyes the life's high places,

Arouse the flesh, put the spirit to sleep;

Oh, India's painters, poets, story-writers!

The woman sits astride on their nerves.

On philosophy and other intellectual sciences, also, Iqbal's viewpoint is illustrative of his general approach to life. He believes that an ideology which is not sustained by the spirit of active effort and the sentiment of sacrifice cannot endure. If a system of thought confines itself to abstract reasoning, speculative hair-splitting or metaphysical pattern-weaving and fights shy of entering into the arena of practical life and grappling with social realities it is bound to shrivel up and lose its validity.

Philosophy not written with the blood of heart,

Is either dead or in the throes of death.

Iqbal's wide study and experience of the world had taught him that it was futile to look up to philosophy for the solution of problems fundamental to human existence. Its glossy shell was empty. It did not contain the pearl of life. Philosophy had no guidance to offer to mankind in its struggle for survival and advancement. For a comprehensive programme of life Iqbal falls back upon the message of Islam. He commends his own example to a rationalist friend. "I came from the stock of idolators and my ancestors used to worship the pagan deities," he says. "There is

Brahmin blood in my veins. Yet I came out of the fold of infidelity and embraced Islam. You, on the other hand, are of Hashimite descent and related by blood to the 'Leader of the ancients and the moderns'. The high distinction of being the Prophet's progeny belongs to you, but, having renounced hint you are groping in the labyrinth of unproved ideas and vain conjectures while, I, (Indian philosophy may be said to be the marrow of whose bones), hold rationality to be the 'veil of truth' and the opiate which causes the weakening of the moral and physical fibre of man and makes him an escapist. Even Hegel is as empty-handed, speculative and hypothetical as anyone. The flame of the heart burns no more in your life; you have lost your Individuality, and, hence, have become the camp-follower of Bergson. What the world needs is the message of life which philosophy does not possess. The Believer's Azan' is the call of awakening that rouses the world from sleep and illumines it. Only the legacy of Mohammad and Ibrahim (May the Peace and Blessings of God be upon whom) can bring about order and organisation in faith and life. O Son of Ali, how long will you follow in the steps of Avicenna! The Leader of the Quraish is far more worthy of allegiance than the leader of Bokhara".

Hold fast to the teachings of
Mohammad,
You are the son of Ali, from Bu Ali keep

away.

Modern education, in fine, has been a failure. It has not succeeded in raising up a generation which could employ its knowledge to lay the foundation of a healthy society in which man was at peace with himself. It is well-versed in the topography of the North Pole and knows all about the flora and fauna of Africa but pays little heed to the discovery of humanity and the awareness of Self. It has learnt to control and use steam, electricity and nuclear power but has no idea of its own strength. It has subjugated the world but taken no steps to discipline itself. The modern man flies in the air and swims in the water but cannot walk properly on the earth.

It all is the fault of contemporary education which has disturbed the moral and emotional equipoise of the youth. The modern man is equipped with Power but lacking in Vision. Iqbal sorrowfully remarks that 'the conqueror of the solar radiation could not brighten his own destiny, the seeker of the orbits of the stars could not chalk out a course of action for himself and the master of science could not mark the difference between good and evil."

He who enchained the sunbeams could not

Unfurl the dawn on life's dark night;

He sought the orbits of the stars, yet could not

Travel his own thought's world;
Entangled in the labyrinth of his learning,
Lost count of good and ill.

To draw, finally, the portrait of an ideal Muslim young-man from what Iqbal felt and thought and prayed and preached, he is a man of unblemished character, his youth is clean and spotless; his blow is deadly and he is as strong as a lion in war and as soft as silk in peace. He acquits himself well both in combat and in friendship. He is gentle of speech and stern in action. His desires are few and his aims are high. He is contented in poverty and rich in indigence, self-respecting in want and benevolent in prosperity. He prefers death to a life of dishonour. Sometimes, he is the dew that cools the heart of the tulip, and, sometimes, the storm that causes an upheaval in the bosoms of the oceans. He turns into a raging torrent if the mountains beset his path and passes like a singing brook through the bedchamber of love. He is an embodiment of Abu Bakr's faith, Ali's valour, Abu Zarr's contentment and Salman's devotion. His faith is a lamp of guidance in the dark night of the wilderness and his life is an example of manly courage and fortitude, of Momin's wisdom and foresight. He likes martyrdom better than worldly power and rule. He casts his noose on the stars and enslaves the forces of nature. The loftiness of his character is the envy of

the angels and his existence is a challenge to falsehood and infidelity. Even the whole world cannot pay his price nor can he be bought by anyone except by his Lord. His noble ideals have lifted him above the triviality of the world and its empty allurements. The deceptions of sound and colour mean nothing to him and he refuses to follow and imitate the peacocks and nightingales of the modern civilization, disdainfully proclaiming:

Nightingale is nothing but sound,

And peacock no more than colour. ■

Whose Hearts Receive Enlightenment

Narrates Abdullah bin Masud that the Apostle of God (once) recited the Quranic verse, And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender. [vi: 12671, and, them explaining it, he said. "When light enters the bosom, the bosom opens up". He was asked. "O Apostle of God ! Is there a sign from which this state can be recognised ?" "Yes", the Prophet replied. "To lose interest in the world, which is the place of deception, and to develop liking for the Hereafter, which is the permanent dwelling place, and to make ready for death before it comes [through earnest repentance, abstention from sin and abundance of prayers)."

—*Baihaqi*

The Morality, Temperament and Nature

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

Arabs would not feel ashamed of committing acts of immorality and debauchery. They would, rather, be proud of their disgusting deeds. They would even put them into circulation via the media of their poetic compositions and poems. Taking wine and hard intoxicating liquor was just a matter of routine. The reprehensible and vicious acts that got committed by them under the spell of intoxication were never deemed something to be ashamed of.

Slave-girls who were called Qainat would be reared for purpose of singing and playing music. The income earned through fornication with them was deemed by their masters as the legitimate and rightfully-earned one. Women captured in wars were made to join the fold of Qainat. Women were not allowed to milk any animal. In case any woman of any household had it committed, the entire family was held captive. The legacy left behind by a deceased was distributed amongst the male heirs only. All the women and children were totally deprived of their parents and relatives' legacy. Widowed woman was just covered by the deceased's next of kin with his shawl and she would become, irrespective of her own willingness or otherwise, his wife. Even the step-sons would thus get

the possession of their step-mothers.

Women would turn up uncovered and unveiled amidst the general public and felt no shame in revealing even the most concealed private part of their body to the general public. Men and women both had their bodies tattooed with indigo. Women adorned themselves with wigs made of spurious hair, sharpened their teeth with files and, having made themselves look younger, fooled and fleeced the youth. Families that were deemed nobler would have their daughters buried alive under the ground or would have them, by just having them pushed down into deep wells, eliminated. They used to be proud of such a perpetration and considered it a sign of high nobility. There were no rules and regulations as regards to marriage. There was no clear-cut legislation laid down to differentiate between Mehram (consanguine) womenfolk and non- Mehram ones.

Gambling used to be the extremely favourite pastime and the residences of renowned people were deemed 'public gambling dens'. Faith in evil spirits was rampant and the absolute influence of, and dispensation by, such spirits on human beings was given recognition. Imaginary and illusionary deities of both sexes were believed in. They would give their faces and forms as grotesque an

* Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

appearance as possible and then have their idols sculpted according to those appearances. Subsequently they would be gotten ceremonially installed in temples and would be worshipped. Usually every tribe would have its own idol separately specified and would believe their fates were totally in the hands of, and controlled by, that very idol. In case one tribe got hostile to another one, it would become hostile to, and bear hatred with, the idols of that tribe also. Putting stakes on horse-races was very much in vogue. It was called Rihaan. Normally three or seven horses would be made to run in one horse-race.

In determining the position of the horses in the race, discords would get extended to such an extent that wars would get flared up and would last for years after years.

Even though freeing the slaves was deemed something to be boasted and be proud of, the ownership right over the free slaves would still continue to persist. This right could even be sold or gifted by the master to anyone else.

