

THE MUSLIM STANDARD

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SACRIFICING ISLAM

In the age-old struggle between Truth and Falsehood, between Knowledge and Ignorance, between Right Guidance and Transgression or Sin, there can be no neutrality, no sitting on the fence, no inaction. Inaction is tantamount to supporting and giving free rein to falsehood, ignorance and transgression. Neutrality seemingly involves no risks and no sacrifice. It is easy and comfortable. The most it involves is some pricks of conscience or the occasional heartache. It does not involve loss of human favour, prestige or even financial gain. It allows one to go on smiling, shaking hands and fraternising with both the wrong-doer and the wronged, the oppressor and the oppressed.

In the local 'Muslim' community, the struggle between Truth and Falsehood has not yet really begun. The present situation is one in which there is a comfortable mixing up between the two and there are powerful upholders of the confused status quo—from ministers of government, imams and even people engaged in the honourable task of 'tabligh' or the propagation of Islam. The clear light of Islam is often stifled under a morass of traditions, adherence to form and ceremony and even a blatant disregard of well-known and elementary ground rules of Islamic conduct. On occasions when attempts are made to rekindle this light or to steer the 'ship of the community' back onto its proper course, there are howls of protest from the upholders of the status quo and the vested interests who launch campaigns of suppressions and vilification, compounded with lies and false accusations ending up with threats and acts of sabotage. And this is not an overstatement. In this sort of situation the 'pious' quietly and rapidly withdraws, giving a free rein to the subverters of

Islam.

There are many reasons and justifications given for this withdrawal apart from the basic one—a failure of nerve or faith. There is, for example, the assertion that we are a minority community and that our continued existence and prosperity depend on maintaining the good pleasure and confidence of the majority and of the ruling government in this 'multi-racial, multi-religious' country of ours — even if this involves standing

spell degeneration, ruin and destruction. The Qur'an is replete with such warnings and the clear command rings out: "DO NOT DRESS UP TRUTH WITH FALSEHOOD."

The "Dressing up" of Truth with Falsehood, of Islam with non-Islam, can be seen in many areas of our individual and collective lives — in our social habits, in our 'religious' observances, in our political allegiances and in some of the brands of 'Islam' (Ahmadiyyah, Nation of Islam, Nubian) which are being peddled to the people. Lest all this sound too vague, let us look at some recent or recurring examples of this 'mix-up':

A Muslim minister is engaged in "fighting" an election" during Ramadan.

In this month he organises the National Day of Gusht in his mosque to call people to Islam and on the same day he sends out his campaign loudspeakers playing lewd calypsoes and inviting the people to "rock with it". He organises his victory parade in Ramadan, a parade in which there is rum swilling and indecency. It's all in the open and there is nothing in it that one can hide! On winning the Election he is honoured by an Imam and a section of his Jamaat for his alleged services to Islam and the Muslim community. He castigates other jamaats for not organising similar functions in his honour and goes on enjoying a high esteem in the Muslim community.

Another, a former minister in the government, has a programme of Indian variety on television which goes out on the air around Maghrib time. Alcoholic drinks are advertised on his programme. He organises cultural pageants which involve among other things beauty queen contests — this time in the sacred month of Zul Hijja. He then dons a 'toupee' and

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Islamic principles on their heads. There is also the prevailing assumption that a blind eye must be turned to whatever acts of transgression are committed, even those committed openly. One is supposed to attempt the impossible by hiding things which are already open and public! This is allegedly to preserve peace and unity. But truth and falsehood cannot peacefully co-exist. Truth and falsehood cannot unite. Truth and falsehood cannot be friends. If they do co-exist comfortably, if they do unite, then this can only

is accepted as a leader in the Muslim community.

On other Indian programmes, we hear Hindu songs being mixed up with 'qaseedahs' (odes) in honour of the Prophet and invocations proclaiming 'There is no god but Allah' and 'Allah is the Greatest' followed immediately by the seductive advertisement—"Guinness - you know it's good". And Muslim organisations continue to advertise their activities on these programmes without even a token of disapproval.

A speech day of a Muslim school begins with a beautiful invocation calling on God Who is the Greatest. It opens with a beautiful 'dua' (prayer) proclaiming "All Praise is due to God Whom alone we worship and serve". And then it ends with a 'dua' followed immediately by the National Anthem during which almost everybody stands up respectfully and sing "This our native land we pledge our lives to Thee". (Can a Muslim not see anything inconsistent, even repugnant in this, never mind the fact that the pledge is made in the mosque precincts? Can he in all honesty make such a pledge and also say, as he is taught in the Qur'an to say "Indeed my Prayer and my Sacrifice, my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the Worlds; no associate has He"? Or is it all just for the sake of a ritual or a ceremony? — in which case it is shown that when a community abandons itself to ceremonies and rituals and alienates itself from the real purpose of life, its downfall is inevitable.)

Or take the case of the ASJA official who at a leadership training programme is reported to have quoted the Qur'anic verse 'Obey God and obey the Prophet and those in authority from among you' and interprets the phrase 'those in authority' to mean the present Government!

And as a last example among the many which can be cited: We have seen Eid-ul-Fitr programmes being conducted by Hindus and Divali programmes being conducted by Muslims. These are now being accepted as the norm in what is an entirely false and ill-advised interpretation of religious tolerance. Religious tolerance there should be but it does not mean religious eclecticism or hotch potch, or 'callaloo' in local parlance. The net result of all this is a confusion in the minds of the people about what Islam is and what Islam is not, poignantly illustrated by a passer-by who saw a mosque illuminated by strings of lighted coloured bulbs and asked whether a

'Bhagawat' was being conducted there!

