



Al-Risala 1990

January

2-4 January 1990.

The Muslim in a Non – Muslim Environment

In his book entitled The Muslims of British India, Dr. Peter Hardy of London University has correctly observed that the partition of the Indian sub-continent has not solved the problems of the Muslims who opted to remain in India. To the Muslim who, as a rule, interprets Islam as a complete system, he puts the question as to “whether in wanting to be accepted as a fellow-citizen on equal terms with his non-Muslim compatriots, he is obeying or disobeying Divine Commands.”

For Muslims who practice Islam as a matter of individual behaviour, without making any attempt to establish Islam as a political system, this question does not raise very complex issues. But for those who interpret Islam as a “complete system” and, as such, an indivisible entity, the question implies that their demand is strangely illegitimate in a truly Islamic context, because what, in effect, they are asking for is a share in a system based on falsehood. It is like demanding that Muslims be granted an equal share in the internal matters of the idol houses of the country.

It must be inferred from Dr. Hardy’s question that the political interpretation of Islam cannot countenance Muslims living within a non-Islamic system, unless they do so as rebels. They cannot live as loyal citizens and sharers in that system. But this interpretation of Islam is a wholly personal distortion and has no basis in fact. This so-called ‘complete system’ is the invention of poets and rhetoricians. It is in no way related to the Quran or the *Hadith*.

This interpretation has been analysed in great detail in the book *Tabeer Ki Ghalati*, (*Tabeer Ki Ghalati* by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Published by Maktaba Al-Risala, New Delhi) and is finally dismissed in the light of academic arguments. The author maintains, in short, that the meaning of Islam is *total submission to God*, and that it nowhere postulates a ‘total system’. It enjoins the believer to be fully obedient to God in his thinking, his feelings, his character and his worship. It is noteworthy that its message is in no way different for the wielder of political power. He too is expected to be responsible to God *in his capacity as an individual, and not as a controller of, or representative of a whole society*.

This does not mean that Islam makes no reference to the organization of society. It certainly does. But while commandments centering upon individual behaviour are absolute in nature, injunctions on social obligation are allowably dependent upon special sets of conditions and circumstances.

The individual who follows Islamic commandments in his own personal sphere is a complete Muslim: the fulfillment of his Islamic duty is not dependent upon his also obeying all social commands, many of which are beyond his individual capacity.

A good example of a religious duty being dependent on circumstances is the payment – or non-payment – of *zakat*.

The payment of *zakat* is obligatory for Muslims just as the saying of prayers is. But there is a basic difference in the nature of the two commandments. While prayers must be said at all events – no Muslim can ever be excused from this – *zakat* is only to be paid if the individual concerned has sufficient wealth to do so. He is not even obliged to set about earning money in order to fulfill this religious duty. At any given time, his eligibility is determined by what he already possesses.

This makes it clear that the Quran takes a very practical view of human existence in matters, which concern society and the individual's obligations thereto.

It follows then that the true Muslim need not feel it his duty to act as a rebel in a secular society, which, by its constitution, protects his rights and tolerates his religion. The position, of course, would be very different if the country were actually governed by infidels – the view propounded by those who hold fast to their own political interpretation of Islam. But it must be emphasized that *India is a secular country* and to say otherwise is to display the crassest ignorance. The Constitution clearly states that the followers of all religions are equally free to practise their beliefs, and the Indian Government adheres to the principle of non-interference in religious matters. The question of India being governed by infidels simply does not arise. The question, therefore, of Muslims having to be rebels in order to be true adherents of Islam, has no meaning in the Indian context.

4 January 1990.

To look down on another Muslim is to place Islam in jeopardy

Urwah recounts how, while on a pilgrimage, the Prophet was waiting for one Usamah ibn Zayd, who happened to be black and flat-nosed. When he arrived, some Yemenese who were with the Prophet at the time, remarked scoffingly, "Just look at what sort of person we were detained for!" According to Urwah, the mass apostasy that took place in the Yemen during the caliphate of Abu Bakr could be traced to this comment.

(Ibn Saad)

5-6 January 1990.

A Sign from the Almighty

Man proposes, God disposes.

