



Al-Risala 1992

July

4 July 1992

The Warning

Sir Winston Churchill, warning the world of the possibility of another war in 1954, said: 'The world is roaming around the brim of hell.'

With the danger of a third world war looming large ahead of him, Churchill used the word 'hell' symbolically. But, to an aware believer, or to a *da'i* 'hell' is not a symbol but a fact. It is a fact that the whole world is standing at the brink of a raging hell. At any moment, it can fall into it. The danger of a third world war may be averted, but the danger of hell is so certain that no one is safe from it – except the God-fearing.

Those who are aware of the danger of a third world war are fully committed to preventing its outbreak. In a parallel situation, those who are aware of the more horrendous perils of hell must be a hundred times more active in their struggle to avoid them than the active champions of world peace are to avoid war.

The truth is that the dangers of hell are so stupendous that if man were fully aware of them, he would neither sleep at night, nor have any peace of mind during the day. His desire to warn the entire world of the impending dangers would be so intense that it would shake him like an earthquake, and he would wish that he had as many tongues to utter the warning as he had hairs on his body.

The Prophet of Islam, as we are told in the Qur'an, was always so' restless that there was a genuine fear that he would fret himself 'to death on account of their unbelief.' (26:3).

Bukhari and Muslim have recorded on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet said, 'I hold your waist to keep you from going into the fire, since you are keen on going headlong into it.'

(*Miskatal-Masabih*, Vol. I, P, 53).

The more gigantic the task, the more determined activity it demands. In the eye of the believer the issue of the Hereafter being the greatest, that is the goal towards which he strives with the maximum energy.

Success, Failure

The secret of America's success lies in one simple word research. Research is carried out on every subject. For instance, some people have carried out research on the subject of success and failure and its causes, and have shown how failure can be converted into success. Here are four of the books which have appeared on this subject:

- *When Smart People Fail*, by Carole Hyatt;
- *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Rabbi Harold Kushner;
- *Peak Performers: The New Heroes of American Business*, by Charles Garfield;
- *Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive*, by Harvey Mackay.

Much valuable matter has been collected in these books, but here, we are taking up only two of *the* points. One is that it is almost impossible to secure a failure-proof life for ever. In this world man has to face up to the inevitability of failure. What he must do is learn a lesson from his failure. The secret of success to most successful men, according to the above books, is that 'they learnt not to take failure as the last word'.

Another point worthy of note is that success, too, poses a problem, like failure. Continuous success brings about arrogance in man, which in itself becomes a cause of failure. One successful businessman, Glen Early said, 'I can't afford to get arrogant about success, so I'm always trying to improve my business.'

Success and failure have nothing mysterious about them. Both happenings have known causes. Learn the causes and stop bearing grudges against others.

5 July 1992

Being punctilious in paying people their dues

Abdullah ibn Umar records the Prophet as Saying: "Pay a labourer his wages before his sweat has dried."

(Ibn Majah, *Sunan*)

Islam Gives Courage

Timazir bint Amr (d. 24 A.H.), a poetess, later known as Khansa was born into a noble family. Her father was the chief of the Banu Saleem tribe of Muzar. She had lost her two brothers in a war fought prior to the advent of Islam. Their deaths were a great shock to her and where, before this tragedy, it had been her wont to compose just two or three couplets at a time, now, after her bereavement the verses simply flowed from her heart as the tears flowed from her eyes. The elegies she wrote in memory of her brother particularly Sakhr, were heart rendering. She continued to write and lament until she became blind in both eyes.

After the fall of Mecca, she came to the Prophet with her tribe and accepted Islam. It is related that when she read out some of her verses to the Prophet, he was very moved and asked her to continue reading.

In her youth, she had been unable to bear the tragedy of her brother's deaths, but she derived such strength from Islam that, in her old age, she sacrificed her own sons in the path of God – she had four sons, all of whom she persuaded to fight in the battle of Qadsiya. They all fought bravely and were finally martyred. When she received the news of the deaths of all of her sons, she neither wrote elegies, nor did she bewail their passing. Instead, she heard the news with great calm and fortitude, and said: 'Thank God who has awarded me the honour of their martyrdom. I hope God will bring us together in the life Hereafter.'

(Khatoon-e- Islam)

6 July 1992

Self Reliance

The Prophet once asked: “Who will pledge to me that he will never ask anything of anyone?” Thauban said that he would; and from then on, he truly never asked anything of anyone.

(Ahmad. Musnad)

God is Unbending

Devi Singh, the notorious dacoit, was killed in a police encounter in January, 1984. Shortly before he met his fate, Mrs. Amrita Pritam, the well-known poetess, had a chance meeting with him. The very interesting conversation which they had was subsequently published in the *Hindustan Times* of January 22, 1984. In the course of their talks, Devi Singh admitted to Mrs. Pritam that up to that time he had 'committed about 100 dacoities. "We are not dacoits, but rebels fighting against the government. We loot treasure, but we have never sullied the honour of any girl. We observe a strict moral code. If any of our members goes against it, we immediately shoot him."