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Sometime ago a Muslim writer in the Middle East wrote a book with the title "Our Castle attacked from Within". By 'our castle' he meant the Muslim ummah or community and he dealt with various forms of non-Islam and anti-Islam which were active within this community, dragging it down and down. Here we are faced with a similar situation to the extent that you would see people weep and cry and say they stand for Islam and that whatever they achieved was because of their Muslim background and culture and in practice, by their conduct, they would be undermining and sacrificing Islam.

Now the question needs to be asked: What in these cases should be the attitude of the one who is concerned to do his Islamic duty? A lengthy answer can be given but only a few pointers here can be made.

A person needs first of all to equip himself with a knowledge of Islam that will enable him to recognise and separate what is true from what is false. If someone is found to be mixing up truth and falsehood out of ignorance, then one has the duty to enlighten him. One cannot stand aloof.

Also, one needs to keep in mind the oft-repeated injunction in the Qur'an to not only enjoin what is good but also to forbid the bad and reprehensible. Consider the verse, "You are the best of communities raised up for the benefit of mankind (in that) you enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah." There is a reason why enjoining good and forbidding wrong comes first even before faith. It emphasises the Muslim's duty and implies that faith can only be realised by certain actions. There is a saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him, which exemplifies this relation between the individual and society: "Those people who are mindful of their duties to Allah and those who are not are like two groups on board a ship. Those on the lower deck decide to make a hole in the ship in order to draw water. If they are not prevented by those above, then all will perish. However, if they are stopped, then all will survive." There can be no neutrality. And note also that preventing wrong is of help and benefit to the wrong-doer and this is one of the primary motivations of a Muslim to a

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believing brother.

"Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong" involve standing up for truth and justice. The Qur'an says: "Stand out firmly for Justice, as witness to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor for Allah can best protect both. And follow not your own desires lest you swerve..." (4:135)

In standing up for Truth and Justice, you would most likely be branded a fanatic or a 'trouble-maker' but remember that Prophet Ibrahim whose life and works we remember at this time can be described as one of the greatest 'trouble-makers' of all time. From his father's point of view, Ibrahim caused a lot of trouble by condemning his worship and sale of idols. From his community's point of view, he caused trouble by going against the forms of worship and traditions of their forefathers which were repugnant to man's purpose in life and to the natural laws laid down by the Creator. From the then government's point of view, Ibrahim caused endless trouble by refusing to bow to the dictates of a tyrannical ruler and by resisting transgression or what the Qur'an calls 'taghut'. For all this he is known as 'Hanif' or the 'Upright' one and as Khalilullah or the Friend of God. His struggle against false worship and 'taghut' was the same struggle that all prophets underwent. And what really is 'taghut'?

"Satan", as Altaf Gauhar has reminded us in his recent 'Translations from the Qur'an', "is the first 'taghut' who misleads man by offering him all kinds of temptations. The second 'taghut' is man's own self which diverts him from the right path and makes him a slave of his own desires and impulses. Then there are innumerable manifestations of 'taghut' including friends, relations, family, tribe, society, nation, leaders and men of authority. Each one of them uses man for his own purposes and having once succumbed to their control man wastes his whole life in abject subservience, never being able to satisfy all his masters fully. 'Taghut' refers as much to an attitude of mind as to a person or group of persons."

As the Qur'an says when speaking of 'taghut', "Right Guidance stands out clear from Error." So let each 'Muslim' determine on which side he stands. He cannot sacrifice the one for the other. He cannot mix up the two. Neither can he be neutral.

Faithful and Fearless in a Hostile World

Today is a great day. It is the day of Hajj and the day of offering animal Sacrifice. Both these events, the Hajj and the Sacrifice, are vitally connected with the life of a man we know in the Qur'an as Ibraheem (peace be upon him).

Ibraheem was the greatest and most fearless iconoclast — destroyer of idols and false gods, known to history. Even as a youth he rejected and renounced the sun, the moon, the stars, the pretensions of the priests and the autocratic demands of an arrogant monarch in favour of complete subservience to Almighty Allah, the Maker and Master of the universe.

A HOSTILE WORLD

This was a great and challenging role which Ibraheem had accepted — the role of being a true Muslim, the role of being a worshipper of one God in a world which was hostile to this very concept. What is interesting is that Allah did not accept Ibraheem's claim on face value but chose to subject him to a series of hair-raising tests.

What happened subsequently is history. Ibraheem was disowned by his father, persecuted by his people, thrown in a pit of fire by his king and was forced to say goodbye to his home and hearth by a society which would not tolerate in its midst a man who was not prepared to put a price on his conscience—a man who would not fear or favour anyone except Allah.

FAITHFUL AND FEARLESS

The amazing and awesome story of Ibraheem's tests and trials, reached its breath-taking climax when Ibraheem was commanded by God, at the ripe old age of four score years and ten, to offer his only child as sacrifice in the path of Allah. The command was given in a dream which repeated itself in three consecutive nights. Men with nerves of steel would have quailed and cowered before such a command. But not so this venerable old fighter Ibraheem whose entire life had been a monument of faithful obedience to the commands of his Master.

Without a moment's hesitation, Ibraheem resolved to slaughter his son—a resolve that must have shaken the very foundations of the universe. In any case it did stir the fountains of Divine compassion. At the nick of the moment a voice spoke: "Stop, O Ibraheem! You have done your duty and fulfilled the dream that you beheld!"

"The question we face today is how much of the spirit of Ibraheem do we possess in us, and how far are we prepared to go in the path of making sacrifices for Allah. How many of us are really prepared to sacrifice our time and effort, our possessions and our connections, for the sake of Allah, and in support of the claim that we are Muslims?"