As regards to agriculture, the best part of the land used to be kept reserved in the name of idols. In case the crop of this part was marred by any earthly or heavenly calamity, deficiency caused to it would be off-set by the crop of other part of the land. On occasions of famines and droughts they would have their hunger and thirst quenched by

drinking up the cattle's blood and eating the flesh, having cut it off the live animal. From the movements or voices of animals they used to take omens. Quackeries and all sorts of mumbo jumbo would be believed in and practiced. Their minds and thoughts were totally held under the sway of superstitions. Being vindictive and rancorous was considered commendable. Event of yore bygone by full one generation, and sometimes by two or more, would be avenged and that was considered the sine qua non of bravery.

Whatever and whichever felonies and monstrosities existed in contiguous countries were hurriedly acquired. Descents and genealogies used to be taken pride in with a vengeance. Every tribe would consider other tribes degraded and contemptible and that would exactly become more often than not the cause of animosity, hatred and war.

Family tenets ruled over the heads and hearts far supremely than the law and the religion. As against the tenets, freedom of opinion was all but non-existent.

In order to have their adversaries eliminated and perished, the tribes used to remain in collusion with alien peoples of adjoining countries. They would make use of all their wit and shenanigans to persuade Persia, Rome and Ethiopia on making raids on their own countries.

Why was the Prophet Mohammad's (SAW) Manifestation in Makkah, the Heart of Arabian Peninsula? :

In their normal life, Arabs were next to none in respect of intellect, gumption and experience. But, owing to lack of education they were ignorant of such things as are acquired through education and learning. They would, remaining confined, as they did, within their vast and generally barren terrains, make do with whatever knowledge they could gain from their experiences and observations. There was no stamp on them of any civilization or ideology. Anyway, it was destined by the Will and Wisdom of Allah Almighty that this sun for the guidance and emancipation of the humanity which made the entire universe illuminated should rise from the horizons of Arab Peninsula which was, from the viewpoint of civilization and education, the darkest region of the world and was, therefore, in need, most of all, of the salubrious and brightest message for life. And they, on having received the Guidance from Allah Almighty, got lifted, thanks to their simple and innate disposition, and unflinching determination and soundness, to the position of being the torch-bearers for the rest of the nations. The reason why Allah Almighty selected the Arabs for this gigantic task and invested them with the responsibility of predication and dissemination of Allah's message all over the world was that their hearts'

tablets were absolutely blank. There were no self-concocted and preconceived notions and ideologies, the various brain-children of respective individuals. Nor were there any inscriptions and impressions of civilisational ways of peoples adopted in accordance with their own respective preferences on them. Had such impressions been there, it would have been very time-consuming and long-drawn process- and even then would not have been much effective- to have them erased first before instilling in them the neat, clean, lofty and sublime ideals and characters.

Against these simple-minded unsophisticated Arabs, there were the Romans, Iranians, and Indians who took great pride in, and gloated over, their advancements, arts and sciences, culture and civilization and philosophies. Owing to that, there had developed in them some such psychological knots and ideological and mental complexes which would not have been easy to be removed. But, the slates of Arabs' hearts and heads were blank. What they had were merely the impressions of clean and natural human perceptions and experiences which they had acquired, in their natural way, from the simple, untutored and nomadic way of life. It was, therefore, much easier to inscribe fresh impressions on them. In the jargon of today's scientific terminology they were victims of simple or unpretentious

ignorance which could be remedied. Contrary to that, other nations of their time were suffering from the gross ignorance due to multifarious influences and factitious and intricately complicated impacts of the civilization. Having such things remedied and cured and then inscribing fresh characters in their place after having them washed off is always an extremely difficult task.

Arabs had never come across any philosophy and civilization or any pedantic venture. They were just as their congenital nature had shaped them. They possessed strong, iron will. In case a truth was not comprehended by them they would have no compunctions in taking up arms against it. And if the truth got overtly revealed to them they would love and cherish it more than they did their own lives, would embrace it and would not hesitate in even laying down their lives for it. Arabs had been secure from all those maladies and vices that get generated by culture and civilization, hedonism and indolence which are extremely hard to be cured. It is these vices and maladies that always come in the way of zest and fervor of risking even one's life for the sake of conviction and creed. More often than not the people get their feet fettered by them.

They had honesty in them as well as probity and bravery. Hypocrisy and intrigue were not in conformity with their disposition. Being fighters with intrepidity, spending most of their time

on horseback, having strong power of resistance and fortitude, being accustomed to simple way of life, and having fondness for equitation and martial arts are the inevitable prerequisites for a nation which has to perform some great feat in the world, particularly in times when waging the wars and adventurism would persist on end and display of bravery and boldness were the order of the day.

Secondly, their mental and practical faculties as well as their congenital capabilities were preserved and protected and had not gone wasted and squandered in illusory and useless logical debates and minutiae, delicate and tenuous topics of scholasticism or local and regional civil wars. It was an adolescent, and from that perspective, a protected nation. It was bubbling with vivacity and warmth, gusto and alacrity, determination and iron will-power. This firmness and integrity of determination, solemnity of action and disposition and propensity of capitulating before the truth is also evident from that very sentence which is attributed to the renowned leader and commander of the Islamic troops, Aqba bin Nafe'. When the Atlantic Ocean posed an obstacle in achievement of his further victories and incursions, he uttered on that occasion: O my God! This tumultuous Ocean has come in our way; otherwise I wish I had kept marching on and on and had Thy name announced and proclaimed all over the Sea and the land. ■

A Study in Contrast Introspection

- S.M. Wazeh Rasheed Nadwi*

Intercultural clash has been engaging the attention analysis of intellectuals and the learned since long; debate and Islamic world is also not quite unanimous.

The theme initially was “clash or unison” between various cultures. Some intellectuals mooted the idea of unity and synchronism between various cultures. Seminars and conferences in several parts of the world were organized to discuss the subject openly. View points were put forward by people belonging to different cultures, specially the Muslims and Christians. The Pope of the day also endorsed the steps being taken. Apparently the debate seemed to revolve around differences in religious beliefs whereas, in reality such clash does not exist. History bears testimony that the followers of various faiths had full liberty to pursue their own religious tenets, shunning interference in each other’s actions.

As far as Islam is concerned, it has been an epitome, non-pareil, of open mindedness, tolerance and forgiveness, and affords full liberty People of all faiths to act according to their own beliefs. Even during the period of their dominance, no coercive actions were resorted to nor any obstacles placed in performances of rites and rituals. Upon entering any country as

conquerors, they treated the citizens with compassion, justice and were extremely condescending. People flocked into the fold of Islam of their own volition, so much so that several countries embraced Islam without any armed action and despite passage of centuries are Muslim majority regions.

Contrast between the attitude of Christian and Muslim conquerors is exemplified by the history of Spain. Before the entry of Muslims as victors into Spain, flag of Christian power fluttered all over the land. Jewish community were under duress, suffering all indignities and humiliation. Islamic conquest resulted in total liberation for them, to the extent of being afforded a hand in administrative affairs. As a result of the contribution of Jews and Christians in all round development of Spain in all fields: viz, education, industry, trade and commerce along side that of Muslims in self-evident.

The communities received equal and just treatment. In stark contrast is the treatment meted out to Muslims by the Christians when they managed to wrest power once again by overthrowing the Muslim government from Spain. Freedom and justice were murdered, virtually; Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity under severe duress and threat of extradition, their schools and mosques were shut down. In the event, Hardly any Muslim survived in the entire country.

* *Former Director of Education, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.*

Similar was the scenario at the time of conquest of Holy land (Palestine) by Muslims. The other two communities received the same treatment and provided equal facilities. Places of worship and other monuments held sacred by Jews and Christians were just as sacrosanct to Muslims. Their monks and preachers enjoyed the same status as they did under their own rule. Peace and tranquility held sway and no outrage of female population occurred anywhere. The great Caliph Omar bin Khattab (APH), in his letter to the Muslim governor of Palestine, Abu Obaida bin al-Jarrah (APH), advised at length to be just and compassionate to non-Muslims, as a result of which transfer of power to Muslims was entirely smooth.

