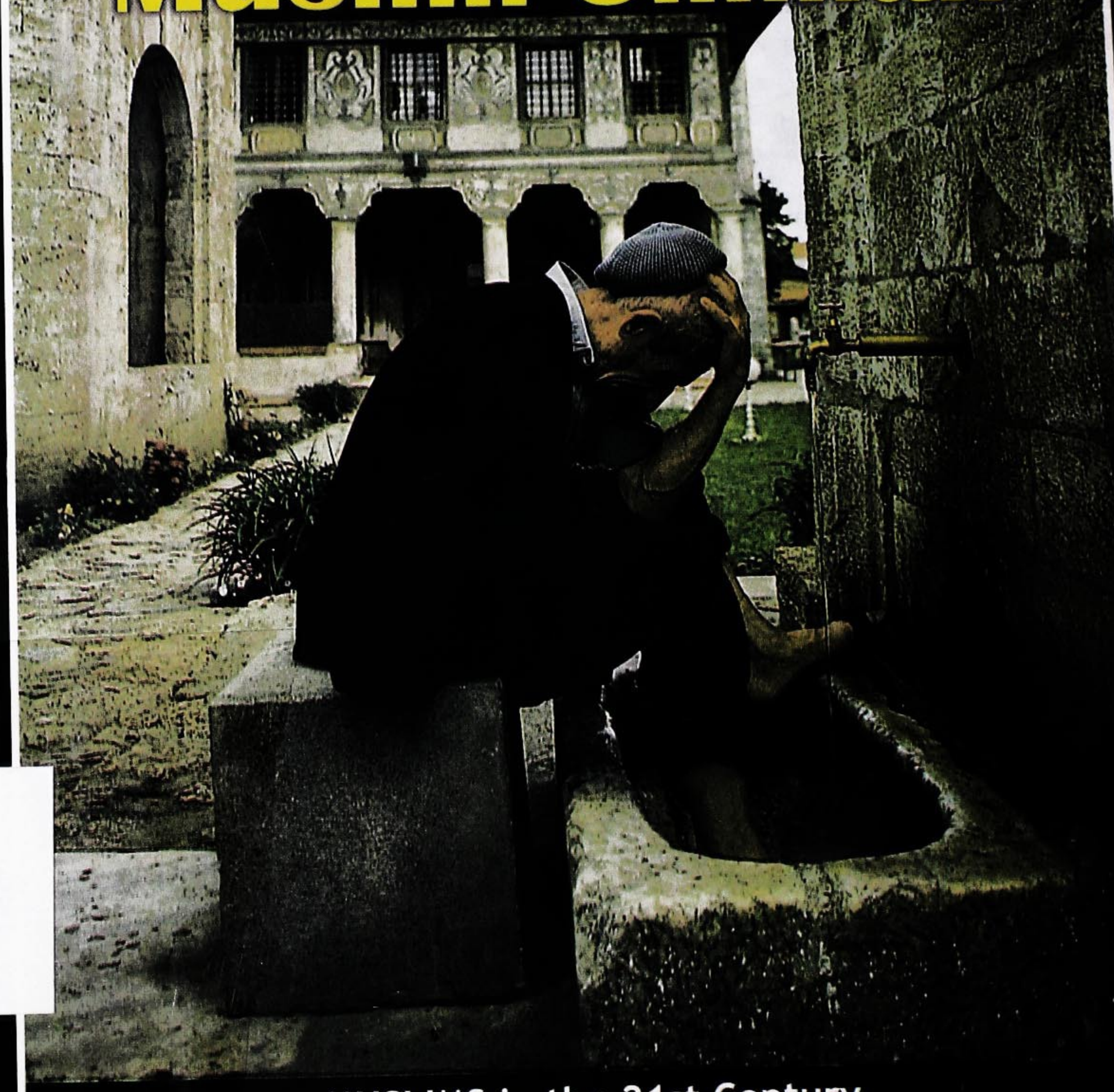
IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

The Decline of the Muslim Ummah



MUSLIMS in the 21st Century

Sorrows & Sufferings

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So, when in darkness the Ummah sleeps
Where still the blind bird clings,
Let our faith, that in darkness and cold lies,
Revive with the warmth and the brightness
The life of the springtime, the life of the whole,
And, as sun to the sleeping earth, love to the soul.

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It is not in our stars
That we are underlings

A sad reflection on

THE DECLINE OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH...

IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

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Dedicated to those
WHO SERVE AND STRIVE
WHO SEEK AND SURVIVE

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Books by IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

--ISLAM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION--

--THE QURAN AND MODERNISM--
--Beyond Science and Philosophy

--TERRORISM IN ACTION:
Why blame Islam?

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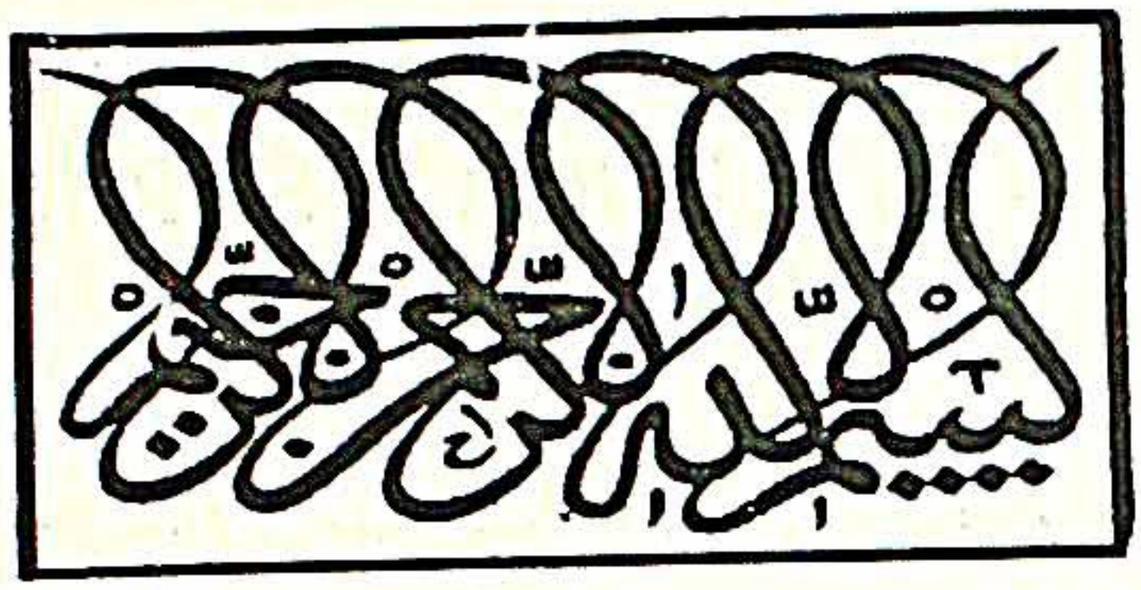
Chapter No. 1



Introduction:

STANDING UP FOR ISLAM

تیرے سینے میں ہے پوشیدہ رازِ زندگی کہہ دے
مسلماں سے حدیث سوزو سازِ زندگی کہہ دے

INTRODUCTION

STANDING UP FOR ISLAM

Muslims in modern age have become a liability to Islam and an easy target for their enemies.

Writing a book on the destiny of nations, especially when they are passing through a phase of decline, is a matter of great concern and anguish. I have had to undergo this distress while browsing over the factors, which led to the present state of paralysis of the Muslim ummah. This appeared to me as if I had personally lost the Mogul Empire and entered into a phase of mental and spiritual servitude. The decline was continual and the denial was scandalous. The history was coming to an end and I was the sole witness to the saga of anguish and pain, despair and desperation.

I feel, in the words of Wittgenstein, like a person caught in a philosophical despair, or like a man in a room who does not know how to get out. He tries the window, but it is too high. He tries the chimney, but it is too narrow. And if he would only turn around, he would see that the door has been open all the time.

In trying to diagnose the disease I have discovered a variety of ailments, some of them serious and some of them fatal, which I would like to discuss with the readers. In trying to understand the

forces, which inhibit the pace of progress and perpetuate the process of decline the most serious are the lack of education, lack of faith, corruption and moral bankruptcy. The understanding of the negative forces has led me to a juncture--the milieu of thinkers and reformers, purporting to put me on the track that has never been soft and smooth. It has provided me with concern to meditate on the varying phases of human history where Muslims rose and faltered. It gave me an opportunity to look into their achievements and failures, dreams and aspirations.

Stopping the wheel of change and creating barriers against socio-economic advance and intellectual enlightenment have been the main stumbling blocks on way to progress and advancement. Change and creativity, as a source of growth, is imperative for internal and external refinement, consummation of life and human perfection. While the world has been moving from one stage of progress to another, Muslims have been stagnant and sterile. They have been living in the cobweb of a spider without learning from it the techniques of survival and sustenance. This is the crude awakening, the sad reflection on the overall pattern of Muslim life across the world.

In this book I have tried to bring the Muslims out of their self-imposed confinement and to propose remedies whereby some maladies may be cured. But cure will not be possible unless serious efforts are made and the pall of stupor and lethargy is shattered.

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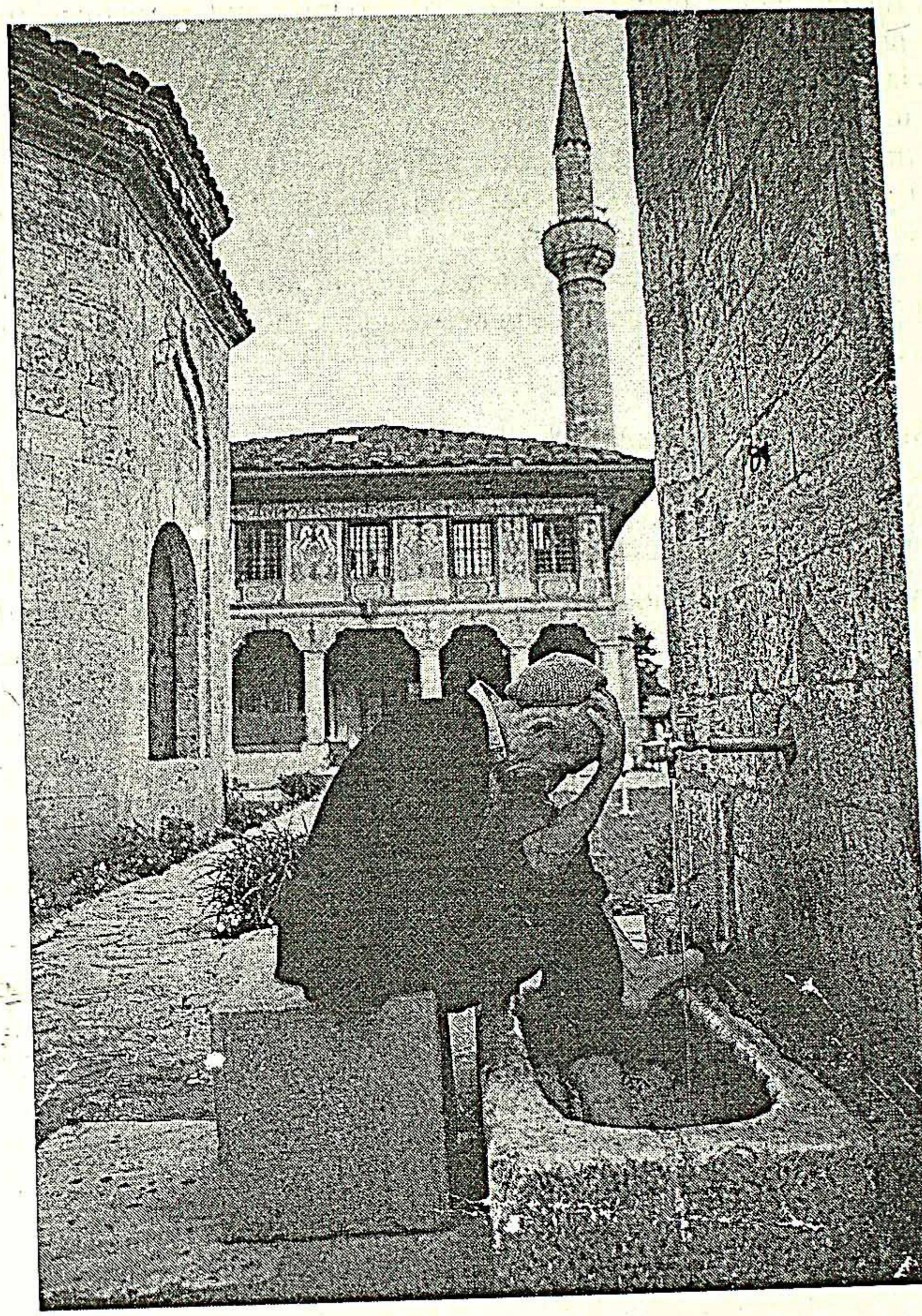

A crude Awakening
A sad Reflection

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At the same time I have tried to confront the challenges, which have been caused by the western colonial policies and the recent US attacks on the Muslim world, especially on Iraq and Afghanistan. These onslaughts have had a disastrous effect on the momentum of thought and action in Muslim states. The major perplexity facing the Muslims is the terrible effect that such events produce on our psyche and make our minds reel. The major challenge is how to thwart their evil effects and reverse the process that stings.

A study of the past thousand years reveals that there has been a steady decline in the process of creative thought and productive perception among the Muslims. Even today if you visit any Arab country, you will see people sitting in the streets around cups of tea, playing cards and other nasty games all through the day. They have plenty of time but nothing to do. The energies are frittered away so quickly and unproductively, that nothing except decay and disintegration are the emerging facets of their environs. The Islamic history and its heritage seem to have had no effect on the character of these people. While in the earlier phases Islam was distinguished by creative activities and dynamic spirit, today we have nothing but decadent remnants of a glorious past.

Gibbon describes the rise and expansion of the Muslim world as one of the wonders of the world history. He explains in a very short period of fifty years Islam expanded far beyond its original borders and left a lasting imprint on the nations of the world. Islam eventually turned out to be a great force, wielding its scepter of authority over a world greater than of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome, and that in a very short period. This was the faith, the courage, and creative thought and action that inspired the followers of Islam to accomplish the highest ideals of life.

But over the subsequent years the glaring discrepancy between thought and action, between faith and practice led not only to the tottering of the Islamic empires, but also to the decay and disintegration, which continues till today. Muslims divorced of the essential ingredients of Islamic education are reduced to the barren remnants devoid of creativity and dynamism. The people who had paved way for the Renaissance in Europe became themselves the targets of decadence and decay.. These are some of the agonies that concern us in this book.

Muslims today neither think, nor deploy their intellectual and physical resources for any progress in this world. Past history is not a subject of interest to them, nor are the sciences and scriptural injunctions a source of learning for them. Although the Quran, the holy book, admonishes them to think and ponder over the signs of God, but they turn deaf ears to its advice. Except occasional reading of the Quran without understanding its meanings and manifestations they do not turn to it for light and illumination.

In the Quran God has given the Muslims clear indications of the way the natural laws operate and the principles that determine the course of human life. He has warned them that the eventual outcome of deviation from the divine injunctions is nothing but decline and destruction.

But Muslims entrapped in ignorance and passivity remain devious and ignore the message of the Quran. They have no sense of direction they have to move and they have no understanding of the purpose of life they are supposed to fulfill. The progressive and transformative power of the message has had no effect on remolding the pattern of their thought and reshaping the contours of their destiny. This is the greatest tragedy that we as Muslims face today.

Sheykh Al-Ghazali, a contemporary Muslim scholar of Egypt, observes that 'faith can never be upheld or promoted by imbeciles or lethargic people. ***Muslims only have become a liability to Islam and an easy target for their enemies. Since they lost their enthusiasm for life and ardour for success and achievement".***

Rational, profound thinking, whether undertaken individually or collectively, is an essential requirement for the understanding of Islam. The Quran admonishes man to be mentally and physically alert to ponder and reflect on God's creation all around him. Mohammad (pbuh) was the harbinger of this call and the herald who came to shake the mankind into alertness and active awareness of God. *1

In this book I have tried to point out the deficiencies, which keep the Muslims oblivious of the cardinal principles and virtues that were enunciated for their improvement and elevation. Deviation from these principles keeps them backward and devoid of the inherent radiance of life.

It is the collective consciousness and a concrete plan of action, which is required to transform the fate of the ummah. The bad thing about the contemporary Muslim world is not only its apathy and lethargy, but also the loss of shame on the depth of degeneration in which it has fallen. A combination of ineptitude and inactivity, mental void and spiritual stagnation mars the pace of progress and causes a spate of disillusionment.

Muslims have been so unproductive over the past 1,000 years that they have made no tangible contributions in the grooves of sciences and learning, knowledge and technology. Their perception and plans of actions have been totally unproductive.

They have been so stale in thought and action that one wonders if they are the same creatures that God had created for His

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Vicegerency on earth. Their main activities have been the pursuit of transitory pleasures and hankering after the perfunctory sources of worldly riches. As a result they have become morally so bankrupt and physically so weak that except succumbing succinctly to the American assaults when they attacked Afghanistan and Iraq they had no other better choice.
Some observers think that the new awakening might arise from the ashes of Iraq and Afghanistan, but the prospects are very dismal in view of their continuing decline. It is a crude awakening, a sad reflection on the abysmal depth of decadence and degeneration.

When creative thought and dynamic actions are devoured by ineptitude and lethargy, feuds and strifes, how can productive forces be deployed to mould the destiny of nations? What confronts the Muslim world today is the stagnation and opposition to a meaningful change. Human rights in general are not honoured and women continue to suffer sexual discrimination. Honour killing (karokari) is the fatality that leads to debase the human society.

When more than half of the population is not allowed to exercise their rights, whose vast energies will be deployed to bring about a healthy change in society? When a number of fanatics and extremists give rise to violence and sectarian killings, then how can unity be forged among the Muslims?

In this book I have raised the issues of justice and rejuvenation, education and enlightenment, as these are among the most vital elements, which determine the contours of human societies. In the Muslim societies these factors are miserably lacking which need to be revitalized and implemented effectively. The Quran in its several passages is seriously concerned with these issues, but Muslims in spite of obvious confessions hardly pay any heed to the practical realities of life. What a contradiction and how grave is the hypocrisy?

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In this book I have traversed some of the bumpy tracts of past history, dismal as well as frightening. During this journey I have also visited a number of significant monuments, which made Islam the most vital and respectable religion of the world. The journey has shown me very many ugly reflexes, which made me shudder in my spines. Seeing the continuing decadence of Muslims over the past centuries gave me a feeling, which is very hard to express in words. It has been a painful and poignant journey, a journey full of bangs and bumps.

Modernism in some of its manifestations may not be acceptable to some sections of the Muslim society, but it cannot be rejected altogether as a system of life, especially when it offers some constructive ideas to add new dimensions to life. This book explains how modernism with the underlying currents of knowledge and research, science and technology can help Muslims evolve a system of creative thinking and productive living. For Muslims like any other nation in the world it is hardly conceivable to exist in an intellectual and scientific void. Modern knowledge may not be able to resolve all the complexities of human life, but still it provides a variety of stimulants to foster the complicated forms of social and economic development. This is the reality of modern life, which has to be met boldly and squarely. Islam demands the affirmation of spiritual self, recognizing the conjunction of the ideal with the real. Islam does not reject the world of matter; on the other hand, it shows the ways to master it. The book is produced to illustrate as how the dynamics of life can be imbued with the ways of spirituality to canalize the productive forces into creative channels. This is the essence of the book.

Another problem, which may confront us in this book, is the 9/11 incident, which has been given a crude version to damage the interests of Islam. Without establishing any concrete evidence the Americans launched a series of brutal attacks in

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which thousands of Muslims have been killed and symbols of Islamic culture destroyed. At the same time a heinous propaganda campaign has been launched to promote the clash of civilizations in which the obvious target is Islam and its followers. The áuthor in this book as well as in his previous publications has made it abundantly clear that Islam has nothing to do with violence and terrorism.

The Quran condemns the killing of human beings and makes it clear that ***if you kill a person, you kill the whole mankind. Turning to God in Islam means turning to humanity.****2 Now the question is how sincerely we turn to God and how much we care for humanity. At a time when decadence has become a persistent phenomenon of the Muslim world, **can we stand up for ISLAM**, can we vouchsafe the message that is cardinal to the philosophy of our religion, can we really contribute when stagnation and depletion are the normal course, will be the burning issues, the challenges bestirring our conscience in the course of browsing through this book.

We have to cultivate in the world the pastures that may be green and fertile, full of flowers and colours, blooming and radiating the flushing meadows all around us. Only green colours on our flags will not suffice. Misconceptions and phobias should not be allowed to turn our attention from the realities of life and usurp our attention from the viability of transformation.

Although in the present emotion-ridden environments it is very difficult to make objective assessment, yet as players we must use all this intelligently and collectively, if we are to effect changes in human society and work for the welfare of the community.

We have to create the avenues of understanding and cooperation to build up a correct image of Islam, so that the religion is extricated from the pathos of disrepute and neglect.

The Quranic injunctions and the Prophet's traditions form the basis of this book. Without being distracted by the secular and spiritual dialectic the author has tried to adopt a balanced course, which is the demand of Islam and the dictum of the modern age. The Quran exhorts: "Don't be led by your passions, lest you swerve from the path of truth (and justice)". *3

The book shows how wrong the fanatics are when they use the Quran and Islam to distort the real spirit and vindicate their own ideological and political doctrines.

I have tried to make it clear that both terrorism and neo-con policies are undesirable and cannot be deployed for resolving the conflicts and complexities of modern age. The Muslim world largely infected with ignorance and lack of enlightenment has to shed off its illusions and distortions from their collective consciousness. This is how through these deficiencies the Muslims have fallen into the pit of ignorance and decadence. The void is deep and cannot be filled unless a thorough shake-up is given to the whole complex of intellectual, physical and psychological paraphernalia. An analytical approach has been adopted in the book to explore the root causes of varying phenomena and propose appropriate remedies.

The unity of the ummah, among others, is the underlying theme of the book, which has to be addressed brushing aside the polemics, which disturb the pattern of smooth and harmonious thinking and action. It is only by breaking the barriers of ignorance and passivity that we can move towards the goals, which remain, obscured under the debris of confusion and distortions, orthodoxy and intolerance.

Echoing the call of the Quran this book intends to denounce those who create hatred and antagonism among various sections of humankind. This clear warning of the Quran needs to be brought home to everyone who kill and terrorize to create

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sectarian strifes and clashes of fundamentalisms and civilizations.

In this book we have also gone in search of Mard-I-Momin or the perfect man as conceived by the Quran and propounded by Maulana Rumi and the poet-philosopher Mohammed Iqbal.
But finding such a man especially among the existing Muslims will be the most arduous job and almost a futile exercise. The perfect man amongst the Muslims does not exist; it is the rarest commodity as the whole ummah is fast asleep and hardly any traces of dynamism, creativity and constructive thought are found to shape such a perfect version. It is an immense groping, an immense search and a painful pursuit. But we must make the endeavor, as without having a dip into the ocean we cannot find the pearls hidden deep under its layers. For the Muslims the Mard-I-Momin must remain the summum bonum- the highest ideal, the ultimate goal.

The impelling motive is ...is an intelligent and justifiable quest or the consummation of life. This is the spirit with which, the book has been written. If it succeeds in bringing the Muslims a step nearer to this goal, then this will have served its purpose, and the author will have gone a long way towards accomplishing the objective that he had set in the beginning.

This will be the most satisfying job, which may also have merited some of God's blessings that rarely descend these days upon people like us. Perhaps, I may be able to share the joy of the following couplet that von Goethe wrote so beautifully:

"If with calm, and unabated,
Faithfully the state you serve,
Know! You shall by none be hated,
*Love from many shall deserve."; *4*

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I cannot be more honest than what I have said. This is the truth and the beauty of truth lies in imbibing and applying it. 'I am happy with my pen that has gleaned my brain'. And again with Keats I may submit:

"***Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all***
You know on earth, and all ye need to know".

It is for the readers now to judge and appreciate the task that lies ahead—a task that is huge and multi-dimensional, a task that needs to be done, and an ideal that needs to be accomplished.

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*`1: Shaekh al-Ghazali: A Thematic Commentary of the Qur'an.
*2. Islam & Western Civilization.
The Qur'an & Modernism
Terrorism in Action: Why blame Islam?
*3. The Qur'an: 4:135.
*4: von Goethe: West-Eastern Divan
(Wenn du nuetzlich und gelassen
So dem Staate treu geblieben,
Wisse! Niemand wird dich hassen
Und dich werden viele lieben.)

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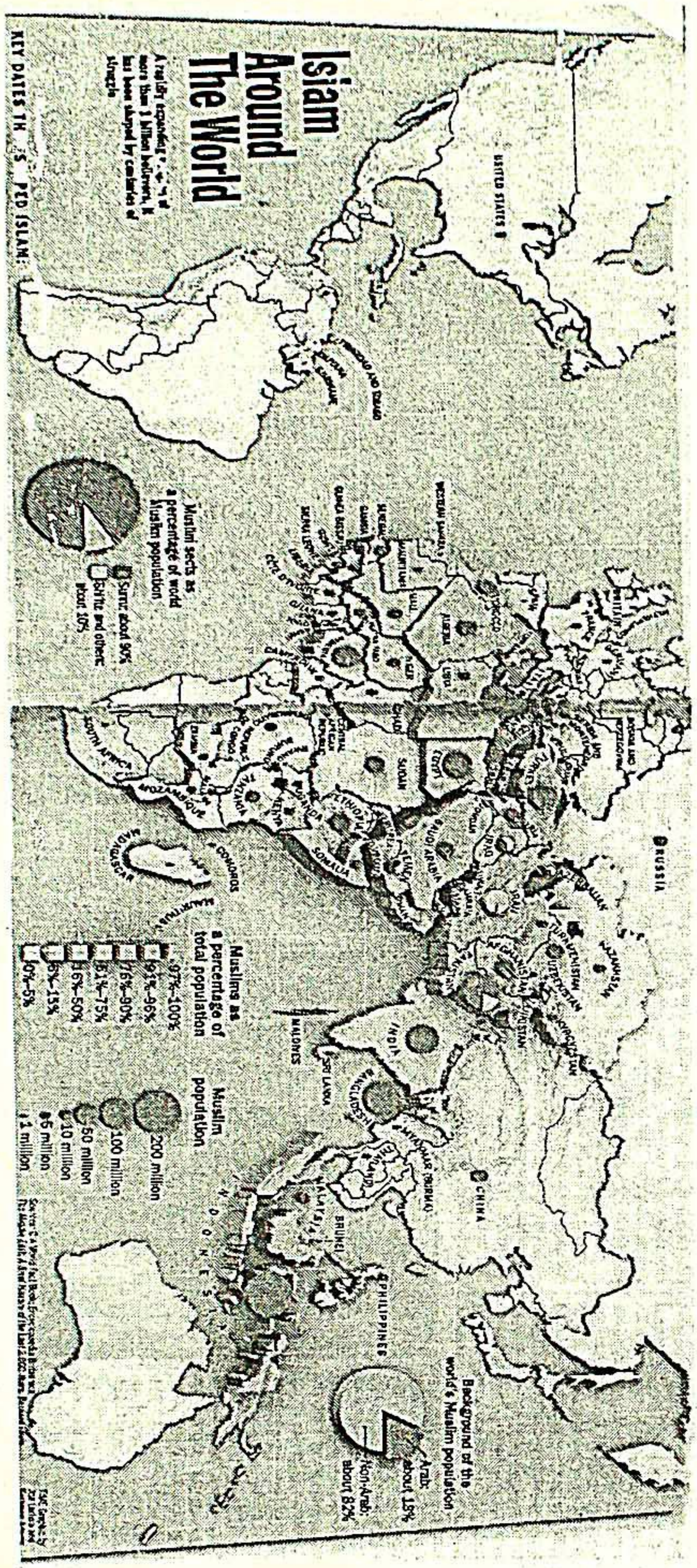
Islam Around The World
KEY DATES TH
ES PED ISLAM
RUSSIA
CHINA
INDIA
Muslims as a percentage of total population
97%-100%
91%-96%
76%-90%
51%-75%
16%-50%
5%-15%
0%-5%
Muslim population
200 million
100 million
50 million
10 million
6 million
1 million
Background of the world's Muslim population
Arab: about 18%
Non-Arab: about 82%

Chapter No. 2

Where is the Ummah?

So, when in darkness the Ummah sleeps
Where still the blind bird clings,
Let our faith, that in darkness and cold lies,
Revive with the warmth and the brightness
The life of the springtime, the life of the whole,
And, as sun to the sleeping earth, love to the soul.

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A Diagnosis for Recovery

Where is the Ummah?

The idea of a united Muslim ummah was a brilliant concept given by Islam for rejuvenating the dormant segments of society and consolidating the resources into an integrated, compact form. Such a united move was imperative not only for assimilating national and political affiliations on a single platform, but also for liberating the individuals from vested self-interests and parochial perceptions. The idea was inspiring especially at a time when the Arab society was segregated by tribal rivalries, domestic feuds and inter-regional assaults. By eliminating aggressive and exploitative tendencies this kind of communal harmony could produce a cohesive, creative precept for a successful strategy. This was a correct diagnosis made for the maladies afflicting the sinews of a diseased society.

The pre-Islamic society, which was utterly decadent and ignorant, could not be endowed with a better precept than this one. A system of this kind was not to be found in other cultures or religions. Hinduism, for instance, in India was divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes with pernicious perceptions and damaging contamination.

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Islam did not only give the idea of an ummah based on noble notions, but also raised the status of an individual, irrespective of their caste, colour and creed. It at the same time restored dignity to entire humanity and paved way for an integral form of existence for all human beings. Dignity of man was restored not only in terms of their status in society, but also in terms of security and sanctity. The Quran declared, "if you kill a man, you kill the whole mankind". Nothing could be a more comprehensive and concise injunction than this positive declaration.

The concept was so beautiful that just by a stroke of its practical implementation all the animosities, hatreds and rivalries were drowned in the stream of peace and cordiality. When the Meccan Muslims migrated to Medina all the coffers of generosity were opened for them. Their Muslim brethren in Medina were ready to embrace them with all possible reserves, material and moral, at their disposal. This was the spirit of love and compassion, which Islam had given to its adherents. This was the spirit, which emancipated the unlettered, unsophisticated Arabs from the clutches of ignorance and arrogance, dogmas and degradation.

At the same time the decadent traditions attached to stereotype social structures and egocentric culture were also removed to be replaced by brotherhood, sacrifice and altruism. These were the qualities, which were being imbibed slowly and gradually by the newly emerging ummah of the Muslims.

The ummah in the meantime had assumed the dimensions, which could be the envy of other societies and cultures. Based on the principle of brotherhood, equality and justice the society had already been liberated from the bonds of slavery and superstition, exploitation and degradation. This was the society which the Quran commended as "the best community established for men".

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The Unity of God and dignity of man were the essential foundations on which the Islamic state in Medina was established. The concept of Islamic culture conceived as a unifying force was the underlying idea conforming to the needs of an evolving society. "Before the rise of Islam the overall complexion of human society both in the East and West was not very encouraging. Moral, social and theological environments were polluted and human values hardly had any imprint on the fabric of society. Coercion and compulsion were the main determinants of social structures. The conditions in the West were even worse when viewed from global and regional perspectives. There were no lawgivers, no philosophers and no scholars", as W. Draper says in one of his lectures.

The ummah as conceived and developed by the guidelines under the instructions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had become an ideal society full of virtues and qualities for an equitable, just and humane order. Almost all the acts of treachery, corruption, lewdness and misappropriation were abolished and a spirit was infused which ensured harmony and amity in society. Islamic society was not an egocentric entity; it composed of amiable and peace loving individuals who were devoted to their cause and dedicated to the purpose of life.

For the betterment of collective welfare the rights of individuals as citizens of state and members of society were profoundly proclaimed to be cardinal. Anyone who deviated from these principles abrogated the right of being an honorable member of the ummah. The Prophet declared "none of you is a believer if he does not like for his brother exactly that which he likes for his own self".

So was the spirit of sacrifice and dedication, which distinguished the Muslim society from others. Corruption, criminality and

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killing of innocent people were not the attributes of the ummah, which the Quran conceived, and the Prophet evolved. Such a society was accorded the highest accolade of being the 'best of all nations'.

An Islamic society was a healthy combination of religious injunctions, socio-economic reforms and administrative measures. Social and economic justice, tolerance and charity were the main features of this society.

The Islamic order eradicated all sorts of artificial distinctions to debase and distort the equitable pattern of Muslim society. It was the dignity of man that formed the integral part of this system. The only criteria on which some persons may be regarded better than others were the accomplishments of piety and righteousness. These criteria eliminated all the false notions of superiority, which were based on creeds, castes and tribal distinctions.

The Jews, the Hindus and other denominations had created for themselves specific grades through which they attempted to distinguish themselves from others. This came to contaminate the social organisms for further lowering the grades of unprivileged masses. For whites the non-whites and for Brahmins the non-Brahmins with their indigenous patterns and traditions were the people of inferior stock.

Piety: the main criterion

The only distinction that Islam established was that of moral excellence and piety. All other grounds were baseless and irrelevant. The Holy Prophet (pbuh), on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage, declared:

"O People be aware, your God is one.

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No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, and no non-Arab any excellence over an Arab and no white has any superiority over a black one and no black over a white one except on the basis of taqva (piety).
The most honorable among you in the Sight of Allah is the one who is the most pious and righteous of you". (Baihaqi)

The Prophet further added:
"Let the people give up boasting (and pride) of their ancestors, otherwise, they will stand degraded than a mean insect in the Sight of Allah". (Bazzar).

Good deeds are the sole criteria on which is determined the grade of a man in the court of God. The Quran declares: "And give good tidings (O, Muhammad) to those who believe and do good works, that for them are the gardens, beneath which flow the rivers". (2:25).

So such were the qualities, which shaped the character of, a Muslim and which formed the destiny of the ummah. All members of the community, both men and women, formed a beautiful bouquet of the Muslim ummah. The Prophet declared that God had removed from mankind the blemish of ignorance and the pride of birth. There are but two classes of men: those who are righteous, God-fearing and honorable in the eyes of God, and those who are wicked and sinful and dishonorable in His eyes. Since collectivism occupies a special position in Islam, the Quran, as a holy book, is addressed to the whole community. "Surely, this Quran (O, Muhammad) is a book of guidance for you and your community (Ummah).

The Canadian Orientalist, Wilfred Smith, acknowledging these facts, says: "The community (ummah) occupies an important position in Islam. It is well known that Muslim society has a

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remarkable solidarity, that the loyalty and cohesion of its members are intense, many have recognised that the community is not only a religious body, but a social group. The community is based on, as it is integrated to, individual faith. Not only is Muslim society held together by common loyalties and traditions, and by a very carefully worked out system of values and beliefs. Not only is it the product of a super ideal. It pulsates with the vitality of a conviction that is warm and meaningful for the individual member.

We may say, that this society, this community (the Ummah) is the expression of a religious ideal. As a creed or religious system may be the expression in an intellectual form of a personal faith – as often is the case particularly with the Christians—so a social order and its activities are the expression in a practiced form of a Muslim's personal faith". *1.

Iqbal, the poet of the East, says that "an individual exists only in relation to a society, left to himself he is a non-entity. A wave is a wave in the river, but outside the banks it is reduced to nothingness".

The concept of social life as preached by Islam is based on creating a sense of sympathy and unity for the community. It urges individuals to assume a lifestyle that is oriented toward meeting the collective demands of the society in preference to individual propensities. A consciousness of the needs of others, and a deep feeling for the pains of others makes a man truly religious and pious.

The tragedy of the Ummah

But the tragedy of the present Ummah is that Muslims do not take their religion seriously and do not abide by the rules and

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principles enunciated by the Islamic code of life. In the absence practical realization of the basic principles, the Muslim ummah, in fact, has ceased to exist. It has become bereft not only of the sense and direction in which it was supposed to move, but has also lost the endowments which were conferred on it as a compact, cohesive entity.

The Ummah was a concept, an ideal to realize the excellence of living both in this world and in the Hereafter. This concept must have conformed to a paradigm, which was oriented to effecting healthy changes in social, political and ethical environments. Its religious, political implications were to be understood and implemented in order to accomplish the ideals contained in its charter. But its ideals could be realized only with a sense of determination and dynamism, devotion and reflection. And unfortunately over the past thousand years these qualities have become extinct among the Muslims. Muslims are neither intellectually vibrant, nor determined or united to forge a platform for collective consciousness and constructive cohesion. Muslims are no longer interested in the guidelines of the Quran and the practical realities of the Prophet's life. Intellectually sterile and morally corrupt Muslims have reduced themselves to the lowest depths of degeneration.

As a result the Muslims are now faced with the challenges, which they find daunting stumbling blocks to dispense with. In the aftermath of 9/11 they have been exposed to the worst assaults in Afghanistan and Iraq, but disunited as they are, they failed to counter the attacks. The only thing Muslims seem to be employing with enthusiasm, rather misplaced, is the verbal condemnation without any practical action. The fabric of the Muslim life both on national and international level is so much ruptured that no constructive pattern is conceivable in near future.

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Apathy and lethargy

Under the cover of physical and psychological apathy and spiritual stupor a system of systematic negation has been allowed to nurture, which consequently causes a wave of failures and frustrations.

This is what has been happening in the Muslim world over the past centuries and this is the fate they are destined today.

On top of that the Muslims as an Ummah fail to take account of their failures and redress them with effective means. With growing apathy and lethargy they have allowed themselves to be pushed in a void of mumbling vacuity. With no sense of destiny and no meanings attached to their lives their whole pattern has become a pot-pourri of junk and jumble. This is a state of decadent culture and devalued lifestyle that prevails in Muslim countries in general and the Arab countries in particular.

Although the Muslims have been subjected to repression and aggression and forces of evil have subdued their vision and aspirations, yet the ground reality remains the lack of knowledge and inadequate preparation to face the eventualities which has given rise to the growing trend of deprivation and degradation. The ground reality is that poverty and squalor are the fate of the Muslims, while progress and prosperity bless the westerners. The question is why Muslims should be victimized and brutalized, and why the law of jungle should apply to determine their fate? The question is why they should act as sheep and buffaloes and not as strong rivals to thwart the forces of oppression?

These are some of the pertinent questions in context of present and past perspectives concerning the Muslim Ummah. Seen over the centuries, in the convulsion of nations, tyrannies are viewed

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as having overruled the state of weaker species. Machiavelli in *The Prince* is reported to have lauded the tyranny of Borgias. Many people in the days of Hitler and Mussolini were enthralled by the use of brutal force to conquer the less prepared states. In the near perspectives in our own times many people were seen to have applauded the US strikes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The truth about the Muslim and Arab world is more bitter as it suffers not only from the despicable degradation from external imperialist powers, but also from a range of psychological, and pathological deformities afflicting the avenues of creative thought and vibrant action. The ummah, drowning in the depths of decadence, appears to have lost not only the capacity to think, but also the ability to act.

Deep in deception

A recent Arab Human Development Report on the deteriorating state of decline in the Arab world shows shocking indicators-- all stagnant and severely eclipsed. With a falling rate in education, women development, investment and income-generating areas remain miserably morbid. Investment in research and development is a mere 0.5% of GDP against 2.9% in Japan, with the result that intellectual life is increasingly isolated from the

rest of the world. Internet use is abysmally low and the "brain drain" to non-Arab countries is high. The most miserable aspect of the report is the revelation that the Arab countries over the past 1,000 years have produced or translated as many books as one single European country (Spain) has done in one year.

The underlying message of the report is clear. While external imperialist threats have grown in recent years, the fundamental destructive forces are seen to be operating within their own domestic environments.

The basic threat to the Arab and Muslim states emanates equally strongly from the neglect and dissolution of internal human and material resources. Ignorance, corruption and incompetent leadership coupled with authoritarianism are among the major bottlenecks. At the same time dogmatism, fanaticism and extremism are adding to the difficulties, which are already innumerable. These difficulties are to be removed before any positive steps are taken to realize the ideals set for the ummah.

The situation is similar to that of a man who has caught the tiger by the ears. As someone said: " I know I have caught the wolf by the ears, for I know not either how to get rid of him, or keep him in restraint".
(immo id, quod aiunt, auribus tenso lupom/
Namnequequomodo a me amittam, invenio:
Uti retimean scio).

However, special efforts need to be made especially by the Muslim scholars and analysts to dig out the deficiencies and propose remedies for the resolution of these conflicting situations .In order to improve and reform the society a constructive strategy, in light of the Quran and modern realities, will have to be evolved. The virtues, which we have elaborated in the beginning of this chapter, will have to be imbibed to give the aspirations a practical shape. Islam is a religion of balanced perception, reason and

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rationality. By placing repeated stress on the faculties of "hearing and sight" the Quran creates a sense of scientific and rational inquiry for material and physical growth. The material sphere of life is as much important as the spiritual segments.

"The application of the comparative method to the Islamic intellectual heritage can be particularly fecund for the study of physics and philosophy, religion and metaphysics. The life of the ideal, says Iqbal, consists not in a total breach with the real which would tend to shatter the organic wholeness of life into painful oppositions, but in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and to illuminate its whole being".

The foundations which the Quran and the Prophet had laid down at the time of Islam's inception remain as valid today as they were in the seventh century. Only the Muslims have to rise above the transient deformities of collective apathy, ignorance and degeneration. This is how the foundation can be consolidated to lead a purposeful, productive life. This is how the whole being of the Ummah can be revitalized and illuminated.

This is the remedy the above diagnosis prescribes. I wish some Muslims hearkened the clarion call.

Reference:

*1. Wilfred Smith: "Islam in Modern History".

Chapter No. 3

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

From Renaissance to Decadence

Remembrance is the only Paradise,

From which we cannot be driven.

--Jean paul

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Leaving footprints on the sands of times...

From Renaissance to Decadence

Renaissance is the essence of the consummation of life. It is the language of the moral, material and human order that moves towards cherishing the ideals of life. By eliminating socio-economic underdevelopment it inspires new ideas and creates new vision raising the level of collective consciousness and human accomplishments. This is the concept that Islam conceived at the time of its inception and this is the path that was followed in its initial phases of reform and development. Renaissance meant growth, values and culture. It was the quintessence of civilization that improved and beautified human life. Creativity and aesthetics are the structural components of the philosophy of renaissance. The Quran and Sunnah in Islam are considered as the creative, aesthetic foundations of the faith. And when Muslims obeyed the principles of the Quran and the Sunnah faithfully, they gave the world a culture and civilization that epitomized not only the scriptural nature of the revelations, but also developed the aesthetic dimensions of human excellence.

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In order to appreciate the essence of renaissance not only the nature of the ideals has to be understood, but also the whole pattern of life has to be evolved in such a way that inherent belief in own destiny becomes a reality. The purpose of life has to be understood and a mode of ethics has to be evolved to realize the ultimaie goal of human consummation. Revelation as the exclusive source of religion serves as the main guideline to determine the destinies of nations. But at the same time the Quran was not meant exclusively for any particular tribe or community, or for any specific period or age. At the same time its teachings were oriented to effecting a change – a real change—in the decadent lives of the masses.

Prior to Islam the socio-cultural anarchism, moral and ethical depravation constituted the structural constraints on the path of reform and development. Those were the days of ignorance (al-Jahilliyah), which had given rise to a paganistic culture devoid of any human and ethical connotations.
Not to speak of aesthetics, people in those days were so brutal and clumsy that they did not hesitate even to kill their female offsprings just to satisfy their inflated notions of pride and arrogance.

The Quran gave to the world a concept that was well defined and exceedingly oriented to the requisites of the times. This was composed of reasoning and intellect, spirit and rationalism. The main focus was on "reason" or 'aql' as known in the Arabic terminology. These notions were introduced in a more distinct and lucid form to make the realities of divine creation more clear and comprehensible to man.
This was the basis of Islamic philosophy, which elucidated the structural dimensions of the evolving systems of human society.

The Quranic concept focusing on the essential features of reflection and contemplation reaches for an ideal that implies perfection and consummation.

According to theologians, reason, however, should not supersede spirit; otherwise it may lead to rebellion—rebellion against truth and rebellion against God. Man at the time of his birth was imbued with primordial nature (fitrah), but when reasoning separates the spirit from its inherent nature, then it creates a sense of dissension in which the rational power rejects subordination to the dictates of spirit. This is the beginning of the internal strife that can cause hindrances in the way of resolving the conflicting situations.

Although a broader base in modern knowledge, an amiable junction of reasoning and spirit, is becoming imperative and probably relevant to the needs of temporal and religious rationalism, yet unfortunately confusion is likely to crop up and confound the possibility of harmony and order in human thinking. "The confusion easily develops because the word 'aql' applies to both the reason and intelligence. Under these circumstances, faith and reasoning would be considered as almost hostile to one another instead of being mutually supportive. The hostility, real or fancied, between faith and reasoning, would have long-term results on the intelligibility—and even the unintelligibility – of Islamic dogmatic theology."*1

Hence, while a broader outlook and a positive *weltanschauung* (world-view) is desired in view of the growing complexity of human thought, a correct religious perspective also needs to be kept in view while seeking reasonable solutions of human problems.

The Quranic teachings are meant to eliminate the wrong notions and misperceptions, which, if allowed to pervade, will pollute the fabric of human life. It is only by combating ignorance and false perceptions that man can attain the higher ideals of life.

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Islam: a creative force

When Islam came it brought in its wake peace and harmony, order and organization. It taught how to rise above the trivial levels of materialism, and add meanings and purpose to human life. Living in peace and order is the essential prerequisite which needs to be imbibed to foster individual and collective well being. Without this ingredient neither the spiritual, nor the material needs of human life can be satisfied. This view is to be understood in context of historical and contemporary perspectives.

Both in the past and at present the underlying philosophy of Islam, as a humane, progressive precept for religious and material accomplishments has not been appreciated. Misconceptions and intellectually unsettling experiences have been propagated to deliberately distort and malign the enlightened image of Islam.

A shame, a liability

Islam used to be regarded even by the western critics as a religion of humane, progressive and enlightened thought that came to be tarnished over the past centuries by the foul and clumsy actions of its own followers. Over the period since decadence set in, Muslims deviated from the right path and polluted the pattern of Islamic thought. By doing so they were condemned not only as transgressors, but, in fact, **became a shame, and a liability for Islam.**

Gibbon, writing on the rise and fall of Islam, says that" Islam among other religions of the world can be credited for one of the most memorable revolutions which have impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the world. Beginning with a small following, ill-equipped financially, and militarily, Islam turned out eventually a mighty force, wielding its scepter of

authority over a world greater than that of Rome, and that too acquired in a very much short period." But all these achievements were fizzled out when Muslims became indolent and degenerate. The Muslims today need the revival of the same ideas, vision and spirit, which determined the contours of their destiny and accorded them a role of leadership in the world of civilization.

Impact of Islamic Thought

It is also a fact of history that without Islamic contributions towards the course of intellectual enlightenment the great western movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would not have been possible. The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century would not have realized their full implications if they had not derived their basic ideas from the Islamic thought and the great works of Muslim thinkers and writers.

Therefore, those who think that Islam is a religion of rites and rituals, fanaticism and extremism, need to be warned about the fallacies that they intentionally or unintentionally tend to fabricate to create a false image of Islam—a religion which was known for its vibrance and vitality, thought and creativity. The fallout of the wrong notions emerging in fanaticism and obscurantism, violence and terrorism, appears to be devastating both for Islam and the Muslims. Following this development were produced the environments which were not agreeable to faith and reasoning, but increasingly injurious to realizing the goals of human and spiritual sublimation. Irresponsible outbursts in different directions have caused divisions and destruction. It is primarily for this reason that Muslims remain embedded in the depths of deprivation, decadence and decline.

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Enlightenment and progress, renaissance and reform, which once were the hallmark of Islam, came to be relegated in the remote recesses of ignorance, backwardness and anarchy. The religion which once was known for its dynamic and vibrant actions, inspiring and revolutionary prorgrammes was stripped of its essential ingredients by the indolence and stupor of its own followers who had in the meantime fallen into the pits of degeneration and disintegration. No one can deny the structural support and inherent vitality of the faith that was the main stimulus for establishing empires and civilizations.

Acknowledging the contributions the Islamic civilization made towards cultivating humanity, renaissance and enlightenment in Europe, the Crown Prince of Britain, Prince Charles said at a seminar in Oxford:

" If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilization owe to the Islamic world. It is a failure, which stems, I think, from the straitjacket of history, which we have inherited. The medièval Islamic world, from central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history. The contributions of Muslim Spain between the 8th and 15th centuries to the preservation of the classical learning during the Dark Ages, and to the first flowerings of the Renaissance, has long been recognized". *2

It is a fact that Islam was the main precursor of reform and renaissance in the West. In Europe it ushered several areas of learning and scientific inquiry such as medicine, mathematics, physics, chemistry and philosophy. Robert Brifffault, recognizing the impact of Islamic civilization on Europe says:

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"It was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture and not in the fifteenth century that the real Renaissance took place.
What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the methods of experiment, observation, and measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks.
The spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs."*3

Muslim influence

It is testified from authentic historical documents that the Muslim world was at its peak
from the 8th century (750) to the earliest period of the 12th century. This was an advanced civilization, which Briffault describes as a "brilliant and energetic civilization full of creative energy". As against this the West was "sunk in barbarism" and low degradation. Hence it would have been an anomaly if the Muslim world (an advanced civilization) had not had a tangible effect on molding the features of western civilization.

Commending the contributions of the Muslim revival movements Briffault in his book "The Making of Humanity" says "the light from which civilization was once more rekindled did not arise from any embers of Greco-Roman culture smoldering amid the ruins of Europe, nor from the living death on the Bosphorus (Byzantine Empire). It did not come from the Northern but from the Southern invaders of the Empire, from the Saracens...it was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, and not in the 15th century, that the real Renaissance took place, Spain, not Italy, was the cradle of the rebirth of Europe."

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At the same time the Muslims were enlarging their area of influence, both in physical, political and religious context, in other territories. Under the Caliph Omar and other subsequent rulers Muslims captured large areas from Hijaz to the north and east and established an empire, which extended up to Spain in Europe. In a short period of time (from 636 with the conquest of Palestine and Syria to 670 with the rule over Ifraqiyyah and North Africa) the Muslims had created large empire which spread from the Atlantic in the West to Khurasaan in the East. This Empire was well established when Muslims conquered Spain. Muslims in those days were so well organized and determined that most of Spain and surrounding territories fell to them in a short period of five years from 711 to 716.

The other features of Islamic Renaissance were found to delineate the socio-cultural values, which permeated the main spheres of human life. It produced a system imbued with moral responsibilities and pragmatic purposiveness. With the establishment of Islamic governments new vitals of administrative and moral dynamics were introduced in the structure of society and state. The exemplary character of the Caliph Omer and his governors impressed the world at large.

With the adorable characteristics imbibed in individual and communal life Muslims were succeeding not only in extending the area of administrative efficiency, but also in making new advances in academic fields such as sciences, philosophy, arts and medicines

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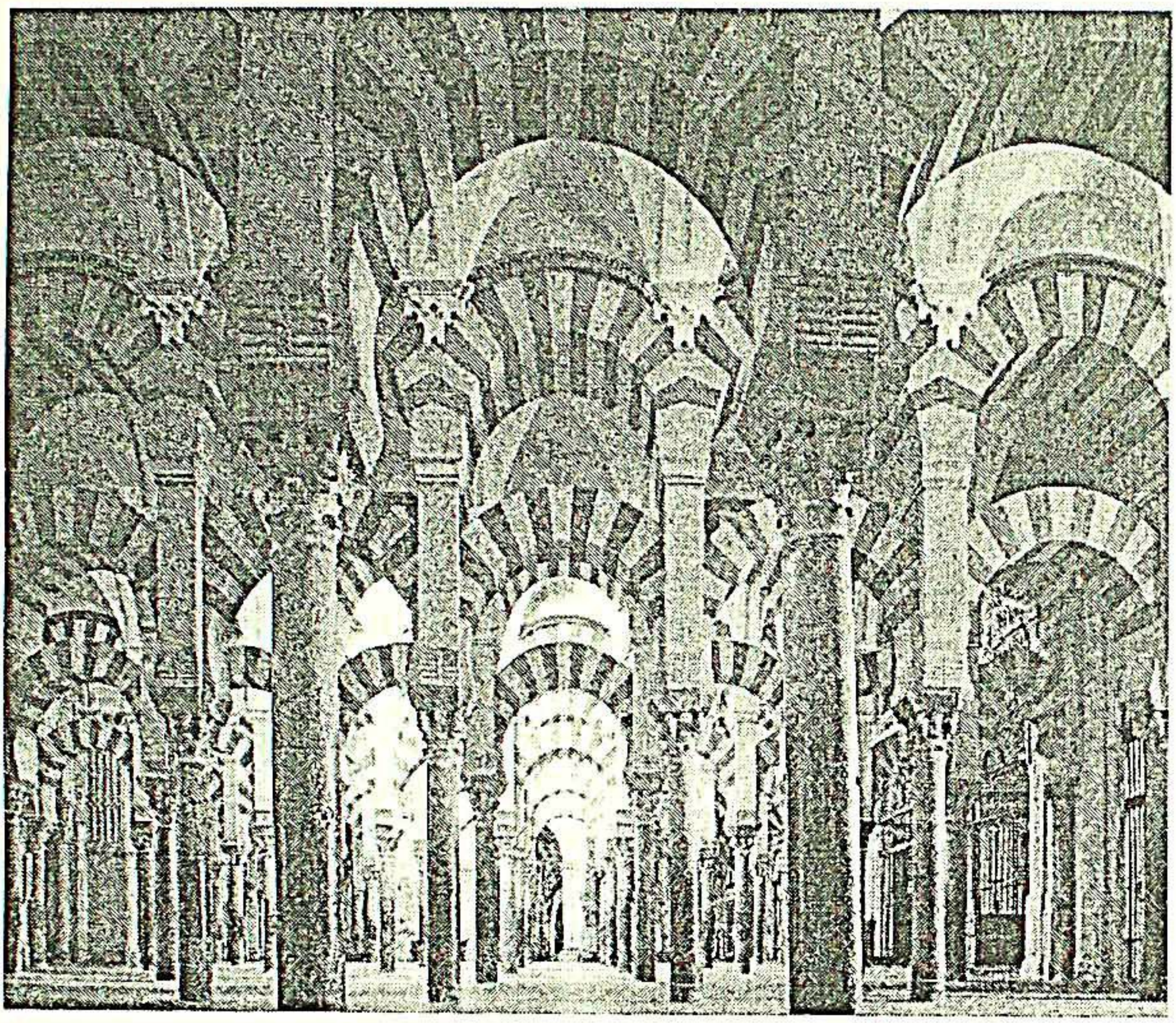

Columns of the Great Mosque in Cordoba

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The greatest contribution of Muslims in Spain was in the field of science and philosophy. Sir Thomas Arnold in "The Legacy of Islam" says "they gave free rein to philosophic speculation and encouraged the philosophers, scientists and writers in their work of research, theology and teaching".,

Muslims also played a significant role in transmitting the Greek works to the West. They introduced the huge documents of Greek philosophers especially the works of Aristotle to the West centuries before the revival of the Greek scholarship, which preceded the Renaissance in Europe. The works were translated into different languages and were transmitted across several countries in Europe.

Muslims in Spain also established universities and libraries with a view to widening the scope of education and enlightenment all over Europe. The quest of learning being the essence of Islamic philosophy helped create a number of institutions at a time when there was no interest in such areas. The libraries in Spain were full of books and periodicals, which covered subjects ranging from sciences to philosophy and literature. It is said that 400,000 volumes of books in the Spanish libraries alone were many times more than all the books assembled all over Europe. But now the situation is so degrading that only 300 foreign titles are translated into Arabic per year in the whole Arab world.

Europe benefited also from the works of famous Muslim writers such as Avicenna, Al-Ghazali and Averros. As a result of these works it became easier for the European writers to make progress in the specific areas selected by them. The Archdeacon of Segovia, Daminis Gundisalvus relied heavily on the works of Avicenna, al-Farabi, and al-Ghazali. His Encyclopedia of knowledge drew information mainly from the Muslim sources.

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Thus closer ties came to be established between the Muslim East and the Christian West through developments in religious thought and flow of academic exchanges. The issues concerning God, the purpose of life, the life after death and eternity concerned Christianity as much as Islam. The sociological approach to furnish concrete responses to the fundamental problems has been more or less identical.

With growing interest in Eastern sciences a school of Oriental Studies was established in Europe for the first time at Toledo in 1250. Here necessary arrangements were made to impart education in sciences, Arabic, Hebrew and Biblical studies. Muslim contributions in the field of positive sciences and metaphysics were also the subjects of studies at this school.

From the above accounts it becomes clear that Muslim scholars, philosophers and scientists were in the forefront in the Middle Ages. They were active in leaning and spreading the light of their knowledge at a time when most of Europe was dormant and groping in darkness. Only the Greek philosophers were prominent with their huge philosophical contributions to seek wisdom and guide the mankind with their ideas and thoughts. But many of these ideas, which had been translated by Muslim scholars, were not relevant to the revelations of The Quran and the doctrine of Islamic philosophy. Hence Muslim scholars like Imam Ghazali launched their reform movements to cleanse the system of human thought from ideas, which were causing confusion and fallacies among the Muslim intellectuals. When Imam Ghazali discovered that the Greek philosophy was penetrating too deep into the corridors of Islamic thought and intellectualism and was causing confusion and misconceptions, he called for the reorientation in accordance with Islamic doctrines and the Quranic injunctions. Later on, Ibn Khaldun also elucidated the Islamic principles in simpler and clearer form, so that unnecessary confusion could be eliminated. Similarly sincere attempts were made by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

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(1563-1624) and Shah Wali Allah (1703-1763), Jamaluddin Afghani, Sir Syed Ahmad and Allama Iqbal.

Acknowledging the contributions of Muslim scholars George Sarton, in his book "Introduction to the History of Sciences" says: " It will suffice here to evoke a few glorious names without contemporary equivalents in the West: Jabir ibn Haiyan, al-Kindi, Ibn Rushd, al-Khawarzim, al-Farghan, Thabit ibn Qurra, al-Battani, al-Farabi, ibnSina, al-Masudi, al-Tabari, Abul Waffa".

In the "History of Europe" Henri Pirenne says "in the whole history of the world there has been nothing comparable in the universal and immediate nature of its consequences with the expansion of Islam in the 7th century". Throughout the Middle Ages from the 7th until the 12th century Muslim scholars and scientists made great strides in the field of learning, discovery and scientific inquiry. The period was significant for the amount of contributions in almost all areas of human excellence. Travel and reading, fighting and love, music and song, as a critic says, abundantly permeated the age. Christians who lived during the 'Arabian Renaissance' felt no false shame in learning from the Muslims.

Islam for Renaissance

It is now generally recognized that it was indeed Islam that paved way for Renaissance in Europe. "Had the Arabs been barbarians like the Mongols, who stamped out the fire of learning, in the East so effectually that it never recovered, and possibly will never recover, from the loss of its libraries and its literary traditions, the Renaissance in Europe might well have

been delayed by more than a century", says Sir Thomas Arnold in "The Legacy of Islam".

With the Muslim genius at its apex the Islamic civilization was opening up new vistas of learning and advancement for all people all over the world. Highlighting this fact Ibn Khaldun says:" It is an amazing fact of history that though their religion is of the Arabian origin and the Law that the Prophet had brought had an Arab complexion, yet with few exceptions, all eminent men of learning in the Muslim Millat, in the field of theological as well as secular sciences, are non-Arabs. Even those who are Arabs by birth are non-Arabs by education, language and scholarship".*4

But there are still some biased sections, which do not recognize the Muslim role in spreading the light of knowledge in Europe. Sir Thomas Arnold condemning the distorted perception of Europeans says:
"Those who excuse the Muslim scholars of lack of originality and of intellectual decadence have never read Averros or looked into al-Ghazali, but have adopted second hand judgments. The presence of doctrines of Islamic origin in the very citadel of Western Christianity, the Suma of Aquinas, is a sufficient refutation of the charges of lack of originality and sterility.

The fact to note is that when all the rich material in Europe's libraries has been brought to light it may yet bee seen that the abiding influence of the Arabs on medieval civilization is much greater than has hitherto been recognized". *5

Robert Briffault, another European writer, commending the Islamic contributions in the field of science and learning says: "For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic civilizations is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the permanent, distinctive force

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of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory—natural sciences and scientific spirit.

Science is the most momentous contribution of the Arab civilization to the modern world... It was not science only, which brought Europe back to life. Other and meaningful influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life.*6

'Like all other traditional civilizations of the past, Islamic culture was eclectic, drawing its elements from a host of different peoples as their ways of life.

The fundamental notions of Tawhid governed that eclecticism of Islam, and this is what prevented the borrowing and the assimilation of cultural elements from becoming a merely syncretistic patching together of disparate and ill-digested importations.

Arab paganism had been syncretistic: the Arabs seem to have brought back from their desert wanderings the residues of the ancient religious paganisms utterly devoid of any spiritual content and saturated with magical powers, all of which Islam destroyed.
The Tawhid of the new religion permitted it to absorb the different cultural elements without losing its basic spiritual perspective. On the contrary, it infused that perspective into all of those cultural importations, making them Islamic in the bargain.'*7

Decadence sets in

This was the civilization built on sound and pure foundations of religious and cultural excellence, which was visible even till the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. But when the West

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came to the Muslim world with its colonialist trappings, it found a decadent culture that had lost its inherent momentum and vitality. The Muslims were impoverished Nawabs living in the ruins of glorious mansions long dilapidated. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century some parts of the Muslim world were still vibrant and trying to sustain the spirit that had created a great civilization. But these were a few patches, which could not be called the representative symbols of the whole Islamic world. The West on their arrival in these declining parts discovered that the Islamic world was fast regressing.

Muslims were declining now not only morally and spiritually, but also economically, militarily, politically and physically. According to some critics spiritual vitality was the foundation of a compact, wholesome process of growth and development, and when this element was gone the whole structure was found trembling and the process of decadence set in.

In the past, the collapse used not to be all embracing covering the whole ummah from Morocco to Indonesia, but this time the decline was not limited to one or two regions, but the whole Muslim world had surrendered to its onslaught. In the seventeenth century, the spiritual force of the Ottoman Empire was evident in many facets of life in Constantinople and other cities in Turkey, but this was certainly not so in Cairo and other Egyptian cities. Not only that, but in centuries past, whenever there was a decadence, short-lived or long, the traditional forms of culture were not molested. They remained more or less intact, with only some exterior signs pointing to an inner loss of vigor. When the regeneration came later, there was no need to start from the scratch, for the artistic tradition had kept the external form of the religion from disappearing altogether. Enough of the culture remained, in other words, to furnish an immediate support for the regenerative efforts of the spirit, when and if they were repressed. The retention of the cultural ambiance furnished by the Islamic arts is what permitted a certain continuity of

mental receptivity in the population as a whole to future renovative surges of the Islamic message.'

In addition, there are a number of other issues, which seem to have obstructed the surge of regeneration among the Muslims. Since decadence took them over they have been declining rapidly in the pits of ignorance, corruption, socio-economic backwardness and spiritual deterioration.

The important point to examine is not the sickness of the Ummah as such, but the tragedy that the sickness is so pervasive and perennial. To the good fortune of the Western colonialists they encountered not only the Muslims slumbering in their hujrahs, but found other nations such as Hindus, Buddhists and Chinese also, more or less, in the same state of apathy.. A general view of decadence was visible on all horizons.

In view of some critics it is the process of Jahilyya (ignorance), or ghaflah (neglect) that has pervaded the Muslim Ummah all over the world. Sayyuid Qutb says that the present Muslim regimes such as Saudi and Egyptian are as bad and backward as those existing during the period of pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah. Qutb and other thinkers who seek changes in the decadent social systems of Muslim states have been encouraged by the writings of Ibn Tamiyya who justified war against Jahilliya.

Most of the enlightened sections of the Muslim Ummah are convinced that as long as this malady is not combated effectively, the process of ghafalah will lead, if not the whole mankind, at least the entire Muslim Ummah to the terminal point of destruction. Then will come a time when 'the actual substance of the community as a whole will no longer be amenable to the vast structural reforms and the renoyative impulses of the vibrant segments of society. 'When that moment arrives, one notices that the opacity of soul has become widespread throughout the

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community and that irremediable decadence has set in once and for all'.

Perpetual perversion

With this process not only the possibilities of surviving the crises get diminished, the chances of spiritual reformation and material progress are also dissolved in irretrievable form with miserable consequences. With the corrupt practices in full gear the Muslim society has become a symbol of perpetual perversion. Muslims are no longer the same Muslims as they used to be in the days of the Prophet and his caliphs. The Quran says 'the Muslims are the best community raised up for mankind and they are a witness of truth to all peoples. But Muslims unfortunately are no longer the best of communities as they have lost the qualities, which entitled them to this status.

As long as Muslims sought the ideals of active participations in the process of spiritual and material reformation, they were among the best in the world. They were the pioneers of discoveries in the fields of science, knowledge and excellence. They were the leaders of renaissance, which served the stepping-stone of growth and advancement.

But the tragedy of the Muslims in modern age is their inability to grasp the significance of the realities and respond to the challenges confronting them. Muslims now fail to feel the pulse of changing times and realize the sense of historical, social and economic imperatives. As Sir Sayyid Ahmad, in one of his best known essays, said:

"The way to reform lies through education and moral regeneration Reformist ideals call for courage and perseverance of a high order. It is for the reformer to boldly violate the customs of his group... In this he will incur a lot of odium and popular disapprobation. But ultimately he will succeed and win converts.

Though he provokes opposition in the beginning he is acknowledged a benefactor in the end."*8

This thesis reminds us of the dictum that Longfellow long ago wrote so beautifully:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time".

Causes:

But forgetting all dictates of wisdom and sagacity, Muslims became degenerate because their lives were divorced of all qualities and properties, which should have been imbued with human values and virtues. Their institutions, political and economic systems, social and cultural organizations were not developed in light of the changing requirements of times. Instead of adapting to the evolving situations they ignored the fundamentals of knowledge and communications and were subjected to the evils of stagnation. They started quarreling among themselves on petty issues and were divided among the superficialities of modernism and conservatism. They adopted different attitudes to the same situations, with the result that they could not conceive of a united front to evolve and strengthen a united strategy. Both camps, in one way or the other, deviated from the essential teachings of Islam and the dynamic spirit that it inculcated among the Muslims. As a result of these divisive tendencies they failed to sustain a solid Islamic society, polity and civilization. They corrupted the religion, debased the norms of a decent and civilized order and assumed characteristics, which were devoid of Islamic substance and ambiance, deficient in scientific and technological efficiency.

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Consequently, Muslims lost a sense of equilibrium, discipline and intellectual curiosity to undertake research, analyze situations and draw inferences for formulations and actions.

Living intelligently and productively was the essence of human life, which Muslims appeared to have dissipated. The Quranic injunctions to develop human faculties and expand intellectual horizons failed to have any impact on their declining endowments. Lamenting this trend among the Muslims Iqbal said: "it is the religious obligation of Muslims to master, perfect and use intellect to uncover the laws of nature and society to live intelligently in the world".

Intellectual honesty was an imperative, which was consigned to oblivion, and thus the Ummah was deprived of its due place in the comity of nations. The Islamic vision, which was the endowment of Islamic heritage, was found to have lost its share in molding the shape of Muslim destiny.
It is primarily the endowment of vision that determines the contours of human growth at any time in human society.

The main purpose of human life, according to the Quran and the Prophet's life-long struggle, was to inculcate values and virtues that could make life meaningful and purpose-oriented. For this purpose the Quran established a framework of conscious concern for growth and development both in temporal and spiritual spheres.

Since Muslims continue to deviate from the path of truth, they remain degraded and far remote from the path of progress and prosperity. The vicious circle of deficient and decadent deviations continues to confound their vision and inhibit their abilities to move forward. Underlying the need of this resurgence Iqbal said: "If the Renaissance of Islam is a fact, and I believe it is a fact, we too one day, like the Turks will have to reevaluate

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our intellectual inheritance. We are today passing through a period similar to that of the Protestant revolution in Europe, and the lesson of the rise and outcome of Luther's movement shall not be lost on us. *9

Extricating the Ummah from the depth of decadence is the most urgent need of the present age, which must merit our collective attention and resources.