When Mrs. Pritam asked Devi Singh to tell her how many members there were in his gang, he replied, "Seven men and the eight is God."

At first sight this seems to be a translation of a verse from the Holy Qur'an (with one minor difference) which says: "Where there are five of your people, there the sixth one is the Almighty (Chapter 58)." The dacoit's statement would appear to be in the same vein as this verse from the Holy Qur'an. But this is not at all the case. Apart from the similar lexicon used, there is nothing else which is common.

The actual sense in which the dacoit used these words becomes clear from what he later explained in the same interview. He said that whatever loot they took was divided up between the members of the gang. But instead of dividing it into only seven parts, they made eight equal shares, the eighth one being for God. "The part which belongs to God is given to some needy person. This giving away of one part of the loot is the way of all dacoits."

The God of the Holy Qur'an creates fear in the mind, while the God of the dacoits encourages fearlessness. God is there so that He may prevent wrongdoing. But by giving a share to God, they endeavour to make Him their Protector. Their way of thinking is that if the seven of them join together to commit some dacoity, God will be their eighth and will be ready to stand guard over them. But the God of the Qur'an would never be a party to such evil. He would, on the contrary, mete out the severest of punishments to the offenders.

This is also Possible

The son beat his mother with his tiny hands. The mother picked up the son and embraced him. What is the meaning of such conduct? It means that the act of beating was sublimated into an act of love by the mother. She put the bad action into the 'good action slot'. She converted a deed worthy of punishment into one worthy of adoration. An incident such as this which takes place in every house, is but one example of how the qualities of Creator, e.g. forgiveness, are reflected in a mother's behaviour. This is one of the signs of the Almighty, by which He shows how He has distributed His blessings in this world. This quality of love in the mother, was not generated by her, its provider was God. Then, if He is the Provider of these qualities, they are certain to be found in perfect form at their source.

Man does not know the hidden reality. That is why he is faced with having to bear many losses in this earthly life. His willpower is weak, he is overpowered by the superficial feelings, and he commits grave errors. He has limited resources at his disposal, and it repeatedly happens that, unable to overpower external forces, he succumbs to them. Such adverse circumstances have made man's life into a tragedy in this world.

All the human beings living in this world suffer time to time from this feeling that they are failures. They are very conscious that they have failed to achieve what they wanted. Almost everyone in this world is a disappointed person, even although he may have well-fed body and a smiling countenance.

Can this tragedy be turned into a comedy? Is it possible that we may reach our destination in life whereas our failures are turned into successes, our faults put into the 'reward's slot'? The divine attribute, as we find it reflected in the heart of the mother, provides in fact a positive answer to this question. God is capable of making that event a reality on a far greater scale for His servants than that shown by a mother for her child. Through the attitude of the mother to the child, the Almighty wishes to show that He can give even this reward to the seeker, the reward of converting a No into a Yes. But this reward is only reserved for those who accord the status of the "mother" to God, and become His "son".

Applying the Brain

Sir C. V. Raman (1888-1970), the well-known Indian scientist, was born in Tiruchirapally and died in Bangalore. Besides being Director of the Raman Research Institute, he held many prestigious academic posts. He was awarded the Nobel prize for physics in 1930.

Raman believed that science came from the brain and not from equipment. When one of his pupils in Spectroscopy complained that he had only a 1 KW lamp, whereas his competitor abroad had a 10 KW lamp, Raman told him: 'Don't worry. Put a 10 KW brain to the problem.' (*Sunday Review*, March 17, 1991).

This is wholly true. Everything in this world has to do with the brain. The shortage of equipment can be made up for by the brain; but a shortage of brain power can never be made up for by equipment.

None of the scientists born two to three hundred years before in the west had access to the superior equipment which is available to the university research student of today. Almost all of them worked with far less equipment. For instance, Newton worked with Kerosene lamps, as electricity had yet to be discovered. Yet it was scientists such as these who established the bases of modern western Science.

This principle thus applies to all men. Whenever one feels one is ill-equipped with money or resources, one should try to make up for it by applying extra brain power as ample compensation for all other shortcomings. Brain-power, nature's gift to man, is so astonishing in its reach, that there is no shortcoming for which it cannot provide a remedy.

Here is another instance of the power of the brain. Mr. Kamal Alig, who studied at Aligarh University from 1976 to 1981, gives us an example from his student days of how the brain can compensate for all shortcomings. It seems that in those days he was a chain smoker (he has now given up smoking) and was in the habit of going on smoking late into the night, when he was studying for examinations. One night, at midnight, he had a great urge to smoke, but he had run out of matches, and even the heater was not working. His urge to smoke went on increasing, and his mind remained preoccupied with this problem for half an hour. Finally, he managed to think of a way to solve it. His room was lit by a 100 watt bulb, and he thought that if he wrapped some light material around it, it would become very hot and start to burn. So he took an old, worn-out piece of cloth and did just that. Within five minutes the cloth had ignited. Mr. Kamal immediately lit his cigarette and began smoking.