Ibraheem came out of his last and most gruelling test with flying colours and God conferred upon him the exalted and coveted title of "The Leader of the Pious People of the World."

Allah did not want human blood. It is a baseless pagan myth to speak of human sacrifice as being a part of devotion to God. All that Allah wanted was to see whether Ibraheem will keep up his life-long tradition of being a truly faithful and fearless servant of Allah. Ibraheem did, in a most convincing and conclusive manner, and earned for himself an unrivalled place in the history of mankind.

A SYMBOL OF TOTAL SURRENDER

Ibraheem laid the foundation of the Kaaba—the noble Sanctuary in Makkah—and invited the people to come for Hajj; Ibraheem also offered his son Isma'eel as a sacrifice in the path of Allah. We must know that it was Isma'eel and not Ishaq, (as the Christians believe) who was offered in sacrifice. Both these acts were

so noble and so full of lessons for humanity that Allah perpetuated them for all times to come by enjoining the followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) — the rightful inheritors of Prophet Ibraheem's mission on earth to commemorate both these practices every year.

Even though sacrifice today does not mean the attempted sacrifice of one's sons and daughters, still the concept of sacrifice in our times is as wide and comprehensive as it used to be at the time of Prophet Ibraheem (peace be upon him). The sacrifice of animals is only a symbol of man's total and categorical surrender to Allah. It is an outward manifestation of man's readiness to sacrifice everything in his possession and power, including his own life if necessary, in the path of Allah.

What Allah liked most in Ibraheem was his perfect and unquestioning trust, his abject and unconditional surrender, his ever-ready, ever-willing nature to do the Divine bidding, all of which found their finest expression in his willingness to sacrifice his son Isma'eel. It was not so much the physical act which was in the balance, but rather the inner attitude, which characterised every action of Prophet Ibraheem, peace be upon him, which was really in the balance.

It is primarily this attitude that Allah requires from us today. It is this attitude and bent of mind of which our animal sacrifice is supposed to be a token and a symbol. Therefore the sacrifice we offer should not be an empty ritual but should be a genuine and powerful proclamation of our readiness and resolve to sacrifice everything in our power, should our duty to Allah so require.

Professions of Islam will always entail an unending series of sacrifices. This is the eternal and unchanging law of Almighty Allah. Nations cannot be built except on the sure and solid foundations of sacrifice. Islam being a mighty and powerful nation of global dimensions—it too cannot be built except on this foundation.

We seem to be making an inverted sacrifice—a sacrifice in reverse—by agreeing to sacrifice what Allah enjoins, to please and placate a relative, a friend, an influential member of the society, a trade partner, or an arrogant and misguided leader.

SUCCESSORS

Sacrifice could mean the sacrifice of time, effort or wealth; of the various connections and relations that bind one human being to another; or of one's likes and dislikes, goals and objectives, preferences and predilections, prejudices and pride. Being a Muslim, being an heir and successor to the exalted purpose and position of Prophet Ibraheem, will entail any or all of these sacrifices as the time and the situation may demand.

Ibraheem won the day by making these sacrifices, willingly, avidly, without a moment's hesitation, and became a master, a champion, a pioneer and leader of men in this field. The question we face today is how much of the spirit of Ibraheem do we possess in us, and how far are we prepared to go in the path of making sacrifices for Allah. How many of us are really prepared to sacrifice our time and effort, our possessions and our connections, for the sake of Allah, and, in support of our claim that we are Muslims?

NOT FAR ENOUGH

Instead of giving of these 'things freely and generously in the path of Allah we find ourselves making demands on Allah Himself. What cheek, what nerve, temerity and audacity! We want to place restrictions and qualifications on the type of sacrifice which we may be prepared to offer at a given moment of time. We seem to be prepared to go only thus far and no further in the pursuit of Divine pleasure, and yet, we unabashedly call ourselves Muslims, and proudly proclaim our title to Ibraheem's spiritual throne.

Some of us sacrifice a few dollars here and a few dollars there, a few minutes of our time now and a few minutes again, but we are not willing to make a total commitment of our time, energies and resources in the cause of Allah. We are the least forthcoming when the sacrifice requires personal involvement and affects our cherished connections and relationships . . .

INVERTED SACRIFICE

In many cases, we seem to be making an inverted sacrifice—a sacrifice

in reverse—by agreeing to sacrifice what Allah enjoins, to please and placate a relative, a friend, an influential member of the society, a trade partner, or an arrogant and misguided leader. It is indeed amazing how readily some of us will sacrifice Allah's pleasure for any of these considerations. This also is a sacrifice no doubt, but this is an inverted an upside-down sacrifice, the consequences of which will be disastrous both here and in the hereafter.

Dear brothers and sisters, the time has come for us to stop fooling ourselves with empty words and platitudes. The time has come for us to redefine our

whole attitude and approach to Islam. The time has come for each one to ask himself how far he is willing to go in the path of making sacrifices for Allah. Let us come up with an honest, truthful answer to the question as to where each one of us stands in relation to the demands made by Allah on his time, effort, property and worldly connections and in relation to the example and pattern supplied by Prophet Ibraheem (peace be upon him) in this regard.

It is for this purpose that the Hajj and the Sacrifice are repeated every year, and blessed is the person who learns and relearns this lesson from them.

—Text of Eid-ul-Adha sermon delivered by S H Pasha at Islamic Missionaries' Guild HQ, Port-of-Spain, 1973.