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Chapter No. 4

ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MODERN WORLD

آئین نو سے ڈرنا طرز کہن پہ اڑنا
منزل یہی کٹھن ہے قوموں کی زندگی میں

(To be afraid of the new order and cling to the modes of the past, This is the most difficult phase in the evolution of nations).

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Competing in the 21st century

ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MODERN WORLD

Islamic thought and its proper nourishment is an imperative for the Muslim personality. The spirit of Islam and its ideals are largely attributed to the pattern of thought that is derived mainly from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh). The Quran made it clear that the salvation or redemption was not reserved for a few (as in Neo-Platonism) or for the chosen people as in Judaism.

The Quran also rejected the idea of renunciation as enunciated by Christianity and openly taught by Manichaeism. It also does not agree with the Gnostics that the world was created by the devil, or with those who believed in hedonism or monasticism.

The Unity of God is the core issue and its sanctity stems from the main stream of Islamic thought. This is the crux of

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the Islamic doctrine and the essence of the Quranic concept.

The interpreters and reformers have elaborated the meanings and implications, so that no ambiguities are left to confuse or mislead the development of Muslim thought.

The constituents of the Islamic thought are not entirely new, nor did the Quran impart them for the first time. Since the creation of mankind, as the prophetic and scriptural accounts attest, the injunctions and moral guidelines have been oriented to defining the concept of the unity. The Deuteronomy says:

"Although men were forbidden to worship anything else except God, yet a host of gods were appointed for the protection of the nations of the world.

They were gods, but God Himself sat supreme in the congregation of gods, and while He had divided the lower gods among all the peoples under heaven, He had reserved the direct worship of Himself alone for the Children of Israel."*1.

Christians, though believed in the Unity of God, but their belief in the return of God in human genesis was in direct conflict with the concept of Unity. The Christian thought that God had a son and the Holy Ghost too had a share in the Kingdom of God contravened the original Islamic conception. The original thought as preached by Jesus Christ was distorted especially by St. Paul and St. Peter who incorporated the worship of Christ and other apostles in the religion,

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The Islamic thought as reformed and refurbished by the Quran liberated man from the pangs of paganism. "Paganism", as Kenneth Cragg says, "violates a right theology, and by so doing it vitiates a right humanity. Nothing could be truer than the call to liberate mankind from the taboos of polytheism and deification of the false gods. Nothing could be more sacred than the repudiation of demonism found in the worship of pseudo-gods and restoration of "the right of rightful God."*2.

The Quran as the major criterion, the Furqan, distinguishing good from bad, submission from transgression serves as the main source of Islamic thought and knowledge. By conveying the divine injunctions into human language it gives directions and admonitions to the whole mankind. Its principles are perennial, prolific and productive. 'By the creeping murmur and the pouring dark its ideas and thoughts fill the wide vessel of the universe.'*3

With injunctions made clear in the Quran and the imperatives explained by the Prophet and subsequent chain of scholars and interpreters the prerogatives of prophecy and divine dictates are made relevant to the contemporary scene of modernism. In the present epoch where so many streams of thought are seen to swerve a series of divergent and contrary ideas and thoughts, it is imperative to see that Islam proves to be a self-evolving system—an ultimate pattern for all walks of life.

This is the state of thought, the quality of knowledge that determines the quality of life in Islam. The Quran says: "Verily, it is the truth, (the quest for knowledge) that

assures certainty". (69:51). The mode based on this search provides stimuli and prepares man for a determined way of life—the life that transcends the perversities of temporal temptations. It is this thought that carves out a path for a balanced and enlightened behaviour.

However, as a result of infatuation with worldly pursuits Muslims have never been able to follow the pattern of Islamic thought in its entirety. Some Muslims did observe these guidelines, but the overwhelming majority has been oblivious of the main ingredients. The tendency has been particularly conspicuous in those segments that found the worldly manifestations more tempting. With the growing impact of modern developments both in philosophical and cultural spheres the process of penetration has been more intense. The result was a phenomenal perception of secularist thought as opposed to faith-oriented Islamic thought. Consequently, Muslims as individuals and institutions seemed to be cut off from the main stream of Islamic thought. Thus deprived and depraved the currents of Islamic thought in modern age have become ineffectual as far as practical implications are concerned.

A similar situation occurred in the medieval ages when Muslims became enamored of Greco-Roman philosophy. The Muslim centres of Islamic thought like Baghdad, Alexandria, Antioch and Damascus were seen to be influenced largely by the Greek philosophers and their works. With the growing influence of the Greek thought on the Muslim mind it further sharpened the divide. Aristotle and Galen's works were translated into Arabic and treatises on ethics were prepared on their grounds. Thinkers like al-Kindi, al-Razi and al-Farabi were committed to translating

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and writing volumes based on the works of Greek philosophers. Besides, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and Nizam-al-Mulk were also equally active in developing the science of ethics mainly based on the works of Greek philosophers. But, nevertheless, their allegiance to Islam remained profound and they did not embrace any Greek ideas which contravened the basic concept of Tawhid.

Although the Aristotelian dialectics, philosophy and sciences were of increasing interest for the Muslim scholars of those days, yet the basic concepts of Islam such as Divine Unity and belief in the fundamentals of Islam were the main plank on which rested the foundations of their thought. They used rather the Greek notions to develop their thesis on the Quranic concept of the Unity and Ethics. The tools of logic and rhetoric were used to developing the art of commentaries and expounding the revealed word of God. The jurists (fuqaha) developed a system of fiqah based on Ijtihad and basic Islamic principles.

'The enormous intellectual development and literary activity which followed during the Abbasid period is a testimony to the assimilative and creative potential of those men who understood the first principles of the ideology of Islam. The understanding and preservation of the integrity and the world-view of Islam in all segments of human thought and behaviour was the basic factor which provided the stability and resolve to withstand the strains and stresses which accompanied the internal expansion of Islam in the early centuries. The sense of the integrity and wholeness of Islam was at its highest during the life time of the Rasul Muhammad and with its impact absorbed in the

following centuries, found itself permanently enshrined in the entire range of Islamic literature.'*4

Islamic Intellectual Tradition

With a deep impact on socio-cultural structures the pattern of Islamic thought was evolved to create sound traditions in order to guide the destiny of Muslim masses. The streams of thought and traditions were diverted to synthesize divergent views and contradictory convictions found among the various sections of society. This process can be appreciated more clearly when we compare the Islamic traditions established during the Prophet's life with the Hindu traditions found in the Upanishads. The essence of these traditions was found in the teachings and techniques, which were exclusively meant for the upper classes of Hindus who alone were supposed to understand and apply them in their daily lives. Had the Islamic thought been also oriented to the exclusivity and esoteric substance of the Upanishads, and then the overwhelming majority of Muslims would have been deprived of the inherent value of the Quranic teaching. Islamic thought on the other hand is the most comprehensive and all-embracing phenomenon to meet the spiritual and material needs of evolving societies. The Quran is not confined to any specific tribe, race or community. It is universal in its injunctions, characteristics and virtues.

Hence Islamic thought cannot be contrary to the connotations of modernism, provided they are not

particularly anti-theistic and anti-religious, nor could modernism contravene the basic precepts of religion. It is for this reason that Islam introduced the concept of 'Ijtihad' and 'Ijma' to reach consensus at issues, which were not to be resolved by the existing injunctions in the Qur'an or the Prophet's traditions.

Two prerequisites determined the contours of this concept: the comprehension of day-to-day problems, and adherence to righteousness and justice. The Quran encourages the believers to use their intellectual faculties to develop these qualities.

The Quran, at the same time, urges men to ponder and reflect on the "signs" that God has inscribed in the universe. The sign of the men of understanding is that they possess the capacity to reflect on the wonders of God's creation both in the heavens and the earth. This capacity leads them to appreciate the endowments that God has given to man to develop and elevate his status as a human being. Had he not been endowed with these qualities, man would have been a miserable, contemptible creature in the whole complex of wonders and beauties that God has created. With his destiny assigned to him he has been given the possibilities of renovating his structures for further improvement and higher accomplishments. Therefore, a scientific attitude to the universe in terms of the laws of nature will not divert a true Muslim from the path of rectitude. It can, on the other hand, help him understand the complexities of human and physical nature.

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Islam for intellectual, Spiritual excellence

At the same time the attitude of Islam to science and knowledge has always been positive. Islam has never condemned the advance science has made or was to make in centuries and decades to come. It has been different from the attitude Christianity has had towards science and philosophy. Christianity did not only reject the scientific discoveries, but also put a number of scientists to death for the assertions they made that appeared rather contrary to the Christian theology. Luther, for example, called Aristotle a dirty pig.

While, on the other hand, Muslim scholars translated the Greek philosophers' works into Arabic and made them popular in other languages.

Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian scholar, says that there is no conflict between religion and science. Both are based on reason. Both study natural phenomena, though for different reasons and destinations. The Quran does not preclude the study of Nature; rather it encourages the believers to understand and appreciate the phenomena. Islam, therefore, supports the study of sciences and urges the believers in particular to use their heart and mind in the pursuit of intellectual and spiritual excellence.

During the days of the Prophet and his companions probably there was no need for devising any system of organized theology and philosophy as the Quran was being revealed with its variegated manifestations to leave its own impact on the believers. However, after the demise of the Prophet and his companions and their followers the need

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for recording and imparting the knowledge of the Quran was felt more intensely. Some schools of thought with their own interpretations came into being establishing new modes of intellectual disciplines. Some of them such as Mu'tazilites employed reason and rationality as the main plank of their discussions, while others rejected them as deviating from the actual path of Islam. For them a synthesis of spirit and intellect was more important than mere rationality. However, since we have discussed these schools in other chapters, we will not go into their details and move over to the modern period, which concerns us here more directly.

Modern ism and its trappings would be viewed differently in different situations especially when they are viewed by different schools of thought at different times. Western thought became popular when the trend of westernization was set in the Islamic world in the wake of European colonialism. The European nations had already rebelled against the Church and the way Papacy was running the affairs. The western thought conforming to the tenets of religion underwent a radical change. The secularist movements enveloping the western civilization played an active role in reducing the significance of religion. The change was particularly perceptible on the eve of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. During the same period came the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the shape of western society. The economic conditions were getting better and intellectual enlightenment was reshaping the society. It was the Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Renaissance.

Civilization: the new religion Of the West...

Materialism was the new religion of modern man. Frustrated with the Christian Orthodoxy the western nations were replacing religion by civilization. They were no longer interested in Christianity, but in Civilization. Civilization was the ultimate goal of the West. It was the new religion of the western man, which soon came to be recognized by many Christians as well. 'Because of its immense material power, expressed in its industrial and military technologies, no Eastern culture could oppose it effectively. Those that attempted, like Japan, to stay the day of reckoning were soon brought to bay.

It was everywhere triumphant, notwithstanding the dogged resistance that the conservative Eastern cultures put up to hold on to the precious heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors'.

In the wake of colonialism most of the Muslim states falling under the scepter of western domination were gradually reduced to the status of underlings with hardly any trappings of national identity left. The westerns that were now more interested in their civilization rather than their religion tried to influence the indigenous populations with their culture and civilization. The westerners, in fact, became the missionaries of their civilization. "All of the ideologies that began to appear with distressing frequency in the West were now transmitted to the colonies, and especially to the governing classes. The children were educated in the West and became the paragons of new hybrid culture, half Islamic and half western, that sprouted in the Islamic world of the early part of the twentieth

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century. This hybridism affected everything and, as usual, the arts gave everything away: the clothing, the architecture, the crafts, the interior furnishings, the literature of the Muslims, revealed that the traditional civilization was dying. While such things might seem inconsequential at first glance, in reality they are of profound importance".*5

Education was the main tool the imperial powers employed to penetrate into the vitals of the Muslim thought and intellect.

In India English became the main language of education and communication. Lord Macaulay, the Viceroy of India, introduced English in schools and declared "we must do our best to form a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect". The policy succeeded pretty well and, to the misfortune of Muslims in particular, the same spirit continues to permeate the Muslim thought and social structures today. The trend is most pronounced in Pakistan, which appears to have become a land of "Brown Sahibs", who feel proud copying western culture, language and pattern of life. Their perception is mainly influenced by western thought and their culture is the culture of the West.

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Such changes have influenced inordinately the mode of Islamic thought. Modern developments appearing in sciences and arts, education and communications have had their serious repercussions on the socio-cultural spectrum of the Muslim nations. These changes have already shattered our moral values, and are likely to disturb the intellectual traditions and communal structures.

The general erosion of the Islamic traditions in Muslim countries is depicted candidly by W.C. Smith in the following essay: "A young Muslim fashionably dressed sits with friends in the Lahore Coffee House and talks in English over Marx and tennis. He has perhaps never studied the Quran...yet intensely conscious about being a Muslim, he and his co-religionists in India are a nation".*6

.Displacement of religion from the corridors of education has become the curse of modern age. Apart from creating secular trends it has given rise to irreligious thought. Consequently the basic contents of Islamic thought have been corroded and lust for worldly gains has assumed the highest priority. As a result faith and confidence have suffered while coping with the problems of modern age.

The dominant emphasis on physical sciences to the exclusion of religious thought is becoming more pronounced as the Muslim societies are moving rapidly towards modernization. In some areas the trend appears to have assumed menacing proportions especially the socio-cultural structure are under heavy pressure. The challenge is likely to grow in future as more Muslim societies get exposed to the onslaught of the western media and secular influences.

It appears that colonialism despite its disappearance from the world scene still continues to be entrenched with its pernicious tentacles in many parts of the Muslim world. When the West came to India and other regions of the developing world it encountered a culture, which had already become decadent. The degenerate segments of

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Muslim society were living on the remnants of cultural depravation. They were like the dispossessed Nawabs living in the ruins of fast debilitating castles. All the vigour and vitality appeared to have gone from their sinews. Spiritual decadence led to the decline in military, political and economic dissolution.

It is high time that we grapple with the core issue and extricate the Muslim Ummah from the abysmal depth of Jahiliyya and ghaflah. Islamic thought, however, cannot be imbibed if spiritual vitality and moral order are not vibrant enough to provide sufficient stimulants to the substance. The Quran from which is derived the Islamic thought can provide guidance for matters both in spiritual and material spheres of human life. The modern Muslim has to learn the Quran to be guided by its thought; otherwise he will always remain entrenched in the decadence, which has been his accompanying concomitant for more than a thousand years. If the process of decline is allowed to persist, then the ummah will be exposed more to the irremediable decadence that has set in once and for all. If the principles of movement are not allowed to motivate the phenomena of human thought, Muslims will be left with scarce reserves to compete in the 21st century. Therefore, an early awakening is all the more imperative, as the western civilization is moving fast with all the forces of thought and action.

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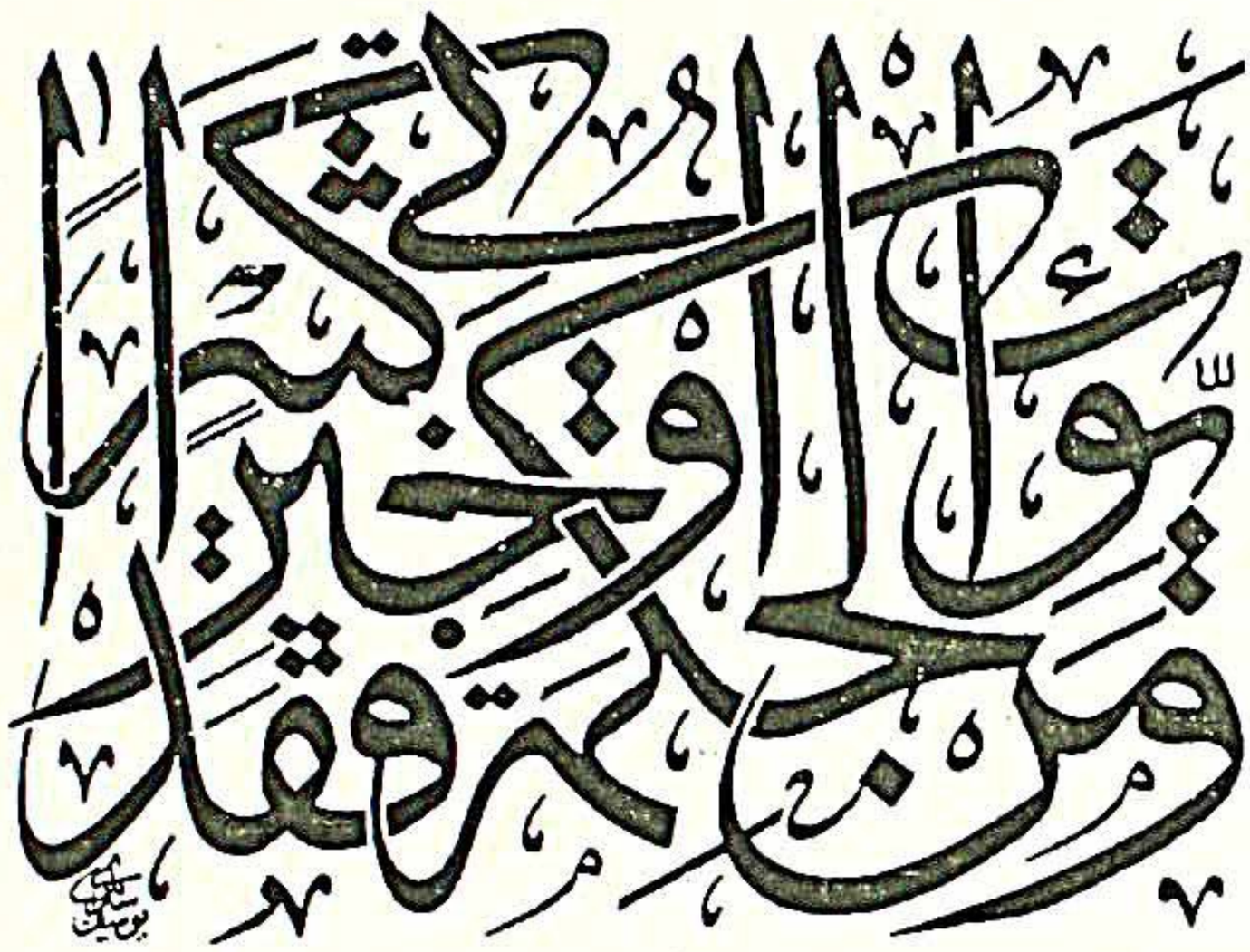
Chapter No. 5

ISLAM AND MODERNISM



(Those who are endowed with wisdom, are the recipients of the bounties in life)

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Chapter No. 5

ISLAM AND MODERNISM

"As we encounter obstacles, let them inspire our creativity.
I will prepare today, and some day my chance will come"

- Abraham Lincoln

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How to evade the pangs of degradation

ISLAM AND MODERNISM

Knowledge and wisdom, intellect and information are the 'sine quoi non' for the capture of human and natural forces and acceleration of growth and advance in the modern age. Even for cultivating the qualitative attributes of mind and heart, soul and spirit, we need the channels of intellect and consciousness. These are the basic prerequisites, which are recognised by the whole world except the Muslims who continue to defy them to their own peril. This is the most tragic situation, which confounds and deludes the whole ummah. This is also a tragic development, which obscures the prospects of growth, and development. Consequently the Muslims are among the most backward people in the modern world where even the concept of life without knowledge and education is inconceivable.

It is not only the modern age which calls for knowledge and wisdom, even in the medieval age, in the age of the Prophet these fundamentals were enunciated clearly and lucidly by the Quran. The Quran in itself is the beginning and end of education. The Qur'an laments the abysmal depth of ignorance or Jahiliyya by denouncing the way the ignorant people turn away from the signs of God.

It deplores their heedlessness and wonders if "their hearts are covered with locks". The Quran further warns, "Allah seals the

hearts of such people who do not understand". (The Quran: 47:24; 30:59).

At the same time there are blessings for people who are endowed with knowledge, wisdom and understanding. "It is only such people who are placed in higher grades in the presence of their Lord, and are blessed with special favours". (The Quran: 58:11).

Elaborating this verse AbdullahYusuf , in his commentary adds:" Although faith makes all people equal in the Kingdom of Allah, but there is leadership, rank degree, joined with greater and less responsibility, and that depends on true knowledge and insight".

In this vein Iqbal says:

"***If you are true in your zeal, We offer you the Pen and Tablet".***

So the pen and tablet are the supreme endowments that God confers on those whom He finds perceptive and accessible to the pursuit of truth and knowledge. Thus the level of excellence and enlightenment both in physical and metaphysical lebenswelt depends largely upon the degree of knowledge and wisdom. There is a constant mutuality between the degree of understanding and the level of accomplishment. The perception and acquisition of knowledge is the basis of all evolution in intellectual and spiritual world. This is why the Quran strongly recommends the acquisition of knowledge even during the war. *1

The need for knowledge and education has never been more imminent and strong than what it is today. The whole concept of growth and development is based on the acquisition of knowledge and technology. Without these requisites hardly any move can be made towards the destination, which the modern nations have set for themselves. This is the most outstanding feature, which distinguishes the modern age from the previous periods of human history. Knowledge has been so deeply imbedded in modernism that without it the very concept is unthinkable.

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However, in the world of ideas modernism has its own way of thinking and undertaking. Owing to their own specific mindset the modern men refuse to embrace any ideas that do not appear compatible with the domain of reason and intellect. As a result of this change many areas of knowledge and enlightenment appear to have emerged which were largely obscured under the debris of medievalism. While medieval man apprehended Nature and was dominated by the forces of superstition and illusion, modern man analyses the events in their scientific and rational perspectives, and undertakes all possible avenues to explore the origin of realities. This is why we find the range of research widely widened and faith and belief largely strengthened on the grounds of research and discovery. *2

Muslims do not understand Islam

It may sound rather strange that Muslims, with few exceptions, do not understand the religion they claim to follow. The main reason for this is the fact that the overwhelming majority do not read and understand the Quran with the zeal that it requires its readers to inculcate. Reciting the Quran simply as a ritual does not serve the purpose.

The Quran, the prophet's traditions and the obligations involved in being a Muslim have to be perceived and understood thoroughly and then practiced realistically. This is the essence that permeates the personality of a Muslim and facilitates his participation in an act that transforms his surroundings.

It has to be understood that Islam is as much a religion of the modern society as of the primitive individuals. Since this fact has not been made clear by the scholars and Ullemas, the modern world views Islam as a religion of the backward people failing to comply with the needs of modern times. The religious schools with hardly any knowledge of modern sciences have failed to explain the Quran in light of modern developments and scientific

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discoveries. Consequently, grave barriers have cropped up in the process of understanding. Instead of bringing Islam nearer to the modern man, dogmatic and egocentric views have created a chasm to confuse the real message of Islam. Its concepts of human welfare, unity of mankind, socio-economic and political order, which are as progressive as contemporary systems, have been badly bruised to stand with dignity in the league of modern nations. Apart from theoretical assertions even in practical arena Muslims have miserably failed to create a viable social, economic and legal structure to do justice to the basic needs of human beings. Muslims in general never study the Quran with the understanding that it calls for and thus remain oblivious of the prerequisites that it presents to improve human life. Their whole range remains confined to the rituals and dogmas with the most divisive and derelict deviations.

The problem with the current understanding of Islam especially by the semi-literate sections of Muslim society is the faulty perception of the principles and practices of Islam. While too much emphasis is placed on rituals and customary practices, hardly any thought is given to the rights of human beings and sustenance and reform of the institutions conceived by Islam for the welfare of human beings. Although charity, socio-economic morality, and human welfare occupy a central core in the Islamic code, yet hardly any well-devised system exists to nourish and sustain these institutions. Hundreds of thousands of human beings in Muslim societies remain deprived of the essential requisites to survive. Food scarcity, poverty, diseases and malnutrition are the common phenomena in Muslim societies. This is what makes the Muslim ummah the most neglected segment of human creation.

Although during the period of the first caliphs a well-defined institution known as 'Bait-ul-Mal' did exist for the welfare of deprived sections of human society, but later developments are found to have dissipated the remnants of this system. Today

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when it is needed most, it hardly exists to justify the basic needs of starving human beings.

The subsequent periods are seen to have placed more emphasis on personal piety, religiosity, and writing of poetry and philosophy, but hardly any concrete contributions were made to developing an organic system for the general welfare of society. Even today mosques and madaris are devoted mainly to rituals and teaching of the traditional forms of Islamic education. Modern sciences, technology and languages or even comparative study of religions are not allowed to enter the premises of these seminaries.

Not to speak of modern sciences, even basic concept of human relations, such as charities, helping the neighbours and providing essential requisites to the needy segments of society are accorded hardly any significant role in the development of human and intellectual attributes. Mosques and seminaries are closed at night and no access is allowed even to the most desperate and needy persons for a short stay or provision of necessary foodstuffs. Is this the ISLAM that was introduced for the welfare of mankind? Is this the Islam that we can be proud of?

Deviation from the Quran

In the majority of religious madaris the Quran is taught simply to recite and memorize without any concern for its meanings and contents, its substance and significance in human life. The Mullahs are interested only in heavenly rewards (tswab) and not in reflection and deliberation or intellectual awakening which the Quran demands. The Quran never asks people to merely recite it, but admonishes to reflect and think over its verses. While Allah asks the Muslims to reflect on the signs both in the Quran and the universe, the believers remain confined to narrating the Quran in its Arabic text without understanding or appreciating the meanings of the text. They are not interested in

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understanding or appreciating the portents, the phenomenal mysteries, the functioning of cosmic phenomena, planets and galaxies. This is left for the secular scientists to explore and explain the meanings for the benefit of human beings. The Quran, in fact, came as a book of wisdom (al-Hikmah) and guidance (al-Huda), which helps man resolve the complexities of human nature and worldly phenomena.

But the Muslims have left all these things for the western non-believers to understand and expand the scope of intellectual and material growth. They themselves are fast asleep, busy in prosaic pleasures of transitory life.

While Muslims condemn modernism and western thought, they remain oblivious of the fallacies and deviations which they commit by not following the meanings of the Quran itself. The Quran pointing out the natural landscape presents "the signs for men of understanding" (3:189). The attributes of providence and benevolence, the creation of animal life, the variations of the night and the day, and the formations of the earth and the heavens are clear portents for reflection and understanding. The impact of these signs is seen to grow through the assimilation of intellectual and spiritual manifestations. Not only man's own life, but the world phenomena in their entirety are subject to the laws of nature established by God-- the Creator of the universe.

Knowledge and wisdom are the basic attributes of Allah who is Omniscient (alim) and All-Wise (Hakim). He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and He wants His creatures, the human beings, also to know and benefit from these treasures. It is for this reason that the endowments of knowledge and insight are conferred on man to derive the maximum benefits for the welfare of mankind. The Quran commends such people who employ their knowledge for developing the potential of human growth. Such people occupy higher ranks and exalted positions. At the

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same time those who know and those who do not know cannot be equal.

Islam therefore attaches special significance to the acquisition of knowledge and encourages the believers in particular to learn and develop their faculties for the betterment of individual and collective pattern of living. The impact of this appeal, especially in the initial phases of the Islamic expansion, was so strong that the spirit of enquiry was fostered throughout the Muslim world and rapid progress was made in the arena of scientific, academic and intellectual advance.

By appealing to reason and observation, the Quran made it clear that knowledge was based both on theory and experiment. Contemplation was only one source of knowledge, while other sources such as observation, exploration and research were equally important avenues for expanding the horizons of human knowledge. The observable aspect of human knowledge has been emphasized in several verses of the Quran. In surah 2:164 the Quran invites human beings in general and Muslims in particular to reflect on the signs of God and not to by pass them like "blind and deaf". The magnificent natural landscape, animal life, stars and planets are among the outstanding features of the divine artistry, which are a source of inspiration for men of understanding. These provide a solid ground for the conscious, creative nature of man to perceive the varying patterns of God's creation. But this can be done only by those who are endowed with knowledge and understanding and employ their faculties for a deeper and thoughtful observation.

The tragedy of the present day Muslims is not only the lack of understanding, but also the lack of interest in exploring the avenues of knowledge, research and insight. At the same time they lack discipline and patience, fortitude and perseverance. The lack of these attributes has been replaced by ignorance and

hypocrisy, opportunism and illusion. The Muslim society as a whole has lost its sense of direction and will to mould its destiny. It has become a crude conglomeration of materialistic and secular seductions with perfunctory exercise of religious rituals. Only ordinary pursuits are the goals which are sought with glee at the cost of higher ideals, decent human values, growth and development. The rate of education is the lowest in the modern world and the cultivation of character is the rarest thing in Muslim communities. The values which embody social obligations and submission to the divine injunctions are not the criteria to reckon with; and still we claim to be Muslims.

Religion and Modernism

The problem with our understanding of Islam and its related values is the false perception both of religion and modernism. Too much emphasis on the mechanics rather than on the substance of religious or secular education confounds the very conception, which is supposed to cultivate character and integrity among human beings. The divergence between what we say and what we do is the root cause of dissipation in human society. God has condemned it as a manifestation of hypocrisy, in the strongest possible way, yet we continue to indulge in its fallacies. We fail to understand that the grounds for building a sound society are found both in religion and modern humanities. The pursuit of one branch at the expense of the other will not give us a balanced and profound structure.

When we speak of 'modernism', we refer to the underlying idea of enquiry and research, reason and rationality oriented to growth and development. In modernism nothing moves on hollow grounds built on illusions and superstitions. Here the hypothesis is to be challenged on which the paradigm is based. Modernism with sciences and developing systems of knowledge moves towards a disciplined and consistent study to explore the secrets of Nature and reform the shape of human society. Here

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we need a societal model which embraces both the religious values and modern avenues of scientific knowledge and social advance. Thus a way is paved whereby a process of transformation takes place to effect necessary changes in the society. But since the process of transformation challenges the status quo of the reactionary forces, it is opposed by them. The staunchest segments to oppose this development are the clergy, feudal lords and extreme fanatics. The role of religio-social opinion varies from country to country, but fundamentally they seem to be united in thwarting the vibrant force of modernism. They fear that, one-day, it might demolish the cobwebs, which they have artificially contrived to perpetuate their vested interests.

Although philosophically and traditionally the approach of all sciences is empirical and secular, yet they are not necessarily opposed to religion and do not create unnecessary constraints in the way of religious or philosophical thought. Although their main focus is on research and enquiry, but it does not mean that they are inherently anti-religious. They may challenge some of the common suppositions, but they do not oppose religion just for the sake of opposition. They base their arguments on reason and rationality and any other criteria are not acceptable to them. However, sciences in the course of their discoveries and exploration also come across some evidence which might help corroborate the cosmic realities and natural phenomena as revealed by the divine scriptures. *3

Scientists may be religious or agnostic according to the mode of thought they may have evolved over a period of time. Their thoughts may deny the existence of God, but their feelings and intuitive insight may lead them to establish a relationship with the Creator of the universe whom they may call by any other name.

This trend appears to be exceedingly clear in the corridors of modern sciences and academic excellence. Mankind is a greater entity – a major cause of awakening in the West. Western scientists pursue knowledge to find out ways for improving the standard of living and procuring means of sustenance for the impoverished sections of human society. In search of truth and wisdom, they explain how knowledge can be deployed to uplift the deteriorating grades of human existence.

The modernist view, however, is not all that new. It originated in its initial phases in the Middle Ages and grew rapidly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With the introduction of science in Spain especially by the Muslim scientists, scholars and thinkers new ideas and social forces were brought in to rejuvenate the dormant streams of human thought and development.

It brought in its wake a wave of general awakening which spread through most of the West European nations and stimulated the process of social and economic development. It was a process of modernization initiated by the Muslim world but adopted and deployed actively by the western world.

Reason and rationality, which were the integral ingredients of this movement, were also the creative force of a Muslim sect known as the Mu'tazilites in the 3rd Islamic century. This clashed both with the Christian and Muslim orthodoxy and was subsequently rejected as a systematic code of religious thought. But the modernist movement in Europe did benefit from its intellectual implications and the Industrial Revolution in Europe may have been the starting point of an organized and well-defined modernist movement.

This provided strong stimulants to accelerating the pace of progress both in humanitarian and natural sciences. With the renewed belief in progress new avenues were found in related

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areas with strong focus on sciences and social reform. At the same time new concepts such as 'evolutionism' and 'multilateralism' were developed to reject the static view and examine the developments in new perspectives.

With strong faith in scientific research and discoveries in related fields the modern man spared no effort to develop and expand the existing avenues and bring in new reserves for further growth and development. The futuristic view became clearer and the fate of mankind was destined to develop and expand in a certain direction.

Religion was also invited to join hands and cooperate towards modernizing the varying facets of human society. Christian and Jewish scholars agreed with this new concept of modernism and elucidated the canons of religion in context of human welfare and socio-economic reforms. This altered the zeitgeist of the common man and made him think in terms of tangible materialist form. But Muslims who were in the forefront in the initial phases were left behind as they did not participate in the race. In many Muslim countries the trend was observed from a distance but no efforts were made to make the best use of opportunities for furthering the pace of social and economic growth.

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Faulty Perception

As a result Muslims were reduced to a very insignificant position and became mere non-entity in the league of nations. With defeats in the 18th and 19th centuries and domination of the European colonialists in the 20th century, the events for Muslims became increasingly unpalatable, but still they were as docile and decadent as ever before. Despite defeats and setbacks the lethargic and despondent posture remained miserably pitiable, yet intellectual awakening was almost extinct and social, moral

consciousness totally wiped out. Instead a defeatist, fatalist view was assumed to shirk the hard realities of a disciplined life.

As a result of their backwardness and lethargic postures Muslims became the worst victims of the US aggression in the aftermath of 9/11. With the western domination taking deep roots in the Muslim world, the western powers manipulated to exploit their economic and political reserves to their own best advantage. Even the remaining remnants of socio-cultural and religious fundamentalism were removed by introducing secular and irreligious curricula in school textbooks.

In countries like Pakistan efforts are being made to cut down the number of seminaries and religious schools to restructure them in consonance with the wishes of the neo-cons in Washington by changing their prescribed courses and methods of education. It does not appear to be a positive move, as in the long run it might harm the spirit with which deep in this field and most of the western networks have been engaged to creating a false image of Islam and the Muslims. Islam is being presented as a flawed and medieval religion incapable of solving the problems of the modern age. This is a wrong trend which has been condemned even by the 9/11 commission instituted by the US government. In its findings the commission has observed that such a flawed presentation of Muslims and Islam is based on biased perception and should be brought to an end.

To combat Islamophobia based on false propaganda and misinterpretations some Muslim scholars have undertaken to create a better understanding of Islam by presenting its values in proper perspectives. *4

. Islam is a religion of knowledge, balance and moderation and it has nothing to do with violence and aggression. This should have been made more clear boldly and proactively by the

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contemporary Muslim scholars and writers, as did some Muslim scholars in the past.

. Maulana Jamaluddin Afghani is one of those who say that Muslims have been in a terrible mess and religion needs to be presented in renewed form to make the enlightened aspects more vivid. He called for a synthesis of moral and scientific pursuits in a more practical way. Afghani was also a strong proponent of "Pan-Islamism" pleading for the unity of Muslim ummah. He championed the cause of rational rehabilitation of Islam and called for the emancipation of Muslims from the clutches of decadence.

Muhammad Abduh

Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) of Egypt was another great Muslim thinker who was deeply perturbed over the decline of the Muslim ummah. With his knowledge of logic and deduction he tried to analyze the deteriorating conditions of Muslims and propose appropriate remedies.

Inspired by Ibn Sina and al-Afghani Abduh upheld the principle of Ijtihad – the right of independent personal enquiry and thought free from all fetters and fought against the imposition of dogmas from Mullahs and orthodox religious authorities. He believed in examining the precepts with reason and called for Ijtihad for research and reform. He said the doors of Ijtihad were open for all times to come in order to face the challenges of times. He argued that Islam is a rationalistic religion and is oriented to "liberating man from the authority of the clergy. It has brought him face to face with God and has taught him not to rely on any intercession".

His philosophy envisages rationalism in Islam as 'a final stage in religious evolution'. He says that it is through the progressive

stages that man has reached the final stage of religion, which is Islam. He places special stress on the use of human faculties and believes that it is through the channel of intellect that Islam reconciled reason with nature, and freeing man from the tutelage of authority. The use of intellectual faculties brings man closer to God.

Moral reform for Abduh is an imperative without which the structure of social, economic and political reform cannot be realized. With religion as a sound base the level of morality ought to be raised to accord actions a solid foundation. Actions are the most important prerequisite for building the society. Abduh, therefore, brings in spiritualism with a strong tinge of pragmatism.

He strongly condemned the general level of ignorance (Jahiliyya) found among the Muslims all over the world and termed it as the main contributing factor for the socio-cultural paralysis of the Egyptian society in particular and of Muslim societies in general.

Shah Wali Allah
Quality of life

Among the major social, religious thinkers to have influenced the course of Muslim thought in the Indo-Pak sub-continent were Shah Wali Allah, Sir Syed Khan, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

The pivotal point on which the philosophy of Shah Wali Allah revolves is the integral interplay between social, ethical and economic systems which determines the shape of human society. It is the personal relation of man to God and to his fellow-beings which determines the quality of his life. No one can be a perfect human being who seeks his salvation in isolation from society. It is only in the social setup that 'the spirituality of an individual is expressed'. A detailed exposition of this philosophy appears in

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Shah Wali Allah's famous work "Hujjat Allah al-Baligah". He contends that social system as a dynamic process is the prerequisite for a modern progressive society. It is also an important ingredient in the evolution of culture and civilization. Since Muslims distanced themselves from this essential element, they were reduced to some of the insignificant communities of the world.

ShahWali Allah makes it clear that the supposed love of poverty is a great misconception among Muslims. It is an erroneous view, which is confused with simple and modest living. He also condemns self-aggrandizement, corruption, bribery and temptations which have corroded the vitals of Muslim societies especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt etc. Shah Wali Allah conceives of a viable state, which must exist to promote "good life", as enunciated by Islam.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan
Education, Education & Education

Among the modernist reformers the names of Sir Syed and Muhhamad Iqbal are the most significant in the history of the Indo-Pak sub-continent.

First, we deal with Sir Syed who is believed to have changed the mindset of the Indian Muslims. In the field of education Sir Syed stands as a colossus – a man who laid the foundation stone for a systematic and modern way of education.

Sir Syed while laying the foundation of Anglo-Oriental College made it clear that among the modern languages English was the most important which has to be learnt by the Muslims if they wanted to make any progress in modern sciences, academics, politics and economics.

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Underlying the importance of the Quran Sir Syed made it clear that its interpretation by the semi-literate Mullahs was not in consonance with the requirements of human growth and the varying needs of evolving times. He was strongly opposed to the blind allegiance to the religious authorities which were no longer valid and adequately qualified to understand and interpret the Quran. Instead of creating a spirit of critical appraisal of the situations and adapting constructively to the changing environments, the Mullahs had produced an attitude of passive obedience to a static ideal of taqlid.

What Sir Syed stressed most was the urgency of resolving the complexities of modern age without being hampered by the views and opinions of the orthodoxy. Sir Syed, both in temporal and religious education, examined the problems from a practical point of view. He sought concrete answers and practical remedies. He was one of the few modernist thinkers who created intellectual awakening among Muslims and enabled them to rise up to the challenges of the modern age. Through a synthesis of western education and Islamic way of life Sir Syed proposed practical propositions for resolving the complexities of modern age.

Muhammad Iqbal
Ego-and Creativity

In the first half of the twentieth century we find Iqbal (1876-1938) as the rising star on the horizons of Islamic modernism. He was a keen student of Islamic ideology and western philosophy. Disturbed by the deteriorating conditions of the Muslim ummah Iqbal worked hard to find the causes of Muslim decadence and suggested remedies for their survival. With stern realities, coupled with lethargy and apathy, enveloping the Muslim ummah Iqbal tried to create the awakening through writing poetry, books and delivering lectures. With the power of pen his writings on religion, philosophy, politics and sociology

were a positive move towards removing the 'grey autumn leaves from the tree of life'. *5

With the soul-stirring poetry his message was conveyed to all the sections of human society, especially to the Muslims, who were at the lowest rung of human existence.

Iqbal condemned at the same time the so-called religiosity, which was not based on spiritual, ethical and intellectual norms and served to perpetuate the cause of orthodoxy and obscurantism. The realm of the spirit and religion had to be rediscovered if Muslims were to rejuvenate their dormant potential. He deplored that Muslims had spoiled the shape of religion and turned it into a narrow, dogmatic set of rituals. Such religiosity, he contended, was hollow and life-thwarting mechanism. Iqbal soon became an iconoclast and opposed the dominant forces of orthodoxy and idolatry.

Iqbal believed in purposive life and the concept of Ego was not conceivable without purposiveness or creativity. Therefore, religion should be used primarily for character building. As a system of knowledge Iqbal sees no chasm between intellectual knowledge and real experiences. His outlook is Quranic and his approach is dynamic. He tries to find solutions of material and spiritual complexities in light of the Quran and modern knowledge. For him, as for Rumi, intellectual consciousness ought to be compatible with religious consciousness. It is only then that a rich, purposeful life can be evolved to embrace mind, spirit and other essential aspects of human life. It is only then that intellectual energy can lead to prophetic consciousness—a mode of individual thought, judgment and action.

"The birth of Islam, he adds, is the birth of inductive intellect. The constant appeal to reason and experience in the Quran and the emphasis on Nature and History as sources of knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea".*6

However, for action to materialize ideas and thoughts should be imbued with faith and intensity. It is only then that action can take place and produce productive outcomes.

Love (ishq) or faith brings Iqbal nearer to the concept of Mard-I-Momin or the Mard-I-Qalandar, as he calls him. He wants strength of character and integrity of personality to realize the goals of perfection. Thus his egoism or innermost thought is imbued with revolutionary zeal and a strong urge to reform the society.

Collective destiny of the ummah and the way to remould it is the main concern expressed throughout his writings. For this purpose he urges the Muslims to exploit their individual and collective potential to the optimum use. The use of natural reserves and human resources is to be maximised to shape the destiny of the Muslim ummah. If Muslims use their resources wisely and productively, then God's help will also be there and it would be possible to realize the specific goals.

According to Iqbal a perfect man is not fettered by his destiny, but he himself is the maker of his day and nights, of the order and functioning of his mental, spiritual and material reserves. In the process of developing his ego, man reaches such an apex that God Himself ascertains his aspirations to shape his destiny. *7

Transcending the superficial limitations of time, space and destiny, the perfect man is imbued with creativity, activity and initiative. In such a way man becomes a co-worker with God. *8

In Iqbal's view man's creativity ought to enable him to transform his personality and environments. If he cannot do, he is divorced of the essential ingredients of growth and perfection. To Iqbal the perfect man is the epitome of best possible attributes reposed in the mind and body of man.

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As Iqbal was keenly interested in reforming the contours of human society, he believed that such a man must be oriented to effecting constructive changes in the formation of an ideal society.

So, in a frustrating mood he challenges the degenerate segments of Muslim society and wondered:

"Who can imagine the strength of his (perfect man's) arm?
Destinies are altered at the mere sight of a perfect man."

Iqbal made it repeatedly clear that without such men in our midst the destiny of Muslim societies will not undergo a change, nor will they attain the goals set for higher beings. Muslims will have to imbibe the spirit of the Quran to cultivate a personality on the pattern of the Holy Prophet.

It should be clear now that the orthodox and obscurantist views of Islam are not the positive assets of the religion that we can be proud of. The discussion of the factors which have caused the decadence should be an eye-opener for the most conservative segments who are not interested in following the path of balance and moderation, growth and development. We also have to be careful about the influence of the ultra liberal elements which want to detract moderate Muslims from the path of piety and purity. To combat the extremists and fanatics in both the camps a course of balanced, enlightened moderation has to be adopted. Education, religion, science and technology have to be deployed for growth and development.

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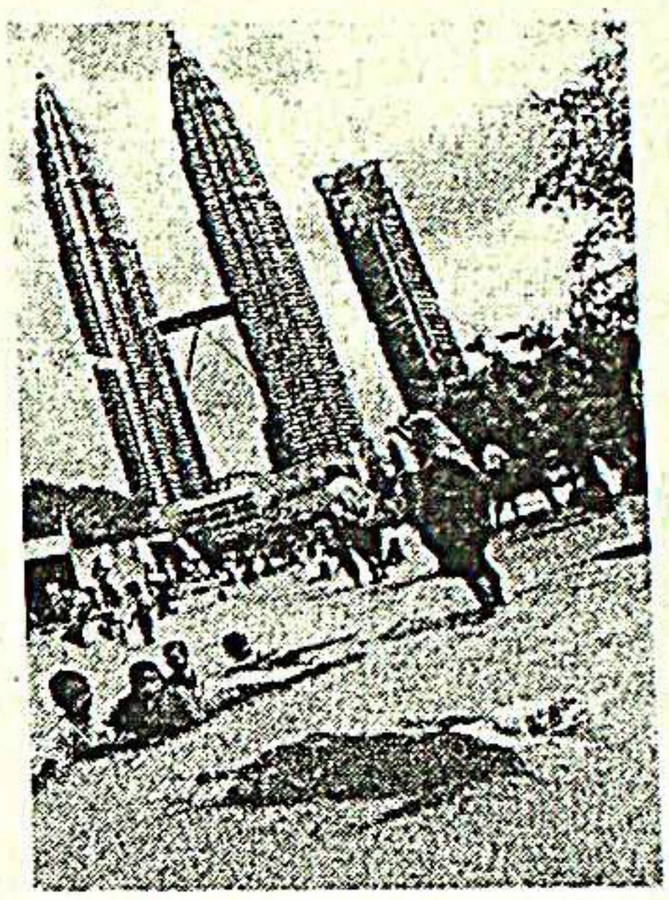

Merging Modernity with Islam

Transforming the society

We have seen how Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, imbued with enthusiasm and vision, laid the foundations of modern educational system for Muslims in India. Had he not established the Aligarh University, how ignorant and backward Muslims would have been. It is not difficult to imagine the steep fall which would have been the fate of the Indian Muslims. Jamaluddin Afghani and Shah Wali Allah's concern for unity and awakening among the Muslims were the cardinal constituents of a successful strategy. Iqbal's concern for the Mard-I-Momin was a clarion call for the transformation of Muslim society.

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As we have seen Muslims over the past centuries have been the worst victims of self-inflicted wounds caused by the rapidly sliding wave of degeneration and decadence. The loss of intellectual insight and deviation from religious and moral values put severe strains on the evolution of a purpose-oriented life, as Iqbal laments it. The all-pervading decadence was given a push by more than two hundred years old colonialism, capitalism and exploitation.

At present the situation seems to be fast declining as anti-Muslim forces spear-headed by the US neo-conservatives are set to cause heaviest blows to the integrity and unity of the Muslim ummah. At the same time Muslims are fast asleep, perhaps half-dead, as no blows appear to have awakened them from their deep slumber.

Islam does not share the gloomy, murky prospects pervading the Muslim ummah, and does not believe in simple faith and belief without any positive action in the direction of an enlightened destination. Muslims will have to be Muslims, redeemers and bearers of responsibilities before any transformation can take place to improve their destiny. The Quran in verses 2:286 and 53:39 clearly points out the burden of responsibilities that each individual has to bear while going through the adventures of life. Adventures and duties should animate the complex of human life and this is how the purpose and significance of living can be realized.

"That man will have nothing save that he strives for" is the principle the Quran (53:39) has clearly enunciated to leave no doubt for the lotus-eaters who under the spell of their growing

religiosity tend to renounce the heavy burden of responsibilities. The misfortune of the Muslim history is the neglect of their own scripture and its injunctions. This is the reason that Muslims have been left far behind while other nations have advanced in all spheres of human life.

Actions are imperative for results and actions determine the quality of life. As the Quranic verses imply that actions are both good and bad and the results are also coloured by the hues and forms the actions assume. Islam, as an all-embracing religion, demands from its followers honesty and hard work both in temporal and spiritual spheres. Any deviation from this principle will lead to hollow, futile exercise. If they disdain from worldly life, it means they follow the Christian ascetic path of renunciation, which may be contrary to the thesis of the Quran and the life of the Prophet. The holy Prophet's life has shown that the earthly life has to be lived with equal engagement, creativity and concern. In Islam there are no barriers or limitations, which should debar Muslims' participation in daily practical life.

But as Muslims we believe that in every aspect of life we stand accountable before the divine court of justice. Hence in Islam there is clear emphasis on socio-economic justice, education, intellect and accomplishments in science and arts. Hence any one who claims that the process of progress as pursued by the modernists is contrary to the belief of a Muslim is, in fact, denying the very purpose of human existence. The divine purpose is writ large on the vast records of human history. From the birth of Adam to the last day of man on this earth the process of growth and development continues to reform and refine the grades of human perfection both in physical and spiritual spheres. No Quranic injunctions or the pattern of the Prophet's life is oriented to renouncing the world and dissociating from the progressive path of growth and civilization.

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Any one who deviates from the path of vitality, in fact, commits himself to a condition of 'selbstentfremdung'(self-alienation), in which the vital venues are left to satisfy whims and vagaries. The notion that Islam and modernity cannot join hands seems to emanate from cantankerous confines of medievalism. It has nothing to do with reformation and renaissance or the making of Islam as a progressive and civilized way of life.

Another form of alienation, which seems to have hindered the process of progress in the Muslim world is their reluctance to accept the realities of life. Lack of education, lethargy, fanaticism and extremism are the negative constituents of a declining nation. On top of that Muslims are divorced of any sense of unity and any notion of charity, which seem to have obliterated the concept of a universal brotherhood. Charity, the instrument of universal love, is more or less extinct from the life of common Muslims.

Here arises the question of Islam's relevance to rediscovering the code of a universal humanity. From its inception Islam has been a religion of love and compassion, harmony and brotherhood. A glance at its history will reveal that no pre-modern civilization embraced more cultures than Islam. In fact, it was Islam which through a successful synthesis of various cultures, conceived the organic view of a comprehensive, constructive religion to suit all religions and races.

Transcending time and space it demonstrated that Islamic doctrines were oriented to beautifying life rather than destroying other cultures. Based on basic human values such as love and charity, the Islamic code was a composite of veritable virtues which won the hearts and minds of all communities irrespective of their ethnic and religious denominations. Especially, in the Indo-Pak sub-continent Islam offered a bouquet of culture and harmony comprising an assortment of lively languages, poetic diction, interesting architecture and palatable cuisines. Nothing

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could be more fertile to the modification of relationship between belligerent communities and ideologies. With the dissolution of divisions caused by castes and creeds, Islam proclaimed the equality of all citizens irrespective of their castes and creeds, birth and vocation. Their original differences could not have had any effect on the process of evolution to motivate their material, physical and spiritual expansion. Thus a truly just and fair system was evolved in which the rights of non-Muslims were as much protected as those of the Muslims. Although some cases of deviation from these principles were also found to have caused a sense of disgust, but these were the oddities caused by human infirmities.

Modernity of Islam

This was the modernity of Islam several hundred years ago when no such concept was in vogue. The caliphs like Omar were the men of future who had laid down the principles with their practical implications for people all over the world. Even today the period of earlier Islam is known for its brilliant thought, enlightenment, justice and fair treatment of human beings irrespective of their ethnic or communal differences. The Declaration of Human Rights as propounded by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was no less modern than the Charter of Human Rights approved by the United Nations. Hence it is absurd to absurd to condemn Islam as a backward and decadent code of life. It is the followers of Islam who have relegated the glorious principles in the background and have betrayed the trust which was reposed in them. With narrow and sacrosanct channels of thought, specific political ideologies and pernicious psychopathic convictions perpetrated by some orthodox elements among Muslims have caused consternation to give Islam a bad name.

Now the question, the Million Dollar question, remains how to deal with such segments and how to extricate the ummah from

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the dismal depths of degeneration. The fact is that we cannot run away from the realities of modern age, nor can we remain stagnant in a world of action. Leaving every thing to God and assuming a lethargic and indolent posture is the most dangerous deviation from the principles of Islam. The void has to be filled in and the issues have to be resolved amicably and intelligently, with reason and intellect given by God.

Revelation and reflection

The Quran invites its readers to ponder and reflect, without which no solution can be found. Muslims have to understand that the self-taught meanings of the reliance on God are different from what the Quran contends to convey. This concept has to be appreciated in light of the implications the Quran implies for the guidance of mankind.

" Our religious leaders have no idea that changes take place in society giving rise to new needs and that our understanding of Islam should take these needs into account, instead of sticking to the decisions given by medieval jurists and scholars whose thinking was moulded, in part, by intellectual, social, economic and political atmosphere of their own age.
Thus the exercise of Ijtihad (independent reasoning) has become an urgent necessity, if we are to face the challenges of modern age This Ijtihad should be collective and it should be undertaken by those religious scholars who understand the problems of this age. This will require a good deal of intellectual liberty". *9

In terms of social, economic and political justice too a lot of work needs to be done in the Muslim world. The western countries have evolved very effective systems to meet the basic needs of their citizens. Special provisions are made for those who happen to fall into the trap of unemployment, poverty or disease. But in the Islamic world no such arrangements are made despite the fact that the first Bait-ul-Mal (the Social Security

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System) was instituted in Medina during the Caliphate of Abubakr and Omar. The socio-economic injustice in Muslim countries is so grave that the holy Prophet, if alive, would have been utterly disgusted with the level of inequalities perniciously penetrating into the fabric of Muslim societies.

With the elimination of socio-economic justice from the Muslim society the ideals and aspirations seem to have had another dip into the pit of decline and decadence. Coupled with the decline in faith and understanding the misinterpretation of religion for specific purposes has given rise to extremism and fanaticism. The meaning and purpose of life have lost their relevance for the common believers in Islam. Instead of following the cardinal values of Islam they are pursuing the worldly riches by hook or by crook. Dishonest practices, corruption, cheating and fraud are the common practices employed in most Muslim societies. Living in the modern age does not help them develop their potential as their main focus is on the ugly manifestations of modernism.

The brilliant features of modernism, such as education, human values, material advance and socio-economic justice do not fall within the purview of their observation.

Modernism may sound obnoxious to many orthodox Mullahs, but its impact on our daily lives is tangible and its existence as a reality has to be reckoned with.

The responsibility lies with the literate Ullemas and scholars who have to explain the concept of modernization with a tinge of Islamic orientation. The structure has to be redesigned by bringing it within the compass of Islamic norms. Modernism as already explained is not an anathema to Islam. It was conceived even at the time of the Prophet (pbuh) and was brought in to shatter the decadent edifice of stereotyped beliefs, suspicions and misinterpretation of human values. The Prophet fought against the evil practices of a decadent society and embraced the challenges with creative response and vibrant human action. This

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was the Jihad the Prophet launched against all forms of corruption, aggression and degeneration. Modernism is nothing but a redefined interpretation of the imperatives of progress both in temporal and spiritual life. Modernism does not stop you from being a Muslim or from following your religion; rather it helps you to be a good Muslim.*10

Religion of Revolution

It is only by understanding the meanings of modernism and by imbibing the spirit of religion that we can create a constructive, purpose-oriented society, a society that is based on the principles of charity, discipline and progress. It is only then that we can transform the individual personality and human society for the realization of the goals God set for us at the time of our creation. This means a religious revolution but also a revolution in our thoughts and actions. For bringing this revolution we will have to bring first of all a psychological or human revolution among the Muslims.

This dialectic is crucial, because reflective thought is the imperative of the Quran. The Quran by giving human life special meanings and direction makes this transformation possible. The Muslim orthodoxy, then far from inhibiting the pace of progress, will be an integral constituent of this revolution.

Then it will be the success of Islam that will have exercised its formative influence in redefining and recreating a cherished concept for the renewal of the Muslam renaissance – the renaissance which appeared centuries ago but was consigned in the cold storage by the neglect of the Muslims themselves. By reviving its trappings it will be possible to rejuvenate the sinews, which have become decadent and dilapidated.

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Then it will be possible to create conducive environments for the enrichment of human life and development of venues, which lead to creativity and sublimation. Then perhaps it might be possible to extricate the Muslim ummah from the depths of degeneration and restore a sense of dignity. This is the only way to consummation and perfection—the way of the Mard-I-Momin who remains an obscured, mythical entity in the chronicles of Islamic inspiration.

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References:

*1: See the Qur'an : 9:122.

*2: See "The Qur'an and Modernism" by Iqbal S. Hussain, Humanity Intern'l,

*3: " ibid

*4: ibid

*5: cf: William Goethe.CA

*6: M.Iqbal: The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.Lahore 1926.P.126.

*7: M. Iqbal: Bal-I-Jibrail. P.81

*8: M. Iqbal: Six Lectures: pp. 11-12

*9: Mazeheruddin Siddiqi: Modern Reformist Thought in The Muslim World.pp.230-31.

*10: See " The Qur'an and Modernism" by Iqbal S. HussainAA

Chapter No. 6

Philosophy of Creation

"Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart cannot be quieted till it may find repose in Thee."

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Capturing the mind and soul

Philosophy of Creative Existence

Man does not know how to be a man. God created man with a specific purpose, for a specific period and assured him of a life that would be eternal in the Hereafter. To be His vicegerent on earth and to worship Him in the best possible manner was the purpose of creation according to the Quran and other divine scriptures. "Behold, though I may give them rein for a while, but My subtle scheme of things is exceedingly firm "says the Creator in the Quran (68:45). The term "subtle scheme" (kayd) evidently circumscribes here God's unfathomable plan of creation of which man can have glimpses only in isolated fragments and never the totality: a plan in which every thing and happening has a definite function and nothing is accidental. *1
Man has, however, been endowed with intellect and perception to understand his role in the "subtle scheme" of creation.
Understanding the nature of his creation and establishing a relationship with God is the purpose of man's creation.

But this purpose is generally relegated in the background as man grows old and develops his faculties. With the enjoyment of a variety of endowments the genuine and intended relationship is consigned in the background and man is trapped in the cobweb of temporal temptations, allure and illusions. An exegete says:

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"As man's knowledge of the process of nature advances, he sees how complex is the evolution of matter itself, leaving out the question of the origin of life and the spiritual forces, which are beyond the ken of experimental sciences. But this knowledge becomes a sort of "Veil of Light": man becomes so conscious of the proximate causes, that he is apt, in his pride, to forget the Primal Cause, the ultimate hand of Allah in creation. The whole process is so complicated and infinite that God "adds to His creation as He pleases", not only in quantity, but also in qualities, functions, relations and variations in infinite ways". *2

The deceptive temptations may cause man to deviate from the right path and man may echo the call of the devil by saying: "Evil! Be thou my good".
Nevertheless, the process of creation is continuous, constant and steadily expanding with the multiplicity of variety, range and expanse.

How was the world created and what was the purpose and plan of creation are some of the pertinent questions that crop up from time to time in man's mind.
This also constitutes one of the most integral issues of the Muslim philosophy. Ibn Tufail, one of the leading thinkers and contributors on this issue has provided some of the answers which may, nevertheless, be debatable in some quarters. Keeping in touch with his dialectical ingenuity, he faces it squarely in the manner of Greek philosophers disagreeing with some of the positions they assumed. Unlike his predecessors, he does not subscribe to any of the rival doctrines, nor does he make any attempt to reconcile them. On the other hand, he subjects both the Aristotelian and theological positions to scathing criticism. The eternity of the world involves the concept of infinite existence, which is no less impossible than the notion of infinite extension. Such an existence cannot be free from created accidents, and as such cannot precede them in point of time; and

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that which cannot exist before the created accidents must itself be created in time. Similarly, the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* does not survive his scrutiny. Like al-Ghazali he points out that the notion of existence after non-existence is unintelligible without supposing the priority of time over the world, but time itself is an inseparable accident of the world, and so its being prior to the world is ruled out. Again, the created must needs have a Creator. Why then did the Creator create the world now and not before? Was it due to something that happened to Him? Obviously not, for nothing existed before Him to make anything happen to Him. Should it be attributed to a change in His nature? But what was there to bring about this change?

Consequently, Ibn Tufail accepts neither the eternity nor temporal creation of the world. The antinomy clearly anticipates the Kantian position that reason has its own limits and that its arguments lead to a maze of contradictions.

However, the eternity of the world and its *creatio ex nihilo* equally and inevitably lead to the existence of an eternal, incorporeal Necessary Being. The creation of the world in time presupposes a Creator, for the world cannot exist by itself. Again, the Creator must, of necessity, be immaterial, for matter being an accident of the world is itself subject to creation by a Creator. On the other hand, regarding God as material would lead to an infinite regress, which is absurd. The world, therefore, must necessarily have a Creator that has no bodily substance. And since He is immaterial, it follows that we cannot apprehend Him by any of our senses or even by imagination; for imagination represents nothing except the sensuous forms of things in their physical absence. *3

However before we proceed further it has to be understood that the acts of creation are discussed on five principal planks: Creation, Prophecy, Predestination, Justice, and Resurrection (Hereafter). At the same time God is believed to possess, among

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others, seven major attributes: Knowledge, Life, Power, Will, Audition, Sight and Speech. These attributes are also imparted in one way or the other to human beings. The above principles and the attributes help develop a quality of relationship between God and man.

According to the Islamic doctrine of creation the world is not an act of chance, but a deliberate move towards creative and sustainable form of existence. Life is not confined to this world alone, but is spread over eternity.

It is a series of causes emanating from the Primal Cause. He says: "He who, in the artificial things, denies or cannot understand the caused resulting from causes would have no knowledge of the art or the artisan; similarly, he who denies the existence in this world of the dependence of efforts on causes would deny the Wise Maker". *4

The other principles mentioned above are described in the Quran and in other descriptive literature relating to religion and philosophy.

However, the basic idea behind the creation of man is to ensure that man submits and sublimes on the ground of doctrines offered to him by the divine scriptures and holy prophets. Man has to understand the purpose of creation and appreciate its connotations if he wants to remain true to the covenant he made at the time of his creation.

But the main constraint on way to proper understanding of the concept of creation is the illusion that the worldly allure and temporal temptations are the real things, while God and His plans are of hardly any interest to man. Hence man who lives under the spell of worldly glare hardly bothers to concern him with the implications of this concept.

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The Quran repeatedly refers to the fundamental principles of creation and reminds man of the purpose for which he has been created. The Quran says:
"Doth man not see that it is We who created him from sperm? Yet behold! He stands forth as an open adversary". Man's disobedience and folly are all the more surprising, seeing that- apart from Allah's greatness and mercy- man himself is such a puny creature, created out of something that is less than a drop in the vast ocean of existence. Yet man has the audacity to be contentious and deviates from the path prescribed for him. *5

Then the Quran refers to the splendour of nature, the beauty of shades, hues and colours.
The wonderful colours, shades of colours are to be found not only in vegetation, but also in rocks and mineral products as well. There are the white veins of marble and quarts or of chalk, the red late rite, the blue basaltic rocks, the ink-black flints, and all other variety, shades and gradations of colours. Speaking of mountains, we think of their azure hue, from a distance, due to atmospheric effects, and these atmospheric effects lead our thoughts to the glories of clouds, subsets, the zodiacal light, the aurora borealis, and all kinds of Nature's gorgeous pageantry. *6

Having established that God is the Creator and there is a purpose in life, many scholars and interpreters have attempted to illustrate the significance of the divine injunctions in varying forms and meanings.

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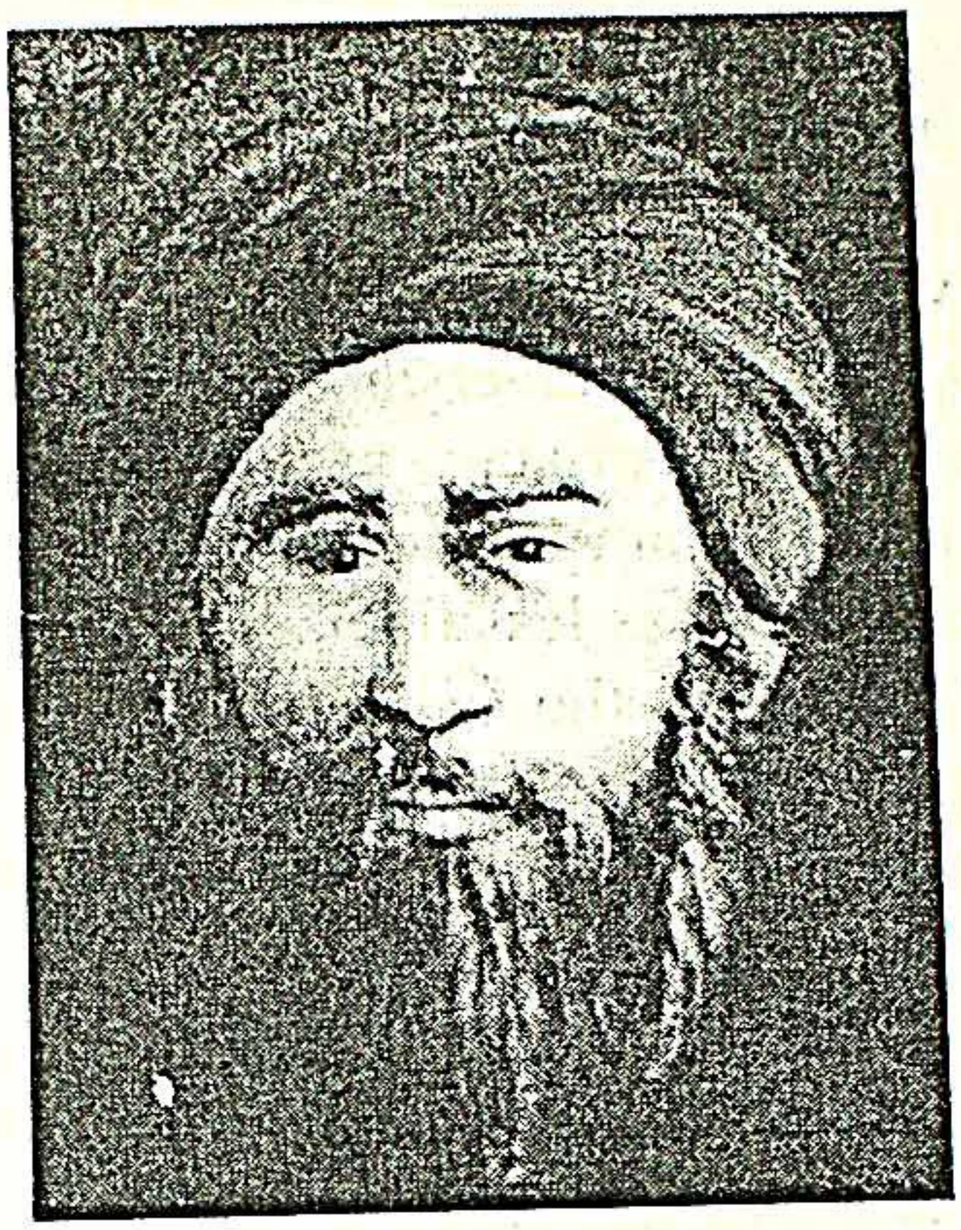

Ibn Rushd (1128-1198 A.D)

Muhammad Ibn Rushd (born in Cardova in 1126) was among the leading thinkers to have paid serious attention to the question of establishing a relationship with God. Ibn Rushd preached the principles, which are important for understanding and establishing a genuine relationship with the Creator of the Universe. These principles are based on the existence of God, the Prophecy and Resurrection.

These principles form the basis of Islamic doctrine. Any one who detracts from these principles forfeits the right to be placed in the category of religious people. He said philosophers should not declare their esoteric interpretations to the masses lest they are misled and fall into the trap of heresy.

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The Way to God

Having established that religion has apparent and inner meanings, symbolic for the common people and hidden for the learned, Ibn Rushd endeavours in his book: al-Kashf 'an Mandhij al-Adilah to find out the way to God, i.e., the methods given in the Quran to attain to the belief in the existence of God and to the knowledge of His attributes. Discussing the different ways various sects in his times approached this philosophy, Ibn Rushd maintains that that the evidence of God's existence can be established by teleological (starting from man and other beings) and cosmological.

This evidence is further strengthened by the fact that most of the environments in which man is born are appropriate to his existence, and this suitability is not a matter of chance, but a pre-planned pattern to sustain the existence of man. The knowledge of God and the acquisition of its attributes are the basis of a correct form of understanding.

