



Al-Risala 1988

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The Grand Compromise

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The greatest event of 1988 was President Reagan's visit to Moscow. In the past, President Reagan called the U.S.S.R. an 'evil empire.' Now, he is developing friendly relations with this once spurned enemy.

Since the Marxist-inspired revolution of 1917, based on the concept of a class struggle, the U.S.S.R. has been spreading the doctrine of communalism – in much the same way as the USA has continued to sponsor the ideas of capitalism. This has engendered deep fear and suspicion between the two countries, which in turn has caused strong rivalry – a rivalry which has continued for over 60 years.

The results, however, have demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt that this policy is of no utility to either of them. Only after spending billions and billions of dollars and roubles on war weapons have they realized that they cannot harm each other without harming themselves.

Now, new ideas are beginning to take shape in both countries. It is this new thinking which compelled Gorbachev to visit the U.S.A, and Reagan to visit Moscow. *Time* magazine (May 30, 1988) has called this new tendency in the two countries "a grand compromise." An official of the U.S.S.R., pointing out how their respective policies had until recently been aimed at harming each other, explained that a 'solution oriented' policy has now been adopted.

There is great lesson to be learned from this development. It shows that in modern times, a policy of confrontation is so much of a luxury that not even the super powers can continue to indulge in it. This new awareness can teach both India and Pakistan a valuable lesson.

Unfortunately, both India and Pakistan are still bent on following the same policy of confrontation, albeit on a smaller scale, as that followed by the great powers. I think that both these countries need to learn this lesson; in the same way that the super powers have adopted a 'solution-oriented policy, so also should we have a 'grand compromise' to end all confrontations.

Muslim Viability

Today Muslims have fallen in public esteem all over the world as being people of no personal value. Muslim writers, of course, are unanimous in expounding the view that this is all attributable to the plots, oppression and prejudice of non-Muslim nations. How absurd this proposition seems when we consider that the arrangement of the entire world is in the hands of God Himself; He has never abdicated His control in favour of Hindus, Jews and Christians. Therefore, holding non-Muslims responsible for the woes of Muslims is a baseless calumny.

The present state of Muslims has come about, not because of national or international conspiracies, but because they are subject to the laws of their Divine Maker. The following verse of the Quran describes how God deals with nations, depending upon whether they are useful or useless.

He sends down water from the sky which fills the riverbeds to overflowing, so that their torrents bear a swelling foam, akin to that which rises from smelted ore when men make ornaments and tools. Thus God depicts truth and falsehood. The scum is cast away, but that which is of use to man remains behind (13:17).

Another analogy is that of the purification of ores by heating them, so that whatever is impure first flows away, leaving behind a useful metallic residue.

A useless, or unprofitable group is like the scum from ore or the foam from water which has to be discarded, while the useful, giver group may be likened to the pure water, or pure metal which is left after the impurities have been washed away. It is the latter group which will attain stability in this world and give value, whether in a national or international setting.

The Muslims of today who have lost their usefulness have become like so much foam under the same law of God which governs all nations of the world. Nowhere will they find either stability or acclaim.

3 October 1988

Dispute is the mark of decline

When a people fall to disputing the teachings of religion instead of putting them to practice, it is a sign of God's displeasure. (Imam Awdhai)

And the Earth He Extended

A recent survey to stones in India shows with certainty that, 70 million years ago, India was situated south of the equator, whereas in our present geological age, even the southernmost tip of India is several degrees north of the equator. A similar study of rocks in South Africa proves that some 300 million years ago, the continent of Africa broke off from the Antarctic. These, and many other geological features all over the world support the modern theory of drifting continents, according to which all seven continents of the world were once parts of one massive land mass which later split up. Thus a world of several separate continents, divided by massive seas, came into being.

This theory was first put forward in 1915 by the German geologist, Alfred Wegener, who noticed that if all the continents could be placed in close proximity to each other, they would fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. This is most obvious in the correlation of the east coast of South America and the west coast of Africa.

Many other natural features are found to correspond very closely with each other on the opposite sides of wide oceans: similar mountains, rock strata dating back to the same geological period, animals, fish and plants of the same species, and so on. Botanists are almost unanimous in their view that, without assuming that the land masses of the world were joined together, there is no other way of explaining the existence of various plants found in different parts of the world. (See *Geography of the Flowering Plants* by Professor Ronald Good).

This theory has now been confirmed by fossil magnetism, and the study of rock faces has revealed the latitude and longitude at which their strata lay in ancient times i.e. in the very positions where the theory of drifting continents would expect them to have been.

There are a number of statements in the Quran which astonishingly anticipate modern scientific findings. The following verse clearly refers to the continental drift: "And the earth He extended after that: and then drew from it water and pastures" (79:31).

The Right Way

Those who wish to build up an identity by separating themselves from others in every respect will find, on the contrary, that they have rendered themselves little better than “untouchables” in relation to other segments of the population. Having an identity of this nature will lead to the decline and death of their community, not to its progress and uplift.

In his article published in the *Times of India*, August 22, 1987, entitled ‘A Reality Muslims Ignore,’ Mr. K. Subrahmaniam analyses the present state of Indian Muslims with special reference to movements which are obsessively concerned with their ‘cultural identity.’ These he sees as playing an exaggerated role.

“A community, as a constituent of a larger entity like a nation, can sustain its identity in two ways. It can either make its own unique contribution to the overall culture of the larger entity or it can insist on cutting itself off from the rest. While the former leads to integration, the latter leads to conflict.”

(The Times of India, New Delhi August 22, 1987)

The phrase, “cultural identity” denotes the recognised value of an individual, or a community, to society and the nation at large. It is something, which is not lightly conferred. It must first be earned. The most shining model we have is that of the Prophet, who earned for himself the title of As Sadiqul Amin – “the truthful and the trustworthy.” The way in which his reputation played an important role is illustrated by the following anecdote.

Five years before the commencement of his prophethood, the Quraysh, in Mecca, decided to reconstruct the Kabah after a sudden flood had shaken its foundation and cracked its walls. The work began, and new walls were built. As the walls rose from the ground and the time came to place the sacred black stone in its place in the east wall, they differed as to who should have the honour of laying it in place. Competition was so keen that it almost led to a new civil war. Four or five days passed in this unsettled state. Then Abu Ummyah, son of Mughirah al Makhzum, suggested to the Meccans, “While we are standing here, let the first one to pass through the gate of al Suffah be our arbitrator in this dispute.” And the first one to pass through the gate was Muhammad. When the people beheld him they called out, “There goes al-Amin (the trustworthy)! We shall agree with his verdict.”