The reputed, reliable historian Stanley Lane Poole has described the conquest of Palestine by the Christians:

Upon their foray into the holy land they let loose a reign of terror and massacre, to the extent that horses of the riders who entered the mosque of Omar, were knee deep in blood Children were either banged against the walls or thrown down from the parapets. Jews were all burnt alive inside their place of worship.

(Tarikh-e-dawat-o-Azeemat, vol. I p. 253)

In direct contrast is the case of reconquest of Palestine by the youthful, prudent Sultan Salah-ud-din Ayyubi (Saladin to the English writers), who earned accolades for all and sundry, including the western writers and historians. Stanley Lane Poole in his book

“Sultan Salah-uddin Ayyubi” is eloquent in vivid terms:

The sultan took no stern action against any non-Muslim. One exception was to chastise Reginald for his threat to invade Makkah and Madinah and for using utterly derogatory language for the mausoleum of the Holy Prophet (SAWS). Sultan saw to it that life and property of his subjects were fully safeguarded.

Message of Holy Qur’an on the subject are explicit:

“Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance.” (Al-Anam 6: 108)

Another message is for believing in every messenger of Allah (PBUT) and to respect what they held sacred:

Say: O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah: That we associate no partners with Him: That we erect not, from among ourselves, Lord and patrons other Allah.” (Aal-e-Imran 3:64)

The era of western despotism is not too ancient history yet and perpetration of terror is fresh in human memory. No deep probe is required for judging the contrasting attitudes of non-Muslims and Muslim conquerors. While Christianity professes mutual affection, sympathy and forbearance among all human beings, history testifies to just the opposite. Similar is the state of current affairs, with all round air raids and mass massacre. What transpired in Iraq and Afghanistan, the inhumanities committed in Abu Gharib and

Guantanamo jails hardly need to be described. Atrocities upon prisoners in secret dungeons of USA continue unabated.

Entire Western and Christian media have waged an anti-Islam Vendetta all through the Muslim world and beyond, spreading concocted versions of the holy message and their missionaries attempting to impose their own faith. Even the realm of education is not immune from pollution aimed at the nascent minds. In the western countries even the observance of Islamic dress code by Muslim women folk is not tolerated. Any member of a legislature or a government employee, observing the tenets of Islam is forthwith suspended or dismissed. On the other hand, Islam imposes no blanket ban on any form of dress, as long as the norms of decency and decorum are not violated.

Every conceivable hindrances is being placed on Islamic faith and religious belief in Europe. Cartoonists and writers, journalists seem hell bent on maligning Islam and its history, so much so that they would not desist from targeting the holy Prophet (PBUH). Propagation and preaching of Christianity goes on unbridled and reports of several Muslim countries entering the fold of Christendom pour in. Even purely welfare and religious organisations are made targets of violent action. Muslim countries which are influenced by the West are being forced to take action against Islamic movements, specially their educational institutions,

without any exception.

Publication of cartoon in blatant derogation of the holy Prophet (PBUH), received united support from entire Europe, under the guise of freedom of expression and media. No effort was spared to suppress the show of natural resentment among Muslims, to the extent of using main force. Muslims, on the other hand exercised restraint. No word was uttered nor a pen raised against the Prophets Moses or Jesus (PBUT). History is replete with instances when Muslims have stuck to the path of fair play, peace and forbearance. Jews and Christians have forever resorted to cruelty.

A case in point is of death sentence by Afghan government passed on one Abd-ur-Rahman who had turned apostate. European media lost not a moment in propagating the subject in adverse light, harping upon the usual theme of personal freedom. Another instance is the onset of violent reaction following the demolition of the statue of Mahatma Budh by Taliban. Several mosques were raided and copies of Holy Qur'an consigned to flames. USA threatened to attack the holy Makkah. On the other hand no adverse publicity from Western media is coming forth on the atrocities of the worst degree unleashed on innocent persons in known and not so well known, jails of USA.

The current reign of sheer despotism is touted as an era of liberty, equality, justice and compassion. The powerful few have taken on the role of sole judge between right and wrong and even

are in control of legal jurisprudence. The only aim seems to be concentrate all power in one hand so as make the rest of the nations its subservient satellites, ultimately to enforce one religious and cultural order, the world over. Alongside there is an ostentatious programme of negotiations through conferences and seminars, diplomatic exchanges, which ineffect boils down to orchestrated delirium. In reality internal or external peace, brotherhood and fairplay are nothing more than a pipe dream.

More is the pity that those who should take up cudgels against such unbridled rule are neither united nor find themselves in any position to even enter into an incisive and fruitful dialogue. Such steps are possible only if there was some sort of common platform for such nations, strong enough to spring up a situation akin to tussle between Communism and Capitalism, much like the days of cold war. The current scenario seems to inspire no confidence. ■

The Revelatory and Materialistic Views of Life

The view of life and the world enunciated by the prophetic teachings or the revelatory guidance vouchsafed to man is diametrically opposed to that put forth by the materialistic outlook which assigns supreme importance to the terrestrial life, and the constant aim of whose endeavours is to achieve worldly power glory, wealth, position, comfort, and all that eat gratify man's longings and appetites.

The sayings of the blessed prophet clearly expound the Qur'anic view of life. The Prophet often used to say:

"O Allah, life is only that of the Hereafter." He used to beseech God:

"O Allah, provide for the progeny of Muhammed only that which is essential."

Mustaurad ibn Shaddad relates that he heard the Prophet saying:

"By God, the life of the world in comparison to Hereafter is no more than the water left on a finger dipped in the ocean."

The life of the Prophet was the ideal embodiment of his teachings and the outlook of life arising therefrom. Ibn Masud relates that once he saw the Prophet lying on a mat, whose marks were visible on his body. He said:

"If you permit, I may spread something on it."

"What have I to do with the world," replied the Prophet, "for me it is like a shady tree under which a traveler takes rest for a while and then leaves on his errand." In a Tradition, Caliph 'Umar narrates:

"I once went to the Prophet when he was lying on a mat without a bedding or a bed-sheet. The pillow on which he was leaning was made of leather stuffed with straw, and the crossed pattern of the matting could easily be seen imprinted on his body. I saluted the prophet I cast a glance over the house. By God there was nothing which I saw except three pieces of leather. I said, 'O Prophet, Pray God to bless your followers with abundance. The Persians and the Roman have been favoured with all the pleasure of the world, although they believed not in Allah! Startled to hear this, the prophet got up and said, 'Ibn Khattab, you too think like this! These are the fellows who have got all their rewards in the comforts of this world alone.' ■

Islam And Terrorism

- Khurram Murad

At a very crucial moment in the history of mankind, we are witnessing a drama which has dangerous and fateful consequences for the future of mankind. Violence on many planes and in many places and in many forms is rampant. Indeed, this era is the most violent and bloody in the history of mankind. One particular form of violence, called terrorism, which is not a very definable word as we shall see a little later on, is also on the increase. It is a matter of great concern for every human being, who has respect for human life, human rights and human dignity, to see the rise of this ugly phenomena. If we flip through the printed pages of the media, look at the images on the screen over the last three decades, we see a continuing stream of that which is called terrorism.

In September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked four aero planes; three of them were taken to Jordan and one to Cairo. On 13 September, the three in Jordan were blown up in front of the assembled world media. This was the starting point of international terrorism appearing before a worldwide audience. As recently as April 1995, there was a huge bomb explosion in Oklahoma, killing hundreds of people, including women and children, and resulting in much havoc. Before this outrage, what the

Americans would like to call one of the most spectacular acts of terrorism, though it would not rank as such amongst other similar acts, was the bomb explosion at the World Trade Center on 26 February 1993, killing about ten people and injuring a great many more. The drama of TWA Flight 847 in 1984, the hostage taking of American Embassy staff in Tehran coupled with so many other regularly occurring acts continue the violence worldwide. These events are such that every ordinary human being cannot but be concerned for the victims of such terrorism. Their misery, suffering, afflictions and for many their deaths deserve full human sympathy, irrespective of the cause for which I or anybody else may stand.