Performing the essential functions of life as enunciated by God and serving as His vicegerent on the earth are possible only when man understands the realities behind his creation and acquires the essential knowledge in this regard.

Hence the knowledge of these elements constitutes the essence of Islamic and every other form of scientific inquiry. Since science promotes the insight into the formation of the universe, the cosmos, the creation of man and the way all these realities came into being, hence it is essentially religious and very near to what the religion propounds.

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Knowledge may be acquired through prophecy (scriptural revelations), intuition or scientific observations. Further avenues may be found in logical reasoning, contemplation and philosophical perception. But logical reasoning, according to some theological schools, is not an appropriate channel for acquiring truth and knowledge. Imam Ghazali and his associates in his school of thought rely mainly on observation, intuition and spiritual segments of human perception.

However, to accomplish knowledge in this way artificial constraints on the flow of communications have to be removed to facilitate the process of intuition and learning. But man can never have a perfect knowledge of God even if He reveals Himself in some concrete, tangible form. The complete compass of His attributes, omnipotence and omnipresence can never be fully comprehended by the limited scope of man's intelligence. But the constant yearning to acquire the knowledge of God helps stimulate the channels to reach the Domain of God.

This is the way to receive Divine blessings, which God bestows on those who sincerely strive to reach the confines of His Kingdom. Such are the people "who are shown the signs of God in the horizons and in themselves", says the Quran (41:53).

All these signs expand the scope of understanding and help perceive the innermost recesses which otherwise remain obscured under the debris of polluted environments of human existence. With a clear and better perception man becomes more accessible to the providence of an Omni-potent Creator. Man thus becomes the 'allama' lasama'-beg', as Maulana Rumi says, the prince with the connotations of the names taught.

God made Adam His vicegerent on earth and imparted knowledge of the things that were not known to him. This knowledge gave him insight into the attributes of things, which were relevant to his existence on earth. This was the trust- the

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amana- as the Quran says in sura 33-72, that he was endowed with the responsibility he was supposed to carry out.

But the tragedy implied in this assertion is the failure of man that he failed to rise to the occasion which demanded complete attention and thorough reception. The responsibility he was entrusted with reason and (relative) free will could not be fulfilled as was supposedly inscribed in the covenant devised at his birth.

The object- lesson of this reprimand is clear, as Henri Corbin says, in" the religious conscience of humanity (Islam) which is centred upon a fact of meta-history ", namely, upon the trans-historical fact of the primordial covenant as understood from the Quranic verse 7:171 ".

The verse reprimanding the Children of Israel, addressing the whole mankind, admonishes them to hold fast with strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and bear in mind all that is therein, so that you might remain conscious of God".

Confirming His Lordship God asked all human beings (to be born till eternity) if He was not their Lord, and they replied:" Yes, we witness it".

The idea of this primordial covenant (mithaq), says Annemarie Schimmel, has impressed the religious conscience of the Muslims, and especially the Muslim mystics, more than any other idea. Here is the starting point of their understanding of free will and pre-destination; of election and acceptance of God's eternal power and of means having response and promise.

The goal of the mystic is to return to their experience of the " Day of Alastu", when only God existed, before He led future creatures out of the abyss of not-being and endowed them with

life, love, and understanding so that might face Him again at the end of time".

In order to establish a cordial relationship with God one has to understand the Quran and develop a spiritual potential to reach the higher levels of perfection. The Quran is the basic lexicon, the essential textbook of the divine knowledge, the key for a well-developed "weltanschauung". *7

The Quran helps the mankind in general and Muslims in particular to rise above the prosaic level of ordinariness and evils. It emanates man from the source to distinguish between the "soul that commands evil" (al-nafs al-ammara) and the soul, which is at peace with God (al-nafs al-Mutmaana).

The human relationship with God is made clear by indicating that "God is nearer to man than his jugular vein". *8
To illustrate this relationship more vividly God has put signs into Nature and into the human soul."*9

It is by comprehending and appreciating these signs that human beings can get nearer to the Reality of God.

The signs within ourselves as indicated by the Quran in sura 50-16 could be perceived and developed through the medium of soul, which is unique in its attributes and potential.

The human soul can be expanded through various stages of development. These stages comprise sensuous (mahsusat), imaginative (muhumat), rational (maqulat), and the Divine.

The soul, according to Muslim theologians and mystics, is a simple entity and a special creation of God whose exact characteristics and propensities are not known to human intellect. It has its own specific connotations, which are essentially spiritual and divine and are distinct from corporal

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connotations. As a distinct entity it is distinguished from body by being supernatural, intellectual and creative.

The idea of the existence of God is the central component in the chain of events leading to man's endeavour to reach his final destination. Belief in God has been the earliest form of religious perception, which evolved through various rituals and practices, has created a structure for submission and sublimation of human body and soul. Understanding the reality of God was the underlying idea to strengthen belief, which was ingrained in human nature at the time of its creation.

"All the unborn souls of Adam's progeny were asked in their earliest stage of existence if God was their Creator or not, and they all answered" Yes certainly we testify". (Quran: 7:172).

But subsequent developments in human thought and action turned out to be detracting stimulants in contrary directions. Different groups, societies and tribes adopted different gods and symbols for deification. They faltered in pursuit of the faith, which they had promised at the time of their creation.

Polytheism fascinated the imagination of weak and ignorant people who felt daunted by harsh realities of daily life. They invented a number of gods and goddesses to worship and seek their sustenance from their imagined sources.
The growth of such polytheistic tendencies took place in particular in the days of pre-Islamic tribalism.

Creation and propagation of polytheism led to the dissolution of faith in one God. Instead a number of deities and symbols were devised with varying attributes inscribed on their images.

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Justice and beauty

However, the search for one God continued unabated and more and more reliance was placed on a series of prophetic revelations and scriptural injunctions. But Greek philosophers like Pythagoras, Socrates and Aristotle sought their guidance through a number of concepts such as aesthetic pantheism, divine truth and metaphysics.
Plato's doctrine of ideas was nearer to the concept of metaphysics developed by Pythagoras. Justice was the central theme of his discourse. Plato had seen beauty as a light of Truth (God).

Aristotle gave the concept a more concrete form and thought that there was a Prime Mover who made things move and accord them forms and shape. Aristotle perceived the existence of God in constant change the world is subject to. He believed that there must be some one to be the cause of all changes in and around the universe and he called this 'some one' the " Necessary Being".

Although for the majority of Greek philosophers there was no clear concept of God, but they seemed to be moving in the direction, which determined the ultimate existence of an Omnipotent God.

However, for the seekers of divine truth the endeavour has been a constant factor in their lives. It is through this source that transcendental realities get clear and infinitude of God is brought in brighter perspectives.

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Infinitude, says William Blake, ***is an inspiration, which "can be seen in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower". He counsels; "Hold infinity in the*** **palm of your hand,** ***and eternity in an hour".***

David Hilbert, a great mathematician, elaborating the concept of infinitude, says "no other question has ever moved so profoundly the spirit of man." It has fascinated poets, mystics, scientists and philosophers.

Iqbal, the Poet of the East, summing up the search for infinitude says:

"***Thou art infinite and I am finite,***
Either let me be submerged,
Or make me infinite".

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*1: Mohammad Asad: The Message of the Quran: 68:45. EN25

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*3: Hayy bin Yaqzan: p.95-97

*4: cf: Yusuf Abdullah: Ex. Note: 4023

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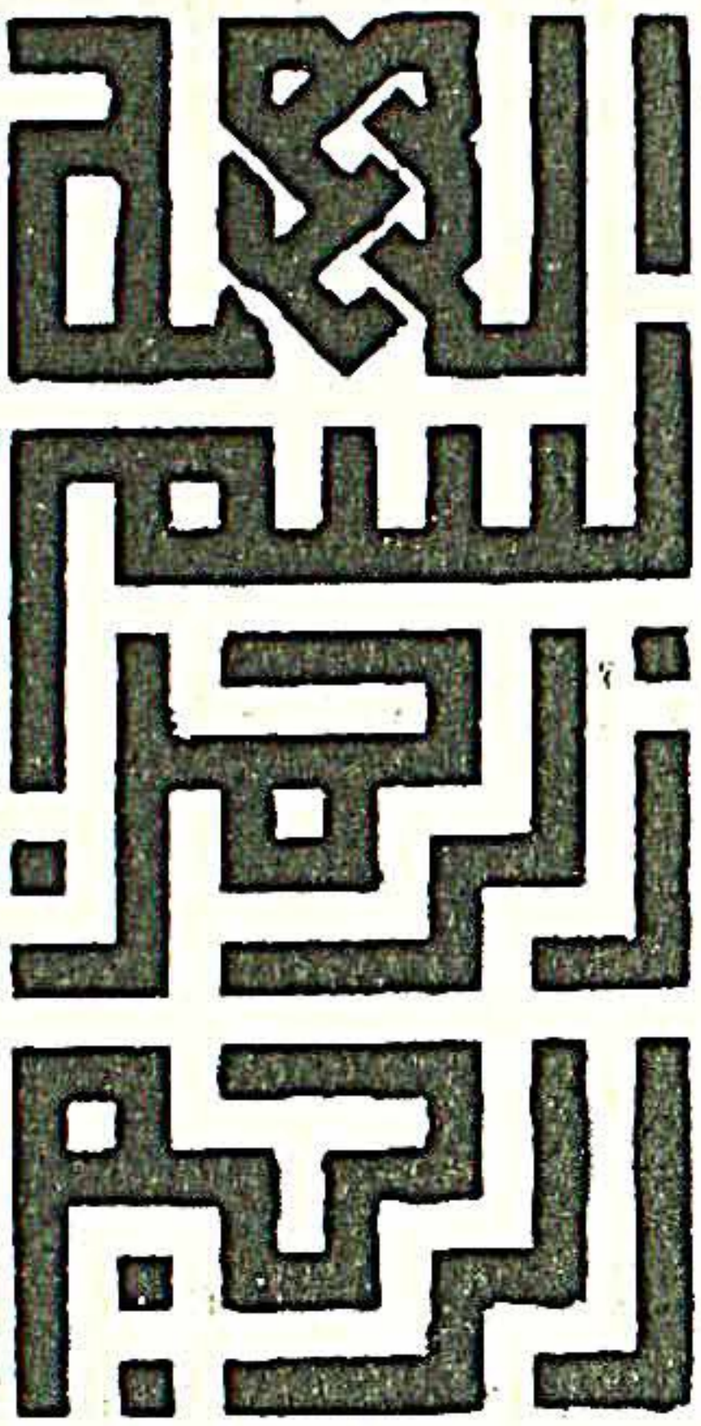

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Chapter No. 7

غلامی میں نہ کام آتی ہیں شمشیریں نہ تدبیریں
In slavery neither swords, nor plans produce any results.

A Nation in Bondage

A nation divided against itself cannot stand.
I believe this government cannot endure permanently,
Half slave and half free.
(CIF: from a speech of Abraham Lincoln.
16June, 1858)

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The morality of masters and
the morality of slaves.

A Nation in Bondage

Bondage or servitude is the worst form of human existence. Slavery has been one of the most distasteful institutions in human history. In pre-Islamic Arab society slavery was practiced with all the manifestations of moral depravity and social degradation. Islam came as a religion of justice and equity and abolished slavery with forthright redress and counter humane measures to rehabilitate the essential pattern of humanity. The first leader of the faithfuls to call them to the prayers was a negro slave whom the Prophet saw even before him entering the Paradise. This was the radical change the world witnessed in the wake of Islamic revivalism.

With the establishment of Islam and its rapid rise in the world Muslims became the rulers of the two-thirds of the world. The pattern was so radically changed that when Omar was on way to Jerusalem, which he had conquered the preceding year, the world saw the marvel of the millennium; the ruler was walking on foot and the slave was sitting on the camel.

In 1250 when Salah-ad-Din had established his rule in Jerusalem and Egypt, his dynasty was taken over by a coterie of military slaves, so was the case in northern India where Mohammad

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Ghori had appointed a slave-viceroy, and this Viceroy's second slave-successor became the sovereign of the Ghori's dominions in India.

So was the case in Transoxania and northeastern Iran, which had prospered under the rule of Abbasids and their Iranian successors the Samandis.
By 1555, the Ottoman Empire was being governed by the Padishah's slave household. Though in the end the same household was blamed for having caused the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

However, since this is not a historical treatise on slavery, hence it may not be appropriate here to go into a detailed dissertation on the subject. The idea is only to establish that Islam, as compared to Christianity and its colonial empires, did not only abolish the scourge of slavery, but also established a pattern of life in which the slaves were accorded equal status. Moreover, the idea is to indicate the manifestations in its wider perspectives, which cover a number of other facets that remain hidden from the perception of a common observer.

These manifestations concern us in their multiple effects as this scourge has penetrated deep into the fabric of Muslim life in one form or the other. Slavery may not be seen as actual enslavement of human beings in iron chains and fetters, but could also be found in political and economic subjugation, intellectual and cultural contamination caused by foreign influences and indoctrination. Its other manifestations are seen in moral and ethical depravation, corruption and confusion, and, last but not least, deviation from the ultimate truth.

And no one could be the worst slave of temporal temptations than the person whose conscience is contaminated with corruption and injustice, greed and avarice. As the Quran says:

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"Allah enjoineth justice and kindness,
and giving to kith and kins,
and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination". (16:90)

In our view nothing could be more lewd and abominable than slavery. It strips man from the virtues of justice and kindness and degrades him to the level of abomination. This is true more for the one who holds others in captivity, although the slaves are also deprived of the dignity and equality, which are the prerogatives of human life. Slavery is not only a rebellion against the laws of God, it also constitutes a negation of one's own conscience.

Shakespeare in this context says:
"What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."*1

Maulana Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in his explanation of the Quranic verse (16:90) says:
"Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more humane, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language have no claim on you; and of course a fortiori the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognized in social life. Similarly, the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognized as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's laws or our own conscience in its most sensitive form".

It is a fact of life that slavery as well as other abominations continue to contaminate the moral, social, cultural and intellectual aspects of human life. It has largely deprived the

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Muslims in particular from the essential ingredients of freedom and dignity, as they remain the victims of internal and external abominations with almost equal exertion. The diabolical forces from within persecute the inner life by spreading false distractions and foreign powers with their inflated agenda to dominate weaker and poorer sections of humanity wind up destroying the order of justice and the life of spirit.

It is a strange combination of satanic seductions, which is manifested in the absence of moral virtues, legal sanctions, justice and humane values. It is the depth of spiritual decadence and human deprivation that leads to socio-cultural anarchism.

The course of life a man adopts and the forms of institutions a society shapes determines largely the level of human excellence and the degree of liberation. Although the archaic forms of slavery have been abolished from a large part of contemporary societies, yet political and economic exploitation exists and continues to act in the same spirit that was the hallmark of traditional slavery. This was strengthened by the western colonialism, which was nothing more than the modernized form of slavery. Active support was given to the western colonial powers by the vested interests found in Muslim and developing societies through their tribal and religious divide.

Modern society, especially the underdeveloped segments, despite the abolition of colonialism, is still victimized and terrorized. With political and ideological environments contaminated human society, especially in Muslim developing countries, is gravitating towards injustice and inequality. Although they proclaim theoretically to treat each other as equals, but in practice the misery to which less fortunate segments of society are subjected is no less than the oppression inflicted in the medieval ages.

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Chaos of consciousness

Exploitation of human beings and lack of institutions has been the main cause of degradation. Such conditions based on inequality and injustice were the main propellants of distorted human character that gave rise to diabolical devices designed to degrade the overall environments. In the words of Iqbal slavery is nothing but the lack of human ego, which is found to weaken man both socially, economically, morally and intellectually. It is a negation of human values and civilizational decorum. A brave new world can only be brought in free and just environments, where there is no exploitation and no slavish restraints on the development of human personality.

Such constraints are also found in social, cultural and intra-state communications especially when it concerns the expression of individual and national feelings, participation in human affairs and dialogue among partners. Conducting such affairs in foreign languages is abominable. It is particularly in this sector that the depletion of individual and national ego is seen to pervade the society. It is also seen in the wearing of dresses and observance of social customs and practices. In countries like Pakistan, where the overwhelming majority of population is illiterate and poor, the so-called elite classes feel elated while speaking in English irrespective of the fallacies they commit and the injuries they cause to the dominant sections of society. Their mental servitude to the colonial domination and their submission to foreign influences is seen interpreting their lurking desire to absorb geopolitical expressions of a decadent dereliction. This is a kind of mental bankruptcy, which continues to manifest in different walks of life. Their obsession with foreign cultures and languages at the cost of their national and religious identity is the phenomenon of utmost disgust. This is not a crisis of faith, but a crisis of national identity and communal participation. This is not so much apathy and disillusionment, as a complete chaos of our national consciousness.

The elite classes' mental diminishment is the cause of national regression, which envelops the whole purview of socio-cultural spectrum. This is the reason that countries like Pakistan continue to suffer under the tutelage of former masters despite the fact that they claim to be independent and sovereign. This is true of most of the Muslim nations, which are passing through a phase of national degradation and personal degeneration.

In Zabur-i-Ajam under the sub-title 'Bandgi Nama' (Book of Servitude), Iqbal says:

In slavery the heart dies in the body;
In slavery, the soul becomes a burden to the body.
In slavery, the infirmity of old age comes in youth;
In slavery, the lion of the forest becomes a toothless imbecile.

This is such a situation that the very fabric of human society is ruptured and man becomes the enemy of man, and society is bifurcated in varying strata and segments.

The socio-economic order, especially in underdeveloped countries, is miserably unjust and increasingly oriented to oppression and exploitation. The petty industrialists, feudal lords and bureaucrats persist in the perpetration of injustice and corrupt practices, which debase the shape of human society. Destitution, lack of education and disease are the general conditions found among the exploited masses.

Starvation lead to slavery

In the rural agricultural regions the landless peasants, with no resources of their own, present a pitiable pattern of life, which is no less than servitude. A study of the essential facts of life in villages indicates a growing phase of social and economic degeneration that pervades the common peasants' deteriorating

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fabric of life. Many landless peasants are tied to the chains of severe conditions of the landlords and lending institutions. Failing to repay the loans in time they are penalized and subjected to conditions, which are not less than those of the former slave masters. In some situations conditions become so desperate that many of them are reduced on the verge of starvation and extinction.

Similar and even worse conditions are found among poorer sections of society in the so-called urbanized areas of developing countries Capitalists in pursuit of avaricious pursuit of wealth do not accept any responsibility towards meeting the basic needs of the segments reduced below the poverty line. In countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India more than one third of populations are living in extreme poverty, squalor and degeneration. These conditions are worse than abysmal state of servitude.

The degenerate conditions perpetuate further inequalities when we see educational, environmental factors further polluting the fabric of human life. While children of privileged classes are seen enjoying the advantages of higher education in elite schools and colleges, the youth of poorer families are found struggling even for bare existence.

The inequality in education was first introduced in India by Lord Macaulay in his "Minutes of Education". With these minutes he wanted to create a distinct class of masters who could dominate the natives with foreign language (English), accent, dress and many other eccentricities attached to the pattern of foreign life. Macaulay said: "We must do our best to form a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect".

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Divisions and discriminations

This created a class of "Brown Sahibs" who treated others as inferior and mismanaged their servants probably not better than ordinary slaves. This was the beginning of slavery in new garbs and the beginning of a nation falling into the traps of servitude. This eroded the Islamic traditions of justice and equality and destroyed the communal structures with intra-social divisions and discriminations.

The history chronicles are replete with sordid tales that reflect the colonialist mentality. This mentality was the cause of superiority and a spirit of domination. There was a complete negation of egalitarianism and justice, and an overwhelming tendency to assert superficial values with egocentric overtones.

The kind of society the British left was not oriented to amiable social and cultural environments. Religion was relegated in the background and dignity of man was consigned to oblivion. This was a tragic situation, which developed into an obnoxious complex phenomenon.

In the wake of traditional colonialism there was another attempt to re-colonize the whole developing world, and in particular the rich oil-producing Muslim states. But since the conditions had changed and profound difficulties had reared up in occupying the lands with brutal force and naked aggression, the Americans devised systems such as capitalism and globalizations to attract developing nations into their networks. With offers of loans and capital assistance they wanted the world order to re-orientate to their specific requirements.

Capitalism and Colonialism

So capitalism and globalization became the main instruments of perpetuating the traditional pattern of colonialism. It came to be

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known as neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism. It was a conflict-oriented approach, but Americans employed diplomacy and aid as the main channels of their long-term strategy. But since the developing nations were becoming more conscious of their rights and place in the world, they did not fall so easily in this trap. The United States soon realized that it could neither dominate the world, nor withdraw from it. But, nevertheless, it did not retreat from the concept of domination and control over other territories. It was always looking for an opportunity, and this opportunity was found glibly in the 9/11 incident.

In response to the terrorist attack on Sep 11, 2001, the US launched a worldwide crusade against the Muslims.
Without producing any substantial evidence the purpose was to foster avenues whereby the neo-imperialist policy could be implemented especially in the Muslim regions of the developing world. The western world found it a very attractive pretext to extend their area of influence in the Third World. In order to realize their plans they changed their tactics and methods of occupation. Now they accused the terrorists for disturbing the balance of power and thus recapture the areas where from they were supposed to be emanating.

The western colonial powers – the US and Britain being the foremost among them, sought to distort and exploit the situation by highlighting the Islamic fundamentalism as a negative force and a threat to their safety and security. This is how a new model of imperialism came to be reinvigorated to perpetuate the policies, which had become rather dormant due to the awakening of the world. Since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt hardly a decade has passed since the Muslim world has not had to suffer the afflictions of foreign attacks and brutalities.

The modern forms of invasions have virtually led to the enslavement of poor nations, and many Muslim nations are included in this category. Apart from military invasions

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economic ad political exploitation through the world organs such as IMF and World Bank is the normal norm of multilateral relations, which prescribe specific rules and conditions to dictate their own terms and directions. Pressures of economic growth exert their influences, which are willingly or reluctantly imbibed by the poor developing countries. As a result of these pressures the quantum of inequalities has never been so great as it is today.

A picture of how poverty and degradation can eventually lead to shackles and slavery is vividly depicted in the following passage:

"With a decrease in the number of capitalists, who usurp and monopolize all the benefits of this era of social evolution, there will come an increase in poverty, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation. Also, however, there will come increasing resistance by an ever growing, more disciplined working class, organized and united by the very mechanism of capitalistic production. Monopoly will become a shackle because of the form of production, which has grown and prospered under its auspices. The socialization of labour and the centralization of its material mainsprings will reach a point where they can no longer be contained within their capitalistic mold. This mold will shatter. The knell has already sounded for capitalistic property. The expropriators are to be expropriated. *2

The eighteenth century French philosophers and political analysts condemned the stark inequalities prevailing in the French society, which eventually led to the Revolution. The claims of the nobility based on hereditary superiority were made to keep their subjects in perpetual subjugation. These claims, though sustained for some time under the pressure of state power and military might, were eventually discarded and demands were enforced to rehabilitate the freedom of the people. With the Revolution in 1789 the chains were broken and people were liberated.

Since 9/11 the impact of enforced power, with political, military and economic implications, has become increasingly vivid especially on the Muslim nations such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Independent countries like Afghanistan and Iraq have been turned into virtual slaves.

The American invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, was a serious move towards crushing the independence of the country and turning into a virtual slave of the US foreign doctrine. This was the most blatant expression of chauvinistic unilateralism, violation of human rights and disregard of moral values and international law. This is the most unfortunate development, which has occurred on the spectrum of word politics since the end of Second World War. Since then civil liberties have been curtailed and independent people of Iraq are under the control of America's army and foreign agencies. As a result of the totalitarian policies the people of Iraq eel themselves worse than slaves.

Since the US policies over the past decades have been largely repressive and destructive especially for the Muslim nations, hence they gave rise to desperation and terrorism. The pangs became unbearable when economic sanctions were imposed and Muslims became the target of increasing oppression. The Indian writer Arundhati Roy wonders 'why is it that the stygian anger that led to the attacks has its taproot not in American freedom and democracy, but in the US government's record of commitment and support to exactly the opposite things—to military and economic terrorism, insurgency, military dictatorship, religious bigotry and unimaginable genocide (outside America)?'

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Terrorism as a phenomenon may never disappear, but its intensity can be reduced and its impact contained, if the US restores freedom and human rights to the people who are exploited and dominated by its neo-imperialistic doctrines both economically and militarily.

These are the evil effects of a technological civilization and neo-imperialism which George Bush calls "Western civilization". Since the brutalities unleashed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine the face of western civilization has been debased and the ugliest features are now appearing largely in their worst form. With a doctrine to dominate the world and with the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq a way has been opened which might be more fatal than the actual form of slavery that America was practicing about two hundred years ago. From individual slavery it has now grown into a collective bondage that enslaves the whole range of nations. These adventures have a destructive effect on present and future generations.

This is the beginning of the decline of western civilization. As T.S. Eliot describes in "the Wasteland", how bitter could be the feelings of uncertainty, futility and desolation in the wake of a collapsing civilization. Eliot creates a macabre scenario in which it is shown how the hooded hordes, modern day barbarians, swarm our plains and lay waste cities Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, and now Kabul and Baghdad—each once a great spiritual and cultural centre—and now reduced to "falling towers". And the destruction one hears, high in the air, "Murmur maternal lamentation". The membranes of civilization are frail, once ripped asunder, they are difficult to revive.

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Civilization on way to ruin

Most of the present day historians believe that our civilization is on the way to ruin, as happened in Iraq. "Almost all things which once seemed sacred and immutable have now become unsettled, ad have destroyed truth and humanity, justice and reason. The sense of living in the midst of a violent crisis of civilization, threatening complete collapse, has spread far and wide. How naïve and fragile that glad and confident hope of a century ago, that the advance of science and the general extension of education assured the progressive perfection of society, seems to us today". *3

Jung stated in "Modern Man in Search of a Soul" (1933): "This brings us nearer to the termination of civilization and the end of history itself". Now the most crucial question is if there is a way out. Can humanity be saved, can civilization be restored?"

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With the spread of barbarities and inhuman conditions the basic values that were enshrined for the sustenance of humanity appear to be dissolving into fissiparous factions of decadence and degeneration. The economic and political doctrines designed in Washington and London has changed the perception of common men both in the West and the East. It has turned the tide of events subjecting us to the onslaughts of domination and destruction, slavery and servitude. If we perceive the facts in simpler way, we see the developing nations, especially those belonging to the Muslim world, miserably reduced to stagnation and poverty, sloth and stupor. None could be the worst orm of slavery and servitude.

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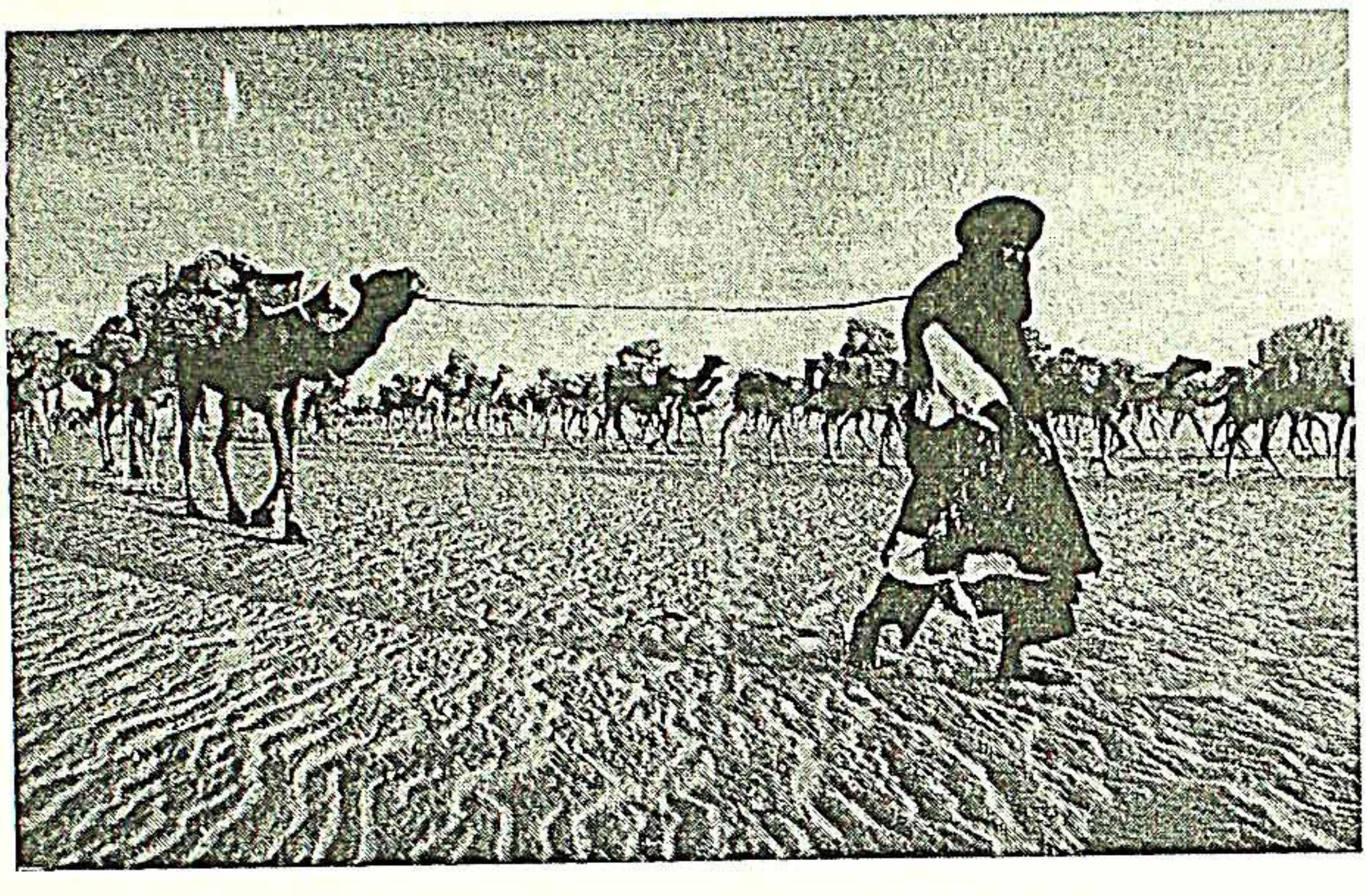

Can Muslims meet the challenges of modern age with such primitive means of communications?

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Chapter No.8

Confronting the Future

A Creative Response for Reform & Revival

The decadent, pleasure-seeking and Corrupt societies cannot face the challenges Boldly and effectively.

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Challenge and Dilemmas:
But where is the response?

A Creative Move towards Reform & Revival

The fall of Baghdad in 1258 was the heaviest blow, which caused the dismemberment of the Muslim world and hastened the process of decline that remained persistent in its pernicious effects for a long time to come. Even today its effects are visible in a number of areas ranging from education, economics to politics and civilization. The Mongol attacks were so severe that they paralyzed almost the whole region from Burgher-on-Volga to Russia and from China to Hungary and East Prussia.

In consequence to the Mongol invasion the whole pattern of Islamic civilization was ruptured and plans to conquer the Islamic world posed the main threat constituting the greatest challenge to the integrity and identity of Muslims. Muslims were utterly demoralized and subjected to the atrocities of the worst form. Matthew Paris writing on the inhuman treatment inflicted by the Mongols says:" They were inhuman and beastly, rather monsters than men, thirsty for drinking for and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men... They were without human laws."

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At the same time the advancing armies of the western Christians who, infused with religious zeal, were out to spread the Christian influence threatened the Muslim world. "Neither the nomad Berber Murabits from the Sahara nor their supplanters the highland Berber Muwahids from the Atlas succeeded in arresting the Western Christians military advance in the Iberian Peninsula. Cordoba fell in 1236 and Seville in 1248. Thereafter, Muslim rule in Peninsula was confined to a natural fastness round Granada. However, the Muwahids did succeed in evicting the Norman masters of Sicily from the beachheads that they had occupied in Ifriqiyah after the collapse of the Murabits there in the 1140s. At this stage, no African Islamic territory fell more than momentarily under
Western Christian rule."*1

Such was the pattern of decline and the complex of challenges that had started confronting the Muslim world in its menacing form in the thirteenth and subsequent centuries. Apart from foreign attacks, internal intrigues, dissensions and growing apathy were the main factors that hastened the decline of the Muslim world. According to Ibn Athir, a contemporary historian, (d. 632/1234), some ugly incidents in the province of Khwarizm led to the murder of both a Turk and Mongols in the court of the Governor of Utrar. The ruler of the province, Khawarzim Shah (1199-1220) is reported to have behaved foolishly to the demands of Chingiz Khan for the return of the culprits who had murdered his tradesmen. At the same time, the policies of Khwarzim Shah were utterly destructive to the strategy of a strong and united front against the invading forces. This left the neighbouring Muslim states in a very weak and unstable predicament. Consequently, he adopted the course of retreat and left his helpless subjects at the mercy of the relentless enemies. The Muslim states were reduced to very insignificant and weak position in pre and post-Mongol period.

The Abbasid caliph al-Nasir (1180- 1225), on the other hand, is said to have encouraged the Mongols to attack Khwarzim, little knowing that his own state was destined to perish at the hands of the same invaders.

The storm engulfed the whole region from Transoxiana to Khwarzim, Khurasan, to the Caucasus in South Russia, finally to reach as far as the Baltic and the Adriatic. The following waves of invasion struck Khurasan in the beginning of 1256 and the caliphate of Baghdad was destroyed in 1258 by Hulagu Khan who had earlier wiped out the Ismaili stronghold at Alamut in North Iran in 1256. The Mongol army advanced further into Syria, attacked Aleppo, and forced Damascus into surrender in 1260.It was at 'Ain Jesuit' (Goliath's Spring) near Nazareth, that the Mongol army was firmly stemmed by the gallant Malmuks of Egypt who gave a crushing defeat in 1260. This was the first Muslim victory in thirty years and it turned the invincibility of the Mongols into fragility.

A scourge of God

The Mongols are believed to be the machines of destruction. Wherever they went, they mowed down all resistance, and their opponents "fell down like the leaves of winter". They have been described by Sir Henry Howorth as one of those races, "which are sent periodically to destroy the luxurious and the wealthy, to lay in ashes the arts and culture which grow under the shelter of wealth and easy circumstances."*2

According to Ata Malik Juwaini, Halgu Khan's secretary, who was appointed Baghdad's Governor after the destruction of the Abbasid Caliph, Chengiz Khan is reported to have described himself as the "scourge of God" sent to men as a punishment for their sins.*3

With the destruction of Baghdad in 1258 a severe blow was given to the world of Islam as it consequently led to the demolition of many other Muslim towns, and their inhabitants, cultures and civilization. This was the beginning of the general decay of Muslims during this period, which lasted in varying degrees of intensity till today

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Europeans started penetrating in the Muslim lands and undertook plans both politically and militarily to occupy these territories. Their plans became successful by the impotence of Muslim rulers and general ignorance of Muslim masses.

In the sixteenth century (1555) the greater part of the Muslim world comprised three great Empires: the Osmanli (Ottoman) Empire Turkish Empire in the Levant, the Safavi Empire in Iran, and the Mughal Empire in India. 'This was a remarkable sequel to the tribulations that the Islamic world had suffered between the year 1220 (the date of Genghis Khan's invasion of Transoxania) and 1405 (the date of Timur Lenk's death).'

However, the growing inefficiency, lack of political and strategic insight and socio-religious dissensions caused further disintegration of these Empires. Although the Islamic world, as Toynbee says, had performed a remarkable feat in surviving the Mongol cataclysm, and its recovery was not confined to the political plane, yet the decline continued in one form or the other.

Similar development took place in the wake of Napoleonic expeditions against Egypt in 1798. "The episode of the French occupation of Egypt was quite significant as it ushered a new era for the Muslim world—an era in which the Western nations began to penetrate into the lands of the Muslims at a breakneck speed. The story of this penetration is very painful to narrate but it proved to be a blessing in disguise since it awakened the Muslims from their slumber. The Muslim society, which was a

medieval and ossified society, when it faced a relentless and superior power, which subjected its people and exploited its wealth, fully realized the enormity of the danger. The method by which the policy of the Western imperialists was executed and the resistance crushed, and the way in which the culture of the conquerors was imposed, did not foster either understanding or friendship, but rather created doubts and promoted fears with regard to the intentions of the rulers. The Muslims were alarmed at the situation that not only their political freedom was in peril, but their institutions, culture, and even their faith—the bedrock of their life—was also being threatened."*3

Challenges and escapism

With the activities of the western missionaries growing rapidly the apprehensions grew and Islam became the rallying point of collective consciousness and a potent instrument of protest against foreigners and their domination. The challenges were multiplying on different planes in different forms and dimensions. Muslims had to be conscious to preserve not only their faith, but also their culture, institutions, economic and political structures. Their economic and political plight in particular was in a terrible shape, for which they were also to be blamed. They were indolent, negligent and apathetic to the pursuit of knowledge and information. They had lost interest in modern sciences and were deprived of the capacity to cope with the changing situations. As a result they regressed and did not find a way to counter and survive. Instead of learning from the contemporary pattern of thought and action they sought refuge in myths and mysticism and little did they realize that clinging to the past indicated 'mental morbidity which leads eventually to death and destruction'. As long as they pursued knowledge and developed natural and social sciences, they were in the vanguard and led the civilized world in knowledge and civilization

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In the modern age, despite political freedom, Muslims remain as decadent as in the past decades. Political freedom is not an easy undertaking. It involves great responsibilities and abundant reserves, for development of political, economic and intellectual potentials. Eric Fromme, a famous sociologist says: "The human mind flees from freedom, especially if it entails fresh responsibilities and new ventures in the domain of thought. The Muslims miserably lacked the courage to think for themselves and consequently flew to the past for shelter. But the inevitable result of mental procrastination was the creation of a society extremely rigid and immobile in outlook and intellectual framework".

Problems and perplexities have been the fate of Muslim ummah over the centuries. Since the Mongol invasion they have not been able to recover completely from the mess they found themselves degenerated. Muslims have not been able to study the realities of evolving times and grapple with the complexities in a realistic and rational manner. They have neither been able to rise above the prosaic levels they were reduced to, nor have they been able to control and organize the material and physical forces for their growth and development. For example, the social and economic transformation that took place in post-industrial England was largely attributed to the powers gained through the use of scientific and industrial knowledge. Knowledge as well as resources were deployed for the attainment of human values and ideals that the British society regarded as imperative for their social success. Since Muslims became deficient in the pursuit of knowledge, and were found lacking in initiative, they lost control over the forces of nature. As Iqbal says:"It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes. And in this process of progressive change, God becomes a co-worker with him, provided man takes the initiative".*4

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So in this context the main task facing the Muslims is to discern the depth of their degeneration and ascertain the possibilities of regeneration. ***This can be done only when the Quran and history are studied properly and lessons are learned for due absorption and eventual application in temporal and spiritual fields.*** Before we proceed further we have to delineate the areas, which determine the scope of our operations and demand the challenges to be encountered boldly and imaginatively. This may lead us to controlling the forces of nature, knowledge and scientific innovations. At the same time, Muslims should also improve the quality of life by upgrading the social environments and industrial structures for overall human improvement. Then thought ought to be given as how these forces can be brought under control by creative leadership. Priorities must also take into account the areas of education, economic and industrial reform, and creative productivity, technology and scientific advancement.

Confronting the future:

These tasks have to be understood in context of the divine scheme of things that is delineated within the framework of the Quran. The Quran repeatedly points out the possibilities of productive deployment of human faculties and natural resources for the ultimate end of human elevation. After all the Quranic narratives and the chronicles of history indicate how social, intellectual and moral forces gathered by Muslims and other nations had altered the course of human history. But when they became deficient in knowledge and decadent in human resources the decline set in, which reduced their capacity to grapple with the situations successfully and productively. As they distanced themselves from practical realities, they delved into the realm of mysticism and turned their back on the earthly problems of day-to-day life. This led them to escapism and also to fatalism that

deprived them of the best potentialities that could have been converted into creative channels of human thought and action.

Among the major maladies afflicting the main stream of Islamic thought has been the lack of education and ignorance. This was accentuated by the credulity of the masses and the cunning of the so-called spiritual guides who are more interested in making money than in guiding the masses. Thus instead of turning to the Quran and Sunnah for guidance and purity the ignorant masses were deluded into believing in make-shift stories that had no relevance to the realities of modern age. 'Thus the simple folks were saddled with an authority more terrible and tyrannous than that of the traditions of a degenerate society'.

As a result of sharp deterioration in education, economic, social and moral spheres the Muslims were at the lowest ebb from thirteenth to nineteenth centuries (1266 to 1850), despite the fact that three great empires (the Ottomans, the Safavi and the Mughal) prospered from 1550 to 1707.

'The kings and the nobles took to a life of lewdness and lasciviousness; the masses were ignorant and apathetic; the administration was bureaucratic and autocratic; and what is worse, no attempt was made to appreciate and profit by the scientific advance and technological developments taking place around them.

The West took advantage of the incompetence of the rulers and the hollowness of the Muslim society. They had superior weapons, better ships, more effective techniques, strategy and diplomacy. In addition, they had the qualities of character that the Muslims ceased to possess.

If the strength of a nation is to be measured in terms of the awareness of a challenge and its acceptance, it can be said that during the second decline, the Muslim nations all over the world

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excelled one another in their lack of understanding of the western challenges. The West regards the solidarity and expansion of the Muslim dominions a serious threat to its imperialistic and colonial programme. Hence it was out to throw off the Muslims by whom the challenge was hardly understood. Accordingly, **their response was as weak as their understanding of the challenge.'**

As such Muslims were in a state of complete chaos and decadence, ignorance and incapacity to cope with the declining situation and respond to the continuing onslaughts. The fields of science and technology, research and innovations, warfare and economics were the weakest areas in which they were becoming increasingly vulnerable. Thus confronting the West especially during the colonial period was the worst phase of the Muslim history. By the end of the 19th century almost the whole Muslim world was under the colonial rule- a shame that was most despicable and distasteful.

Although some efforts were made by some Muslims in the Indian sub-continent, North Africa and South-East Asia, yet the forces of resistance were weak and could be subsided by the brutality of the invading armies. Islam was a great ideological force with inherent stimulants to motivate the dormant segments of the Muslim society, but the overall effect was limited and could not be deployed as an all-embracing forceful movement to thwart the ongoing evils of the western colonialism.

The challenges if understood and appreciated properly could have turned the tide with material, physical and spiritual resources duly deployed. On social, a political and intellectual plane there was a good deal of work to be done, but again the apathy and ignorance turned out to be a stumbling block on way to an effective confrontation.

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As a result of pernicious colonial onslaughts the Islamic values on social, cultural and intellectual levels were under attack and the already declining forces were pushed systematically in the depth of degeneration. On the political front of growing disunity, the western colonial masters exploited confusion and dissensions with extreme dexterity. Starting from the Fall of Baghdad the political eclipse of the Muslim world continued unabated. Except the takeover of Constantinople there was no silver lining for the Muslims on the dark horizons enveloping their vast regions of territories and populations. It affected miserably the psyche and the capacity to respond effectively to the challenges, which were assuming threatening proportions. At the same time their perception of the realities of life was utterly flawed which consequently affected their capacity to respond.

Muslim Reformers

Jamaluddin Afghani

At a time when social, political and economic conditions were rapidly deteriorating, we find in Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838-1897) a thinker of great courage and insight. He made it clear that simply paying lip-service to their ideology could not help Muslims to solve their problems. If they really wanted to preserve their freedom without being deprived of their religious and moral values, they had to make a fresh start in terms of Islamic resurgence and thus resurrect their social and cultural structures on new, remolded foundations. It is said that 'the message of al-Afghani burst through the reigning obscurantism as a splendid lightning'.

His message was oriented primarily to "Pan-Islamism", stressing the need of collective unity under one banner and under one Caliph. He made it clear that the western domination would continue till Muslims remained disunited and backward. Therefore, there was an urgent need for reform and renaissance.

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Remaining true to the values of religion al-Afghani stressed the need of political liberation. And the main idea behind his efforts was to regenerate requisite forces for the development of political and social life especially in Turkey, India, Persia and Egypt. Defending one's homeland and living in dignity were the main priorities of a proposed strategy he suggested for the Muslim world. But since Muslims have for long neglected these priorities, they have fallen into the abysmal depth of degeneration, submission and servitude. In view of this degeneration al-Afghani evolved the concept to inspire and infuse new spirit among the Muslims. He urged the Muslims to break the shackles of slavery and work for the 'salvation' wherein lay the secret of their success and prosperity. He said that there was no shame if a nation was vanquished by the armed might of a larger and stronger nation." But the real disgrace the passage of time will not erase ... is that the nation, or one of her individuals or a group, should run to put their necks under the enemy's yoke, whether through carelessness in the management of their affairs or out of desire for some temporary benefits, for they become thus the agents of their own destruction".

Some more challenges that confront the Muslim ummah relate to the distortion of religion and morality of man. Muhammad Abduh, a leading Egyptian scholar, stresses the need of *ijtihad* to resolve the complexities of modern age. He said the gates of ijtihad were open to meet all the questions raised by the new conditions of human life.

"The last word must no longer belong to the old works or to the authorities long dead, but must be the result of the modernist spirit and the due consideration of the common good". He argued that Islam is essentially a rationalistic religion. "Islam", he said, "has liberated man from the authority of the clergy; it has brought him face to face with God and has taught him not to rely on any intercession".

One of the reasons for the backwardness of Muslims could be attributed to the orthodoxy of the clergy who have relegated religion in the narrow corridors of obscurantism and misconceived interpretations of distorted ideologies and notions. Abduh envisages rationalism as the final stage in religious evolution. At the same time he underlies the need of a pragmatic approach by releasing Muslim mind from masters and mysteries. He also appeals to the testimony of human conscience and common sense to realize the Will of God.

Abduh is totally against the domain of dogmas, which continue to persist with pernicious effects on the quality of religious and human life among the Muslims. This leads to a clearer distinction between good and evil, so that Muslims could be relieved from the overwhelming impact of the evil on their daily life. At the same time he warns against the dangers of fatalism and rejects any fatalistic overtones attached to Islam. In forty six verses of the Quran free will is maintained explicitly and unequivocally.

Morality in action

Muslims have failed to face the challenges of times because they have failed to learn from history the lessons for improvement and regeneration. Abduh sees in history a kind of morality in action, which must be studied by politicians and policy makers. He hopes that by learning from history it will be possible to introduce moral education for practical application. He believes that religion as well as history can be employed as effective means for realizing moral reforms in Muslim society. The Quran provides a solid foundation for the employment of moral injunctions in human life and, therefore, these principles should be thoroughly examined for practical application. His exegesis explains how spiritualism can be modified by a kind of pragmatism.

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Meditating upon the causes of backwardness Abduh concludes that lack of education and ignorance are the main reasons for the decline of Muslims. Muslims will remain paralyzed as long as they remain trapped in the cobweb of theories that have no relevance to the practical realities of human life.

"Every theory of social dynamics is ultimately a philosophy of history. Its special urgency arises from the fact that it gives people as best as it may, an insight into the experiences of mankind and brings to mind the lessons that accrue from them. History is not a series of mere accidents; there is always a purpose behind them. The essential task of a historian is to study that inner process of thought, that underlying motive of action, which works behind the social change.

Anyone who cares to penetrate through the outer crust of historical events and episodes will find "something" that may be called the metaphysical structure of the historic humanity; something essentially independent of the outward forms—social, spiritual, and political—which we see clearly." *5

In light of this observation we see a variety of events and developments, which have had a curious mixture on the overall pattern of social, political and cultural life of Muslims in India and Pakistan. These events point out the mistaken notions and missed opportunities, which led to further deterioration of the living conditions of Muslims. Shah Wali Allah, as a great scholar and historian, tries to acquaint us with the fault lines, which distorted the shape of Muslim destiny.

Shah Wali Allah, in his book '*Tawil al-Abadith*' explains the varying phases of history and the imprints they leave on the destiny of nations. Without recognizing these phases and the possibility of continuing evolution of human history it is not possible to grasp the reality of these changes and adjust to the future scenarios of social and political developments. Even the

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prophets, whose source of knowledge and revelation was the same, could not, however, agree to their applications with regard to the needs and peculiarities of each age.

Shah Wali Allah agrees with Ibn Khaldun that the study of history supplies the material for sociological studies, and considers it as a key to the study of the Holy Quran.*6

The Quran warns that nations are judged collectively and suffer for their misdeeds both in this world and in the Hereafter. The Quran every now and then cites historical instances and admonishes the readers to reflect on the destiny of nations who were consigned to destruction. The Quran says:" Already, before your times, have precedents been made. Traverse the earth then, and see what hath been the end of those who failed to perceive the Signs of God".*7

Probably testifying to the truth of this verse the British writer Tennyson says:" Our little systems have their days and cease to be: They are but broken lights of Thee, and Thou, O Lord! art more than they."

The Quran narrates the stories of ancient people like Aad, Thamud, the people of Noah and many others just to illustrate the fundamental principle involved, which determines the destiny of nations. There is a great lesson for the Muslims in the narratives of the Quran, but Muslims neither learn from the Quran nor from history. What a people, what a tragedy?

Shah Walli Allah substantiates his contention with the narratives of the Roman and Persian Empires. The rise and fall of these Empires must be another clear lesson for the decaying ummah of the Muslims.

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Sir Syed: the Reformer

From Shah Wali Allah we come to Sir Syed Ahmad, a great scholar imbued with enthusiasm and perseverance, who devoted his best faculties and energies toward rejuvenating the decadent sinews of the Indian Muslims.

Inspired by a deep sense of history and a strong urge to realize the ideals of Muslim regeneration he studied social and political problems in light of the evolving pattern of human society. He was distressed to see the declining posture of the Indian Muslims especially in the field of education and enlightenment. He realized the dangers that were unleashed by the growing gravity of the multiple challenges that were seriously endangering the fabric of Muslim life in India. He took the challenges boldly and decided to remove the impediments by whatever means could be gathered. His task was huge and challenging as the resources available at his disposal were extremely paltry and there was a serious challenge of the orthodox Mullahs both from within and without the country. This was compounded by the anti-Muslim attitude of the British rulers and highly prejudices quarters of Hindu militancy. Nevertheless, he took the first step by translating English books into Urdu, so that Muslims could realize the level of degeneration that they were confronted with and thus prepare themselves for the future, which looked extremely bleak. He also produced his own publications and proposed to set up an educational institute (Anglo- Oriental College) for imparting education both of English and modern sciences.

His visit to England in 1869 turned out to be a journey of immense knowledge and information. It made him believe that without modern knowledge and languages Muslims of India were destined to be doomed. The only way to rehabilitate them was to impart them scientific knowledge, modern technology and intellectual insight.

The spread of western education and teaching of English language constituted the main challenge with insurmountable hurdles and growing wave of opposition. Although Sir Syed Ahmad was equally enthusiastic about defending and spreading the tenets of Islam, yet the opposition did not subside. In a brilliant article ,"Thoughts of Man", Sir Syed discusses the problems of science and religion in a very pragmatic way and defines reason as the main distinguishing feature which makes man distinct from animals.
His main thesis was to convert the human potentialities into a powerful complex of learning and education.

Muhammad Iqbal: the Mard-i-Momin

Following Sir Syed we have another great thinker and reformer in the person of Muhammad Iqbal who recognized the challenges facing the Muslims of India and urged his compatriots to respond to resolving the complexity of evolving situations. He was as much convinced as Sir Syed of the need to synthesize the virtues of the East and the West and develop the genius of human faculties for the accomplishment of higher ideals. His main areas of interest were Muslim revivalism, universal brotherhood of mankind, and development and creativity of a dynamic personality. Such a personality for Iqbal was the personality of a 'Mard-i-Momin', without whom the Muslim resurgence was not conceivable.

For Iqbal the lack of knowledge, the lack of rational thought and action formed the main constraints on the way to growth and development of the Muslim ummah. To dissipate the deficiencies of prosaic life Iqbal urged his compatriots to inculcate the spirit of creative love, which transcends and resolves the contradictions of personal and collective life.

He believed that without creating an appropriate awareness of the evolving situations and without imbibing the spirit of

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creativity Muslims would not be able to accomplish the ideals and shape their destiny. In his poetry and philosophy, therefore, he underlies the dignity of life and its perpetual creativeness. Whatever strengthens and advances life should be absorbed and whatever impoverishes or negates the intrinsic values should be rejected.

Since 9/11 the nature of challenges has become graver, and the capacity of Muslims to face them seems to have become weaker and incapacitated. The US military and political assaults on Afghanistan, Iraq and other poorer regions of the Muslim world remain unabated and continue to inflict heavy blows on the body-politik of the Muslim world. These challenges have to be met boldly and effectively, but no tangible outcome is conceivable as there has been a shocking reversal of material, political and intellectual experiences. Muslims with their flawed perceptions and impoverished resources are found to be lacking in responding effectively to the onslaughts of the enemies. The weakness of the cavalry is an open invitation to the enemy's invasion. You cannot fight the enemy with kid gloves, remains a true maxim for all times. The tragedy of modern Muslims lies in their degeneration, weak and corrupt practices and thoughtless strategies for reform and development.

Hence when confronted with the highly developed technology of the West, the Muslim world finds it floundering in a mess, defeated and downgraded. As Shaykh al-Ghazali, the Egyptian scholar says: "Our credentials for victory and success seem to diminish every time we take on an aggressor; we have become the world's champions of lost causes".

As a result of inadequate understanding of the realities of life and lack of deployment of resources for practical application, the Muslim ummah is experiencing a phase of decline and degeneration. The perception of this degeneration has become particularly acute since 9/11.

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The Quran makes it clear in several passages that ***the decadent, pleasure-seeking and corrupt societies cannot face the challenges boldly and effectively***, and the result is a continuing process of decline and degeneration. Although Muslims today comprise more than one fifth of the world's population, yet their countries are divided with their resources dissipated. They have no clear-cut strategies, nor are their forces consolidated on any single plank. The result is that foreign countries are in control of their lands and resources and Muslims are squabbling among themselves on petty, peripheral matters.

Persisting in their deviation from the principles of Islam, Muslims remain exposed to all sorts of challenges, which on many occasions become insurmountable. Consequently, they have to face devastation and frustrations, defeats and dejections. The renunciation of the basic principles of human growth coupled with growing inability to acquire modern knowledge of science and technology has diminished the capacity for development, both physical and spiritual, and has given birth to millions of "life's rejects".

A Sufi poet of the Punjab. Baba Bulleh Shah, was not far from truth when he said that "***the word of truth ignites a furious blaze***". What Muslim society needs today is a word of truth, howsoever poignant and bitter it may be. It is a matter of immediate urgency and if we do not attend to it history will pass us by, and we will be forlorn like other lost civilizations.

Apart from aggression, militarism and destructive onslaughts of the West, the Muslim world faces a number of other challenges as well in modern age. These challenges could concern us while facing secularism, modernity, material and spiritual backwardness, institutional collapse, injustice and corrupt practices, moral morbidity, dissensions and terrorism, apathy and sectarian killings. Climatic and environmental pollution, water

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diseases and health hazards are the additional endowments that a backward society offers to its citizens. The spheres are so multifarious and dimensions so demeaning that except challenges very little is left to cope with. In short, our daily life is a composite of confusion and degeneration, decadence and despondency.

Scholars, as we have pointed out above, have been at pains to illustrate the decadent features, but Muslims remain miserably oblivious to the realities of life. **Muslims learn neither from the Quran, nor from history**. They remain distanced from the essence of truth and realities, and devoid of vision and knowledge they let their energies fritter away without producing any concrete outputs.

Arnold Toynbee, the great modern historian, in his "Study of History" points out the relevance of history to the realities of modern age. Without learning from the history, which the Quran also suggests, we cannot carve out a constructive and productive future. A deep insight into history provides us a stimulus that prepares man to face the challenges. Challenges without evoking creative and effective responses become hugely daunting. Iqbal calls for healthy dynamism to meet such challenges.
Toynbee says the interaction of challenges and responses develops and sustains civilizations. It must be a continuous process; otherwise the civilization comes to an end. The reason that Muslim civilization is half-dead today could be attributed to the lack of this interplay.

According to Toynbee a dynamic encounter with challenges creates the possibility of successfully sustaining the civilization. It moves from challenge to response and from response to challenges again. This is how the sinews of vitality are nourished and the pattern of life is evolved. It enables man to progressively master the inhibiting forces of external dangers and develop the force of self-determination.

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When a civilized society finds itself threatened by an aggressive army of invaders, it finds itself exposed to two alternatives: Dogmatism or fundamentalism, or creativity and dynamism. The former takes the dogmatic segments of society back in the past, leaving very little to learn from the present, as we find it in the present conservative societies. Iqbal calls it mullaism and obscurantism. The other facet, according to Toynbee, deals with the dynamic forces of creativity and helps evolve a progressive pattern of living.
It may lead to developing a dynamic civilization, which may be called Sir Syedism or Iqbalism in context of modern evaluation.

Our stagnant society is in need of a dynamic innovative strategy, which should be oriented to facing the challenges in an effective and creative way. This is a task of promethean dimensions, which, if executed properly, may be able to salvage our civilization from imminent extinction, otherwise the future is bleak and the present is already degenerate.

Creation is a single act, but growth is a continuous process, and the process must continue if the Muslim ummah has to survive.

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Chapter No. 9

Conflicts of Civilizations

Civilization depends on morality
-Emerson

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Civilization depends on morality

Conflicts of Civilizations

Is the clash of civilizations inevitable with all the catastrophes that are apprehended in contemporary conflicting situations and modern neo-con theories, egocentric ideologies and fanatic interpretations of religious doctrines? The US social scientists like Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama have already predicted that the continuing conflicts between the West and Islam will bring the world to an end. Similar predictions were made by George Orwell and Aldous Huxley in their books "Nineteen Eighty-Four", and "Brave New World".

Francis Fukuyama believes that Huxley was right when he saw the modern developments devouring the very dimensions of human history. He says the most significant threat posed by modern technology is the possibility that it might alter the human nature and move us into a 'post human' stage.

With subtle, challenging developments, biotechnology with information technology gives the world an uncertain future. It is apprehended that as a result of these technologies the world might assume the dimensions of heinous tyranny the example of which has not been seen in human history.

In the Brave New World some characters are found to have depicted the controllers who employ force to determine the dimensions of human personalities. While some people are

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seduced, others are compelled to live orderly in an organized society.

Post-modernism with its multifarious manifestations depicting cultural and intellectual life has already dawned and an epoch seems to be approaching which might herald revolutionary changes in human society. With modernity entangled in its expanding tentacles man cannot escape the effects of evolving modernism unless they are imbued with strong faith.

Faith is the strongest defence mechanism which will not only save man from the pernicious effects of modernity but would also save him from annihilation. Socrates said that 'no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death'. Faith with renewed confidence helps man to imbibe the characteristics of a new age without being swept away by its tides. Othello, after having realised the oddity of his deeds, calls upon the gods "to roast him in sulphur and wash him in steep down gulfs of liquid fire".

However, coming back to our thesis the modern thinkers assert that the conflict between civilizations is inevitable, which might be religious, ideological or cultural. The fault lines between civilizations will pave way for battles in the future. This will be the last phase in widening the scope of conflicts in modern age. Huntington, tracing the historical background, says that 'for a century and a half after the emergence of the modern international system in 1648 (after the Peace of Westphalia) the conflicts of the western world were largely among princes, emperors, absolute monarchs and constitutional monarchs attempting to expand their bureaucracies, their armies and their mercantilist enemies. Till the French Revolution the principal lines of conflict were between nations rather than princes, between ideologies rather than inter-state rivalries.

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Modern theories have helped evolve systems transforming the social structures in favour of less fortunate sections of society. Radical ideologies and revolutionary ideas that prompted the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 were mainly oriented to transforming the exploitative and decadent nature of the existing societies.

In the subsequent years the French and the Russian Revolutions and their implications in social and political spheres caused a number of conflicting situations both at internal and international level. The revolutionary changes were so dramatic that many people felt the pangs of oncoming changes. Nevertheless, the Russian masses, who were on the verge of starvation, welcomed the changes, without knowing how they will be exploited and oppressed in the coming years.

Pernicious ideologies

However, conflicts concerning the nation states and ideologies were primarily the conflicts within the western civilization. The conflicts in the modern age started with the Nazi doctrine that denied all men equal share and identity in the complex of humanity as a whole. The core of the Nazi doctrine, on which was based the structure of the central European civilization, was primarily oriented to stark distinctions and divisions among human beings on the basis of their breed, ethnicity, and culture. This doctrine was so pernicious that it led to the decimation of millions of Jews in Europe and to the collapse of a cohesive edifice of civil liberties and a civilized way of living. The main idea of the Nazi doctrine was the supremacy of the German race and conversion of other masses of mankind into a new form of slavery.

The impact of the Nazi doctrine remained confined mainly to the central European lands and with the collapse of the Nazi regime after the World War II, its pernicious tentacles were not

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allowed to spread in far-off lands in Africa, Asia and Latin America. But later on when European colonialists penetrated into distant lands their influence grew and enveloped large areas of poor and developing countries. The masses were made the object of exploitation and were diminished into the abysmal categories of human species very similar to the slaves of medieval ages.

This was the politics of exploitation, capitalism and debased civilization, which has had its evil effects on the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions of the colonized territories. Its effects and after-effects appeared in revolts, rebellions and growing dissatisfaction all over the developing world. Impelled by the persistent pressure of severe events some civilizations were reduced to non-entities and millions of human beings were denied the essentials of humanity. Though not openly proclaiming the doctrine of Nazism, yet in context and implications they were not much different from the diabolical doctrine of the pre-war days. However, their effects were not lasting and durable, and evaporated with the change in situations and pattern of thought.

The change whether caused by the revolutionary movements or effected by radical ideologies has become a prerequisite of the modern society. Islam played a vital role in altering the mode of thinking in the world. From its very beginning it was opposed to the denial of humanity on any grounds and contravened human impulses and policies, which were detrimental to the over-all interests of human beings. Islam gave a concept of society which transcended castes, colour and creed..

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However, western ideologues and philosophers had their own conceptions and their own ideologies. Some of them, as discussed above, were not very congenial to the harmony, equality, peace and order in human society. Machiavelli, for instance, was one of those who believed in the role of

authoritarian rule irrespective of its religious, moral or ethical implications. Writing in '*The Prince*' he contended the necessity of power which made the rulers fight among themselves. A ruler wants power because without it he can not impose his will neither on his rivals nor on his subjects. Hence he must wield power and assert his authority. This was another perception, which made the authoritarian rulers convinced of the necessity of deploying means for the exploitation of their own interests. They were not concerned about the complexion they assumed.

So is the case today between regional and super powers, developed and developing nations. The world is divided among hundreds of states on the basis of religious, political and ideological affiliations, rulers' interests and super powers' self-imposed perceptions. This division is causing irritations, conflicts and discord all over the world.

Another element, which has been added recently to the complex situation, is the complexion of culture and conviction of religion that is found to have caused a series of conflicting situations.

According to Professor Huntington, a more significant role is to be played in future by culture and civilization in creating conflicts and disorder in the world. A civilization is a cultural entity for the cultivation of higher values and sustenance of refinement and reform in all aspects of human life. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities religious sects, all have distinct cultures at different levels. These differences, says the US ideologue, are the product of centuries old divide. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. Differences, however, do not necessarily mean conflicts, and conflicts do not necessarily lead to violence or aggression. But differences could undoubtedly cause conflicts, which might be catastrophic for regional and inter-state relations.

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Huntington says the world is becoming a smaller place and inter-action between peoples of different civilizations is increasing. With the increase in inter-action a growing awareness is intensifying differences between civilizations and communities. The process of economic modernization and social change throughout the world is separating people from long-standing local identities. This has also weakened the notion of nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world, religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labelled "fundamentalist". The revival of religion provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and assumes global dimensions.

Distinct identities

The rise in civilization consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West. While the West is at the peak of its power, the non-western nations are becoming increasingly conscious of their distinct identities. Consequently, the West, with its trappings of power and influence, confronts the non-western nations to subdue them. The West wants the non-western world to reshape their ideologies and ways of living in light of western culture and connotations. This is a very serious issue as far as Muslim nations are concerned. With the growing influence of fundamentalism no Muslim state will allow itself to be subjected to such superficial suzerainty. If pressed hard they will be resisting the pressure with as much power as possible. They may not be able to give a good fight on the battlefield, but there will be a growing resentment against the haughty attitude of the western nations.

With a bullet in their hands the West may be able to suppress the Muslims for some time, but eventually they will have to surrender or at least compromise with the growing consciousness of the emerging nations.

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Finally, economic regionalism is increasing at a faster rate than previously perceived. The importance of regional economic blocs is likely to foster successful economic regionalism, and a uniform consciousness for civilizational harmony.

As people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an US-versus-them relationship, a relationship existing between them and people of different ethnicity and religions.

Differences in culture and religion, as we have already seen, create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration, to trade and commerce.
Samuel Huntington thinks that the efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism and its efforts to maintain its military predominance and to advance its economic interests are likely to engender countering responses from Muslim and other civilizations. This will lead to mobilizing support on the basis of religion and civilization identity.

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Clash of civilizations

The clash of civilizations, as it is generally known, occurs at two levels. At the micro level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territories and each other. At the macro level, states from different civilizations, compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions, and third parties, and competitively promote their political and religious values.

The fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the cold war as the flash points of crisis and bloodshed. The velvet curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of Ideology as the most significant dividing line

in Europe. Huntington contends the conflicts along the fault lines between Western and Islamic civilizations have been going on for more than 1300 years. This warfare culminated in 1990, when the US and its western allies sent a massive army to the Persian Gulf to defend some Arab countries against aggression by another.

Huntington believes the centuries old military inter-action between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become even more virulent. Many Arab countries are reaching levels of economic and social development, where autocratic forms of government become inappropriate and efforts to introduce democracy become stronger. Some openings in trade and political systems have already occurred. The principal beneficiaries of these openings have been the Islamist movements.

In the Arab world, in short, democratic movements strengthen anti-western political forces. Democracy provides a better opportunity for the expression of grievances both against the local dictators and foreign imperialists. This may be a passing phenomenon, but it surely complicates relations between Islamic countries and the West.

These relations are also complicated by demography, by the movement of migrants from developing countries to the western hemisphere. With increasing immigration in Europe growing racism is seen in countries like Italy, Germany, Britain and France. The violence against Muslim migrants has been more intense and more widespread. Especially in the wake of 9/11 the hostilities against the Muslims in America and Europe has been conspicuously higher than in the past. This has given rise to the anti-Muslim racist organizations like the BNP in Britain and Le Pen's party in France.