Sayings of Muhammad (peace be upon him)

"If anyone summons others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those of the people who follow him, without their rewards being diminished in any respect on that account. And if anyone summons others to follow error, the sin of which he is guilty will be equivalent to those people who follow him without their sins being diminished in any respect on that account."

"He who holds fast to my example when my people are in a corrupt state will have the reward of a hundred martyrs."

"Things are of three categories: a matter whose right guidance is clear, which you must follow; a matter whose error is clear, which you must avoid; and a matter about which there is a difference of opinion, which you must entrust to God."

ON REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

"If a people sit and remember God, the angels surround them, blessings encompasses them, peace descend on them..."

"Whoever sits in a place wherein he does not remember God, there is disappointment for him from God; and whoever sleeps on a bed wherein he does not remember God, there is disappointment from God."

"Do not hold too much talk without remembrance of Almighty God, for certainly excessive talk without remembrance of God produces a callous heart; and verily the remotest of the people from God are those of callous hearts."

"The devil reclines on the heart of the son of Adam. When he remembers God, he retraces; and when he is heedless, he whispers evils."

"Verily he in whose breast there is nothing of the Qur'an is like a destroyed house."

THE VOYAGE HOME

For too long, we have been adrift on the open sea,
Far, far away from home.
Unprepared, we are humiliated by these storms ...
Our small boat, sails broken, a victim to the winds.
Cross currents, too strong for our thin arms.
Waves, soaring higher than our humble hope.
Our heads, bowed even before defeat.
Our damning eyes, avoiding one another's
Our souls, as wild and sometimes as lonely as the open sea.

Let us cease to curse nature,
Abusing our lips, with one another's names.
Let us mend this broken boat, this broken sail, this broken soul.
Let us harness the wind,
Make use of the currents,
With faith and sweat, set sail to our land of the Qur'an and Sunnah.
Amidst this storm, let us begin the voyage home.

Hashim Bin Ambia

ARE THESE MY WORDS?

Allah, please help me in
My hour of need,
Of pure Inspiration
When I might think
I am a Maker
Of poems, and the like,
Is this my Light?
Or is my mind and hand
And their connection
The mere mute offering
Of a creation?

WHAT CANNOT BE REGAINED

Torn apart is her mould
Tranquil, serene, and kind;
Stabbed her old father's mind,
Stole respect from mother's side;
That girl/woman who tried
To Westernize her soul.
She was a Muslim virgin.

FRUSTRATION

In a corner of my mind
Lies an ugly question
Which makes my nerves bon
And my brain stop hoping.
For this question has no answer
Yet leaves me in sheer futility
To what end, why, and as who's toy
Were we created?

I am not a woman
But an ant in a vast cage
And this world's illusion
Of happiness and grief
Is mere confusion meant
To taunt our brains into believing
That we are free—yet we die.

All the beaches of the world
Are forbidden with naked people.
And we sit, trapped in our own
Ignorance of the reason Why
We cannot
A question infinite and unanswered.
But, we follow with heavy tears in our
hearts

The movements of the remote fun-
making.
I am a woman
With an animal desire
Who loves to dance
And sing and pass
The time on play.
I am a Muslim
With a soul born to seek God
With responsibility and
Humility, who is told
"You cannot," It is Haram".

He told me to fear Him
And I do.
He gave me greed, hatred,
Smallness of mind;
Along with hunger, fear,
And untold pain.
But, He said to squelsh
These, and live in "truth",
To deny all that's in me
So to attain lasting peace.

Shariffa Ahmad Bey (U.S.A.)

Poems of the New World

Muslims' understanding of Islam in our times can be expressed in a few phrases: "Fast and pray and leave the affairs of others alone. No one will then get in the way of your religion and Allah will not call you to account for others. He would help everyone who keeps his religion to himself." Life for such people is summed up thus: "Leave us alone to live and eat. Jihad is part of this living and eating. Therein lies the Reward."

Among Muslims who cling to their 'Islam', there is a picture of the real Muslim as one who fasts and prays and gives a few coppers in charity every Friday. This Muslim is one who knows nothing but his 'salat' and his fasting. He is not interested in anyone or anything even if the firmament were to come crashing down. He goes out to the masjid and returns home and from his home to the masjid again. And if he needs anything from the shop, he fetches it and goes back home.

Muslims would lose only if this model becomes the highest one which the followers of Islam look up to and which its workers strive after. They would lose because this is a lifeless model on which is piled up all the Prophet, peace be upon him, sought refuge from—namely, weakness and laziness, and cowardice and miserliness. This is moreover difficult to uphold and justify because the individual attempting to do so would be placed "far away from the sheep; neither could he defend the sheep from the wolf nor could he give the protection of a shepherd..."

The believer never steps out of line and only works within a group

It is necessary for Muslims to throw off this image and replace it with one composed of the pristine strength and effectiveness of the believer while he strives for control over life's existence under the banner 'Laa ilaaha illa Allah'—there is none to be worshipped except Allah. The believer never steps out of line and only works within a group. Islam aims at this ideal, provides working examples and lays down the laws for achieving it. This is why, for example, prayer in a congregation is considered better than prayer performed alone; the supplications in a Muslim's prayer—Thee (Allah alone) do we worship—are community-centred.

The Qur'an tells us about two righteous parties. One party looks on

WHY TROUBLE YOURSELF?

religion as an individual worship. They despair of reforming the disobedient. They call for isolation from them and the abandoning of their affairs to God, themselves preferring safety and comfort even while corruption spreads over the land. The second party looks on worship as believing in righteousness and DOING righteous acts while standing up to the disobedient, whatever the injuries and loss that may be incurred.