The Prophet’s honesty and trustworthiness had become bywords in Mecca, for his own consistently correct behaviour had been his greatest distinction. His had been the healthy way to achieve an identity. Anyone wishing to attain to such moral eminence in the eyes of society must be equally principled and constructive in his relations with others.

Those who wish to build up an identity by separating themselves from others in every respect will find, on the contrary, that they have rendered themselves little better than “untouchables” in relation to other segments of the population. Having an identity of this nature will lead to the decline and death of their community, not to its progress and uplift.

Do not Plunder: Preserve

Mexico City, with 16 to 17 million people living in just 590 square miles of federal territory, is the most populous conurbation in the world. Situated in a 'bowl' between high mountains, it is badly afflicted by air pollution. But what is worse is that the 'bowl' is sinking – at a rate of about 10 cms a year. This was first detected in 1925, but is thought to have started much earlier. Its cause is over-exploitation of subsoil water.

Natural resources on this earth are all part of an intricate and delicately balanced system. If man uses these resources wrongly or exploits them to an unwarranted degree, the whole system is likely to be thrown out of gear. We must never lose sight of the fact that the whole of nature has been fashioned by God to meet the needs of mankind, and that if "God made the Earth for you a carpet, so that you may travel on its open roads," (Quran 71:19-20) we must treat what He has created for us with the respect that it deserves. We must reflect on every aspect of God's creation, ".....the heaven, how it was raised on high; the mountains, how they were set down; the earth, how it was levelled flat," (Quran, 88:19-20) and then we must seriously consider how, in availing of these divine gifts, we may preserve rather than destroy them. Plundering nature is like digging a premature grave for mankind.

Taking the Initiative

Hindu-Muslim communal rioting, which regularly upsets the even tenor of Indian life, is an example of the type of conflict which can only be resolved by a unilateral decision not to allow matters to escalate. It is, of course, for the Muslims to take such action; they need think only of the example set by the Prophet if they require guidance as to how to conduct themselves on such occasions.

In this life on earth, there is no escaping conflict, for that is part of God's scheme of things for mankind. In any conflict, the question of taking the initiative always arises. Normally, this would mean entering into the fray either verbally or physically, and fighting until one side clearly emerges as the victor. This can be a very terrible process in which both sides suffer in many ways. Sometimes the victor suffers even greater losses than the vanquished, and all that he has left to show for his victory at the end of it all is the tattered remnants of his prestige. Although he may have risen in the esteem of his own people, he will have engendered feelings of anger, resentment and hostility in the breasts of all his opponents. He will have created a situation in which the latter, simmering with hatred, will be perpetually on the look-out for the chance to take their revenge. Victory, after all, is not a self-prolonging state of affairs. It has to be preserved and defended – fought for on repeated occasions, if necessary.

This leads us to wonder whether such a victory is worth winning at all, and whether 'taking the initiative' could not be done in some more peaceful and, therefore, more fruitful way. Would not the making of a conciliatory move be a better initiative on the whole to take? And where conciliation is impossible, wouldn't a simple withdrawal by one side be more productive of beneficial results ?

Hindu-Muslim communal rioting, which regularly upsets the even tenor of Indian life, is an example of the type of conflict which can only be resolved by a unilateral decision not to allow matters to escalate. It is, of course, for the Muslims to take such action; they need think only of the example set by the Prophet if they require guidance as to how to conduct themselves on such occasions with the Treating the battle of Hudaibiyah (6AH), by refusing to be provoked by the harassment of the Quraysh and by acceding to all their demands, he put an end to a conflict which had lasted for twenty years. In so doing, he defused the tension which had marked the relations between Muslims and their non-Muslim compatriots. Far from being a capitulation, this was a moral victory for the Prophet.

It is such moral victories that all right-thinking Muslims should aim at. Any other kind of victory is likely not only to generate a counter-productive animosity, but to turn potential beneficiaries of the blessings of Islam into determined foes of the very word of God which it is the duty of all Muslims to convey to them. Muslim action in situations of conflict should always be such as to encourage and inspire others with their example and should never deepen already existing prejudices. The Muslim who retaliates in the

face of extreme provocation is the Muslim who will never succeed in conveying God's message to his antagonists. If he is to succeed in carrying out God's work, he must give up the warlike postures that so many present-day Muslims are so fond of striking, and show himself open to the kind of serious discussion which will ultimately permit an earnest and persuasive transmission of the message of Islam.

How Muslims bring calamity upon themselves

One night, the Prophet went out, and, entering an Ansari settlement called Banu Mauwiyah, he offered two *rakaats* in the mosque there and followed this with an exceptionally long prayer. Khabbab, who was present at the time, said, "I have never seen you utter such a prayer as you did tonight." The Prophet concurred. "It was a prayer of hope and fear," he explained, "I asked the Lord for three things. Two He granted, one He denied. I asked Him not to destroy us as He destroyed the nations of old. This He granted. Then I asked Him to prevent any external enemy from gaining ascendancy over us, and this too He granted. But when, finally, I asked God to let us not be split up into groups, with some suffering at the hand of others, the Almighty denied me this." (Tirmidhi)

Leaving It All Behind Us

When the U.S. launched its first manned spacecraft in 1969, the first stage rocket boosters produced a horrific noise of such intensity that the entire area within a hundred-mile radius was shaken up by it. But the astronauts inside the rocket blithely went on their space journey quite untrammelled by the ear-splitting din, for after an interval of just 10 seconds it had ceased to affect them.

If they were able to travel in peace and quiet, it was because they had simply left their own noise behind them. This is explainable in terms of their very great speed – 25,000 miles per hour – as opposed to the relatively slow speed of sound, just 700 miles per hour. Once the rocket had crossed the sound barrier, the terrible noise which it generated no longer reached the astronauts' control room.

Unlike the rocket, an aeroplane, unless of the supersonic type, is accompanied throughout its entire journey by the sound it produces. In same ways, human beings, and even whole communities, are like that aeroplane, in that they are accompanied throughout their lives by certain sets of disturbing circumstances as they go on their way. As often as not they are extremely unpleasant, and whether generated by individuals themselves or by others they are elements in human existence which many of us would like to be able to leave behind, just as the rocket leaves its own sound behind it. But what would enable us to outdistance what are apparently permanent features of our lives? There is a very simple solution to this problem: greater diligence, more strenuous efforts to attain worthwhile objectives. It is only such action which will protect us from the impact of adversity. Self help is the only positive factor which will insulate us from the shocks of our environment and carry us on to a higher plane of tranquility. Only by doing our utmost to overcome whatever is inimical to human progress will we become as protected as the astronauts were from the deafening noise of the rocket.

