



# Al-Risala 1991

## October

## The More Correct Principle

Tipu Sultan was the ruler of Mysore from 1782 to 1799. This was the time when the British were trying to establish their rule over India. Tipu Sultan clashed with the British; though he was not in a position to face the British army all by himself. He tried to enter into a treaty with the French against the British. But France was unwilling. He then sent his emissaries to Arabia, Constantinople and Mauritius for help, but all in vain. He also tried to rally the other principalities of India, but they thought it was suicidal and declined to join against the British.

Ultimately Tipu Sultan confronted the British troops all by himself. The result was a foregone conclusion. He was killed by a British bullet on May 4, 1799 at Srirangapatam. This was a futile battle, yet Tipu Sultan tried to justify it by saying: "One day's life of a lion is better than 100 years of a jackal's life."

This phrase was immensely liked by the Muslim poets and preachers. There is bravado in this, indeed, but it is devoid of foresight and wisdom. If such a stand were really principled, the Prophet along with the companions would have preferred martyrdom in Mecca, and would not have opted for something which their adversaries would consider as a 'flight'.

Contrary to this is the example of Nizam Ali Khan of Hyderabad. Considering the prevailing state of affairs, he entered into a treaty with the British in 1768, which permitted his state to remain intact. This enabled him to be of immense service to the Muslims and to Islamic institutions.

Contrary to the saying of Tipu Sultan, it is far more desirable to become a 'jackal for a day' to enable one later to live the life of a lion for a hundred years.

## The Right Inputs Working towards social progress

The sewing needle which is sold in markets everywhere does not of itself spring into existence. Its creation is in no way instantaneous. It only assumes its marketable shape after going through numerous stages in the manufacturing process, right from the stage of being a lump of iron ore to the stage of being a length of fine steel wire.

This is a very simple example, but it gives us some idea of how complicated the manufacturing process is and of the time required to produce the finished article.

Yet, it is easier to mould a piece of metal than to mould a human being. While metal has no will or intentions of its own, the human race has these aplenty. That is what makes a reform movement so extremely difficult in human society.

Present day Muslim leaders appear to be singularly ignorant of this fact. They set about the task in a way which suggests that the desired results may be achieved without any substantial investment in time and as if everything will be achieved by slogan-shouting and oratory. But the truth is that it is only through well planned actions carried out over a long period that any achievement is possible.

In the last one hundred years, a large number of needle factories have been established. And they are still going concerns. But, during the same span of time, no similar achievement in terms of community uplift or reform has been possible despite the efforts of our leaders. The reason for the success of the needle factories is that while producing a needle due regard is paid to the laws of nature while the failure of the community to progress is due to the erroneous belief that results can be obtained by catchy slogans and fiery speeches.

Building a community does not start with gatherings and processions. It actually starts with the building of individuals. And it is not possible to build individuals without silent hard work. Concerted effort in this field is what history and wisdom dictate.

## Misunderstanding

One of the sequels to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was the flight of Kuwait's ruling family to Saudi Arabia. It was only after the liberation of Kuwait that crown prince Saad Al Sabah returned to his homeland on March 4, 1991. As he got down from his aeroplane at Kuwait airport, something happened which was considered worthy of being captured on film by the photographer of Associated Press. This photograph was published on the front page of *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* of March 6, 1991. (It is reproduced here on the opposite page).

The caption reads;

"The Crown Prince of Kuwait, Saad Al Sabah, returns from his exile after the Gulf war on 4th March. After disembarking from the aeroplane, he is kissing the ground of his country."

What the representative of the American News Agency saw was Saad Al Sabah putting his forehead on the ground at the end of a seven month exile. His guess was that the prince was so overjoyed at recovering his land that he wanted to kiss the ground as soon as he got off the plane. In reality, however, the prince was prostrating himself before God to express his gratitude for His mercy. For Saad Al Sabah it was an act of bowing before the Almighty, but for the press it was "kissing the ground."

Misunderstandings are often created in this way as a result of a misinterpretation and subsequent misstatement of the facts. We hear about something, or we witness an event, and then we give our own version of it according to our own perceptions and mental make-up.

The correct thing to do in such circumstances would be to make a more thorough investigation of whatever has been seen or heard. Only then, and after due consideration, should we form an opinion. But this seldom happens. We proceed to broadcast views based on the most superficial information-an act of irresponsibility if ever there was one. This can create the most serious misunderstandings of which we ourselves can become the victims. If we interpret prostration before God merely as an expression of joy on the re-possession of land, we are turning an act expressing belief in God into a ritual of polytheism.