The Game of Image –Building

In all this, the image of Islam in the West has once again been painted with highly skillful craftsmanship. It is an image which displays this ugly face of terrorism, as also of violence, fanaticism coupled with a dark hue of hatred. Islam and this image have become fused. Following the recent burning of copies of The Satanic Verses in Bradford, there has been a continuous stream of books with titles like The Dagger of Islam, The Militant Islam, The Rage of Islam, etc. Such fundamental fear in newspaper and periodical articles is

evident by titles such as 'The Warriors of God', 'The Holy Warriors in the Path of God' and 'Islam Backs the Dark Ages'. These are all contributed by respectable newspapers, respectable publishers and respectable writers. Since 1979, following the Iranian Revolution, the Daily Telegraph set the tone with its column leader: 'Islam on the March Again after Seven Centuries.' Then, television is not far behind. German TV has been showing a multi-part series entitled 'Terror in the name of Allah' which sets the image and tone before the audience. So this image of Islam as a form of terrorism has become transfixed in the minds of those who are listening and watching these films or reading these books and articles.

This image is not a new image; hence why I have said it has been painted again. 'This image', R. W. Southern, a noted historian, said, 'of astonishing tenacity has changed very little from generation to generation. Norman Daniel, who has chronicled the same with painstaking research says in *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*: 'The creation of a legend of Muhammad's life, violent and voluptuous, was an important part of Christian polemic. The noted French philosopher, Voltaire, wrote: 'that he (Muhammad) should put his own country to fire and the sword to make this book (the Qur'an) respected. He then went on to say that this medieval concept proved extremely durable,

surviving the break-up of Europe, European ideology and Europe's ideological unity - the division into Catholics and Protestants and the advent of atheism. It could be added that even enlightenment, liberty, secularism and humanism through all these changes failed to obliterate this medieval concept. This image is still a part of the cultural inheritance of the West today. So it is not a new image; it is inherited from the past. However, there are circumstances today which have made this image perform yet new tasks.

Terrorism: A Global Phenomenon

One should note that recent Muslim activities which are categorised as terrorism are but a part of the overall terrorist activities which take place around the globe. The terrorist activities of the IRA and the Loyalists on a much larger scale, have been going on for more than three decades. In December 1984, a disco club was destroyed by a bomb. In December 1983, Harrods was bombed to cause maximum casualties to Christmas shoppers. On 4 October 1984, a Brighton hotel where Mrs. Thatcher and other Government ministers were staying, was bombed. These events are common knowledge.

We should also recall the Kurdish Workers Party which undertook in just two days in November 1973, 75 terrorist attacks against Turkish establishments and embassies worldwide. Of course, the Armenians have been carrying out

such terrorist actions against the Turkish establishment for years.

After Oklahoma, when suspicion for the same fell on the Muslims, Newsweek magazine counted the terrorist actions during the preceding seven days and came to a count of 13 events which could be classified as terrorist, and out of these only three were carried out by Muslims. During 1980-85, according to Robert Oakley, the former US Ambassador to Pakistan and a State Department official, out of all the events catalogued as terrorist, about 58 per cent took place in Europe and of these a quarter were of 'Middle East origin'.

Of course the words 'Middle East origin' are suspect in themselves because the person who placed the bomb in Oklahoma was also supposed to be of 'Middle East origin'. Thus, 'Middle East origin' is a very vast label under which much can go. When Muslims are not at the forefront or in the lead of terrorist activities why does the whole focus fall on Muslims and Islam? As soon as one hears the word 'terrorism', immediately the picture of a Muslim's screaming voice, bearded face, hands raised high, comes to mind because newspapers and journals always display such photographs. The first source to project this image then is the media. However, the media is not to be blamed; it only puts headings on that which it thinks the public expects.

During 1985-88, over a 40-month

period, ABC Nightline, an American news and current affairs slot, showed 52 programs on terrorism, 48 of which were focused on the Middle East. This was not an appropriate proportion of terrorist events taking place the world over. Then there is the concept of a civilizational conflict which will arise in the future. The reason advanced for many American actions is that this is a sure defence against the anticipated actions that could be taken against it. All terrorist acts are carried out by or on behalf of the evil empire as President Reagan used to say. Today, the Soviet evil empire has been replaced by expectations of another evil empire rising in its place, one which was at the doorstep of Europe for a thousand years and which is again expected to arrive in the same place. So this image is neatly demarcated.

If the Middle East were to be a place where there was no Islam, where there was no oil, where there was no Israel, then these events would not have received the same projection by the media. The many terrorist events in Sri Lanka by Tamils as in many other places do not receive that much publicity. Because the Middle East is inhabited not only by people but by oil as well, and not only people but by Arabs, then as soon as you say Arab, you must also say Muslim. However, George Habbash, the Palestinian group leader who in September 1970 hijacked four planes was not a Muslim, he was rather a Christian! Yet again though it goes to

the debit ledger of the Muslims because he was an Arab and he was of 'Middle East origin'.

Demonising Islam

The academics say, so consequently do the politicians, that this violence and terrorism actually goes back deep into the roots of Islam, into its religious roots. The call of jihad - holy war - with which the Qur'an is full, the division of the world into two tribes, the Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, and the dream of world domination, are deemed to be the roots of Islam. This is why the terminology is carefully tailored to fit this pattern.

If Pakistan makes a bomb, a nuclear bomb, it is christened as an Islamic bomb. The bomb which was dropped on Hiroshima was not a Christian bomb, and the bomb which was made by Israel is not a Jewish bomb, the bomb made by India is not a Hindu bomb but if Pakistan succeeds in making a bomb, it is an Islamic bomb.

There is little doubt that the IRA has very deep Catholic roots and the Protestant groups allied against it also have deep religious roots. But no one deduces their terrorist activities to Christianity, to Catholicism or to Protestantism. Muslim activities, however, are attributed immediately to Islam. So this demonisation of Islam is a long, long saga, one which appears regularly on the political screen of the world. As mentioned earlier, this is a

drama which has dangerous consequences for mankind.

As far as Islam is concerned, it is not fruitful to compare theory with practice and practice with theory because the sanctity of life is common to all religions. Islam neither claims to be a new and specifically superior religion, nor is it, but in Islam the sanctity of human life, is supreme. The Holy Qur'an says: that to kill one person is like killing the entire mankind . . . And to give life to one person is giving life to the entire mankind' (5: 32).

Even during war, in those backward days when there was no Red Cross and no international law of war, Abu Bakr Siddiq, the first Caliph of Islam, instructed the Muslim army as follows before it was despatched: 'Don't touch a woman, don't touch a child, don't touch an old man, don't touch a sick man, and don't burn a garden, don't burn harvests, don't go on a scorcher policy. Although conquests took his place, most cities fell to the Muslims without bloodshed and without of razing them to the ground, without reducing them to rubble as has happened in many other cases.

The question is what is the truth? Behind all this image-making, what is the truth? Pontius Pilate asked the same question of the Jews who brought Jesus before him. Out of ignorance or deliberately, and this is a matter of debate for historians, he ultimately sent Jesus to be nailed to the cross to die.

Behind this image-making, I believe an effort is being made in our own time to send the whole faith and an entire people to the same sad fate. Therefore, the question of what if the truth is, is very important.

Einstein is considered to be the architect of modern scientific thought. Before he rose to eminence he was a postmaster, and used to travel on the bus from the city centre where there was a clock tower. There he used to see the clock. One day he thought that if his bus travelled at the speed of the light, then the clock would always show the hour as 5 p.m., i.e. time would never change for him. This was the day the theory of relativity was born, a day when the Newtonian theory of the universe was overturned. However, without subscribing fully to Einstein's theory, one could say that reality depends on the position of the observer; not only the position of the observer, but also his political interests, political bias and prejudices. That is where reality lies.

Defining Terrorism

So let us define terrorism. Unfortunately, searching the literature for a definition of terrorism does not help. Every scholar says that it is impossible to define terrorism. It depends on the perspective of the person who is defining it. One author said that we should not use the word terrorism because it conjures up so many disparate meanings in people's minds. Others say any definition is worse than

useless because it is the political rubric under which the definition is contained which counts, i.e. it is randomly, arbitrarily and selectively applied by those who have political motives. Terrorism is not a term of scientific classification. It is imprecise and emotive. It is not applied to all acts nor to all people. It is reserved for politically motivated violence of which we disapprove. So this is what the definition is.