9 October 1988

Help us!

Lord, give us what is good both in this world and in the next and save us from the fire of Hell (Quran 2:201).

Spiritual Awareness

“There are some who make others equal to God, bestowing on them the adoration due to God, and the love of God is stronger in the faithful. But if only they could see their punishment. the wrongdoers would know that might is His alone and that God is stern in retribution” (2:165).

The highest form of spiritual awareness is love of God. Love, indeed, is the greatest thing which man has to give. But all too often we find that love squandered on lesser beings, simply because man seeks some external source of emotional dependence which should be both visible and tangible, unlike God, who will remain hidden from human eyes until the Last Day of Judgement. Human beings, with their scant inner resources, seek someone, or some thing, which will compensate for their own shortcomings. Hence their propensity to worship objects with allegedly magical properties, or other human beings generally self-styled ‘leaders of men.’ But when such adulation, which should be accorded to God alone, is bestowed upon another, God is filled with repugnance for such erring ways. The Quran makes it clear what the fate of the misguided worshipper will be: “There are some who make others equal to God, bestowing on them the adoration due to God, and the love of God is stronger in the faithful. But if only they could see their punishment. The wrongdoers would know that might is His alone and that God is stem in retribution” (2:165).

It can never be proper for man to offer anything less than pure, true love to almighty God, his Creator.

When, faced with an inner emptiness, a man turns to any other than God for spiritual replenishment, he should remember what this verse from Al-Baqara has to say about divine retribution. Not only will God become disaffected from those who give less than their whole love to Him, or who kneel in adoration before others, but He will bring down upon them all the awesome might of his divine vengeance.

10 October 1988

Protect Us!

Inspire me, Lord, to render thanks for the favours you have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good work that will please You. Admit me, through Your mercy among Your righteous servants (Quran 27:19)

A Time and a Place for Everything

At the battle of Uhud, which took place in the month of Shawwal, in the third year after the emigration of the Prophet to Medina, the Muslims initially gained the upper hand, but ultimately suffered defeat, with seventy of their number martyred on the field of battle. With the Muslims in a state of disarray, the enemy hordes bore down upon the Prophet. Abd Allah ibn Qamiah, Utbah ibn abi Waqqas and others, who were in the forefront, threw stones at the Prophet until his face was a mass of blood. One of his front teeth was broken and two metal rings were thrust so deep into his flesh that Abu Ubaydah later broke two of his teeth on them, trying to pull them out.

In this wounded condition the Prophet and a few of his companions took refuge from the enemy in a small pit. They were quite out of sight of the enemy and even the majority of the Muslims did not know where the Prophet was. The word began to go round that he had been slain and this, naturally, caused great consternation among the Muslims. The discovery of the Prophet's whereabouts has been described as follows by the Prophet's biographer, Ibn Ishaq:

Kaab ibn Malik was the first person to catch sight of the Prophet, following the defeat of the Muslims and the circulation of the rumour concerning the death of the prophet Kaab says that he recognized the eyes of the Prophet, shining through the eyeholes of his helmet, whereupon he shouted at the top of his voice: 'Muslims! Be of good cheer. Here is the Messenger of God. The Prophet motioned him to be silent and he did not shout the good news again. (*Seerat Ibn Hisham*)

Kaab's jubilation was natural enough and his passing on the glad tidings of the Prophet's survival was entirely innocent. He might, therefore, have expected a word of approval or encouragement at that point from the Prophet but, instead, he was told to keep silent. He had not realized, as the Prophet had, that any such outburst of joy was likely to attract the attention of the enemy, with dire consequences for the Prophet's life. Even the slightest sound would have been enough to bring down another barrage of the enemy's stones upon him.

Just as at that moment of crisis, it was wiser for the Muslims to remain silent rather than shout out the good news at the tops of their voices, so it is prudent for anyone in a difficult situation to modify his behaviour to suit the prevailing conditions. Similarly, in order to make the most of one's opportunities, one must be able to recognize the right time and place for decisive action. If one misjudges either of these factors, one's actions can be counter-productive to the point of leading to self-destruction.

In this world, no set of conditions remain eternally static. We must therefore, review our strategy from time to time in the light of changing circumstances. We must gauge when publicity will help us in the

achievement of our goals, and when it is more prudent to attract as little attention as possible. Sometimes one is forced into confrontation, but it should be acknowledged that there are occasions when it is better to withdraw from the field of battle. It should also be remembered that in the pursuance of one's objectives, it is sometimes necessary to endure great losses before one makes any substantial gain.

These are just a few rules of the thumb which one should bear in mind if one is ultimately to be successful. If even the Prophet of God had to be mindful of them, is it not fitting that we lesser mortals should follow his lead?

Wisdom should go hand in hand with bravery

Khalid ibn Walid was one of the greatest warriors and leaders of the Muslim army in its early days. Yet, in the year 17 AH, while he was still riding high after his mighty conquests, he was removed from his post by the second caliph Umar. Khalid was a brave and extremely daring commander. But there were times when his bravery would lead him into hasty decisions. A case in point was the siege of Hims, (16 AH) when the Roman Emperor Heraclius, along with his North African troops, attacked the forces of Khalid and besieged them within the town. Contrary to orders from the Caliphate, Khalid immediately sallied forth to do battle with the attacking forces, without waiting for the arrival of reinforcements. On this particular occasion, the Muslims, by the sheer grace of God, were victorious. But Umar considered that Khalid had been hasty and imprudent in this action. Shah Waliullah comments: "Courage is not everything in the field of battle. Patience to await the necessary assistance is also a virtue, otherwise courage, on its own, can lead one straight to defeat." (Izala al Khifa).

Let no Opportunity Slip

There is no doubt that most great successes have resulted from the timely seizing of opportunities. No matter what one's sphere of activity is, one must constantly be on the alert for any opportunity that comes one's way. And one should remember the old saying: "Opportunity knocks but once." Fail to avail of it and it is lost forever.

A study of America's barons of industry, carried out to discover what takes them to the top, revealed that what distinguishes them from those who never make any great success of their lives is their passion for work – a passion quite as powerful as any other human urge. For American tycoons, work takes precedence over wives, children, holidays and hobbies. They are often so intent on work that they look upon holidays as an unwelcome distraction. The deciding factor in their outstanding success is their being "masterful opportunists, keenly alert to any chance for personal advancement."