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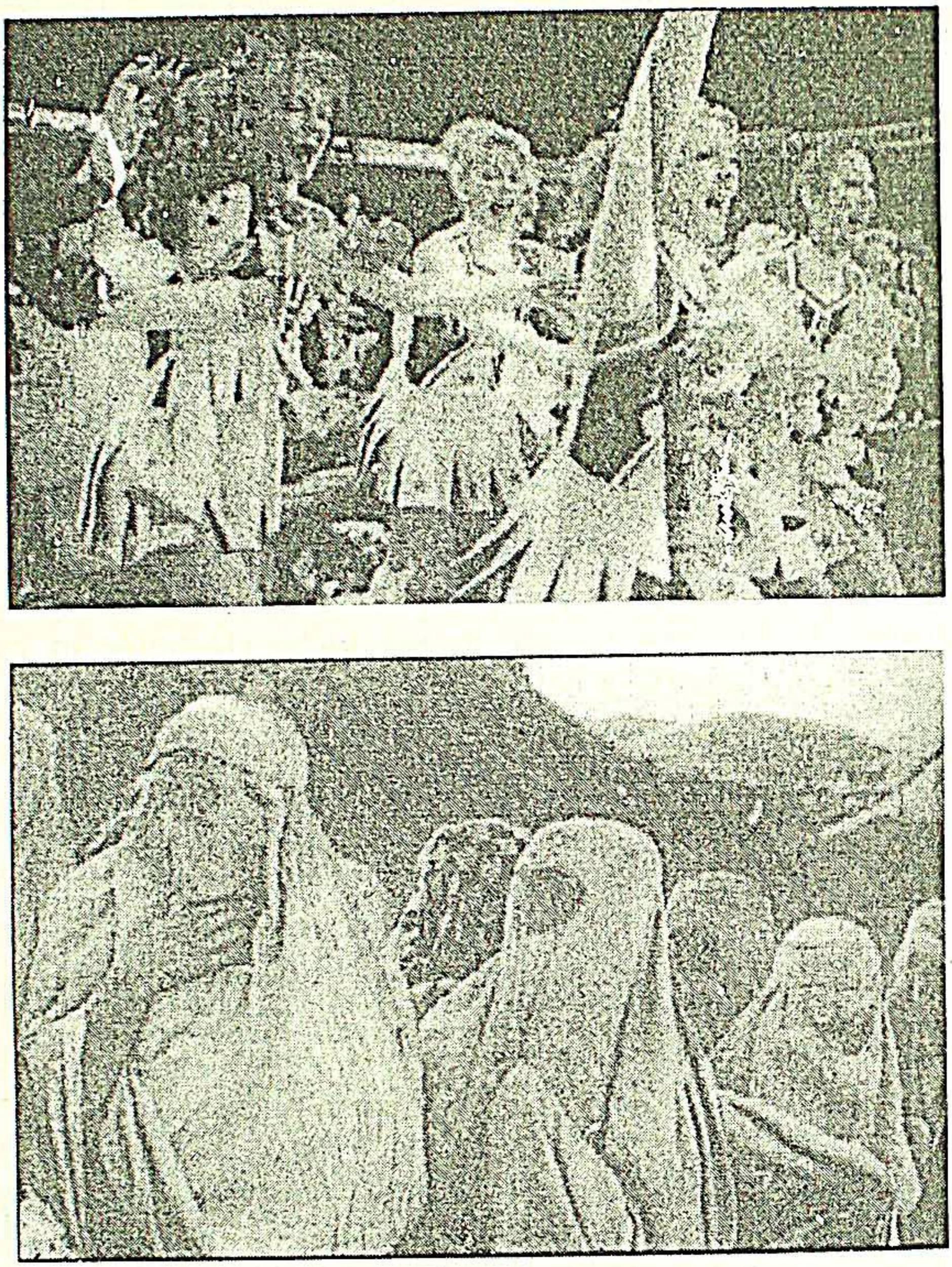

Different Worlds
Different Perspectives.

On both sides, the interaction between Islam and the West is seen as a clash of civilizations. Most of the fundamentalists, whether of Islamic or Christian hues, regard the current developments as highly propitious to their specific egocentric ideologies. The process is not based on any objective criteria, but on concepts and perceptions, which are far removed from realities. As the whole edifice built on the ashes of the demolished trade centres in New York is exclusively designed to malign the Muslim world. Although Islam in particular and the Muslim world in general have nothing to do with the 9/11 incident, yet the majority of ill-informed masses continue to be misled by the Christian fundamentalists and the neo-con policy makers in Washington. It is for this reason that the western civilization has failed to effect basic reforms both within and without its parameters, and has largely disappointed the world with its pernicious propaganda and horrendous attacks on Muslims nations. Some fallacies are also committed by the Muslim fundamentalists who refuse to be charitable in their perceptions and prefer a policy of fanaticism and extremism.

Bernard Lewis, a western writer on Islam, comes to a similar conclusion. He says "we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them.

"This is no less a clash of civilizations –the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judaeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the world-wide expansion of the both."

Referring to a clash between Muslims and non-Muslims in a number of Asian countries, Huntington concludes that in Eurasia the great historic fault lines between civilizations are once more aflame. The conditions –and events described in these observations call for a serious and concerted study to elucidate

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the kinder and wiser side of Islam to avert a fatal clash which might lead to the annihilation of the bulk of humanity. Such an effort has become all the more imperative especially in the wake of 9/11 attack and subsequent US assaults on the Muslim nations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

On the basis of these assumptions, which may not be scientifically valid, they could, nevertheless, influence the policy makers and the wielders of power in Washington and other capitals of the western world.

As a result of these theories and the mounting influence of the neo-cons in America, the US policies have already had catastrophic effect on the citadel of Islamic civilization in Baghdad and elsewhere. For almost a thousand years Baghdad was the cultural capital of the Arab world, the most literate population in the Middle East. Genghis Khan's grandson burnt the city in the 15th century and so, it was said, the Tigris ran black with the ink of the books. Recently, under the rule of George W. Bush, the black ashes of thousand of ancient documents filled the skies of Iraq again. It was the final chapter in the sacking of Baghdad.

In view of the recent brutalities perpetrated by the US the above apprehensions expressed by the western ideologues may be nearing their practical realization. In the destruction of this civilization there is a special message for the Arabs and the Muslims in the Middle East.

Muslim leaders, thinkers and scholars have to analyse these developments in light of above developments. An appropriate strategy is imperative to meet the challenges; otherwise the prospects are extremely bleak. The docile and self-indulgent attitude of the Muslims will have to be replaced with the dynamism of creative thought. It is deplorable that Muslims remain oblivious of the need to change and effect innovations in

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their thinking and policies. In recent times some thought seems to have been given to this requirement, but the approach has been either too fundamentalist or too secularist. A balanced and moderating influence has not been found to penetrate the mainstream of Muslim thought.

Some times it appears as if at the heart the western and Muslim civilizations are monolithic and their perceptions egocentric. As a result of these biased interpretations an unbiased perception is hardly conceivable. Both sides look at each other with doubt and skepticism. This leads to misjudgments, prejudices and exaggerated phobias. A sense of self-righteousness and superiority of own values is made to determine the course of thought without realizing that their actions are devoid of the inherent qualities claimed by them.

Since these actions and their implications fail to coincide, the result is frustration and disillusion. With lack of insight, balance and confusion our ideals remain too illusory and our views become too deceptive. With wrong policies and flawed actions the Muslims, in particular, have defamed the image of Islam and caused serious damage to the civilizational and ideological conceptions.

The setbacks have been enormous and the lessons hardly learnt. How long will it take for the losses to be repaired and the profile to be improved remains anybody's guess. Although the process of decline has been going on for long time and the phase of decadence is pathetic, yet the push towards the abyss has not been so rapid as appears to have affected the Muslim world in recent past. Over the past thousand years the decline has been gradual and steady. Almost all the Muslim states have undergone a phase of decline, deteriorating the quality of socio-moral, cultural, political and economic structures.

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Islamic heritage under threat

After the dissolution of the Ottoman and Mughal Empires most of the Muslim nations have had long doses of docility and ineptitude. As a result they lost their territories and became underlings under the rule of Europeans.
With the colonial power entrenched the western nations grew stronger and succeeded in expanding the sphere of their influence both in political, economic and cultural spheres.

There is a sense of outrage over what has happened to the Muslim world, especially in the wake of 9/11. Many Muslims do not agree with the analysis of the Bush administration that the terrorists who caused the destruction of the World Trade Center were Muslims. Many believe that President Bush has trespassed the Geneva and Hague Conventions by refusing to protect the Islamic heritage of Iraq. In Iraq extensive cultural destruction has taken place, which has bamboozled experts, historians, and archaeologists from all over the world. Many people wonder that while the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by Talibans in Afghanistan was strongly condemned by the US, Britain and other coalition partners, no such outcry has been raised on the destruction of precious preserves of the Islamic and ancient historical sites in Iraq. Many cities belonging to the Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations, the temples of Nabu and Nimmah repute, and sites depicting the Mesopotamia culture have been damaged and destroyed. Persistent plans to perpetrate destructive assaults are under way to destroy the Muslim archives, museums and sites of cultural heritage. Even holy places like the shrine of Imam Ali have been under attack, which have caused a worldwide revolt.

Many believe that what happened in Iraq is not less than a criminal act, as many libraries were destroyed, copies of the

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Quran burned and museums mauled. A brutal disregard of religion, culture and human values was allowed to disfigure the shape of human civilization.

Now despaired and dejected the Muslim world feels deeply smitten by the horrible onslaughts unleashed by the US. Armed forces on the innocent people of Iraq. Incapacitated by the lack of knowledge, resources and weapons Muslims not only in Iraq, but in several other places, have been exposed to the mounting heaps of humiliation and destruction. However, in some quarters some critical comments have been made, but they too have remained without any tangible effect. Since Muslims are not united and their policies are not concerted, whatever actions they propose, remain without implementation. Since they lack the requisite clout, the act of handling the situation remains without any realization. The Muslims possess neither knowledge, nor tangible reserves to cope with the changing situations. Without a single platform and organized media their voice remains unheard.

Except the OIC and the Arab League, which too are miserably ineffective, their efforts to present their own side of the picture remain widely off the mark. Hence this has led in some Muslim quarters to a pause for reflection, a period of introspection that needs to be energized with optimum intellectual and physical stamina.

The pain caused by the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq has been felt throughout the Muslim world, but no concrete action has been taken to counter the US aggression or reform the decadent structures within their own countries. The situation confronting the Muslims at present has been compared with the passivity of sheep and cows who must submit to the dictates of their masters.

The reaction of Muslims both in Afghanistan and Iraq has been so timid and vapid, that even the weakest animals would be feeling shame on such human beings.

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One can condemn the forces of oppression, but it is suicidal to ignore the continuing depletion of resources and talents. In a state of moral apathy and psychological stupor a state of systematic negation is allowed to nurture the conditions, which perpetuate the perversity and degeneration. This is what is happening currently in the Muslim world.

As a so-called ummah lost in the cobweb of confusion and delusion the Muslims appear to be devoid of both the spirit and determination to take actions. With lack of interest in ascertaining the causes and effects of their decline they have allowed themselves to be pushed in a void of docility and apathy. With no sense of destiny and no meanings attached to their lives they have become synonymous with emptiness and sterility. This is a state of decadent culture and devalued civilization.

Enterprise of justice

A study of history and an understanding of contemporary events must lead to a correct perception of present and future developments; otherwise the very venture of existence would be meaningless. The very exercise of living in peace and dignity would be futile.

History tells us that peace is not merely the absence of war, nor is it a negation of terror and aggression. "Rather peace is an 'enterprise of justice' that requires respect for the welfare of all people and that cannot be obtained...unless personal values are safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents."*1

Islamic civilization has been a civilization of peace and dignity—a civilization that has worked for the welfare and dignity of mankind. The books of history are replete with

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chronicles confirming the contributions that Islam made towards rehabilitating other cultures and civilizations. With its principles of universality and unity of mankind Islam strengthened the bonds, which have been frail and fragile. Islam as a universal civilization comprised people of different races and cultures over more than three continents.

For this reason some European scholars have recommended the study of Islamic civilization, culture and philosophy. Professor Roger Bacon, a 13th century scholar of Oxford, England, recommended strongly the study of Oriental languages and Islamic culture.

Wolfgang von Goethe, a renowned German thinker and writer, was sufficiently convinced of the extensive contributions of the Islamic East. He says:

"North and South and West are quaking,
Thrones are cracking, empires shaking
Let us flee towards the East,
Where as patriarchs we'll feast!
There in loving, drinking, singing,
Youth from Chisel's well is springing." *2

As a result of Goethe's perception and realization of the high values that the Islamic culture offers, no other western writer is regarded as more relevant to the modern times than Wolfgang Goethe. Indeed, Goethe's writings could be torchlight in the dark recesses of western bigotry and bias which purport to prejudice the right image of Islam.

Robert Briffault, another western scholar of the contemporary age, elaborating the impact of Islam on western civilization, says: "For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, however, it is so clear and momentous as in the genesis of power which constitutes the paramount distinctive

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force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory – natural science and the scientific spirit.

The period characterizing Muslim contributions in the field of science and arts parallels directly with the Dark Ages in Europe. While Muslim scholars were producing books and research documents extending over thousands of volume, the Christian Spain had only 200 books in its library in Ripoll Monastery.

Briffault further adds:
"That a brilliant and energetic civilization full of creative energy should have existed side by side and in constant relation with populations sunk in barbarism, without exercising a profound and vital influence upon their development, would be a manifest anomaly. That no such suspension of natural law was involved in the relationship between Islam and Europe is abundantly attested in spite of the conspiring of every circumstance to suppress, deform and obliterate the record of that relation."*3.

Appreciating the Muslim contributions in the fields of sciences, literature and humanities the Crown Prince of Britain Prince Charles says:
"If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilization owe to the Islamic world. It is a failure, which stems, I think, from the straitjacket of history, which we have inherited. The medieval Islamic world, from Central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history.

The surprise is the extent to which Islam has been a part of Europe for so long, first in Spain, then in Balkans, and the extent to which it has contributed so much towards the civilization

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which we all too often think of wrongly as entirely western. Islam is part of our present and past in all fields of human endeavour. It has helped to create modern Europe. It is part of our own inheritance, not a thing apart."*4

In his "History of Europe" Henri Pirenne says "in the whole history of the world there has been nothing comparable in the universal and immediate nature of its consequences with the expansion of Islam in the 7th century. Throughout the Middle Ages from the 7th till the 12th century Muslim scholars and scientists made great strides in the field of learning, discovery, and scientific inquiry. The period was significant for the amount of contribution in almost all areas of human excellence. Travel and reading, fighting and love, music and song permeated abundantly the whole age."

Sir Thomas Arnold in "The Legacy of Islam", condemning the distorted perception of Europeans says:" Those who excuse the Muslim scholars of lack of originality and of intellectual decadence have never read Averros or looked into Al-Ghazali, but have adopted second hand judgments".

As evidenced from the above statements Islam remains a rich civilization, a prolific philosophy, and a great vision with great aspirations and ideals. But it is the neglect and passivity of the Muslims that has made Islam irrelevant to modern civilizations. It is the lack of insight and knowledge that has consigned the doctrine of Islam into oblivion.

It is in this vein that philosopher Iqbal says: "In the world of Islam we have universal polity whose fundamentals are believed to have been revealed but whose structure, owing to legists' want of contact with the modern world, stands today in need of renewed power of fresh adjustments. I do not know what will be the final fate of the national idea in the world of Islam, whether

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Islam will assimilate and transform it, as it has assimilated and transformed before, many ideas expressive of different spirit, or allow a radical transformation of its own structure by the force of this idea, is hard to predict."

However, the foundations of Islamic civilization are solid and the hues and nuances are multocoloured. For the time being its structure seems to be shaky and its contributions insignificant, but in the end it will be renovated and strengthened. With its inherent attributes, ethics and morality, its spiritual and physical entity will be reestablished.

With this understanding spread all across the world the barriers between the Western and Islamic civilizations will be reduced and new avenues opened to bring the West closer to the important currents of thought in the Muslim world. This is how we may be able to pursue a meaningful and functional dialogue to establish Islam as a religion of peace and civilized living.

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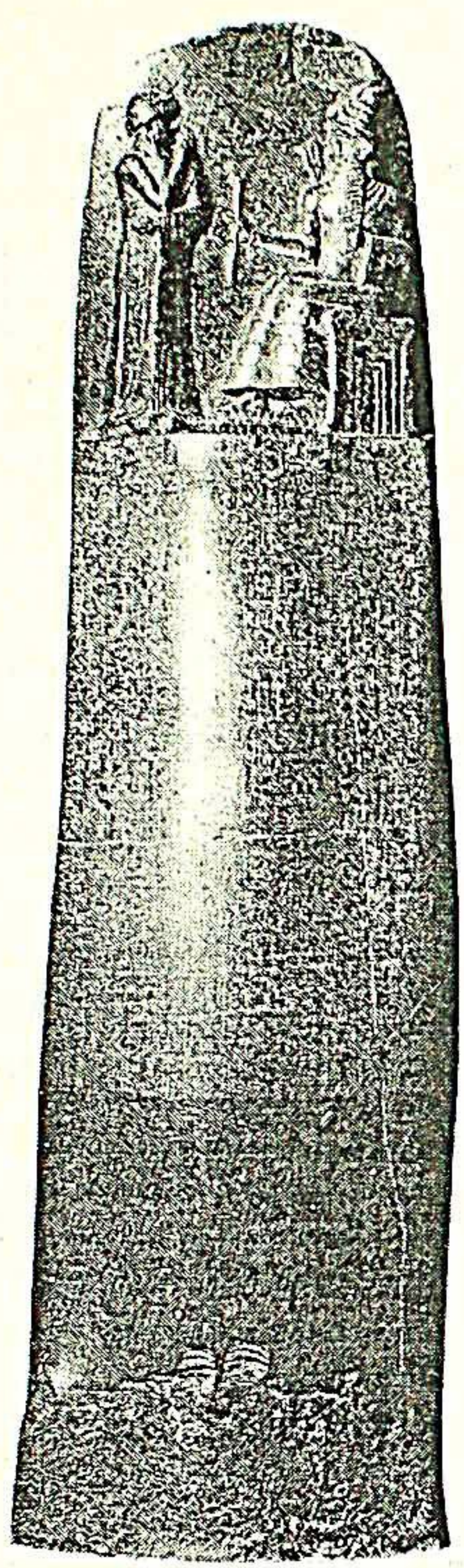

Symbol of Babylonian culture.

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Chapter No. 10

Man's inhumanity to man

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind".
--John Donne

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From Terrorism to Adventurism

Man's inhumanity to man

"What is new about the emerging world order is that for the first time, the United States can neither withdraw from the world nor dominate it."

--Henry Kissinger

The Allied forces barbarities perpetrated in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Honduras are the most despicable phenomena that man fails to forget. Similar were the anti-human crimes committed by the Nazis during the Second World War. Then British forces excesses against the Mau Mau in Kenya and the Russian army's atrocities in Chechnya and the Serbian genocide in Bosnia are among the other glaring instances of the most inhuman action in recent world history.

How does it happen and how close man gets to animals or becomes even worse than beasts when he commits such dreadful atrocities. According to some psychologists it results from man's hatred against man based on race, culture and ideological warfare. 'The predisposition to see the enemy as inferior, bestial or outside the scope of legal accountability, it prompts the occupying forces to descend into the abysmal pits of brutality and mistreatment. The

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dialectic of terror between the two sides--heavily armed soldiers on one side, and poorly resourced but desperate resistance on the other-has always proved hard to reverse.

Lord Russell of Liverpool in 1945 wrote a brilliant book on the brutalities of the Axis powers-Germany, Japan and Italy. The accounts revealed in this book are unbelievable and in reality nerve wrecking. The brutalities perpetrated in concentration camps, the transportation of Jews to Auschwitz and Buchenwald, the smell of the rotting corpses and the use of bulldozers to bury the rotten bodies into mass graves are some of the horrors depicted in this book. Many Germans say they knew nothing of these horrors being perpetrated in their name.

The atrocities in Vietnam, Latin America and Iraq have been filmed for the benefit of the American public. They will be able to see and wonder on the extent of animalism that their compatriots have been doing in other lands.

The way it has been done and the quantum it has been accumulating are the subjects of modern study. The chief culprit is the American war on terror, which presumes that every Muslim in the Middle East is a terrorist. The "terrorist"-has become a generic, demonized fanatic, capable in the popular imagination of the worst atrocities. The effect has been to dehumanize the alleged enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan, just as German propaganda dehumanized the Bolshevik commissar in 1941, and allowed them to be mistreated and executed.

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Fear and misconceptions

The misconceived perception creating inflated angst could be the main cause of conflicts and barbarities. Dealing with humankind's natural bent towards chaos and violence the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes says that the selfish conduct of people, probably based on fear and misconceptions, is likely to give rise to conflicts and wars. The only hope for peace and a modicum of happiness would be found if humankind gave up their aggressive designs to enter into a "social contract" under a leviathan, that is, a strong king who would establish a peaceful and safe civil society. In this arrangement, people could avoid the death and mayhem of anarchy. Hobbes saw the anarchy of his imagined state of nature as brutal and atrocious, which led to the absence of government and creation of disorder. Hobbes contended that states possessed power and with power they could use it as they pleased. This was a dangerous trend, which could produce explosive situations. The present state of world affairs corresponds very much to this analysis. The brutalities perpetrated by the western democracies, such as the United States and Britain, are astonishingly moving towards this end.

Until well after World War II the military philosophers of the West and especially of the United States thought that politics and war were fundamentally different. In the wake of defeat in the Vietnam War (1963-1975) the American military leaders reconsidered the possibility of integrating the two sides in the state policy. Carl von Clauswitz, an earlier military thinker, had already underlined the view of war as an instrument of the state.

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Although he had not advocated war for war's sake, yet he made it clear that a good deal of violence be implemented "to compel our opponent to do our will".*1

In "Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War" the Clauswitzian principles are enunciated more lucidly to justify the waging of war and perpetration of hostilities against the enemy. His guidelines were adopted as the main strategy for waging of war in the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991) by the senior Bush administration. Even a nuclear war is justified by the Clauswitzian thinking. Clauswitz might have approved Truman's dropping of nuclear devices on the Japanese cities during the World War II.

Although much of new conservative school of thought agrees with the Clauswitzian philosophy of violence and destruction, yet some liberal and rational thinkers like John Keegan find his views "too Western in their cultural predisposition". Keegan, on the other hand, advocated a broad-based cultural approach, that embraces not only the culture of the United States, but a culture that embraces much more than politics.*2

John Keegan makes it clear that moral and legal aspects of prosecuting a war are also to be given due though when waging a war. If these values were not brought into debate, then wars would become a menace for the mankind. Then the world will be on the verge of destruction and humankind will be annihilated.

Terrorism has been one of the main causes of recent wars in the Middle East. Since the Middle Ages till recent times its traces have been tangible and damaging.

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The first acts of terrorism are traceable to the Jewish uprising in 6th A.D., which was meant to drive the Romans out of Palestine. Sporadic acts of terrorism have been creating disorder and destruction in and around the countries of their origin. In the modern age the organized pattern seems to have established its network in 1960s, when it assumed almost international proportions penetrating deep into distant territories, like the United States of America. The core issues have been political, ideological and religious.

In addition, there may be some personal and individual reasons for embracing terrorism as an act of belief. Individuals with personality disturbances may be looking for a cause to give their lives meaning and purpose. *3

Causes:

They may be suffering from a "narcissistic injury", which may lead to a profound and lasting harm to their self-image and self-esteem. Such individuals, according to Richard Pearlstein (The Mind of the Terrorist) may turn to rage and aggression for their psychic rewards. There may be some loner, eccentric cases that may be planning to destroy the society, which, according to their perception, is not moving in the right direction.

Another cause of terrorism may be the injured sense of legitimate injustice and struggle for legal rights as independent nations. This sense of injustice appears to be prompting the Palestinians, Kashmiris and Chesans to fight for their cause. Many terrorist organizations have ideological grievances and are perturbed on the

deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the most backward regions of Latin America, Asia and Africa. They hate the 'venal elites' living in luxury, while the poor are suffering in poverty.

Radical Islamic fundamentalism in recent years has also been a strong spawning force to give rise to a number of terrorist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Taliban and Al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Takfir wál-Hijra in France, Germany and Britain. Although some of their grievances are genuine and require satisfactory resolutions. Yet some of these groups are exceedingly militant and reject negotiations and coordination from other sections of Muslim liberal schools of thought. However, extremist ideas and use of force for their practical applications are contrary to the teachings of Islam, yet the terrorists justify their acts as Islam-inspired.

The terrorist networks happen to be well-organized, transnational in character, helping one another with safe and secret hiding places, training camps, forged passports, developed infrastructures, explosives and financial facilities.

The main idea behind terrorism is to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm and force the targeted governments and organizations to accede to their demands. In order to obtain their objectives the terrorists employ all possible means of persecution, torture and murder. Sometimes the terrorists appear to achieve tactical success, but their achievements till now have not been of a durable nature with any tangible outcomes.

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Terrorist activities were on the rise in 1980s, especially in the Middle East, Europe and Latin America. They became very widespread when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. With the slogan of jihad the religious fundamentalists assumed a vital role which was duly recognized by the US, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They welcomed Arab militants like Osama bin Laden and provided them generous military and financial assistance. It was not realized that the arms and ammunitions supplied to the militants could one day be deployed against these very states.

After the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan the activities of these groups subsided for some time, but they became active again in 1990s when the World Trade Center in New York was bombed in 1993, killing six and injuring about a thousand people. In 1995, the Federal Building in Oklahoma was blown up killing 167 people and hurting some 400 others. Then in 1996, the explosion of TWA flight 800 near Long Island killed all 230 people on board. Then in 2001 (September 11) both the buildings of World Trade Centre in New York city were blown up killing more than 4000 people and injuring an equal number of people. This was the most terrible event in the history of terrorism that sparked off a wave of condemnation from all over the world, and led to the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the 1990s with political terrorism taking deep roots among the extreme fundamentalist sections of the Islamist organizations, suicide bombing came to be used as a growing destructive tool to eliminate the foreign occupiers of Muslim lands.

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This was deployed in Palestine, Kashmir and Chechnya with growing ferocity and frequency. It has also been used against the US forces in Iraq. So far as al-Qaida is concerned its main focus has been on Saudi Arabia that has allowed the US forces to be based in the holy land for the exploitation of oil reserves and the safety of the royal family. Al-Qaida has also been targeting President Musharraf and his government in Pakistan. It has also attacked selected targets in Indonesia, Philippines and Spain.

With terrorism spreading its tentacles all over the world there has been a sharp rise in state-sponsored anti-terrorist activities, which, in fact, assumed more threatening proportions than the forces they intended to counter. The trend has been more visible over the past decade and, in particular, since the 9/11 incident. The neo-con policies were converted into adventurous ventures with no end in sight.

Terrorism, as an act of violence, is calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and anarchy. The main idea behind these terrorist activities has been to arouse worldwide condemnation and consciousness against the spree of injustice, US domination and foreign occupation of the Muslim lands. The terrorists desire to break down the pattern of existing inequalities in international political and economic order and persuade the western powers to do justice to the suppressed segments of human society. By bringing the United States into a state of frenzy they want to create an impact, which could create a just and equitable order especially in the Middle East where the majority of Muslim populations remain, suppressed and deprived of

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their basic, genuine rights. Finding their vital interests at stake in the wake of 9/11, the United States declared war on terrorism. But this war was very chaotic and disorderly and instead of resolving the imminent issues, it gave rise to further conflagration in the areas targeted by the US.

Conscience
Of humanity

Although terrorism needs to be contained and brought under control, but the way President Bush has made an abrupt plunge into the unknown terrain is not a wise and rational act. Dealing with terrorism by launching preemptive strikes against defenceless and innocent people in Afghanistan and Iraq has evoked widespread condemnation. The world community remains convinced that there is no justification for huge, terrible reprisals in response to irresponsible acts of a few irrational individuals. Pope John Paul II, condemning the US reprisals said, "It was against the conscience of humanity, a crime against peace, which will invoke the vengeance of God".

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At the same time too much militancy being attributed to the so-called "Islamist" groups by the American neocons and Christian fundamentalists in the West, seems to have lost its legitimacy in the light of recent publications and research reports. The British historian Norman Daniels in his book " Islam and the West: The Making of an Image" explained the phenomena by introducing a new term ". knowledgeable ignorance" and pointing out that it is now

an accepted anthropological term describing and knowing people by the ethnicity and origin of their forefathers without viewing their individual and collective actions in proper perspectives. With such preconceived perceptions people, religions and civilizations are categorized in specific classes even when they are not, and could not possibly be imbued with such attributes. Such "knowledgeable ignorance" is extensively visible when it comes to condemning the Muslims and their religion. Since September 11, 2001, in particular, this trend has become more acceptable among the large sections of the western populations and policymakers. With the so-called war on terrorism the whole blame is focused on Muslims alone, which is not justified.

The US attacks on Muslims

The US attacks on the Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan have been condemned even by the September 11 Commission instituted by the US administration. In its latest report released at the end of July 2004, the Commission said, "Islam is not the enemy. It is not synonymous with terror. Nor does Islam teach terror…Lives guided by religious faith, including literal beliefs in Holy Scriptures are common to every religion and represent no threat to us… With so many diverse adherents, every major religion will spawn violent zealots. Yet understanding and tolerance among people of different faiths can and must prevail."

The problem cannot be confined to Islam or any other religion. It is a universal problem, which has to be examined in its wider perspectives and deeper implications.

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The problem will continue to pose a serious threat as long as individuals and societies remain deprived of their genuine rights and dignified and independent existence. These are the issues that need to be resolved before terrorism can be brought under control.

Democracies, being open societies, present both advantages and disadvantages to the terrorists. They are useful for their purposes, as they have limited restraints on their movements and activities. But, due to strong public and political pressures, there can also be backlash against terrorists, howsoever worthy their cause may be. As Ted Robert Gurr contends "terrorist movements in democracies contain the seeds of their own destruction".

In recent years, especially since 9/11, there has been close coordination between western and Muslim countries to contain the dissemination of terrorism. But the American measures such as severe assault on innocent people in the Middle East have been increasingly provocative and counter-productive. Instead of creating sympathy for the victims the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq have produced growing hatred for the invading forces. These attacks have been condemned even by the citizens of the United States and other western countries. During the last days of the US occupation of Iraq, the American published pictures of maltreatment of the Iraqi prisoners that were horrific and condemnable. The memories of past atrocities, committed in Korea, Cambodia and Vietnam, have again appeared on the surface to debase the image of the United States. In addition, the brutalities of the Israelis have also been put in the account of the US as they have been

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perpetrating atrocities against the Palestinians only with the massive support of the US administration.

The course of action, since September 11, has shown that America's objectives were shortsighted and limited to asserting its authority over the weak and defenceless people of the Middle East. "The current (US) administration", says Noam Chomsky, a famous American analyst, "is at the extremist end of the policy planning spectrum, and its adventurism and penchant for violence are unusually dangerous. But the spectrum is not that broad, and unless other deeper issues are addressed, we can be confident that other ultra-reactionary extremists will gain control of incredible means of devastation and repression."

The issues need to be scanned psychologically

Terrorism, although condemned by the international community as a heinous and horrific act, however, cannot be controlled by military means alone. It is much more a complex issue that merits deep insight and thorough analysis. Its sociological and psychological ramifications are widespread and penetrate deep into human nature. Psychologists and sociologists think that aggression and violence are ingrained in human nature, and the more primitive form a living creature lives, the more aggressive he tends to be. With furies deeply ingrained in animal nature the path is paved for atrocious destruction of the opposing forces. Scanning the vast perspectives of creation from vegetable to the animal kingdom the decree of violent death seems to be inscribed on the frontiers of life. Therefore, the issue of terrorism needs to be examined

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more thoroughly, not only militarily, but psychologically and sociologically as well, so that an appropriate and amiable palliative could be found.

The dominant cause of war, according to a large number of thinkers, lies in the human instinct for aggression. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the pioneer of psychoanalysis, believed that people have both a life instinct and a death instinct. People and nations wage wars because they want to avoid their instinct of suicide by converting it into an act of aggression against others, as we have seen in the latest American attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. Nevertheless, Freud thought that the more civilization evolved, the more governable the instinct of aggression would be.
But Freud's theory fails since we have seen a relatively civilized nation like the US perpetrating the most brutal acts of barbarity in the Middle East. The same is true of Israel, which also claims to be a civilized nation.

Konrad Lorenz, a leading scholar in the field of ethnology, who studied animal behaviour with special reference to instincts, contends that aggression is instinctual among animals, but for functional purposes. In "On Aggression" (1966), Lorenz observes that aggression helps a species to survive by providing food, mates and territory. Within a species, however, aggression becomes a ritual so that attack and submission can take place with little danger to life.

Lorenz deduces that humans, who lacked fangs and claws for the easy killing of their own kind, developed weapons for killing long before they developed mechanisms for restraint. As a result, humans are willing to kill their own kind in acts of murder and in organized warfare.*4

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The phenomenon of war has been studied in context of instincts or behaviour developed or distorted by human experience. The role of genetics has been studied as providing stimulants to the pattern of human behaviour. Edward O. Wilson, in his study on Sociobiology, tries to analyze behaviour as a response to genetic evolution, an evolution that the environments also shape. Wilson thinks a deficiency in psychological and biological needs can ultimately lead to varying patterns of conflict and violence*5

According to some other studies the role of leading personalities, their thinking patterns and mindsets also form strong stimulants in determining the course of warfare. John Stoessinger, in Why Nations go to War, says that decision makers are, after all, humans capable of irrational behaviour: they are captives of emotions that psychological and physiological factors can affect. Stoessinger finds many human weaknesses contributing to wars.

According to Stoessinger, the personality traits of individuals may lead to misperception. However, the most important question remains if the tendency to go to war is instinctive or learned.

John Stoessinger believes that humans have learned war much as they once learned slavery, incest and cannibalism. Professor Stoessinger concludes his study on the happy note that humans can "unlearn" their propensity to war as they have given up other ugly traits.*6.

But if wars are instinctual, then the future of mankind is bleak.

Societies have existed, in fact, where violence is virtually absent. Cultural norms against violence appear to shape individuals' behaviour, dampening any instincts that might call for any violence and aggression. The Zuni Indians of the American Southwest and the Bushmen of southern Africa have developed such non-violent societies.*7

Aggression and violence, terrorism and wars will remain part of human history as long as humans do not control their emotions and become more civilized. It is the wisdom of the leaders and the pattern of a civilized society that supersedes the irrationality of the masses. When de Gaulle declared that Algeria would be free, the French settlers rose in revolt and launched a severe terrorist campaign to thwart the intentions of the French government. But de Gaulle defied the settlers and convinced them of the proposed plan with his wise and rational arguments. In the end, it was the wisdom of the leader that succeeded in eliminating the threat of terrorism.

The US 'September 11 Commission's' report is also worth repeating. It said: "with so many diverse adherents, every major religion will spawn violent zealots. Yet understanding and tolerance among people of different faiths can and must prevail".

This is how the present complex situation has to be resolved, not by fighting terrorism with more terrorist and adventurous actions, but by rational and wise policies, understanding and tolerance. As Bonar Law said:

"There is no such thing as inevitable war.
If war comes, it will be from failure of WISDOM".

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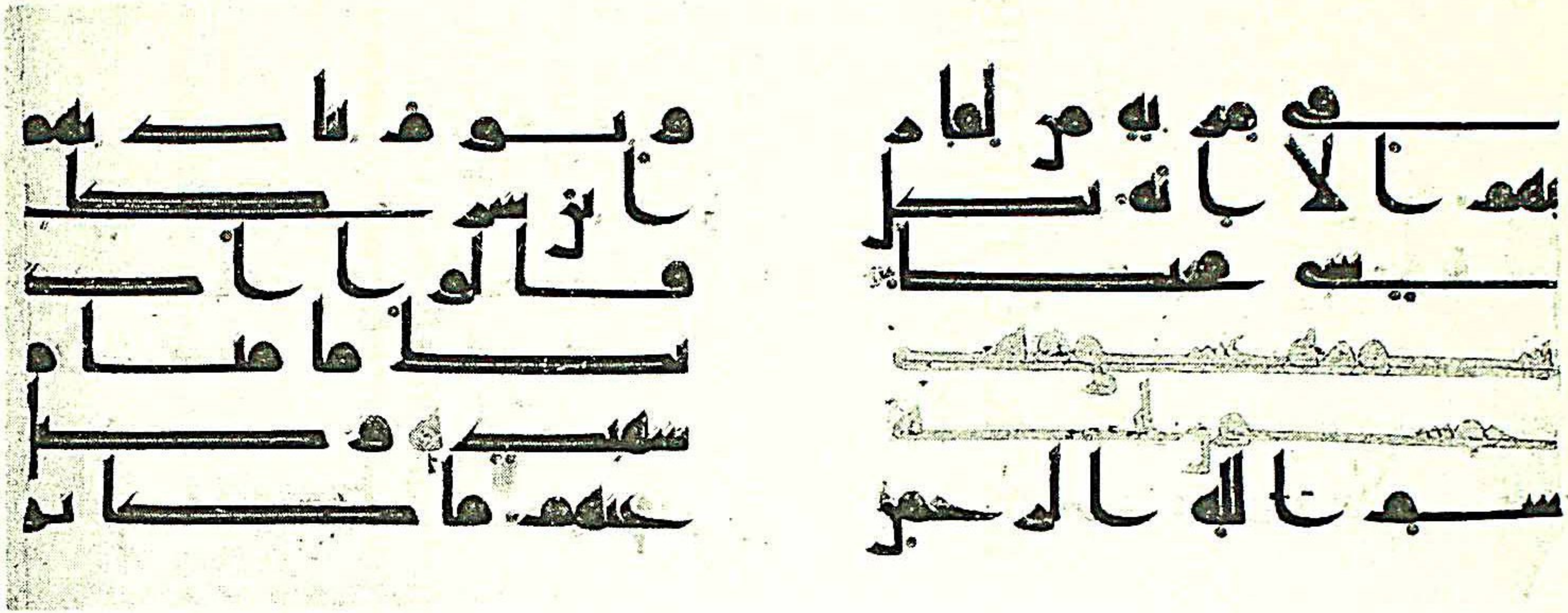

Chapter No. 11

BACK TO THE QURAN

A hundred new worlds lie in its verses;
Whole centuries are involved in its moments".

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Whoever does not know the Quran,
Is like a person who is not born.

BACK TO THE QURAN

Neglect of the Quran and distance from its substance are among the main causes of the Muslim decline. Since Muslims became oblivious of the meanings of the Quran and confined themselves to its occasional recitation, a process of confusion and degeneration was set in. Deprivation was also seen to have depleted the source of knowledge, which led to decadence and deficit in thought and action. Modern lifestyle, allure and temptations deprived Muslims of the sense of direction and purpose of life. The purpose for which human beings in general and Muslims in particular were created was consigned to the cold storage with no thought attached to the purpose of creation and the role of Vicegerency assigned to man.

Modern Muslim, though a believer in the divine revelation and truth, however, continues to neglect the ingredients of

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the book, which conveys the meanings, and implications of the principles of existence.

The realities of the Quran are the realities of human life. They elucidate the moral and material aspects of human existence, the narrative of events that determine the course of human destiny and shape the form of world civilizations. This is the study that should have been given top priority, but the tragedy of the modern age and especially of Muslims is the neglect with which they have treated this book- the book of divine wisdom and universal truth.

The study of the Quran covers a vast area of phenomena and an immeasurable region of connotations that suggest and recognize the tune of ethical, historical and human developments. The event does not stop anywhere since the process of evolution is constantly expanding and new situations are being elaborated in light of new implications and orientations. Their significance has to be appreciated in context of the evolving pattern of socio-cultural diversities and physical and metaphysical phenomena. With the rapid course of scientific advance and expansion of human faculties the natural and supernatural contents of the Quran have to be analyzed and understood adequately.

The meanings of the Quran are to be made clear to those who speak different languages and have different doctrinal and intellectual orientation. Thus a serious attempt has to be made, in light of the Quranic injunctions, to facilitate the 'fusion of mind and event' – a crucial venture to harmonize human thought with the ultimate reality.

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The task of interpretation has been going on for centuries, though with different variations and different evaluations. These works have been undertaken largely by the learned exegetes to expound the concept of truth as contained in the Quran. The learned authors have been pondering over the issues facing the Muslim ummah in light of the Quranic guidelines.

These works have been disciplined by 'rigorous sense values' and dedicated time and energy. They have set in motion 'a train of thought', which needs to be understood and practiced.

With the exegetical efforts a tradition has been set in to seek adequate answers for the difficult issues facing the Muslims both in secular and spiritual spheres. The complexities of the Arabic language and its rendering into foreign expressions have to be made explicable for application in every context and situation.

Although the Quran itself remains the main source of information and guidance, as one passage explains the other, yet there arise situations, which demand special elucidation and interpretations.

The Prophet's traditions and his companions' and their successors' explanations have been the major source of the constant flow of knowledge and guidance especially for readers like myself who would otherwise have been utterly confused and misinformed.

Ibn Kathier, a great interpreter himself, says:
"If we do not find the commentary of the Quran in the Quran itself, or in the Traditions, we should turn to the sayings of the companions, who knew about it best. This is because of the evidence they had seen and the conditions they had known, and because of the true nature of understanding, right knowledge and good deeds which they possessed". *1

Prolific and perennial

The Quran with a broad spectrum of divine realities and natural phenomena remains the most important document to reveal the mysteries of divine creation. Its revelations direct from the divine source make it a book of paramount importance. Its essence and flavour expands with the expanse of necessary elaborations and interpretations.

The Quranic revelations and their elucidations are imbued with fervour and flavour not to be found anywhere else in the world. The purpose of creation, responsibilities and obligations, ideas and movements are the underlying ingredients of the Quranic situations.

The Quran as the major criterion, the Furqan, distinguishing good from bad, submission from transgression serves as the main source of knowledge and wisdom. By converting the Divine injunctions into human language it gives directions and admonitions to the whole mankind. Its principles are perennial, prolific and productive. "By creeping murmur and the pouring dark it fills the wide vessel of the universe". *2

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With injunctions clearly conveyed and imperatives ingrained in the text of the Quran, the prerogatives of prophecy and narratives of history become all the more relevant to the contemporary scene of deviation and transgression. In view of man's growing appetite for earthly pleasures, vanities and allure, the Quran's role as a guide and reformer assumes increasing significance. By underlying the dangers of ambiguities and oblivion the Quran offers avenues for understanding and sublimation.

Faced with the uncertainties of life and death man could not be endowed with a better guide than the Quran. The Quran is such a vast treasure of knowledge and wisdom that to grasp its meanings and values is a daunting task that intimidates the wisest scholars and seers. Its manifestations are so dazzling and its proclamations so powerful, that to absorb its substance man must be endowed with the ever growing reserves of genius and intellect, perception and perseverance. The domain is so vast that to traverse its realm man must have not only one but hundred lives, as Iqbal says:

"A hundred new worlds lie in its verses;
Whole centuries are involved in its moments". *3

But it is not possible to do justice to the essence and substance of the Quran without pondering over its verses. The Quran demands of its readers' *tadabar, tafakkur and taaqual,* which mean deliberation, thoughtful consideration and rational understanding.

The Quran is not interested in its mere recitation, but invites the readers to give due thought to its verses and injunctions. But this is the greatest deficit that is found

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amongst Muslims especially those reciting the Quran without understanding it. This is why Muslims remain retarded without any Intellectual insight, moral and material endowments. God's blessings do not descend upon people who neither think, nor learn from the Quran.

The understanding of the Quran is all the more important, because it deals with the problems and issues that concern us in our daily life, the problems of temporal and spiritual life, culture and religion, philosophy and history. Without understanding the Quran we cannot understand God,
His injunctions, the universe and its manifestations, human existence and its relevance to this world and the Hereafter. At the same time the problems of good and evil, truth and error, space and destiny are the problems of human life, which must be given due thought and deep pondering. These problems, however, cannot be comprehended without adequate intellectual insight and physical and mental exertion.

Quran is the book of God and it helps us understand the nature of Godhead. It also helps us expand our horizons and evolve a pattern of inter-action between men and God. The attributes of God are innumerable which the Quran elaborates. Each of these attributes (Life, Eternity, Unity, Power, Beauty, Justice, Truth, Love and Goodness) is illustrated on different occasions and in different passages with varying substance and manifestations.

As a living Reality God wants communion with His creatures which He maintains through His scriptures, prophets and the mode of worship. It is a continuing relationship that must be nurtured through gradual and

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steady inter-action. The concept needs to be properly understood as some people (Christians in particular) have tarnished it through misconceived perception of trinity. For God the attributes of Omnipotence, Omniscience and Sole Lordship are the vital constituents of His eternal Entity.

It has also to be understood that God is not only the Creator, but also the eternal source of sustenance, life and death. The Quran says God did not create the world for any idle sport, but for a definite purpose, and for an appointed term. Without understanding this plan we cannot carve a correct course of life and remain confused and deluded. The knowledge to integrate life with its ingrained purpose is given to us by God through His scriptures and prophets. This knowledge has to be imbibed and absorbed for leading a purposeful life, otherwise, there will be no difference between men and beasts

The Quran also gives us an insight into the virtues, which have to be inculcated, and the vices, which have to be shunned. Without justice and love, mercy and compassion we cannot lead a humane and productive life. The Quran warns man to avoid the wrongs that contaminate the quality of human life and create a distance between God and man. The goodness and beauty are the essential attributes that man must cultivate if he wants to realize the higher grades of excellence. The Quran, no less than the Bible, lays special stress on love and compassion, humanity and charity, but to the misfortune of Muslims they have relegated these virtues in the background and have emerged with vices, which are contrary to the convictions of the Quran. Positive qualities are the radiance (nu'r) that signify beauty and perfection. Man was created in the best of

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moulds, in the image of God and for peace and harmony on the earth. God is the Beauty of heavens and the earth, and He wants His creatures also to imbibe and reflect this radiance.

Beauty of thought and action

Beauty of thought and action is the real beauty the Quran intends to inculcate. It is this beauty that is found in the divine messages revealed in God's scriptures. It is the beauty of speech and action, the beauty of preaching and writing that leaves an indelible impact on character and enhances the excellence of human soul. Could anything be better than this epitome of love and beauty?

Among other qualities that add to the beauty of man are the virtues of patience and forgiveness. Those whose deeds are beautiful shall be given the highest reward in this world and better still in the next, says the Quran. *4

Equally of fundamental significance is the relationship of man to God. God created man in the best of moulds and endowed him with the best of faculties and attributes to enrich his life with the best use of time and potentialities placed at his disposal. Creating strife and conflicts, discords and dissensions does not correspond to the mould that God had designed for man. By indulging in violent and aggressive actions man turns out to be the most ungrateful creature on the earth.

By deviating from the path of truth and beauty man distorts his face and assumes ugly features that deprive him from the original beautiful colours with which he was dyed.

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This is the most painful distortion that man experiences due to his clumsy and distasteful deviations.

Another important domain that the Quran opens up for man is the sphere of knowledge and understanding. This is the most extraordinary endowment, which even the angels do not possess. *5 Among men who are granted the faculty of knowledge and wisdom are the recipients of supreme good. *6

This is via this faculty that man gets nearer to the Quran and when he understands the mysteries of the signs of God, he learns the lessons of nature and history, physics and metaphysics, which are indispensable for the education of humanity. Since physical environments pose serious difficulties in the pursuit of goodness, the Quran clarifies the situations to survive obstacles and d handicaps. Without the Quranic injunctions and the Prophet's guidance it would not have been possible for man to attain the higher levels of moral and spiritual accomplishments. Without this knowledge man would have degenerated to the level of animals – a herd of cows, deaf, dumb and blind. The source of eternal knowledge provides to man an insight into the mysteries of universe, domain of physical and metaphysical realities and the evolving levels of conscious and unconscious mind.

According to the Quran there are three types of knowledge, which evolve the pattern of human thought and strengthen the degree of certitude.
These degrees may be categorized into:

- Knowledge by inference (ilm al-yaqin),

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- Knowledge by perception or observation (ain al-yaqin)
- Knowledge by personal experience or intuition (haqq al-yaqin).

The sources of knowledge and understanding of the natural phenomena, which are the signs of God, are indispensable for creating consciousness for ascertaining the nature of Truth, the Ultimate Reality. The scientific knowledge, which takes us to the study of Nature, of the galaxies and the stars, of the seas and the mountains, substantiates the worldview in a thorough and comprehensive way. Were it not for the Quran, our knowledge would have been lopsided and our perception rather imperfect. It is with the knowledge of the Quran that we discern the laws of Nature and penetrate into the patterns of cosmological variations. It is with the knowledge of the Quran that we can transform our lives and improve the quality of human environments. In fact, the Quran teaches us how to live and how to die, how to rise and how to enter the domain of eternity.

Vision of intellect

The vision of the Quran is the vision of intellect and those who confine Islam to orthodoxy deviate from the essence of the Quran. New scientific discoveries and understanding of natural phenomena do not mar the spirit of the Quran; they are the additional stimulants to support the faculties of thinking and reasoning. These avenues make the horizons of understanding far more broad and increase the capacity of discernment and transformation. The signs of God will not be visible to those whose perception remains blurred under the debris of illusions and distortions.

The essence of true understanding does not emanate entirely from the human mind, as Plato thinks, but emerges from the eternal source of wisdom, as the Quran says. Although human faculties are endowed with the capacity to discern and perceive, but they are limited and cannot transcend the restricted spheres conferred on man. For deeper discernment and understanding of the phenomena the human mind has to turn to the divine source of wisdom and truth, as Friedrich Copleston says:
"The ideas are certain archetypal forms of stable and immutable essence of things, which have not themselves been formed, but existing eternally and without change, are contained in the divine intelligence."*7

However, the Quran determines its own directions and provides its own parameters along which flow the streams of human knowledge and spiritual excellence. All other criteria are not so much reliable and may be dissolved in the course of time.

Those who do not perceive this zeitgeist are likely to forfeit the capacity to think correctly and develop accordingly. The locus of Divine revelation becomes active only when man turns to it with due thought and devotion. It is only then that the Quran stimulates the mind and the heart, the brain and the soul. It is only then that man sees beyond the veil, as Rumi says:

" The Quran's call remains valid till Eternity, Listen! O people devoted to ignorance.
I am the word of God, and subsist through the (Divine) Essence; I am the sustenance of the soul, and I am the epitome of purity.
I am the Sunlight that hath fallen upon you, but I am not separate from the Sun.
Lo, I am the fountain of the water of life,
Tthat I may deliver the lovers (of God) from extinction.

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*1: Ibn Kathir: Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim (Cairo).
*2: Adapted from William Shakespeare's Henry V... Prologue II.
*3: Muhammad Iqbal: Javid Nama. Translated by A.J. Arberry, London.
*4: The Quran: 3:172; 9:121; 29:7
*5: The Quran: 2:132
*6: The Quran: 2:269
*7: Friedrick Copleston: "A History of Philosophy".

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Chapter No. 12

The way Muslims decline

"Ill fares the land, to hast'ning fills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

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Dynamics of Social Creativity
A study in decadence and depravity

Why and how Muslims Declined

Almost thirteen civilizations are buried under our feet, yet we are decadent and uncivilized. The study of Muslim thought and culture pervading the fabric of human life over the past centuries is a study in decadence and depravity. In the aftermath of Mongol onslaughts the path of socio-cultural progress seems to be severely hindered which continues till today.

However, here we do not wish to enter into another discourse on historical antecedents of the Muslim period, what we want to see is the course of social evolution and its impact on civilized and cultured life in the Muslim world. In the course of our study in this book we have seen how Islamic society grew and how civilization and culture was evolved to create an improved pattern of human life. As an organism the society has been undergoing different phases of rise and fall. In this context we will examine some aspects relating to biological, religious, social and cultural

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changes or evolution, as it is known in modern terminology.

The Muslim social and cultural life which once was dynamic and dominant became a victim of its own lethargy and ignorance, dissensions and divisions. The decadence occurred because Muslims could not maintain the stream of vigour and vitality, which was imperative for sustaining the spirit of dynamism. They became incapacitated by the flawed perceptions and misinterpretations of ideological analogies drawn from inherently contradictory sources. Hence the decadence of Muslim culture was mainly due to lack of dynamism, lack of vigour and vitality coupled with insufficient hold over science and technology, religion and philosophy, arts, literature and economics.

Apart from its depleting dynamic dimensions the rise and fall of Muslim culture has been subject to rapidly evolving cycles of social, intellectual, political and economic structures. The question here which ought to merit our serious attention is whether the present period of Muslim decline will continue for ever or will it be replaced by fresh infusion of vigour and vitality to blossom into another dynamic culture and civilization.

The researchers at Kroeber and Sorokin institutes say "many great cultural and social systems or civilizations have many cycles, many social, intellectual, and political ups and downs in their virtually indefinitely long span of life, instead of just one life-cycle, one period of blossoming, and one of decline".

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This thesis is established by the fact that the Egyptian civilization rose and fell at least four times and the Greco-Roman-Byzantine culture probably many times. Similarly, the civilizations of China and India have had their evolving periods of rise and fall. The Muslim civilization rose from the seventh to the eleventh century. Then it started to decline till the Mongol onslaughts in the twelfth century. It remained completely dormant till the thirteenth century when it saw its second rise in the expansion of its domain including three great empires – Turkish, Persian and Indian. Its second phase of decline started again in the eighteenth century which remains miserably imbedded with growing signs of decadence and decline enveloping the whole Muslim ummah.

Rise & Fall of Muslim Civilization

Tracing the rise and fall of Muslim civilization we come across in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries three great Islamic empires—the Ottoman, the Safavi, and the Mughal. These empires covered most of the Islamic world and reached their climax about the same period. From 1555 to 1707 they rose to their zenith and then the decline started.

The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and longest-lived dynasties that ever ruled the world. Its dynamism and resilience were so vibrant that no conceivable army could thwart the forward march of its forces.
The empire reached its zenith with Suleyman in the sixteenth century. With almost the whole of North Africa occupied the Ottomans spread their empire from Yemen to

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Budapest, and from Algeria to Baghdad. In 1529 they had reached the gates of Vienna, the capital of Austria. In 1453 the great Roman city, Constantinople was taken over and was renamed 'Istanbul', the city of Islam.

In 1683, with the failure of a second attempt to capture Vienna the long, tortuous process of decline started. 'The Sultans who succeeded Suleiman possessed neither the imagination nor the political acumen necessary to keep a vast empire intact. They frittered away their energies in petty squabbles, meaningless intrigues, and frivolous avocations. Little did they realize that in an age of technology and science their old weapons would prove worse than useless. Their defeat in 1683 sealed their fate in Europe. But for the mutual bickering of the European powers, the Ottoman Empire could not have maintained its frontiers for any length of time. Then there was the growth of western imperialism and also the emergence of Russia as a strong centralized state, both of which turned the scales against the Turks.'*1

The western colonial powers were over active in devouring parts of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey became 'the sick man' of Europe. With the arrival of Ataturk some reforms were made, but these reforms could not bring in the synthesis and harmony of religious and cultural spirit which once was the glory of the Turkish past.

Thus with the decline of the Turkish Empire, the Muslim civilization on the whole began to show signs of weakness and decay.

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Muslim empires one after the other began to crumble. They did not only decline, but lost hold over the pulse of evolving times. While the western nations were advancing in science and technology, the Muslims, with a reverse gear, were moving backward with hardly any innovations in the field of mechanizations, economic and industrial growth. Their whole thinking and working apparatus had gone sterile and ineffective. The western powers, on the other had, had developed superior industrial and military hardware and were thus able to dominate the rest of the world with their scientific and technical expertise.

'The Muslim powers, quarrelling as they were among themselves, sought for the latest weapons from the Europeans who found thus a splendid chance to enter into the complexities of Oriental political intrigues and turn them to their advantage. They meddled in the affairs of the Mughal Empire in India, the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, the Safawid monarchs of Persia, and, last but not least, the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. The interfering powers were the English, the French, the German, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the Russians. This will show that practically every European power, impelled by her superior technical skill and actuated by commercial and imperialistic ambitions, set out to bring under their dominance as much of the Muslim world as they possibly could. The Muslim powers were no match for them.' Ibn Khaldun observed, the conquered mimic the conquerors and so many sections of our communities became psychological captives.

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Inter-state rivalries

Muslims were the victims not only of psychological and moral depletion, but their internal weaknesses were sharpened by inter-state rivalries. The inconclusive wars between the Ottoman and Persian empires during sixteenth to eighteenth century period further weakened their political and economic prowess and exposed them to the European domination. Moreover, the armies had become a hub of growing corruption and promotions were made through bribes and not on the basis of merit. This caused a further blow to the strength of the armed forces and made them incapable of thwarting the assaults of European invaders. Elie Kedoure says, "It was not corruption, not misgovernment, not inefficiency—that spelt the ruin of the Ottoman Empire. Thee things had always been present, but the Empire had remained. What destroyed it in the end was the pressure of European ambitions… The Ottoman Empire died of Europe".*2

The same fate awaited the Safawid state, which after the reign of Shah Abbas became a hostage of incompetence, atrocities and corrupt practices of his successors. On top of that the Persian state had become the most attractive spot for the repeated interferences of Europeans from time to time. With the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 a strategy was evolved to reach India through Iran. This caused serious consternation among the British who maneuvered to encircle Persia from the eastern side, while Russia was already placed on its northern flank. Due to encirclement Persia was reduced to nonentity, incapable of doing anything to resist the pressure of Europeans.

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Russia and Britain made the best advantage of the situation and used Iran and Afghanistan for their colonial expansion.

The third great Muslim Empire was that of the Mughals in India, which was distinguished by the religious and political cunning of Akbar, architectural creativity of Shah Jehan and extreme religiosity of Aurangzeb. 'Akbar recognized that a Muslim regime in India could not survive for long if it failed to win the assent of its Hindu subjects. In 1564 he abolished the poll tax on non-Muslims. He demonstrated his power to the Rajput descendents of the Huns and Gurjaras by taking Chitor in 1567-8, and thus having intimidated the Rajputrs, Akbar conciliated them, and this was wise, since they were the most martial of the Hindu peoples before the rise of Marhatas and the Sikhs.

The Mughal Empire, however, started disintegrating when Akbar's conciliatory policies were abandoned by Shah Jahan (ruled1628-58) and were replaced by offensives against the independent Muslim states in the Deccan. Shah Jahan's successor Aurangzeb had gone farther. He had reimposed the poll tax on non-Muslims in 1679; and he had driven the Rajputs, hitherto the Mughals' allies, to take up arms against him in 1680-1. *3

After Aurangzeb, who died in 1707, there was a rapid decline of the Mughal Empire.
Aurangzeb was followed by several incompetent and pleasure-seeking rulers who were less interested in maintaining the integrity of the Empire and indulged more in seeking the pleasures of the world. Their corrupt and sensuous practices crept into the body politic of the Empire and it became difficult to thwart the oncoming onslaught of

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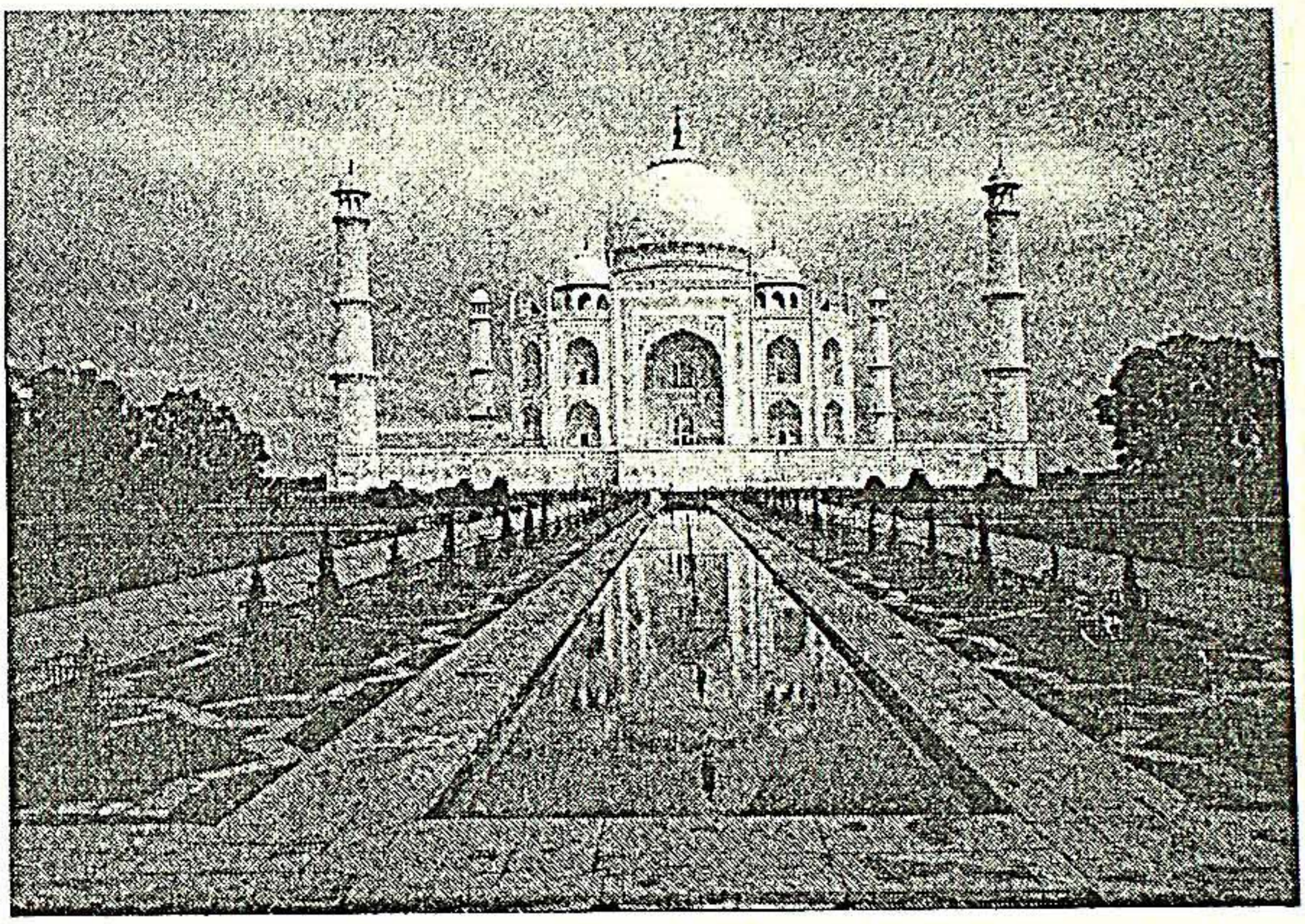
the British the Marathas and others who were looking for an opportune moment to exploit the situation for their own benefit.

The process of decline was accelerated by the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739, which resulted in defeats for the Mughals, and deprivation of their material and moral reserves. Nadir Shah's invasion was followed by a series of attacks by Ahmad Shah Abdali, which left the Empire "bleeding and prostrate". These invasions turned out to be catastrophic and hastened the process of decline.



However, the Mughals, despite their human frailties, were men of intellect, reason and passion. They were imbued with courage, compassion, and love for literature, poetry and beauty. With the construction of Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan had converted the concept of beauty into an immortal

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materialistic mould that would never perish, and if at all perished, it would never be obliterated from the minds and hearts of hundreds and thousands of generations.

With varying conceptions of religion, society, amity and fairness they evolved patterns of life, which did not deviate from the basic principles of humanity. Scanning from Akbar's Deen-e-Ilahi they conceived of Islam as the most suitable religion for mankind. Impressed by its ideals they became intensely interested in learning and imparting Islam to others. As such they were given the titles of Nur-al-Din (Jahangir), Shihab-al-Din (Shah Jahan), and Mohyi-alDin (Aurangzeb). As such the Mughals are regarded as the ideal Muslim rulers who were more interested in practicing the practical aspects of Islam than simply theorizing it. Jahangir is known for his justice, Shah Jahan for his love and compassion and Aurangzeb for his modesty and dedication. Akbar was the most perfect of all as far as the secular conception of a successful ruler is concerned.

However, at a time when Muslim empires and cultures were declining in Turkey, Iran and India, some good things were happening to reawaken the Muslims especially in India.

Muslims realized that without facing the challenges as they confronted them, they would not be able to overcome the odds in their way. But this consciousness was confined only to a few thinkers and social activists in India such as Shal Wali Allah, Sir Syed, Hali, and Iqbal. They tried to revitalize the energies of the Muslim masses through their writings, lectures and practical plans, but the response was not very encouraging. They were opposed, among others,

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by the Ullemas who thought that any pursuit of modern sciences, scientific knowledge and English language was not in conformity with the religious dictates. This was a completely flawed perception and contrary to all the dictates of wisdom and religion.

Moral, intellectual sterility

Muslims at the same time lacked moral stamina, education and intellectual foresight. They frittered their energies in useless pursuits without any concern for building a vibrant and dynamic society. Lethargic and listless as they have been over centuries they remained worthless members of society. They had neither the understanding of the Quran, nor the perception of practical realities of life. As such they remained intellectually sterile, morally bankrupt and physically inactive.

However, some Muslim scholars did rise up to save the destiny of the nation. And the prominent among them were Afghanuddin Jamali. Shah Wali Allah, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and Muhammad Iqbal. The role of these leaders has been discussed in our chapter on "Islam and Modernism".

Though the challenges before these leaders were not new, yet the magnitude and gravity was extremely excruciating. Facing a new political, economic and military order in which Muslims were left miles far behind was the most horrendous task which appeared exceedingly difficult to accomplish. What was of immediate concern was the rapid decline in which Muslims were relegating day and night. The perplexity had led to producing a state of deluge, which was becoming all the time more menacing.

What was more perplexing was the decline of institutions, which were supporting the sustenance of a glorious past with its brilliant culture and civilization. Since the fall of Baghdad in 1258 the whole structural cohesion of the Muslim world appeared to be disintegrating. Although some Muslim thinkers like Ibn Khaldun thought that this catastrophe could be the beginning of a new era for the Muslim world.

The legacy

But another threat that had already perished the Muslim Empires and was now threatening the legacy of Islamic culture and civilization was now prevailing in the shape of colonialism. Since the beginning of nineteenth century all the important spheres of political, economic and military influence had gone into the hands of European colonialists. Muslims were stripped not only of their share in political, economic and military arena, but were also deprived of an integral posture required for maintaining the viability of human, social and political structures.

With gradual decline in education, scientific pursuits and religious belief their confidence was shattered and their capacity to reform the institutions was impaired. And when the danger was perceived, it was never perceived with the insight and determination to conceive and realize the aspirations of the Muslim nation as a whole. And when the corrective steps were thought to be taken, they were opposed by the narrow-minded, egocentric sections of Muslim orthodoxy. So not only the impending threats were not properly realized, the response to meet these threats

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was also not found to be sufficiently strong and united. This made it easier for the colonialists to capture and exploit the Muslim territories and equally difficult for the Muslim world to withstand their continuing onslaughts. The latest version of this capture was seen in the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early years of the twenty-first century.

Muslims, in the meantime, became so indolent and lethargic, that not to speak of catching up with the West in science and technology; they assumed a defeatist attitude by aligning with the easier course of backwardness and decadence. They appeared more like a fish jumping out of a pond just to fall back again into the torrential streams to take it wherever it wishes. By discarding energy and determination to live like honourable, independent nation they lost the will to fight and survive.

When the conditions become so hopeless, the prospects become exceedingly bleak. As someone said:

"We are the hollowed men,
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw, Alas,
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion."

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References:

*1: M.M. Sharif: A History of Muslim Philosophy. P. 1419.
*2: Elie Kedoure: England and the Middle East, Bowes and Bowes, 1956. P.14
*3: Arnold Toynbee: Mankind and Mother Earth.

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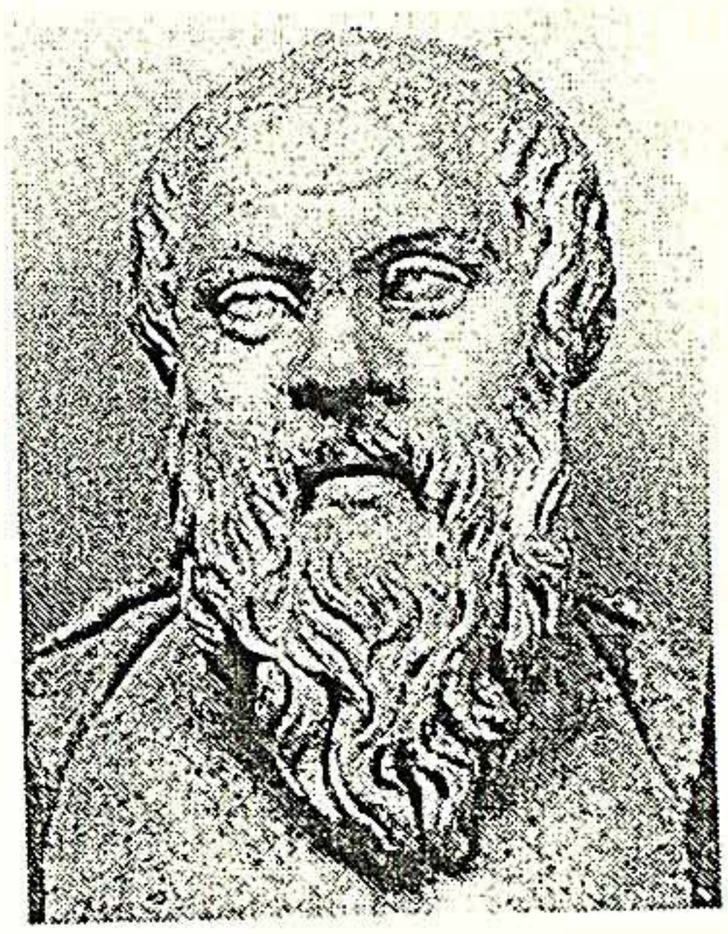
Chapter No. 13

The Philosophy of Living



"No evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death".
-- Socrates

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Making life worth living

The Philosophy of Life

"Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos because he is no longer involved in nature,
and has lost his emotional and unconscious identity...
Thunder is no longer the voice of an angry god, nor is lightening his avenging missile.
No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of a man, no mountains cave the home of a great demon.
No voices now speak to man from stones, plants, and animals,
Nor does he speak to them believing they can hear."