However, efforts have been made to define it. For our purpose, let us adopt the definition employed by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency. It defines it as, ' . . . Use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups whether acting for, or in opposition to established governmental authority. It includes, therefore, acts of a government, against other governments and by groups appointed by a government.

With this definition in hand, we shall go forward and look at the history of Islam and compare it with the rest of world history because all people say that you must go to the roots of Islam. The roots of Islam are in its Holy Book, in the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and in its history. Let us take just one or two examples. Take the case of Jerusalem. Salahuddin captured it in 1187; this according to a Christian chronicler, Ernoul, who was present there. This is also narrated by Stanley Lane-Poole in his biography of

Salahuddin.

Salahuddin's guards were commanded by responsible Amirs. They kept order in every street, prevented violence, even insult, inasmuch that no abuse against the Christians was ever heard of. This he compares with the events of approximately 100 years earlier, in 1099, when Duke Godfrey of Bouillon and Tancred of Hauteville rode through the streets of Jerusalem choked with the dead and dying, when hundreds of Muslims were tortured, burned and killed in cold blood, all in all a wanton massacre defiling the Christian teaching: 'Blessed are the merciful.' Will and Ariel Durant, authors of *The Story of Civilisation*, say: 'Women were stabbed to death, suckling babes were snatched by the leg from the mothers' breasts and flung over the walls or had their necks broken by being dashed against posts and 70,000 Moslems remaining in the city were slaughtered. The surviving Jews were herded into a synagogue and burned alive.'

Even earlier, in 638, when [Umar, the Second Caliph took Jerusalem, he virtually walked from Madina to Jerusalem. I say walked because for half the way he rode a camel, but for the other half his servant rode the camel. He had 14 patches on his dress. He signed a peace agreement with the Christians of the town and took it absolutely peacefully. By comparison, when the Romans in 70 CE took

Jerusalem by force the streets of the city were clogged with corpses; they slew all the Jews they could lay their hands on. Josephus numbered at 1,197,000 the Jews killed in this siege and its aftermath; Tacitus calculated them at 600,000.

Then there was the violence of the Inquisitions. Inquisitions, according to the Durants, are among the darkest blots on the record of mankind, revealing a ferocity unknown in any beast. Hundreds and thousands of people were burned at the stake because of their divergence in faith. These are just a few examples from world history. This does not mean that Islamic history is free from such incidents. Muslim kings also committed acts of violence. We as Muslims would not condone them in any case. Nor should non-Muslims. But the comparison is there to see.

When we look at the present time we find that those who are in the forefront of accusing Islam and Muslims of terrorism are in fact greater terrorists themselves. We do not condone or excuse acts of terrorism by Muslims. Even if our opponent does something wrong morally it is not right for us to respond with something else which is wrong. Muslims must stand for the teachings of Islam under all circumstances. But the hypocrisy through which the accusations are laid at the doors of Muslims and Islam is something which must be kept in view.

To judge all that is happening, we should accept the dictum of Justice Jackson who, observing in the Nuremberg war trials, said: 'If certain acts and violations of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States judge them or Germany judge them. We are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us. This is the criteria on which we have to judge both parties. And Muslims should be prepared that these rules should be invoked against them as well if they violate them.

When during the 1950s the United States was haunted by the fear of an evil empire, i.e. Communism, the Hoover Commission was set up to report on how the United States should face this enemy.

The Hoover Commission's report says: 'There are no rules in this game, hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the United States is to survive the long-standing American concept of fair play must be reconsidered. We must subvert, sabotage and destroy our enemies. American people must be made acquainted with, understand and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy.

So starting in Greece, and moving from there to Iran, Chile, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Libya, we find that America, using the same definition of

terrorism that the CIA accepted, was engaged in subverting, taking covert action and bombing for political purposes. In Iran, where Dr. Mussadeq came to power in 1952, and the supply of oil to the West was threatened, it is a well-known story that the CIA gave money to organise mass demonstrations which sought to throw him out and bring back the King. Of course, the Shah had to be thrown out again in 1979 only this time America could not save him.

Chile is a very interesting story. Dr. Salvador Allende was elected President in 1970. Thereafter, the American Administration first tried by bribery to create economic and political chaos. The Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Army, Gen. Rene Schneider, a firm constitutionalist, was empowered to stop the President from taking the oath. When the Commander-in-Chief refused, a plot was hatched to kidnap the Commander-in-Chief himself. \$50,000 American dollars was the price tag for his kidnapping and subsequent murder. \$7 million was allocated by the CIA for destabilising Chile, financing opposition parties as also terrorist and paramilitary forces. So in September 1973, by a brutal, violent military coup, Allende was thrown out and killed. 12 President Ford said: 'I think this was in the best interests of the people of Chile. And certainly in our best interests. So that is how we judge our actions. If this was done by a Palestinian group or an

Arab or Muslim group, this would represent the highest act of terrorism.

Without wanting to go into the details about the Vietnam war, one very interesting incident should at least be highlighted. When the peace negotiations were going on, Saigon tried to introduce some conditions which Hanoi refused to accept. To bring Hanoi to the negotiating table with a feasible political objective, not war, Nixon ordered the bombardment of Hanoi. For 12 days, 100 B52s and 500 fighter bombers, carried out sortie after sortie over Hanoi. In intensity and sustainment, never before in the history of warfare had such a bombardment taken place. Each plane carried 24 500lb. bombs and round the clock this bombardment went on for 12 days, reducing Hanoi to rubble. The sole purpose, to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table - a political objective!

This does not mean that other countries have not performed similar acts. The United States is chosen as an example because it is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism. Currently, it labels five Muslim states as terrorist without any tenable evidence whatsoever. It has been wielding the sword over the head of Pakistan for 12 years. Unless Pakistan agrees to the political demands of the United States, it will not be cleared from the list.

Israel is in the thick of the battle in the Middle East, and Israel is one of the

few states which have been born out of terrorism. All Israeli political leaders have been terrorist leaders. The first plane ever to be hijacked was by Israel in December 1954. It carried two Syrians who were detained as hostages in order to effect the release of Israeli prisoners held in custody in Damascus. Even if one ignores all the acts of terrorism by Zionist groups in Palestine, who can deny that even after emergence as a state the first political murder was carried out by Israel in 1948 when Count Bernadotte, the United Nations negotiator, was killed and the commander who ordered his death was Shamir, later to be Foreign Minister of Israel. There is a long history of killings in Israel of Palestinians. These events are recorded by Israeli historians themselves. Benny Morris is one of those who has chronicled the whole saga. He argues that it is a myth that the Palestinians fled. Rather, they were made to flee, and this in the face of threats and killings. Fear was put into their hearts. They were terrorised and made to leave. Many other Israeli historians have also recorded this. In October 1985, Israel sent its bombers to Tunis, a faraway place. These bombs killed about two dozen Palestinians and about a dozen Tunisians. In direct contravention of international law, this was once again done for a political reason.

These are just some of the incidents. They cannot become an

excuse for Muslims, to shed even one drop of innocent human blood. However, we have to bear in mind when evaluating this drama that images of Islam and terrorism are being woven together. One view which is raised by many leader writers is that, if Islam does not approve of terrorism and if Muslims do not approve of it, then they should openly condemn all acts of terrorism. Of course, we should accept this because Muslims via the Qur'an have been asked to be witnesses unto justice for the sake of Allah alone and for no other political purpose. The Holy Qur'an says: 'Let not the enmity of any people make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice' (5: 8). Hence, it is the Muslim's religious duty to condemn such violence. But if Muslims do not condemn, can we understand why not? Perhaps we can, for those who are at the forefront of demanding that Muslims condemn acts of terrorism, do not themselves openly condemn all terrorist acts.

When Israel bombed Tunis, the first reaction of the United States government was that this is an action of some terrorists. After a day, it was said that it was a legitimate defensive action taken by Israel. Finally, when the furore all over the world grew louder and louder, the United States abstained from voting on the Resolution in the Security Council which condemned Israel's act against Tunis. Abstaining is not condemning, it is condoning! Resolution after

Resolution in the Security Council has been vetoed by the United States, and it stood alone in vetoing those resolutions. So, what respect for the opinion of the world community? With such a bad record, perhaps it is difficult for Muslims to condemn terrorist actions immediately. The United States is powerful, it is a mighty power, the only superpower. Perhaps it can afford to say yes, it was wrong, but Muslims feel powerless and, therefore, with the mentality of a powerless people, they find it hard to say yes, they have been wrong.