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New opportunities are never so veiled that they cannot be perceived in the normal course of events. Many people do become aware of them, but those who actually come forward to avail of them are generally very few in number. This is mainly because of the element of risk which is so often a feature in the grasping of new opportunities. Fear of incurring a loss very often conquers hope at the outset. Inertia, laziness and a propensity to think too much are other factors which prevent timely action. It is only those who are quick to take decisions and who can take the risk factor in their stride who have any chance of success.

We must learn not only to recognize opportunities, but to avail of them the moment they come our way. That is the sure path to success.

How the Khushbu Khana Became a Chapel

The Emperor Akbar (1543-1605) saw India's political instability as the outcome of a diversity of religious beliefs. He felt that the people of the sub-continent would never unite under one ruler until they were all of the one religion. However, it seemed too arduous a task to change the religion of such a large population solely through missionary efforts, and so as one historian has put it, he "devoted himself to the evolution of a new religion, which would, he hoped, prove to be a synthesis of all the warring creeds and capable of uniting the discordant elements of his vast empire in one harmonious whole."

An Advanced History of India, p. 451 Macmillan, India

Akbar used to sit in his *Ibadat Khana (House of worship) – one of the many buildings which made up his capital at Fatehpur Sikri (just 45 kilometres away from Agra) – and hold theological discussions with religious scholars which eventually led him to conceive of his famous *Din-e-Ilahi*, or divine religion – a blend of all the different religions of India. What Akbar really wanted to establish was a national religion, one that would be acceptable to all of his subjects.

While preparing his *Din-e-Ilahi*, Akbar realised that he needed to have a better knowledge of Christianity, so he had a Persian translation of the Bible sent to him by the King of Portugal. But, this proving inadequate for the task in hand, he wrote to the Pope in Rome, requesting that teachers well-versed in Christianity be sent to him. The Pope complied with this request forthwith, sending two Jesuit priests, Fr. Aquaviva and Fr. Monserate from the Vatican to the court of Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. When these learned theologians arrived on February 28, 1590, they were lodged in the Khushbu Khana (Fragrant Room) adjoining the Ibadat Khana. A painting in the Akbar-nama shows the Emperor in deep discussion with them. Highly trained as missionaries, and not just ordinary priests, they became influential enough to have the Khushbu Khana converted into a chapel – the first in northern India. Although they did not succeed in converting Akbar to Christianity, at least one of the priests remained in Fatehpur Sikri, preaching Christianity amongst his subjects. The carvings of David's fish – a famous Christian emblem – which are still to be seen in the ruins of Fatehpur Sikri, are visible reminders of the mark made by the Jesuit priests on the court of Akbar.

In a report which they sent to the Pope, they claimed that Akbar had been preparing himself for conversion to Christianity but that he had refrained from taking the final step, because he realised that the Christian religion could never provide him with a factor which was indispensable to a successful reign – a solid power base. It is one of the sadder facts of life that power is dearer to rulers than anything else in the world – dearer even than a religion which has proved to have an overwhelming appeal for both intellect and emotions. The failure of these Jesuit priests, because the religion they offered might have undermined rather than supported Akbar's rule, has in it a lesson of great significance for Muslims who

are in earnest about propagating Islam: they should never present their religion in a form which appears as a threat to temporal power.

Another lesson to be learned from this period in Mughal history is keenness and readiness to spread the word of God – at a moment's notice, if necessary. When the Pope was asked to send teachers of Christianity to the court of Akbar, he was able to send two highly trained missionaries without delaying for so much as a day. The same demand has been made of Muslims in modern times, but they have not proved themselves equal to the task. Unlike the Christians, who have been able to send missionaries both eastwards and westwards, Muslims – bereft as they are nowadays of the true missionary spirit – have allowed their religion to sink into the doldrums of inertia and general apathy.

How a believer should treat others

Describing the Prophet's qualities, Ali ibn Abu Talib said: "Three things – quarrelling, arrogance and vain pursuits – he eschewed as far as he himself was concerned. And three things he eschewed as far as others were concerned: he did not find fault, lay blame or seek to expose anyone's weak points. Only when there was hope of reward from God would he hold forth." (Tirmidhi)

Bowing to the Truth

Only clear minds can recognize the truth when confronted with it, just as it is only minds which are free of all pride and prejudice which can accept it. When the truth is detrimental to self-interest, it is only a mind free of worldly attachment which will assign to it its correct value.

When a man submits himself to God, his submission should be spontaneous and headlong, like stones tumbling down a mountainside. His unhesitating capitulation before the truth should be like a landslide in its velocity and its irreversibility. God does not want man to be stubborn and arrogant when confronted with truth; He wants His servants to fall before Him in total submission and acceptance.

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To see clear proofs of God and not to recognize them means that one's mind is not on God – it is focussed on other things.

The greatest test of man in this world is to believe in a God who Himself remains invisible, but who reveals Himself in nature and in the divine revelations of the Quran. So categorical and clear are those divine proofs that the truly earnest seeker after the truth cannot fail to recognize them. He will bow before them as if they were God Himself; he will be as certain of their veracity as he would be if God – in all His glory and perfection – were made manifest. He will forget all pride and egoism, he will come crashing down from the heights of man-made opinion and will submit himself humbly to his Creator.

The way in which the Prophet's trusted lieutenant, Umer Ibn Khattab responded to the recitation of a certain verse of the Quran, is an illustration of how the truth should be accepted. The occasion was a very terrible one. News had come that the Prophet had died and the Companions were grief-stricken. At first Umer refused to believe this news, and even stood up in the Prophet's mosque and held forth to reassure the congregation that the news was false. "There are certain hypocrites," he said, "who think that the prophet has died. It is not so: he has gone to visit his Lord, as the Prophet Moses visited the Lord on Mount Sinai. When he stayed away from his people for forty days, some said that he had died. By God, the Prophet will return to us, as Moses returned to his people, and he will punish those who thought he had died." But then Abu Baker came on the scene and gave the sad news that the Prophet was indeed dead. Then he recited this verse of the Quran: "Mohammad is no more than an apostle: other apostles have passed away before him. If he dies, or is slain, will you recant? He that recants will do no harm to God. But God will reward the thankful" (3:144).

Umer later recalled his reaction to hearing this verse: "I was just stunned when I heard Abu Bakr recite this verse. My legs could not carry me, and I fell to the ground. I realized that the Prophet had indeed died." (*Seerat Ibn Hisham*, Vol. IV, p. 335).