If such an allegation is made it is viewed as a serious crime by God. And even if the culprit is not acquainted with the reality, he is still held guilty. The Shariat has made proper investigation mandatory. Before uttering a single syllable, one must find out the truth. If one is unable to investigate and is, therefore, not in possession of all of the relevant facts, one should simply remain silent.



Crown Prince Saad al-Sabah of Kuwait kisses the ground after alighting from the plane at Kuwait City international airport on Monday as he returned from exile following the war. – AP/PTI

## A Dangerous Apathy

Abu Hurayrah recorded God's Messenger as saying, "I have seen nothing like hell, whose fear-struck may have gone to sleep. I have seen nothing like paradise whose seekers may have gone to sleep."

Man should abhor hell above all else. But he has become totally insensitive to its perils. Man should seek paradise first and foremost, but he no longer has any ardent desire for it. These two shortcomings sum up the story of mankind.

Man's apathy towards this reality is indeed strange. Not even in their subconscious minds are people wary of hell. Not even in their most fervent wishes do people include the prospect of paradise. Given this kind of apathy how is it possible for them to remain safe from hellfire, or to be rewarded with the good things of paradise?

People's fears are all about something quite different. Their emotional outbursts are all for something else. Fears and hopes alike are focussed elsewhere. Under the circumstances, how can they ever become claimants of the divine blessing?

The temptations of this world are the pivot of their lives, causing them to disregard the life hereafter. They have concentrated their attention on worldly wealth, leadership, popularity, fame and so on.

There is hardly anyone who is worried about forgiveness and deliverance in the life hereafter, or who can be galvanized into action by the fear of punishment or the desire for paradise.

What a pity there is everything in this world except what is most desirable. What a pity that man knows everything except what he should know best. Undoubtedly, this is the worst kind of omission. But a time will come when man will realize his mistake. This realization will not, however, serve to compensate for what has been lost.

## The Way of the Faithful

Of the many traditions of the Quran recorded in the Kitab-al-Tafsir of *Sahih at Bukhari*, the following concerns an incident recounted in explanation of the surah A-Hijrah.

According to Ibn Abi Mulayka, two of the Prophet's companions, Abu Bakr and Umar, raised their voices in the presence of the Prophet and, as a result, came close to disaster. It happened that when a delegation of the Banu Tamim had come to Medinah Abu Bakr said that AlQ'aq'a should be made their leader, whereas Umar was of the view that Ala'ra bin Habis was a better choice. Abu Bakr then accused Umar of having said this just to oppose his proposal. But Umar said, "It is not my intention to oppose." Whereupon they began to argue and, in the process, raised their voices. In consequence, a verse of the Quran was revealed:

"O believers, do not transgress Allah and His messenger. And fear Allah. Verily he is listening and all knowing. O believers, raise not your voices above that of the Prophet ... Lest your deeds go waste, and you may not even come to know." (49: 1-27)

Ibn Al-Zubair says that after this, Umar changed too much that he always used to speak in a low voice in the Prophet's presence, so much so that he could hardly be heard, and the Prophet would often have to ask him to repeat what he had said.

This is the way of the faithful. A believer may unknowingly raise his voice above that of God and His messenger, but as soon as he is made aware of it, he immediately lowers it.

This is applicable not only to the period of the Prophet but also to the present day, when it is still required of the faithful that they should not raise their voice. The only difference is that in the time of the Prophet people received such instructions directly from him, whereas nowadays people must instruct themselves by making reference to the Quran and the Hadith, Even today, when listening to the commands of God and His messenger, one must lower one's voice like the early Islamic believers.

## The Problem Facing the Ummah

Producing Quranic solutions to current Muslim problems appears to be a simple matter. Theoretically, that might be so but, from the practical point of view, it is not such a simple matter. Although a clear answer to them exists in the Quran, identifying it and carrying it into effect is much more complex than is generally imagined.

“What is the date today?” A question of this nature is easily answered. If the day and the month are known, a glance at the calendar is all that is needed to find out the date.

But finding answers in the Qur’an, as if it were a simple matter of eliciting information, is a very different matter. Even if one knew the Arabic language and held the coveted post of Sheikh-al-Thfsir<sup>1</sup>, there would always be other kinds of hurdles to surmount.

### I. Professor in the Study of the Quran

Why should this be so? It is because the finding of a Quranic solution to Muslim problems is not just a technicality like ascertaining a date from a calendar, but a matter of personal trial for the individual seeker. In reality, the finding of a Quranic solution entails the Muslim community itself being put to the test. This is what makes the whole issue so extremely difficult.

## The Sunnah of Human Trial

The Qur’an makes it clear that the purpose of man’s creation is to put him to the test. After creating human beings, God has brought them into the present world in order to subject them to a trial.