What is the Truth?

We again revert to the most important question raised earlier: What is the truth? It was the same question Pontius Pilate asked of the Jews who brought Jesus Christ before him. And searching for truth, he ultimately sent Jesus to the cross. If an American group bombs Oklahoma, their psychology has to be understood, their history has to be investigated, their action has to be looked at with compassion and mercy, but if a person of 'Middle East origin' is rumoured to have thrown that bomb, then the whole Muslim community in the United States for three days lives in a state of terror and fear; even their neighbours make threatening phone calls to the effect that we are going to kill you, we are going to get you. So the whole people, the whole faith, is being nailed to the cross. This is a very dangerous game to play, because there

is so much commonality between Islam and the West. There is so much in common between Islam and Christianity. As Southern says, perhaps this is the very reason for conflict between Islam and Christianity; i.e. they have so much in common between them. Of course, there are differences as well. The future of mankind cannot be peaceful unless the West and Islam can peacefully co-exist and they can only co-exist if both let the other live according to their beliefs, culture, traditions, laws and social norms. If both can do that, only then can there be peace and coexistence between the two.

It is important for the future of humanity. There are over 1.3 billion Muslims in the world. Every fifth person walking on the globe is a Muslim and they inhabit areas which are strategically important. Muslims are not out to deprive the West of the resources that are in their lands. They have to trade with the West. They have to have economic ties with the West. They have to sell their oil as well. Of course, they will guard against the extravagances of their rulers who have been doing the bidding of foreign powers, who have been squandering the resources of Muslim countries, but they are not basically hostile. Hostility is only a reaction against what has been done to them and what is being done unashamedly. The two major civilisations of the world, the Western

civilisation and the Islamic civilisation, are neighbours. They are so much akin to each other and if they can co-operate, then the world can become a happy and peaceful place to live in. If not, then not only one but more Bosnias may take place and this would be a catastrophe.

A quotation from H.G. Wells in this respect is very appropriate: 'The Roman could lie, the Roman could lie about his enemies with the freedom and vigour that must arouse the envy of even the modern propagandist.'

An accusation against any people is usually the prelude, an excuse for some massacre, enslavement or robbery on the part of the accuser. Accusations though lead us nowhere.

Finally, to conclude, it is appropriate to refer to an incident which is taken from St. Augustine. Chomsky also quoted this in *Pirates and Emperors*. A pirate was captured and brought before Alexander the Great. Alexander asked the pirate: 'How dare you molest the people?' The pirate replied: 'And how dare you molest the entire world? I am called a thief because I do it with a little ship only. You do it with a great navy and you are called an Emperor.' Under this scenario, powerless people doing trivial acts are the major terrorists of the world whilst major powers perpetrating terrorism in many parts of the world are the civilised barbarians. ■

Islam: A Religion of Pure Monotheism

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Morals of Islam act on human nature similar to that of fire which purifies iron and melts it so that it can be moulded into an effective instrument. The credit of its goes to Prophet Muhammad who came on earth to guide people from darkness into light and lead them to path of salvation, progress and prosperity.

Needless to add that the religion that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought is based on the concept that all human beings regardless of caste, creed, colour, language, culture and origin from one community. In the words of the holy Quran: "O mankind! We have created you from a single pair of male and female, constituted into diverse peoples and nations that you know and co-operate with one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most pious, the most virtuous". (49: 13)

Unlike other religions Islam is not only a religion but a complete code of life. Islam is an Arabic word which connotes submission, surrender and obedience. Its another literal meaning is "Peace" And it signifies that one can attain real peace of body as well as mind only through submission and obedience to Allah.

Noted Islamic scholar S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi says: "Islam is a religion of pure Monotheism. It does not admit of any intermediaries or

intercessors between man and his Creator. It frowns upon all material and visible objects which might become centres of devotion and to which People paid spiritual homage in one form or another. There is no place in it for an intervening agency, a manifestation, an Image or an idol. There is also no priestly class in it nor a tribe of monks hermits.

And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My Call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright. (-ii:186)

So worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (only). Surely, pure religion is for Allah only. And those who choose protecting friends beside Him (say): we Worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah. (-xxxix:2-3)

He further says: "Islam dwells at such a high level of intellectual purity, highmindedness, honesty of purpose and sincerity of action that it is impossible to conceive of a better ideal or a nobler concept. No other faith or philosophy in the world can compare with it in these respects, nor can anyone improve upon the description given in the Qur'an of the Uniqueness and Excellence of God." (The Four Pillars of Islam, 221-222)

We may further understand the true meaning of Islam through the following thought-provoking words of Hammudah Abdalati: "The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root "SLM" which means, among other things, peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious sense the word Islam means submission to the Will of God and obedience to His Law. The connection between the original and the religious meanings of the word is strong and obvious. Only through submission to the Will of God and by obedience to His Law can one achieve true purity and enjoy lasting peace.

If our faith is classified Mohammedanism and we are called Muhammadans, it will have wrong implications. This misnomer implies that the religion takes its name after a mortal being, but it is not so.

The implication of this misnomer is that non-Muslim might think of Muslims, worshipers of Muhammad. Further a wrong impression is formed that the religion was founded by Muhammad and therefore takes its name after the founder. Islam is not just another "ism". Nor do Muslims worship Muhammad or look upon him the same way as Christians, Jews, Hindus, Marxists, etc, look upon their respective leaders. Muslims worship God alone. Muhammad was only a mortal being commissioned by God to teach the word of God and lead an exemplary life. He stands in history as the best model

for man in piety and perfection. He is a living proof of what man can be and of what he can accomplish in the realm of excellence and virtue. Moreover, Muslims do not believe that Islam was founded by Muhammad, although it was restored by him in the last stage of religious evolution. The original founder of Islam is no other than God Himself, and the date of the founding of Islam goes back to the creation of this world. Islam existed in one form or another all along from the beginning and will continue to exist.

The true name of the religion, then is Islam and those who follow it are Muslims. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Islam or submission to the Will of God, together with obedience to His Law, does not mean in any way loss of individual freedom or surrender to fatalism. Anyone who thinks or believes so has certainly failed to understand the true meaning of Islam and the concept of Islam. The concept of God in Islam describes Him as the Most Merciful and Gracious, and the Most Loving and most concerned with the well-being of man, and as Full of Wisdom and care for His Creatures. His Will, accordingly, is a Will of Benevolence and Goodness, and whatever Law He prescribes must be in the best interest of mankind". (Islam in Focus, 7-8)

We may easily comprehend from the above connotations of Islam that in true sense entire creation of the whole

world literally follows the religion of Islam. The sun, the Moon, the earth, air, water, stones, trees, animals and other innumerable things found in this cosmos are thus Muslims. For all things run on a specific course and pronounce Allah's praise and glorify Him. The holy Quran says: "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is oft-forgiving, Most-Forgiving. (S. 17, A.44)

The holy book further says: "Seest thou not that to Allah prostrate all things that are in the Heavens and on earth, the Sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the trees the animals and a great number among mankind?" (S.22, A. 18)

In this context it would be apt to mention that three basic concepts of Islam as laid down by prophet Muhammad and all Prophets who had been sent by Almighty Allah to this universe before him for the guidance of people are: At-thowhid (The oneness of Allah); Ar-Risalah (Prophethood); Al-Akhirah (Hereafter).

These three basic concepts are embodiment of all Quranic injunctions and the do's and don'ts prescribed by prophetic traditions.