Belief Versus History

Allama Iqbal, the famous poet and philosopher, once observed that "just as memory has great significance in the life of an individual, in that if it fades or is lost altogether, his life becomes meaningless, so does history assume great importance in the life of a nation, in that if its history is lost, or buried under thick layers of obscurity, its life too becomes meaningless and absurd."

I would say that such a philosophy is based on the romantic imaginings of poetry, and, as such, is far from giving us a precept for modern living. The lives of nations are built up, not in history, but on the strength of their beliefs. The first generation of Muslims was the most alive of all, for, without any history to fall back on, they performed the most heroic of feats. Far from being the proud inheritors of an ancient legacy from the past, they cut themselves off from their history and embarked on a totally new way of life. In so doing they created their own magnificent history.

The opposite example is that of modern Muslims, whose latter-day reformers (including Iqbal) have consistently sought to make them remember the glorious history which they have left behind. Many are the books which have been written to keep this history alive, and all our poets, orators and writers have never ceased to blow the bugle of renaissance. But the community has steadfastly refused to be awakened from its slumbers. The result is that Muslims are as backward today as they were a hundred years ago – perhaps even more backward. The truth – if it could only be recognized – is that the individuals making up a community or a nation will rise only through their own inner revolution and not by having perpetually recounted to them the events of the long distant past.

A Queer Culmination

*Hating others amounts to hating one's own self; it is a way of injuring one's own psyche.
Loving others, on the contrary, does one nothing but good.*

Two years after the beginning of World War II, Japan, without having openly declared war, bombarded the huge American military base at Pearl Harbour, destroying it completely. As an immediate major naval victory, it was a matter for Japanese jubilation, but as a piece of military strategy, it was ill-conceived, because it had the effect of bringing the U.S.A. directly into the war, whereas the latter's involvement prior to this had been only indirect. (America had, in fact, been selling arms and ammunition to the enemies of Japan). At this point America now formed a united front with Britain and the U.S.S.R., which came to be known as the Allied Powers. Matters came to a head in August 1945, when America dropped the first atom bombs in the history of mankind on the Japanese towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, completely obliterating both these industrial centres, and bringing to an end the military power of Japan.

The bombing of Pearl Harbour was, without doubt, Japan's greatest military blunder: it quite unnecessarily brought the U.S.A. into the war. But Japan, realizing how great a mistake this had been refrained from committing another. A defeated, but still living nation, it opted for adjustment to the new set of circumstances rather than resistance to them. In this way Japan opened up for itself new and splendid possibilities. Finding no opportunities in the military field, the Japanese put all their effort into the fields of education and industry. In accepting America's supremacy in political and military affairs, it was then free to divert all its attention to peaceful fields of activity. In consequence, within a period of thirty years, Japan became far more powerful than before. Of the original incident which set in motion this unexpected train of events, a commentator writes:

That is queer culmination of Pearl Harbour, but history has many contrived corridors and perhaps Pearl Harbour was one of them.

(Hindustan Times, 30 November, 1981)

After every failure there exists the possibility of a new, and perhaps different kind of success for all human beings, provided they refrain from harbouring false pride, waste no time in futile lamentations and set about immediately adjusting themselves to the new set of circumstance. Above all, in beginning the struggle anew, they should rid themselves of all feelings of hatred. Of this negative sentiment, Dale Carnegie writes:

When we hate our enemies, we give them power over us – power over our sleep, our appetites and our happiness. They would dance with joy, if they knew how much they were worrying us. Our hate is not hurting them at all, but it is turning our own days and nights into hellish turmoil.”

Hating others amounts to hating one’s own self; it is a way of injuring one’s own psyche. Loving others, on the contrary, does one nothing but good.

Getting off the Ground

When the first manned flight took place on December 17, 1903, lasting 12 seconds and covering 120 feet, only five of all innumerable newspapers in America thought the news fit to publish. The rest dismissed it as some kind of hoax. This was because the two brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, who had successfully got their 'heavier than-air' aircraft off the ground, had carried out their experiments in complete privacy, with no glare of publicity for their attempts.

The Wright brothers were bicycle makers from Ohio, who set out to construct a flying machine, and starting with the most primitive structures, they persevered until they had developed a craft which was to usher in a new era for mankind.

The way they set about their now famous work, on a 600 acre farm in Kitty Hawk, a secluded spot on the North Carolina coast, was in great contrast to the methods of Samuel P. Langley, who was then America's most distinguished aeronautical scientist. The latter had the advantage of funds, expert know-how, and a great deal of publicity. The site of his experiments was just thirty miles south of Washington D.C. and the eyes of the nation were on his project. In spite of these advantages, his endeavours ended in failure.

The Wrights had achieved by quiet endeavour what others could not achieve by substantial funding and much-publicized preparation. They kept their sights firmly on the goal ahead of them, shunning publicity until they actually had a positive contribution to make to modern technology. When Orville Wright was asked after World War II whether he had ever imagined the terrible destruction which would be wrought by subsequent aeroplanes, he simply said that on "that day at Kitty Hawk, we thought only of getting off the ground."

When Judges are Judged

On the subject of correct judgement, the Prophet said, "There are three kinds of judges, one of whom will occupy the Garden of Paradise, while the other two will be consigned to Hell-fire. The one to be admitted to the Garden will be he who recognises the truth and makes his judgement in accordance with it, while one who recognises the truth yet makes his judgement in defiance of it will occupy the Fire, as will he who comes to a decision on the basis of ignorance."

(Reported by Buraydah and transmitted by Abu Daud and Ibn Majah)

The first obstacle which has to be surmounted in reaching the truth, whatever the issue, is the veil of falsehood which conceals the facts. Once this has been removed and what is right has been made plain, there is still the question of personal acceptance of the truth, and, equally important, the willingness to act upon it. Basing a decision upon accurate knowledge frequently demands a sacrifice of some sort – of prestige, position power, credibility, etc. – from the person who has to make it. It is only those who strive to find the truth and who, having found it, are prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary in its acceptance and implementation, who will be held worthy heirs of the life everlasting. They are the ones whom God will admit into the Garden of Paradise.

The other two categories of people mentioned by the Prophet cannot be deemed fit to enter Paradise, in the first instance, because flying in the face of a known truth is like staging a rebellion against God Himself, and in the second, because a lack of seriousness in the quest for truth – a willful ignorance – is quite enough to destine one to Hellfire and damnation. If, having earnestly sought out the truth, one makes a wrong decision, one's action will surely be forgiven, but if, in matters of right and wrong, one makes a judgement without any proper investigation and scrutiny of the facts, one can never be forgiven in the eyes of God.