Indeed, all things in this present world have been created with this end in view, part of God’s scheme being to determine whether man, with his God-given intelligence, can penetrate the veil of doubt which constantly obscures the divine guidance of the Almighty. It stands to reason that such guidance can have its effect only on those who themselves can pierce the veil of doubt and embrace the truth in its real, unveiled form. Those who fail to pass this test will never have the benefit of God’s guidance in this world.

Here is a verse on this subject from the Quran: “They ask: ‘why has no angel been sent down to him?’ If we had sent down an angel, their fate would have been sealed and they would have never been reprieved. If we had made him an angel, we would have given him the semblance of a man, and would have thus confused them with that in which they are already confused.” (6:9)

This shows that divine guidance is never to be found in such a form as leaves no room for human doubt. If an angel were to appear as such when he brought God’s message, who would doubt his being God’s

emissary? That is why God sends His message to man through man, so that in spite of the truth of the message, the testing element of doubt may remain.

This is God's law for this world. Whenever the truth makes its appearance, it is always accompanied by an element of doubt. In this lies the testing ground of man. Here, he must pass beyond the veil of doubt. One who succeeds in so doing will see guidance in its real form; one who fails to do so, will never receive the guidance of his Maker.

God has endowed all men with insight. Such insight is like a divine criterion. Those who use their God-given insight in all its purity are the ones who will succeed in the test. Those who fail to overcome doubt by using their powers of reason will never pass the test.

The greatest obstacle to recognizing the Quranic solution to problems is as described above: whenever a solution is offered with reference to the Qur'an, no matter how well supported it may be by the logic of evidence, there is always a residual element of doubt, from which many fail to extricate themselves. In spite of the true path being pointed out to them, they draw back from setting foot upon it.

### **An Example from the First Phase of Islam**

Here is an illustration of this point from the days of the Prophet.

When the Prophet appealed to a man known in Mecca as Al-Haris ibn Usman ibn Nawfal ibn Abd Manaf to accept monotheism as his religion, the latter, speaking as the representative of his community, said, "We know what you say is nothing but the truth. However, we are afraid that if we follow you, the Arabs will expel us from Mecca. (*Al-Tafsir al-Mazhari*). The Qur'an records it thus: "They say: if we accept the guidance with you, we shall be driven from our land." (28:57).

In ancient Mecca, the people's main source of income and, in fact, the basis of their leadership was polytheism. They had placed in the holy Kaaba the idols of all of the tribes – no less than 360 of them. Thus, in the role of the idols' guardians the Meccans held sway over all the tribes of Arabia. Besides giving them the advantages of leadership, these idols were also a source of economic gain, because all the offerings made to them by Arabians visiting Mecca for this purpose came to the townspeople. In this way, polytheism had become their economic and political mainspring.

When the Prophet of Islam brought them God's message, their hearts went out to its truth. But their minds could not take them beyond the thought that if they publicly assented to the idea of God being one, and all other gods being false, they would immediately find themselves cut off from the tribes who practised polytheism. This would lose them their leadership and their source of income. Even after receiving the firmest of guidance, they still had doubts about accepting Islam.

## Indian Muslims

Today, Indian Muslims find themselves in a similar situation in that they have stopped short of receiving the guidance of the Qur'an because of doubts which continue to beset them. They have the Quranic point of view explained to them, and they quickly grasp its truth and its appropriateness. But no sooner have they done so than questions begin to arise which cast doubt on the particular solution offered. It is entirely due to this doubting cast of mind that they fail to adopt the Quranic solution.

For instance, whenever the verses of the Qur'an dealing with patience and avoidance are repeated to them, they become apprehensive that if they adopted this path, it would only encourage the Hindus to become more audacious in their attempts to crush them. Similarly, when the constructive message and *dawah* programme of the Qur'an are laid before them, they become preoccupied with the fear that if they do not launch political movements, they will find themselves cut off from the political processes of the country. If they are told that the Hindus have to be regarded as '*mad'u*' and that the launching of 'demand and protest' political movements against the *mad'u* is forbidden in the Qur'an, their suspicions are immediately aroused, and they insist that if they stopped the policy of 'demand and protest', they would be deprived of their constitutional rights in the country. And so on.

This is the real difficulty with this question. The Qur'an is undoubtedly a complete book. It clearly sets forth all the questions which are going to face us till Doomsday. But according to God's law regarding semblance (the veiling of reality), all the answers to these questions necessarily involved an element of doubt. And it is here that Muslims are put to the test. If only they could bring themselves to cast aside all doubts, they would be certain to find solutions to their problems in the Qur'an. But if they become mired in the element of doubt, there is no verse from the Qur'an nor any tradition of the Prophet which will give them guidance.

Now let us proceed to the Quranic solution to the problems faced by the Muslims of today.