The two groups often become engaged in conversation which almost invariably follows the same lines. The first party would shout at the other, "Why trouble yourself with people who have incurred God's anger and inevitably will be destroyed?" The second party would reply, "We seek forgiveness from our Lord. Perhaps they may become righteous and God-fearing or the punishment would descend on them."

This then is the second party, righteous acting and calling to the way of Allah. This is the successful party enjoying Allah's protection while the first party, concerned about its own righteousness and despairing of reforming others does not come in for any mention:

"And when a community among them said, Why do you preach to a folk whom Allah is about to destroy and punish with an awful doom, they said: In order to be free from guilt before your Lord, and that haply they may ward off evil.

And when they forgot that of which they had been reminded, we rescued those who forbade wrong, and visited those who did wrong with dreadful punishment because

they were evil-livers." 7 : 164-5

The expression *they did wrong* covers the first group of people since wrong-doing consists of many stages beginning with abandoning the call to the way of Allah and ending by reaching out for the things declared unlawful. It is an expression repeated in several places in the Qur'an. Sometimes the Qur'an mentions it in very clear terms in dealing with those who abandon the injunction to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, likening them at the same time to donkeys toting valuable books. Those who have the slightest sense would never think of including these donkeys among the learned among men, merely because they also carry books.

"The likeness of those who are entrusted with the law of Moses, yet apply it not is as the likeness of the ass carrying books. Wretched is the likeness of folk who deny the revelation of Allah. And Allah guides not wrong-doing folk."

The Qur'an 62 : 5

A righteous disposition not enough

And sometimes the Qur'an deals simultaneously with certain laws governing reward and punishment whereby a mere righteous disposition does not prevent punishment but it is righteous doing which wards it off:

"If only there had been among the generations before you men possessing a remnant of good sense to warn people from corruption in the earth, as did a few of those whom We saved from them! The wrong-doers followed that by which they were made sapless, and were guilty. In truth, thy Lord destroyed not the townships unjustly while their folk were doing right."

The Qur'an 11:116-7

The Qur'an deals with actual accounts which affirm this connotation. For example, there were the Israelites whom God has damned because the 'righteous' among them withdrew to themselves and flattered the agents of corruption among them. They were considered transgressors like these corrupted ones themselves.

"Those of the Israelites who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, son

All that is needed for evil to triumph is that 'good' men should do nothing!

of Mary. That was because they rebelled and used to transgress. They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Verily evil is what they used to do. *The Qur'an 5:78-9*

The Qur'an bears down heavily on those who study the religion of Allah, attain the ranks of knowledgeable folk and thereafter do not exert themselves to the call of Allah. On the contrary, they take knowledge as a means to wealth and fame. And so God says:

"Indeed those who hid any part of the Scripture which Allah has revealed and purchase a small gain therewith, they consume in their bellies nothing but fire. Allah will not speak to them on the day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. Theirs will be a painful punishment."

The Qur'an 2:174

When we ponder on the reason behind the punishing of those who keep away from eliminating mischief, we can see why in fact they deserve punishment. It is because isolation and individualism are like guards whom their master has placed to look after his orchard. Instead of looking after the crops and the fruits and co-operating with each other in so doing, each of them retires to the shade of the trees, eating the fruits while the gates are left open for thieves to do as they like and for animals to ravage.

Since the birth of the Message

Isolation as far as the Muslim community is concerned signifies a violation of the divine covenant which has laid down certain conditions on this community by making it the community of the Middle Path and setting it up as the guardian of truth, the standard-bearer against evil and the summoner to the way of Allah.

If the early Muslims had understood Islam as being concerned only with their own good and with keeping to their homes, they would not have gone out from the Arabian peninsula to engage

in battle the empires of Persia and Byzantium. Islam would not have reached the people of Syria and Palestine, Iraq and Egypt, Persia and India, Turkestan, North Africa and Spain. And if they had understood Islam as a means towards wealth and fame and veneration and honour, they would not have embraced it. The Muslim of old gave and did not take. He was persecuted after having enjoyed security and was despised after having reached ranks (in his pre-Muslim days).

Indeed Islam has laid down the principle of collective action since the birth of the message and made it an essential condition for entering the ranks of believers.

It was impressed on the believers in Mecca that without combining with the group in Yathrib (Medina); there would be no relationship or friendship despite the faith they had achieved.

"Those who believed and left their homes and strove with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah, and those who took them in and helped them—these are the protecting friends one of another. But those who believed and did not leave their homes, you have no duty to protect them till they leave their homes."

The Qur'an 8:72

Even the polytheists who have a treaty with the community of believers who exert themselves are considered worthier of good faith than those individuals scattered like beads of a necklace which has no linking thread.

"But if they seek help from you in a matter of religion, then it is your duty to help them except against a folk between whom and you there is a treaty. Allah sees whatever you do."

The Qur'an 8:72

No wonder then that Allah has described the community of believers solidly working together as "They are true believers." This description implies that there is at the other end superficial believers, in name only:

"Those who believed and left

their homes and strove for the cause of Allah, and those who took them in and helped them—they are the true believers. For them is pardon and a bountiful provision."

The Qur'an 8:74

As Ostriches do

Individualist religion collapses before the grouping of the disbelievers who spread great confusion in the land and great corruption.

Suppose that you pray and fast alone and forsake society regardless of whether people err or are righteous. Is it possible for your womenfolk to dress according to the teachings of the Sharia' in a society which neither binds itself by the teaching of the Sharia' nor in which women dress according to it? The rest of the women will laugh at them and they themselves will return to you with howls of protest. They throw away the covering dress and instead they wear the garment of prostitutes.