It should not be thought that this applies only to the judges who sit in the courts of law. Each and every one of us has to make decisions in life which affect the destinies of others in greater or lesser degree : It is on the basis of these decisions then that our eternal fate will be decided.

This is Not Islam

In the time of the Prophet, people were known to have caused commotions inside the very mosque where the Prophet was praying. Even, so, the Prophet made no move to punish troublemakers. In this day and age, however, when a relatively harmless noise is heard from a street outside a mosque, it is enough to provoke the Muslims into fighting a pitched battle.

On December 25, 1987, I had a meeting with a man whose hometown had been the scene of an outbreak of communal rioting during the month of Ramadhan earlier in the year. When I asked him for details, he explained that Muslims had been offering their night prayers in the mosque when they heard a commotion coming from the street outside. It seemed that a non-Muslim marriage procession was passing by and participants were pausing at different places to play musical instruments. A group of Muslims came out of the mosque and demanded that members of the marriage party should desist from making a noise in the vicinity of the mosque, as prayers were being offered inside. The non-Muslims ignored this request, whereupon a verbal exchange ensued, which escalated into a full-scale riot.

“So much for the way you people act,” I said in reply to his tale. “Now, I should like to tell you about the course of action followed by the Prophet in similar circumstances. As you know, in the early days of Islam, the idolators still held sway in Mecca, which meant that they also had the Holy Kaabah under their control. This placed them in a position to subject the Prophet and his followers to all sorts of cruel provocation. One way was to stir up a commotion whenever the Prophet and his followers entered the House of God. The Quran dismisses this practice as unworthy in the following verse: “Their prayers at the Sacred House were nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. They shall be punished for their unbelief” (8:35).

Quranic commentators, such as Ibn Kathir, (with Abd Allah ibn Umar as his source) and Qazi Sana-ullah tell of how the idolators put their faces to the ground, blew whistles and clapped their hands in order to distract the Prophet from his prayers. According to a statement of Imam Muqatil, recorded by Qazi Sahib, two men would stand blowing whistles to right of the Prophet while he was saying his prayers, while two men stood to his left, clapping. In his *Tafsir al-Mazhari*, he writes that, in the course of their circumambulation of the house of God, the Quraysh came face to face with the Prophet then they would make derogatory remarks about him. Mudarik tells of how the idolators even made the rounds of the House of God in a state of complete nudity. All of these pranks were played simply in order to reduce the Prophet to a state of mental disarray. But the Prophet was not one whit disconcerted. During his thirteen years in Mecca, the Prophet was persistently subjected to such treatment, yet, never once did he protest. Never once did he resort to retaliatory action. Instead, he kept his patience, steadfastly refusing to be provoked by the actions of the Quraysh. It should be remembered that by this time the Prophet

was not alone. He was surrounded by a sizeable group of believers who were nothing wanting in bravery and who would have been ready to fight and to sacrifice themselves in defense of their faith. Even so, the Prophet never incited his followers to attack the Quraysh, nor did he ever once take any other measures to put an end to their clamour and commotion.

The Prophet's silence in the face of the disturbances created by the idolators was certainly not the result of fear. It was rather a part of the strategy consciously adopted by the Prophet. He was fully aware of the fact that if anything is to be achieved in this world, there is always something else which must be relinquished. If the Prophet was to be successful in communicating God's message, he knew that he should have to abandon any idea of entering into quarrels and confrontations. He should have to keep himself completely aloof from all dissention. Hence the Prophet's policy of disregarding all provocation aimed at diverting him from his mission by the Quraysh and, instead, concentrating solely on preaching his message and calling the people to Islam. Finally, however, there came a time when God Himself altered the situation radically by putting an end not only to the chaotic behaviour of the idolators, but also to the idolators themselves.

In the time of the Prophet, people were known to have caused commotions inside the very mosque where the Prophet was praying. Even so, the Prophet made no move to punish troublemakers. In this day and age, however, when a relatively harmless noise is heard from a street outside a mosque, it is enough to provoke the Muslims into fighting a pitched battle.

Clearly, if the Prophet's actions were truly in consonance with Islam, then Muslim behaviour today is the very opposite. Now it is for the Muslims to decide which method to adopt – their own misguided one, or that of the Prophet.

In the Light of the Quran

*In order to accept the truth one has
to deny one's own self; one has
to be prepared to admit that one is
in the wrong. Those who do not
have the courage to do so,
will never arrive at the truth.*

There are several sayings of the Prophet Mohammad in which he extolled the virtues of the Quran. One of these, reported by Umar ibn Khattab and transmitted by Imam Muslim, goes as follows:

“Some nations God raises by virtue of this Book, while others He degrades thereby.”

Clearly, this Hadith does not mean that the mere presence of the Quran in a nation's midst is enough to elevate that nation to great heights. Were this the case, the Muslims would not have sunk to the great depths they have in the present day and age, for everywhere the Quran is present amongst them. Millions of copies of the Quran are regularly being printed and circulated throughout the world, and there is no home or village inhabited by Muslims in which people are not in possession of copies of the Quran.

What, then, is the meaning of this Hadith? How is it that one nation is elevated by the Quran, while another sinks thereby to ruin? The answer to this question is that it all depends on whether or not one adopts a Quranic outlook on life. Those who come to see things in the light of the Quran will ascend to great heights, while those who do not take the Quran as their beacon will fall to ruin and disgrace.

In the Quran, God has explained all the fundamental facts of life. In one verse of the chapter entitled 'The Prophets', it is written:

“We have revealed unto you a Book in which there is mention of you.”

(Quran, 21:10)

Quranic commentators have taken the phrase “mention of you” to cover both our religious and worldly affairs. The meaning of this phrase is clarified by a prophetic tradition, according to which Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him that times of great trial lay ahead. The Prophet asked Gabriel how they could be faced, so that one might emerge from them unscathed. Gabriel replied: “With the Book of God, in which there is mention of that which took place before your time and that which will happen after you. Furthermore, the Book of God provides a settlement to those matters affecting you.”

This Hadith makes it clear to us what position the Quran should occupy in our lives: the Quran enables us to scrutinize our problems, and offers solutions thereto; without doubt, it contains such guidance as will effectively lead us out of our present predicaments. However if we are to receive this guidance, it is not enough just to read the Quran. Over and above this, we must be wholly receptive to its teachings. We must read the Quran with the earnest intention of accepting, without misgivings or hesitation, whatever it may have to say.