This is called 'mental labour', as apposed to physical labour with which people are better acquainted. Of the two kinds of labour, the superior kind is mental labour. All the great achievements in this world have been brought about through mental labour. Physical labour involves only the wielding of the mattock and the hammer. But it is mental labour which runs offices, factories and modern scientific establishments. If the former can bring us one rupee, the latter can bring us a million.

10 July 1992

The feelings inspired by faith are misinterpreted by the profane

Abu Salma and Abu Hurayrah tell of one occasion when the Prophet, intending to despatch a force, urged the people to offer their contributions. A merchant, Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, who was among them, spoke up: "Messenger of God, I have four thousand. Two thousand are for my household. The other two I lend to God." "God bless you in what you have given and in what you have kept," said the Prophet. Abu Aqeel Ansari, on the other hand, was a poor man, who had spent his whole night working in an orchard, for which he was paid just two *sa'a* of dates. One *sa'a* he kept for his household, the other he presented to the Prophet. The Messenger of God prayed for blessings upon him, as he had for Abdur Rahman ibn Auf. But there were hypocrites who leveled slanderous accusations against these two. As far as Abdur Rahman ibn Auf was concerned, they said he was just being ostentatious. And as for Abu Aqeel, they said, "Couldn't God and the Prophet have done without his one *sa'a*?"

(Al-Bazzar)

The Testimony of Women

The testimony of two women has been regarded as equal to that of one man. The phrase 'so that if either of them forgets, the other will remember', makes it quite obvious that this rule is based on natural ability, rather than on discrimination against the weaker sex. This command sets a value upon memory per se.

This divine injunction has come to be exposed to severe criticism in the last couple of centuries on the basis of the concept that man and women were counterparts rather than complements to one another.

How strange it is then for science to have reached the same conclusions and testify to the truth mentioned in the Qur'an. Women, in general, have poorer memories than men. The law of witness in Islam is no more than a reflection of this biological fact.

We quote here a part of a news-item which appeared in *Times of India* (18 January 1985).

"Men have a greater ability to memorize and process mathematical information than women, but females are better with words, a Soviet scientist says, reports UPI. "Men dominate mathematical subjects due to the peculiarities of their memory", Dr. Vladimir Konovalov told the Tass news agency. "The stronger sex shows greater difficulties in processing and adapting language material."

11 July 1992

Sycophantic subordinates portend disaster

Aishah reports the Prophet as saying: “When God desires the good of someone in a position of power, he assigns to him an honest counsellor, one who reminds him of God’s word when he forgets it, and who assists him when he remembers it. And when he desires the opposite for anyone, he gives him an evil counsellor, one who does not remind him when he forgets and does not assist him when he remembers.”

(Abu Da’ud, *Sunan*)

12 July 1992

The Wise Way Is the Practical Way

Man often has to take decisions in life about what to do and what not to do. On such occasions there are two basis for decision making: (i) What is desirable, and (ii) What is possible.

In personal matters, wisdom lies in seeing what is desirable and then working towards that end. But in social matters, the correct position to adopt is to see what is possible and then to follow that course. This difference exists because; in personal matters, the self alone is involved; having complete power over one's own self, one can take any course, follow any path. But in social matters, there are always others to be considered over whom one has no power. One can only request others to treat some particular path: One cannot force them to do so. In that case, the wisest thing to do is see what is possible. Of the two courses – the desirable and the possible – the latter should be followed. In either case, one should follow the path, in so far as it is possible, which has religious and moral sanction. That is the path of idealism.

By attempting to achieve what is desirable in personal matters, life's journey does not stop. It goes on. But if the same attempt is made in social matters, someone or the other will immediately set himself up in opposition to it and one's journey will come to a halt. One's onward journey having been thus interrupted, all one's energy is then spent in the arena of confrontation. The useful and result-yielding way out of this dilemma is to grasp whatever opportunities arise out of making concessions to the demands of the other party.

Keeping a look-out for the future, so that one's journey may continue, is the only practicable way of leading one's life in this world.

12 July 1992

Faith one attaches to God

Bara' ibn Azib reported the Prophet as saying:

“The strongest knot of faith is loving for the sake of God and animosity for the sake of God.”

(Ahmad, *Musnad*)

Social Justice in Islam

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

A gathering of intellectuals was convened at the Law College of Ranchi on December 14, 1991, under the presidentship of Mr. Justice Sateshwar Rao. On that occasion I addressed the meeting on the topic of 'Social Justice in Islam.' The text of my address, including some later additions, is as follows.

Social Justice means equality in law, or justice for all. Prior to the advent of Islam, this kind of social justice was almost unknown either in theory or in practice. It was left to Islam then to establish equal justice for the first time in human history. This reversal of the old order is so established a fact that even non-Muslim thinkers have acknowledged it. For instance, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) writes in one of his letters. 'If ever any religion approached to this equality in any appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone.' (p. 379).