## Muslim Security

To Indian Muslims, and especially to those of North India, the most urgent problem is that of the security of their lives and property. With this issue so much in focus, their worldly activities naturally revolve around it. The Quran, however, deals with the question of security in very clear terms: "Apostle, proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord: if you do not, you will not have conveyed the message. God will protect you from all men. He does not guide the unbelievers." (5:67)

We can directly infer from this verse that the secret of protection "from all men" lies in inviting people to come to God, and in making all necessary provision for the continuance of this task. This is the greatest guarantee of security.

Even when a community turns hostile to Muslims, it is not possible for it to change its God-given nature: every human being, by instinct, is a Muslim; his nature, by birth is ever in quest of Islam. This means that every enemy of the Muslims is potentially their friend. As such, if his dormant nature can only be awakened, he will eventually accept Islam. And when that happens and he joins the Muslim community, becoming an integral part of it, the Muslim problem will of itself come to an end.

Time and again, this Quranic principle has been borne out by history. In the first phase of Islam, the Arab idolaters were initially very hostile towards the Prophet, but, in his wisdom, he avoided their opposition and, exercising great patience, he continued to communicate to them the message of Islam. Consequently, in a mere matter of twenty years, all of Arabia's tribes entered the fold of Islam, and all those who had appeared to be his enemies became his friends and allies. By becoming guardians of Islam, they brought into being an Islamic history which was international in its reach.

In the thirteenth century, Mongol hordes descended like an avalanche on an area stretching from Samarqand to Baghdad, obliterating all signs of Islam in their depredations. In the face of this military onslaught the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad crumbled.

But what was the sequel? Amidst the ruins of these Muslim nations, the *daw'ah* power of Islam began to make itself felt. The Islamic creed slowly but surely began its conquest of the Tartar victors' hearts. Ultimately within a span of fifty years, the history of this whole region underwent an amazing change. The conquerors of Muslims became the subjects of Islam. The mosques demolished in the Muslim world by Halagu were rebuilt by his grandsons. In those very mosques which they themselves, had demolished, they prostrated themselves in all humility before the one God.

Referring to this historical development in the course of his presidential address at the All India Muslim League in Allahabad in 1930, Dr. Iqbal said, "One lesson I have learnt from the history of Muslims is that at critical moments in their history, it is Islam that has saved Muslims and not vice versa."

He has expressed the same view in one of his poems:

'It is clear from the story of Mongol strife that the Kaaba wins its protectors away from the guardianship of idol houses.

However, it seems that Dr. Iqbal had learned this truth only in part. He did not see its relevance to the present situation. He could only see that in past history the *daw'ah* power of Islam had saved Muslims; he failed to underscore the importance of this power in the context of the present. This led him into the error of suggesting a geographical division as a solution to the Indian Muslim problem, which eventually meant the formation of Pakistan. He should instead have urged Muslims to communicate the message of Islam to non-Muslims, so that, with the performance of this duty, all their problems would solve themselves, just as had happened in the past.

The mind of the whole community is moulded by its leaders and intellectuals, whose speeches and writings take the people in one direction or the other. The difficulty with Indian Muslims is that their

leaders' thinking does not extend to conveying God's message to the people preoccupied as it is with politics, and nationalism. That is why they are very conscious of communal problems, but oblivious to the opportunities of calling people to God.

Here is an example which is a very apt illustration of this point. Dr. Ambedkar (1893-1956) was born into an 'untouchable' family. In India, there are crores of 'untouchables' (now reclassified as 'scheduled castes' or 'backward classes'.) Regardless of their new nomenclature, they are still prevented from having an equal status in Indian society because of the inflexibility of Hindu religious traditions. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the more fortunate ones who managed to have a college education in India, later going abroad for higher education. He became a leading intellectual, and thanks to his excellent academic record, he became the sole representative of all the low-caste communities, who were a constant prey to frustration and disappointment, because of the degradation forced on them by society.

Dr. Ambedkar, was greatly concerned at this deliberate humiliation of his community, and was anxious to help them find an equal status in society. After making a thorough study of Hinduism and Hindu society, he finally came to the conclusion that they could never attain an equal status while they remained within the Hindu fold. On the other hand, his study of Islam revealed to him that such equality could very successfully be given to his people provided the whole community entered the fold of Islam.

To this end, he delivered many lectures and wrote several articles. In one, he wrote:

"Islam seems to give the Depressed Classes all they need, Financially, the resources behind Islam are boundless. Socially, the Mohammedans are spread all over India. There are Mohammedans in every province and they can take care of new converts from the Depressed Classes will get all the rights which Mohammedans are entitled to."