You send your daughters to school where the school-mistresses are the ones who set the example in displaying their charms. The headmistress would reprimand, if not dismiss, any girl who does not wear a dress in accordance with the group. In the schools and colleges, the boys and girls are mixed up and the system and the methods approve of and encourage this. Can you resist all this? No! Therefore, would you prevent her from attending school or university and keep her in the thick of illiteracy? It is a problem!

Your own children go out to the street and see the immoral movies and the obscene magazines. They read the ugly stories and the bedroom novels. They become involved with bad-mannered companions. Can you guarantee their immunity from being smeared? Would all your advices and instructions be of any use in the face of all this? The radio and the television with their loose programmes are the thieves within the home—stealing religion and morality. Can you prevent your family from listening to them? Or, could you force the station to alter its programmes.

The term social life can be interpreted to mean the various entertainment opportunities, parties, dances, outings, formal dinners and other so-called niceties in which one can become involved, including also the circle of friends and acquaintances amongst whom one circulates. This however is a very narrow view of the term and excludes too many vital factors. It will certainly be more embracing if one is to interpret the term to mean; the way one interacts with his family and society. As it is the social life of a Muslim, and not just anyone, that is under discussion, attention must be paid to the response of this person with the commands of Almighty Allah and the practices of Muhammad (s.a.a.w.s.) As a Muslim is a follower of the religion of Islam, it invariably follows that he will have a definite and prescribed way of life, for Islam is not merely a collection of prayers and rituals but the best code of life as prescribed by He who knows Almighty Allah and as exemplified by the noble Prophet Muhammad. Before proceeding further it is prudent that one observes what is meant by the word 'Muslim.'

A Muslim is one who submits himself to the will of Almighty Allah. One who suppresses his contrary desires, deeds and thoughts in favour of the will of Almighty Allah; not by coercion but on his own volition. Such a person is a Muslim.

The social life of a Muslim should always reflect the highest standards of morality. Abul Ala Maududi puts it this way:

"The moral (+social) life of a Muslim will always be filled with piety, righteousness and truthfulness. He will live in the world with the belief that God alone is the Master of all, that whatever he and other men possess has been given by God, that the powers he wields are only a trust from God, that the freedom he has been endowed with is not to be used indiscriminately and that it is in his own interest to use it in accordance with God's will. He will constantly keep in view that one day he will have to return to his Lord and submit an account of his entire life. The sense of accountability will always remain firmly implanted in his mind and he will never behave in a carefree and irresponsible way."

The Islamic way of life is comprised of a number of rights and obligations. Generally Islamic law imposes upon every

SOCIAL LIFE WITHIN ISLAM

Sheriff Mohammed

human, four kinds: —

- (i) *The rights of God — which every man is obliged to fulfil;*
- (ii) *man's own rights upon himself;*
- (iii) *the rights of the people over him and*
- (iv) *the rights of those powers and resources which God has placed in his service and empowered him to use for his own benefits.¹*

To fulfil the rights of God in our way of life a Muslim must have implicit faith in Almighty Allah and acknowledge Him alone as God. He must obey unquestioningly Allah's commands (as stated in the Qur'an) and must offer his Salaat (prayer) to Him regularly.

To fulfil the rights upon himself a Muslim must not destroy, maim or injure the body given to him by Almighty Allah by consuming alcoholic beverages, haram (forbidden) foods and drugs, nor must he sully his mind and spirit by evil thoughts and desires.

The Islamic code ensures that a Muslim must honour his obligation to his fellowmen. It has forbidden the telling of a lie in every form and shape, as it causes harm to other people and soon becomes a menace to society. It has forbidden theft, robbery, forgery, bribery, cheating, usury or interest for the simple reason that whatever is gained by these means is obtained by causing loss and injury to his human brethren. Backbiting, slandering and news-carrying have been forbidden. The Holy Quran likens these acts to the eating of the flesh of a Muslim brother. Gambling, lottery, raffles and other games of chance are also prohibited for

again one person will gain at the expense of thousands who lose. Also prohibited are hoarding, black-marketing and monopoly. Murder, violence, the spreading of mischief, disorder and wanton destruction have been made crimes, for no one has the right over others' lives or property merely for personal gain or gratification. Fornication, adultery and unnatural sexual indulgences have been strictly prohibited. These sexual crimes not only mar the morality and ruin the health of the perpetrator but spread corruption and immorality in society, unleash cycles of venereal diseases, threaten public health, debase the health and morals of the succeeding generation, upset the relations between man and man and shatter the cultural and social fabric of the society. The Islamic code of life, if followed strictly, will eliminate every aspect of those loathsome and detestable crimes.

Why has Islam imposed so many safeguards and rules? Is it merely to suppress the natural body urges in him? No. These restrictions have been imposed so that the rights and privileges of the other members of the society will not be violated and trampled upon, but will be held as sacred by all. However, the social code offered by Islam does not only seek to protect the rights of others but strongly advocates that co-operation, mutual relationship and the establishment of social institutions should be given due prominence in order that an ideal society is created.

By far the most important social institution in any society is the family. The general decline of Islamic living in the Trinidad Muslim society can be attributed to a great extent to the abandonment of vital roles by the family. The Muslim family structure has been caught in the rapid social change that has engulfed this nation, has been strangled by the norms and mores of western culture which is so opposite to our own and has been further weakened by an education system that lays insufficient stress on moral education and spiritual development.

* * *

*Abridged text of paper delivered at the preliminary meeting of the Muslim Teachers' Association held at ASJA Girls College, San Fernando, December 1975. The Association is still to be activated, in sha Allah.