--Carl Gustav Jung,1964.
(Approaching the Unconscious)

Life, the way it is defined and pursued both in terms of evolution and eternity, determines the contours of its consummation.

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Morality is the main criterion with which men of thought and action measure the standard of perfection. The last words of Socrates when he was sentenced to death were:
"No evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. The hour of departure has arrived and we go our ways. I to die and you to live. Which is better is known to God, and only to Him."

This is the essence of spirit, the essence of life that we perceive as reaching the apex of consummation. This is the cause that adds meanings and beauty to human life. Causes are chosen by man himself in light of values and virtues passed on to him by his religion and philosophy, The phenomenon of man, the form of his personality is very much shaped by the characteristics and qualities absorbed by him from different sources of guidance and enlightenment. The principles of kindness and compassion, piety and justice are the fundamentals on which the structure of social life is based. These are the hues and nuances that beautify human life.

A character in "A Tale of Two Cities" reaches his apex when he accomplishes the act of self-abnegation. He prefers to sacrifice his own life to save the life of his friend for his wife and children. At the engine of death he imagines the Lord whispering in his ears: "I am the Resurrection and Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live".

Such noble characters are evolved only through intense use of prayers, submission and devotion. A closer co-relation with the sole source of eternity facilitates the process of perfection. 'A secularist friend once cross-examined me as to what exactly I meant by prayer; to describe its happening, I answered I would gladly do so if I could find the words. The trouble is, as Tagore observes about poetry, that words have meanings, or, as I prefer to say, predominantly intellectual meaning; and in a prayer it is emotion, not reason, that seeks an outlet. It is by prayer, by

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communion with an all-pervading spiritual force, and the soul of man discovers the purpose or goal of human endeavour. That is why down all the ages of human development prayer has been intimately associated, whether as cause or effect, with the nobler and more enduring forms of architecture and music; associated, too, with poetry and painting, with the awe-inspiring aspects of nature, with the great emotional mysteries of maternity, mating and death:*1

This is how life is etched into eternity and this is where morality enters into the phenomenon of man.

God's greatest gift to man is his life. "It has been given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never to know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so that while dying he might say: all my life, all my strength, were
given to the finest cause in all the world --the liberation of mankind". *2

The framework to live a decent and meaningful life has been given by God. Only we have to perceive it and follow the rules that determine its parameters. The framework is inviolable and its sanctity has to be respected. The phenomenon of man is very much determined by the laws of God. He has been given definite injunctions, special faculties and freedom of choice. Now with the raw materials so beautifully arranged man has to give the shape to his life. If he violates these laws, the mould is shattered and the replica assumes ugly features. As C.H. Waddington says: " Any mode of thought which attempts to attribute to man or any other organism any form of unchanging essence, or any character that is conceived as "being", rather than "becoming", flies in the face of our whole understanding of biology".

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Hence the concept of good life has to be understood and developed to attain the higher goals of human existence. Without developing proper perception and thorough insight into the realities of life one cannot assume a posture, which may be 'perennial, pure, and perfect'. Man may have a biological dimension (on which, of course, is based his biological stature), and biologists like Julian Huxley may be concerned to trace his growth only through biological evolution, but his compact personality cannot be evolved and spiritual and moral progress cannot be accomplished without absorbing the characteristics which religion affirms.

Julian Huxley himself believes in the sanctity of human soul and the symbols attached to it. He equates them with the individual personality at its highest and fullest, as the ultimate standard by which we must judge all other human achievements. However, at this juncture we cannot go into a detailed discussion on the influence of science on the external conditions of our life, which, of course, in modern times is pretty extensive. But the main idea behind this thesis is to reaffirm a framework that has been given to man to develop his biological, material and spiritual strength. ***Our main concern here is to find out the way to evolve an excellent, morally sustainable human life—a life without malice and jealousies, hatred and animosities.***

Quality of life:

Jesus Christ preached the gospel of love and compassion. When he was being carried for crucifixion, he had no remorse for his inquisitors. He looked to God and said: "Father,
forgive them, for they know not what they do".

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when on his mission in Taif was pelted with stones called not for any retribution, but for guidance and mercy for those who did not understand his message.

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Prophet Abraham when brought face to face with blazing fire confronted it with grace and courage. He came out of it with serenity and success. His example of sacrifice became torchlight to enlighten the darker recesses of human vagaries and vanities.

These are the prophetic attributes that add superb dimensions to human life and make life really worth living. This is the philosophy of life, which man in an imperfect and evil world needs badly. These are the qualities that make life so much exciting despite the frustrating setbacks, which make men despondent and miserable.

Seeing such a broad spectrum of evolving images -*men becoming better than angels and men becoming worse than beasts*, one has to take an attitude of 'tolerant irony 'toward life, as Lin Yutang pleads. It is an attitude of forgiving human nature for its shortcomings and not forgetting to chide it for not doing better. "In some such fashion, we, the human species, shall always proceed further and higher. That is the warm, emotional, sympathetic thinking that I mean. Here the intellect is going to help us very little. After science has done its spadework, religion, art, literature and philosophy must take their rightful place in human life.

These things seem poorly correlated in the modern world; the specialist has usurped the man. For science can never replace art, religion, literature, and philosophy. Besides knowledge, we must retain, and never lose a taste for life, a reverence for life, a sense of wonder at life, and a proper and reasonable attitude toward life.

The taste for life must be unspoiled, the reverence for life must be truly profound, the sense of wonder must be fully alive, and the attitude toward life must be harmonious and reasonable."*3

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Struggle for fulfillment

Improving the quality of life has been the obsession of educated and enlightened human beings especially since the outbreak of renaissance in Europe. The advance in science and technology, arts and literature has contributed considerably towards evolving the pattern of human life. At the same time new avenues of thought and creativity have opened up a myriad of vistas for improvement and development. The speed has been so rapid that even "development' seems to be lagging behind the passage of creative expression linked to the process of advance and growth. In the course of this evolution' the struggle for existence has been largely superseded, as an operative force, by the struggle for fulfillment.'

Fulfillment is the consummation of life. It is a struggle against the ugliness and meanness of life, the perversities and deformities that disturb and degenerate the pattern of life. And this is the positive side of life: human development and moral accomplishments.

Struggle is an imperative for human perfection, for individual personality and for the emergence of new qualities and patterns. Without struggle nothing can be realized, and for every new accomplishment a new course of struggle has to be undertaken. As Whitman says: "*It is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success*
shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary".

Struggle is imperative because it is a great stimulant to the act of creativity that is an integral component of human life. Such people are imbued with intellectual curiosity, physical strength, flexibility and insight to visualize and participate in the

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exploitation of human and natural resources. With these attributes can be realized the possibility of shaping the contours of human destiny. In this process knowledge and the organization of knowledge plays an exceedingly significant role. It helps not only in the transformation of human personality, but also helps in the exploration of new possibilities for further improvement and fulfillment.

Without comprehending these possibilities the process of progress cannot be linked with the complex of human destiny. The problem of destiny and the way to realize it is ingrained essentially in human nature. Ever since man was born, he has been looking for avenues for the embellishment of his destiny. The more man advances in knowledge and thought, the more he is infatuated by the urge to reach the still higher echelons of human perfection.

The evolutionary range of human thought has extended from the primitive pagan understanding of man's existence to the most perfect role in the complex of divine creation. It has been done through religion to philosophy, from science to modernism. Most of the evolutionary segments seem to have misunderstood or trespassed the religious contents of belief. Although the essentials of religion have been altered or blurred, but still religion remains and will remain an irreversible source of development and perfection of human life. Its teachings concerning the basic values, ideals of material and spiritual attainment, and notions of perfection are the fundamentals for a happy and harmonious human life. Although recent advance in science and philosophy has affected the course of human thought considerably, but it does not mean that 'by analysing the spectrums of the rainbow or creating artificial rainbows at fountains in squares, our belief in God or the scriptural injunctions would be destroyed and we would therefore be left in a world of satanic skepticism.

But no, the rainbow is just as beautiful to look at, if one will only look. Not a bit of beauty and mystery of the rainbow and the river breeze is destroyed'. *4

The rationality of believing in God today merits more justification than not in believing in Him. The relationship between experience and belief has been a matter of scrutiny both in the corridors of scientists and philosophers and religious scholars. Although the traditional metaphysical schools in Europe have lost their hold on the channels of media and communications, yet the belief remains strong in ethics and morality. Most of the wiser segments of human society still think that belief in divinity and the values emanating from it is more valid than disbelief in them.

These values and their realization evoke a sense of purpose in human life. Love, compassion, charity and tolerance are the features that distinguish man from animals. Considered in their final spiritual and biological realization they constitute the basic property of all forms of life. Love transcends the biological, and is something greater than its natural counterpart. It is still a noble sentiment that eventually leads to the preservation of species and beautification of human life.

The concept of a good life beyond greed, cravings, malice and temptations, as conceived by the Quran and other scriptures, does not penetrate into the modern human mind. Individual lust for wealth and power has replaced the ethics of Jesus and the modesty of Muhammad with the machinations of Marx and Machiavelli, Hegel and Nietzsche.

The erroneous conception followed by some western philosophers castigates the concept of good life and confines it merely to the Jesus' Sermon or to the social and religious ethics. With the evolution of secularist doctrines such as Marxism and Darwinism the concept of a morally, spiritually good life seems to have been pushed to the periphery. The Marxist interpretation

has not been sympathetic to the religious concept of a moral life. Its analysis was based on a materialistic perception of physical and biological propensities. Its demands were purely materialistic and the means utterly arbitrary and immodest.

Similar was the nature of theories propagated by Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, Jean Paul Sartre and many others of the same flock. The Darwinian theory of species turned out to be an increasingly detrimental element in disturbing the pattern of a religion-based conception of human life. For Marxists and others believing in a similar pattern of thought, a purely morals-inspired life was not of much interest.

Influenced by such theories the secular mind of the West thought that it could discover and develop material and intellectual potentialities by experience and analysis alone. The modern mind believed that he could create his own values and virtues. Humanists in Europe believed in the 'Brotherhood of Man', if it could be divorced from the' Fatherhood of God. Some humanists called for a new religion and new values. Humanists and Utilitarians believe in the promotion of self-preservation through knowledge, education and enlightenment. Though they accorded an equally important role to other experiences such as sociability, generosity, character and aesthetic instincts, yet religion with its various connotations was not wholly acceptable to them.

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Influenced by the biological and physiological developments of the Darwinian theory many intellectuals in the West lost faith in the divine concept of morality and its importance for human personality. The English writer Mandeville contended that there was 'no significance of morality for the progress of society and development of civilization'.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, said: "Get rid of the conscience, compassion and forgiveness. Oppress the weak, climb over the corpses"*5

For Nietzsche the Christian ethics was "the most poisoned poison that had ever been instilled into the vigorous body of the ardent mankind".

Hence, according to these theories, since we are 'trapped in existence'; our way of life is entirely arbitrary and conditioned by materialistic conditions. Our morality, therefore, is bound by our desires and material means to satisfy them.
As a corollary to this supposition what is profitable for us is good for us. So a sort of ethical theory can be deduced from the pragmatic compulsions of human life.

Developed on this basis the distinction between 'evil' and 'good' is mainly subjective and oriented to personal interests. If one thought that the right way to resolving his financial difficulties was to rob a bank, he could do it. But since such an act could result in imprisonment, one probably would not go for such a solution.

But despite all these discussions, merits and demerits of varying theories the divine truth remains the ultimate truth. Without recognizing and implementing these values in human society one cannot realize a truly enduring pattern of human life. Without establishing a relationship with God and His injunctions it won't be possible to create a decent, humane structure in which an individual personality could be nurtured without hindrance and constraints.

Islam, as a religion of reason and reform, places special emphasis on this relationship. Keeping man intact within the framework of temporal life, Islam suggests means and measures by which the values, secular and spiritual, can be equally

integrated. It accords equal importance to developing man's inner life as to his active existence. The achievement of inner harmony in building up the personality is as important as was the development of highly evolved mechanism in human body.

Its approach is so progressive and its values are so rational that even the seekers of the world are not left in a void. They are, however, warned that their excessive indulgence in worldly pursuits is not an exercise in the right direction. They are told that divine injunctions and human aspirations are to be blended correctly to evoke a beautiful response. Material and moral values have to be pursued in such a way that morality is not subjected to the doctrine of materialism.

The barometer, which measures the index of worldly pursuits, sexual and secular seductions, must be watched correctly to evade deviations and degeneration. The modern societies, both in the Muslim and Western hemispheres, are reduced to decadence because they do not observe the indicators systematically and intelligently. Fascinated with temporal temptations they forget the moral obligations both in regard to God and man and thus reduce themselves to a lower level of human existence.

Life can be fascinating if temporal temptations and ethical obligations are converged harmoniously into evolving a pattern of life that does not deviate from the principles of morality. Conversing or colliding with other disciplines and worldviews cannot harm an individual if he is true to his faith and understands the purpose of life. Then in spite of pain and dissensions, deprivation and frustrations life can be resilient and creative, dynamic and productive. This is the essence of religion, the substance of philosophy that purports to perpetuate a satisfying life—a life that is based on purity and love, character and creativity. This is how life can be worth living.

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Again with Tennyson I would like to conclude:
"***My strength is the strength of ten***
Because my heart is pure".

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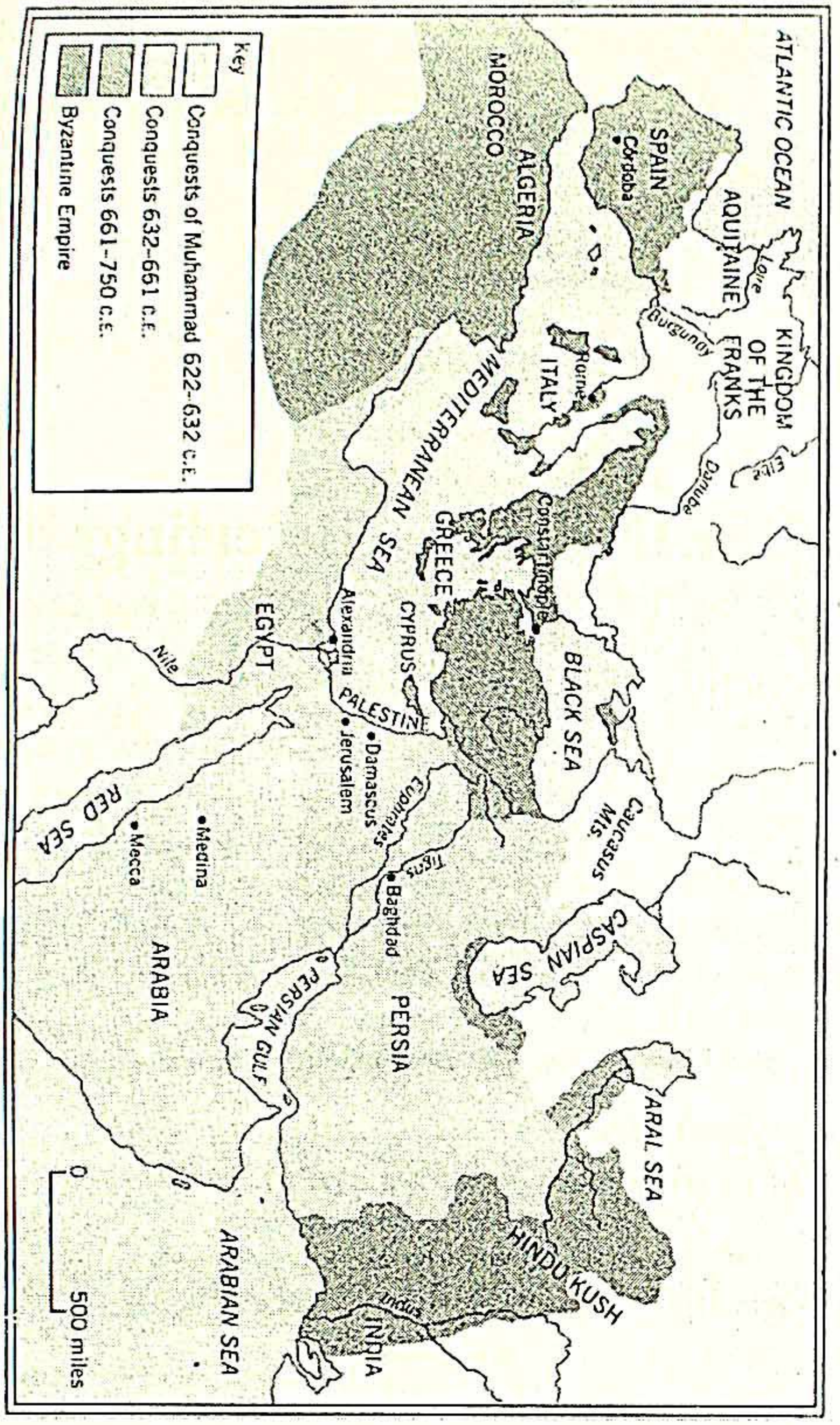

The Expansion of Islam
622ca to 750 CE.

Chapter No.14

MUSLIMS: the Underlings

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars
But in ourselves, that we are underlings".

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Understanding the nature of decadence

MUSLIMS: the Underlings

ISLAM gave the world a wonderful concept for growth and success, perfection and consummation of human life. This was the concept that transformed the world and left its imprint on the fabric of human society. When transferred to the realm of human history the phenomenon of man became the phenomenon of human consummation. It established the pattern of human evolution by creating a belief in positive reality and negation of evil. The world was refurbished with an improved form by radically altering the decadent modes of degeneration and dogmatism, subjugation and regression. This was the first step towards the realization of the unity of mankind.

To correlate the hope in human progress a system was devised to guide and incorporate the peculiar features of progress and prosperity both in this world and the Hereafter. A new history was to begin which was to proclaim faith in progress. The Prophet was assigned the responsibility to determine the course of action. By downgrading the importance of a life of debauchery the Prophet produced a stream of consciousness among the decaying segments of human society. This consciousness was necessary for determining the principles to prove the effectiveness of righteousness and charity, submission and humility. Submission was for God—the Sustainer, and charity for man –the partner in earthly existence.

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However, to coordinate the scheme of perfection a continuity of thought with action was declared to be the underlying prerequisite. A kind of spiritual life was to be created in which the whole life should be reformed and enlightened. There was a close inter-relation between positive thought and creative action. The Prophet established by his own conduct the transformative power of work. He never lost a single moment of life in which he was not engaged in some thoughtful and productive course of action. By laying the foundations of mosques, by removing the stones for building the trenches, by lecturing the faithfuls on the utility of knowledge and by thwarting the forces of evil he removed every barrier to progress and enlightenment. By raising the level of work to its most redemptive and constructive power he revolutionized the whole structure of human society.

But the tragedy of the ummah for which this gigantic scheme of thought and action was undertaken turned out to be the most regressive and degenerate form of human existence. Except a few decades in the earlier phases of the Islamic revolution under the rule of earlier caliphs or later in the 16th and 17th centuries under the Ottoman, Safavi and Mughal empires the whole episode is full of sordid tales which are hardly distinguishable from decadent and degenerate forms of existence. The ummah, which was supposed to be the best community according to the Quranic greetings, happened to degenerate into the abysmal depth of degradation and disintegration in which it seems to be terminally placed for an indefinite period. The process of disintegration is so continuous that the phenomenon of dissolution is now taken for granted.

Divided into some 60 states Muslims have no conception of a collective consciousness nor are they in a position to evolve policies for resolving the complexity of current issues.

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The conditions are so disgusting that even the goats gloat over their deteriorating plight. With heterogeneous policies and perverse pattern of thought they are perpetually perturbed by inter-communal strifes, sectarian alienation and socio-cultural estrangement from one another.

With no common political platform their differences and internal frictions are exploited by their opponents. Their enemies who consist of numerous western Jewish and anti-Muslim lobbies are always in the lookout to find their deficiencies and exploit them. To make things worse their enemies have penetrated deep into their ranks to subvert their plans, if any, to realize any worthwhile goals.

Colonialism, having already dealt a severe blow to the Muslim identity and integrity, seems to be reaping the bounties even after its formal exit from the Muslim territories.

With superior technology, war plans and socio-economic structures the western nations were in a stronger position to perpetrate and exploit the natural and physical resources of the Muslim world. The impact of these policies was increasingly infuriating during the 19th and 20th centuries. Even small nations like the Dutch could rule much bigger far-off lands like Indonesia, Java and Sumatra for hundreds of years. The rule of the Dutch over the Indonesians lasted for more than four hundred years- from June 1595 to December 1949.

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Several other factors could be assigned to the overall decay of the Muslim nations over the past centuries. All these factors are seen to have had their negative imprints in one way or the other in all Muslim societies. "The political fall of the Muslims was conditioned by factors both external and internal. The external factors were almost in all cases due to intellectual, moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Thus, primarily the Muslims themselves were responsible for their decadence. The machinations of the imperialist nations were helped, or shall we say, abetted by the

inefficiency of Muslims and the colossal ignorance of the masses. So long as the Muslims were in the vanguard of knowledge, they led the civilized world in culture, science and philosophy. But as soon as they lost interest in free and independent inquiry, knowledge and enlightenment, they ceased to exist as a dynamic force. Not only in Indonesia which was ruled and exploited by a colonial power for a long time, but also in Persia, Turkey and India where the semblance of Muslim power existed for some time, one finds absence of interest in scientific pursuit or genuine philosophical quest." *i

Mental Morbidity

Since Muslims lacked the capacity to cope with the demands of the modern scientific world, they regressed as it were to the past and took refuge in the long exploded myths and dreams-a very good for the time for which they were conceived and nurtured, but quite out of date in the modern world. Little did they realize that a passionate clinging to the past is an indication of mental morbidity, which leads eventually to death and destruction. As individuals regress or get fixated under the stress of life, so do nations. When the realities of life are hard and unpalatable, decadent communities like neurotic individuals take refuge in the past and find solace in their earlier achievements.*2

As a result of the deficiencies enumerated above, above all, the Muslim ummah is currently faced with direct onslaughts of the US Imperialism under the guise of war on terrorism, and the most despicable feature of this war is the killing and destruction of Muslims wherever the occasion and opportunity occur. For the time being the most brutal attacks have been perpetrated on the Muslims of Iraq and Afghanistan. Other Muslims in other Muslim states have also been subjected to silence and impotence with the connivance of the so-called Muslim rulers.

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Since George W. Bush's arrival in the White House and the terrorist attack on Manhattan and Pentagon the whole complex of national and international policies appears to have undergone a change. In the wake of 9/11, President Bush and his hawkish team, instead of adopting an amiable and constructive attitude, opted for a very aggressive and oppressive strategy against the Muslims as a whole that they called as terrorists. The policy was followed by arrogance and overwhelming control of destructive weapons, many times more dangerous than those in possession of other nations. As a result of multiplying ferocity and bestial nature of the policies, the US started moving in a very dangerous direction to annihilate and destroy the Muslim world.

Osama bin Laden has been used as a highly exaggerated bogey to place the whole blame on Muslims whether known or unknown to the confines of terrorism. Osama has been given much more credit than he deserves and hundreds of thousands of lives have been brutally murdered just to satisfy the arrogance of a few individuals at the helm of affairs in Washington, London and Tel Aviv. The highhandedness coupled with perversity has caused a damage of incalculable proportions to the Muslim world. Moreover, physically, militarily and psychologically the Muslims have been subjected to the lowest possible rungs.

In the wake of US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq the Muslim world finds itself in a very miserable situation. In spite of growing social, religious and ideological motivations the world of Islam remains in a void, which appears to be devoid of material, scientific and intellectual reserves to face the challenges and resolve the harsh realities. This was the lack of preparation and adequate realization of the difficulties and deficiencies facing the Muslim world that led to creating a quagmire out of which an easy exist seems to be very difficult. Here is a lesson for the Muslim Ummah to learn that there is no room for the myth-making qualities, aberrations and living in the

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past. It has to be understood that without transforming the inherent capabilities into positive, productive streams of creative thought and action, as the holy Prophet of Islam did, the present and future remain bleak for the Muslim world.

Since September 11, there has been a further decline in the overall apparatus of strategic, physical and intellectual reserves of the Muslim nations. Contrary to the realistic appraisal of the changing environments, the illiterate Mullahs continue to propagate militancy and violence as the viable means to combat the US aggression. They neither understand the meanings of the Quran, nor appreciate its implications in context of current material, geo-physical and strategic developments. The Quran (8:60) clearly makes it clear that "your horses must be fully nourished and trained before you embark on any fighting journey." However, when war becomes inevitable, it must be prosecuted with vigour, vitality and determination. But modern warfare is not conceivable without modern technology, a developed arms and ammunitions industry and strategic segments involved in any warfare. ***The weakness of cavalry is an open invitation to the enemy's invasion***. You cannot fight the enemy with kid gloves, as an English saying goes. But the tragedy of contemporary Muslims is that they allow themselves to fritter away their energies in irrelevant aberrations, purposeless pursuits and religious bigotry. This is the reason that from their quarters emanates only decadence and degeneration, confusion and corruption. The purpose of their lives has been reduced to a profane living, an ordinary and prosaic existence without any vision and substance.

Hence when faced with the highly developed technology of the West the Muslim world finds it floundering in a mess defeated and downgraded. This is how the situation has evolved in the aftermath of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As an Egyptian scholar says "Our credentials for victory and success seem to diminish every time we take on an aggressor; we have become

the world's champions of lost causes". The 'bond with God' has been ruptured by the Muslims (see the Quran: 2-28). The verse implies that God has endowed man with all the faculties and endowments to see how true he remains to the covenant he made with his Creator. When Muslims deviate from the right course, they are trapped in the vicious circle of evils, deviations and defeats.

Although many things are done in the name of religion, but hardly any concrete plans are executed to realize the goals to accomplish excellence in practical areas of human existence. As a result of these drawbacks the Muslim ummah is experiencing a phase of moral and material decadence. Muslims have become the underlings—the perverse specimens of degenerate and dejected species. This is being increasingly recognised by a number of thoughtful critics, scholars and intellectuals who have been pondering over the causes and effects of the Muslim decline. The perception of this degeneration has become exceedingly acute since the 9/11 incident.

It is a painful sight when we look at the Muslim nation today and see how weak its moral and social fabric has become, and how disunited its people are. Although Muslims today comprise more than one fifth of the world population, their countries are divided, with some of them constantly at loggerheads with one another. The enemies have united their forces and consolidated their efforts, and have been giving the Muslims one beating after the other. They are in control of Muslim lands and capital, while we are squabbling among ourselves, and pursuing our petty wars against each other.

We need the steadfastness and perseverance referred to in the Quran (Surah 8: Al-Anfal) to ensure victory in the battlefields of life.

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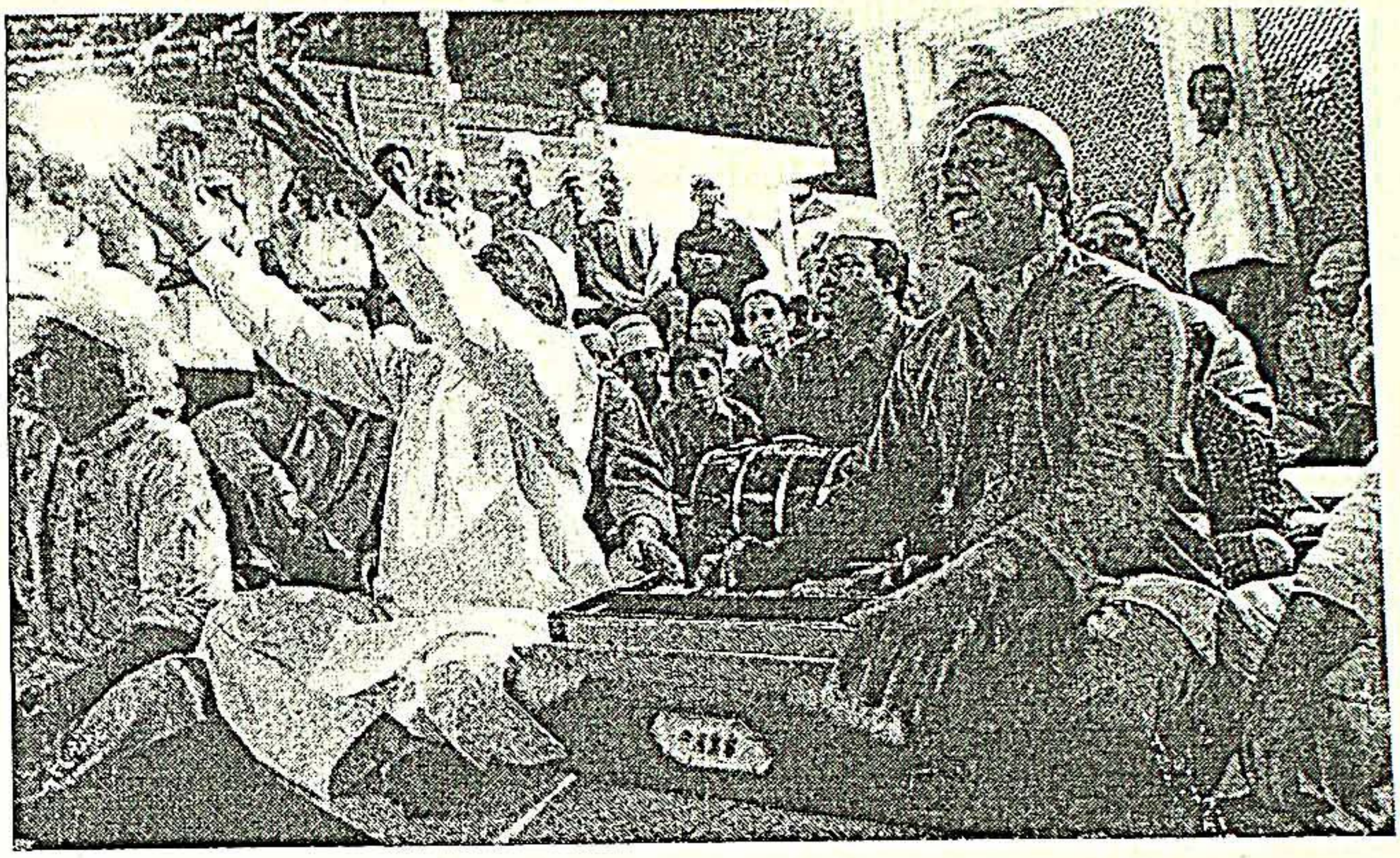

At the same time Muslims are miserably deficient in industrial and technological sectors and depend heavily on foreign nations for sustenance in consumer and commercial spheres. Economically most of them are backward and live on foreign loans and assistance. This is a shameful predicament especially when excessive oil reserves and mineral resources enrich some of the Arab states. Even in satisfying the basic needs of expanding populations most of the Muslim states have to import wheat, corn and other agricultural produce. They lack adequate systems of planning and development. Famines and periodic food deficits are common phenomena. Most of the prorgrammes and projects are prepared on ad hoc basis without taking any long-term, strategic requirements into account.

The past colonialists and present global capitalists never wanted the developing countries in general and Muslim countries in particular to develop and advance especially in economic and industrial areas. Even in present age when most of the

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developing countries are independent in political sense, the dependence on foreign aid and technical assistance is overwhelming. Despite huge oil reserve these states are acutely deficient in industrial and agricultural production. At the same time there is no collective consciousness for improvement of living conditions and the whole process in which the communities ought to have been involved seem to be miserably neglected..

The rulers of the Muslim states are primarily interested in improving their own lot irrespective of the collective downfall of the ummah.

Caught in contradictions, confusion and corruption the Muslim communities are confronted with a dilemma; they must denounce their evil practices and give up a life of lethargy and stupor or face the eventualities, which become the fate of such nations. They need to be explained how evil effects envelope the whole communities if appropriate measures are not taken to desist the major deficiencies of their systems.

Although Islam places strong emphasis on developing and humanizing the socio-cultural, economic and political system, but the lack of practical application will continue to constitute the main bottleneck on the way to human growth and social improvement. In order to enrich the human environments and socio-economic structures the material and moral reserves will have to be exploited to the best possible levels of growth and development. In order to transform the Muslim society as a whole and to promote the pattern evolved in the earlier phases of Islamic revolution the degenerate and decadent character will have to be replaced with constructive and dynamic dimensions. There is no other way that can justify the Muslim position in fast developing conditions of modern societies.

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It isn't in our stars

Muslims seek justification for their decadence in their stars, in natural phenomena, which supposedly operate against their interests. They think their destiny is already determined and they cannot play any constructive role in shaping it any more. They seek nothing beyond these phenomena, while they themselves are the reason for their decadence. This is the most pathetic response to the process of degeneration that appears to have enveloped them. What they lack most is the creative power, and that alone. Goethe called it *Gott-Natur,* which he described beautifully in an ode:

Nature! By whom we are surrounded and enfolded, powerless to step without her limits, impotent to sink deeper within her. Unbidden, she takes us up and carries us along in the cycle of her dance, until we weary and fall from her arms…
Although we continually influence her, we have no power over her. She is manifest in her countless children—this mother…
She is pleased with illusion; she punishes, like a harsh tyrant, him who destroys it in himself or in others. But him who follows her trustfully she presses close to her heart.
Her children are without number. She is miserly toward none, but she has favourites on whom she spends lavishly and for whom much is sacrificed. Her protection is given to the great. Her drama is ever new, because she continually provides new spectators.
Life is her most wonderful invention, and death a masterstroke whereby she may have much life. She envelops man in darkness and spurs him eternally toward the light. She makes him dependent on the earth, slow and heavy, yet always is stirring him up…
She is generous; praise be to her and all her works. She is wise and calm. She has brought me thus far; she will lead me out. I place myself in her hands without reserve.

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Do with me as she may, She will not spite her own creation. All lies at her door. She alone is culpable, and she alone is deserving of credit.

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Chapter No. 15

JIHAD in Modern Times

The significance of Jihad lies not in waging wars,
but in averting confrontations, not in demolishing cultures,
but in creating environments for enrichment of life and growth of civilizations.
These are the summon bonum of JIHAD.

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A CREATIVE CONCEPT FOR CONSUMMATION

JIHAD in Modern Times

Jihad in modern times has been grossly misinterpreted and deliberately distorted to give the concept a bad name which, in fact, was conceived to wage a struggle both for defending the religion if attacked and developing human personality in the best mould that God had devised for it. The idea was to cultivate character in such a way that temptations and allure of worldly life could not distract man from the path of God. Jihad was meant to exert and strive for the consummation of human life. Therein lies the beauty of action and excellence of righteousness.

As a struggle against the forces of evil and oppression Jihad demanded of Muslims the cultivation of qualities such as courage, perseverance, righteousness and trust in God. These are the qualities, which the Quran characterises as supreme human virtues. The Quran recommends patience and restraint as the best principles to guide human conduct. The Quran in verse 16: 126-127 makes it clear that the advantage in controversies lies with those who assume a patient and self-possessed posture.

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Elaborating the concept in a more specific way the Quran says:

"***Those who believe, and emigrate and strive with might and main,***

In Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons,
have the highest rank in the sight of Allah:
They are the people who will achieve (salvation)."

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in his note (1270) on the above verse says: " Here is a good description of Jihad. It may require fighting in Allah's cause, as a form of self-sacrifice. But its essence consists in (1) a true and sincere faith, which so fixes its gaze on Allah,
That all selfish and worldly motives seem paltry and fade away, and (2) an earnest and ceaseless activity, involving the sacrifice (if need be) of life, person or property, in the service of Allah.

He, however, makes it clear that "**mere brutal fighting is opposed to the whole concept of jihad, while the sincere scholar's pen or preacher's voice or wealthy man's contributions may be the most valuable forms of jihad**".

Shaykh al-Ghazali, a modern Muslim scholar of Egypt, in his book "A Thematic Commentary of the Quran", says that jihad could encompass the whole range of activities including inventiveness, development and construction on land, in the sea, and in outer space. It implies research in all fields to gain wider and deeper understanding of the world around us and all the phenomena associated with it.

Al-Ghazali says that the most painful feature of the misinterpretation of the concept lies not only in its distorted

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presentation to the non-Muslims, but in its misunderstanding and clumsy application by the Muslims themselves. Muslims lack not only the proper understanding of the realities of the concept, but also remain oblivious of the imperatives of progress in temporal and spiritual life. This is why they are among the most backward nations in the world.

Hence the real spirit of jihad lies in the struggle against the forces of evil and oppression and not merely in fighting against the enemies or opponents who may have different views or contrary ideological conceptions.

The Quran, furthermore, says that there is no compulsion in religion (La ikrah Fiddin). *1 Therefore, those people who want to impose their will on others, or want others to follow their interpretations of religion by force are not the true believers or perpetrators of the genuine concept of jihad. The implication of the verse (2:256) indicates that the religious or moral law of Islam extends beyond doctrinal compulsions and prohibits categorically any use of force in enforcing the fundamentals or interpretations of the religion.

All Islamic jurists (fuqha) without any exception confirm that forcible conversion in Islam is not acceptable, and that any attempt to coerce the non-believers to accede to the faith of Islam is a grave sin. This must do away with the false propaganda being disseminated in the West that Islam spread with the sword.

Nevertheless, bigotry and geocentricism compounded by the extremists' perpetration of atrocities continue to

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perpetuate fanaticism and misconceived angst of Islam. The jihadi movements under different garbs of religious, political and ideological insinuations continue to perpetrate acts of violence. Their acts are not limited to any particular area or region, but they are carried all over the globe, from America to Indonesia.

The fact needs to be made clear that jihad in Islam is exclusively in self-defense and does not permit an act of aggression or force to be employed against defenseless individuals or communities. The Quran and the Prophet's own engagements in battles were mainly to ensure the sanctity of human lives and properties. The Prophet never approved of any act of aggression for imposing the doctrines of Islam on non-Muslims. In the majority of cases strict conditions were observed to restrict the role of aggression and avoid the perpetration of hostilities when and where weak and innocent people, such as children, women and old folk, were involved. Muslims tried to avoid war to the best of their abilities, and indulged in it when compelled under the force of circumstances.

War: an abominable aberration

Islam regards war as an abnormal and destructive aberration, which needs to be avoided to the best of possible limits. God decries the very notion of war, as He asserts in the Quran (5:64) "Every time they kindle the fire of war, Allah extinguishes it. But they (miscreants) ever strive to create mischief on earth, and Allah loveth not those who do mischief". But miscreants continue to cause dissensions and disorder and thus deprive themselves of the mercy and blessings of God.

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However, when war becomes inevitable, then it should be fought with all the best resources available at the disposal. Moreover, war is permissible in the cause of God (see; the Quran: 2: 190), but even then the limits are not to be transgressed. Women, children and infirm people are not be subjected to atrocities with clumsy imprints left on their bodies.

These are the ethical considerations that delineate the dimensions of jihad. While waging war or jihad (qital) Muslims are supposed not to perpetrate brutalities or injustices in the form of sudden attacks on defenceless people. Except in extreme cases when Faith is apprehended to fall under severe onslaughts of unjustified attacks, and defending Muslim lives and properties becomes an imminent task of the 'imperatives of necessity', a resort to war and aggression is not permissible in Islam. The entire course of the growth of Islamic culture testifies to the socio-cultural, political and economic structure that Islam has built on these premises. It is permeated by the principles, which are wholesome and substantial.

Distorted perception

However, some verses and their misinterpretations have given rise to confusion and distorted perceptions especially in secular western circles. As already explained permission is given" to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged". Abdullah Yusuf Ali explaining the verse 22:39 observes that "several translations have failed to notice that '*yuqatiluna*' (in the best-approved texts) is in the passive voice, "against whom war is made", -- not "who take arms

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against the unbelievers" as Sale translates it. The clause "and verily… their aid" is parenthetical; Verse 40 connects it with "they are wronged".
The wrong is indicated: 'driven by persecution from their home, for no other reason than that they worshipped the One True God'. This was the first occasion on which fighting—in self-defense—was permitted.

This prerequisite is maintained throughout the Quran, even in verses revealed in later periods than the above verses (60:8; as well as the concluding part of 4:91).

The fact that needs proper understanding of the verses and their implications is the relevance to their revelations at a time when Muslims were defenseless and were increasingly exposed to incessant attacks from their rivals in Mecca and surrounding territories. A number of non-believers and western orientalists have failed either to appreciate the vulnerability of the situation, or willfully ignored the substantial truth behind the verses. For instance, the verse 4:91 commands: "Seize them and slay them whenever you may come upon them. In their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them". This verse does not advocate an open license for killing. Its validity applies only in cases where Muslims are subjected to persistent persecution and a continuing wave of hostilities. It is the war of liberation and self-defense that needs recognition, otherwise, the maintenance of peace; justice and order shall not be possible.

It is, therefore, wrong to assume that the Islamic concept of jihad is based on wrongful use of force and irrelevant application of interpretations which do not form an integral

part of the whole thesis. It may be categorically stated that the wars of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were entirely defensive in nature and were designed to do away with mischief and injustice inflicted on Muslims. This fact is conveyed in varying forms and illustrations in the following verses: 2:244; 4:74; 8:39; 9:6-16; 22:39; 47:4; 5:35; and 28:77. At the same time the Quran repeatedly makes it clear that Islam is a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness.

Hence jihad is not something to be decried and condemned, but duly conceived and appreciated in its proper context. The concept has been misunderstood both by the believers and non-believers, Muslims and non-Muslims. Interpreting it in a careless and dogmatic manner as a holy war against the non-Muslims just to force them to embrace Islam or exterminate them has been a complete deviation from the intrinsic truth of the concept. Nothing could be far from truth than this queer definition of jihad. Deriving any conclusions from such a distorted conception would be totally wrong and absolutely false.

The misconception about jihad is attributed largely to the misunderstanding and misinterpreting the term without caring for its linguistic and religious connotations. While dissecting it linguistically we find that the word 'jihad' is derived from 'Jahada' or 'Jahida', which means 'exerted' or 'struggled'; its juridical-theological implication is exertion in the way of God to create and sustain conducive environments for adding beauty and excellence to human life. It implies the deployment of moral, intellectual and physical faculties for the realization of high ideals that are the goal of human life.

Imam Raghib, an authority on the interpretation of the Quranic terminology, asserts that the essential attributes of striving against difficulties, aggression and tribulations constitute the basic formation of jihad. In this context he refers to the Quranic verses and the Prophet's traditions which signify the importance of moral strength, physical and intellectual resources and environmental compatibility for the excellence and refinement of human life.

Raghib says there are three types of Jihad:

1) To face the enemies of Islam.
2) To fight against one's own self (to control selfish desires and temptations).
3) To strive in the way of Allah with one's life and wealth (41:9; 20:9).

Raghib also quotes the Holy Prophet, who advised his followers to "fight against your desires as you fight against your enemies".

The fighting component seems to have become more significant during the later periods when different ideologues interpreted the Quranic verses and the Prophet's traditions in different ways, sometimes giving them the colour and hues as desired by them. Mr. Lane, the author of Madood Qamoos, says that Jahada came to be used by the Muslims to signify the act of fighting or waging a war against the unbelievers at a very later period. The author adds that the definition of jihad, as an act of waging war, is only of Môslem origin, and is not classical (original)".

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At the same time some misunderstandings may have arisen out of classical sources themselves as many thinkers belonging to this school thought that jihad had to do something with establishing Muslim rule over others. But in fact Muslim imperial dynasties were not following the principles of jihad when they were out to capture foreign territories and establish their suzerainty over them.

It may also be made clear here that jihad has nothing to do with terrorism. It is a totally wrong interpretation of the concept that militant connotations are being conveyed to create mischief and disorder in the world, and that too in the name of Islam. As already explained the Quran establishes an order, which is based on peace and order, harmony and amity. Anything that deviates from these principles defies the doctrine of Islam.

The non-violent characteristic of the concept of jihad may be illustrated by two outstanding events in the history of Islam. These events emanate direct from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when he had to confront the infidels in their highly hostile postures. These events relate to the Sulh-i-Hudaibya (a peace treaty) and the Fath-i-Mecca (the conquest of Mecca).

From these events it can be gauged how the Prophet dealt with the most provocative situations without resorting to violence or aggression. The Quran itself conveyed the Divine message with specific guidelines delineating the course of an amiable and peaceful strategy. This shows how even without using violence uncomfortable situations can be overcome.

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Therefore, jihad when viewed from the perspectives of terrorists goes miles away from the genuine injunctions of the Quran, and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). Hence understanding the nature of jihad and confronting the situations without resorting to violence is an integral part of the concept, which may not be relegated in the background. It is only by understanding and analyzing the situations intelligently that we can resolve the complexities of modern age. Although "understanding" in itself is the rarest commodity, yet presenting the true Islamic perspectives is the urgent imperative facing us as Muslims in the contemporary hostile environments.

The issue has become so urgent that even President Khatami of Iran has condemned terrorism as a malicious misinterpretation of Islam. President Khatami says: Vicious terrorists who concoct weapons out of religion are superficial literalists clinging to simplistic ideas. They are utterly incapable of understanding that, perhaps inadvertently, they are turning religion into the handmaids of the most decadent ideologies."

But this is also a fact and a reality of modern times that a good deal of terrorism is a sharp reaction of the hegemonic aggression perpetrated by the neo-imperialist powers like the United States against the weaker segments of Muslim communities in the Middle East. As a result of superior technologies the western powers exert their overwhelming force on the minorities in general and on Muslims in particular.

This leads to a spiral of pernicious perception and uncontrollable violence from both sides. The Islamic

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justification for this sort of resistance is highly enigmatic and needs to be rationally resolved by both sides.

In order to create amiable environments and peaceful order not only social and political perplexities will have to be resolved, an attempt will also have to be made to evolve a non-violent ethics and a creative strategy from the point of view of Islam. The cooler and compassionate side of Islam will have to be brought in to convert it into a more proactive movement. As a modern Muslim thinker says: " Modern Islamic movements have yet to pay sufficient attention to the potential of nonviolent action as a strategy for activism and resistance, an approach that does not involve the religiously questionable nature and strategically self-defeating consequences of indiscriminate violence or "terrorism".*3

However, the fact must be established that The Quran does not advocate a policy of aggression, nor does it approve of a policy that may lead to unnecessary submission or trepidation in face of aggression. The Quran suggests a balanced and moderate approach while confronting violence or unprovoked attacks from the side of attackers. Violence or responding to aggression is permissible, like polygamy, under forced circumstances. Defensive wars have been waged and are allowed to be waged when faced with situations of violence and aggression.

Maulana Maududi, a famous theologian of Pakistan, says "Jihad is a defensive war and hence does not violate the norms of international law. Jihad, claims Maududi, is both offensive and defensive in accordance with the divine

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injunctions to replace domination of man over man by the domination of Allah over the whole globe".
Nonetheless, the essential prerequisite remains peace, non-violence and maintenance of law and order.

The Quran makes it clear that aggression, violence and evil deeds are not independent, esoteric factors of life, but rather the result of man's succumbing to the temptation arising from his own moral weakness and personal degeneration. In other words, the power of negative assertion is a matter of willfully choosing the wrong course of action. Man is warned to refrain from violence, but people, in general, do indulge in acts, which leave clumsy imprints on the faces of human beings.

However, in case of persistent perpetration of hostilities Muslims may follow the course of jihad as a means of deterrence to avert aggression and ensure peace and order in society. If injustice and aggression can be stopped by giving a good fight, then, of course, there is no harm in resorting to the means of force.*2

Entire life in jihad

The spirit of jihad does not lie in mere brutal fighting in the battlefield, but could comprise the writings of a scholar, the lectures of a preacher, and contributions of a researcher or even innovations of a scientist. But in the battle between good and evil, virtue and vice the struggle is long and perennial. As Ibn Taimiya says "the battle with enemy forces takes place occasionally, but the faithful spends his entire life engaged in jihad".

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From this it may be implied that jihad is a struggle, a constant struggle to eliminate discrepancies between deficiencies and perfection, a fight to survive the contradictions on way to the realization of human transformation, consummation of life. Jihad, therefore, is a source of revolution, a means to perfection, which need not be violent and confrontational.

Whenever there is confrontation between good and bad, it is usually vice that momentarily prevails. But in the final analysis it is the good that must dissolve the duality of matter and spirit and survive the upheavals to give human life a better shape and status. On way to realizing the goal of refinement and excellence many innocent lives are sacrificed at the altar of greed, aggrandizement and territorial expansionism. But these sacrifices have to be absorbed to abolish conditions of servitude and to ensure peace and perfection. This is the ideal of life, the essence of jihad.

The significance of Jihad lies not in waging wars, but in averting confrontations, not in demolishing cultures, but in creating environments for enrichment of life, beauty of culture and growth of civilizations. With sacrifice and self-surrender Jihad charts the way for self-discovery and identification with divine injunctions. Jihad is not a symbol of violence and intolerance, but understanding and accomplishment. Creativity and consummation are the summon bonum which must remain the ideals to add beauty and perfection to human life. It is in this context that the concept of jihad should be understood and appreciated.

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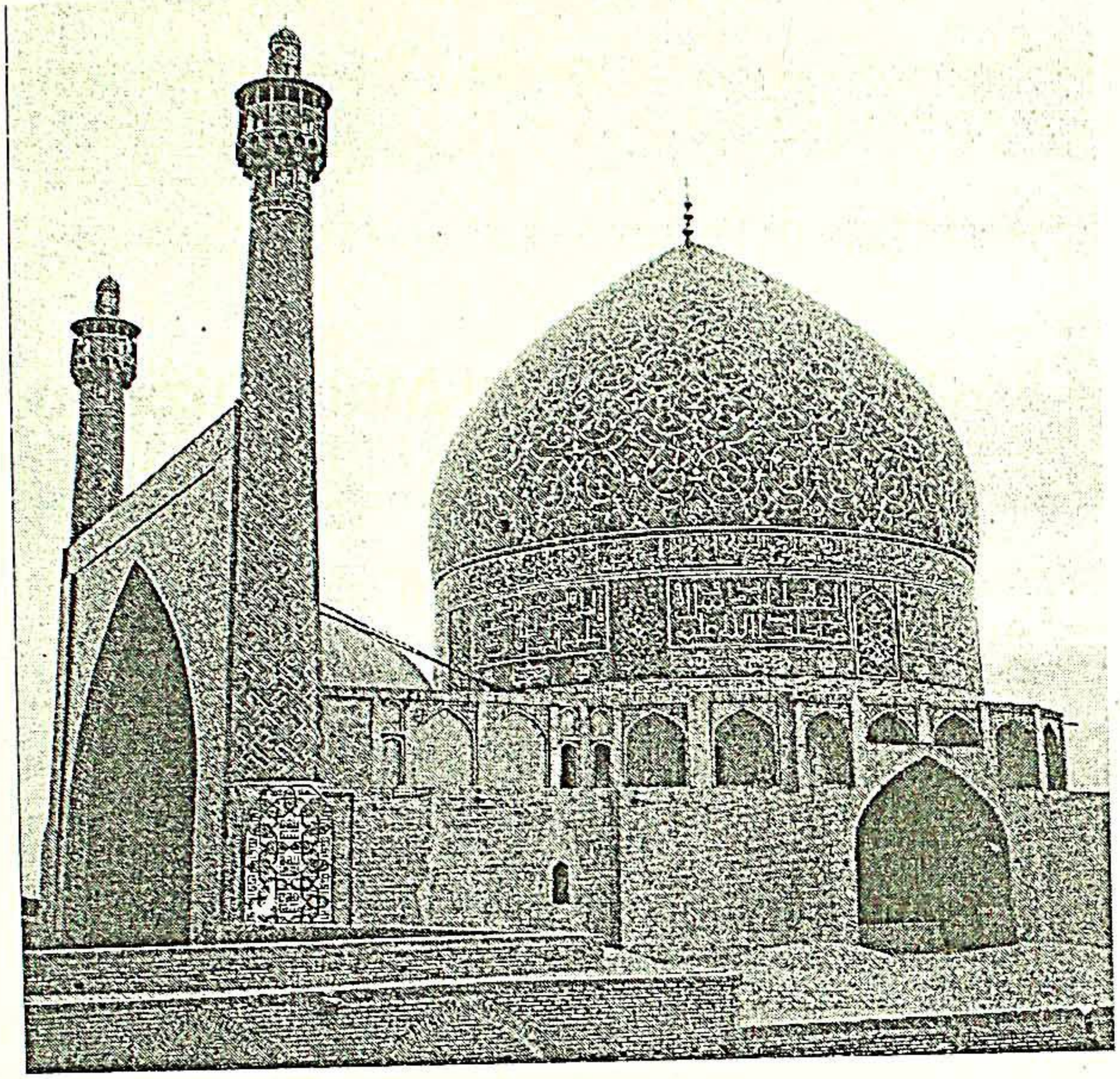

Imperial Mosque, Isfahan, Iran. 1637

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Chapter No. 16

The Muslim Model of Modernization

پـــس نـکـو گـفـــت آن رسـولِ خـوش جـواز
ذرئـــــه عـقـلـــت بـــه از صـوم و نـمـــاز

"How beautifully the Prophet of the happy nature said:
A little reason is better than prayers and fasting.
(Rumi: "The Mathnavi")

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Embracing the 21st Century

Muslim Model of Modernization

How modern is the Muslim model of modernization and how Muslims can enter the 21st century while clinging to the medieval ages, are some of the crucial issues, which will be confronting us in the following passages.

The most critical concern pertaining to the Muslim Ummah today is the decadence, which envelops it from almost all sides. Moral, social, political and economic sectors are some of the major areas, which underscore the arguments in support of this assertion. Lack of education, inadequate understanding of development priorities and lack of concern for socio-economic equity are the other areas that reveal the true nature and complexion of a decadent society.

A system or a model that ensures rapid socio-economic growth, satisfaction of human needs, and development of military and industrial infrastructure, but excludes ethical and moral norms will be difficult to evolve in a truly Muslim society. Creating a model on the basis of Islamic

ethic will be the first requisite in a Muslim society. Muslim thinkers maintain that a Muslim model besides conforming to the material needs of the modern society should also take into account the moral and ethical norms that Islam ordains. Hence, a meaningful concept ought to include both moral and material ingredients to compose a compact system of an Islamic civilized society.

A representative Muslim society cannot develop without a proper moral basis. Morality means goodness both for individual and communal growth. The Quran in an address to the believers says: "You are the best of people, raised for (the good of) mankind, enjoying what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah". (3:110).

This is the philosophy, the purpose behind the creation of a Muslim community, and for such a community an appropriate model becomes a prerequisite for progress in all spheres of life. It implies that Muslims should evolve a pattern that integrates moral and material well being of society both at domestic and universal level. The concept of a meaningful development calls for a wholesome civilization that is oriented to modern technologies for economic and ethical well being of human beings.

God, for this purpose, has provided resources both intellectual and physical, as well as laws of nature and legal injunctions. There are specific principles and deterrents that prescribe the scope of human actions.

The Quran makes it clear that God has created all means of production and natural resources, so that man could deploy them for the benefit of all human beings. Several Quranic

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verses refer to sustenance and possibilities of existence both on the earth and in the Hereafter.*1.

Explaining the verse 2:25 Muhammad Asad in "The Message of the Quran" refers to Muhammad Abduh's interpretation in Manar (1.232f) where he interprets the Quranic verse in the following way: Man's actions and attitudes in this world will be mirrored in their "fruits", or consequences, in the life to come—as has been expressed elsewhere in the Quran in the verses, " And he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it" (99:7-8).

"As is evident from innumerable Quranic injunctions as well as the Prophet's traditions forthcoming from authentic traditions, every citizen is entitled to a share in the community's economic resources and, thus, to the enjoyment of social security: in other words, he or she must be assured of an equitable standard of living commensurate with the resources at the disposal of the community. For, although the Quran makes it clear that human life cannot be expressed in terms of physical existence alone-- the ultimate value of life being spiritual in nature-- the believers are not entitled to look upon spiritual truths and values as something that could be divorced from the physical and social factors of human existence.

In short, Islam envisages and demands a society that provides not only for the spiritual needs of man, but for his bodily and intellectual needs as well. It follows, therefore, that –in order to be truly Islamic—a society (or state) must be so constituted that every individual, man and woman,

may enjoy the minimum of material well-being and security without which there can be no human dignity, no real freedom and, in the last resort, no spiritual progress : for there can be no real happiness and strength in society that permits some of its members to suffer undeserved want while others have more than they need.*2

A model of equality and justice

This is the model the Quran has devised for the Muslim Ummah- a model in which, along with spiritual progress, there are equal opportunities for material, physical and intellectual advance. A model that permits no inequality, no injustice and no perpetration of aggression and fanaticism. If a society is not oriented to the optimum utilization of physical and natural resources, it becomes an hostage of underdevelopment, deprivation and poverty. In such a society not only the avenues of spiritual growth are obstructed, the society itself degenerates into the depths of degradation and exploitation. It was probably this apprehension that the Prophet had in view when he warned the believers "poverty may well turn into a denial of truth (kufr).

Consequently, the Model of Islam ensures justice, fair play, equal opportunities for health, housing and provision of food for all the citizens. The Quran makes it obligatory for the state and richer segments of society to create such facilities for the communal welfare of the ummah. Omar Ibn al-Khattab, during his caliphate, had undertaken to collect and translate these Quranic ordinances into a concrete administrative scheme, which, however, could not be realized due to his sudden death. *4

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Since social justice, protection of citizens, development of intellectual and natural resources are essential ingredients of the Muslim model that Islam proposes, it, therefore, cannot be accomplished without integrating all these elements into a wholesome, civilized system. It is for this reason that modern Muslim reformists believe that without integrating all the necessary elements and synthesising them with the cardinal requirements of modern age we cannot conceive of a system, which satisfies both the material and spiritual aspects of modern life. Modernism in its ethical form and not medievalism in its archaic mould can ensure the sustenance of an equitable socio-economic structure.

In the modern age medieval structures cannot conform to the evolving situations changing from day to day. Although the fundamentals of Islam are perfect and suitable for all times to come, but the obtuse allegiance to the archaic structures will be of no value in the modern age. Even some of the ancient theological and mystical interpretations of Islam could be fallible when viewed in contemporary situations. The social and economic conditions have significantly changed and the interpretations made several centuries ago may not be valid today. Many reformists wonder how new social conditions will be reshaped when modern jurists and scientists revert to the outlines proposed by the medieval theologians.

Muhammad Abduh, a modern reformist, says that " it is the bounden duty of every Muslim to go direct to the Book of God and the teachings of the Prophet without the mediation

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of any of our predecessors (salaf) or those who come later in time (khalaf).*5

Islam, he declares," reproves the slavish imitation of the ancestors that characterises the leaders of the religion with their instinct to hold on to the tradition-sanctioned ways".

Intellectual inquiry is an integral ingredient of the system that makes the process to move. Without inquiry and research no productive enterprise can be realized and hardly any tangible success can be achieved in any sphere of life. But in the case of Muslims neither any interest is found in intellectual inquiry, nor do any possibilities exist for research in development sectors. This is the most depressing aspect of national life in Muslim states.

Iqbal (1877-1938), a great Muslim reformist, while condemning the slavish mindset of Muslims pleads for a balanced and middle of the road approach to resolve the complexities of modern age. He is neither for religious dogmatism nor for dominant western thought to pervade the structures of social and economic reforms.

He says in Pyam-e-Mashriq:

"*Carve out your own path by your own spear. It is a torment to go the way others have gone. If some novel work is accomplished by you, it will fetch its reward, even if technically it amounts to a sinful act*".*6

Iqbal further asserts, "to feel afraid of the new order, and cling to the modes of the past, is a delicate stage in the life of the nations". In Iqbal's view the only thing from the past that can be imitated is the Islamic thought and the lifestyle of the Prophet (pbuh).

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In Iqbal's views there are certain things, which are needed, most in the present age. He says "Humanity needs three things today: a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis."

He asserts that the West and its civilization are the greatest hindrances on the way of man's ethical advancement. The Muslims, on the other hand, are in possession of these ultimate ideas which emanate from the revelation.*7

The multiple efforts of reformers and thinkers have been directed toward reforming the society, which has remained sterile over the past centuries. Most of the efforts failed to produce any positive results, as Muslims and especially the Ullemas did not respond positively to these attempts. The result was that Muslims could not keep pace with the times and were relegated in the abyss of decline. The dynamism of Islam escaped the Muslims and they became the decadent remnants of antiquity.

With strong belief in theoretical Islam and remaining oblivious of practical realities Muslims even today in the post-modern world are not attuned to the scientific research, academic excellence or the laws of nature. Even the injunctions of the Quran remain elusive to them. The system of causes and effects which most of the Muslim thinkers propound remain beyond the scope of comprehension of the overwhelming majority of Muslims.

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Muslims shun realities

By ignoring the laws of Nature and the chain of cause and effect Muslims have refused to grapple with realities. They use prayers merely as a means to achieving their goals in life, without realizing that God has ordained a law that prescribes the principle of success. God has made it clear in the Quran that everyone is accorded the reward of their efforts. But Muslims hardly pay any heed to such admonitions. They want to achieve results without putting in due efforts for them. This is why they remain unsuccessful in life. Any contravention of natural laws leads to failure and frustration.

Elaborating this principle a little further, Dr. Fazlur-Rehman, a Pakistani scholar, says: "Islam is the first actual movement known to history that has taken society seriously and history meaningfully, because it perceived that the betterment of this world was not a hopeless task, not just a '*pis aller*' but a task in which God and men are involved together. In the post-Islamic era, it is only communism that has expressly and systematically set out to mould history".*8

In the same strain, Amir Ali, another serious scholar of the Indian sub-continent, denounces Muslims' mismanagement of their affairs and leaving everything to the Will of God. Amir Ali makes it clear that God's Will is not arbitrary. His governance functions according to the laws prescribed by Him. This is why today, despite repeated prayers day and night, Muslims remain subjected to persecution, oppression and the worst attacks of foreign powers like the US and Israel. Although Divine help does come to the aid of

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believers, but first comes the ground work that has to be done to attract the blessings of God.

Referring to the military victories of the holy Prophet Shibli Nomani (1857- 1914) explains them in terms of the causal nexus.

From the above discourse it becomes clear that Islam attaches strong significance to renovating the environments and improving the pattern of human life. God has created man for a specific purpose and this cannot be realized if life is left to the aimless assumptions without any definite goals and destination. High ideas and aspirations must inspire the life and motivate to the accomplishment of ideals, which God infused in the spirit of man. Vicegerency means certain duties and obligations, which must be understood and realized. If this were not the purpose of life, then the pre-arranged paraphernalia would have led to nothingness and the whole exercise would have been futile. Then the concept of a happy and successful eternal life, too, would have petered out without any concrete outcome. It implies that God wants His creatures, including the Muslims of course, to reform their social, cultural and economic environments to the best possible use of their human capabilities.

Sufism, though a noble pursuit for the purification of soul, however, does not fall within the parameters of this definition. The culture or system that is oriented to a passive and docile mindset cannot serve the cause of a fully vibrant, dynamic way of life.]

A dynamic culture

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A dynamic culture integrates necessary requisites of intellectual, and moral consciousness, economic and social restructuring. Especially, in the modern world, which is moving with an unimaginable speed, a retrogressive approach will not fit into the framework of a proposed model that is the need of times. In order to evolve this system Muslims will have to be more pragmatic, so that whatever resources are available, they are used realistically for development and welfare of people.

While discussing the need of development we may ponder over the mode, which need not be solely secularist as in the West. A secularist model that conceives modernity and materialism as the sole yardstick will not be acceptable in a Muslim society. Hence the model, which could be suitable for the Muslim world, would be an amalgam of modernity and religiosity (ethos of Islam).

Before we proceed further, we may examine the secularist theory that subscribes to modernity with all the materialistic connotations attached to it. It is detached from the traditional religious directions and is designed to modernize the society placing its emphasis on urbanization, literacy, democracy and socio-economic growth. This model does not necessarily embrace religious virtues, and traditional mode of thought.

According to Daniel Lerner who evolved this model, this is the most advanced system that provides maximum societal benefits such as economic growth, education, social and political freedom from wants and inequalities. Lerner says that this is the most popular conception, which is accessible

to all modernizing societies on all continents of the world. He adds: "What the West is (today), the Middle East (or the Muslim world) seeks to become tomorrow".*9

The problem with such models is that they reject religion altogether. Lerner's assertions, while defining the dimensions of this model, reject religion from any participation in the process of development. He says: "the sacred codes ...provide simple rules of conduct for all the flock—who can remain ignorant, or, more profoundly, innocent".

He goes a step further and condemns Islam as an obstacle on the way of development. Lerner rather deplores that "secular enlightenment does not easily replace sacred revelation in the guidance of human affairs".
He adds: "Modernization poses the basic challenge—the infusion of rationalist and positivist spirit against which Islam is absolutely defenceless"*10

Such statements, now more frequently circulated in the West, are issued to frustrate the Muslim world on their incompetence as equal partners in the formation of social and economic growth. They are ridiculed, because they have failed to prove that they can also improve and proceed further in the world of material expansion. "Their paradigm for progress has collapsed and the promised miracle has eluded the Muslim world", as Dube put it.

Another writer argues that the Arab nations remain in a transitional phase for a variety of reasons. Chief among them is the role of Islam. Cefkin adds: "Islam continues to

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have a powerful hold on the masses, impeding political development since it is not possible while modernizing conditions to singularly adopt religious values. In terms of the super-structure, it is a society where modern private and public institutions have been built, but where cultural fetters such as religious and social traditions inhibit the realization of the full potential of these structurally modern institutions".*11

Nevertheless, in spite of serious critical comments, Islam has its own inbuilt model and institutions, which have proved their efficacy during the rule of the first four Caliphs. And many Muslim scholars are convinced that the same model can still stimulate the process of development if concerted efforts are made to develop the potential and revitalize the resources.

As we have already pointed out the Muslim Ummah is fast asleep and the causes of underdevelopment remain as inhibiting as ever before. Ethical and moral paralysis, lack of education and underdeveloped socio-economic structures continue to cause the obstructions on the way to development. The approach is utterly retrogressive and deficient. Sufficient thought is not given to the development of modern techniques for the improvement of socio-economic conditions.

A community or civilization cannot be nurtured for long if it does not receive its sustenance from the sources of moral and material strength. Civilization in fact is a process of growth that either moves forward or disintegrates. Psychologically and historically viewed a civilization creates history when it is dynamic or lives at the margin of

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history when it is stagnant. Stagnation can also appear when actions are not taken in right direction. For example, the current wave of fanaticism and extremism may constitute some stimulants for some ignorant sections of society, but they cannot be considered as development-oriented dynamic movements.

As a result of this stagnation Muslims have become dependent on other sources of production, which are not as productive as is the demand of requisite avenues. A view of the majority of Muslim economies will reveal that they import 90% of their consumer and technical goods from western countries.

For the transformation of the socio-economic structures Muslims must be aware of the needs and requisites for the realization of the goals, which must be accomplished to shape the destiny of the ummah. Without creating this awareness no concrete steps can be taken to promote the social integrity and economic prosperity.

A model based on stimulation and vibration

A role model oriented to the basic Islamic prerequisites absorbing the modern innovative components is the need of the hour. Such a model operating within the framework of Islam will serve as the composite constituent of a long-term development strategy. With moral, scientific and technological base it will serve as an important structural variant to rehabilitate the decadent segments of Muslim society.

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The modern world is a super-intelligent world and our competition is with the forces that are far ahead in the field of scientific, industrial and technological growth. In arms and ammunitions too they are far ahead and dominate the Muslim world easily with the best possible technologies at their disposal.