It was the worst air-show accident in history. All three pilots and at least 47 spectators were killed in the holocaust. More than 360 people were injured, including many children. At first, many of the spectators did not know what had happened. One of them said, "I thought it was just some kind of special effect." This terrible happening bore out that saying that "man proposes but God disposes."



Time magazine of September 12, 1988, published a report with photographs, entitled, "Hellfire from the Heavens" which gave details of a tragic Air disaster in West Germany on August 28, 1988. It happened during an air-show, near the Ramstein Air Base in Frankfurt, in which ten military aircraft of the most up-to-date design were taking part. About 300,000 people had gathered to watch this special demonstration, fancifully titled, "Arrow Through the Heart."

As shown in the diagram given above, ten aircraft – jet planes flying at 350 miles per hour – flew high into the sky to create a heart-shaped formation. One of these planes was to leave this formation during the flight in order to pierce the "heart" like an arrow. This tenth jet, piloted by a veteran Italian flyer, Ivo Nutavelli, arched down in a solo loop intended to take him through the lower half of the two "heart" as the formations passed each other beneath him. But Nutavelli arrived too low and perhaps a split second early. The "arrow" was supposed to fly at a slightly higher altitude than the other jets, but levelled out at the same altitude, so that instead of "piercing the heart," it struck at least one of the other planes. Three planes burst into flames. In normal circumstances, this extraordinary display by military jets would have produced tremendous thrills and excitement, but after this terrible accident, all the glamour was blasted out of it in just a few hellish minutes.

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6 January 1990.

A man's greatest weakness is his offspring

The Prophet once picked up his grandson, Hasan ibn Ali, held him in his arms and kissed him. Looking towards his companions, he said: "It is children who make misers, fools and cowards of us."

(Al-Haythami)

Woman and War

When Germany invaded the USSR in 1941, the Soviet government made emotional appeals to its citizens to treat the saving of their motherland as a sacred duty. Of those who joined the military in response to these appeals, 800,000 were girls between the ages of 15 and 16.

A book has now been published in the USSR by S. Alexiyerich, entitled, *War's Unwomanly Face* (Progress Publisher, Moscow), which deals with the experiences of these girls. During her four years of research, the authoress travelled to one hundred cities and interviewed 200 women who had participated in the war.

The book reveals many hitherto unknown facts about women's participation in the war, one of which is that many women began to conceal the fact that they had ever had anything to do with the war. "We wanted to become ordinary girls again. Marriageable girls."

One of the interviewees, an educated woman by the name of Vera Safronova Davdova said, "I believe that the women reacted to the war in a completely different way from the men. The men were more matter-of-fact and casual about the experience, whereas the women reacted in an overwhelmingly emotional manner."

In recent times, a great deal of research has been done to discover the true nature of women and their inborn aptitudes. An attempt has been made to understand the female species scientifically, Astonishingly enough, the findings of these researches and investigations corroborate the view of women taken by Islam,

Modern research has shown that woman is sensitive by nature and is more emotional than man. This discovery makes it clear that it is not proper to have women enter those areas where cool and objective decision-making is required irrespective of the circumstances, and where "manliness" rather than "femininity" is a basic prerequisite.

In the departments of politics, war, international relations, large-scale industrial planning and, not the least important, in the law-courts, mental discipline and dispassionate decision-making are of the utmost importance. In such fields, the decision-makers have to be able to rise above the pressures of the immediate environment. Women, because of their inborn emotionalism, are unsuited to such tasks. Men, on the other hand, being relatively less emotional, are better able to deal with the contingencies of their position.

It is because of this biological difference between men and women that Islam has assigned them to separate spheres of influence. This is not a matter of gradation, but of a difference of workplace or field of action. This difference is supported in every way by scientific research. The truth is that it is the champions of feminism who are unscientific by the standards of today, and not the upholders of traditional Islamic attitudes.

8 January 1990

Barbaric behaviour is to be abhorred at all times.