1. Towards Understanding Islam. p. 16.

After the family and its connections, come man's relations with his friends, neighbours and dwellers of his locality. This will obviously include non-Muslims. Muslims are enjoined to treat all honestly, truthfully, equitably and courteously. Muslims should constantly take care of others' feelings, avoid abusive and indecent language, assist each other, attend to the sick, assist the destitute, the needy and the crippled, sympathise with the trouble stricken and help the unemployed to gain employment. Islam says that if God has bestowed riches and wealth upon you, then do not squander it on luxurious frivolities.

Maududi says: "What Islam totally disapproves of is conceited self-centredness which neglects the welfare and well-being of others and gives birth to an exaggerated individualism. It wants that the entire human society should prosper and not merely a few isolated individuals."

It is a historical and society tragedy that so many of our Muslim brethren possess a mentality that elevates cultural imitation. What is needed now is a complete re-orientation to an Islamic social framework. The time is now and the place to start should be in the homes and schools. However, it must not start and end there. Every conscientious Muslim should contribute towards such a noble venture in society as a whole.

When one can greet one's friends with Assalaamu Alaikum regardless of those around or refuse an alcoholic beverage regardless of the circumstances or maintain our Islamic apparel despite the latest styles, or refuse to participate in any activity that is un-Islamic but otherwise 'acceptable' in the society, then can one have an indication that one is on the road to a social life compatible with the principles of Islam.

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Continued from page 7

A friend of yours is ill or circumstances put you in difficult straits and you have to ask for a loan. Can you force people to give you a loan without interest? Such examples are many. They may be worse and even more bitter.

What then is left of individualistic religion? All that is left is the clogging of the ears, the closing of the eyes—as ostriches do—and contentment with humiliation which leads the afflicted one into hell. When he is asked about what he did, he would reply in unison with the disgraced group:

*"We were weak and oppressed
in the land."*

The Qur'an 4:97

**Love and support only to
those who work together**

Meanwhile, it is left for the guides and the preachers to spend time talking about the things that invalidate Wudu and spoil the Fast, about the uses of the tooth-stick and the prayers over food and the marriage ceremony. They would keep

on repeating these manner of things until it becomes one of the best ways of making worshippers fall asleep and boring listeners. They would enter knowingly or unknowingly the group whom Allah mentions:

"And (remember) when Allah laid a charge on those who had received the Scripture He said, You are to expound it to mankind and not hide it. But they flung it behind their backs and bought thereby a little gain. Verily, evil is that which they have gained thereby."

The Qur'an 3:187

Here lies the danger of individualistic religion and the necessity for collective, co-ordinated action, in spite of hindrances on the road and conspiracies against such action. Therefore it is not surprising that Allah should grant His love to those who join together to work in His cause:

"Surely Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as if they were a solid structure."

The Qur'an 61:4

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FANTASIES and FACTS

Woman in Islam, B. Aisha Lemu & Fatima Heeren, *Islamic Council of Europe*, 1976/1396 A.H. 51 pp.

Partly because of ignorance of the status of woman in Islam, a rash of complexes have developed both among Muslims and non-Muslims which do nothing to unite the Muslim nation into a dynamic whole or pave the way for some beneficial interaction. Because western society is based on the premise of unlimited individual freedom (amounting to licence), lack of responsibility to the Creator, and materialistic goals, women have to battle with men for their sustenance. Looked upon as an evil menace to mankind at times, they are abused, frequently misused and forced to abandon their real nature and, consequently, their real roles in society.

The contrast between Muslim and western society is one of the themes in a book entitled "Woman in Islam" which is made up of two papers delivered by B. Aisha Lemu and Fatima Heeren (of English and German origin respectively) at the recent International Conference in London. The papers had to be limited in scope. Nonetheless, not only do Sisters Lemu and Heeren trounce western critics, but they also blaze a clear path through the brambles of ridicule cast over women in today's world.

In her contribution, Sister Lemu leaves little ground for argument about the status of the Muslim woman. She covers the main aspects of her social function and points out very good reasons behind the Islamic legal framework. Drawing upon the Qur'an and H²dith, she establishes convincingly that the Muslim woman is not the enslaved, bird-brained or stupid creature which some western folk think her to be. She attributes some of the allegations levelled against Islam to deliberate fantasy on the part of the west which "as long as we recognise it as such, it is a pleasant form of escapism".

She sets out different areas in which the Muslim woman plays a significant role and the position which she attained as a result of Islam. Muslim women, she suggests, can regain this position if they apply themselves to the challenge. By her magnificent use of language and simplicity of expression, Sister Lemu shows her awareness of current affairs, Islamic demands pertaining to males and females, and the probable effect of proper educational facilities for Muslim women on present-day Muslim society. Indirectly, she points out one of the major causes of the present state of Muslim decadence—the lack of facilities for the education of Muslim women. Her contribution serves as a yardstick for the measurement of our response to the command of the Prophet, may Allah bless him: "The search for

Books

knowledge is a duty for every Muslim (male and female)."

The arrangement of the booklet is commendable, since it places the general discussion of Sister Lemu before the more detailed presentation of Sister Heeren on "Family Life in Islam". Sister Heeren speaks from a personal standpoint heavily reinforced by Qur'anic quotations. Her clear insights into Islamic family life are valuable for anyone contemplating marriage or experiencing marriage troubles. Against the background of the social trends sweeping western countries, she places the Islamic family structure as the only effective barrier against the destructive tide of so-called "enlightened philosophy" which threatens to "uproot what has been implanted into human nature from time immemorial".