The contribution of Islam in this respect can be placed under three headings: first, the formulation of a complete ideology of human equality and justice; second, the giving of a Powerful incentive to adopt this ideology; and third, the establishment of a living example of equality and justice in all walks of life.

THE CONCEPT OF EQUAL JUSTICE

In ancient times the concept of human inequality, which was prevalent everywhere, gave rise to social injustice in every society. For example, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, regarded certain classes of individuals as natural slaves. Although there were other thinkers who did not subscribe to this view, slavery continued to be widespread in Rome and Greece, and indeed, throughout the entire world of antiquity.

In modern times, this concept has been further strengthened by Darwin's theory of evolution, according to which mankind was regarded as having achieved differing levels of development, the apex being white European civilization.

The superstitious concept of racial differences, handed down to us from ancient times, paved the way for social discrimination. And such discrimination found an academic basis in modern times in Darwin's theory of evolution, which purported to show that in the evolutionary process, some groups had made distinctive progress while many other groups had been left far behind. That is to say that certain groups attained a superior level, while others remained in a primitive condition.

Thanks to this theory of evolution, the European nations came to regard other nations as being inferior to them – hence the concept of 'the white man's burden' according to which the white races considered themselves invested with the natural right to subjugate the rest of the world in order to civilize it. This was the logic behind the colonialism of modern times. These concepts, in some measure, are still extant.

The world of today can be broadly divided into two parts – the traditional and the scientific. The former appears undeveloped and the latter developed. But from the standpoint of social justice, there is no difference, because in both, beliefs which form a permanent obstacle to social justice still persist.

The traditional world is influenced to a large extent by believers in *karma*, the theory that anyone born today necessarily shoulders the burden of his past deeds. As they see it, that is a law of nature, and, as such, has to be submitted to unquestioningly. A belief of this nature obviously stifles any possible incentive for social justice. In the light of such a belief 'injustice' simply becomes 'nature's verdict.' The human being has to suffer in this world for his misdeeds in his previous life-cycle. Given this state of affairs, it is just .not possible for anyone to alleviate human suffering. That being so, how can there be any motivation to act out of a sense of Justice?

The scientific world is likewise under the influence of this concept of human inequality, but for another reason – the general acceptance gained by the theory of evolution. The concept of the biological evolution of life seeks to explain the differences in the existing species, advancing the theory that in the process of evolution some have gone forward while others have been left behind. For instance, Darwin claims that the female of the human species remained at a primitive stage in the evolutionary process while 'man has ultimately become superior to woman.' By the same token, the blacks of Africa, the pygmies and other dwarfish races have been 'left behind.' Because of this theory, the scientific world cannot be sympathetic to the supposedly backward, or under evolved races.

The theory has been advanced that if people suffer a variety of afflictions, it is 'their 'own fault.' That is to say that those who are made to feel inferior in the treatment they receive from others are in fact suffering the consequences of their own shortcomings. It is as if they were fated to be the victims of injustice; the perpetrators are not, therefore, to be blamed.

With the advent of Islam, all such ideas based on an inherent inequality lost ground. In different ways, and with great persistence, Islam presented to the world the concept that, in spite of outward differences, all human beings are equal. All are entitled to equal social status and equal rights. No one is inferior or superior. Here are two references from the Qur'an and Hadith respectively.

Men, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in Allah's sight is the most righteous of you. Allah is wise and All-knowing. (49: 13).

According to this verse of the Qur'an, the differences of colour and race found among human beings are for the purpose, not of discrimination, but of identification. Men in essence are equal. What really distinguishes one man from another is character. His superiority can therefore be spoken of only in terms of the degree to which a man is honourable. The truly honourable man is one who is God-fearing and who recognizes and fulfills the rights of God and his fellow men.

On the occasion of the final pilgrimage, the Prophet delivered his last sermon while sitting on his camel. One of the things he said is recorded in these words:

'O people, listen carefully, your Lord is one Lord, there is no doubt about it. Your ancestor is one ancestor, there is no doubt about it. Listen well to my words: no Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, and no non-Arab is superior to an Arab. No black is superior to a brown or red, and no red is superior to any black. If there is any superiority in anyone it is due to his God-fearing qualities. Have I conveyed the message?' the Prophet asked the people. The people answered from all corners, 'Indeed so! God be witness.' Then the Prophet said: 'Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent.'

(Al-Jami li Ahkam al-Qur'an, 16:342)

This declaration was made by the Prophet in the final year of his life at a time when the whole of Arabia had been conquered. As such, it was not the declaration of a reformer, but of a ruler of the times: His definition of human equality was not just listened to as a theory, but was immediately put into practice—enforced in society.