Suhayl ibn Amr was one of those taken captive by the Muslims at the battle of Badr. A famous orator of the Quraysh he had been wont to make vehement attacks on the Prophet. Umar asked the Prophet for permission to break two of Subayl's front teeth, so that in future he would be deterred from making such speeches. This the Prophet refused, saying: "I will not disfigure him; if I were to do so, God would disfigure me, even though I am His messenger."

(Akhlaq an Nabi)

Nothing

Everyone is engaged in some activity or the other and regards what he is doing as of some importance. He thinks he is doing something for the final day. But when the day is over, and the last moment of his life approaches, he gazes with astonishment on his failure to achieve anything; the last page of his life's book has imprinted upon it, 'Nothing'

Louis XVI was the last of the emperors of France. He was born in 1754 and died in 1793. The French democratic revolution of 1789 took place during the rule of this king. When this revolution proved successful, he was imprisoned. He lived in imprisonment for some time, then on January 21, 1793 he was put to death for the crime of plotting with external powers against the French Revolution in order to regain his lost empire.

A historian writes of this final emperor of France:

'It was the habit of King Louis XVI of France to keep a daily diary. In it he would make a brief entry every day about an appointment, an event, or a meeting. On July 14, 1789, he had spent long hours hunting. At night he scribbled one short word against that date: "Nothing"'

The 14th of July page of the French King's diary is the final page of the life of every man. This is not just the story of an unsuccessful king, but the story of all men.

Everyone is engaged in some activity or the other and regards what he is doing as of some importance. He thinks he is doing something for the final day. But when the day is over, and the last moment of his life approaches, he gazes with astonishment on his failure to achieve anything; the last page of his life's book has imprinted upon it, 'Nothing'.

How strange that we cannot understand the valuelessness of our actions, and how equally strange that we should remain preoccupied by non-issues. How many of us, if we were truthful, would write "Nothing" in the pages of our diaries.

10 January 1990

The Treasure House of Power

The human brain is the most extraordinary of all God's gifts to man. But even the greatest scientists have been unable to use it to the fullest extent. Considering that in the brain we have the most powerful machine in the world, let us make supreme efforts to put it to full use so that humanity should go from success to success. With such a "machine" in our possession, there should never be even the merest whisper of failure.

The brain is a fabulous mechanism. About the size of half a grapefruit, it can record 800 memories a second for the average 75 years many of us live, without exhausting itself. The human brain retains everything it takes in and never forgets anything. Even though we don't recall all the information received, everything is on permanent file in our brain. If a computer to match the brain's potential was built, it would occupy space comparable to the size of the Empire State Building (1,250 feet tall) and need 1,000,000,000 watts of electrical power to run. The cost would be equally immense. The mind is one of God's most amazing gifts to man. Yet most people use only a small fraction of their mental ability. For many, the power remains largely untapped.

(The Plain Truth, October 1988 p. 29)

The human brain is the most extraordinary gift of God to man. But even the greatest of scientists, are able to use it only partially. In the form of the brain, you possess the most powerful machine in the world. Put it to full use and you will never have to complain of failure.

The human brain is the most extraordinary of all God's gifts to man. But even the greatest scientists have been unable to use it to the fullest extent. Considering that in the brain we have the most powerful machine in the world, let us make supreme efforts to put it to full use so that humanity should go from success to success. With such a "machine" in our possession, there should never be even the merest whisper of failure.

11-14 January 1990,

Setting our Own House in Order

“Those of the Children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by David and Jesus the son of Mary. This is because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses and never restrained one another from wrongdoing. Evil is that which they did. “(Quran, 5:78-79)

This verse of the Quran shows that for a religious community to retain the true spirit of faith, they should direct their attention towards setting their own house in order. The Muslims of today, however, far from paying attention to setting their own house in order, have taken it upon themselves to set other people's houses in order. It is in this way that they seek to keep their faith alive. Their faith does require them to discourage others from wrongdoing, and even to take an uncompromising attitude towards wicked deeds, but within their *own* society. Once the faithful abandon efforts to keep their own house in order, then the curse of God descends upon them. That is what happened to the Jews, and the same thing happens to the Muslims when they sink to such depths. No amount of effort on their part to set others' houses in order will atone for their failure to restrain members of their own society from evil.