Commenting that law alone does not guarantee a healthy and happy family life, she notes that a great deal depends upon "the goodwill of all concerned" and that "the best laws remain written phrases where this goodwill is missing".

She ties in the concept of Islam being a way of life with the overall working of the Islamic marriage and the unity of the Muslim family in such a way as to provide a better understanding of marriage not only to non-Muslims but to Muslims also. The role of the family is beautifully discussed under four aspects:

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1. Family life as a cradle of human society providing a secure, healthy and encouraging home for parents and growing children;
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4. Family life as the most secure refuge against inward and outward troubles.

The rest of the paper is dedicated to the detailed explanation of each of these four principles and it makes excellent reading. Her comments on the advantages of the extended family, which Islam encourages, are eye-openers for all who believe in the "dog-eat-dog" principle of living so common in present-day society. She also outlines four phases through which a Muslim wife can educate her children Islamically and enable them to live a conscious Islamic life.

This book is definitely a need fulfilled. It is a must for every Muslim home and every Muslim, male or female.

Muhammad Sayyid

NON-STARTERS

Lessons in Islamic Theology, Part I,
Waffie Mohammed, undated, 27 pp.

The New Arabic Qaida, Waffie
Mohammed, A Rabita-ASJA pub-
lication, 1976, 16 pp.

To survive and survive vigorously, every community and every generation in that community needs to cultivate the pursuit of knowledge and the habit of enquiry and research on its own. An excessive dependence on 'imported' personnel and resources encourages mere imitation and suppresses creativity. Each community needs to produce its own teachers, doctors, scientists and its own writers if it is to grasp the assertion that "only that knowledge which is lived is truly useful".

In this context, the efforts by Waffie Mohammed—"Research Scholar University of Karachi, Resident Tutor & Missionary for Rabita Alami Islami (sic) and ASJA Inc."—to produce some writings on Islam are worthy of commendation. But this is as far as the plaudits can go. His two recent pamphlets—"Lessons in Islamic Theology" and "The New Arabic Qaida"—bear all the stamps of

indecent haste and several other shortcomings. Moreover, they cover ground which is infinitely much better covered in other works. Both publications, frankly speaking, are non-starters.

So far as the 'Qaida' is concerned, the writing of the Arabic script can be much improved. For the beginner at least it can be bigger. There are a few grammatical and spelling mistakes in the Arabic and there are too many errors in the short introduction, errors of spelling, grammar and transliteration; there is also an instance of 'malapropism' where the word 'included' is used where obviously the writer meant 'deluded'.

In 'Lessons in Islamic Theology' all sorts of mistakes abound so much so that on every page almost there is one, and on some pages there are several. To point them out and comment on them would probably require a separate pamphlet. It should suffice here to list some of the categories of mistakes occurring and give some instances.

1. Spelling Mistakes:
'resistence' for resistance (p.8);
'exempler' for exemplar (p.15);
'circumbulate' for circumambulate (p.22); 'permissable' for permissible (passim).
2. Wrong use of words, phrases, and abbreviations:
'c.f.' (meaning compare) for see (p.8); 'logical' for analogical (p.12); 'Restraint from urination in stagnant water.' (p.18). The writer probably meant 'Refraining'.
3. Faulty sentence construction:
'Water which can be used for obtaining cleanliness includes...if clean water is mixed with a little perfume, it can be used for obtaining cleanliness.'
4. Clumsy style, leading to ambiguity:
'A bath has to be taken before Salaat can be performed in the following cases...' The phrase 'in the following cases' should have been put after the word 'taken'. As it is the word arrangement in the pamphlet is hilarious.
5. 'Non-sequiturs':
See p.8 and the 'reasons' given for the Qur'an being 'the only book which enjoys the status of being the Sacred Book of the Muslims'.
6. Faulty and inconsistent transliteration from the Arabic:
'Muaqqidah' (p.14) and 'Muqqidah' (p.15) for Mu'akkadah;
'Mutawattir' for 'Mutawatir' (p.16);
'Tayamum' and 'Tayammum' (p.26)
7. Inconsistent translation from the Qur'an:
'Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and all those in authority over you.' (p.3)

'...obey Allah and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority.' (p.11).

8. Questionable definitions:

'Ijmah ul Ummah i.e. unanimous opinion' (p.10). The first word should be transliterated Ijma'. Ijma' is usually rendered as 'consensus'. Consensus does not mean unanimity.

9. Errors of fact:

'Rasulullah only wanted the Muslims to give importance to the Qur'anic injunctions concerning Wudu.' It is really difficult to understand what this statement means.

10. Historical distortions:

'After the passing away of the Holy Prophet ... the companions did not experience much difficulties in projecting Islam as the complete way of life.' (p.3) What about the Ridda wars etc.?

The list can be added to and some other aspects of the pamphlet need to be discussed. However, attention will be drawn only to one further matter relating to the question of the authenticity of Hadith literature. Some of the statements made, seem to encourage some doubts on this. The author apparently is not conversant with recent researches in this field. Works like 'The Sahifah of Hammam ibn Munabbih' edited by Prof. Hamidullah and 'Studies in Early Hadith Literature' by Dr. Azmi should help to set the record straight. It is not true to say for example that Hadith were not written down in the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

One parting remark: any aspiring writer needs to be aware of the seriousness and the hazards of "getting into print" and it is advisable not to rush into it especially considering the hallowed nature of some of the ground being covered. What is done in print cannot easily be undone. The writer of the pamphlets under review needs to spend far more time on his manuscripts and adopt some stringent methods of quality control before his other works—and we hope there would be more for the sake of our growing community—see the light of day.

Abdul Wahid Hamid

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