In an intellectual void we cannot exist for long. "We need to be little more inspired in our thinking, and recognise these patterns, and many other equally fascinating, which could be the result of programmes laid down by a super intelligence in the noumenal world".*12

The noumenal world is not something entirely unknown or unknowable. It is a part of the same cosmos where we live, except that it is vibrating and is undergoing a process of transformation to be turned into a phenomenal world. The holy Quran refers to this phenomenon in a more illuminating way when it describes the process of fertilization and pollination through the act of natural phenomena, such as winds, rains and streams.
The Quran says:
"And We let loose the winds to fertilize (the plants) and We send down water from the clouds and let you drink thereof". *13

These are the signs of God, which indicate a definite process that procreates and composes a variety of organic and inorganic substances for the benefit of man. The winds, which usually go unnoticed, are shown to be vibrating and pollinating the process of creativity. The Quran has another chapter on vibrations and vitality (Al-Dhariyat: Ch.51),

which affirms the principle of recreation and the requisites for sustenance. ***Without vibrations (movements), whether of winds or minds, the possibility of productivity will be severely restricted.***

Another chapter in the Quran known as Al-Murasalat (77), translated usually as' those sent forth', but in modern terminology may be interpreted as the "**communications**", may fit very well into the modern model of development. Without communications the process of development will be inconceivable in the modern age of globalization, information technology and inter-planetary ascent and discoveries.

Any proposed model of development ought to imbibe, among others, the process of discernment, research and creativity. The Quran refers to this process repeatedly in its assertions. The verse 30:30 implies the creation of man on a defined model. This model is the best and is oriented to perpetuating the process of progress and development. Natural disposition to discern and perceive is the quality that God has infused in man. It consists in man's instinctive cognition of God as the ultimate source of creativity with constant influences on human and social development.

It is clear from the foregoing citations that all the components and processes remain ineffective unless man puts in his best efforts **to stimulate and 'vibrate'** them as the Quran says. All patterns receive their vibrations from the original source, which is oriented to creativity.

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A meaningful dialogue:

Hence it should be clear to human beings in general and to Muslims in particular that the demands of the Quran are different from what the Muslims are pursuing. Although customary rituals involved in the worship of God are also important, but their perfunctory pursuit without any meaningful dialogue with God and His creatures does not produce any positive results. The Quran make it clear that ***God is not interested in the prayers of those who are not mindful to the meanings and significance of their prayers.*14***

Hence a balanced, harmonious combination of ethical (religious) and material resources is the ideal that the Quran propounds. This is the model that involves the essential ingredients of science and knowledge attached to the ethos of Islam.

But the way to progress will not be paved, as long Muslims remain indolent mired in misconceptions, ignorance and dogmatism. Living in a state of inertia and looking to God for help does not accord with the principles of the Quran. Action and reaction, cause and effect are the laws of nature, which govern human actions. God makes it clear in The Quran that "He does not help those who do not help themselves".*15

Explaining this verse (13:11) Muhammad Asad says: " This statement has both a positive and a negative connotation: i.e., God does not withdraw His blessings from men unless their inner selves become depraved (cf: 8:53), just as He does not bestow His blessings upon willful sinners until

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they change their inner disposition and become worthy of His grace. In its wider sense, this is an illustration of the divine law of cause and effect (*sunnat Allah*) which dominates the lives of both individuals and communities, and makes the rise and fall of civilizations dependent on people's moral qualities and the changes in 'their inner selves'."*16

Hence the fundamental component of the Muslim model would consist of an innovative spirit to devise and delineate a socio-economic structure to meet the growing needs of the people. The component would be derived from the religion and culture of Islam and would correspond to the rules of conduct for a constructive development-oriented strategy. Nevertheless, a modern pragmatist view conforming to the enlightened perceptions of development might give rise to some difficulties stemming from the structures of traditional societies in developing Muslim countries, as happened in Turkey.

Yet the concept has to be articulated and argued that the concept is an extension of the religious values of Islam. The ethnocentric groups dominating the traditional schools have to be convinced that modern knowledge and technologies are equally imperative constituents of the proposed model. For example, computer technology, inter-planetary and communication systems did not exist in the past, but they are an integral part of any well-devised structure of modern geo-economics and soft power.

Another important aspect, which may not be overlooked while realizing the goals of a Muslim model, is the production of books and establishment of libraries. This

must form part of a viable education and communication policy. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century was largely responsible for creating a new era of progress and development in the western world.

The same thought has to be accorded to other important technologies such as telefax, satellite and cellular systems and other technologies, which might be available in future. It is believed that rapid developments in information technologies would bring about revolutionary changes in the model of modernization. This would be helpful for accelerating the pace of development and sustaining a level of self-sufficiency. This would also help to reduce the gap between developed and developing countries.

With the induction of satellite and cable facilities and modern technologies the whole world has become a global village. A large variety of programmes are available on hundreds of channels; some of these programmes may be irrelevant to our culture and some of them may even cause conflicts in our social and religious order, but the informative and educational programmes are imperative for imparting latest information and technologies to the seekers of knowledge. Hence while remaining attached to the ethical and moral values, modern technologies may be employed for further growth sand development of Muslim societies. Hence measures may be taken to ensure that modernization does not impede the perpetuation of Islamic culture and traditions. While giving due thought to cultural and religious aspects, modernity may not be assumed as an inhibiting factor in the formation of a success model for the Muslim world.

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We have to change, but the change must be for improvement of both the body and the soul. One- sided development to the exclusion of the other side will not be conducive to the realization of the full potential of modern institutions and civilization. This is what is meant by a meaningful induction of modernization.

We have to be careful that while on way to transformation the crisis of our society does not become the crisis of our civilization.

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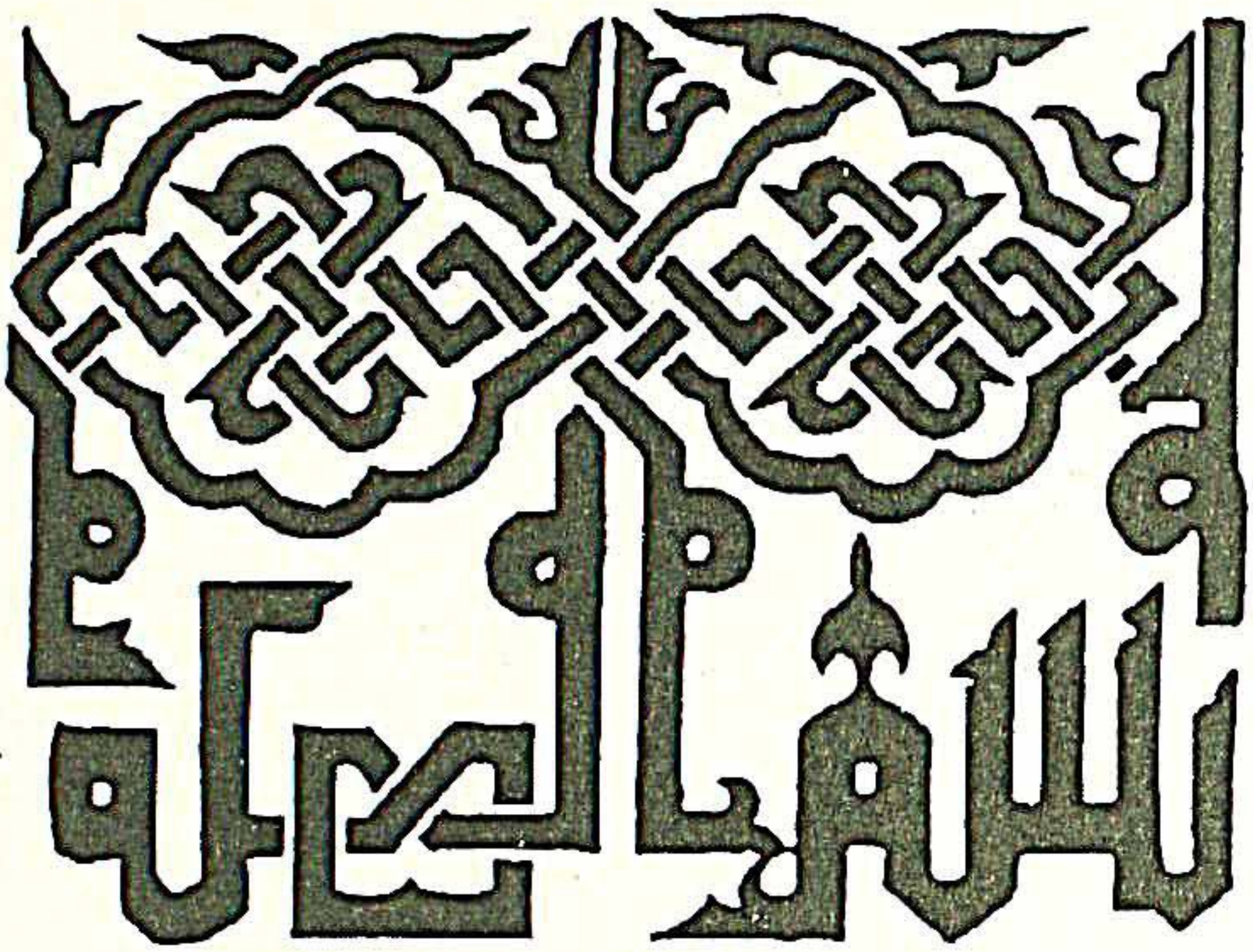

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Chapter No. 17

ISLAM, SCIENCE & PHILOSOPHY

"The release of atom power has changed everything except our way of thinking and thus we are being driven unarmed to a catastrophe. The solution of this problem lies in the heart of mankind."
--Albert Einstein

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Religion is life, Philosophy is thought...
We need both life and thought,
And we need that the two shall be in harmony.
--J.F. Clarke

ISLAM, SCIENCE & PHILOSOPHY

Relationship between religion, science and philosophy is exceedingly interesting and instructive. It provides a great source of knowledge, inspiration and guidance. Man without these avenues will be left in utter darkness without any rays of illumination and enlightenment.

A writer says:
"Science is but a sense of curiosity about life, religion is a sense of reverence for life, art is a taste for life, while philosophy is an attitude towards life, based on a limited comprehension of the universe as far as what happens to it".*I

Jacques Maritain in his discourse on philosophy and theology says that in the Middle Ages philosophy, in fact, was usually treated as an instrument in the service of theology. Descartes separated philosophy from all higher

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wisdom, from everything in man, which comes from above man.

While dealing with the subject we have to diagnose a number of connotations contained in terms such as reason and rationality, intelligence and wisdom, truth and intuition. The Greeks recognised the great truth that contemplation in itself is a great attribute, which cannot be bartered for any other quality of human life. Christianity taught that love is worth more than intelligence. It transformed the notion of contemplation, which henceforth did not stop with the intellect but with the love of God.
It restored to action its human significance of service to one's neighbours and charity to humankind.

The Greeks, among others, were exceedingly keen in finding out the hidden corridors of metaphysics, philosophy and transcendental studies. Pythagoras, Socrates and Aristotle tried to understand the concept of Godhead and impart it the essential attributes considered to be worthy of such a concept.

Pythagoras (500 BC) was the first recognised philosopher of mechanical and aesthetic pantheism. Through the preoccupation of beautiful he perceived harmony and beauty in the whole cosmos. Through this theory he tried to elaborate the basic attributes of God's existence.

The other Greek philosopher who gradually came to realize the divine truth was Socrates (470-399 BC). He is believed to have developed a sense of deep piety, morality and belief in God rejecting the multiplicity of deities.

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Plato's doctrine of ideas was closer to the concept of metaphysics conceived by Pythagoras. Justice was the central theme of his discourse. Plato saw beauty as a light of Truth (God).

Aristotle gave the concept a more concrete form. He thinks that there is a Prime Mover who makes things move and accords them form and shape.

Aristotle perceived the existence of God in constant change the world is subject to. He believed that there must be someone to be the cause of all changes in and around the universe and he called God "the Necessary Being".

Although for the majority of Greek philosophers there was no clear concept of God, yet they appeared to be moving in the direction that determined the existence of God. However, for the seekers of truth the search for the ultimate source of creation has been a constant endeavour. It is through this source that transcendental realities get clearer and infinitude of God is brought in clearer perspectives.

Infinitude, as William Blake says, is an inspiration.

"To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour".

David Hilbert, a great mathematician, elaborating the concept of infinitude, says that 'no other question has ever

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moved so profoundly the spirit of man'. It has fascinated poets, mystics, scientists and philosophers.,

Iqbal, the poet of the East, summing up the search for infinitude, says:

"Thou are infinite and I am finite,
Either let me be submerged,
Or make me infinite".

However, the knowledge of God in one form or the other has been the focal point of man's search for intellectual perfection and spiritual consummation.

Even the quest for happiness depends very much on the understanding of God and establishing a rapport between man and God. Most of the religious philosophers and seers are convinced that the ultimate consummation of human life lies in the knowledge of God. The very essence of happiness and perfection lies in the search of God.

But the attainment of happiness or the perfection of soul cannot be derived from philosophy alone. It depends largely on the correct understanding of religious beliefs and convictions as propounded by God through divine scriptures and prophetic traditions.

This leads us to comprehending the concept from the Islamic point of view. The Quranic conception of God is strictly monotheistic and omnipresent. God has an absolute Being, totally independent and self-sufficient. Whatever exists does so only by His Will. He has no partners either in creating the universe or managing its administration. He is the "First Cause" and the only Cause.

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A state of perfection

With ISLAM as the religion of the Quran reached the divine revelation to its consummation. God's revelations continued throughout the ages for the guidance and welfare of mankind. With firm faith in the unity of God and consequently in the unity of mankind, special stress was placed on the unspeculative piety (righteousness) and consciousness of God (taqwa), together with the performance of rituals such as regular prayers, charity (zakat), fasting and pilgrimage etc. With monotheism as its cardinal constituent the Quran shattered the earlier images of polytheism found in the worship of a variety of deities and trinity etc.

Over the centuries though interest in religion continued to grow, yet the creed of divine unity has had a very feeble effect on the evolution of human thought and belief. Creation of a number of gods gave way to the dissolution of faith in one Go. Instead a number of symbols and deities were devised to seek their blessings. This was all a speculative segment of human imagination.

The Islamic monotheism is based on specific religious, social and political philosophy. The Islamic concept is pure and perfect and transcends all forms of anthropomorphism and polytheism.

Elaborating this concept Abul-Kalam Azad, the renowned Muslim scholar, says: "It embodies a comprehensive concept of the Unity of God. From the standpoint of anthropomorphism versus transcendentalism, the Quranic

concept assumes a state of perfection, such as had not reached before".

The concept is so comprehensive and all-embracing that "No vision can encompass Him, while He comprehends all visions". (The Quran: 6:103).
In another verse the Quran says "His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth". (2:255).

However, the essence of the concept can be imbibed only through reflection and contemplation. The Quran challenges the human mind to observe the daily wonders including the ingenuity of man's own intellect, and a multitude of manifestations indicating the presence and power of a conscious, creative Force dominating the whole universe.

The most striking impression the Quran leaves on the mind of a reader is the reality of a purposive and creative power that controls the whole universe. But this impression is difficult to register if a man is not prepared to perceive and ponder. Yet it is not a conception based on faith alone. It is equally conceived through intuition of the heart and the rationality of mind. It requires an amiable synthesis of faith and reason.
"We do not prove that God exists, but that He does exist, just as we do not prove that seven plus three should make ten, but they do make ten. Therefore, the mere presence in man's mind of a datum which obviously transcends man implies the existence of its object". *2

Hence a believer knows God not only through intuition, but also through knowledge. Faith and reason are both essential

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for the understanding of God. But since man's reasoning faculty is polluted by the continuing contamination of conceit and deception, it must be cleansed by inspiration and purity of heart. As William Blake says "the doors of perception must be cleansed" before one can enter the domain of divinity. Immersed in love and knowledge man can perceive the conception which is beautiful and immaculate.

Man has to be more of a mystic and less of a philosopher to comprehend the realities of the Ultimate Truth. As Gilson says "when philosophy abandons the problem in order to immerse itself in the mystery, it ceases to be philosophy and becomes mysticism". *3

Elaborating the same theme in a more beautiful language Maulana Rumi says: The philosopher is in bondage to things perceived by the intellect; but the pure saint is he who rides as a prince on the intellect of intellects". *3

It is, therefore, imperative that questions relating to metaphysic mysteries and realities of the ultimate Truth are understood with the help of knowledge. But the original source of knowledge remains the venue of divine revelations. The transcendental guidelines given in the scriptural revelations spell out the answers about the existence of God and help in resolving the mysteries of the universe.

But some skeptics may wonder why in an age of scientific advance and rationality we should revert to the sources which are thousands of years old and apparently are not based on any logical and experimental deductions. In some

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modern circles it has become fashionable to insist that the sources of knowledge must be "objective, practical and non-transcendental". They wonder why a source beyond man's own perceptive range should be acknowledged as the fountainhead of knowledge.

The answer to this objection lies in the fact that a significant part of our accumulative knowledge comes from the sources which religion opens up for us. Most of the facts revealed by religion remain unchallenged despite the scientific assertion that knowledge should be based on rational deductions. It rather goes to the credit of the religion that many scientific discoveries themselves corroborate the facts contained in the divine scriptures revealed thousands of years ago. The modern science cannot refute the Quranic verses relating to the movement of stars and planets, galaxies and solar systems.

Scientists are now coming to believe that the universe could not exist without a Creator. John Wheeler, the well-known physicist at the Princeton University, refers to an "Observer-created universe". He believes the universe could not have come to exist unless a mind functioned behind it. He asserts that "bizarre, though it may seem, for instance, measuring the spin of one sub-atomic particle forcing a twin particle, miles away, to have the opposite spin. The Observer literally creates reality, much as eastern and other holistic faiths teach".

The Quran, in this regard, makes an amazing disclosure:

"Do not the unbelievers see that
the heavens and the earth were formed together

and We clove them asunder.
We made from water everything.
Will they not believe?" (21:30).

This is a clear indication to the earliest stages of creation, which the scientists also confirm. "As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in Allah's wonderful universe. Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sunspots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on the earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is sun..*5.

Dealing with the same theme Muhammad Asad says "It is futile to make an explanation of the Qur'an dependent on "scientific findindings" which may appear true today, but may equally well be disproved tomorrow by new findings. Nevertheless, the above unmistakable reference to the unitary origin the of the universe—metonymically described in the Quran as "the heavens and the earth"—strikingly anticipates the view of almost all modern astrophysicists that thus a universe has originated as one entity from one single element, namely, hydrogen, which became subsequently consolidated through gravity and then separated into individual nebulae, galaxies and solar systems, with further individual parts progressively breaking away to form new entities in the shape of stars, planets and the latter' satellites". *6

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Now the question arises how the realities of physical, biological and human life revealed in the Quran some more than 1400 years ago could be corroborated by science which have hardly anything to do with the religion. This proves that the source of divine revelations is absolutely true and valid. At a time when there was no university or scientific institute such knowledge could not have come from the most primitive sources of information or from the unlettered prophet who had never been to a school nor had he been taught by a teacher.

The fundamentals of religion and science also differ from one another. While science deals primarily with Nature, the doors of knowledge for religion open through faith in God. As Bertrand Russell says: "The fact is that science started with a large amount of what Santayana calls 'animal faith', which is, in fact, thought dominated by the principle of conditional reflex. It was the animal faith that enabled physicists to believe in a world of matter"*7

Furthermore, Russell says that science since the times of the Arabs has had two functions: 1). To enable us to know things, and, 2). To enable us to do things.
It is the analysis of everyday thinking that science primarily deals with. Through the comprehension and development of inductive thought it becomes easier to carve out a path of action. As Albert Einstein says: "The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking. It is for this reason that the critical thinking of the physicist cannot possibly be restricted to the examination of the concepts of his own specific field. He cannot proceed without considering critically a much more difficult

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problem, the problem of analyzing the nature of everyday thinking".

But the problem arises especially for the Muslim ideology when it comes to analysing and explaining the situations in terms of nature or matter to the exclusion of God altogether. For religion God is the Creator of all matter and without taking God into consideration the analysis or comprehension cannot be comprehensive. Howsoever, rational the system of scientific knowledge may be, the concept of harmony and balance in universe is difficult to be explained without presupposing the existence of God. The religion prescribes the limits of human behaviour, and as soon as you trespass the bounds, you are likely to cause disharmony and imbalance in nature.

Elaborating this concept Iqbal says: "If physics constitutes a really coherent and genuine knowledge of perceptively known objects, the traditional theory must be rejected for the obvious reason that it reduces the evidence of our senses, on which alone the physicist as observer and experimenter must rely, to the mere impressions of the observer's mind. Between Nature and observer of nature, the theory creates a gulf which is compelled to be bridged over by resorting to the doubtful hypothesis of an imperceptible something, occupying the absolute space like a thing in a receptacle and causing our sensations by some kind of impact—the theory reduces one-half of nature to a dream and the other half to a conjecture." *8

This is for this reason that the acquisition of knowledge and its due deployment in quest of truth has been made compulsory by the Quran. The Quran provides some of the

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essential requisites for serious study of data concerning the nature (the signs of God) and its various manifestations all across the horizons.

Hence while the scientific study demands the use of rational, logical observations to penetrate the depth of nature, the Quran enjoins the believers equally to understand the signs of God by observing and reflecting the modes of operations in light of the laws of nature.

Observations and reflections on God's creation could stimulate the process of human thinking and reawaken the dry streams of dormant thought. This is where the deductive method of reasoning and the inductive method of the Quran could merge to elaborate the pattern of divine creation and the existence of God.

This is how the Prophet Abraham strengthened his belief by observing the fading of the stars, the moon and the sun. This shows that the process of observation and reflection is a very helpful ingredient on the way of building up a solid faith.

At the same time a right relationship between thought and intuition is integral in stimulating the process of observation and reflection. As Iqbal says: "They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps reality piecemeal, the other in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspect of reality. The on e is present enjoyment of the whole of reality; the other aims at traversing the whole by slowing specifying and closing up the various regions of the whole for the exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek vision of the same reality, which reveals itself to them in accordance

with their function in life. In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says is only a higher kind of intellect." *9

However, while dealing with scientific and philosophical expositions the believers as Muslims have to be careful lest they fall into the malicious trap of disbelief. However, Muslim thought, developing fast in the subsequent decades after the inception of Islam evolved in four distinct directions: the Greek-inspired school, Mu'tazilism, Philosophy, Scholastics and Mysticism. Mu'tazilism and philosophical school under the influence of the Greeks thought that the reason was the main criterion of determining and resolving the issues of human life. It could also solve m metaphysical problems concerning God and soul etc. Scholastic theology emerged as a counter-movement to establish that revelation formed the basis of truth and it is only through this that truth could be determined. Mysticism evolved out of the yearning of human soul to reach the domain of the Divine.

Later on, however, differences were resolved to reduce the number of schools into two directions: one relying on reason as the only reliable source of knowledge and understanding, and the other believing in revelation as the sole agency of prophetic perception.

But still different sects and schools of thought continued to perpetuate the differences among Muslims, with the result that dissensions and open hostilities were found to shatter the fabric of Muslim unity. With the strifes in political arena a fertile ground was prepared for the rivalries in philosophical and religious corridors. Differences also took place on the basis of ethnicity. In the wake of Mawali

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movement, which was initiated to create equality in the ranks of Islam, a serious turn took place among the non-Arab nations to establish that the Syrians, the Egyptians and the Persians were superior to the Arabs. *9

As a result of pectoral differences several hierarchies and false prophets emerged to establish their hold on the mass of Muslim communities. With the spread of knowledge Muslim philosophers like al-Kindi began to reassert the influence of Greek philosophy to prove their own standpoint. The legacy of this period (750 – 800) was not very productive as far as the unity of the Muslim ummah was concerned.

With the appearance of the Carpathians sect a dreadful period started in the Islamic history, which dissipated the final shreds of the Muslim unity. For about one hundred years (890-1000) they slaughtered and plundered the pilgrims. Even the Abbasid caliphate was unable to control them. In 930 A.D. to the horror of the Muslim world, they carried away the Black Stone from the Kabba and kept it with them for more than twenty years.

With such horrors all around a period of decline and decadence appears to have damaged the remnants of Islamic culture and religion. The decline was accelerated by the antagonistic notions of Ma'mun and the Mu'tazilites and the reactionary movements emerging in Turkey and elsewhere.

Ahmad bin Hanbal (d.A.D 855) who refused to compromise on his belief in the sanctity of the Qu'ran and accepted the inquisition instituted by Ma'mun, was embraced as a hero by both the orthodox schools and

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common masses. Abu'l Hassan Ashari (d. A.D. 935), a prominent theologian, established his school of scholastic theology in this period. He dealt a severe blow to Mu'tazilites and the Greek-inspired philosophers. This school found another great proponent in the person of al-Ghazali in later years.

Moreover, some serious tendencies are seen to have cropped up in this period, which caused severe blow to the unity of the Muslim ummah. The outstanding among these were the pantheistic elements, which were introduced mainly by Bayazid Bistami (d. A.D. 874) and his pupil Mansur al-Hallaj (d. A.D. 921). Their doctrines of reincarnation and transcendental unity of God are seen as fostering the un-Islamic system of pantheistic Sufism which developed in later periods. *11

Another sect which is found to have caused dissensions among the Muslims were the Fatimids who are believed to have propounded a number of heresies to establish their own ideology. The Isma'ilians were the main proponents of this school who had also established a university in Cairo. As a result of their propaganda thousands of Muslims turned heretics and deviated from the original path of Islam. The Seljuqs, under the leadership of Nizam al-Mulk, succeeded in curbing the influence of the heretics. The Seljuqs, as the devout Sunnis, were fortunate to have found a great scholar and activist in the person of Imam al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali wrote many books to refute the claims of the prevalent sects and developed strong arguments to establish the original doctrines of Islam.

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At the same time some anti-Muslim forces in foreign lands gathered their resources to dismember the shape of Islam in conjunction with the internal elements such as the Fatimids. In A.D. 1075 an increase in the tax for Christian pilgrims led to a dispute between the Christians and the Seljuqs. The Roman Emperor, an enemy of the Seljuqs, appealed to the Pope to help the Eastern Christians and extended his support for an attack on Jerusalem. As a joint strategy the first crusade was launched in 1096 which conquered Antioch and Jerusalem (1098), where they slaughtered more than 70,000 Muslims apart from a fair number of Jews.

Such catastrophes that appeared both in theology, philosophy and ideological directions caused severe blow to the fabric of Islamic unity and purity of thought and ideology. Muslims were weakened by both internal and external forces, which were out to curtail the sphere of their influence.

Moral, religious decadence

Consequently, the Muslims who were the inheritors of a great legacy were pushed into the abysmal depth of moral and religious decadence. The ethical significance of the moral concepts contained in the Quran and in the traditions of the Holy Prophet was ignored and mere lip service was rendered to the rituals of the religion. The theologians and Mullahs who were supposed to be the guardians of religion turned out to be hypocrites and miscreants. This trend has been so vital in its destructive strength that it has continued to perniciously disrupt the smooth flow of Islamic thought and practice. The practical realities have been relegated in

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the background and Mullahs are interested in merely making money. Al-Ghazali, in his MUNQIDAH, says that students (even in those days) were interested in religious education just to gain wealth and position, and the exceptional cases were far and few. Combined with religious fanaticism the Muslim clergy were trying to perpetuate the sectarian differences to augment their own positions.

These were the basic elements of decadence among Muslims, which are equally valid today. Analysing and critically evaluating the characteristics of the age, which was characterized by religiosity combined with hypocrisy al-Ghazali, says that these evils were exceedingly rife and led to a series of conflicts between reason and faith.

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The real faith that ought to lead man to God was lacking altogether. There were universal misunderstandings about religion and real values, i.e., wisdom, knowledge, good and justice, these things received very little notice and attention. Consequently, a process was set in which caused a setback to the structure of refinement and renaissance that Islam had helped to evolve. Lacking interest in the practical implications of religion, science and philosophy Muslims became decadent and devious from the path of progress and prosperity.

The same trend continues even today without any sense of loss or remorse. The orthodox sections of Muslim society remain insistent in their perception that there is no reality beyond the things they see. The most mind-boggling paradox is the powerlessness of the power that they

presume to possess, though in reality the power remains elusive and the powerless egocentric.

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Chapter No. 18

History towards its Reckoning

"The least a statesman can do is to listen to the rustle of God's mantle through History, and to try to catch the hem of it for a few steps".

--Bismarck

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History towards its Reckoning

Surveying the history of mankind, and the rise and fall of the Muslim Empires, is an interesting and instructive exercise in which large parts of humankind with differences and animosities, ignorance and arrogance are seen to reflect the aspirations, which played a significant role in evolving the pattern of human civilization. Surveying the chronicles of history we come across hundreds of examples, which may help us to broaden the horizons of our understanding. The Quran says: "There have been examples that have passed away before you. Travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected the Truth". (3:137).

Tennyson in "Memoriam" says:

"Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be. They are but broken lights of Thee, and Thou, O Lord! Art more than they."

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"Only Allah's truth will last, and it will gain the mastery in the end. If there is defeat, we must not be dejected, lose heart, or give up the struggle. Faith means hope, activity, striving steadfastly on to the goal."*1

These historical narratives tell us how ancient people like Aad, Thamud, the people of the Prophet Noah were treated because of their arrogance, disobedience and rejection of faith.

The treatment of history has been the most excruciating experience of human existence with vivid examples and thought-provoking conclusions. But the most bizarre episode of the whole historical sequence has been the disdain with which coming generations have treated it..

The Quran records a long sequence of history, probably from the birth of Adam to the extinction of human race. The purpose of these narratives is to create an impression of serious deliberation to ponder the consequences of human actions. It informs the readers that the evolution of history is not neutral; it is either positive or negative, it is either constructive or destructive. Hundreds of communities with serious claims on their vast empires and enormous mass of resources were destroyed and now hardly any traces of their glory is found to confirm their claims and communicate a sense of pride.

The Quranic narratives confirm a principle that determines the shape and sequence of human destiny. According to the Quran, the law of retributions governs the process of human history. The Quran makes it clear that "***God is on***

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the side of those who restrain themselves (who fear God), and those who do good".*2

According to Fakhr al-Din Razi the fear of God implies due reverence to the commands of God, while 'restraint' or 'doing good' means the kindness and mercy which is the outstanding feature of the conduct of noble human beings. "

The perfection of the path to spiritual sublimation lies in devotion to truth and charity towards the fellow creatures".

Reviewing the above verse in the historical context it becomes clear that it was an admonition to the infidels of Arabia to ascertain the quality of their deeds in light of the colours and hues they produced on the fabric of individual and social life. The deeds with qualitative connotations will be regarded with rewards and respect in the Divine Court of the Almighty Lord. At the same time the Quran makes it clear that wrongdoing is not a desirable facet of human conduct and is always condemned by God. When Abraham was chosen for a leading role in the league of nations, he implored the Lord about his progeny, on which God made the following statement:
"My covenant does not include the wrong-doers"*3

This clearly refutes the assertion of those (Jews etc) who claim to be "God's chosen people" by virtue of being the descendents from Prophet Abraham. The Quran makes it clear that the exalted status is not conferred automatically by virtue of physical or mystical allegiance, but reaches those who follow the precepts of God sincerely and honestly. Evildoers are naturally excluded from this category.

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The knowledge of history is important for us as it provides a *Weltanschauung* (a world view) from which may be studied the trends of human evolution either towards peace and progress or toward regression and decline. At the same time the religious point of view presents a pattern of moral and spiritual sustenance, which is important to add quality to human life. The moral conditions, which emanate from the varying conditions of social structures, are not enduring as their impact varies from region to region and phase to phase. Such values cannot be universal, nor can they have a permanent effect on evolving a uniform system of ethical environments.

The phenomenon of man, the quality of his personality is very much shaped by the events and socio-moral developments that take place around him. The principles of justice and kindness, virtue and piety are the essential elements that shape the form of social and cultural order. These are the ingredients that nurture the beauty and dignity of human life.

"Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more humane, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language 'have no claim' on you; everything that is recognised in social life. Similarly the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognised as shameful and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's laws or our own conscience in its most sensitive forms." *4

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Hence the phenomenon of man in this world is very much determined by the laws of God and the socio-cultural, historical and political developments that take place in and around us. Man has been given certain intellectual faculties of understanding and development within which he has to operate to attain the high ideals of human existence.

However, throughout the narratives of human history the basic virtues and human values have remained almost the same with some variations arising out of evolving perception and changing patterns based on ethnic and tribal elements. Secularization and materialism have played havoc with the meanings and implications 'of the divine values. Christianity being 'the most materialistic' of all great religions allowed the trend to grow and nourish'. *5

We are living in a period of history in which there is a growing consciousness of cruelty and killing, atrocities and wars. Even on occasions atrocities are widely celebrated. The recent US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq produced such a furore in the conservative circles of America that they celebrated the "success" of the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan by declaring that "Victory changes everything". Charles Krauthammer, the Washington Post columnist, wrote that "seems to elude the experts again and again—Gulf war, Afghan war, next war—is that power is its own reward. Victory changes everything, psychology above all. The psychology in the region (Central Asia) is now one of fear, defeat, or destroy the other regimes in the area that are host to radical Islamic terrorism". Krauthammer declared: "America is no mere international citizen. It is the dominant power in the world, more

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dominant than any since Rome. Accordingly, America is in a position to reshape norms, alter expectations, and create new realities. How? By unapologetic and implacable demonstration of will."

The US attacks coupled with such stupid assertions have added alarmingly to the agonies of Muslims in particular. The assaults on Muslims are reminiscent of the crusades, which were launched in 1099 to kill Muslims and destroy their properties in such large numbers with such brutality that even after one thousand years their memory is fresh in the minds of progenies. The present rulers have interpreted history in their own way to justify their monstrosities in historical and religious context.

In the post-World War II scenario the US is believed to have dropped bombs in more than 20 countries and assisted in engineering coups in some 20 states. Perhaps the beacon light for these warlords came from Friedrich Nietzsche who observed:
"A revaluation of values under whose novel pressure and hammer a conscience would be steeled, a heart transformed to brass, so that it might endure the weight of such a responsibility".

This was the *zeitgeist* which turned the owl of Minerva blind and debased the quality of actions which otherwise could have been noble and sublime.

Catching God's mantle:

Understanding history and appreciating its implications in context of human civilization is the most difficult task

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facing rulers and politicians, religious leaders and reformers. Oscar Wild said, "The only duty we owe to history is to write it" and define it in terms of contemporary developments. Bismarck, the maker of modern Germany, said "the least a statesman can do is to listen to the rustle of God's mantle through history and to try to catch the hem of it for a few steps".

The Quranic conception of history is developed to expand human perception to identify and interpret the incidents in light of divine dispensation. Every thing that happened in the past had a closer relevance to the revelatory message of God. It is in this context that the Quranic verses are to be studied and appreciated. "***Do not people travel in the land and see the end of those who were before them?"***

More than twenty reminders in the Quran refer to a succession of events and locations that unfold the truth of divine injunctions and their related implications. Through the Quranic landscape a broad panorama is presented to establish the nature of realities and their direct or indirect impact on the nature of human cultures and civilizations.

"Travelling through the land" is an important indicator in the sector of historical narratives, and the way man can learn from its lessons. Since in those days books on history were not documented, hence the only way to learn the lessons of history was to visit the places which once were inhabited by the old and civilized communities such as the Companions of Aika and the Rocky tract of Hijr (Surah 15) , the settlements of the people of Aad and Lot (S.54), the rocky architecture of Thamud, the tent-pitching of the Lord

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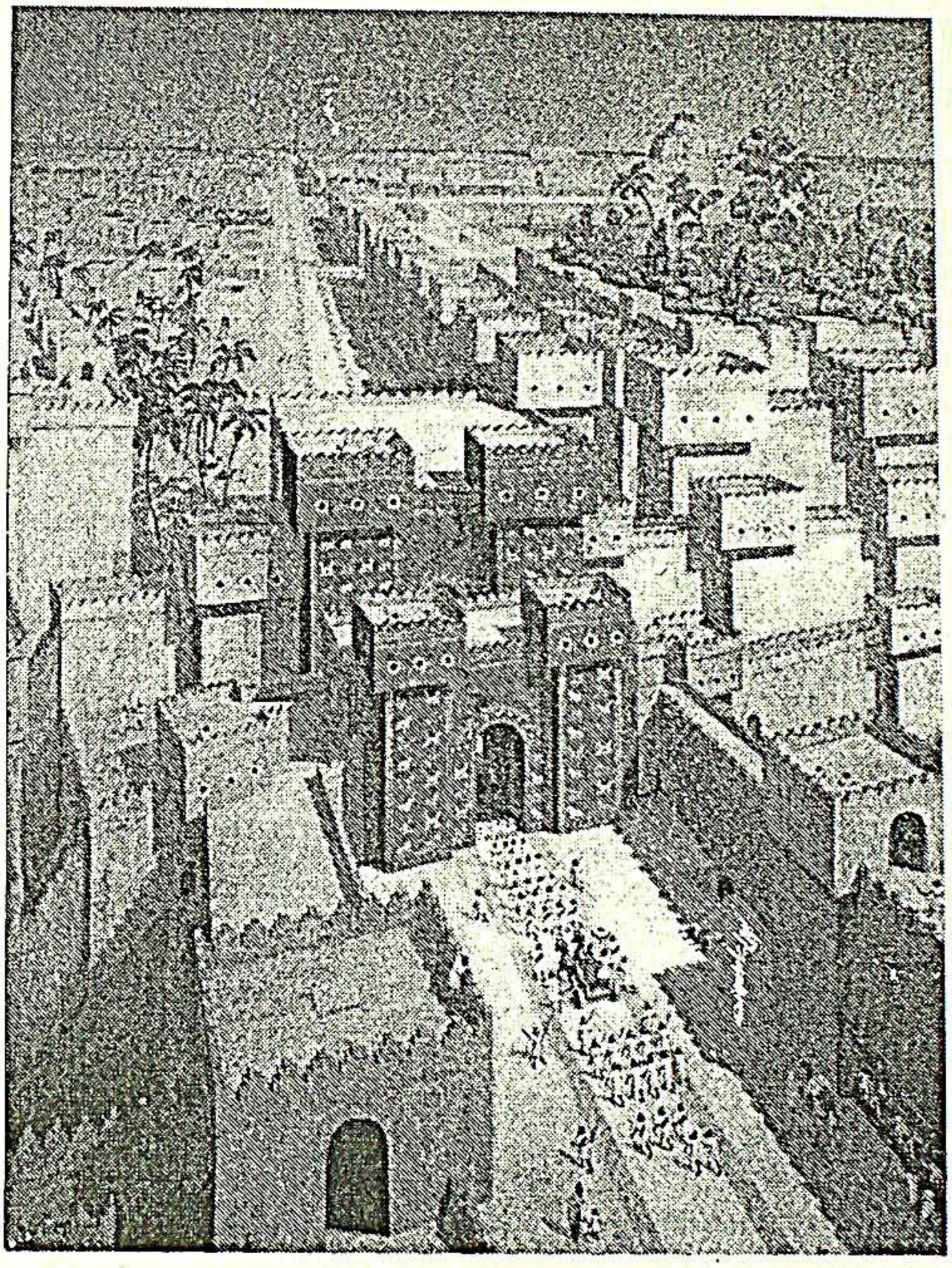
of Stakes (Pharaoh), and the dwellings of Petra and the Dead Sea (s.89).

These historical events indicate the forces of retribution, which distinguish the morally good from the evil-minded. Confirming the impact of historical developments the Quran says ""It was not Allah who wronged them, but they wronged themselves".*6



The Ishtar Gate in Babylon as it might have looked in th 6th century B.C.E.

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A source of warning:

The Quran, through the study of historical incidents, makes it clear that the destruction of the past communities must provide a source of admonition to the present generations. Let not any community think that it can escape the nemesis when it descends on the wrongdoers however strong they may be.

Underlying the significance of the past events, the Quran rejects the trappings of power and prestige, armies and ammunitions as irrelevant to the dispensation of the Divine Power. It is the reality of the divine truth that determines the dimensions of human triumphs and defeats, successes and failures.

Referring to such cyclical fluctuations the Surah Ar-Rum(30) interprets the implications of historical developments in an exceedingly impressive way. It is the ultimacy of divine dispensation, which determines the dimensions of human destiny.

The Surah (Ar-Rum) is a brilliant illustration of the varying aspects of human history which normally remain obscured from the perspectives of man's imagination. In this surah the mysteries of human life are linked beautifully with the phases of human evolution over time and space.

The wars between the Christian Roman Empire and non-believing Persian kingdom were a source of dejection and then inspiration for the believers in Arabia when the Quran assured them that the Romans would succeed in recapturing the lost territories in a span of some (nine) years. The

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prediction was validated and the Persians were defeated and destroyed during the stipulated period.

The Quranic history provides a sequence of movements and developments, which were exceedingly significant for Islam in its struggle to assert its identity in the world community. The purpose of Allah was clear and it was not to be thwarted. It was established in the aftermath of the battle at Badr in A.H 2/A.D.624 and the events started moving positively, though slowly, in favour of Islam.

Islamic Revolution
Of thought & action:

. Mightier events were yet to come. A new inner world was being created through Islam. The spiritual revolution was of infinitely greater importance in world history. It covered all the essential aspects from toning down of priestcraft and false allegiance to the restoration of simplicity in faith and life, the rehabilitation of this life as the first step towards understanding the hereafter, the displacement of superstition and hair-splitting theology, and the recognition of the divine as covering not merely an isolated thing called "Religion", but the whole way of life.

Thought and feeling—this was and is the true message of Islam and its mission. Its struggle, its fight continues, but it is not without effect, as may be seen in the march of centuries in world history.*7
The main lesson of history, especially of the Quranic history, remains that success or failure depends largely on the quality of human thought and in sincerity and dedication while executing the jobs assigned to man.

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"Only in the spaciousness of thought can the magnificence of reality exist". No triumph or defeat can be perennial without being identified with the nature and complexion of respective ideologies and aspirations. Wrongdoing is the basic cause of destruction, which appears to pervade the whole canvas of human history.

"We destroyed many generations before you when they did wrong,
Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they would not believe.
Thus do We requite those who do wrong", says the Quran (10:13).

The aggressive hands of oppressors and inconsistent minds of detractors appear to figure conspicuously in the annals of human history. Serious constraints seem to be placed on the natural flow of the message that was intended to create conventional form of theism. The very sequence of the prophets was necessitated by the crudity of man's distortions and illusions. Political injustices and economic exploitations, social evils and moral degeneration often become the causes of serious outbursts. They become the pretexts of large-scale murders and aggression against humanity. The wicked join hands with the mighty forces of aggression, claiming to be liberators while enforcing occupation by destruction and annihilation. This is the tragedy of human history and especially of the present century.

The world history is often disturbed by the violent movements and militant ideologies. These disturbances

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lead to ideological conflicts and political perversities. World wars have been the result of such distortions, which were based on nationalist arrogance, and misinterpretations of religious and political notions. "It is the turning points and not the turning of the countries that define our times." Hence it may be said that the 19th century ended not on December 31,1899, but on June 28, 1914. Similarly, the 20the century may be said to have come to an end not on December 31, 1999, but on September 11,2001.

The Quran, the Bible and the Old and the New Testaments are the living witnesses to the scandals of mankind and serve to vindicate the claims of divine prophecy. The human thought owes its sustenance to the moments of truth, which encompassed the varying phases of human history.

The Qur'an views history as a confirmation of divine commands and prophecies. It scans a gradual order of historical changes, which occur over a period of time.
By revealing a long chain of causes and effects, various phases of decadence and destruction the Quran highlights the innate value of virtues and vices in the evolving scheme of things. By interpreting the events of the past the Quran establishes the validity of the divine principles for all nations and all ages. It is in this context that the Quranic interpretation of history becomes a critical appraisal and a poignant reminder – a reminder to warn man of the hypocrisies and ambiguities that eventually turn out to be abortive and destructive.

In the Quranic worldview the communities are seen to have perished because they were perverse and wicked, because they persisted in their rebellion and deviation. Instead of

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surrendering to the Will of God, they ridiculed and rejected the prophetic missions. Disbelief and ignorance, heedlessness and hypocrisy were the dominant features of their character. Not only did they remain chained to the festering beliefs of their forefathers, but they were also consistent in their rejection of the divine injunctions.

Discussing the events in their destructive dimensions the Quran says:
" We do not chastise, until We send forth a Messenger. And when We decide to destroy a town, We command those among them who are lost in the pursuit of pleasures, and they continue to act sinfully, so that the sentence (of doom) is passed on the community, and We break it to smithereens." (17:15-17).

This is how the Quran turns to the tide of events, which caused the rise and fall of communities in the past. By presenting a broad spectrum of vagaries and vanities, virtues and vices the Quran points out the ways both of destruction and salvation. Destruction or salvation depends on the choice man makes in this direction. The ways can be carved out with faith and conviction only if man wants the process of transformation to take place. Human and historical realities are presented lucidly to create awareness for success and sublimation. From the scriptural perspectives we proceed to perceive an historical perception with appropriate implications for our own age.

With faith, submission and transformation Muslims were able to bring about a revolution in the history of generations. Under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the concept of the vicegerency of man

was evolved to assume sanguine dimensions to fulfill the function man was supposed to accomplish. When the Prophet died many people doubted if the structure created by him could survive the evils of men and the upheavals of times. Some of the pernicious elements, temporarily subdued, however, were able to emerge with more perversity and grave challenges. The Prophet had a vision and, therefore, had left a legacy, which could face the challenges bravely and boldly. As a historical figure the Prophet (ph) could not be oblivious of the phenomena threatening the existence of the new community. His vision, his religion and the Quran's moral and directional injunctions were strong enough to thwart the life-threatening forces of division and dissensions.

Islamic conquests:

With the sense of history so profusely infused in the minds of the Prophet's successors, the spread and speed of the Islamic conquests became amazing. 'From the East Roman Empire the Muslim Arabs had conquered Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt by 641. From the Persian Empire they had conquered Iraq by 637 and the whole of Iran by 651. In 651 the Sasanian Persian Empire was extinguished. In 633 the Armenians and Georgians capitulated to the Islamic state on favourable terms. Between 647 and 698 the Arabs conquered North West Africa from the East Romans, and in 710-12 they went to extinguish the Visigoth kingdom. Except for the North Western corner of Spain, they conquered all the Visigoths' dominions, including the remnant of Visigothic territory in southwestern Gaul. Simultaneously, in 711 the Arabs were

conquering Sind and the southern Punjab, up to, and including, Multan

In 661-71 the Arabs conquered Tokharistan (present-day Afghan Uzbekistan), which had been the Persian Empire's share of the territorial spoils of the Ephthalite Hun Empire. It put the Islamic state astride the overland route between India and China via the Oxus-Jaxartes basin. In 706-15 the Arabs went on to conquer Transoxania. Here they suffered a setback, but in Transoxania they returned to the attack, and in 739-41 they conquered the whole of Transoxania definitively. On four other fronts, however, they met with checks that they failed to overcome.' *8

With thee conquests Muslims were ruling more than half of the world and were basking in the rise of their rule at the apex of an advanced civilization and culture. Continuing their conquests Muslims had reached up to Asia Minor and were planning to take over the East Roman Empire. However, to accomplish this goal they had to conquer Constantinople, and that to take it, they must wrest from East Roman hands the naval command of the Mediterranean. In 669 Mu'awaiyah built a fleet, and in 674 –8 his forces besieged Constantinople by both sea and land, but this siege turned into a disaster for the Arabs. The East Roman fleet had been armed with napalm, and with apparatus for discharging it. A second Arab siege of Constantinople in 717-18 was an equally disastrous failure. However, there were some other setbacks as well and plans to reach Spain and France were frustrated by strong resistance by the inhabitants of these areas."*9

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Nevertheless, Muslims despite their initial weaknesses and difficulties were able to move in almost all directions with success, growth and development. The pace of their progress established the truth of the principles the Quran enunciated. The notion that the strength and vitality of a nation related directly to the virtue and righteousness was seen to have practical implications. This opened the door for collective consciousness and socio-economic welfare of the community. The ummah, which was conceived only as a theoretical proposition became a reality in no time. The ummah and its consolidation became the cardinal constituents of future planning and collective integration. The idea behind a united ummah was to combine and reconcile the resources, which were available at any time for the benefit of Muslim communities as a whole. But unfortunately this concept could not be conserved for long and was found depleting in the aftermath of Caliph Ali's murder. Internal divisions and dissensions formed the main hurdles in the way of a united and strong ummah. Thus only a few years after the death of the Prophet a breach occurred which could not be closed over the past fourteen centuries?

The Decline

The decline of the ummah continued first slowly, but then rapidly when Baghdad was sacked and occupied by the Mongols in 1258. That year was the virtual point of departure from a period of relative calm in the Islamic history with which Muslims are confronted even today.

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This phase of decadence was further debased by European colonialism, which struck a severe blow to the identity and integrity of the Muslim ummah. It deprived the Muslims of their vision, direction and dignity. These developments have had an increasingly negative effect on the course of evolution and most of the avenues of development were found deficient to face the challenges and defy the arbitrary policies both of alien powers and domestic rulers.

The records of the colonialists are so bleak and so many in numbers that even several chronicles would not suffice to contain the length and breadth of their deeds and misdeeds. Condemning the record of colonialism a British writer says:" Perhaps most grotesque in this postmodern calculus of political repression is the moral blindness displayed towards the record of colonialism. For most of the last century, vast swathes of the planet remained under direct imperial European rule, enforced with the most brutal violence by states that liked to see themselves as democracies. But somehow that is not included as the third leg of the 20th century tyranny, along with Nazism and communism.
There is a much-lauded Black Book of Communism, but no such comprehensive indictment of the colonial record."*10.

It is highly deplorable that such atrocities with colonial barbaric perversions are excluded from the 20th century reckoning of history.

Milne further adds:" If Lenin and Stalin are regarded as having killed those who died of hunger in the famines of the 1920s and 1930s, then Churchill is certainly responsible for the 4 million deaths in the avoidable Bengal famine of

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1943—and earlier British Governments are even more guilty of the still larger famines in late 19th and early 20th century India, which claimed as many as 30 million victims under a punitive free market regime. And of course, in the post-colonial era, millions have been killed by US and other western forces or their surrogates in wars, interventions and coups from Vietnam to Central America, Indonesia to South Africa, (and now from Afghanistan to Iraq).

There is no major 20th century political tradition without blood on its hands. But the battle over history is never really about the past, but—it is about the future. Those who write colonial barbarity out of 20th century history want to legitimise the new liberal imperialism, just as those who demonise past attempts to build an alternative to capitalist society are determined to prove that there is none. The problem of the left now is not so much that it has failed to face up to its own history, but that it has become paralysed by the weight of it."*10

The same question we may pose to our Muslim brothers who have even more miserably failed to face up to their own history.

Their self-indulgence and criminal neglect of the historical antecedents make them even more culpable in the eyes of human history.

While this hubris remains morally culpable to the overwhelming majority of the Muslim nations, the principal charge against them, however, is their prostration before the colonial powers in the past and before the US

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Imperialism in the present decade. This is good enough for disaster as hardly any avenues are left for survival.

Sense of destiny

And when the danger was perceived, it was not met with due preparations, adequate knowledge and insight. The sense of destiny was not fully imbibed and the loss of legacy was not realized in its entirety. The result was a tempering with historical truth and obviating the genuine perception of the colonial records. This hindered the process of proper understanding the history and made it difficult for a thorough diagnosis to take place.

While all philosophies and theologies oblige the participants to prepare a programme of action with precision and vision, but in the case of Muslims crutches were found in hollow religiosity without any practical propositions. The realm of the spirit was seen diminishing and no appropriate forces were found to harness the ethical and material goals. The outlook had to be reexamined and reformed.

This requisite, which became the crying need of the Muslim reformers of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is still the predominant need of the Muslim world. Many Muslim thinkers became increasingly conscious of the fact that Muslims had to acquire not only modern knowledge of science and technology, but also had to alter their perception regarding their posture in the comity of nations. They had to find a set of answers to give the ummah a set of programmes.

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Many historians believe that the purpose of history and its legacy is to create an awareness of specific objectives to reshape the destiny of the Muslim ummah. Episteme, as they call it, *is an intellectual framework* to *create a constructive sense of life itself.* Hence the meanings and significance of life must be redefined in historical and Islamic perspectives if a new age has to dawn on Muslims. The main purpose has to be the emancipation of people and the deployment of knowledge for the renovation of human life. This is how a way could be found towards reformation and transformation. The study of history must lead to this purpose.

The present age is the most critical age as far as Muslims are concerned. It has brought defeat on them; it has brought shame on them. It is a challenge not only to their existence and identity, but also to their faith and destiny.

The most deplorable facet of the modern age is the shape that has been given to Islam. Islam has been turned into a narrow, static and rigid religion. Mullahs control the oral means of communications with loudspeakers at the highest pitch without producing any positive results. With ideological idiosyncrasies, dogmatism and fanaticism the extremists in religion have taken over the control threatening the lives of innocent people. Although all religious schools of thought are not bad, and some of them may be pursuing a moderate and balanced view as propounded by the Quran, yet the loud utterances of the extremists are good enough to cause confusion and destruction.

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Being the final version of the revelation the Quran was endowed with all positive and constructive components, which could contribute towards creating a harmonious and humane society. Hence it is the worst tragedy to present Islam in some other form, which has no relevance to its inherent composition.

A study of history teaches us that the options are there and alternatives have to be sought to avert the pitfalls that threaten our religious, social, political and economic structures. The opposing forces are hostile and many times more powerful. Under the call of 'crusades' and destructive assaults they are actively pursuing a course to damage the inbuilt corridors of Islamic citadels. Howsoever fragile and debilitating these structures may be, yet they have to be preserved and maintained.

Angst

The concern for a common humanity has become a bluebird philosophy specially when there is so little to understand and embrace from the other side of humanity. Today, apparently divorced from the fragile bonds between the various components of humanity, the modern man is alienated by an insurmountable chasm and psychopathic angst, which no amount of humanism can bridge.

The western world sees Islam as a threat to their civilization and under the pretext of the "Clash of Civilizations" intends to crush the very remnants, which are scattered and defused.

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In the Muslim world itself there are serious constraints, as already discussed which are further aggravated by inadequate opportunities to study and understand the historical antecedents and measure their impact on the evolving situations. With the sharp rise in the US attacks in the wake of 9/11, there has been a concerted effort if not to eliminate, at least, to reduce the influence of Islam as much as possible and to alienate the Muslims from their faith and convictions. Through changes in curricula and textbooks an attempt is being made to secularize the system of education and turn the Muslim youth into agnostics or atheists. The New World Order as designed by Washington is a very pernicious concept as far as Muslims are concerned.
At the same time roadmaps are being devised to perpetuate the western hold over the Muslim lands in the Middle East.

For Muslims who wish to face these challenges successfully the task is of exceeding significance. It has to be met boldly with vision and imagination. While the old colonizers have gone, the new imperialists in the form of neo-cons in Washington are preparing plans to foist their domination over the Muslim world. What is at stake now is the oil and other material resources, but the whole range of political, economic, cultural and social aspects of Muslim life. The very soul of the Muslim world is about to dissipate if the challenges are not met boldly and effectively. It is for this reason that the mind and soul of Islam need to be comprehended and captured more intelligently and effectively.

The major lesson of history is the need to understand it. If we understand it, then we can transform the decaying destiny, which appears to be doomed in the context of

present perspectives. The coming developments need not be as equivocal and tragic as the past events. The historical narratives can be comprehended as providential warnings with inherent lessons and inbuilt reflections. An adequate understanding could be the main safety valve to help us escape the consequences and survive the process of destruction. It could provide a valuable insight into the causes of historical upheavals to assure a safe return from the declining precipice. As Kenneth Cragg contends:

"This sense of the cumulative past, wrought into its finality, gave to the Quran its characteristic confidence. History as prophecy means history as accountable, history as probationary, history as morality. It means humanity mentored by great personalities and God served by human guardians of the right. It means history proceeding, under reiterated reminders, towards its reckoning."*11

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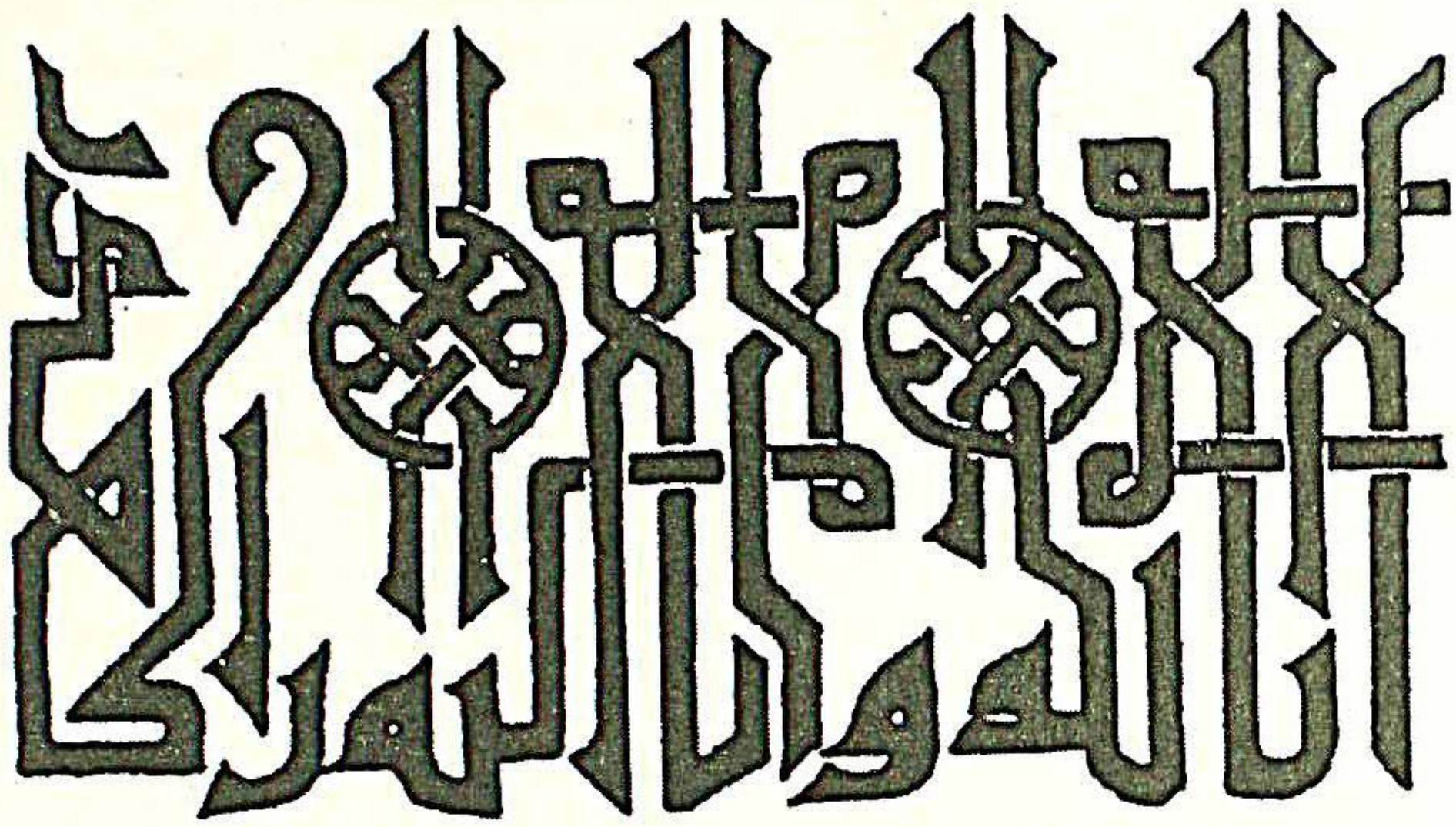

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Chapter No. 19

Decline of Muslim Empires

Nous avons sur les bras un homme malade—
Un homme gravement malade.

(We have on our hands a sick man—
a very sick man.
The sick man of Europe, the Turk.)
--Nicholas I.

How to survive in the 21st century

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The Decline of Muslim Empires

Almost thirteen civilizations are buried under our feet, yet we are decadent and uncivilized. The study of Muslim thought and culture pervading the fabric of human life over the past centuries is a study in decadence and depravity. In the aftermath of Mongol onslaughts the path of socio-cultural progress in the Muslim world was further depraved and severely hindered.

. In the course of this study we will see how Islamic society grew and how civilization and culture was evolved to create an improved pattern of human life. As an organism the human societies have been undergoing different phases of rise and fall. Societies and empires, cultures and civilizations have grown, reached their apex and declined. Even in pre-Islamic world many societies have had their own periods of glory and dissolution. Some societies were totally annihilated from the face of earth. The Quran gives an account of the communities, which deviated from the path of rectitude and were destroyed. The Quran makes it clear that there are some fundamental principles, which play their role in determining the destiny of nations. As long as these principles are observed, the communities prosper and merit the grace of God. ***Wrongdoing and injustice are among the most despicable features of human society, which lead to perdition and destruction.***

History establishes the fact that recorded events are immutable and are meant for lessons to be learnt. Their relevance for the contemporary communities becomes more significant as the current situations are evolved in more or less similar

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circumstances and compulsions. The varying conditions of moral, intellectual and material development may have different effect on evolving perceptions and situations. The level of development is very important, as man in primitive society of Africa may not be able to visualise the coming events in the same way as a scientist or scholar in Europe or America. Hence it is important to study the rise and fall of nations with deep interest and insight. It is for this reason that while studying the various phases of Islamic history we gain a deeper insight into events if we perceive the advance and decadence with due interest and concern that it merits.

Maladies of civilization

The study of states, civilizations and empires makes us more pensive as we get closer to ascertain the hidden factors relating to their rise and fall. Arnold Toynbee, discussing the rise and fall of civilizations, says that states since the dawn of civilization have existed side by side with each other. They have not been insulated from each other; they have collided with each other, and their collisions have precipitated the wars that have been one of the maladies of civilization.

The civilization of the Muslim world has been among the most flourishing developments in the world history, but it lost its trappings when it fell victim to a chain of wrongdoings and divisions, lethargy and corruption. The decadence occurred because Muslims could not maintain the stream of vigour and vitality, which was imperative for maintaining the spirit of sustenance. They became incapacitated by the flawed perceptions and misinterpretations of ideological analogies drawn from inherently contradictory sources.

Hence the decadence of Muslim culture was mainly due to lack of insight and knowledge, wrongdoing and sterility. Followed by insufficient hold over science and technology, religion and philosophy the decline became more rapid and certain.

Apart from its depleting dynamic dimensions the rise and fall of Muslim civilization has been subject to rapidly evolving cycles of social, intellectual, political and economic structures. The question here which ought to merit our serious attention is whether the present period of Muslim decline will continue for ever or will it be replaced by fresh infusion of vigour and vitality to blossom into another dynamic culture and civilization. The researchers at Kroeber and Sorokin universities say "many great cultural and social systems or civilizations have many cycles, many social, intellectual, and political ups and downs in their virtually indefinitely long span of life, instead of just one life-cycle, one period of blossoming, and one of decline".

This thesis is established by the fact that the Egyptian civilization rose and fell at least four times and the Greco-Roman-Byzantine culture probably many times. Similarly, the civilizations of China and India have had their evolving periods of rise and fall. The Muslim civilization rose from the seventh to the eleventh century. Then it started to decline till the Mongol onslaughts in the twelfth century. It remained completely dormant till the thirteenth century when it saw its second rise in the expansion of its domain including three great empires – Turkish, Persian and Indian. Its second phase of decline started again in the eighteenth century, which remains miserably imbedded with growing signs of decadence and decline.

Tracing the rise and fall of Muslim civilization we come across in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries three great Islamic empires—the Ottoman, the Safavi, and the Mughal. These empires covered most of the Islamic world and reached their climax about the same period. From 1550 to 1707 they rose to their zenith and then the decline started.

The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and longest-lived dynasties that have ever ruled the world. Its dynamism and

resilience were so vibrant that no conceivable army could thwart the forward march of its forces. The empire reached its zenith with Suleyman in the sixteenth century. With almost the whole of North Africa occupied the Ottomans spread their empire from Yemen to Budapest, and from Algeria to Baghdad. In 1529 they had reached the gates of Vienna, the capital of Austria. In 1453 the great Roman city, Constantinople was taken over and was renamed 'Istanbul', the city of Islam.

In 1683, with the failure of a second attempt to capture Vienna the long, tortuous process of decline started. 'The Sultans who succeeded Suleyman possessed neither the imagination nor the political acumen necessary to keep a vast empire intact. They frittered away their energies in petty squabbles, meaningless intrigues, and frivolous avocations. Little did they realize that in an age of technology and science their old weapons would prove worse than useless? Their defeat in 1683 sealed their fate in Europe. But for the mutual bickering of the European powers, the Ottoman Empire could not have maintained its frontiers for any length of time. Then there was the growth of western imperialism and also the emergence of Russia as a strong centralised state, both of which turned the scales against the Turks.'*1

The western colonial powers were over-active in devouring parts of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey became 'the sick man' of Europe. With the arrival of Ataturk some reforms were made, but these reforms could not bring in the synthesis and harmony of religious and cultural traditions, which once was the glory of the Turkish past.

Thus with the decline of the Turkish Empire, the Muslim civilization on the whole began to show signs of weakness and decay. Muslim empires one after the other began to crumble. They did not only decline, but also lost hold over the pulse of revolving times. While the western nations were advancing in

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science and technology, the Muslims, with a reverse gear, were moving backward with hardly any innovations in the field of mechanizations, technology, and economic and industrial growth.

Their whole thinking and working apparatus had gone sterile and ineffective. The western powers, on the other had, had developed superior industrial and military hardware and were thus able to dominate the rest of the world with their scientific and technical expertise.

'The Muslim powers, quarrelling as they were among themselves, sought for the latest weapons from the Europeans who found thus a splendid chance to enter into the complexities of Oriental political intrigues and turn them to their advantage. They meddled in the affairs of the Mughal Empire in India, the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, the Safawid monarchs of Persia, and, last but not least, the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. The interfering powers were the English, the French, the German, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the Russians. This will show that practically every European power, impelled by their superior technical skill and actuated by commercial and imperialistic ambitions, set out to bring under their dominance as much of the Muslim world as they possibly could. The Muslim powers were no match for them.' Ibn Khaldun, the famous Muslim historian, observed 'the conquered mimic the conquerors and so many sections of our communities became psychological captives.

Muslims were the victims not only of psychological and moral depletion, but their internal weaknesses were sharpened by inter-state rivalries. The inconclusive wars between the Ottoman and Persian empires during sixteenth to eighteenth century period further weakened their political and economic prowess and exposed them to the European domination.

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Moreover, the armies had become a hub of growing corruption and promotions were made through bribes and not on the basis of merit. This caused a further blow to the strength of the armed forces and made them incapable of thwarting the assaults of European invaders.

Elie Kedoure says, "It was not corruption, not misgovernment, not inefficiency—that spelt the ruin of the Ottoman Empire. Thee things had always been present, but the Empire had remained. What destroyed it in the end was the pressure of European ambitions... The Ottoman Empire died of Europe".*2

The same fate awaited the Safawid state, which after the reign of Shah Abbas became a hostage of incompetence, atrocities and corrupt practices of his successors. On top of that the Persian state had become the most attractive spot for the repeated interferences of Europeans from time to time. With the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 a strategy was evolved to reach India through Iran. This caused serious consternation among the British who maneuvered to encircle Persia from the eastern side, while Russia was already placed on its northern flank. Due to the encirclement Persia was reduced to nonentity, incapable of doing anything to resist the pressure of Europeans. Russia and Britain made the best advantage of the situation and used Iran and Afghanistan for their colonial expansion.

The third great Muslim Empire was that of the Mughals in India which was distinguished by the religious and political dexterity of Akbar, just conduct of Jahangir, architectural creativity of Shah Jahan and extreme religiosity of Aurangzeb.

' Akbar recognized that a Muslim regime in India could not survive for long if it failed to win the assent of its Hindu subjects. In 1564 he abolished the poll tax on non-Muslims. He demonstrated his power to the Rajput descendents of the Huns and Gurjaras by taking Chitor in 1567-8, and thus having intimidated the Rajputs, Akbar conciliated them, and this was

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wise, since they were the most martial of the Hindu peoples before the rise of Marhatas and the Sikhs.