*(Politics of Conversion, New Delhi, 1986, p. 321)*

The instances show that Dr. Ambedkar had come very close to Islam and that there was every possibility of his joining the Muslims after converting along with his whole community. He even made a statement known as the Yeola Declaration on October 13, 1935, in which he appealed to 40 million Harijans to forsake their present religion and enter into another religion. (p. 332).

But no Muslim leader of note paid any attention to Dr. Ambedkar. They did not even feel any need to meet him. On the contrary, during that same period, that is, the 1930s and 1940s, the Muslims as a community demonstrated that their sole interest was the partition of the country. No real keenness was shown by the Muslim leaders of that time to bring the Harijans into the fold of Islam, the religion of mercy, all" their attention being focused on the issue of the country's political division into two parts: Hindu India and Muslim India.

This communal policy on the part of the Muslims wrecked any hopes Dr. Ambedkar may have had of improving the lot of the Harijans. It naturally occurred to him that if they converted to Islam and then partition took place, they would in all probability be unable to go to Pakistan and, forced to live side by

side with their former oppressors, they would become the victims of a Hindu backlash. Any Muslims still remaining in India would hardly be in a position to help the new converts. Because the Harijans would then be in an even worse position than before. Dr. Ambedkar gave up his intentions of entering the fold of Islam.

If our leaders' thinking had been *daw'ah-oriented*, they would have realized that by helping the backward classes to improve their status in society by joining ranks with Islam, they (the Muslims) would have benefited greatly in the process. With such large-scale conversions, the Muslim population would have risen to 50 per cent of the total population of the subcontinent. And if the *daw'ah* process had been continued, it would have risen still further. There would have been no need to seek political refuge through the formation of Pakistan. As it was, the non-Quranic mentality of our Muslim leaders did a great deal of damage; it caused them to see communal dangers quite clearly, but blinded them to the immense potential of *daw'ah*. They completely missed the point that calling people to God ensures protection from enemies, and that this may be achieved without any direct effort on the part of Muslims, provided they do not, by any ill advised action, place obstacles in the path of its attainment.

A living proof of this is to be found in the history of India of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Events show that during this period, Islam was spreading rapidly throughout India. It would be no exaggeration to say that several thousand people daily entered the fold of Islam. Had this process not been interfered with, no Iqbal or Jinnah would have been required to propose such a solution to Muslim problems as partition. However, after the first world war (1914-18), the launching of national movements by Muslims, culminating in the formation of the All-India Muslim League, had a damaging effect on the entire process. Unwisely, these movements highlighted the differences that existed between Hindus and Muslims. Fiery speeches and hostile activities caused an insurmountable wall of hatred to rise up between the two nations. Muslim leaders, with their hatred-based politics, effectively dried up the flow of Islam which had begun in the 19th century after the decline of the Mughal empire.

In order to build their future in India, Muslims needed to do one of two things: either they should have played the role of true *dai'is* and communicated the message of Islam to other nations, patiently and with wisdom and understanding, or, failing that they should at least not have placed obstacles in the process of the natural propagation of Islam; they should just have maintained a low profile and allowed Islam to spread on its own strength.

If Muslims had adopted either of these courses, the result would sooner or later have been the same. But they did not see fit to become either the direct *dai'is* of Islam or its indirect helpers. In consequence they have gained nothing. Their politics of agitation, spanning more than a century, has been of no avail.

Even today, Muslims have the same problem. Opportunities are open to them on all sides, but they fail to exploit them. If the spirit of *daw'ah* could be aroused in them today, even now they could benefit greatly from its effects. The divine *Sunnah* mentioned in the fifth chapter of the Qur'an is an eternal law: it is as relevant today as it was in the past, and it will continue to be relevant until the Day of Reckoning.

Human nature is unchangeable. The present generation has entered this world endowed with that same nature that God has never ceased to bestow upon man since the very moment of Adam's creation. This means that the man of today likewise awaits the divine call so that he may respond to it in the way of previous generations. This is so because it is inborn in him to do so.

This means that opportunities for *daw'ah* activity are legion. However, if these opportunities are to be made to bear fruit, every care must be taken to exercise patience and to avoid confrontations. If Muslims are effectively to perform the role of *da'tin* this country, they shall have to root out all grievances against and put an end to all conflicts with the other community. They must in their heart of hearts feel the necessity to behave in this way. No superficial glossing over of differences or shallow displays of goodwill can suffice. Where Muslims formerly regarded the members of the other community as their rivals, they shall now have to love them because, in reality, *daw'ah* can be effective in no other way. They shall have to become their well-wishers to the point of beginning to pray for them.

The day Muslims opt for this course of action, they will truly have set in motion the processes of *daw'ah*. It will then, for all time to come, give the results decreed for it by God. Success will certainly be ours. All our problems shall in this way be solved.