It is, therefore, only those who are capable of self-effacement who are able to obtain guidance from the Quran; those who, when their own thoughts are not in consonance with what they find in the Quran, will readily admit that they are in the wrong. Neither self-interest nor questions of personal honour will ever cause them to flout the Truth.

24 October 1988

Paying for Wisdom

“It is costly wisdom”, says Roger Aschan, “that is bought by experience.”

There is no doubt that the wisdom acquired as the result of experience could be acquired less painfully if we accepted the good advice and proffered knowledge of those more experienced and wiser than ourselves. But there are very few people in this world who will accede to this without first having tasted the bitterness of experience themselves. Most people come to understand that it is better to learn from other sources only after suffering great personal loss.

A Short History of, *Dawah* work

The Muslims are *Ummah* – followers of the Final Prophet – a status which carries with it the individual and collective responsibility which at God’s behest, has been laid on the shoulders of the faithful: to call mankind to God. No further Prophets will come to this world. That is an absolute certainty. It is a matter of equal certainty that there must be no falling off in the work originally undertaken by them, so that it is the bounden duty of Muslims to carry on the divine mission which in ancient times was the Prophet’s, special task. With the end of prophethood, it is the Muslims themselves who have been delegated to take the place of the Prophets, so that their work may continue unabated. No lesser an effort than this will justify their calling themselves by the name of *Ummah*.

The mission with which the Prophets were entrusted was to communicate God’s message to those of His servants who went their way in ignorance of His existence. It was their duty to explain to those who were caught up in the worship of many gods that there was, truly, only One God, and to call on them to worship Him alone. They had also to inform those who thought of this world as everything that there would be a last Day, which would be of crucial importance to them. Furthermore, it was for the Prophets to impress upon their fellow men that they were not free to do as they pleased in this world, but were subject to God’s commands; they then were meant to lead life, not of license, but of discipline. And so that no one should attempt to plead ignorance, and use it as a shield on the Day of Judgement, the Prophets were required to enlighten all mankind on the subject of God’s revelations, as they were originally set down in the scriptures. To this day, this revealed knowledge has been preserved intact in the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet.

The torch of enlightenment has been placed on the hands of Muslims by God. To make its light shine upon the world is their greatest task in life in their role of *Ummah*. Yet it is this duty, more than any other, which they have chosen to neglect. The main reason for this is that they are so obsessed by their own nationalistic issues, that they do not even perceive it as their duty to communicate the word of God to the other nations of the world.

Once, on a journey to the Arab world, I happened to meet a highly educated Muslim who confirmed my fears that the former zeal of Muslims in spreading the word of God was nowadays greatly diminished, or even non-existent. I mentioned that I thought the real duty of Muslims was to communicate the message of Islam to other nations of the world, his immediate rejoinder was: “The Muslims of today have no time to think of anything but their own problems. This is what prevents them from carrying on the *dawah* work amongst other nations.” His reply was symptomatic of the mentality now prevalent among Muslims – a mentality which has led them into a serious dereliction of duty. Problems of their own security have taken precedence over the preaching work, for they consider their very existence as a nation to be

threatened. This has inclined them to concentrate all their efforts on self-defence, thereby losing sight of their responsibilities in the field of *dawah*. This diversion of their energies into wrong channels has caused many Muslims to attach to the protection of purely nationalistic interests the false label of "Islamic *dawah*."

This line of thinking runs counter to the teachings of Islam, the Quran makes it clear that the security of Muslims is entirely dependent upon their successful performance of the task of *dawah*. It follows that as long as they continue to call mankind to God, they can rest assured that their national interests will enjoy His protection. Once they neglect this duty, they can no longer have any legitimate expectation that the Almighty will safeguard their interests. In days gone by, the Muslims, zealous as they were in the field of *dawah* could rightly feel entitled to, and did actually enjoy such security. But nowadays, if Muslims feel that God no longer keeps them safe, it is because they themselves have shirked the responsibility entrusted to them by God of communicating His word to the other nations of the world.

"Apostle, proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not, you will surely fail to convey His message. Allah will protect you from all men. He does not guide the unbelievers."

(Quran, 5:67)

There are a number of Traditions related in the books of Hadith concerning the circumstances under which this verse was revealed. For instance, Abdullah ibn Abbas relates how the Prophet explained that when he was sent by God to preach His word, he felt a certain hesitancy in proclaiming this message, for he feared that there would be a section of the people who would disbelieve him. It was at point that God revealed this verse. There is another Tradition which tells how, prior to the revelation of this verse, the Prophet always had guards around him. On receiving this revelation, the Prophet leaned his head out of his chamber and told his guards that they might go on their way "for God has taken me under His protection."

(*Safawat at Tafaseer*, Vol. I p. 355.)

This clearly shows that the secret of being protected from the malice of others is to call them to God. Once the Prophet was launched on his mission, there was no further need even to consider the necessity to guard him, for the carrying out of his mission itself ensured his safety. This promise was made directly by God to the Prophet of Islam, but it applies likewise to his followers, albeit indirectly.

All our affairs should, therefore, be considered in the light of this fundamental principle. We must also accept the fact that, conversely, if the security of the followers of Islam is under threat from other nations, it simply means that the Muslims have failed in their duty of calling people to God. When, on the other hand, they rise to this task, they can certainly count on God's protection from all apprehended dangers. There is no need for them to take additional measures to protect themselves. All they need do is communicate the word of God; this in itself will suffice to, defend them against all hazards.

The Quran illustrates this principle with the story of a true believer who lived at the court of Pharaoh in the time of Moses. The exigencies of his situation had led him to keep his faith a secret, but a time came when Pharaoh declared his intention to have Moses put to death. Hearing this, the believer was no

longer able to keep silent. He delivered an address to Pharaoh and his courtiers on which he spoke up on behalf of Moses and communicated to them the full message of his faith. In so doing, he was placing himself in extreme jeopardy, for Pharaoh's enmity for Moses was a matter of common knowledge. Clearly, Pharaoh would mete out the same violent treatment to Moses' supporters as he would mete out to Moses himself. The believer nevertheless gave first importance to his duty to convey the message of truth. The Quran records his entire speech and concludes the tale with: "Allah delivered him from the evils which they planned, and a grievous scourge fell on Pharaoh's people"(40:45).