In his declaration, the Prophet told the people that just as there is one Creator of this world so all the human beings in this world were born of one man and one woman. All human beings were thus equal, being each other's brothers and sisters. They might differ in respect of appearance, but as to honour, status and the right to legal justice, there was no difference between them.

So far as human status is concerned, Islam clearly states that if people have been placed on different rungs of the social ladder, this is not a matter of having been favoured with or deprived of social distinction, but of their being under divine trial. God has created man in this world in order to test him. Worldly goods and position (or the lack of them) are used by God as instruments of this test. They are like examination papers set by the Almighty. Opulence and penury are both intended to be states in which man is tested. He should, therefore, stop suffering from inferiority or superiority complexes, and should consider instead whether he is going to pass or fail this test.

THE INCENTIVE FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

Modern psychological and biological research on race has clearly upheld the teachings of Islam, so that from the academic point of view, other theories stand refuted. Molecular biology, too, has opened a whole new field of research in modern times. A team of genetic experts in the USA, convinced by the evidence they already had that all of humanity had common ancestor, have attempted to trace that single progenitor across the millennia. Placed in this perspective, all differences of colour, physiognomy, physique, etc. are purely relative, and do not necessarily constitute different racial characteristics. All modern research points to human beings as members of one Great Family, all bound together by the same biological brotherhood. (*Newsweek*, January 11, 1988).

A number of books and research papers have lately been published on this subject. *The Race Question in Modern Science* by J. Comas (Published by UNESCO in 1956) has a chapter on 'Racial Myths' which is worth studying.

In spite of these academic findings, no great material changes have occurred. Those nations who had come to consider themselves superior are still acting under this misapprehension, while nations considered inferior are still subjected to injustice in new and varied forms. The reason is that to attain social reform, theory by itself is not sufficient. Along with it, a powerful incentive is essential. And this is exactly what is provided by the Qur'an.

As well as enjoining justice, (16:90) the Qur'an holds out the promise of reward for one's deeds. It also informs us that a complete record is constantly being made of all human actions. After death, everyone will find himself standing in God's court, where he will receive his just deserts. No perpetrator of cruelty will escape God's punishment. That time has to come when man will suffer the consequences of his deeds. 'On that day mankind will come, divided in terms of vice and virtue, into groups, to be shown their labours. Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it also.' (99:6-8).

This concept of accountability alerts man to the necessity of being extremely punctilious in his dealings with others. He then sees how essential it is to be just to everyone, if he is to save his own self. He avoids wronging others so that he may not be punished by God.

In the absence of any concept of accountability, social justice figures in our lives as a need felt by others, not by ourselves. But once we recognise that there is such a thing as accountability, social justice becomes a prime necessity for everyone, including ourselves. And who can neglect his own needs?

The concept of accountability is such a strong check that it restrains one not just from oppression, but from even any semblance of it. Once, when the Prophet was at home with his wife, Umm Salmah, he called the maidservant, who took some time in coming. Seeing signs of anger on the Prophet's face, Umm Salmah went to the window and looked outside where she saw the maid at play. When the latter came in, the Prophet happened to have a *misvak* (a stick used for cleaning the teeth) in his hand. 'If it wasn't for the fear of retribution on the Day of Judgement,' he told the maid, 'I would have hit you with this misvak.'

In ancient times the beating of slaves was considered a natural right. But the mentality created by Islam put a stop to this practice, whatever the faults of the slaves. This was because the Muslims were afraid lest they be held accountable for this act in the eyes of God.

The Prophet once came across Abu Masood Ansari beating his slave. 'You should know, Abu Masood', he said, 'that God has more power over you than you have over this slave.' Abu Masood trembled on hearing these words of the Prophet. 'Messenger of God,' he said, 'I am freeing this slave for God's sake,' 'If you had not acted thus, the flames of Hell would have engulfed you,' the Prophet told him.

This incident shows that Islam, by obliterating outward differences, brings all men on to the same footing. Abu Masood had at first considered himself to be on a different footing from his slave in a purely material sense where he was respectable and powerful, the slave was lowly and weak. But when

the Prophet reminded him that in the eyes of God he stood on exactly the same ground as his slave, he immediately humbled himself.

Material differences in standing bring about social injustice. When these differences are obliterated, social inequality will of necessity disappear.

It is undeniable that all incidents of oppression and social Injustice are the result of inequality between man and man. Some are powerful, others are weak. Some are rich, others are poor, now what happens is that the powerful and the wealthy come to regard themselves as being superior to the weak and the poor. They imagine they can oppress others with impunity, their elevated positions being enough to safeguard them from any attempt at retaliation.

But Islam tells us that every man's fate is the concern of God. All moral issues are finally to be judged in the divine court. God being infinitely more powerful than all of the powerful men in the world. He will pronounce His verdict and enforce it with absolute justice towards one and all. At that time no mortal creature will be able to escape God's verdict.

In this way, human affairs are no longer matters to be settled amongst men. They become matters to be settled between man and God. On the one side stands God, and on the other side stands all of humanity. So, when faced with God, no one is powerful. Everyone feels himself in the same state of humility as he had supposed was the state of other human beings weaker than himself.