### **Ease Will Follow Upon Difficulty.**

A very important principle set forth in the Qur'an is that, in this world, a man cannot be beset by adversity forever. According to God's law, difficulty will always be accompanied by ease.

Whenever a person, or a community, suffers deprivation, some new door is certain to open to it at that very time. 'Every hardship is followed by ease. Every hardship is followed by ease.' (Qur'an, chapter 94).

The above verse clearly shows that not only is there a successful solution to all difficulties in the world of today, but that a matter of greater satisfaction – the solution always outweighs the difficulty. This generally means that there is more than one way of solving the problem. As a hadith puts it: 'One difficulty cannot defy two solutions.'

Indian Muslim leaders and intellectuals keep up an incessant barrage of speeches and writings which portray the Muslims as the most downtrodden people in the country, subjected as they are to prejudice and cruelty. Statements of this sort are repeated, day in and day out by every writer and speaker. But harping in this way upon Muslim difficulties is just another way of displaying one's lack of faith in the Book of God. It shows the Muslims' disbelief in their own scriptures. If they had really believed in the book of God, they would have looked into its pages for solutions to their problems. They would have learned from it that for every difficulty, there is more than one solution. Then, instead of bemoaning their lot to the world, they would have proclaimed far and wide the solution to their problems.

## The Hindu Problem

Indian, Muslims commonly believe that Hindus are prejudiced against them and that injustice and cruelty on their part have created insoluble problems for them. All doors to the leading of an honourable life in this country, therefore, seem closed to them. Or so they believe.

This opinion is the unfortunate result of the experiences they have had of lower class Hindus who gather in the streets to raise slogans, and who loot and bum and indulge in rioting. These are the common Hindus and certainly do not include Hindus of the middle or upper classes. However, Muslims tend to allow these bad experiences to colour their thinking on the subject of the entire Hindu community. They end up feeling that all Hindus are against them.

But this conclusion—a dangerous one to arrive at – is not based on facts. While it would certainly be true to say that the common Hindus and the overtly religious Hindus are against Muslims, it would not be true to say this of the majority of upper class Hindus who have had a modern, higher education, and who have no interest in the politics of communalism. It is particularly important to grasp this point in view of the fact that it is these very upper class Hindus who, thanks to their higher education, hold all the key positions in the country. It is they who run the nation's entire political and economic system. Perhaps even more important is the fact that all media institutions are subjected to their influence.

To drive this point home, I should like to refer to a long article in the *Times of India* (February 9, 1990) by Mr. Chandan Mitra, titled: "Militant Hinduism is self-limiting." In January, 1990, on the occasion of the Magh Mela at Allahabad, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad organized a massive gathering. Mr. Mitra who was present on this occasion, comments that although the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other fundamentalist Hindu organizations had managed to rally a large crowd of the public rank and file by upholding the cause of Ram Janam Bhumi, and had also had a temporary success in the November 1989 elections, they had failed to bring the intellectual class of Hindus around to their way of thinking. This, according to Mr. Mitra, showed the greatest weakness on the part of organizations which had been formed in the name of religion. "The B.J.P.'s problem", writes Mr. Mitra, "is that despite decades of strenuous effort, it has failed to acquire intellectual legitimacy from the secularised, urban Hindus who dominate public opinion And it is unlikely to succeed in this endeavour in the foreseeable future."

If a religious class has its roots in true religion, it will necessarily uphold truth and justice. But once decadence in its thinking sets in, truth and justice become overshadowed by prejudice Just such decadence has set in the present religious class of Hindus, so that the 'religion' they project seems entirely based on prejudice. They are no longer motivated by religious truth. What spurs them to action now is enmity for Muslims.

The same is true in this respect of the Hindu masses, for the majority of Hindus are poor and illiterate. And people who live in such a state of unawareness can be aroused by any slogan.

Their gullibility was recently demonstrated in the elections held in November 1989. Solidly pro-Congress for the last half century, they nevertheless allowed themselves to be swayed by fundamentalist Hindu parties who played up the facts that Rajiv Gandhi was the son of a Parsi and had a Christian wife, which according to them, made his credentials secular rather than Hindu. They were then led into thinking that under his prime ministership, it would be impossible to construct the holy Ram Mandir. On this point alone, the Hindu masses of northern India became disaffected and defeated Rajiv Gandhi's party in their own region.

For the above reasons, the wisest policy for Muslims would be to bring all controversial matters before the intellectual class of Hindus in order that logical solutions to them may be arrived at. On no account should they take their problems into the streets where it will be the Hindu masses, in particular the religious class, who will deal with them.