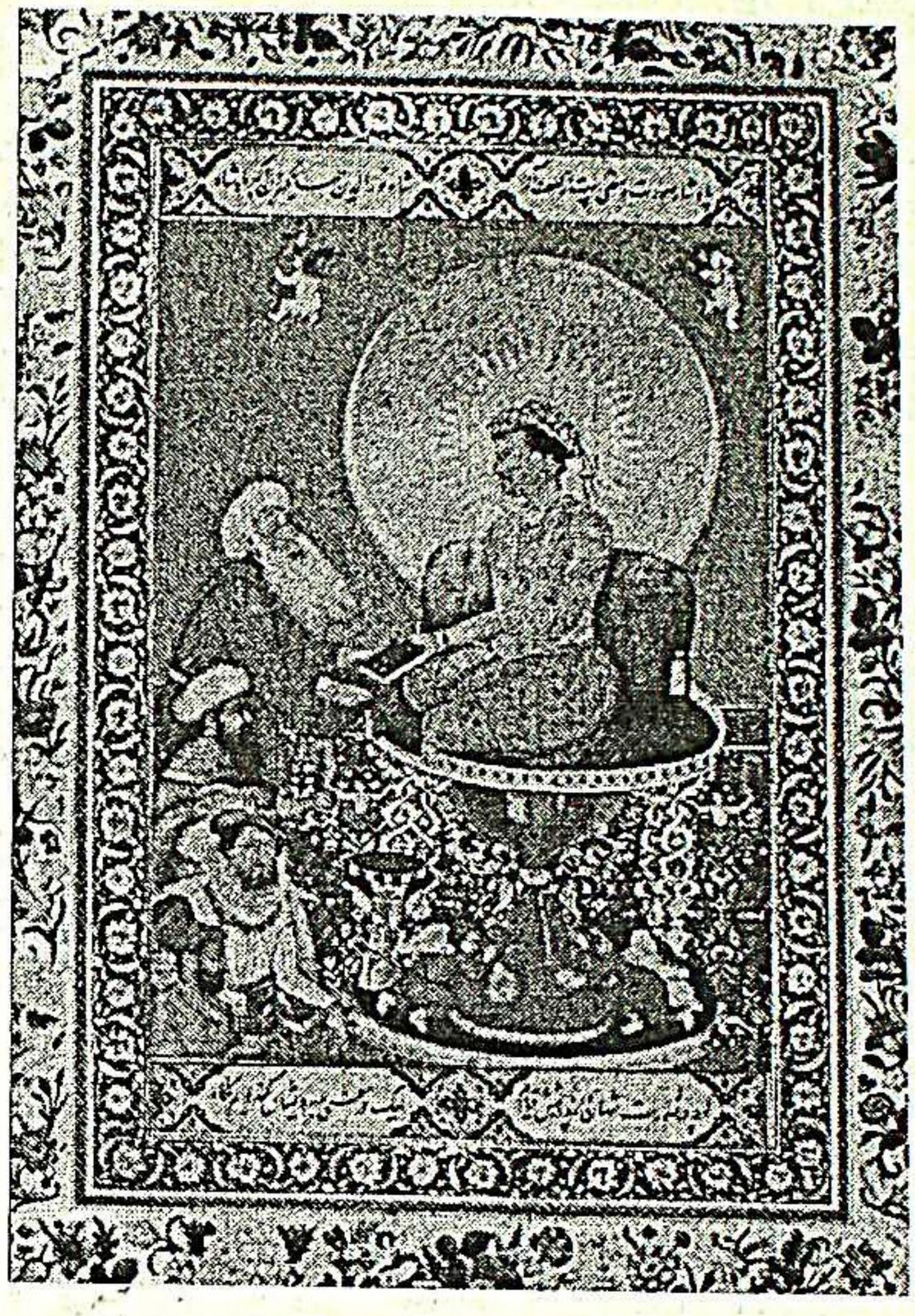
The Mughal Empire, however, started disintegrating when Akbar's conciliatory policies were abandoned by Shah Jahan (ruled1628-58) and were replaced by offensives against the independent Muslim states in the Deccan. Shah Jahan's successor Aurangzeb had gone farther. He had reimposed the poll tax on non-Muslims in 1679; and he had driven the Rajputs, hitherto the Mughals' allies, to take up arms against him in 1680-1.*3

After Aurangzeb, who died in 1707, there was a rapid decline of the Mughal Empire.
Aurangzeb was followed by several incompetent and pleasure-seeking rulers who were less interested in maintaining the integrity of the Empire and indulged more actively in seeking the pleasures of the world. Their corrupt and sensuous practices crept into the body politic of the Empire and it became difficult to thwart the oncoming onslaught of the British, the Marathas and others who were looking for an opportune moment to exploit the situation for their own benefit.

The process of decline was accelerated by the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739, which resulted in defeats for the Mughals, and deprivation of their material and moral reserves. Nadir Shah's invasion was followed by a series of attacks by Ahmad Shah Abdali, which left the Empire "bleeding and prostrate". These invasions turned out to be catastrophic and hastened the process of decline.

However, the Mughals, despite their human frailties, were men of intellect, reason and passion. They were imbued with courage, compassion, and love for literature, poetry and aesthetics. With the construction of Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan had converted the concept of beauty into an immortal mould, which would never

perish, and if at all perished, it would never be obliterated from the minds and hearts of hundreds and thousands of generations.



Jahangir in the company of Sufi mystics

With sound faith in religion, amity and fairness the Mughals evolved patterns of life, which did not deviate from the basic principles of humanity. Scanning from Akbar's Deen-e-Ilahi to Aurangzeb's profound religiosity they conceived of Islam as the most suitable religion for mankind. Impressed by its ideals they became intensely interested in learning and imparting Islam to others. But they did not force anyone to embrace Islam under the shadow of sword. Many non-Muslims, especially Hindus were their consorts, counsels and courtiers. As such they were given

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the titles of Nur-al-Din (Jahangir), Shihab-al-Din (Shah Jahan) , and Mohyi-alDin (Aurungzeb). As such the Mughals are regarded as the ideal Muslim rulers who were more interested in practising the practical aspects of Islam than simply theorising it. Jahangir is known for his justice, Shah Jahan for his love and compassion and Aurangzeb for his modesty and dedication. Akbar was the most perfect of all as far as the secular conception of a successful ruler is concerned.

However, in spite of all the positive, outstanding features the Mughal Empire could not last forever. Soon after Aurangzeb a process of decline was set in, which shattered the structure of so beautifully conceived and established Empire. A combination of factors, internal and external, precipitated the fall, which resulted in the dissolution of the Empire. Among the internal factors were the pleasure-seeking propensities, internal feuds and spiritual depletion.

Among the external factors the major cause was the penetration of the Europeans and their efforts to capture specific spheres of political and economic interest. While internal factors related to overall rupture of moral, social and political structure of the national fabric, Muslims had lost interest in infusing the channels, which were gradually becoming dry and barren. Thus primarily the Muslims themselves were responsible for their decline. The machinations of the imperialistic nations were helped, or shall we say abetted, by the inefficiency of Muslim rulers and the colossal ignorance of the masses. So long as the Muslims were in the vanguard of knowledge, they led the civilized world in culture, science, administration and socio-physical growth. But as soon as they lost interest in free and independent inquiry, they ceased to exist as a dynamic force.'

The impact of these developments was so serious that Muslims eventually seem to have gone down in a deep crisis of confidence. Their whole approach to the onslaughts both from

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internal and external negatives was totally confused and indecisive. While reformers like Shah Walli Allah, Jamaludin Afghani, Sir Syed and Iqbal called for dynamism and development, the overwhelming majority of religious schools were opposed to the learning of English, the acquisition of worldly knowledge and pursuit of materialistic innovations. The result was disunity and lack of courage and vision to create appropriate avenues for growth and development. Their whole gambit was surrounded by dogmatism and mysticism in which they sought solace. Reclining as recluse in the hermitage of religion they found distorted perceptions, which had nothing to do with religion.

Myths and fiction instead of science and knowledge

'As a result of reactionary tendencies, reason became the target of attack and even an object of ridicule. It was contended that reason was foreign to religious truths and led only to their distortions and misrepresentation. Consequently, all domains of knowledge were given scant attention and their findings were not properly appreciated. Science was discredited on the plea that it led to materialism, and philosophy was opposed as intellect was debarred from entering the portals of divine knowledge. Science and philosophy condemned, what remained was a fairy tale, very comforting to the ignoramus but extremely injurious to the nation as a whole. The Muslim mind continued to be fed, for a century and a half, on fiction and myths. The result can be well imagined. Not only was there a dearth of scientific thinking, but also an absence of genuine philosophical activity. In the heyday of Islam there existed thinkers of great repute, who built their philosophies on the teachings of the ancients, but they made splendid contributions of their own to the storehouse of knowledge. The states created the proper atmosphere of intellectual pursuits. Throughout the breadth and length of the

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Islamic world as it existed during the period under review one misses freshness and originality of thought.'*4

Since there was no freshness and adaptability to the changing situations, the Muslims could not devise an effective strategy to combat the onslaught of ignorance and decadence. As a consequence to the decadence in thought Muslims turned more and more to mysticism. Although a great purifying force for the soul, mysticism, if allowed to pervade the entire gambit of human life, becomes a hurdle in the way of overall progress, planning and execution of appropriate policies for advance and growth in other sectors of human excellence. However, if employed with its inherent features such as intuition and contemplation, it can move towards intellectual curiosity and an unending search for growth and improvement. But its exclusive concern with the ultimate truth, discarding all attempts to refurbish the earthly life with material and physical paraphernalia, can hardly be of any concrete benefit to improvise the pattern of human life as conceived by the divine injunctions themselves. One wonder how man can fulfill the role of God's vicegerent on earth if one remains afloat suspended between heavens and earth, all the time. Islam does not teach to be an escapist. If it were so, the pattern of the Prophet Muhammad's life would have been totally different; then he would not have fought the battles he did and he would not have suffered the pangs, which he experienced.

The semi-literate mullahs have been making the situation worse for the already dormant segments of the Muslim society. With their distortions and misinterpretations the mullahs have created an image, which hardly corroborates the genuine connotations of Islam. Not only did they present the teachings of Islam in an exceedingly passive and unproductive manner, they also created barriers of understanding and made it increasingly difficult for creative thought to produce anything positive. Acquiescence and

resignation are the crutches with which they wanted the Muslims to tread.

At the same time, with distorted perception they have been creating hatred against other sections of Muslim society with the result of perpetuating sectarian strifes and divisive tendencies. This has caused another serious setback to the creative conception of Islam and the way Muslims should lead a productive and purpose-oriented life.

This has also given rise to pre-deterministic and fatalistic ideas, which have become an essential constituent of the Muslim creed. They made the Muslims believe that disasters and decline happen at the appointed hours and nothing can be done to avert them. So if Muslim Empires fell apart, it was how they were destined to disintegrate. If Muslims die of starvation, disease and poverty, nothing can be done to remove these epidemics and everything should be embraced gleefully. What an attitude to live in this world?

Is it the way, one wonders, taught by the Quran and imparted by the holy Prophet (pbuh) through his continuing struggles throughout his whole life?
This is a challenge not only to the ingenuity of the human intellect, but to the whole concept of the Islamic mode of thought and action. To an ignorant fatalist nothing comes as a challenge as he is comfortably entrenched in the cosy cobwebs of his distorted delinquency

Nonetheless, irrespective of what our mystics and mullahs think, the challenges have to be met and met boldly if we have to live in this world as independent and dignified human beings. Otherwise, the other course left is the life of the slaves and the depraved that have nothing to live for.

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Chapter No. 20

A crude awakening
A sad reflection

MUSLIMS: the Sick Nation of Modern Age

Vision, dynamism and aspirations: They are the essence of consummation.

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Deficiencies of the Muslim World

MUSLIMS: the Sick Nation of Modern Age

The Muslim ummah in the aftermath of the US attack on Iraq seems to be wallowing in a state of utter confusion and disarray. The shock, which had not yet subsided from a similar attack on Afghanistan in October 2001, has been renewed with intense pain and agony.

This is a period of reflection, a period of introspection which needs to be energized with optimum physical and moral dynamism. Moral stamina and physical prowess, which constitute the essential ingredients of progress and advance, are no longer to be seen among the ranks of decadent Muslims. This is a shameful situation, which cannot be erased by 'disda:nful smiles', 'mockery, delusion and snares'.

Situated as we are in the early years of the twenty-first century, we find ourselves bemoaning and groveling in the pits of weakness, self-pity and despondency. The whole Muslim world appears to be in a dire state of decadence and diminishment. Passivity like the pall of death pervades them. This is the dreadful phase Muslims in general and Arabs in particular

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appear to have entered since the invasion of Baghdad in 1258. The political predicament of the Arab countries over the past decades has been so horrible that nothing could be more gruesome than this experience.

Since the Egypt's signing of separate peace with Israel in 1978 the internal conditions have never been more combustive with the confrontational groups exchanging fires and cannonade. The Arabs suspended Egypt from their ranks and moved the Arab League's headquarters to Tunis.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was another fatal blow to the spirit of unity and cohesiveness, which found Arabs fighting against the Arabs. The Saudi, Syrian and Egyptian forces were poised to throw the Iraqis out of Kuwait with the result of bitter divisions and acrimonies taking place in the Arab world.

The situation since then did not change at all, rather it got worse. Now the Arabs in this region find threatened not only from outside, but also from within their own territories. Their leaders are corrupt and sterile and cannot do anything tangible to alter the decadent structures of their social, political and economic systems.

Over the past years they have witnessed the destruction of Iraq, the demolition of Palestinian properties and assassination of their leaders without any reprisals. Israel is the strongest power in the region defying the regional and international laws.

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Lack of unity, lack of education

A United Nations report reveals that social and political conditions are so disruptive that the very essence of Arab and Muslim unity is dissipating and instead of creative consciousness a pattern of life devoid of basic values is threatening the very existence of Arab societies. The 22 countries with enforced

impotent leadership are lacking miserably in democratic, political institutions, free speech, civil liberties and government accountability. 'It lays bare a region, which is abysmally failing to educate or employ women (more than 50% are illiterate), at disastrously self-destructive cost. It exposes resource-rich societies in which per capita growth is now on par with sub-Saharan Africa, birth rates are soaring, in which investment in research and development is a mere 0.5% of GDP (against 2.9% in Japan); and in which intellectual life is increasingly isolated from the rest of the world. Internet use is low and the "brain drain" to non-Arab countries is high.

The most deplorable aspect of life is its utter neglect of education, intellectual refinement and socio-economic structures. The report says that in the past 1,000 years Arab countries have translated only 300 books, which are one-third of the books translated in Spain within the span of one year. Israel's continuing occupation of the Arab territories has proved "a cause and an excuse for distorting the development agenda, disrupting national priorities and retarding political development".

As a result of this growing deficit in development priorities the Arabs in particular and Muslims in general appear as undisciplined buffaloes or herds of meek sheep that have no capacity to salvage their identity when they are attacked by a tiger.

The situation is not much different from the confrontation of the mighty and weaker species when they face each other. The reaction both in Afghanistan and Iraq has been so insipid and tasteless that even the sheep would be gloating over the timidity of such human beings, and especially when they call themselves Muslims. Muslim quarters nowhere in the world came out with anything constructive to encounter the onslaughts, which were unjustified and destructive. This is the most miserable situation,

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which exposes physical impotence and moral morbidity of the Muslims.

It may be easy to develop physically, but it is very difficult to cultivate moral and spiritual qualities that promote and refine human personality. It is from moral qualities that human beings imbibe stamina and dynamism to convert their potential reserves into tangible realities. This enables people and nations to accomplish high ideals and realize their aspirations. Over the centuries Muslims lost not only their empires, but also the qualities that could recompense the loss of their glorious past. This is why they remain miserably embedded in the abysmal depth of degradation and degeneration. They neither learn from the Quran, nor from the history.

A writer commenting on the experience of passivity says that it is from this source that emanates the various forms of diminishment, which consequently lead to death and destruction. It is the dynamism of the active men or nations that enables them to realize the goals of their aspirations.

In *Le milieu divine* Teilhard describes the passivities as the most horrible aspect of human life. The passivities of growth present the individual with the situation or the condition under which they are to develop their mental and physical life.

The passivity o diminishment or the "real passivity" constitutes the external obstructions to human growth and the internal forces of erosion. Among the internal forces of diminishment are included the failure to cope with diseases, disability, physical and moral onslaughts and evils of other debilitating nature. As strong, dynamic human beings we have to stand up and face the forces of failure, destruction and deviation. We have to combat the ever-deepening crises enveloping uncertainties, poverty and disease.

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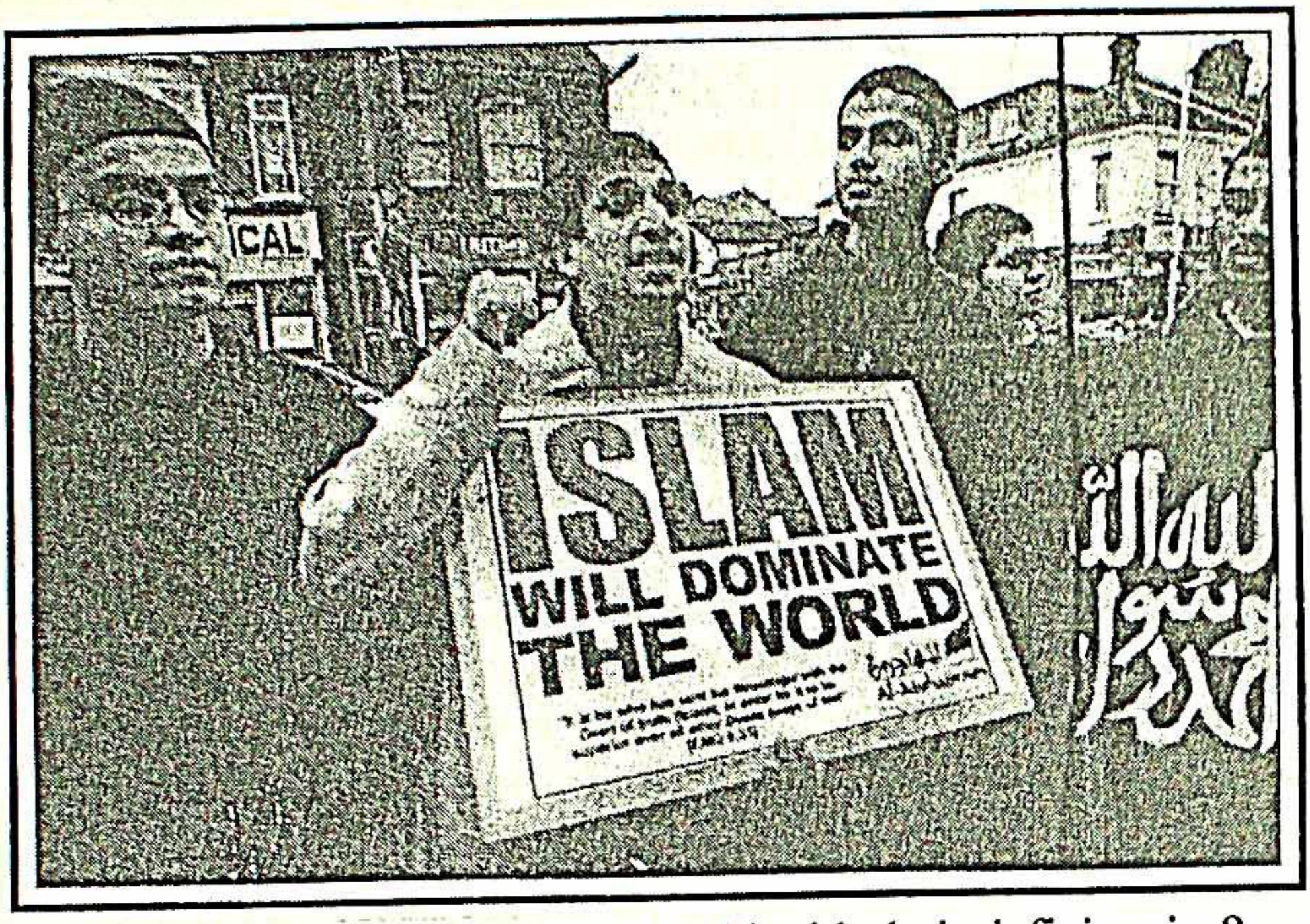
As a result of their passivity Muslims have lost not only their vitality, energy and dynamism, but have at the same time been reduced to a vulnerable position of being attacked from almost the whole non-Muslim world.



Can Muslims dominate the world with their deficiencies?

The West regards the Muslims as anachronistic, archaic, aggressive and fanatics. In addition, they are stereotyped as the most uncivilized species spreading their tentacles to destroy and terrorize the world. Within their own ranks Muslims are divided among themselves on the basis of sectarian, ideological and socio-cultural conflicts. They do not present united, cohesive and constructive properties of a developed and civilized people. The lack of a systematic coherence led them to frustrate their energies in a multitude of fissiparous tendencies. Instead of becoming the best of communities as the Quran commends them,

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they have assumed the role of collectivizing the phenomenon of evil in its all-conceivable forms. This is the main dilemma of the modern Muslims that must turn them to reflecting upon the reasons of their retardation and underdevelopment. In fact, the profile of a civilized Muslim has been badly tarnished and needs to be repaired.

`Almost all Muslim societies deny in practice most of the basic individual freedoms and human rights that are the integral elements of a civilized society. This applies both to secular states like Syria, Egypt and Turkey and religious states like Saudi Arabia..

Sick man of the world

As a result the Muslim ummah is seen as the "sick man" of the world, and the whole world is led to believe that the root cause of all these evils lies in their religion. While the irony of the predicament is that Islam, in fact, has nothing to do with the predilections of the so-called Muslims of the modern age. Muslims, in fact, have debased their religion and have become a liability to the religion that was healthy and positivist in its thinking and perception.

On political and military fronts Muslims remain divided and fragmented. Divided into more than sixty states, despite vast territories and abundant reserves, they remain under-nourished and underdeveloped. Owing to their weaknesses they have been exploited in the past by the colonial powers and are now being deprived of their due share by the neo-imperialists. Recent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq have reduced them to non-entities and crippled their capacity to react and face the challenges effectively.

Apart from direct attacks on Muslim nations, the neo-imperialists have undertaken concerted measures to divert the

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more conscious elements from active participation in the process of reconstruction and development.
By imposing wars and inflicting economic sanctions the western powers distort the conception of a constructive strategy to create hostilities and divisive tendencies among the Muslims.

At the same time political institutions have been stripped of their inherent ability to function effectively to serve the cause of socio-economic growth. At the time of their departure from the colonized Muslim world the western powers handed over the power to the native elites who were faithful stooges of their western masters. In many Muslim states the democratic political institutions have been replaced by the military or dictatorial governments, so that appropriate political environments could be produced for the benefit of western powers. Most of these rulers are illiterate and oblivious of the needs and rights of people and dictates of justice and fair play. Most of the Muslim states are repressive regimes and do not allow the free expression of speech, participation in politics and development of independent institutions. Most of the Muslim countries are 'run by dictators who do not represent their people; men who are unpopular, corrupt and take little care of the welfare of their people'. These are the real issues and complex conflicting situations that deform the shape of Muslim ummah. Other issues in other areas also merit due consideration before any effective strategy can be evolved for reform and refinement of the ummah.

On the economic front the ummah remains undernourished and underdeveloped. Their production patterns are archaic and their technology outmoded. They have not found an effective system of raising the level of production and meeting the basic needs of their people. The shortcomings of these Muslim states are visible in larger perspectives. The human development indicators are among the lowest in the world; poverty is pervasive, literacy is less than 30%, institutions of higher learning are rare. As President Musharraf of Pakistan pointed out at the last OIC

meeting in Malaysia "the Muslim underdevelopment (in economic and social sectors) consigns us to the margins of the international power structure. Our intellectual impoverishment diminishes our ability to defend our just causes. Our shortage of scientific skills erodes our ability to energise our economies, to compete commercially, and to cater for the defence of our countries... To promote dynamic development, prosperity and peace within our nations and societies, we must focus on poverty reduction, employment generation, expansion of production, science and technology, higher education, health, and human resource development."

EDUCATION

The lack of education is the main malaise of the Muslim ummah. It is the root cause of all deficiencies that are found among the Muslims. In an age of dynamic growth and development any progress in any sector of life is not conceivable without education. The deplorable fact that deprives the Muslims of their aura of success is the neglect that is shown towards educating the masses and developing the levels of higher education among the so-called literate classes of the Muslim nations. If we compare the figures, the facts would appear to be deeply depressing and extremely hopeless. Just comparing in one sector the West seems to be miles ahead.

America has about 300 million population, out of which 1.1 million qualify as 'scientists', while out of 1.5 billion Muslims only 300.000 qualify as scientists. The ratio would be 230 scientists per one million Muslims. In America there are more than 5,760 universities, while in the Muslim world with a population of 1.5 billion there are only 600 universities. More than 800 million Muslims are absolutely illiterate.

An inadequate deployment of resources and optimum utilization of potentialities is another serious obstruction on the way to progress and development of Muslim societies. Even in basic necessities of life no Muslim state is sufficiently equipped to meet the growing needs of populations. From time to time several Muslim states are exposed to food deficits and famines. The western countries make the best use of their deficiencies and exploit their inadequacies. In the industrial sector the situation is even worse and ninety percent of industrial products are imported from western countries. Socio-economic progress and adequate industrial structures are the basic imperatives to fight poverty, deprivation and illiteracy.

Economic conditions are a little better in oil-producing Arab states, but the plight of the poorer segments in non-oil countries is the worse and is steadily declining with the increase in population and non-effective channeling of funds into productive channels. Hardly any thought is given to strategic planning and proper utilization of resources for long-term productive purposes.

Globalization or the exploitation of resources should not be confined to the developed states for the richer segments of society. The developed countries must be made aware of the fatal consequences of mal-distribution of resources and exploitation of wealth for their own benefit. This will lead ultimately to more aggressive reactions in developing countries with a sharp rise in extremism and terrorism. This is in the interests of the West itself that such discrepancies are dispensed with; Socio-economic growth on an equitable basis will provide an effective antidote for violence and extremism.

On the religious and cultural fronts too the conditions are unpalatable and need to be corrected as early as possible. The centuries old decay has led to perpetuating a process of jahilyya (ignorance), ghaflah (neglect) and illiteracy. These maladies

have created an environment of biased perception, egeocentricism and ideological conflicts. The religion has been divided into sects and the sects are influenced by hostilities and narrow-minded Mullahism.

Culture is not the culture of genuine Islamic values, but is largely influenced by Hindu and western traditions. Marriages and socio-cultural functions, in particular, are performed in light of traditional Hindu customs, which have nothing to do with Islam and its enlightened practices. The elites are influenced more by the western values and cultural connotations and represent views and perceptions that are largely westernized.

The concept of culture that Islam presented was unique and pure in its perception. Since the time of its inception Islam introduced a system, which was oriented to developing the traits of simplicity, modesty, equality and fraternity. But under the influence of foreign cultures, which reached the majority of Muslim states through western colonial masters, missionaries and media the Muslims have abandoned the inherent values of the Islamic culture.

The guidelines and teachings that Islam offered paved way for Renaissance both in the Muslim world and in Western Europe. It was on the basis of these values that a highly developed civilization and culture were evolved, which shaped the destiny of Muslim ummah. This also gave rise to Renaissance in Europe.

Under the influence of the colonialists and foreign media the native rulers and the majority of masses have not been sincere to the principles of Islam. As a result not only a process of doubt and skepticism was infused among the Muslims, also a socio-cultural structure was evolved which was more relevant to the policies of western powers than the precepts of Islam. This gave

rise to distortions and contradictions, which debased the perception of Islam and its culture. The spirit and essence of the message was dissolved to be replaced by western values. This was a great setback both to the form and complexion of the institutions, which were developed to shape the identity and destiny of the Muslim ummah.

VISION

Another great stumbling block on the way to progress lies in the lack of vision, which neither the Muslim leaders nor the masses possess. The trouble with the Muslim world today is that the blind are leading the blind. That is why we are not reaching the destination. The way to shaping the destiny lies in exploiting the resources, both physical and metaphysical, and adjusting to the forces of nature. In order to accomplish the higher ideals and participate in the realization of individual and national aspirations Muslims will have to revise their policies to fit into the framework of Islam as suggested and devised by the Quran. A united front against the evil forces of aggression and neo-colonialism will have to be forged to thwart the onslaughts from wherever they emerge.

The realization of aspirations depends largely on the quality and quantum of efforts that are inspired by requisite vision and intuition. The dynamic forces of a community are like the waves of a river, which are dissipated if they are not amalgamated into proper channels to create collective consciousness and united force. The aspirations can be realized by the mobilization of dormant elements, which lie like dead stones if not moved with necessary force and energy. Individual organisms need to be integrated into an organic whole or a compact *Gestalt* to provide vigour and vitality to the undercurrents of human aspirations. 'The totality of the process, from its biological to its historical phases, is motivated by numerous factors, including the natural

coalescence of elements, the coalescence of stems, the spherical shape of the earth which causes the physical compression of peoples, and psychical curvature of the mind.'

Since human consummation is the summit of all generation, it is toward this end that both matter and soul tend to move. But this attainment is not possible without a clear conception and a strong spirit to accomplishment. This is the postulate that sustains 'faith in life' and provides stimulus to the process of collective consciousness. This is what we need to remove the deficiencies of the Muslim life—the vision, the aspirations and the dynamism.

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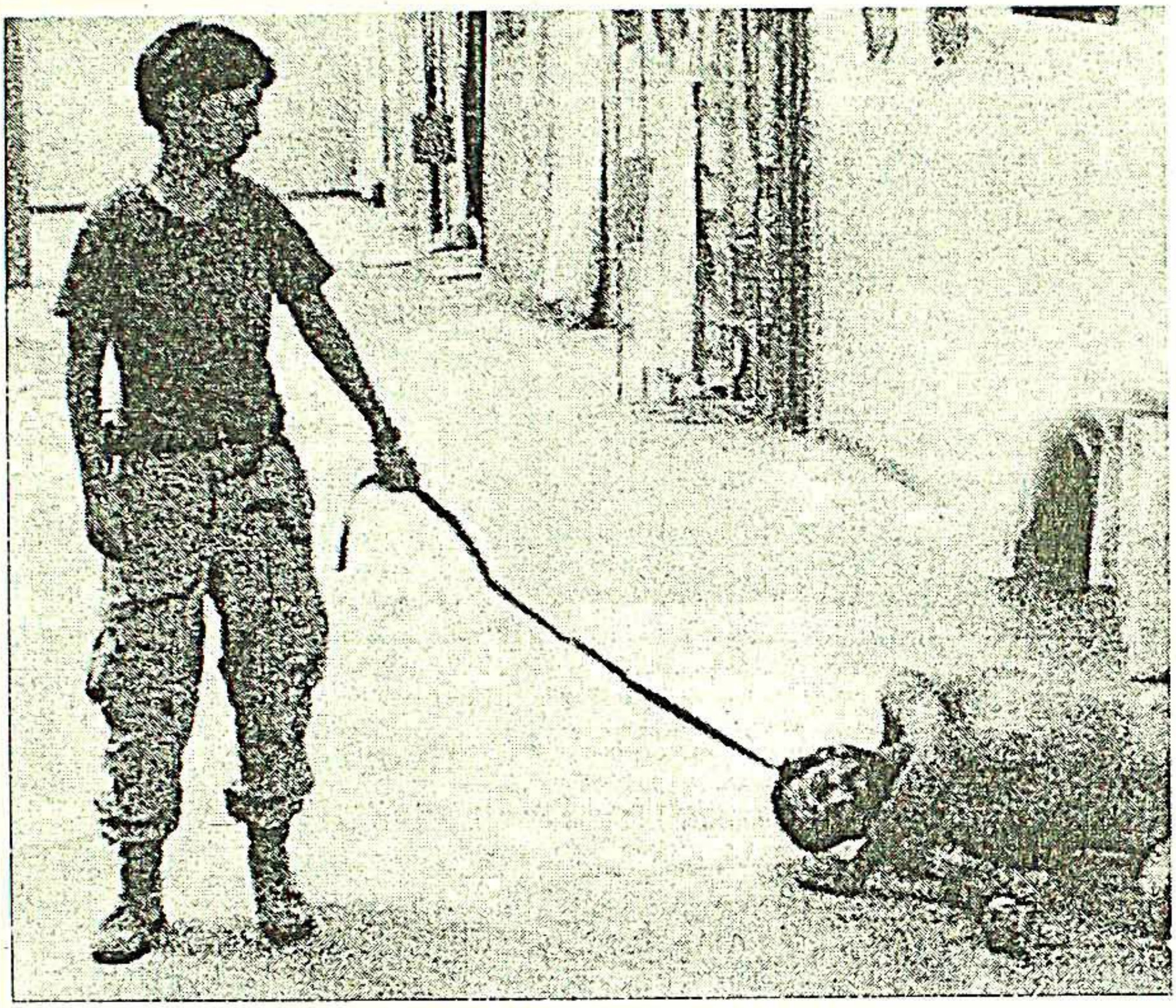

The Western barbarities which would ultimately lead to their decline.

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Chapter No. 21

The Decline of the West

The US adventures may be the
Beginning of an end- the end of a dream
That is based on invasions, oppressions
And illusions.

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The important lesson to learn from history
is that empires do not last for ever,
and their ends are usually unpleasant.

The Decline of the West

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The ferocity of the American attacks on Muslims and Islam has evoked a sense of disgust and hatred in the Muslim world against the western nations in general and the US in particular. Many people wonder if the assaults carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan are the new crusades in guise of reprisals against the terrorists. The war on terrorism indeed has become a crusade against Islam. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire it is for the first time that the Christian nations have assembled so aggressively on a united platform to suppress the Muslim Ummah in order to expand its sphere of imperialist domination and realize its exploitative designs.

The brutalities with which Iraqi citizens in general and prisoners in Abu Gharaib prison in particular have been treated will be remembered for decades with shame and disgust. The books of history will be replete with sordid stories and dreadful pictures that emanated from the

dungeons cf the prisons in Iraq and the caves in Afghanistan. The treatment meted out to the prisoners at the Guatanamo Bay must be the subject of ongoing debates and critical condemnations from all over the world. These atrocities must have been the thorniest episode to hurt the human conscience in decades, if not in centuries. The torture, murders and humiliation heaped upon the prisoners were not the first or the last to have been added to the ugliest drama played by the Americans over the past decades. Were similar acts not committed by the Americans in Vietnam, Chile, Honduras and Bagram Air Base?

Sadistic, blatant abuses

The humiliation of the prisoners was not an invention of the maverick US soldiers, but a part of the system established by the sick mentality of the authorities that conceived and executed them. The naked bodies of the Iraqis being abused and tortured were the worst specimens of actions when men degrade themselves to the lowest level of animalism. The US Major-General Antonio M. Taguba, admitting the atrocities, condemned them by pronouncing that they were the worst instances of "sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses". The humiliation has been so endemic and has so badly tarnished the image of Ameica in the world that not even Washington's worst enemies could have thought of producing such a wave of hatred against America.

For most of Americans it was not only a "crisis of confidence", but a crisis of civilization—a civilization which was supposed to refine and reform, a civilization

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which went to Iraq to liberate the citizens from the clutches of authoritarian and undemocratic rule of Saddam Hussein. But the way the people of Iraq have been abused in the post-Saddam era has made them forget the way they were treated in the past.

The American soldiers who went on a "liberating, civilizing" mission to Iraq have proved how crude and perverse the other side of the Corporate America is. In the very first encounter with the ancient Muslim civilization the modern western civilization seems to have lost its sense of proportion. The double standard doctrine has shown its hollowness and has proved that the invaders had no moral standards when it came to treating weaker and poorer sections of society.

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Many people are wondering if Americans are now turning to the crude and sinister designs of the old colonial powers that used to employ the systematic torture of their hapless victims. Amnesty International declared that it was 'a well-defined exercise in systematic torture'. The barbarity has shown that the invading forces were there to create a divide, which would perpetuate the perversities and shatter the foundations of civilizations. The US actions seem to affirm the assumptions that their policies are consistent with those of the 19th century imperialists: the conviction of cultural superiority, the view that the world is a place of merciless Darwinian competition where
force is the only language that lesser, underdeveloped people like the Muslims of the Middle East understand.

The same is true of the Palestinians who are being tortured and humiliated for such a long time. The same was true of

the Bosnian Muslims who were killed by the Serbians in an act of genocide at Srebrenica in 1995.

The international community has condemned the atrocities that establish the images of Muslim men being humiliated and tortured all over the Middle East extending from Bosnia and Chechnya to Iraq and Indonesia. These events have confirmed people's belief that the US and Britain are not in Iraq, Afghanistan and in other states to liberate or emancipate the citizens but to dominate and perpetuate the sphere of their influence. A commentator says:' they have strengthened the feelings that there is a deep racism underlying the occupiers' attitude towards the Arabs, Muslims and other minorities. We have grown used to seeing Arab men bound and hooded, in the occupied territories and Gaza. Israel advises the US on how to control civilians and interrogate them. Ariel Sharon has made the Israel army's "rules of engagement" available to the US military. The world notes the similarity between the practices of the US army in Iraq and those of the Israel army in Palestine. There is evidence that the scenes now shocking the world have been common in "Facility 1391" (Israel's secret prison), and some say, in other jails as well".

George Galloway, the British MP, commenting on the US, British barbarities, said in an article in the Guardian: "My heart sank. How could that possibly be? Even I, the archet of sceptics when it came to western fables about Iraq, had fallen for the biggest hoax in modern history. For as it has turned out, the dictator was telling the truth and the self-appointed leaders of the free world were guilty of mendacity.

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If there were a genuine accounting for the many crimes committed in Iraq, it would be trial not seen since Nuremberg; it would involve those who sold Saddam the gas he used
at Halabja, those who encouraged him to invade Iran when its revolution threatened to sweep away the corrupt kings and puppet presidents of Arabia propped up and profited
from by the west: those, like Donald Rumsfeld, who twice visited Saddam during that war to help him to target the terrible weapons the west had sold him: and those whose hands are covered with the blood of all those buried in the biggest of all the mass graves in Iraq—slaughtered by sanctions."

According to the reliable sources both the military and civilian heads of the US occupation have been implicated in this affair, but responsibility hardly stops there. Going up the chain of command still further, one reaches those who are politically responsible for these heinous acts.

Domination

What the West wants to establish by subjugating the Muslim communities in Iraq and Afghanistan is the imperialistic domination through strategic superiority in arms and ammunitions. Bob Woodward, in his book 'Bush at War' refers to the US General Franks' boastful claims that the US made for the first time the use of the AC- 130-gun ship. The slow-flying planes, equipped with a 105mm howitzer and a Gatling gun, could spray 1,800 rounds per minute, laying down a withering carpet of fire so intense that Afghans said they 'breathed fire'. George Bush also

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retorted that it was a lethal weapon, My reaction was, if you have got a shot at the enemy, take it in any way you can."

This approach is in sharp contrast to Woodrow Wilson's strategy that maintained the balance between war and peace and did not lose the grace in wartime.

Those who are concerned with humanity do not exceed the limits of civilized behaviour, whether it is peacetime or an ongoing war. The teachings of religion and civilization both call primarily for the concern of human feelings and sufferings. Any person who does not appreciate these concerns cannot be considered as a civilized human being.

However, with the decline in moral standards both the US and the British administrations have lost touch with the civilizing act of human conduct. More and more they are becoming the victims of double standards and are seen deviating from the principles of morality and decency. An Arab analyst says: "There would be no hearts and minds to be won in the Arab world, no public diplomacy that would convince the overwhelming majority of Arabs that this war would be a just war. An American expedition in the wake of thwarted UN inspections would be seen by the vast majority of the Arabs as an imperial reach into their world, a favour to Israel, or a way for the US to secure control over Iraq's oil."

Almost the whole world is now convinced that the US attacks on the Muslim lands were not meant to fight terrorism, but to execute its designs of expanding imperialism. In pursuit of these deigns they violated not only the basic moral norms, but also contravened the

sanctity of the world organizations like the United Nations and a series of international laws. The very fabric of world peace and international justice has been ruptured by brutal attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. The Islamists argue that the flagrant violation of international law proves that the western justice was nothing but a godless sham.

The critics suspect that with its exceedingly aggressive policies the US is on way to becoming a "Greater Israel"—a threat to world peace. In defining the course of future history, not only the wave of invasions and brutal attacks would be the determining factors, but other developments such as globalization, unilateralism, and the varying impact of religious and ideological convictions will be seen as shaping the mould of current and future developments. These events will contribute to determining the course of human history in the 21st century.

Professor Francis Fukuyama has already divided the world into two camps: the western and non-western. While distinguishing the two groups by specific differences, Fukuyama asserts that the world has already reached "the end of history".

Whether the world has reached the "end of history" or not is a debatable issue, but the fact remains that unilateralism and imperialism accompanied by the force of America's weapons of mass destruction constitute the gravest threat posed to world peace in contemporary world. If this threat continues to infuse its poison into the vitals of human civilization, the socio-cultural structures may one-day collapse under the debris of the neo-con policies.

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By declaring other countries, and in particular, Iran, Iraq and North Korea as the "axis of evil", the Americans justify their attacks under the newly devised concept of "preemption".

Dangerous Adventurism

This is a policy of dangerous adventurism, which might shatter the foundations of world civilizations. In any case its long-term effects are dangerous both for world peace and security, as well as for multilateral functioning of the UN and other world bodies.

As a result of the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq there is a widespread bitterness throughout the Arab and Muslim world. The growing western arrogance and a crude display of dominant designs over the Muslim nations, which cannot defend themselves, are the most depressing features of modern military and political realities. The internal dissensions and lack of preparation in Muslim states have weakened their capability to defend themselves. In the wake of these attacks the US may be planning more preemptive attacks on Iran, Syria and Sudan.

USA's conversion or preparation to launch imperialism on world scale is both distressing and dangerous. Amaury de Riencourt, in his book the "Coming Caesars" writes, America was heading towards becoming an imperial power. He said: Expanding democracy leads unintentionally to imperialism and that imperialism inevitably ends in destroying the republican institutions of earlier days: further, that the greater the social security, the dimmer the prospects of liberty, and that as society

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becomes more equalitarian, it tends increasingly to concentrate absolute power in the hands of one single man.

Caesarim, he adds, is not dictatorship, not the result of one man's overriding ambitions, not a brutal seizure of power through revolution. It is not based on specific doctrine or philosophy. It is essentially pragmatic and untheoretical.

It is a slow, often centuries-old unconscious development, that ends in a voluntary surrender of a free people escaping from freedom to one autocratic master." This is for this reason that he sees the US president enjoying unlimited powers of truly Caesarian magnitude.

The ominous prediction seems to have become increasingly perceptible as all the powers are now in the hands of George W. Bush. But this may also be the turning point in the history of the United States and the very structure of a super power may be crumbling from within. Gorbachev presided over the dismemberment of the Soviet Empire. Bush's fate may not be different from his counterpart in Moscow. It may be the beginning of the end of a dream that is based on invasions, oppressions and illusions.

Fall of Moral Values:

The beginning of the end, in fact, had begun with the invasion and withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. Its consequences became increasingly visible with the invasion of Iraq. As Martin Jacques in the Guardian says: "The invasion of Iraq represented the high watermark of Western moral values. In retrospect, it is clear that the idea

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had been gaining momentum since two coincidental events in the 1970s: the end of the Vietnam war, which profoundly scared the reputation of the United States, and the beginning of the modern era of globalization. With Vietnam out of the way, and globalization the new bearer of Western and, above all, American values, the latter found an ever- expanding global audience, a process enormously boosted by the collapse of communism."

Globalization

In the 90s the impact of western philosophy and, in particular, of globalization became so perceptible that the western model of modernity became synonymous with modernization, in which globalization came to play an ever-growing role. Where nations were not to follow the US imposed model, they were known as the "axis of evil" or the rogue states. This was the outcome of exceedingly conservative policies, which were moving towards the crudest form of imperialism. Democracy and market economy became the new western mantra to be applied to every society whether they liked them or not.

The West justified their role in introducing and imposing the so-called civilizational values on the ground that they were the most suitable panacea for the ills of modern age. They propagated that they were trying to civilize the developing world, which was groaning under the burden of social and economic backwardness

In the pursuit of imperialist designs globalization was employed as an increasingly effective channel to exploit and extricate maximum benefits for expanding the sphere

of foreign domination. In this context Bill Clinton is believed to have played a more tacit role than George W. Bush, who appeared to be more blatant and rowdy, and gave up all claims of legitimizing the thesis of perpetuating the concept of colonization. History tells us that all policies aimed at expanding the sphere of influence must be presented in a pleasant and palatable manner, so that the bitter contents are minimised as far as possible. Exploitation cannot be turned into an effective channel if it is made to appear as a deliberate tool of aggression and expansion.

Nevertheless, globalization remained under sustained attack by its critics all over the world, especially in the developing world its pernicious effects were found to be more vitiating. The aftermath of 9/11 made it more vicious and it became a target of constant attacks by the liberal, intellectual circles across the world. However, it came to be replaced by a more absurd doctrine of military impe4rialism. The Bush administration employed the measures which ran contrary to the traditional norms of civilized behaviour and international trade. At the Johannesburg summit in August 2002, the world delegates were extremely critical of the highly exaggerated unilateral policies of the United States and were wondering as what to do with the United States.

Underlying the aims and purposes of imperialism Hannah Arendt, a political strategist, says, that "the central political idea of imperialism is the expansion (of its influence) as a permanent and supreme aim of politics". This has been true of all empires ranging from the Byzantine to the Mongols, Turks, Europeans and now the Americans.

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Several ideologues, neo-conservatives and men with old, colonial perceptions have been propagating the advantages of imperialism, not for the colonialists, but for the people whom they wanted to bring under their control.

President Bill Clinton, at a meeting, in 1999, told his audience, that "Today we must embrace the inexorable logic of globalization – that everything from the strength of our economy to the safety of our cities, to the health of our people, depends on events not only within our borders, but half a world away." He made it clear that globalization was "irreversible". His successor, George W. Bush, exploiting the 9/11 opportunity, not only seized the event to further develop on this theme, but deployed all possible measures, economic, military and diplomatic, to extend the area of American imperialism to the farthest regions in the world.

For the proponents of globalism the concept is of exceeding importance, which they pursue with religious fervour. For the, the market is the blessing of God. In recent years, they have succeeded in spreading messianic claims to the victims of their doctrines in the developing world. The idea is to lull their independent urge for national growth and independence, and pave way for the steady rise of American imperialism.

Michael Ignatieff, in his recent book "The Empire", says: "The movement of national liberation that swept through the African and Asian worlds in 1950s, seeking emancipation from the colonial rule, have now run their course and in many cases have failed to deliver on their

promise to rule more fairly than the colonial oppressors of the past."
In order to support his absurd assertion he further writes:" For every nationalist struggle that succeeds in giving its people self-determination and dignity, there are more that only deliver their people up to a self-immolating slaughter, terror, enforced partition, and failure."

But historically viewing these observations are a pack of lies and absurdities. Most of the Asian states are moving ahead socially, politically and economically. This is particularly true of the East Asian nations, which have surpassed some of the European economies.

Ignatieff wants to convince the world that the developing world, on its own, is not capable of executing fair and development-oriented policies. Hence, western values and models of modernity are the imperative need of modern age. From this he wants to deduce that under such circumstances it is the duty of the United States to come to their succor and support them with the process of reconstruction and development. 'For half a century, following the Second World War and the rise of anti-colonial movement, only diehard colonialists would have voiced such sentiments—such has the ideological wheel turned'.

But for how long? wonders Martin Jacques in his article. Iraq has proved a rude awakening. Already the West has been reminded by growing Iraqi resistance of the forgotten lesson of the anti-colonial period, that people of different races and cultures do not want to be ruled by an alien power from the other side of the world. 'Meanwhile, the

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revelation of widespread criminal behaviour by American and British troops are a poignant illustration of the fact that "western moral virtue" is only one element of the Western story."

Many people wonder if this is the "moral virtue of the West", then how dreadful would be the "moral vice of the West". The fact that the US is the sole super power does not mean that it is also the embodiment of virtues and cultural refinement that the civilization enshrines. The mantra that George W. Bush and his neo-cons have been repeating since their arrival in Washington that the 'the conflict is a fight to save the civilized world' is becoming as hollow as any other false assertions.

If the criterion of being civilized were the elimination of all those who oppose you, then the very concept of civilization would be divorced of the essential ingredients that it is supposed to integrate. Many of the present US policies are contrary to the principles of justice, liberty and democracy enshrined in the US constitution. One wonders if the US has said farewell to these values. The arbitrary arrests of bearded Muslims and attacks on their localities and religious institutions undermine the principle of justice and scandalize the US constitution.

A blow to civilizations

The question is whether the US intends to save civilization or scrap even the essential elements of cultured and civilized life. Civilization does not develop by imposing own ideologies and own values on others, nor can it sustain

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by chocking the course of justice through unilateral policies.

What is most required is the sustenance of values, moral, social and cultural, both on national and international scale. What the world needs now is a collective consciousness and a global contract based on basic human values, not necessarily the values that serve the cause of US imperialism. "The growing sense of crisis that now pervades the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq could well herald a global shift in perceptions about the 'moral virtue of the West'. The idea that the coalition was a force for liberation rather than occupation is already a distant memory and is becoming more absurd by the day."

The basic prerequisite for the sustenance of these values—the values shared by both the West and non-western nations, lies in respecting the virtues of other cultures and civilizations. Any attempt to impose western values on others and, in particular, on Muslims, would be a futile and unproductive exercise.

Moreover, a distorted western perception of Muslims and their civilization will not help preserve the basic values, which are imperative for a humane and civilized order. In order to combat terrorism and create a just and fair world order, the West will have to explore the avenues more seriously where it falters more frequently. Perhaps, in future it might have to look more eagerly towards the East for virtues and wisdom, as von Goethe said so beautifully in his Divan:

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North and South and West are quacking,
Thrones are cracking, empires shaking.
Let us flee towards the East,
Where as patriarchs we'll feast.

At a time when the US is the sole super power the need to explore new avenues for maintaining the sanctity of moral values and international standards becomes all the more imperative. Since America finds it much easier to violate laws and values without any reprisals or counter attacks should not lead to further attacks and added atrocities. During the Nazi period though there was a systematic attack on moral values and human rights, yet there was sufficient awareness to condemn and respond to the brutalities. The Nuremberg trials were instituted to establish the truth and supremacy of human and legal values.

Through the trials the criminals were brought to account and the system repaired. But now when the balance in international power politics tilts only to one side, there is no prospect of bringing the criminals to trial.
The sordid tale of the Al Gharaib prison is still fresh in the memory of the world.

Exploitation and colonialism

The nature of relationship between ethics and economics, morality and politics has been a cause of concern since the days of Aristotle. Apostles and philosophers have been warning against injustices and inequities of the greedy and avaricious, of the capitalists and imperialists.

The inequities, which were perpetrated by tribal chiefs in the medieval age, are adopted as evil elements of exploitation and destruction by the colonialists and imperialists in the modern age. The opportunity to be unilateral and the passion for world domination have become the integral components of new doctrines for expanding the sphere of influence in the world.

The war on Iraq was an open denunciation of moral values and humane resolutions—a contradiction of the civilizational claims made by the West. It was a distinct move to demolish multilateralism, democratization and universal order of peace and order. Paul Kennedy, a renowned US historian, warns the US administration that if they do not desist from their policies of occupation in the Middle East, and do not reform their policies concerning the scandals of prison torture and plans to take over the whole Arab world, then the consequences will be catastrophic and the world will be virtually on the verge of disaster. He has condemned the whole venture as "misconceived and bungled", and feels that the State Department and Pentagon must be searching for an exit strategy. If the US does not correct its policies "the pendulum could indeed swing too far. And the consequences for all of us, but especially for war-torn communities, could be severe".

Kennedy further adds:" Ever since 1945, the US leaders have shouldered the responsibility of walking a fine line between doing too little or doing too much in world affairs. Drifting in either direction brings dangers and critics. It seems though, that the Bush administration plunged a little

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too readily into large military interventions along Mackinder's rim lands, and yet it is also true that an equally serious predicament awaits if the US public and politicians overreact and decline to assume the responsibilities called for by their country's world position. The last thing we need is a US repeating its policies of 1919. What we really need is a US that can recapture its attitudes and policies of 1945, and blend democratic ideals with geopolitical wisdom. Is that really impossible?"*1

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*1: Paul Kennedy: The Guardian, June 19, 2004.

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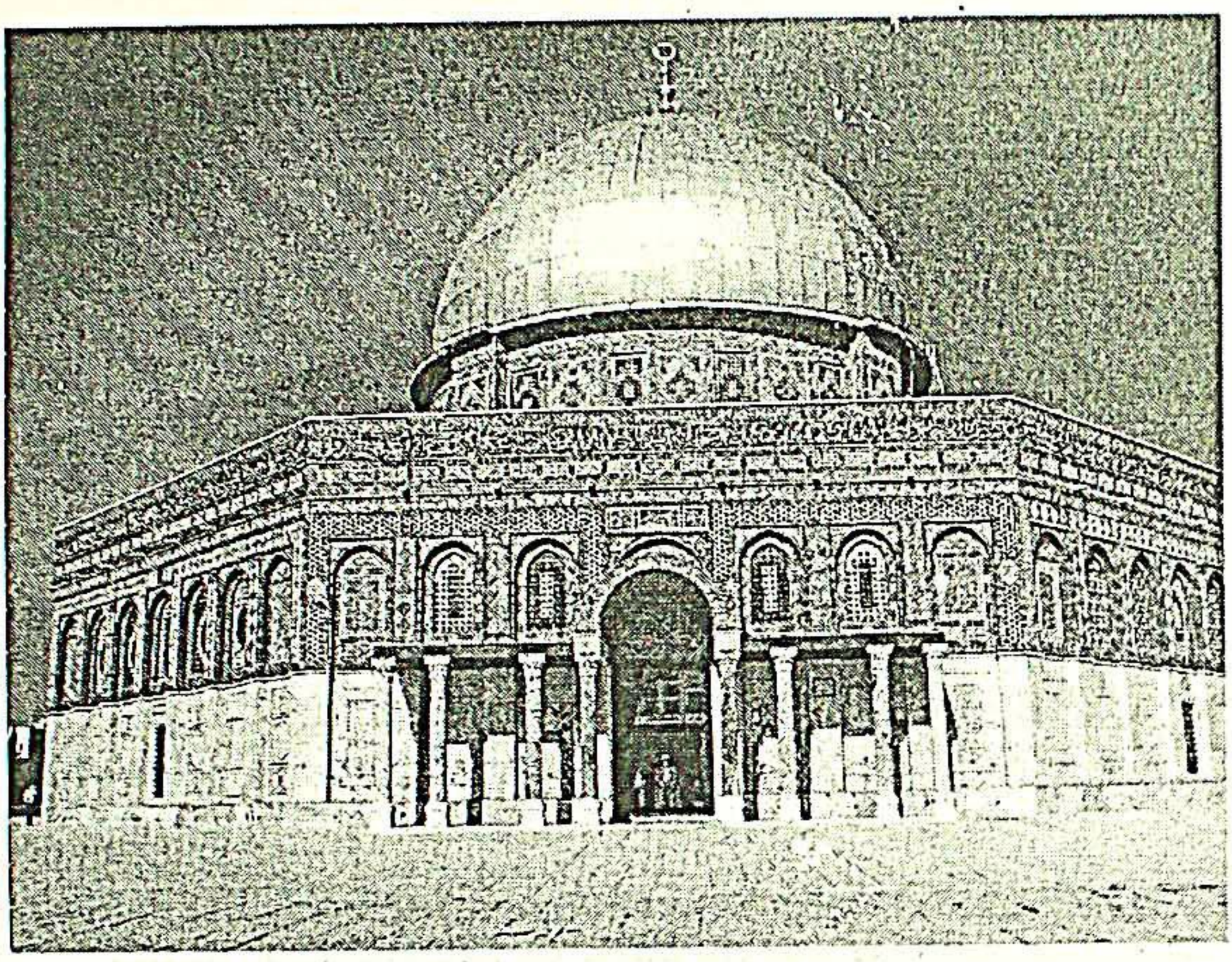

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Chapter No. 22

MARD-I-MOMIN

"Mard-I-Momin is not dictated by the waves of time, but is destined to shape the sojourn of the sun, the stars and the moon".

-- Iqbal

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The secret of life lies in its movement

MARD-I-MOMIN

"Arise and create a New World
Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham".

Mard-I-Momin or perfect man is a long, cherished ideal conceived and developed by many thinkers and philosophers of the past. Diogenes (400-325 B.C,) a Greek philosopher is believed to be among the first thinkers who devoted his ideas and thoughts to the consummation of human life. As a seeker of knowledge and perfection he intended to disseminate the idea of perfection among his fellow-beings. Once with a lamp in broad daylight he was found roaming about the streets of the town where he lived. When asked what he was looking for with a lamp in his hand in the broad daylight, he retorted that he was looking

for a man. When told that there were so many men all around him, he retorted that they were not men, but creatures of lower degree.

Similarly, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207- 1273) tells the story of a man who was in search of a perfect man. In his book "Diwan-I-Shams-I-Tabriz, Rumi narrates the story of a Shaikh, who was in quest of a perfect man. " I wish to see the Lion of God (Ali) and Rustam of Dastan (Iran). His compatriots told him that they have also been looking for such men for a long time, but there was no success in their ventures. But the Shaikh was insistent that there must be such a man who can guide the destiny of his nation.

Rumi and Iqbal both believe in the concept of the Ideal Man, Mard-I-Momin or Mard-I-Haq as Rumi calls him. Basically both believe in the essential ingredients for the composition of an ideal personality, but a slight difference arises when they move towards the attainment of this ideal. While Iqbal calls for the creation of conducive environments for the development of an ideal personality, Rumi believes every age has its own Ideal Man.

Among other Muslim thinkers we have writers like Ibn-Sina, Al-Arabi, Ibn-I-Muskawaih and Ibn-Tufail who conceived and developed the concept of perfection in man. Later on the concept was developed by Ibn-Ibrahim al-Jilli (1366-1408) in his well-known work Insan al_kamil.

Iqbal was the latest who developed the concept to almost a perfect level. Delving on the essence of the Quran, Iqbal says that the Mard-I-Momin of Islam is endowed with the

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highest degree of ego, which, no doubt, is finite and bound by man's existence in this world.

Although it is creative; but its creativity is limited by its subordination to the Ultimate Ego. However, in its quest for immortality, it works closely with the Almighty and thus acquires the godly qualities, which transform him into a Mard-I-Momin.

Elaborating this concept Iqbal adds: "Life offers a scope for ego--activity and death is the first test of the synthetic activity of the ego. There are no pleasure giving and pain giving acts; there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts. It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution, or disciplines him for a future career. The principle of the ego-sustaining deed is respect for the ego in myself as well as in others."*1

Action & Strife

Iqbal further contends that immortality is not conferred on man as his inborn right, but is achieved by personal effort. For Iqbal good life demands action and strife, and not withdrawal and resignation. A perfect life is the composite of pure heart, intellectual insight, dynamism and strength of character. At the same time strong will and desire, courage and confidence are additional constituents of a perfect personality.

In Darb-e-Kalim Iqbal says that the Mard-I-Qalandar is not swayed or dictated by the waves of time, but is destined to shape the sojourn of the sun, the stars and the moon. Hence, in reality a true Mard-I-Momin is the genuine vicegerent of God on earth. As a rider of destiny he

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traverses the realms of thought, power and potentialities. As a leader of the nation, he hearkens the noise of intuition and brings back days of peace and prosperity to the world. As a keeper of deep insight he moves steadily and consciously on the path of realization and perfection, both for his own self and the destiny of his community. Society is the integral structure in which ego strives to realize its perfection.

Dynamism, love and knowledge are the essential ingredients of an inspiring personality. It is through the best utilization of the human faculties and virtues that the conceived Mard-I-Momin reaches the highest level of moral and ethical excellence. It is through these qualities that the ideal man liberates his own personality as well as the society from the worn-out traditions and conventions, which hinder the process of evolution.

While passing through the process of evolution the perfect man has to undergo several phases of self-sacrifice and spiritual purification. As the Quran says: "That was indeed a trying test. So We ransom him for a great sacrifice. And leave him (his hallowed memory) for posterity".

The ideal man accepts "the heavy trust of God" and realizing this responsibility he commits himself to accomplishing the higher ideals of goodness, creativity and perfection.

Fears and phobias are not the factors to reckon with and the Mard-I-Momin does not apprehend the onslaught of evils and vices. He is equipped to fight them and survive the phenomena that thwart his march towards the accomplishment of his goal.

The hand of God

The hand of the Momin, Iqbal says, is the hand of God—dominant, resourceful, creative and confident. In Bal-I-Jibrail Iqbal says:

"A perfect man's hand is the hand of God,
Dominant, creative, resourceful, efficient.
Human but angel-like in disposition, compatible with the Master's attributes,
His carefree heart is indifferent to the riches of either world
He is reason's last goal; he is the harvest of love,
In the wide world he sets all spirits ablaze."

In another verse Iqbal says that the Momin is "a flashing sword against evils which protects man to preserve truth. His affirmation and negation are the criteria for good and evil".

Living by the highest and the best is the ideal of the perfect man. As Mencius says: "It is enough that man's heart is still touched by beauty and goodness and justice and kindness. Knowing that God is ever so high above us, how

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can we live except by the highest and best in us? We should be ashamed to live otherwise.

To live the good life, to act according to our highest and noblest instincts is merely the right thing to do. It is, in fact, to be religious, to have reverence for this life.
He who attends to his greater self becomes a greater man, and he who attends to his small self, becomes a small man".

Iqbal is fascinated by greatness wherever he finds it. His own ideal of greatness, however, remains Mard-I-Momin or Mard-I-Qalandar. Shaping and perfecting individual personality in the mould of moral and spiritual beauty is the ultimate goal of his ideal man. His Mard-I-Momin is the man who inspires, guides and leads a pure life. Underlying the perfect man's strength of character and sharpness of vision Iqbal asserts:
"Can anyone imagine the strength of a perfect man (the strength of his arms)?
Destinies are altered by the mere glance of a perfect man."*2

A truly and genuinely evolved Mard-I-Momin possesses immense powers. With the deployment of these faculties he can change the destiny of nations.
All these qualities he finds in the holy Prophet (pbuh) who is the perfect epitome of a Mard-I-Momin.

A perfect man or Mardi-Momin as Iqbal calls him, is a man with vision, a man who is imbued with ideas and thoughts and can guide others to accomplish the high ideals for which man was created. The dominant quality of such a

man's personality is reflected through his ego, which is nothing but the love of wisdom and creative activity.
"There is a continuing duration of egohood in the whole universe, which, in fact, is the permeation of the Ultimate Ego. The ultimate aim of the Ego is not to see something, but to be something". *3

It is the philosophy of "Self", that is dynamic and creative. In "Asrar-I-Khudi" Iqbal explains the concept by various examples that the whole universe obeys the Will of God and the laws of nature. For this reason, Iqbal rejects the idea of self-destruction as found in the philosophy of mysticism, and finds the aim of life in ***self-realization and self-knowledge.***

Without acquiring knowledge man cannot evolve an outlook that is constructive and scientific. The acquisition of knowledge is exceedingly important not only for man in his individual capacity, but for the welfare of the society as a whole. In the modern world only those societies are seen to assume the supreme hold over natural phenomena, which are leading in knowledge and science. Muslims, being backward in knowledge, sciences and other secular pursuits, are at the lowest rung of human society. The period, which is known as the golden period in Muslim civilization, was marked by a spectacular advance in science, literature, arts and humanities. Briffault says in his book "Making of Humanity":
"Science is the most momentous contribution of the Arab civilization to the modern world; but its fruit was slow in ripening...It was not science only which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated their first glow to the

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European life'—There is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of the Islamic culture is not traceable; nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the permanent distinctive force of the modern world, and the supreme source of its victory—natural science and the scientific spirit'... What we call science arose in Europe as a result of new spirit of inquiry, of new method of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs."4

Vicegerency

However, to reach the stage of perfection man has to acquire not only knowledge, but has to pass through a number of stages. The stage of perfection so achieved enables man to realize the ideal of perfection, as well as the office of vicegerency that God assigned to him.

From the perspectives of the perfect man the cultivation of qualities that must be imbibed to act as the vicegerent of God on earth are exceedingly important. Vicegerency is the highest office entrusted to man and without being conscious of its responsibilities man cannot execute this task satisfactorily. This must be done within the framework of divine guidance with necessary attributes, deep insight and strong devotion. God "created man in the best of moulds", and to preserve this mould man is supposed to act accordingly, according to the pattern God has devised. In case his actions happen to be contrary to this conception,

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then the whole system is disturbed and man becomes the "lowest of the low". *4a

"As the vicegerent of God on earth, man is the complete Ego, the goal of humanity, the acme of life, both in mind and body; in him the discord of our mental life becomes a harmony. The highest power is united in him with the highest knowledge. In his life, thought and action, instinct and reason become one. He is the last fruit of the tree of humanity; and all the trials of a painful evolution are justified, because he is to come at the end. He is the real ruler of mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth. Thus the kingdom of God on earth means, the democracy of unique individuals presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth. Nietzsche had a glimpse of this ideal race, but his atheism and aristocratic prejudices marred his whole conception."*5

Since purity of heart and purification of reason and intellect along with dynamism and strength of character are the essential ingredients of the ideal man, hence Iqbal's Mard-I-Momin is distinguished from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer's superman. Since nobility of character and virtuous living are not the integral part of Nietzsche's superman, hence he is not bound by the parameters of Islamic theology or Christian morality. While Iqbal's perfect man is a theist, inspired by religion and divine injunctions, Nietzsche's super man is an atheist, as he does not necessarily believe in God and His dictates. Moreover, Iqbal's perfect man is a democrat since he believes in the collective welfare of society, while Nietzsche's super man is an aristocrat, as he is the representative of the Empire or a Royal class.

But some critics have criticised Iqbal for having borrowed his ideas from Nietzsche's concept of a super man. But Iqbal has himself repudiated this in his writings. He says: " Some of the English reviewers, however, have been misled by the superficial resemblance of some of my ideas to those of Nietzsche'. The conception of this super man in Nietzsche is purely materialistic. This conception may be new in European literature. It is, however, the same as the idea of Overman in Emerson. It is probable, that Nietzsche borrowed it from the literature of Islam or of the East and degraded it by his materialism. In the literature of Islamic mysticism, the expression used for the higher man is "Insan-e- Kamil". I wrote on this subject about 36 years ago, immediately after leaving the college."*6

Iqbal also differs with Bergson for having escaped the essential elements of intellectualism. "The vitalism of Bergson ends in an insurmountable dualism of will and thought" For Iqbal the central core of human personality lies in the vitality of Ego or Will that man must employ for optimum refinement. Self is directed by these essential elements that remain vital throughout human life. But these constituents should not follow the will blindly, which probably delves in the Bergsonian concept. Iqbal says:
"The life of the Ego is a kind of tension caused by the ego invading the environment and the environment invading the ego. The ego does not stand outside this arena of mutual invasion. It is present in it as a directive energy that is formed and disciplined by its own experience".

Nevertheless, Iqbal's mystical humanism seems to have reflected his reading of Bergson and Nietzsche, as well as

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his ideas developed from the traditions of Islamic Neo-Platonism. Nietzsche's superman and Ibn Arabi's 'Perfect Man', Bergson's 'Elan Vital', and Rumi's "Evolutionary Spiral', merge in his thinking, along with perceptions drawn from Hegel, Whitehead, Russell and Einstein."*7

Knowledge to develop personality

The main idea behind the Divine revelations has been to create a consciousness in man about the purpose and role of his life in this world. Without recognising and executing this responsibility man cannot do justice to his existence. The Quran also lays the foundations for intellectual and spiritual refinement. Iqbal says the birth of Islam is the birth of inductive knowledge. Knowledge from all sources and on all subjects must be learnt to develop the potentialities that God has infused in man; otherwise, the life of the individual and the formation of the society will remain imperfect.