There are countless instances of the Prophet having warned his followers from acting in the manner of the Jews in this regard. Time and time again he emphasised that if they abandoned efforts to keep their society up to the standard demanded by their faith, they would be cursed in the sight of God. This was what happened to the Jews, and the same fate would await them if they acted in like fashion. Here are a few statements of the Prophet on this subject:

“The state of the Children of Israel was such that when one of them saw his brother doing some wrong, he would at first discourage him from acting so, but the next day the wrongdoing which he had seen his brother perpetrate would not prevent him from eating with that person and keeping company with him. When God saw them acting in this manner, He intermingled their hearts with one another and made His prophets, David and Jesus the son of Mary, utter a curse upon them. This was because they disobeyed and persisted in their excesses.” The Prophet then went on to say: “By the One who has control over my soul, it is absolutely incumbent upon you to encourage one another to do good and to restrain your own people from wrongdoing. You must catch hold of the arm of evil and turn it towards righteousness. If you do not do this, God will intermingle your hearts with one another and He will cause a curse to descend upon you, as it descended upon the Jews.”

On another occasion, the Prophet said: “By the One who has control over my soul, it is incumbent upon you to urge one another on to good, and to restrain one another from wrongdoing. If you do not do this, then quite soon the wrath of God will descend upon you. Then you will call out to Him, but He will not hear your cry.”

And the Prophet is also reported as saying: "Certainly, God does not punish everybody because of the wrongdoing of a few people. Until, that is, they have reached a stage when they see evil in their own midst and are in a position to take a stand against it, yet they do not do so. When things reach this stage, then God punishes everyone, the elite and the masses alike."

The point made in this verse of the Quran and these statements of the Prophet is an extremely important one. It is that the law of God, which applies to the Muslims, is exactly the same as that which applied to the Jews. In this regard, there is no difference between the two communities.

When one considers matters in this light, the state of communal relations in India would appear to represent a fulfillment of the prophecies mentioned above. Could this be a manifestation of God's curse upon the Muslims? The word "curse" is a translation of the Arabic word *la'nah*, which literally means 'being removed from good.' The Muslims of this country certainly seem to have been removed from God's mercy. Day in and day out, they pray for God's wrath to descend upon their supposed enemies, but their prayers are not answered. A handful of troublemakers in their communities perpetrate riots and the whole community suffers as a result. These are all signs that the Muslims of today have themselves been subjected to God's punishment. The fears, which the Prophet expressed with regard to his community, appear to have been borne out.

Indiscipline and waywardness have become the order of the day amongst Muslims. They are always ready to start a fight, even over the pettiest of issues. Invariably, it is they who start communal riots, due to provocative acts on the part of certain elements among them. When these riots escalate, the whole community suffers as a result. The same situation crops up again and again. The entire Muslim community has become aware of this state of affairs. But not a single group among the Muslims condemns these offenders. There is no one to catch hold of these people's hands, as if to say: "Enough!"

There are plenty of Muslim leaders who are only too ready to lay the blame on the Government or at the door of the non-Muslims. There are even some who have set themselves up as judges for all mankind and some who lay wild claims to being able to alter the course of Time. But not one of them is ready to take the Muslims to task for what they are doing. Why is it that they do not point the finger of accusation at members of their own community who, by their provocative actions, incite their fellow-countrymen to take retaliatory action, with the result that the streets of our country become soaked in blood?

The statements of the Prophet quoted above show quite clearly that communal tension in this country can be eased only if the Muslims take it upon themselves to set their own house in order. They should keep a watch on those individuals in their community who are responsible for provoking riots. At present, Muslim leaders have directed their agitation entirely towards the Government and the non-Muslim community. It is they themselves, however, who are responsible for their own community, and it is the troublesome elements within it that they should try to contain. By abandoning this task and blaming others, they are only adding to their own monumental guilt.

Certain Success

“One who has said his morning prayer finds the guarantee of God.”

I used to watch an idolater worshipping idols made of stones daily in the morning before opening his shop. And he was a successful shopkeeper.