The existence of two distinctly different classes in the present Hindu community bears out the Quranic principle that in this world difficulty is always followed by ease. If, to Muslims, the communal class of Hindus represent 'difficulty', this is counterbalanced by the modern, educated class of Hindus who provide the element of 'ease'. If the religious class of Hindus are prejudiced and antagonistic towards Muslims, the educated class of Hindus are sufficiently broad-minded to settle Muslim issues with justice and realism.

Furthermore, in accordance with God's law, far greater power stems from 'ease' than from 'difficulty', while the Hindu communal organisations have little beyond the provocative quality of their slogans, the modern, educated class of Hindus wield all the power of their superior positions in academic, administrative and economic spheres. However they control the media. It is they, more than any other class, who decide all matters of importance.

## The Story of Two Mosques

Here I should like to illustrate the validity of the Quranic principle of 'ease' being more powerful than 'difficulty'. Not just in theory, but in a real life setting. The example I have chosen concerns two mosques, one at Ayodhya and the other at Delhi. The problem of the former, the Babari Masjid at Ayodhya, took its present shape as early as 1986. Muslims, exhorted by their leaders, brought the issue to the streets. They attempted to resolve this problem by means of processions, rallies, marches, boycotts and the use of loudspeakers. In reality, this was a way of seeking the solution at the level of the Hindu public and the Hindu religious class. As such, it proved futile.

Such street-politics had the effect of intensifying counter-politics among the Hindus, for the Hindu religious class seized upon this opportunity to make highly charged appeals to the masses thereby thoroughly arousing their sentiments. They told the Hindu public that by accepting the partition of the country, they had met their first defeat at the hands of the Muslims. Now, on the issue of the

construction of the Ram Janam Bhumi Temple at Ayodhya, were they going to accept a second defeat at their hands?

Such provocative remarks stirred up the Hindu public of North India and bloody, communal riots ensued at different places on the sub continents. A kind of mass hysteria and a general unwillingness to yield rendered the matter far more complex. What had previously been a local problem, strictly limited to a particular area, now became a matter of national prestige affecting the entire country. Ultimately, the Muslims did not emerge the victors. Not only did they fail to recover the Babari Mosque, but they also lost many of their previous gains. This was entirely due to the wrongness of their approach. (For further details, please see the writer's article titled, Hakeemana Tadbir (wise strategy) *Al-Risala*, Urdu, March 1991, p. 5)

Now let us take an example to the contrary. In an upper class area of New Delhi, there was an old dilapidated mosque standing in the middle of a vast open space. The whole area of the building and the adjacent land added up to 18 acres. After 1947, this area had come under three government departments, archeology, DDA and the Delhi Corporation. All of these had set up their offices in the premises of the mosque. Their plan was to develop these grounds into a picnic spot of modern standard. The work had started and several lakhs of rupees had already been invested.

It "was at this point that a *moulvi* thought of recovering this ancient mosque. However, he held no rallies and led no processions. He made no statements to the press. Nor did he stick up posters or raise any hue and cry with the slogan, 'Hand our mosque back to us!' Avoiding all such propagandist methods, he simply went and quietly met the educated Hindus of that Area. In private meetings with them, he explained that this place, being a mosque, was a place of worship 'and, as such, was sacred, irrespective of which community it belonged to. On this plea, he requested them to help him to recover it from government possession.

One educated Hindu, who had retired from the post of Secretary to the Government of India, proved whole-hearted in his willingness to help him. He contacted the three departments, collected the relevant documents, then prepared drafts of all the necessary letters. He even accompanied the *moulvi* to the offices concerned.

It took three years of quietly going from one office to another, but, ultimately, with the help of the Hindu retired secretary and some other influential Hindus, the three departments were prevailed upon to hand over the mosque.

The *moulvi* sahib then received written permission to use the mosque and to raise an 8 foot boundary wall around its sprawling 18 acres. Today, not only do the mosque and madrasa stand intact on this site, but all facilities such as electricity, telephone and a sewer line have also been made available to them. This has made it possible to develop this complex into a flourishing Islamic Centre.

While the mosque at Delhi – more spacious and important than the one at Ayodhya – was recovered by the Muslims without their having to forgo anything, the mosque at Ayodhya has been lost to Muslims, who have furthermore, suffered personal losses in the process. This is the result of unwise Muslim leaders having attempted to solve the Ayodhya mosque problem at the level of the masses, unlike that of the Delhi mosque which was resolved at the level of the educated class of Hindus. This is the sole reason for such a difference in outcome – dismal failure in Ayodhya vis a vis resounding success in Delhi.