This verse shows quite clearly that what saved the believer from "the evils which they planned" was his faithful communication of the message of truth. The only strengths he possessed were his realization of truth and his abilities to proclaim it. Ranged against him was all the material might of Pharaoh. Yet when the believer stood up to proclaim the truth, God rose along with him. God's protection ensured that the believer came to no harm, for, despite all the power he enjoyed, Pharaoh failed in his evil designs.

God has promised that he will protect those who call mankind to Him, and there can be no doubt as to His fulfillment of this promise. It is *dawah* in the real sense of the word which qualifies a man for such divine assistance. Such is the power of *dawah*. And no other work, even if we are at pains to label it *dawah*, will make us deserving of divine protection.

The Confirmation of History

It is quite astonishing to see how history confirms this promise given in the Quran. Throughout Islamic history, there have been occasions when the security of Muslims was thrown into jeopardy, and on all such occasions, what averted the danger was the Muslims having delivered the message entrusted to them by God. It was in so doing that the Muslims proved themselves worthy of divine protection.

The form which this protection took has varied over the centuries. Sometimes it has happened that in spite of the believers conveying God's message to the full, their hearers have denied its truth and rebelled against it. On such occasions, God has taken matters directly into His own hands, and has sent spiritual succour to the believers, thus enabling them to overcome their enemies. The stories of the Prophets Hud and Lot provide examples of such divine intervention.

It has been generally observed that when God's true religion knocks on the door of the heart, an echo is sure to come from within. In fact, the voice of divine truth has so resounded in human nature throughout the ages that those who are in earnest about listening for it will immediately bow to its authority. But even those who hear without immediately accepting this truth, will still look with favour upon those messengers of God who have managed to strike a chord in their souls. Likewise, those who differ in viewpoint from God's emissaries are generally persuaded by the latter's sincerity of the moral and humanitarian necessity of being of assistance to them. This is just another form which divine succour can take, a practical illustration being the story of the Prophet Joseph.

The third and most powerful form of divine assistance is to be seen when the essential impact of the message of truth is so awe inspiring that its hearers are immediately convinced, and are ready to make a full acceptance of Islam. This is a form of divine succour which has been availed of many times in the course of Islamic history, when it has automatically removed all problems. This was, in fact, the order of divine succour accorded to the Prophet of Islam, the course taken by his *dawah* mission is eloquent testimony to its ultimate power.

An Acknowledgement

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) has paid tribute in his book, *The Hero as a Prophet*, to the capacity of the message of Islam to win over peoples' hearts, and in order to banish misconceptions about the Prophet's method of conveying the divine message, writes:

“Much has been said of Mahomet's propagating his religion by the sword. The sword indeed; but where will you get your sword? Every new opinion, at its starting, is precisely in a minority of one. In one man's head alone, there it dwells as yet. One man alone of the whole world believes it; there is one man against all men. That he take a sword, and try to propagate with that, will do little for him” (p. 23).

It was not the sword, but the inherent strength of the message of Islam which won people over to its side, and, in the following pages, we may touch on certain episodes from Islamic history which will satisfactorily prove this point.

Man proposes, God disposes

The Prophet Mohammad stayed in Mecca for nearly thirteen years. Towards the end of this period, the idolaters decided to rid themselves for all time of the problem he posed. Their leaders offered various opinions as to how this was to be accomplished. The Quran makes a scathing reference to their conspiracy: “And remember how the unbelievers plotted against you. They plotted, but God plotted also, and God is most profound in His machinations”(8:30).

The idolaters imagined that in one or other of these ways, they would remove the Prophet from the arena. But, as is stated in the above verse of the Quran, God, with His machinations, – which excelled any plan they could devise – brought their vicious plans to naught. What was this plan which God had put into action? History tells us that, just when this plot to eliminate the Prophet was being hatched in Mecca, two Muslims were dispatched to Medina, where they began to preach the message of Islam. As a result of their preaching, the majority of Medina's inhabitants entered the fold of Islam. At this point, the Prophet quietly moved from Mecca to Medina. It was to this move that the Prophet alluded when he said: “I have been commanded to move to a town which will consume all towns.” (Bukhari, Muslim)

The above-quoted verse of the Quran clearly shows how superior divine “machinations” are to mere human conspiracy. Human plots operate on the level of imprisonment, murder or expulsion from the land, while God’s scheme centers on winning over people’s hearts through the preaching of His word. There is a tremendous difference of scale and quality. Where the human mind can go only so far as to suppress the activities of an opponent, – an action which does not necessarily eradicate his ideas – the Almighty follows a course which opens people’s hearts to His message, and He does this in such a way that it is strong and permanent in its effect. He does not adopt the sudden, brutal methods of the human executioner, but sends out believers to preach His word in the towns and villages, so that the people gather around the banner of His true faith. In this way true religion gains so much in strength that no plot which its enemies can hatch can ever weaken or dislodge it. *(to be continued)*

LETTERS

What is the dilemma confronting the Muslims? In a secular/cosmopolitan milieu, there is a growing breed of Muslims at crossroads of two entirely diverse worlds. They interact in an environment alien to their Islamic beliefs, and their contact with fellow Muslims is almost nil. In several homes, very often a dose of Islam is stuffed down the throat either by his parents or more often by Maulvis adding to the bewilderment.

Unable to conciliate between the vastly diverse beliefs, he loses his balance and sways either way; being drawn towards fanaticism or towards permissiveness. Unfortunately, there is hardly any literature or any other media which will guide him.

In spite of my vast reading, I have hardly come across any such material pertaining to the dilemma, till a few months back when I happened to chance upon *Al-Risala*. A perusal of a few monthly publications amply illustrate to the Muslims how to adopt themselves in an alien culture, without discarding their religious beliefs but being strengthened by its principles, achieve results in a competitive oriented society.

Besides, numerous examples of how conciliation is better than confrontation drive home the point.

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The two issues of *Al-Risala* I have received are quite informative. The methodology you have adopted to view and interpret current happenings in Quranic perspective will no doubt make the intelligentsia of the *Ummah*, whom I believe is the bulk of your readership, realize how relevant is the message of the Quran to contemporary situation. I am also very much pleased to receive your two books *Religion and Science* and *God Arises*. You have marshalled all your arguments beautifully and convincingly in justifying the case for Divine revelation and also invalidating the secularist, empirical approach to the understanding of the mysteries of the universe and life. This will no doubt clear the mental confusion in which the contemporary youths are entangled due to the pernicious influence of modern secular civilization. Your works manifest clarity of thought, deep study and patient research.

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