When this consciousness is created in a man, he dare not, whatever the circumstances, be unjust to others. This undoubtedly gives him the greatest incentive to bring about social justice.

In an atheistic society where people do not believe in God, such a check is not possible. Where there is no belief in God, human affairs must be settled between man and man. And in that situation there can be no conviction that all men are equal, for the differences between them will remain all too obvious. In the absence of a divine overlord, such differences can never be leveled out, and if their effects are to be negated, it can only be done by taking matters between man and man and turning them into matters between man and God. Everyone should have the conviction that there is a God above all men that all issues must finally be settled by Him, and that no one may challenge His verdict.

There are other religions besides Islam which have the concept of God. But, owing to human interpolations in their scriptures, their particular concept of God has, for all practical purposes, become ineffective. For instance, in Christianity, God's son atoned for the sins of humanity by his crucifixion. In Judaism salvation is granted in advance to its adherents as their birthright. In Hinduism, the monistic concept of God serves no practical purpose.

In terms of Islamic monotheism, God is a separate Being, and all human beings are His creatures and His servants. Such a belief arouses in man the feeling of humility.' Contrary to the Hindu concept, God in Islam is the sole supreme Being: man has no part in that divinity. In Hinduism, man is a part of God –

a concept which produces the opposite feeling of superiority. While Islamic monotheism awakens in man the consciousness of his being God's servant, Hinduism encourages man to say, 'I am God.' The former creates the psychology of humility, unlike the latter which fosters pride. When the members of a society are flawed by pride, it is well-nigh impossible to bring about an atmosphere of social justice.

FAILURE OF MODERN INSTITUTIONS

Amnesty International, an organization known as a watchdog of human rights, set up its headquarters in London thirty years ago. Thirty years is a long time for such an organization to have been functioning, but, in all that time, it has not been able to serve humanity in any way except for publishing reports in the newspapers.

It is significant that on the completion of thirty years in December, 1991, the organization did not see fit to hold any celebrations. Asked why this was so, a representative of the organization, a Ms Franca Scinto, replied that there really wasn't anything to celebrate.

Every year on December 10, the United Nations celebrates the Day of Human Rights. This year the statement issued by Javier. Peres de Cuellar, the U.N. Secretary General, lamented the blind use of force and the barbaric treatment meted out to people notwithstanding the universal Declaration of Human Rights which had been issued under the auspices of the United Nations.

What is the reason for the failure of these institutions to establish peace and justice? It can be explained by the fact that peace and justice in human life cannot be established solely on the basis of appeals and statements in the newspapers. What is required is an ideology which enshrines correct human values, and which might properly serve as the basis for an intellectual revolution. Those reformed along these lines should in turn reform the social institutions, and wherever the reins of government fall into their hands, they should establish peace and justice in society by constitutional means.

Only once in the course of history have all these conditions been fully met. That was when the Prophet and his Companions succeeded in establishing a system based fairly and squarely on peace and justice. Neither his predecessors nor his successors ever attained such a resounding success.

AN EXAMPLE OF EQUAL JUSTICE

Islam's third great contribution to social justice was the example it itself set in according the same honour and respect to all human beings, whether they were weak or strong, kings or commoners, be it in family circles, social life, positions of power or in the government; by the same token, no one could escape punishment for his sins.

The history of Islam abounds in examples of justice for all. Here only a few incidents are mentioned in brief.

1. In ancient times, it was unthinkable for a girl of noble birth or even any free person, to be married to a slave. The Prophet, wishing to break with this tradition, decided to arrange a marriage between his own first cousin, Zaynab bint Jahash (d. 20 AH), who belonged to the Banu Hashim, the most respectable clan of the Quraysh tribe, and Zayd ibn Haritha, a black negro slave. This most extraordinary event served as an important example of Islamic justice.

2. The Ka'aba, the most holy place of worship, was considered sacrosanct in all its parts. Therefore, when the call to prayer had to be made from its roof, it was only a person of noble birth who could ascend it. A man of lowly birth performing this religious duty was not to be countenanced. After the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet broke with this tradition by asking a negro slave, Belal ibn Rubah to go up on to the roof of the Ka'aba and give the call to prayer (Azan).

This was a unique event, not only in Arab history but also in world history of ancient times. Had Islam not become dominant, people would certainly have killed Belal for his 'arrogance'. They did, however, voice strong reactions against this act, which is an indication of how shocking it had appeared to them. For example, Utab ibn Usyad of Mecca thanked God that his father was no more and could not, therefore, witness this horrible sight on that day. Harith ibn Hisham asked, 'couldn't Muhammad have found someone other than this black crow?' (*Al-Jame Lil Ahkam Al-Qur'an*, 16/341).

3. Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph lost his coat of armour. One day he saw a Christian of Kufa selling the same coat of armour. This case was brought to the then Qazi Shurayh bin Alharith. Ali went to his court like a commoner, where he was asked by the Qazi to produce two witnesses. Ali then brought forward his son Hasan and his slave Qambar. The Qazi rejected the evidence of his son on the grounds that the evidence of a son in support of his father is not acceptable. Thus the reigning Caliph lost his case. However, the Christian was so greatly impressed at the display of such equality in the court of Islam between the king and the commoner, that he himself admitted that Ali was right. The coat of armour did belong to him. (*Azmat-e-Sahaba*, pp. 32-33).

4. Once during the caliphate of Umar Faruq, the second Caliph, Amr ibn al-Aas, who was the then governor of Egypt, arranged a horse race in which his own son was also to participate. His son's horse lost, however, to a young, native Copt. The son, Muhammad ibn Amr, was enraged, and lashed the Copt boy with a whip, saying, 'Take that! That will teach you to beat the son of a nobleman!' The Copt came to Medina and complained to the Caliph, who took it upon himself to institute an enquiry. When he found that the Copt had been beaten unjustly, he immediately sent an emissary to Egypt to summon the governor and his son before him forthwith. When they arrived, he handed the Copt a whip to flog them, just as he himself had been flogged.

In the presence of the governor, the Copt started whipping his son, stopping only when he was satisfied that the punishment had been severe enough. Then the Caliph addressed himself to the governor: 'O Amr, since when have you enslaved people who were born free?'

(*Azmat-e-Sahaba*, pp. 40-41).

5. Palestine was conquered during the Caliphate of Umar Faruq. To sign certain agreements with the conquered nation, he had to travel to Palestine. When he left Medina, he was wearing rough clothes and had only one servant and one camel. He said to his servant, 'If I mount the camel and you go on foot, it will not be fair to you. And if you mount the camel while I go on foot that will not be fair to me. And if we both sit on the camel's back, that will be an injustice to the camel. So, it would be better if all three of us took turns.'

So taking it by turns, Umar Faruq would ride and the servant would walk, and vice versa, and then both would take a turn of walking so that the camel should be spared. Traveling in this manner, they reached the gates of Palestine, where the inhabitants gaped at the sight of the Caliph going on foot while his servant rode the camel, for it was the latter's turn to ride as they approached their destination. In fact, many Palestinians failed to make out who was the Caliph and who was the servant. (*Taamir ki Taraf*, pp. 56-57).

Through its intellectual revolution and the practical examples it set, Islam thus created a history which had an impact on almost the whole of the inhabited world of that time. This revolution was so powerful that its effects could still be felt one thousand years later.

After the Prophet, the period of Sahaba (The Prophet's companions) and of Tabiin, (the companions of the Prophet's companions) is known as the golden age of Islam. But the effects of the Islamic revolution lasted far beyond this period, continuing to leave its imprint on human society in various forms across the centuries. Even Muslim kings dared not challenge it. Many examples of their submission to Islam can be cited. An incident relating to Jahangir, the Mughal emperor, has been very effectively portrayed by Maulana Shibli Nomani in the form of a poem entitled, 'Adl-e-Jahangiri.'

Jahangir's Queen, Noor Jahan, once inadvertently killed a poor man. It happened at some hunt, when a washerman, straying into her line of fire, was hit and mortally wounded. When he died, the matter was brought to court, where the Qazi passed the death sentence on the Queen. Neither the king nor the Queen dared refuse the Qazi's sentence. Finally, the issue was resolved only when the washerman's wife pronounced herself willing to accept the blood-money, as is provided for under Islamic law. (If the victim's next-of-kin refuses to accept the blood-money, the culprit is sentenced to death – murder for murder).

Now let us take an example of conduct which is the very opposite in spirit. The British ruler, James I, (1566-1625) a contemporary of the Indian ruler, Jahangir (1569-1627), claimed that he was above the law and could exercise his judgement independently. The then British Chief Justice, Sir Edward Cook, (1552-1634) differed with him on this issue, so that when John Beat, a British merchant, once refused to pay tax on imported currants (an order given personally by James I) because no law to this effect had been passed by parliament, Sir Edward took the side of Beat. Enraged, the King exclaimed, 'Am I subject to the law? To say so is treason!' Justice Cook did not waver from his standpoint. As a result, he was removed from his post by the King. It is a matter of historical record that legal differences with the king eventually broke his judicial career.

When the case of the King and Justice Cook came to the British Privy Council, the then Attorney General, Francis Bacon, upholding the legal supremacy of the king said: 'Judges should be lions, but yet lions under the throne.' (1/92).

According to time-honoured legal traditions in Britain, there were two kinds of law: common law and legal prerogative. For the public there was one set of laws and for the king and nobles quite another. The King was above the law. His word, in fact, was law. It was not until the advent of Islam that this division was abolished and the same set of laws was enforced for all. The rule of the King had perforce to give pride of place to the law of the land:

THE IMPACT ON HISTORY

Shortly before his death on the eve of his last pilgrimage, the Prophet of Islam gave a sermon which came to be known as the sermon of the Final pilgrimage. One of the historic declarations made in this sermon was: 'Everything pertaining to paganism now lies beneath my feet.' With these words, the Prophet announced the advent of a new age, an age freed by him of all superstition and ushered in with the special succour of God.