The principle of seeking the solution to problems through quiet, well thought-out action as opposed to rabbleroising in the streets is applicable not only to the affairs of mosques, but to all problems of a general nature in which more than one community has a stake. Whenever Muslims resort to stirring up public unrest, they will find themselves at loggerheads with the Hindu masses, and the inevitable result will be defeat. On the other hand, if they set about matters in an orderly way, and confine themselves to dealing only with the educated class of Hindus, matters will remain at that upper class level and solutions will ultimately be found to their problems. Moreover, if their cause is true and just, whatever solutions are arrived at are bound to be in their favour.

### **We shall Drink. They-shall Not**

This is a simple matter of adopting the correct strategy. An episode from the life of the Prophet leading up to the Battle of Badr is an apt illustration of what correct strategy can achieve. When a halting place had to be chosen for the Muslims, one of the Prophet's companions, Alhubab ibn al Munzir proposed a spot where there were springs of water. This was not only so that the Muslims should have a supply of water but so that their enemies should be deprived of it once the springs fell into Muslim hands. "We shall drink so that they shall not." The Prophet liked this proposal and accepted it. (Ibn Hisham, *Sirah*, 2:259)

We have this situation in reverse in India, where if Muslims adopt the ill-advised strategy of taking matters to the Hindu public, the water will all be drunk by the Hindu communalists and the Muslims themselves will be deprived of it. Whereas, if we attempt to resolve our problems at the level of the Hindu upper class, the water will flow for the Muslims and the Hindu communalists will go thirsty.

### **An Example from the Early Phase of Islam.**

Examples of higher and lower classes responding in different ways to similar situations are to be found in the early period of Islam. When a group of Muslims emigrated from Mecca to Abyssinia in order to avoid persecution by the Meccan townspeople,

they were faced with problems similar to those which now confront us in India in terms of public and religious antagonism. But, when these problems were brought before the upper class, they were resolved with complete justice in favour of the Muslims.

When the Muslims landed on the coast of Abyssinia, they were treated with the disdain reserved for foreigners. They were even physically assaulted. If, at that point, these Muslims had been provoked into agitating against their tormentors, no fair judgements would have been made in their favour. The situation would have been quite the reverse. The Muslims being in the minority and the local population in the majority, the problem would have intensified, thereby adding to the difficulties of the Muslims.

The Muslims, however, refrained from airing their grievances in public. They continued to work and steadfastly avoided confrontations. Later, they had the opportunity of meeting the king, Nagus. The king asked them if anyone in his country had oppressed them. The Muslims replied in the affirmative. Nagus then issued an order to the effect that whosoever had caused any suffering to the Muslims should have to pay four dirhams as a fine, this sum to be paid to the Muslim in question. Next, he asked the Muslims if four dirhams was adequate compensation. The Muslims said that it was not. Nagus then issued another order increasing the amount from four to eight dirhams. (*Hayat as-Sahaba*, vol. I p. 335)

Another such event took place during this migration after the Muslims had reached Abyssinia. They were followed there by Meccan idolaters, whose sole aim was to bring them back to their country so that they could continue to persecute them. When the pursuers reached Abyssinia, they approached the clergy and from there found their way into the royal court. They had managed to influence members of the clergy (i.e. a class of people who were adherents of a distorted form of religion), so that they sided with the idolaters in their demand for the expulsion of the Muslims from Abyssinia and supported them in their insistence that they should be handed over to them. The clergy even raised a hue and cry against the Muslims in the court on one occasion. In such a situation, if the Muslims had tried to have the issue settled at the level of the religious class, the result would certainly have gone against them.

But the Muslims were wise enough to circumvent the religious class, and placed their case directly before the king. As a result, Nagus gave an order which was wholly in favour of the Muslims. He expelled the Meccan idolaters from the Court, and informed the Muslims that they might remain with honour in Abyssinia for as long as they wanted, and that no one could force them to leave the country. (Ibn Kathir, *Sirah*, vol. II)

## The Last Word

This is a world of competition. And a world of competition it is going to remain. This is not a set of circumstances which has been brought about by an "enemy of Islam." Rather, it is a system which has been established in this world by God Himself. This being so, it is extremely foolish to say that all Muslim woes are the result of an enemy plot, and then to go on lamenting over this state of affairs ad nauseam.

The only solution is to have a complete understanding of adverse circumstances, becoming acquainted with the plans of the 'antagonists' and then countering' them by wise planning and strategy. We have to try to turn adversity to good account. Every difficulty – as it arises – has to be overcome by the power of 'ease' Success in this world is only for those who can turn even failure to advantage. Those who do not possess this capacity are destined to go on uttering futile protests against circumstances until, finally – doomed to oblivion – they are buried forever in the graveyard of history.

26 October 1991

## One does not lose by giving.

Abu Hurayrah reports this saying of the Prophet:

“Charity does not decrease anyone’s wealth while forgiveness only increases a man’s honour; God raises up one who abases himself before his Lord.”

(Muslim, *Sahih*)