Now come to the three basic concepts of Islam. The first and foremost tenet of Islam is oneness of Allah. For real objective of life is attainment of

pleasure of Allah. Almighty Allah alone deserves worship. There is no deity except Him. If we worship except Him, it would be an act of polytheism. In Islamic concept polytheism is an unforgivable sin. It is contumacious treason against Him. This is a rebellion against the Creator. Almighty Allah forgives all sins except polytheism. The holy Quran says: 'Allah forgiveth not that partner should be set up into Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed' (.4, A.48). Abu Amr relates on the authority of Sufyan b. Abdullah that he said to prophet, 'O Apostle of Allah, tell me something about Islam that I may not require further elucidation from anybody. The Prophet replied: I have faith in Allah, and stick to it firmly" Abdullah bin Busre reports that a person said to the Prophet (PBUH), "O Apostle of God! I have known many commandments of Islam (but it is difficult for me to act on them simultaneously) therefore, tell me the one which I can make the passion of my life." The Prophet said, "Keep your tongue wet with remembrance of God."

The second tenet of Islam is Prophet-hood. The holy Quran says: "There is no nation to whom a Warner has not been sent" (35:24)". To every people we sent a Prophet to teach them to worship God and to avoid evil (16:36)" O ye who believe, believe in God and His apostle and the Book

(Quran) which He hath sent down to His apostle and scriptures which He hath sent down formerly. Whoever denieth God and His angles and His Books and His apostles and the Last Day hath strayed far from the truth (4:136) "We have sent to mankind messengers proclaiming the truth and warning that men may henceforth have no excuse for ignorance" (4: 165)

It should be kept in mind that besides having reposed faith in all prophets and apostles, Muslims must also believe that Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet of Allah and there would be no Prophet after him. If anyone claims to be a Prophet of Allah after him, he would be a liar and an imposter. Almighty Allah sent a good number of Prophets for guidance of mankind but the holy Quran has only mentioned 25 of them. The main plank of all Prophets was to emancipate the people from superstitions and uncertainties and lead them to the right path.

The third concept of Islam is Hereafter. Contrary to other faiths Islam has a unique and different concept regarding the Day of Judgement. It would not be an exaggeration to say that whole gamut of Islamic life depends on the Hereafter. The holy Quran says: "What is the life of this world but amusement and play? Man's real home is in the Hereafter, if only he knew". (29:64)

It should be noted that a Muslim whatever he does in this world is for the

Hereafter. That is why the real life of believers is the life to Hereafter. A Muslim shirks in committing unholy acts for he will have to be accounted for them before Allah on the Day of Judgement. No doubt, the fear of the Hereafter baffles Muslims from perpetrating all sorts of evil acts.

Maulana Manzoor Nomani has rightly said that "Faith in the Hereafter implies, in a word, the placing of one's complete trust in the revelation made by the Prophets that, at the end of this mortal life, there is to come another life and another world in which men will be requested for the good or evil they might have done during their earthly sojourn.

The holy Quran says: "The dwellers of paradise will ask the inmates of Hell, what brought ye into Hell-fire? They will reply, " We were not of those who observed the prescribed prayers, and we were not of those who fed the poor, and we indulged in vain talk with idle thinkers, and we questioned the happening of the Day of Judgement, till death overtook us" (Q:74: 42-47)

In a nutshell, a Muslim cannot be perfect, unless he adheres to the above mentioned concepts of Islam. It is therefore a bounden duty of all Muslims to carry out the teachings of Islam and lead their lives as Almighty Allah stands for His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and asks him to say: "Lo! My worship and sacrifice and my living and my dying are meant for Allah, Sustainer of the worlds." ■

Major Emperor Penguin Breeding Ground Gone Barren Since 2016

- Seth Borenstein

Black-and-white with yellow ears and breasts, emperor penguins are the largest penguin species, weighing up to 88 pounds (40 kilograms) and living about 20 years. Pairs breed in the harshest winter conditions with the male incubating their egg. Scientists blame the sharp decline on climate and weather conditions that break apart the 'fast ice' — sea ice that's connected to the land — where the emperor penguins stay to breed.

For the past three years, virtually nothing has hatched at Antarctica's second biggest breeding grounds for emperor penguins and the start of this year is looking just as bleak, a new study found.

Usually, 15,000 to 24,000 breeding pairs of emperor penguins flock yearly to a breeding site at Halley Bay, considered a safe place that should stay cold this century despite global warming. But almost none have been there since 2016, according to a study in [a recent issue of] *Antarctic Science*.

The breeding pair population has increased significantly at a nearby breeding ground, but the study's author said it is nowhere near the amount missing at Halley Bay.

"We've never seen a breeding failure on a scale like this in 60 years," said study author, Phil Trathan, head of conservation biology at the British Antarctic Survey. "It's unusual to have a complete breeding failure in such a big

colony."

Normally about 8% of the world's emperor penguin population breeds at Halley Bay, Trathan said.

Black-and-white with yellow ears and breasts, emperor penguins are the largest penguin species, weighing up to 88 pounds (40 kilograms) and living about 20 years. Pairs breed in the harshest winter conditions with the male incubating their egg.

Scientists blame the sharp decline on climate and weather conditions that break apart the 'fast ice' — sea ice that's connected to the land — where the emperor penguins stay to breed. They incubate their eggs and tend to their chicks — one per pair — on ice. After breeding and tending to the chicks, the penguins move to open sea.

What's troubling isn't that part of the colony has moved to Dawson-Lambton, it is that scientists thought of Halley Bay as a climate change refuge in one of the coldest areas of the continent 'where, in the future, you expect to always have emperors.'

A 2014 study by Jenouvrier projected that because of climate change the global population of emperor penguins will likely fall by at least 19% by the year 2100.

The breeding colony failure, Trathan said, "is a warning of things that might become important in the future."■

(YMD)

Religious Way of Thinking

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The friend of this wayward man had been endowed with a sublime faith and was armed with the intuitive knowledge of all-embracing divine attributes. He knows that God alone is the Master and Maker of the universe, Fashioner of all causes and effects and has power to alter the situations and circumstances according to His will. He therefore came out with a reply which adumbrated the fallacy of his friend's materialistic outlook. The over lordship of God is a fundamental and incontrovertible truth but, unfortunately, it is also a fact evaded by all those conceited fellows who disbelieve in the existence of that which is beyond human perception. The very mention of the fact is distasteful to these persons.

“And his comrade, when he (thus) speak with him, exclaimed: Disbelieves thou in Him Who created thee of dust, then of a drop (of seed), and then fashioned thee a man.?”
(*Al-Kahf: 38*)

One can imagine how unpalatable and annoying was such a talk to a purse-proud self-admirer. His friend, however, was a confident believer without any obsession produced by the materialistic outlook. He declared:

“But He is Allah, my Lord, and I ascribe unto My Lord no partner.”

(*Al-Kahf. 39*)

The owner of the gardens was then reminded by his friend of the living reality which is the pith and substance of Surat-ul-Kahf. This was a truth, absolute and profound, but also sickening for the grasping spirit of the materialist. He was told that the apparent causes have no importance at all: all power belonged to the Creator and Master of all causes and effects. He was warned that the estate and effects on which he prided rested on hollow foundations; his affluence was neither brought about by the tangible, outward causes nor was it due to his own merit, intelligence or industry. It was all, in truth and reality, owing to the beneficence of the Wise, Omnipotent Lord, Who has fashioned everything in the best proportion. His attention was thus invited by his comrade toward the imperative need of restoring his faith in the omnipotence and beneficence of the Lord.

“If only, when thou interested thy garden, thou hadst said: That which Allah willeth (will come to pass)! There is no strength save in Allah. (al-Kahf: 40)

Create a Safe India For Our Children

- Shashi Shekhar

Peace is slowly returning to Tappal town in Aligarh district. However, an atmosphere of terror still prevails. It would seem that somehow we have internalised fear and while this may be a good coping mechanism, every ugly incident leaves us diminished and bruised.

You may recall the dreadful gangrape in Alwar district on April 26. A Dalit couple on a motorcycle was forcibly stopped and six people raped the woman in front of her husband. They made a video of this and put it out on social media. They felt no shame or fear. They seemed to feel they would get away with this crime. Initially, it seemed that they would not be brought to book as the police did register an FIR in this case till May 7.

No matter what the crime is, the criminal always behind leaves some evidence. In Alwar, the video of the entire incident was on social media. The prime minister mentioned it and Rahul Gandhi visited the victims. The rapists are now behind the bars. When this barbaric incident came to light, the issue of women's safety was raised yet again.