This historic change was first wrought within Arabia, then it spread beyond its frontiers, ultimately making itself felt throughout the entire world. This resulted in the eradication of the division in society between free men and slaves and the inception of the rule of law all over the world. It also caused all such philosophies as sanctioned injustice and social inequality to lose in influence. Now, any philosophy based on human inequality finds no ground on which to flourish.

One example of this in modern times is provided by Hitler, according to whom the German race was superior to all others. Firm in this belief, he put forward the idea that it was their birthright to assert their supremacy over all other nations. 'He regarded inequality between races and individuals as part of an unchangeable natural order and exalted the Aryan race as the sole creative element of mankind.' (8/967).

But what a fate awaited Hitler! His popularity in Europe rapidly waned and he was finally deserted even by his own minions in his own country. In utter frustration, he committed suicide in a bunker in Berlin, thus annihilating not only himself but the Nazi movement which he had set in motion.

The influence of the social revolution brought about by the Prophet is still alive, not only in Muslim countries, but indirectly throughout the entire inhabited world. On the question of social justice, or equal justice, researchers have acknowledged that if ever any system has truly attained this end, it is Islam. One such acknowledgement by Swami Vivekanand has been mentioned above. Now the question arises as to how Islam managed to succeed in this when other religions or systems failed. There are two important reasons for this. One is that Islam gives us a complete ideology in favour of human equality. The other is that it provides humanity with a historical example of that ideology put into practice.

These are the points on which other religions have failed. To make this point clear, I shall cite here two examples from Hinduism and Christianity.

Hinduism as has been explained above divides humanity as a matter of basic belief into two parts. Its very philosophy demands a high position for one group and a low position for another. The existence of this belief makes it impossible to mete out equal treatment to both groups. Those who live by this system can never regard themselves as being equal to those who appear inferior to them by birth.

Here it is pertinent to mention the Backward Classes Commission set up by the President of India in 1953, with Kaka Sahab Kalelkar as its chairman. After making a survey which was completed in 1955, it presented a 262 page report which was published in 1956 by the Government Press.

This report (available in the Delhi Public Library, Delhi) stated that the caste system of India was of a very different nature from the class system prevalent elsewhere. In India, this system is not traceable purely to economic causes as is generally the case in other countries. Its roots, on the contrary, go much deeper, being enshrined in the system of beliefs. According to the report, 'it is the peculiarity of India that it recognized the social differences inherent in human nature and gave them an institutional and mystic form with a religious and spiritual background.'

What the Kalelkar Commission states is borne out by the facts. It is indisputable that social differences in India have been traced to qualities inherent in human nature. Given this belief, they are an inevitable and natural reality. In a society where, of necessity, such a concept exists, the ideas of obliterating these differences and of having equal justice cannot have any general appeal.

A similar obstacle to equality is condoned even by Christianity. Here I should like to refer to a report prepared by a team of five Christian journalists and published in the Sunday Review (*Times of India*) of December 22, 1991. According to this report, the number of converts to Christianity from low castes is more than fifty per cent, these being known as Dalit Christians. 'Those who came over from the backward Hindu strata, still find themselves bogged down in discrimination by the Church.'

Dalit Christians are prevented from burying their dead in graveyards along with upper caste Christians. They cannot marry into upper caste Christian families. In many churches they have separate seating arrangements. They are discriminated against in educational institutions run by Christians themselves. The caste prejudice extends even to the Christian clergy. This is specially true to the Catholic Church whose priests are almost totally drawn from the upper or middle classes. In Kerala, where Christianity has thrived for 2,000 years, caste is evident on a social level. The caste factor surfaces time and again, causing intense anguish to members of the Dalit Christian communities.

When Dr. Casimir Gnanadickan, Catholic Archbishop of Madras, was asked about this, he admitted that a strong caste system existed within the Church set-up. 'I agree, it was a retrograde step. But sometimes the power of faith cannot break reality.'

It is true that Christianity does not teach human inequality or social injustice. But what is lacking in Christianity is a powerful, historical example of human equality. The mission of Christ did not reach beyond the invitation to faith. It did not reach the stage of practical revolution. That is why, in the first phase of Christianity no such example of human equality could be set. In the absence of telling precedents, belief alone is not sufficient to bring about any practical change.

The Islamic system is totally different from those of Hinduism and Christianity. In it, there exists a complete ideology in favour of human equality, while alongside it there exists a perfect, practical example. On both counts, the first phase of Islam set the course of Islamic history for all eternity. And Islamic history will continue forever in the same direction, for there is no influence powerful enough in the world to alter its course.