Mard-I-Momin or perfect man is a dynamic personality with ideas and thoughts, knowledge and learning through which he interprets the sources of creativity, the attributes of a perfect life and the reality of universe. Through the development of ego are nurtured the dimensions of life, which may not be put in purely logical categories. His ideas and thoughts are rational, but they are not secular without ethical or religious connotations. For him a world is not conceivable which is devoid of a direction and purpose.

The ideal is the reconstruction of a productive society and a positive ethical system in which creativity assumes the

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central role. Creativity is the sine qua non for reformation and development.

Mard-I-Momin as the epitome of creativity plays a proactive role in remoulding the shape of human society and realizing the destiny of Muslim nation. He believed that today than ever before we need such a living personality more urgently than at any other time. Perhaps it is for this reason that he supported the ideas of Prof. Mackenzie by saying that "there can be no ideal society without ideal men; and for the production of these, we require not only insight, but a motive power, fire as well as light. A philosophic understanding of our social problems is not even chief want of our times. We need prophets as well as teachers; men like Carlyle, or Ruskin or Tolstoy, who provided us with a new severity of conscience or a new breadth to duty. We want a new Christ. The prophet of our time must be as man of the world, and not merely a voice in the wilderness". *8

His candid call to the Ummah was:

"Arise and create a New World
Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham".

Revolution for perfection

Iqbal was convinced that without igniting a revolution in Muslim society the destiny of the Muslim ummah could not be changed. Without producing a perception based on creativity and enlightenment Muslims could not be liberated from the clutches of sterility and stagnation. Over the past centuries the Muslim mind has been chained to mimesis- defined by Toynbee, as a kind of ineptitude, a

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failure to think and act. Therefore, Iqbal wants Muslims to evolve a model of human perfection, which must pervade their individual and collective conception. This model should be oriented to the needs of the times and serve the spirit of future. Creativity is the central core of this model without which nothing tangible is conceivable. It is the *summum bonum,* the ultimate determining factor in moulding the shape of human society. Condemning the lethargic and inactive segments of Muslim society Iqbal compares them to the dead and motionless expanse of the river. In Bang-I-Dara he bemoans the declining predicament of the Muslims in the following way:

"The motionless bank of the river said: ' In my long existence I have given much thought to the nature of my existence, but the meanings of my existence have not been revealed to me.' Hearing this the fast-moving and tumbling wave retorted: "***The secret of life lies in its movement. I exist so long as I move; when I cease to move, I shall cease to exist.***"

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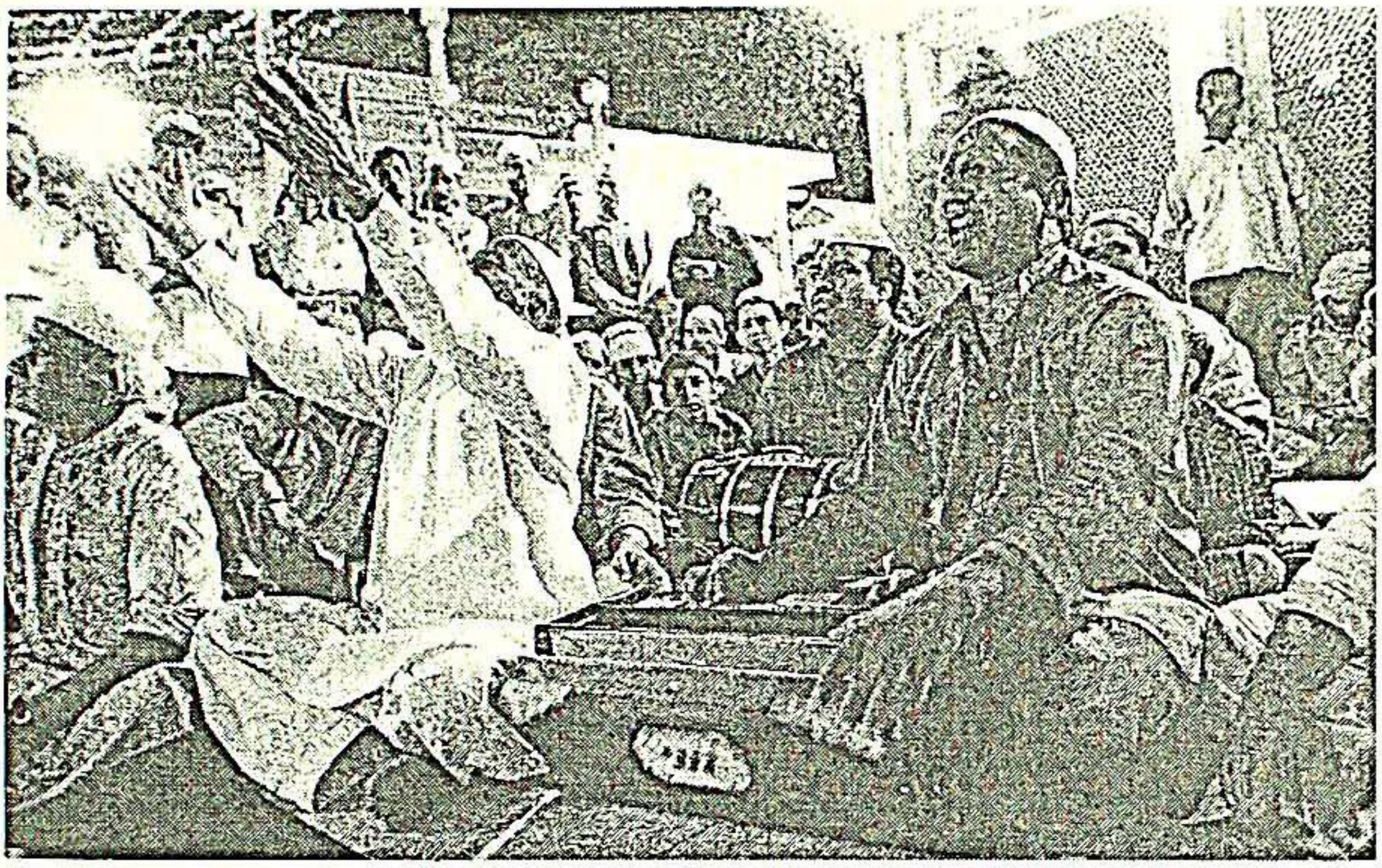

The way religion is distorted.

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Chapter No. 23

ISLAM as the Religion of Humanity...

Man without religion is the creature of circumstances

---Gusses at Truth, series 1.

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Religion in disrepute

ISLAM as the Religion of Humanity...

Over the past decades religion has rapidly fallen into disrepute. Especially since the 9/11 attack the decline has been more manifest in its negative assertions. It has become synonymous with fanaticism, extremism, bigotry and intolerance. More and more people, especially the educated and liberal classes, feel frustrated with the way religion is propagated and deployed to exploit specific political ends.

Religious doctrines some times distorted and misinterpreted by the loud eccentric proclamations of the semi-literate Mullahs generate pernicious perceptions and polluted environments of hatred and hostility. Instead of presenting Islam as a religion of peace and understanding, knowledge and enlightenment the biased quarters create just the opposite connotations.

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Instead of focusing on the accumulation of knowledge, research and advance, the orthodox religious quarters have been following an egocentric approach to contain it within their own confines. There was a time when Islam was the cradle of knowledge and enlightenment and the whole world looked to it for guidance and leadership. The renaissance was its distinguishing feature, which fostered the process of intellectual and industrial growth in the West. The great intellectual and cultural movements of the West like the Reformation, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century could not have been possible without drawing its inspiration from the Islamic advance.

Dissension & misinterpretations

But since Muslims started deviating, squabbling and flouting the real spirit of Islam, they became the victims of their own negligence and were overtaken by nations, which were far behind them in intellectual and scientific advance. Soon were they bypassed by the western development in science and technology, physical and material advance. Muslims instead of imbibing the virtues of Islam and spreading the correct connotations of the Qur'an started indulging in fissiparous tendencies leading to dissensions and misinterpretations. Instead of blossoming Islam as a universal religion for the whole mankind the Muslims turned it into small sects with divisive delinquencies and intra-religious conflicts.

At the same time they have made Islam a mosque-based religion with no social, : political and charitable implications for the growth of society, with limited

perception and circumscribed demarcations. It was confined to the specific sects and humanity on the whole was excluded from its corridors. Hence Islam, which should have been the most effective means for realizing national and individual accomplishments, social and moral consummation, has been reduced to a level, which it does not deserve. Circumscribed for a few simple-minded, half-literate believers it has been turned into a cobweb of dogmas and rituals. This was not the purpose of religion, which was brought in to remove fallacies and delusions, divisions and dissensions. Islam came as a religion of balance and moderation, enlightenment and reform. God in the Quran addressing the Muslims says, "We have made you a just community (an ummah justly balanced) that you might bear to the truth before all mankind, and your own Apostle may testify over you. God does not like dissensions (terrors and evils).(2:143 & 205).

The "middlemost community" is a community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes and is realistic in its appreciation of man's nature and possibilities. In tune with its oft-repeated calls to moderation in every aspect of life, the Quran exhorts the believers not to place too great an emphasis on the perverse instincts, which incite man to aggression and perversion. The balanced attitude implies a rational and correct response to the temptations and propensities of human life. This is what Islam teaches and this is how it ought to be understood and applied in human life.

But the tragedy among Muslims is the lack of education and inadequate understanding of the Quran. As a result they do not appreciate the message and fall prey to the

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misinterpretations propagated by the semi-literate Mullahs and highly motivated sections of theocracy.

Since the Mullahs and reformers fail to present religion as an effective means for promoting social, moral and intellectual advance, the common people remain bereft of its real understanding, blessings and virtues.

It is a pity that in the present day Islam very little thought is given to the study of human society. Islam as a religion and code of life was introduced to reform the decadent society, which existed in the days of pre-Islam Jahiliyya. The whole life of the Prophet was dedicated to effecting reforms in the decaying socio-cultural and religio-ethical spheres of the Arabian society. These changes were an integral part both of the Quran and the vision of the Prophet. The Prophet's whole life was devoted to creating a social, religious structure, which could serve the needs of humanity both in temporal and spiritual spheres. The focal point of the Prophet's life was to proclaim and demonstrate the means of effecting concrete changes in human life. The application of this ideal in practical life, to make life meaningful, was not per chance or an occasional exercise, but a revolutionary movement, a serious exercise to bring about moral and social forces in motion.

The same stream of thought seems to run through the writings of Ibn Khaldun, Muhammad Abduh, Maulana Maududi, Sir Syed and Muhammad Iqbal. This is also the underlying idea of the sense of evolution preached and practiced by the modernist school of thought. "The Philosophy of Society and History" was the title of a series of lectures prepared by Muhammad Abduh, the great Egyptian scholar and writer. He appears to agree with the

ideas of Ibn Khaldun who conceived a worldview of history for the growth and progress of humankind.

His evolutionary approach is evident in his 'Risalat al Tauhid' and his commentary on the Quranic verses. "**Men form a single nation**" is an indicator of the direction the Quran gives.

His writings are a positive message to confirm and apply the moral modes to alter the decadent structures of human society. In the course of his lectures he deplores the continuing trend of Jahiliyya, which the Prophet tried to remove, but unfortunately continues to perpetuate the pernicious pattern of present day society. Muslims in particular are miserably devoid of the virtues, which form the basis of a humane and progressive society. This has also given the religion a bad name which Muslims as believers pretend to presume. Muhammad Abduh condemns the indifferent state of mind, which ruptures the fabric of life in Muslim societies.

Since September 11

At the same time the lack of education, extremism and fanaticism have damaged the reputation of the religion, which was given to mankind for steady improvement and gradual development. Since 9/11 Muslims all over the world are being targeted for their extremist postures vis a vis the western nations. The US in particular has launched a crusade against the Muslim states, which are supposed to have harboured the terrorists. All these attacks are being launched without any substantial evidence to establish their own case. However, extremism has largely been based on a perception of fear and antagonism.

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Different theories and ideologies are propagated to create hatred and hostility against the forces of ignorance and aggression.

Another serious blow, which has been caused to the image of Islam, could be attributed to the integral concept of *JIHAD,* which has been largely misinterpreted to achieve specific political ends. Jihad in Islam is based on high moral and social grounds to add new colours and consummation to human life. The very assumption that that it is an instrument of force to compel others to accede to the fundamentals of Islam is contrary to the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). The Qur'an declares it candidly 'La ikrah fiddin' – there is no compulsion in religion. Jihad in the Quran was presented as an earnest endeavour to accomplish high ideals of social and moral consummation. Self-defence to protect the religious institutions in case of a foreign attack and creation of conducive environments for justice, peace and order was the integral essence for waging jihad. Otherwise, Jihad is an all-embracing endeavour to improve social and spiritual aspects of human life. Ibn Taimiya, a prominent Muslim scholar, says that 'battle with enemy forces takes place occasionally, but the faithful spends his entire life engaged in jihad'. It is an immense struggle against aggression, corruption and degeneration.

Shaykh al-Ghazali, an Egyptian scholar, says that the most painful feature of the misinterpretation of the concept jihad

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lies not only in its distorted presentation to the non-Muslims, ***but in its misunderstanding and clumsy application by the Muslims themselves***. Muslims lack not only the proper understanding of the realities of the concept, but also remain oblivious to the imperatives of progress both in temporal and spiritual life. This is why they remain among the most backward nations in the world and give a bad name to the very religion, which is based on love and compassion, peace and order.

The Quran in verse 2:256 makes it clear that there is no compulsion in religion, but Mullahs try to impose their will and misinterpretation of Islam on believers and non-believers. The above verse implies that the religious or moral law of Islam extends over doctrinal compulsions and prohibits categorically any use of force in enforcing the fundamentals of religion. All Islamic jurists without any exception confirm that there is no forcible conversion in Islam and that any attempt to coerce others to accede to personal perception propagated under the cover of religion is a grave sin. Hence it is wrong to assume that Islam spread with the use of sword or it approves the use of force.

Islam at the same time places great emphasis on the way social, religious and political communications are conducted with the non-believers, especially with the followers of the Abrahamic faith—the Jews and Christians. "Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelations except in the most kindly manner", is the advice given to the Muslims in the Quran (16:125).

In these verses the Quran has set out specific code to determine the course of conduct, which must be followed

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while preaching or communicating with the followers of other faiths. These are the principles, which carve out a course of peaceful existence and a basis of relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is the way of creating a civilized society and a peaceful order of existence.

But it is a pity that in spite of these cardinal instructions Muslims, in many cases, deviate from the correct course and cause damage to the fair image of Islam.

The Quranic revelations make it clear that God has given man the freedom of choice and raised him to the status of a moral being in contrast to the animals. Disagreement in religious, social and political intercourse is inevitable, and will remain so in the life of this world. Imam Razi, a prominent Muslim scholar, says that the Quranic injunctions are in tune with the nature of human beings. The proneness to intellectual dissensions is a permanent feature of human nature, and hence any attempt to neutralize it will be futile.

However, Jihad as its Quranic understanding implies does not mean unnecessary confrontation, hostility or the use of abusive language. What it involves is the self-surrender for the consummation of human life. Jihad can be brought about by a variety of vibrant human actions to realize the realities of temporal and spiritual life.

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Misunderstandings about Jihad

. War is not the way of Islam, nor is it the normal course that is enjoined for the Muslims. Only in exceptional cases when the lives and properties of the believers are irreparably damaged, then the recourse to war is permissible. The Quran says: "God does not love the treacherous and ungrateful. Permission to take up arms is hereby given to those who have been attacked, and against whom war is being wrongfully waged".
This implies that Muslims never incite wars of aggression, nor do they condone bloodshed or unjustifiable warmongering.

Islam, by its definition, is a religion of peace and order. Peace is the essential connotation contained in all the adjectives attached to the specifics of Islam; God, Greetings, Paradise and Muslims all convey the message of peace and brotherhood. The words 'Jahida' or 'Jahada' pertain principally to the spirit of striving, exerting and employing intellectual, moral and physical faculties for the attainment of higher ideals. The fundamentals of Islam are to be practiced for the realization of a just, civilized and peaceful way of life. These are the essential perquisites of the religion of Islam.

Maulana Maududi, a prominent theologian of Pakistan, says that there is nothing in Islam that should be taken to defame it. The concept of Jihad calls for defensive war and does not violate the norms of international law. Jihad is both offensive and defensive in accordance with the divine injunctions to replace the domination of man over man by

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domination of Allah over the whole globe. Nevertheless, the essential prerequisite remains peace, non-violence and maintenance of law and order. The beauty of the whole undertaking is the way ***confrontational situations are converted into creative affirmations.***

In context of Jihad what often is forgotten is the component of compassion and reason, sacrifice and surrender. In contemporary culture with its pernicious tentacles the modern man has become used to often condemning rather than comprehending.

The issues, whether religious, political or cultural, are allowed to be confused rather than understood. Very often it is not understood and especially in the West that Islam is not the religion of war or aggression, but of peace and harmony. It believes in the welfare of the whole mankind and its principles are oriented to creating an order for this purpose. Islam as a code of life beautifies the contours of human life and tries to avert confrontations when they could lead to demolish cultures and civilizations. Jihad is not a symbol of violence and intolerance, but of understanding and perfection. It is in this context that it should be understood.

Discrepancies

At the same time many socio-cultural and religious practices followed by the Muslims are incompatible with the spirit of Islam. Some of these practices have been borrowed from the socio-cultural life of Hindus in India and some are due to the prevalent pattern of secular preserves of western nations. The liberal elements and so-called intellectuals have their own agenda and try to

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convert Islam into the "freer" democratic setting obtaining in the West. For a normal believer in Pakistan and India such non-practicing Muslim intellectuals carry less weight irrespective of their strong anti-imperialist stance especially in regard to the recent US attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, the orthodox clergy, howsoever strong their convictions may be, enjoy less respect when they assume extremist posture.

Such contradictory facets coupled with growing corruption, treachery and injustice found among Muslims are seen as the most disturbing phenomena giving Islam a bad name. Some of the Muslim states are polluted with stinking segments of corrupt, authoritarian and unjust forms of social, political structures. Hypocrisy has become a virtue for the majority of the Muslims all over the world. Hence, while a good deal is written and proclaimed about the virtues of Islam, hardly anything tangible is done to implement them in practical shape.

Fanaticism

The fanatics Mullahs in particular have maligned Islam, perhaps unwittingly, to the chagrin of sincere devoted thinkers and writers. The Mullahs want to take us to the middle ages. They are intolerant of other people's views and openly incite simple-minded believers to fasten bombs around their bodies and strike against the infidels. They do not ponder on the seriousness of their declarations and produce statements, which are largely inconsistent with the spirit of Islam. It is for this reason that Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of the East, condemned the half-literate Mullahs for their ignorance and bigotry. He

declared that their biased, hollow lectures are absolutely unproductive and illusory. They are primarily infatuated by the hatred of others and lack due understanding of the Quranic injunctions and the Prophet's traditions. Consequently, such pronouncements cause serious damage to the sanctity of the religion and the spirit of Islam.

Mualana Obaidullah Sindhi, a prominent Muslim scholar, says: "When religion is allowed to be dominated by the reactionary and anti-progressive forces, it is reduced to a bundle of dogmas and ceremonies, and its in-born spirit of revolutionary change is dead. Then the religion becomes a tool for perpetuating the sins of injustice. When religion has a dominating creed of a particular society, it loses its fervour and the revolutionary spirit of changing itself and others. Then to vest such a religion with power is equivalent to placing a dangerous authority in the hands of reaction to be ultimately used against the people."

Ever since such negatives, reactionary ideas, empty rituals and practices penetrated into the mould of religion, the code of Islam has been reduced to a decadent system with scarce practical implications. To the true Muslims religion means a code, a framework within which to operate and turn life into more meaningful and productive enterprise.

A conscious, creative pattern

Religion, to be attractive and productive, should be able to provide a conscious creative pattern – a creative synthesis of material and spiritual values. It should be rediscovered in light of modern developments in science and technology, psychology and sociology.

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It should be able to teach and impart knowledge to eliminate poverty, squalor and disease. Religion should be able to help mankind survive the critical situations, which threaten the existence of human life. This is how the tarnished image of religion can be rectified and better perception introduced. Islam in the present age should not be narrow, rigid and dogmatic. It should be productive and dynamic, thoughtful and compassionate.
It is only by reasserting the inherent values of religion we can rejuvenate the dormant sinews of the Muslim ummah.

Life has to be a purposive activity and religion ought to be an effective means to motivate and develop the creative potential of human beings. The concept of self too implies purposiveness. Iqbal, commenting on this concept, says: "Purposes colour not only our present states of consciousness, but also reveal its future direction. In fact, they constitute the future push of our life, and thus in a way anticipate and influence the states that are yet to be. To be determined by an end is to determine by what ought to be. Thus past and future both operate in the present state of consciousness and the future is not wholly undetermined as Bergson's analysis of our conscious experience shows. A state of attentive consciousness involves both memory and imagination as operating factors. On the analogy of our conscious experience, therefore, Reality is not a blind vital impulse wholly unilluminated by idea. Its nature is through and through teleological". *1.

However, as far as Islam is concerned, it is a real entity. It is full of meanings and creative consciousness. The significance of the meanings and the sense of purpose have to be understood and imbibed to realize the goals of a

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creative and productive life. A conscious war has to be waged against the misuse of religion and its misinterpretation; otherwise the future will remain bleak both for the religion and its followers, and the purpose of religion will not be realized to the accomplishment of spiritual and secular aspirations.

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Reference:

*1: Muhammad Iqbal: The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam: Pp. 52-53

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Chapter No: 24

MUSLIM INTERACTION WITH THE WEST

Religion can affect the world only if it assumes international dimensions.

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Striving for the soul of Islam
Dynamics of an evolving strategy

MUSLIM INTERACTION WITH THE WEST

Reviewing the situation in the global perspectives we see the crisis of confidence and identity as the main dilemma of the Muslim world. 'The problems are connected in a complementary fashion. Because the more a traditional religion tries to become relevant in a largely secular world shaped by the temporal values, norms and behavioral models, the more deeply will it be drawn into an identity crisis.

And vice versa, the more a religion tries to assert its identity in traditional rites, dogmatic beliefs, and moral ideas, the more irrelevant it becomes for a secular society. American sociologists have characterised this as the "identity involvement dilemma". For Muslims it is the most difficult question confronting the whole structure of their individual and communal personality. Doesn't secularisation ultimately mean the dissolution of their very

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substance, the disintegration of Islam itself, is the crux of the contemporary dilemma. Raised by the famous German theologian, Hans Kueng this issue means, that its implications would lead to the loss of historical continuity and cultural identity for the Islamic world.*1

Discussing the ramifications of the dilemma Kueng observes that this is a fateful question for the world of Islam. Is there a thinkable practical way between religious re-Islamization and anti or non-religious secularization?

There is of course a way out which Islam suggests, but it has to be perceived and studied thoroughly before any practical steps are taken to resolve the issues facing the Muslim world.

At the same time we may reject here the assumption, as apprehended by Kueng, that the present conflicts and threatening situations such ass secularisation would lead to the disintegration of Islam itself. It is wrong to assume that the present challenges emerging in a variety of conflicts and assaults would ultimately suppress the spirit of Islam and subdue the elements, which have kept Islam alive almost over the past fifteen centuries. The foundations of Islam are strong enough to face the challenges and threats of all sorts from all corners of the world. The modern man lives at a time and a level which are transitory and his forces to dominate the human life are limited and bound to dissipate. As Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of the East, in his lectures, asserts:

"Thus, wholly overshadowed by the results of his intellectual activity, the modern man has ceased to live soulfully (successfully) from within. In the domain of

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thought he is living in open conflict with himself, and in the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold hunger, which is killing all higher strivings in him and bringing him, but life weariness. Absorbed in the 'fact', that is to say, the optically present source of sensation, he is entirely cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being."

Contemporary societies, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are afflicted with these conflicts. Materialism and secular culture have further stimulated the growth of conflicting situations and irreconcilable application of intellectual and physical resources. Consequently, there has been a rapid rise in human misery, national and international conflagrations, as evidenced in recent years.

Islam, nevertheless, faces the challenges of the present age with faith, vision and destination, though at times its edifice seems to be shattered by the faltering delinquencies of its followers. In such situations the Muslims become a burden, a liability to the system they claim to adhere. The opposing forces make the best advantage of the fallacies, which Muslims commit in the course of their deviations. The "forces of evil", due to their superiority in material and physical reserves, assume the dominant role and cause maximum damage to the spiritual and physical identity of the Muslims. Muslims being intellectually immature and emotionally ebullient, fall victim to the traps of opponents carefully crafted for their downfall. A modern version of the primitive plans seems to envelop the structural, political and economic environments of the Muslim world.

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Iqbal says he who seeks to fight the forces of evil must also undertake requisite measures to bring about necessary changes in the social organisation of man. This means that society should not be allowed to drift along the course of events as they arise, but the events should be brought under the control of man. He should fully develop his potential, and reform his environments to realize the ultimate goal of his existence.

However, the dreadful reality of the present age is the dominant force of materialism and secularism, which attests to the prediction of the western thinkers like Marx, Feuerbach, Freud and Nietzsche, who prophesied the domination of evil forces as the ultimate consequence of conflicting situations. They predicted that with the rise of secularization, moral and religious forces, one day, will be relegated in the background. This is true today of most of the western secularized societies.

Predicament:

However, some religious dogmatists think that western secularity poses a threat not only to Islam, but also to Christianity and other religious faiths and doctrines. But the apprehensions are groundless, as Islam is based on strong foundations, which can sustain a continuing flow of its own values and norms of life. As a result of this profound belief the majority of Muslim thinkers believe that in the post-modern paradigm religion will not be doomed, as predicted by Marxist-Humanist planners, but would ultimately replace the godless secularism as preached by the liberal and freethinkers

The basic thesis here is the predicament of modernity vis-avis divinity, religion and secularity.

The ideas propounded by the freethinkers seem to be fostered by the belief that Islam, Christianity and other religions discard science, knowledge and technology, which in the long run constitute serious constraints on the way to progress and prosperity, modernity and secularism. But the presumptions are contrary to reality. Although it is a fact that some orthodox schools of contemporary religious thought do not approve of the pursuits that purport to scientific growth and development. But such schools are not the genuine representatives of the inherent injunctions and teachings of the religion. Islam never opposed the pursuit of knowledge; on the contrary, it supported the sectors that were oriented to the growth and development of knowledge. The Quran and the Prophet's traditions are replete with such directions.

However, the real conditions condemned by Islam are the manifestations of anti-religious secularization. What Islam underlies is the meaning, the purpose and destination determined by the religion. It placed strong emphasis on the way life should be evolved in light of these values. It does not, at the same time, create any hindrances in the way of temporal and material accomplishments.

A Muslim has not to forsake the worldly life to reach the ultimate goal of spiritual sublimation. While practising the basic principles of Islam a Muslim can be engaged in developing and renovating the human environments. What Islam in general condemns is the conspicuous consumption and sexual perversion attached to the modern concept of

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secularity. These connotations are becoming increasingly clear now even to the blind believers in modernity, "which has long since become problematic for westerners and what has so often perverted instrumental reason into unreason, technological mastery of nature into devastation of nature, and enlightenment into human enslavement (to science, technology and comforts of modern living).*2

This is the artificial lifestyle and false illusions of a self-indulgent modern culture that Islam in general condemns.

Post-modernity, whose ramifications are not clear yet, and whose byproducts could be catastrophic, both physically and spiritually, might assume the complexity of a dilemma and constitute a challenge for the Muslims in the 21st century.

For Islam and its rational interpretations, the 'operative paradigm' of contemporary compulsions lies in a balanced, pragmatic approach based on intellectual and rational realization of the basic imperatives of religion and modern requisites of materialistic civilization. Islam does not shun the basic problems of modern age and feels fully equipped to resolve them in a pragmatic and success-oriented way. In this context special thought has to be given to the basic parameters which need not be confounded by the misplaced orthodoxy and egocentric elements.

At the same time it has to be understood that in Islam there is no conflict between reason and revelation. Most of the leading thinkers ranging from Jamaluddin Afghani to Muhammad Iqbal, and from Muhammad Abduh to

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Maulana Maududi have underscored the need for reform based on the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Quantum leap

It has been repeatedly made clear that the imperatives of the Islamic faith do not impede the process of development and growth in the pertinent sectors of science and technology, social and economic advancement. Faith and reason, education and science can go hand in hand without creating any problems for the fundamentals of Islam. On the other hand, it is exceedingly important for the Muslims to be equipped with necessary requisites to cope the challenges of the modern age. It is only then that they can resolve the complexities of social, economic and technological backwardness. The scientific and entrepreneurial management during this period of the modern century requires not only concerted efforts, but expertise, confidence and competence. It has to be understood by the backward segments of Muslim Ummah that they will have to make a quantum leap in the fields of science and technology, economic and social engineering if they aspire to attain any competitive edge in the modern world.

In the post-September 11 era the need for such a leap has become all the more imperative. With brutal assaults on the Muslims and grave apprehensions about the religious orthodoxy, serious constraints have been placed on the already meager resources and circumscribed reserves of the Muslim world. Export of technology and avenues of scientific cooperation have come under serious scrutiny. The way invectives against Islam have been fabricated and

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the way new misunderstandings have been created to spread negative assertions are the well-known facts all over the world. They are a challenge, which has to be met boldly and constructively.

Fundamentalism is not Extremism

In a world which has become so close and inter-dependent, we cannot afford the luxury of indolence and passivity, especially at a time when regular attacks are constantly unleashed on Muslims all over the world. Neither can we afford the luxury of fanaticism and extremism while dealing with other nations. We have to adopt a balanced and cautious approach to meet the challenges and add new dimensions to our destination.

However, extremism and radicalism should not be confused with 'fundamentalism', as fundamentalism is a matter of dimensions without which no edifice can stand on its foundations. It is an integral part of the religious conception and forms the foundation of Islamic faith. Fundamentalism, being a composite of the basic values of the religion, does not stop Muslims from exercising the use of reflective and intellectual faculties, rationality and reason for resolving the contemporary issues facing the ummah across the world. While remaining loyal to the fundamentals of Islam Muslims can equally develop a vision and clarity, as well as a pragmatic approach to deal with the challenges of evolving situations.

According to the Quran the Muslim ummah is a community of justly balanced individuals. (The Quran: 2:143).
As such Muslims are not supposed to transgress the bounds of rationality and balance, tolerance and moderation. The

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Quranic attributes are based on the essence that seeks to avoid excesses of all kinds in human relationship. This is the catalyst for the creation of a rationally ordained human thought and action.

Although this is an important guideline to determine the course of human thought and action, yet it has become increasingly difficult in context of contemporary conflicts and situations. There are strong temptations for both sides to indulge in open polemics, diatribes and brutal reprisals.

Some scholars have suggested that Muslims currently are in a state of serious mess; they have to alter their perception and move boldly with the current of events. "Islam is like every other living faith, an ever-changing reality. A religious tradition cannot be frozen or arrested; the household of faith cannot, as it were, be closed temporarily for repair or reform".*3

The common plea in this regard is made for development and adaptation to meet the challenges of modern times. But abrupt changes and radical adaptations may not be possible as they might alter the nature and complexion of the scriptural injunctions and prophetic traditions.

This is why the present-day fundamentalists do not agree with the idea of any critical scrutiny of the Quran and the hadith, and they find the demand "Back to the Quran" an urgent and necessary prerequisite of their agenda. And they go to the extreme measures to silence any opposition to their revolutionary revivalism. The rational schools of Islamic thought, without going to the extreme measures, also agree, in general, with the fundamentals of Islam.

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Apparently, reviving the Islamic ideology as a rationally balanced code of life may not only rejuvenate the vibrant facets lying dormant under the debris of decadence band orthodoxy, but might also clear the thorny path for reaching the destination confidently and constructively. It may also help in improving the image of Islam and averting the clash of civilizations. The current negative perception about Islam is largely attributed to the rising wave of extremism, which is generally given the name of 'fundamentalism' in the West. It is not entirely the western media, but sections of the Muslim society as well which have contributed towards distorting the image of Islam. This needs to be rectified by infusing a spirit of balance, moderation and enlightenment in thought and actions, which continue to be diverted in exceedingly, biased and highly exaggerated avenues.

Over the past decades we have seen that some scholars like Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, Khomeni, Iqbal and Maududi have worked consistently toward altering the environments by presenting the faith as the essential ingredient of a pure and pristine religion. But this did not imply any deviation from the Quran and Sunnah, which is found to pervade the ignorant segments of the Muslim ummah.

Bad name

As a consequence of growing indulgence in extremism, terrorism and explosive situations the extremist elements

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have given Islam a bad name and have caused a serious damage to the sanctity and integrity of a religion which was known for its justice, equity, peace and harmony. It is a pity that now the same religion is accorded negative complexion with obnoxious assertions, such as "militant Islam", " fanatic extremists" and "Muslim terrorists".

At the same time, there are socio-cultural, economic and educational issues, which need to be discussed in local context in order to develop and expand the scope of human environments. Without giving due thought to these issues Muslims cannot attain the level of existence which accords with dignity, independence and identity. In the absence of these attainments they will remain deprived of the requisites that are vital to rejuvenate the sinews of human society. Education and economic growth are the imperatives that would be more crucial in the future in determining the contours of national competence and collective cohesion. These are also the areas, which would strengthen the overall capacity to face the challenges and confront the western nations on an equal footing. Without developing these sectors no Muslim state can acquire the capacity to ensure and sustain on a durable basis the pattern that would be required in the future.

At the same time there are some other areas which are utterly deficient and are increasingly exposed to the growing infiltration from the western quarters. The most vulnerable areas pertain to media and culture, and presentation of own case in an effective and convincing manner. Muslims have failed miserably in developing their case and presenting it in a convincing and effective way. Since 9/11 its deficiency has become increasingly apparent.

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Among the major areas education is a very sensitive field which needs to be refurbished with the requisites of modern methods and development-oriented ideas and systems. This is at the same time the most neglected sector in many Muslim states and needs immediate and concerted efforts for rebuilding the scope of literacy. Most of the elite schools are open to foreign influences with pernicious effects on the structural and psychological environments of the institutes and students. Without giving serious thought to the improvement of educational structure an enlightened future will not be conceivable.

Negative effects

Most of the secular and religious institutes in Muslim countries are not equipped with modern methods of education, especially with regard to the instruction of modern sciences and languages.

Consequently, hardly any Islamic scholars are equipped with the essential prerequisites to pursue and impart higher education in respective subjects. As a result they feel utterly incapable of taking positive steps to comprehend and counter the growing influence of cultural and civilizational onslaughts unleashed by the western nations.

Consequently, the influence of western media and propaganda goes on growing inordinately to corrupt the mindset especially of the younger generations.

The greatest long-term threat to the traditional Islamic values is likely to emerge from secularized materialism, which does not accord with the ethical and religious values of Islam. Capitalism, Darwinism and Evolutionism are

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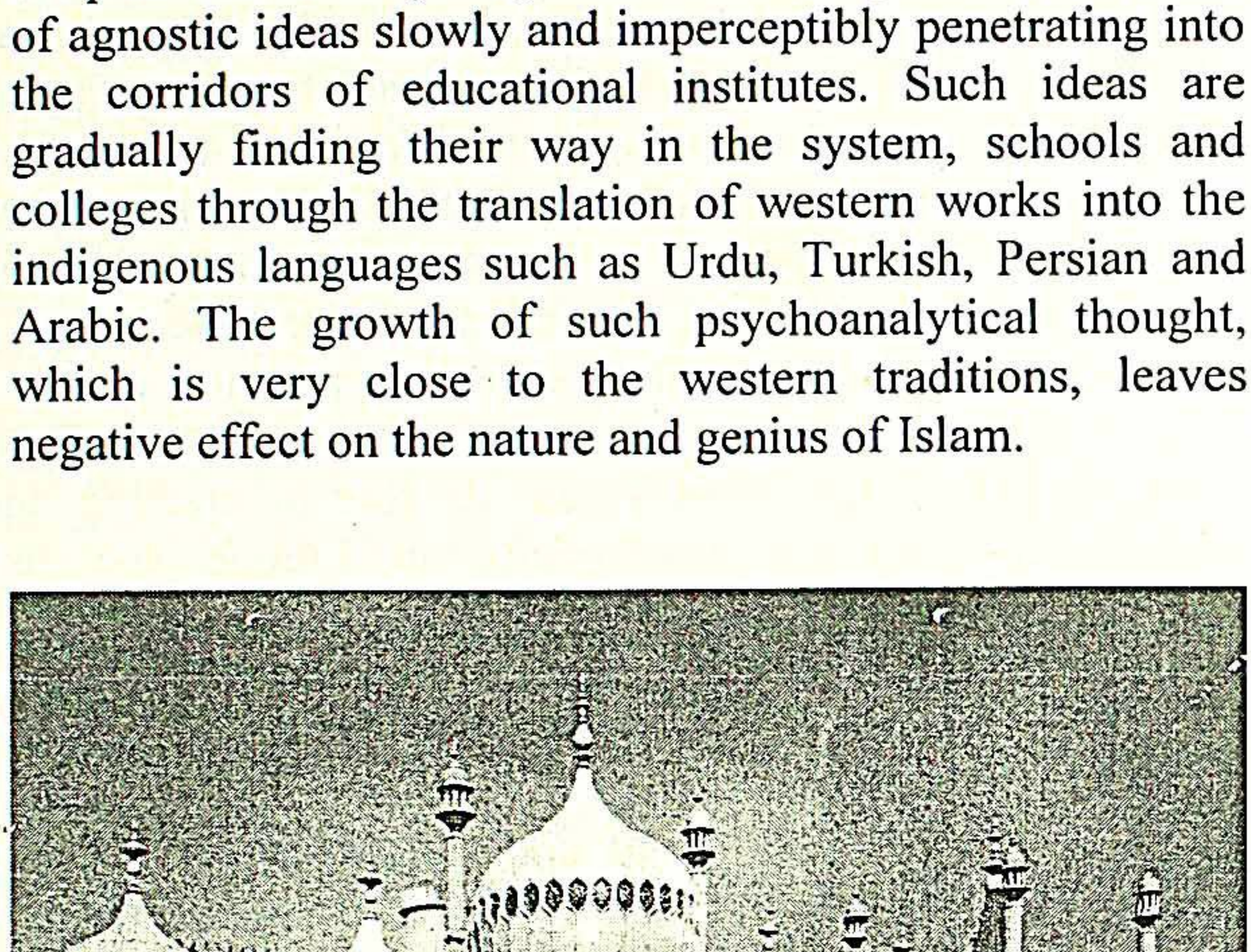
among the major 'isms', which constitute a serious threat to the inherent moral values of Islam.

Another serious drawback, which is likely to incapacitate the potential of the young Muslims is the growing influence of agnostic ideas slowly and imperceptibly penetrating into the corridors of educational institutes. Such ideas are gradually finding their way in the system, schools and colleges through the translation of western works into the indigenous languages such as Urdu, Turkish, Persian and Arabic. The growth of such psychoanalytical thought, which is very close to the western traditions, leaves negative effect on the nature and genius of Islam.



Western architecture (Brighton) influenced by the eastern ideas.

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Over the past decades the western movements such as Existentialism and Humanism have penetrated deep into the arteries of Muslim thought with repugnant repercussions on the intellectual and educational environments. The influence of these movements is spreading through the works of nude or semi-nude pieces of arts, agnostic writings of the so-called thinkers and philosophers and distorted depiction of human life in the western world. These works are bound to affect the Islamic perspectives, which are already under heavy strains.

Lack of knowledge about Islam, its role in creating an enlightened base for Renaissance in Europe and its contributions towards refurbishing the contours of world civilizations are some of the major deficiencies affecting the capacity of Muslims, especially the young scholars, to learn and respond positively. Many Muslims are unaware of these realities and fail to understand the currents of modern philosophical thought in order to contribute anything constructive in this regard. This is the cause of a sense of inferiority and a symptom of affliction that debilitates the psyche and intellectual capacity of the Muslims as a whole. This deepens the crisis especially in the domain of intellect and deforms the quality of assertions to counter the allegations of modern critics.

At the same time most of the arguments presented by the Muslim scholars are deficient both in contents and spirit. Most of the scholars who undertake ventures to plead for Islam are the westernized Orientalists who subconsciously subscribe to the doctrines of western philosophy and

thought. Hence their writings are intrinsically influenced by the stream of western writings and tend to perpetuate the pattern of Greek philosophical thought, which al-Ghazali condemned for being anti-theistic in its contents. At the same time the apologetic attitude of some writers is more pathetic when they deal with the issues relating to Islam in a philosophical and intellectual manner.

In light of thee observations the situation appears to be pathetic and the spectrum seems to be decomposed to degenerate further into a state of malaise. Those who are acquainted with the evolving pattern and may be able to present an authentic review of the whole situation are miserably docile and passive in reacting to the volley of onslaughts being unleashed by the western critics. This is the misery that makes me sad. Let other pens also dwell on it to thwart the quantum of guilt and misery.

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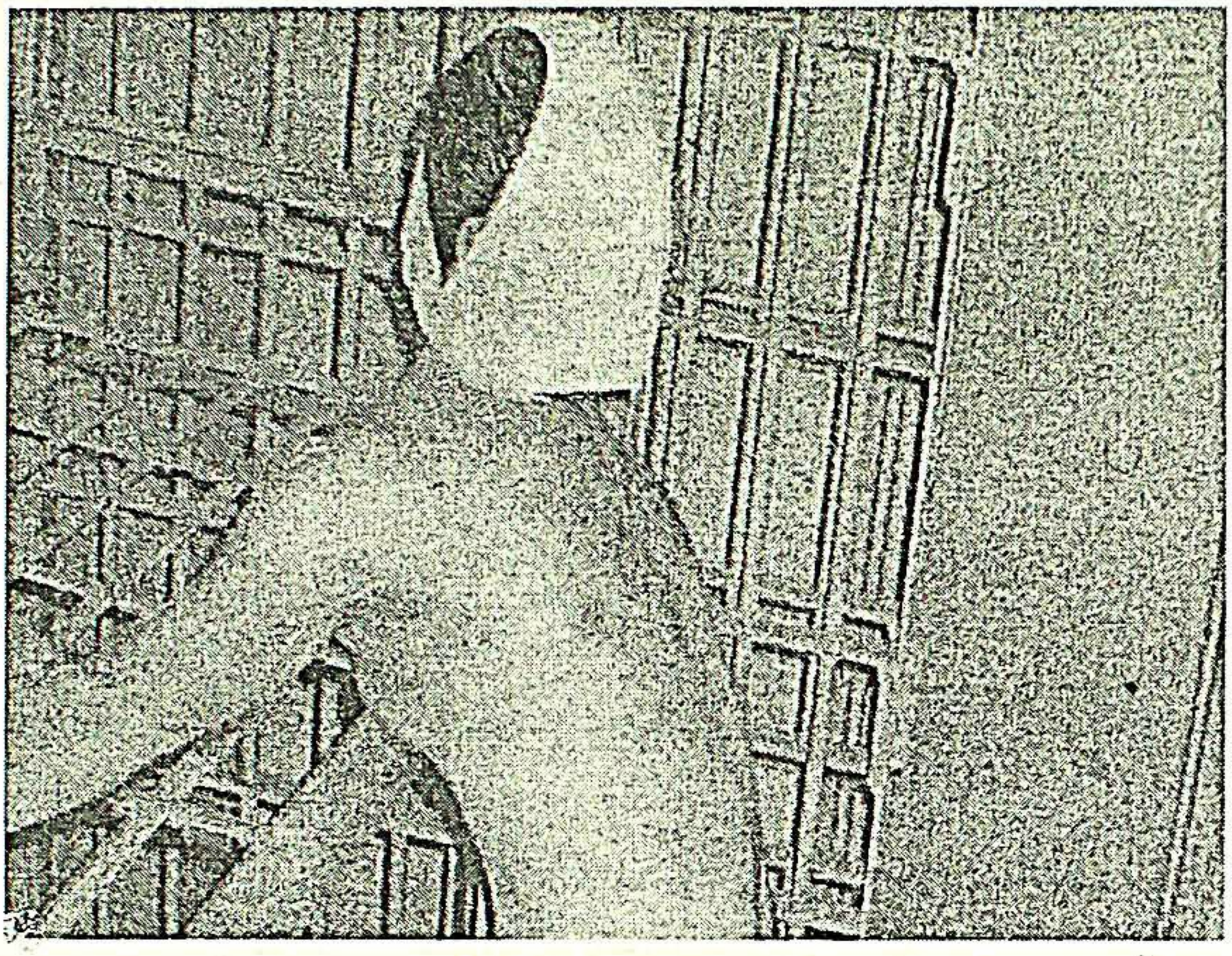

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Chapter No. 25

Don't Cry for Me, America!
I am a Muslim

We are your linguistic nightmare,
Your linguistic aberration, your linguistic
Mestisaje, the subject of your burla.
Because we speak with tongues of fire,
We are culturally crucified.
Racially, culturally, and linguistically
Somos huerfunos—we speak an orphan
Tongue. (A Spanish proverb)

DON'T CRY FOR ME, AMERICA!
I am a Muslim

Because we speak with a tongue of fire,
We are crucified.

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On the night after the day the horrendous attacks were launched on Iraq, people converged on city streets in all the major towns stretching from Sahara to Jakarta chanting slogans against the brutal US invaders. Muslims wondered why an act of few fanatics should lead to the destruction of hundreds and thousands of people who may never have heard of Osama bin Laden or al-Qaida. Bin Laden may have written the message and his couriers may have delivered it, but how could the whole Ummah be made accountable for the entire episode is not comprehensible to the overwhelming world population.

Many people thought it was an act of revenge that remained subsided since the crusasaders undertook to eliminate Islam by killing mercilessly hundreds of thousands of Muslims in

and around Palestine. The ferocity of the US attacks reflected a psychosis that was bordering on frenzy, hysteria and madness. Prior to perpetrating his assaults President Bush himself used the word "crusade" to depict the highly provocative nature of the venture.

It was not only a war on terrorism, but also a clash of religions and civilizations between Christianity and Islam.

In 1099 the Christian crusaders launched their attacks with such ferocity that hardly any Muslims were left alive or unhurt in the surroundings of the besieged city. The streets of Palestine were running ankle-deep with blood. So a thousand years later crusades have become a convenient rationale for attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan and probably now on Iran, Syria and Sudan.

Muslims as well as Americans find it hard to believe that anyone could seriously link the religious crusades in the 11th century with the attacks on New York, Kabul or Baghdad in the 21st century. Many Christian writers blame President Bush for using the word 'crusade' which evoked unnecessarily an ideological clash between Islam and Christianity. As a result of this perception many Muslims in western countries were regarded as suspects and many Christians in Muslim countries were taken as fifth columnists. This established bin Laden's contention that it was a war between Muslims and infidels.

However, the tragic side of the episode is the failure of George Bush to learn any lessons either from the crusades itself or from his revengeful assault on Afghanistan and Iraq.

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He seems to be bent upon killing as many Muslims as possible in as many countries as conceivable.

If he were to study Islamic history and especially the way Saladin conquered Jerusalem and spared the lives of every Jewish and Christian citizen, he would learn more about tolerance and forgiveness.

However, crusades whether of the past or present are no sensible response to the violence of the fanatics. By indulging in such crusades things will always get worse. By killing Muslims under any pretext would not resolve the issues facing the contemporary world community. Already the relationship between the two communities, Muslim and Christian nations, has suffered inordinately due to brutal hostilities perpetrated in the past. It was the bloodthirsty implication of the Christian fanaticism that produced the extremism of Islam.

Crusades in Action

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Church militancy

Consequently, the Church militancy has been as much responsible for Islamic militancy as the al-Qaida or other militant organizations. In the second half of the 2oth century the Ku Klux Clan in America was overtly or secretly sponsored by some church bodies with a view to terrorise the religious and ethnic communities in America. As a result this led to an unnecessary ideological clash between the two communities.

At the same time some Church organizations are busy propagating false image of Islam and its Prophet. Recently an exhibition was held at the Bolognini chapel in Italy in which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was depicted as being condemned to the fires of the Hell. This was the most distressing news for all Muslims all over the world. The fresco could be nothing but the most despicable depiction of the worst kind of religious bigotry and mental degeneration.

At the same exhibition of such a ferocious fresco contravenes the essential ingredients of international ethics, which should be applicable to all religions and civilizations. The fresco, the "Last Judgment" by Giovanni da Modena, after Dante's Inferno, remains the most monstrous piece of human imagination, which has caused deep agony and consternation to more than 1.5 billion Muslims.

Even from a secular point of view it is utterly disgusting to defame and degrade a person who is held in such a high

esteem all over the world. Such conjectural configurations do not help the tensions that perpetuate distorted perceptions, conflicts and confusions.

Similar hate campaigns continue to be perpetrated by some extremist schools of thought in the western world. In the wake of 9/11 incident concerted attacks are being made on the religious, social and cultural traditions of the Muslims. Attacks have also been made on the mosques and seminaries in many towns in the USA and Britain. Young Muslims are being picked up for long and unnecessary interrogation. Every dark or brown coloured person with a beard and turban is a serious suspect of being the follower of Osama bin Laden. Entry is being made an uphill task for Muslims especially from Pakistan, Iran and the Middle East.

A "No-fly list" is being prepared by the US Homeland Security Agency to institute stricter security measures to bar Asian people, especially of Islamic faith, from entering the country.

In some Canadian and US cities a flyers campaign has been launched to make life more precarious for the threatened communities. Muslims are being threatened with violence and discrimination. The flyers say, "The Islamic infidels have no belonging in the US and in the world at all ...we ask that whenever you spot Muslims... you beat them and cause harm to them".

As a practical implication of such hate campaigns many Muslims feel that they are being discriminated

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unnecessarily and are being exposed to a situation, which is not of their making. Many Muslims have been massacred across America over the past decades. Several Pakistanis have been shot dead in stores, gas stations and on open streets all over America.

However, killing innocent people and attacking Muslim nations will not produce any positive results in the end. Violence and aggression, whether from the West or from the Islamists, is not a rational resolution of the complex situation. Violence, if allowed to persist, will lead to more militancy, violence and aggression. Indeed, such attacks would strengthen the cause of the terrorists. To many Muslims it would appear that such attacks justify the Manhattan slaughter. "Military retaliation", says Simon Jenkins in London's Times, would elevate the terrorist's cause, idolize their leader, devalue moderation and validate fanaticism. If ever history needed a catalyst for a new and awful conflict between Arabs and the West, this could be it. In the end, it would be a victory of panic over reason, of brute force over common senses."

The ferocity with which these attacks are carried out makes the situation even worse.

As a result of this ferocity more and more people and nations are exposed to the thunder of tornados and the clash of the arms. As hawks in Washington continue to perpetrate a policy of ferocious aggression, more and more innocent lives are exposed to the dangers of militancy and violence.

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"Muslims are coming"

The war is not confined to the military attacks alone, it pervades the western media as well. The western media are full of stories, which purported to the fanciful ideas of being threatened by the 'rustic' Muslims living in and around the European and American states. Muslims are portrayed in menacing proportions with huge beards and turbans.

Some British newspapers announced, "Muslims are coming". Christians justified the murder of Jews during the World War II, because they had arrived to plunder and take over the German Empire. Similar plot is now being prepared against the Muslims who happen to have settled down in many European cities it is a warning if a similar pogroms is being hatched to eliminate the Muslims from the western societies.

The western media, the Times, the Daily Mail, Telegraph and Washington Post in particular, being the leading organs, have launched attacks on the way the religious education is imparted to the Muslim youth in Islamic institutes established in Europe and across the Muslim world. They have linked these institutes with fundamentalism and terrorism.

In the Sunday Telegraph Will Cummins warned of Islam's "black heart" and perhaps 'dark mind', which, he said, should be the focus of our fear rather than its "black face".

Similar views are expressed by Michel Houellebeeq, a European writer, in his novel called "The Platform", in which he condemned Islam as "stupid and irrational". In

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the book released in Paris he says that "Islam is the most stupid religion" and that the "badly written" Koran made him fall to the ground in despair. This shows the deep hatred with which the western writers depict Islam and the Muslim way of life.

The Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci is so much obsessed with the anti-Islamic hatred that she describes Muslims as a "billion rats".

In the past, highly provocative language has been used by the well-known writers like Blaise Pascal, Montaigne, Voltaire and Levi Strauss. Artists like Giovanni da Modena and Dante have produced works of art depicting the Prophet of Islam in the most derogatory way.

The western media coupled with several writers and artists have placed a disproportionate emphasis on acts of violence committed by the Muslims and those committed by the non-Muslims—Jewish and Christian. While terrorist attacks on New York have been condemned in such a ferocious way, the Jewish and Christian attacks on Muslims, especially the genocide in Bosnia and Chechnya, are not responded with the same vehemence.

Francis Fukuyama has already divided the world into two camps: the western and non-western. While distinguishing the two groups by distinct differences and depicting Islam as the most menacing of all Fukuyama asserts that the world has already reached "the end of history".

The simplistic division of the world into "us" and "them", "good" and "evil" leads eventually to crusades and systems

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such as initiated by the most fundamentalist Christians and authoritarian dictators like Hitler. The Manichean division of the world between the people of God and the rest (infidels, a form of absolutism that dehumanized the 'others' as ruthlessly as the secular ideologies of nationalism and class conflict), is sociological, theories to sanction mass murder, the new generation of revolutionary terrorists finds its justification in religious texts and ideological interpretations.

Missionary Zeal:
Colonialism and Neo-Imperialism:

The idea to kill and dominate the world is not a new one. It is as old as the Byzantine Empire. When the Roman Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, he did so not only for himself but also for the whole nation. He made all people embrace it. Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, and imbued with force and enthusiasm, it started spreading all over the neighbouring territories. Crusades, prompted by the missionary zeal, were undertaken to conquer and control the occupied territories.

At the same time, the European nations had worked out a strategy to develop their network and expand it in all areas irrespective of their distance and size. Hence it started penetrating into Africa, Asia, West Indies and the Pacific region. The missionary zeal was the underlying spirit to develop and promote the concept of colonialism.

With the passage of time the Christian fundamentalism became so strong that many European politicians and dogmatists started believing in some sort of divine conception supporting their nefarious designs. They took it as a missionary duty to occupy foreign lands and rule the world. This archaic idea seems to have been revived in the aftermath of 9/11. The western mentality from the days of colonialists to the present age is afflicted with the condemnation of Islam and the lifestyle of Muslims. Negative perception and unfriendly assertions continue to be accorded undue support in political, religious and academic corridors. The neocon strategies in Washington are based primarily on this thinking.

Consequently, western arrogance coupled with rising ignorance led to creating conflicts and confusion with regard to Islam and its precepts. Over the past years the rise in misconceptions and Islamophobia has been phenomenal. The arrogant onslaughts launched by western politicians, writers and media have struck serious blow to the image of Islam and the dignity of Muslims.

Many Muslims may be feeling and actually experiencing the same sense of dread and loss of identity as felt by the martyrs of Kashmir, Palestine, Bosnia and Chechnya. Thousands of Muslims maimed and killed in Iraq and Afghanistan have had to bear the pangs of merciless torture only for the reason that they happened to be Muslims.

George W. Bush and Tony Blair while planning the invasion of Iraq were more interested in recreating a structure of neo-colonialism than combating the terrorists. It was an evil conspiracy to collude with the follies, which

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could be extremely dangerous in its implications. These follies tend not only to poison the present international environments but also pave way for the destruction of thousands of Muslims who have had nothing to do with terrorism.

It is a common knowledge that the European empires including the French, German, Belgian and the Dutch have been the most brutal in human history. As a result of their callousness and ferocious perpetration of brutal policies millions of people were allowed to perish in the Indian camps between 1876 and 1908. Also in millions run the number of deaths caused by the British aerial bombing and gassing of villages in Sudan, Egypt, Iraq and Palestine in 1920s and 1930s.

The latest round of Muslim killings extends from the Sabra and Chatilla massacres to the heaps of bombs, devastation and destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is not limited only to the killing of innocent people, but the existence of the whole civilization is at stake. Already many rare specimens of the Quran and other valuable manuscripts have been burnt in the libraries of Baghdad and Basra. Recently, even the tomb of Imam Ali in Najaf and sacred mosques in Kufa have been under attack.

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At the same time biblical stories with distorted interpretations are taught in Israeli, European and American schools to brainwash the western youth. By misrepresenting the facts of history and cardinal principles of Islam a great injustice is being done to the spirit and sanctity, which ought to be a part of common heritage. Instead of helping the western nations understand the

correct stance of Islam Vis a Vis the terrorists a wrong and distorted image is being created to mislead and misguide the people.

Negation of the genuine values of Islam and distorted perception of its principles is a new form of cultural imperialism. Many Muslims regard it as hypocrisy of the West and feel alienated by the artificial barriers, which put heavy strains on the flow of their true moral traditions. Whatever interests the western establishments may be pursuing, but the course should be civilized at least. "Because we are at war, we do not have to abandon our capacity for humility and self-criticism, nor the search in other cultures for the inspiration for new thinking. These are the essential requisites which the western fundamentalists reject", says the British columnist Madeline Bunting.

Fundamentalism or terrorism attached to Islam is a uniquely distorted presentation of Islam. Linking Islam to the historical archetypes and distorted images has been a continuous practice of the Christian fundamentalists since the days of Crusades. The same misinterpretation continues to dominate the mainstream of thinking in the West even today. This is the most dangerous trend, which threatens the existence of a peaceful order in the world.

This trend has been growing in intensity since the days of Iranian revolution in 1979. In those days the US news media were spending more than one million dollars a day to obtain the value-loaded images of distorted stories in the way they craved most. The present coverage of the American atrocities in Iraq is a repetition of the old

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practice. It is a continual exercise in representing Islam as a unidimensional entity that continues to wage war against the West. The Muslims of Iran and since 9/11 Muslims of other parts of the world have come to be depicted in the most distorted and negative assertions. This is a presentation that is most xenophobic and egocentric, which is readily adopted by the rightist, fundamentalist schools of thought in the West.

These are the common criteria against which all Muslims are contemporarily judged, even though the distinction between reality and hyper-reality is inextricably indistinguishable. Islamophobia, therefore, has become an inherently integral element of the western way of thinking. In addition, Islam remains a facet of misconceived conception, a prejudice against which any legal action is difficult to prosecute. It is only on moral grounds that we can condemn it.

In fact, it is the lack of understanding and misrepresentation of Islam that leads to widening the gulf between the two sides. It is not the resurgent Islam that expresses itself in the language of resistance, but it is rather the spirit of resistance that adds militancy to its expression. Understanding the Muslim world and presenting their religion in its proper perspectives is the basic prerequisite that can help us overcome the alienation from each other.

The Muslim world feels that the West has nothing on its agenda except exploiting and extricating the maximum benefits from political opportunities and economic resources. Colonialism and exploitation of the past two

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centuries have led to creating innumerable problems both in socials, political and economic spheres for the Muslim world. These have also given rise to economic inequalities, ideological conflicts and political disruptions. Discrimination and injustice, crimes and disturbances have been the outpourings of this phenomenon. "There is surely no more obvious system of the corruption of the western politics than the disproportion of resources between the money available for sustaining life and the money available for terminating it. We could, I think, expect that, if they were asked to vote on the matter, most of the citizens of the rich world would demand that their governments spend as much on humanitarian aid as they spend on developing new means of killing people.

But the military-industrial complex is a beast which becomes both fiercer and hungrier the more it is fed". *1

If Tony Blair and George Bush had the interests of the poor people at heart, they would be spending more on feeding the people than on killing them. As the US spends more than 12 billions dollars a month on killing the Iraqis, it has so far offered only 65 million dollars to provide them with food, water and sanitation. A confidential UN contingency plan for Iraq revealed recently that the war could expose around one million children to "risk of death from malnutrition". It warned, "the collapse of essential services in Iraq could lead to a humanitarian emergency of proportions well beyond the capacity of the UN agencies and other aid organizations".

Demonising the Muslims

With inequities enveloping most of the developing world, the majority of which is composed of poor Muslim nations, a systematic racist policy appears to perpetuate an order of racial and cultural discrimination. By the end of 19th century, at the height of imperial adventures, the ideology of racial superiority began to assume a pseudo-scientific form, which in turn further added to augmenting a view of racial hierarchies. This has created a lower class of shudras or international *untermenschen.*

Once the western powers demonized the blacks to justify slavery, and then they demonized the "coloureds" to justify colonialism. Today, they demonise the Muslims to justify attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria—all Muslim states. And in an age of media, of spin, of Machiavellian monstrosities, demonisation is being employed increasingly under the guise of xenophobia, the fear of strangers and the fear of Muslims. It is xenoracism, a feature of the Manichaean world dominated by imperialism and capitalism, where there are only whites and coloureds, Muslims and non-Muslims, terrorists and adventurists.

With these demonic divisions we are very close to "the development of a civilization that gave new powers to the rich (the imperialists), which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property, and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable rights, and for the advantages of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness". This is how Rousseau observed the phenomena in 1755.

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These are the corrupting influences, the inequalities and absurdities that seem to be the unalterable realities of the modern age—an age dominated exclusively by the West in which Muslims are reduced to the lowest rungs of existence. This is the clumsy side of the civilization that confronts other civilizations to destroy them. These are the fatalities that make the western man the most dangerous of all species. These are the perversions, the treachery and cruelties of the modern man that blacken the horizons of human consciousness.

At the present time, as Bertrand Russell said, the fiercest and most dangerous animal with which human beings have to contend with is man himself, and the dangers arising from his banality are growing all the time.

These are the reasons that make me wallow in agony and pain, but no one shares my pain and no one cries for me, because I am a Muslim, because I am poor, because I am decadent.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul;
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
It is the cause.

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ISLAM & WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Author: DR. IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

"ISLAM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION" examines the complexities of contemporary society and analyzes the diversity of modern cultures and civilizations.

It deals with dilemmas and afflictions, which haunt the modern man and proposes remedies to survive the assaults, both ideological and military, in the present absurdities of human life. Since September 11, the importance of this book has grown considerably as it deals with issues which arise largely out of distortions, and conflicts and make it exceedingly difficult for man to escape the ravages of evils and brutal forces. It condemns both terrorism and adventurism, which have become the most unpalatable peculiarities of current international politics.

Written from the perspective of Islam the book underlies the need of moral and intellectual awakening, without which the modern man is doomed to perdition. In the social context the book helps man to have an insight into the perplexities of socio-political communications whose perversity was the basic cause of recent attacks and destruction. As a result of inadequate perception man's potential for growth does not appear to have reached optimum levels. Rather the animal instinct seems to have been exploited to implicate man in his characteristic animal instincts.

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"ISLAM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION' makes it clear that ISLAM is not a religion of aggression and violence and any crude critique directed against Islam is obviously against the very essence and understanding of this religion. The author has taken pains to emphasize that compulsion and use of force to impose Islamic fundamentals is not in the spirit of religion. The essence of Islam is the message that man is the highest essence of the creation of God. Hence, any clash whether of human beings or civilizations does not constitute this essence.

The main idea behind this book is to present the true face of Islam to the West where it has been badly tarnished especially since September 11. The value of the book lies in the message. It illuminates the virtues it conveys, and brightens the direction it determines.

It is only by appreciating these values that we can realize the rationale of creation. Harmony, peace and order are the imperatives of human existence, and this is where Islam plays a very significant role.

The book, in the final analysis, explores the avenues, which lead to the ultimate

destination. It is only by transcending these peripheral absurdities that a profound experience of exalted existence can be shared with the noblest of divine creatures. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of man remains the most important phenomenon, ensuring whose success is the common responsibility of the whole mankind.

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THE QUR'AN AND MODERNISM
--Beyond Science & Philosophy

Author: Dr. IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

Although many books have been written on the Qur'an, yet it is rarely that any works have been produced to analyze the events from religious, scientific, philosophical and futuristic perspectives at the same time. While interpreting the Qur'an scarcely any thought is given to the contemporary issues and hardly any efforts are made to interpret the divine injunctions in light of modern realities and scientific research.

The "QUR'AN AND MODERNISM' has been produced to redress these lacunae. It has been written to counter the despairing effect of modern deviations and to make a constructive contribution towards the consummation of human life. This is a serious attempt to scan the essential elements of spiritual and physical growth and traverse the terrain of universe beyond science and philosophy.

The author has ventured to establish that modernism in Islam is not an anathema and modernity does not pose a challenge, which may not be met squarely. A creative response is always possible with thoughtful analysis and deep insight. The author makes it clear that The Qur'an is not a book of thoughtless concern and Islam is not a religion of static stereotypes. With consistency of conception and grace of expression the prosaic situations are turned into effective affirmations. With the excellence of language and diction a vision extends toward elaborating the movements of the Qur'an.

Explaining the Qur'an to the modern man is the most difficult task, more subtle and intellectual than any other occupation in the world. The book has been produced to elucidate the peculiarities of the divine injunctions in a language and style that could be comprehended easily by the modern man. With modest reserves and analytical credentials the author has tried to underscore the pre-eminence of the Qur'an in every chapter of the book. It is a book that goes beyond science and philosophy, physics and metaphysics maintaining the supremacy of the ultimate reality. Penetrating deep into the 'crystal spheres' it establishes the reality of a cosmic order. In the light of modern discoveries the Quranic verses are interpreted to substantiate the evidence of creative rationality. With a vast range of analytical and lexical endowments " The QUR'AN AND MODEDRNISM" will go a long way to shatter the barriers of illusions and misconceptions which hinder the process of a purer perception and cleaner conception. This is the way to serving divinity and transforming humanity.

GLOBAL TERRORISM
An Islamic Perspective—

From New York to Baghdad

By: IQBAL S. HUSSAIN

Terrorism is the most agonizing phenomenon of the modern age. 9/11 was the most disdainful event, which shook the spectrum of the world. In the aftermath came brutal attacks which caused destruction and demise on an unprecedented scale. The very shape of civilization seemed to be fragmented and deformed.

"GLOBAL TERRORISM" –An Islamic Perspective --is the latest in-depth study of the causes and effects of the 9/11 incident. From the pen of Iqbal S.Hussain, an internationally known author, the book is the most conclusive study of the causes and purposes that led to mass bombing, invasion and destruction. Should adventurism be the response to terrorism is the question posed in the book..

It is a compact study of religious and ideological divergences, crusades and cultural conflicts, terrorism and adventurism. Fundamentalism and clash of civilization form the integral ingredients of modern theories and ideologies, which have been, accorded special, deeper analysis. The book, based on broad and balanced analysis, is a convincing contribution to a rational and scientific study of the subject.

Running amok is not a new phenomenon. The syndrome goes back to centuries far remote from the contemporary

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culture. The book spans out the lengthy historical periods, replete with rampages and turmoil. It takes an intrusive look at the history of expansionism and imperialism. "Morality of War" – a chapter in the book- will be of special interest to the hawks in America. They will find some other passages also worth browsing which reveal why the world hates America and how it can survive it.

The book establishes that ISLAM has nothing to do with terrorism—it is a religion of mercy and compassion. Those who interpret it otherwise are the hijackers of Islam itself.

ISLAM at the same time does not advocate any clash, neither of civilizations nor of human beings. Only on intellectual level in a rational and thoughtful way, differences
are to be resolved amicably and productively.
ISLAM is not a religion of compulsion and hence any connotations or connivances causing conflagrations are not within the parameters of Islam. Islam has to be understood properly before any hasty judgements are passed to defame it. This has become increasingly imperative in view of September 11 attack which was largely viewed as an Islamic terrorist attack. This is a debatable subject which deserves special attention of the West. The question is still alive as to where were the Jews on September 11.

The book deals in particular with the *collective apathy* of the Muslim Ummah in which it seems to have degenerated more steeply in recent times. This is the most unfortunate development, which has caused large-scale misery and depravation. This is a chillingly pathetic state- a great challenge which needs to be met effectively and

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intelligently, and not in an emotional and irrational way. The author thinks this is the great lesson the Muslim Ummah can learn from 9/11 and recent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lack of advance in science and technology and inadequate preparation to meet the challenges are the major constraints in developing the potential of Muslim world. This is the message the book conveys especially for Muslims all over the world.

There is no need for unleashing attacks on those who do not agree with you. This terrestrial globe is carved out both for Muslims and non-Muslims. No one has the legacy except those who are humble and fearful, pious and merciful.

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