The wounds of Kathua are still fresh. The trial court pronounced its decision on the incident last week. The court has sentenced three people accused of raping the eight-year-old girl in a temple to life imprisonment.

But what about those who were looking to make political gains from this tragedy? Two state ministers had tried to give the entire incident a political colour. We heard the slogans from the crowds who had gathered to proclaim the innocence of the criminals.

Now the incident in Tappal has proved that it doesn't matter which government is in power. Politics has a way of creeping into every issue and tainting it to some extent. The trauma that the victim in Kathua suffered can never be erased from public memory. Today, the same is happening with in the Tappal case. Each time a section of Indians preoccupied with the religious or caste identity of the victim and the criminals. This is a dangerous tendency. A look at the National Crime Record Bureau data is revealing. Within five years, the incidents of rapes of minor

girl children have increased enormously.

In 2012, the number of cases of molestations and rapes of the girls of 17 years and below was 8,541. This number increased to 19765 in 2016. It was in 2012 when the Delhi gangrape took place. After that, Parliament had made laws related to the crime of rape far more stringent and strict. Despite this, about 106 cases of rape are registered every day in the country. And 40% of the victims are minor girls. Predators probably chose children as they are less likely to resist but this is a blot on our society.

Who says that by making strict laws, the brutality that drives rapists can be negated? Our experience shows that such people are not deterred by strict laws.

More than laws, this country should trust its traditions and social decency.

From Kathua to Tappal, whatever has happened in last year and a half only shows that our inherent sense of social probity and decency is waning. Instead of rectifying this dangerous slide, we have chosen to give ugly colours and labels to such shameful incidents. This is most dangerous and will come back

to haunt us again and again.

After three years we will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of Independence. It may be possible that by then the government is able to provide every citizen with a home and shelter. It's possible that by then the problems of electricity, roads, water will be sorted out. But do not forget that the victim of Tappal also had a home.

But home and shelter do not guarantee security. Now is the time when we will have to once again invoke the spirit of our great social movements because over the last five decades, politics has hurt our fundamental values and practices. There was a time when politics rose from society. But now our society is being directed by politics. Society itself will have to take the responsibility of giving it the right direction. Without this, we cannot achieve all the promise that we had as a nation at the time of Independence. We must collectively rise to the occasion and create a safe India for our children. ■

*Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief,
HindustanTimes*

17-06-2019

Concept of Society And Social Justice

- K.K. Usman

God will not change the prosperous state of a people unless they first change their own hearts and selves.

(8:53)

And why should you not fight in the cause of God and for those men, women and children who being weak are ill-treated and oppressed?

(4:75)

Because the whole world, creation itself, is the target of the Muslim Will to transform and refashion, the community of Islam is the human race in its totality. Here, every man is a citizen and everyone counts. None is excluded by virtue of his/her progeny, colour, religion or culture. Man's humaneness constitutes his full candidacy for membership.

The human mind or soul has no vision of a relation between man and his fellows greater or nobler than that of intellectual intercourse. The society Islam envisages should maintain a free order in which ideas and men from within or without its frontiers are free to move, to associate and dissociate, to compete and win— in peace. "Pull down the barriers and let the best thought win" is the first principle of the world order Islam furnishes, confident that the truth, which is one as God and value are one, will emerge as victorious.

It's religious scale is that of an absolute social justice wherein every man, blest or unblest, gets exactly what he deserves, whether sooner or later.

The ideal society, in Islamic perspective, is one in which man is constantly on the move to understand, to know and to master creation. It is one where the fruits of each person, won in peace and justice, are his own and to enjoy; where to be rich is rather than a thing of shame, a matter of rightful pride. It is one where the destitute and the deprived are blames worthy if their poverty and misery is their own decision and work. On the other hand, if their misery is not due to their own responsibility, it is their right and title to partake of the prosperity and wealth of others, as to give is the duty of the affluent. There has always been charity: alms are as old as man. But only in Islam did charity and sharing of wealth becomes institutionalized. Islamic society was the first ever, by law, to collect these charities publicly, according to given rules and ratio proportionate fo wealth, and by force were it necessary, in order to bring the benefits of this world to its deprived members, whether Muslim or others. It was the first welfare state in history. The Quran states that the righteous ones are men who do not claim every portion of

their wealth, but recognize that a portion thereof belongs by right to the poor and the deprived.

(51:19)

Islam seeks to bring about the realization of all values in the human society. Of these, the highest are the moral. The moral are precisely those which cannot be enforced. Man may be made to do; but his doing will not be moral. For it be moral, it has to be his own free choice. The genuinely moral values can be realized in man at all only by himself acting as a subject of the realization. Above all, it must be deliberate and free, his own decision and choice. Only then will it be moral.

What can the Muslim, or any other man, contribute to this extremely personal and free decision of the moral subject? Obviously, the Muslim's role can be only that of teaching, of causing the moral subject to perceive for himself, of exposing him to examples and situations of realization or violation of the various imperatives. Only such assistance to, or "invasion" of, the other man's person does not violate its holy territory. This is precisely the meaning of Islamic altruism when the Muslim has carried his ethical and religious activism to its furthest limits.

As mentioned earlier, moral values cannot be enforced and must result from one's own free choice. In

turn, this presupposes man's perception of goodness and obligatoriness of that which is to be brought about by his deed; and here, no compulsion and no outside material causation can help, because for perception to be perception at all, it must be the subject's own perception. Here, man may be helped, but never coerced, to perceive. The processes in which such help takes place constitute education in its highest sense; and that is the final practical purpose of Islamic concept of society.

It would seem that such lofty ideals of society and social living are too idealistic to be followed and put into practice. The truth, however, is that these ideals did find men who believed in them and gave them real existence. The Muslim realization of these ideals is unusual, indeed extraordinary. As soon as Islam was established on earth, men accepted these principles and followed them. The early period of Islamic history was especially distinguished by an exemplary fulfillment of them. The ethical perfectionism of these early Muslims is a permanent source of inspiration; such for instance, were the regime of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and Ali — the early Caliphs of Islam.

After being elected as the first Caliph, Abu Bakr took the floor. He thanked God and praised Him in appropriate terms and said:

“O men! Here I have been assigned the job of being a ruler over you while I am not the best among you. If I do well in my job, help me. If I do wrong, redress me. Truthfulness is fidelity, and lying is treason. The weak shall be strong in my eye until I restore to them their right and the strong shall be weak in my eye until I have restored that right from them... Obey me as long as I obey God’s command and His Prophet’s. But if I disobey God’s command or His Prophet’s, then no obedience is incumbent upon you...”

Upon his accession to the caliphate, Umar ibn al Khattab delivered the following speech:

“I am told that the people are fearful of my hardness, apprehensive of my severity. The markets hum with their bemoaning: ‘Umar was too hard even when the Prophet was here with us, and he was harder while Abu Bakr, rather than he, was our Chief. What is to be our lot now that all power is his?’ Let me tell you plainly that such bemoaning is in place...”

I was the companion of the Prophet, his servant and worker and I knew too well his compassion and love, his mercy and friendly love— qualities which God Himself had confirmed in him. But I was in his hands a drawn sword until he would see to put me back in the sheath or let me go forth. Nonetheless I remained with him all the

time until his death and he was pleased with me. May God be praised!

Now I am your chief. Know, therefore, that my hardness and severity shall henceforth be doubled, but against the unjust, and the aggressors, Muslims or others. To those who seek peace, piety and virtue I shall be kindlier than they can ever be even to themselves. Know that I shall not tolerate injustice. I shall fight the unjust and cause him to grovel in the dust until he acknowledges justice. But that I, the same chief, shall grovel in the dust in front of the pious, the virtuous, the just...

Certainly I have duties of my own and it is your right to take me to account therefor. It is your right and my duty that I touch none of your income except that which God had ordained in the way He ordained. I promise your towns to construct and your frontiers to guard: that I expose you to no danger and restrict your movements to no locality; that whenever you go out on an expedition, I become the father of your families until you return. Be therefore pious. Help me against yourselves by refraining from asking more than is your due. Help me against myself by constantly enjoining the good and forbidding evil, by offering me your counsel in everything pertinent to the government of your affairs... The Prince of Believers should be a brother to the believers; otherwise he is an enemy to them.” ■

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