One day I asked him the reason for his daily worship of the idols before starting his business. He replied that they were our gods. “When we have worshipped them we are assured of our success through their help. These idols are a source of confidence for us.”

The only great secret of success is confidence. If a person manages to find this source of confidence, even if it is only through unreal gods, he can succeed in this world. This goes to show that if someone believed in the real God, and this belief gave him the necessary confidence, his success would be all the greater.

A *hadith* goes: “One who has said his morning prayer finds the guarantee of God.” It is as if the morning prayer brings man to the guardianship of God. Then it is God’s responsibility to protect man on all occasions of crises and to lead man to success by extending all His help to him.

Man rests at night. Then when morning approaches, he goes out to work after due preparation. Now if man can bring himself to have full conviction in God, when he gets up in the morning and says his prayers before going out, he will enter the field of life with full confidence. He will be convinced in his heart of hearts that success awaits him. There is just no question of failure.

One who enters the arena of life with this confidence will work hard with all his strength. He will pursue even the most difficult path with the conviction that he is awaited by certain success.

Nothing but success can await such a man in this world.

16 January 1990

Genuine Sympathy

“In a word, their secret lies in excellence. They have made excellence their target in life. And when you have achieved excellence in your field, no one can bar you from success.”

In the course of a conversation with a young man who had received his degree in science from a university in America and who was currently working in an academic institution in that country. I asked him if he had met any Jews while he was there. He replied that he had, and that in fact, there were some Jews working in that same office in which he was employed. The director of that institute was also a Jew.

Then I asked him what he thought was the reason for the extraordinary success of the Jews, who were, after all, only a small minority in the USA. He replied, “In a word, their secret lies in excellence. They have made excellence their target in life. And when you have achieved excellence in your field, no one can bar you from success.”

He said, moreover, that the academic institution established by the Jews in America had a very stringent policy on the awards of scholarships. The most striking feature of this policy was that although it defined eligibility for non-Jewish students as having 40 per cent marks or more, it demanded the very high standard of 75 per cent marks from Jewish students. This policy would appear at first sight to be unfair, even harsh to the Jews themselves. But this different standard, set for the Jews, by the Jews, is not an act of severity, but of sympathy. In this way, they inspire their own people to work very hard indeed. This gives them the impetus to leave others far behind in their fields.

The present world is a world of competition. It is no place for the easy or the seekers of concessions. It is only those who strive with every fibre of their being towards the goal of excellence who will finally take their places in the front ranks of society.

When Small is Great

India's freedom movement began in 1799 with the death of Sultan Tipu in the war with the English. For the next hundred odd years, fighting with the British, abusing them, inviting foreign governments to wage war against them and other such hostile actions became the order of the day.

These activities, attended as they were by a certain amount of clamour and agitation, would invariably bring themselves to the notice of the English, who would then proceed to crush them. However, with the appearance of Gandhiji on the political scene, the whole situation underwent a sudden and radical change. Where former leaders had demanded freedom through violence, Gandhiji followed the path of non-violence. In fact, he set himself to running the freedom movement along such lines as would appear of so little consequence to the English that they would pay no heed to it, until it was too late for counter-action.

A crucial piece of strategy devised by Gandhiji to this end was the Dandi March. This was a journey which he made on foot from his ashram at Sabarmati to Dandi, on the coast of Gujarat – traditionally a salt-producing region – in order to lodge a protest against the salt-making plants being transferred from private to state ownership, thus causing hardship to the entire nation. He walked 240 miles in 24 days to make salt on the seashore in defiance of the salt-law regulations. There, holding the salt in his hand, he broke this foreign-imposed law.

When Gandhiji announced his plan, the English officials held a meeting during which an English officer remarked: "Let him make his salt. Mr. Gandhi will have to find a great deal more than a pinch of salt to bring down the British Empire."

But this pinch of salt – strange as it may seem – was exactly what brought the British Empire tumbling down. A thing so small and insignificant in itself, it had the most momentous consequences for the fate of India and its erstwhile rules.

Exploding the Myth

Wine was originally prohibited in Islam because of its bad effects on a man's spiritual health. Physical health was not at issue. But now recent research has also exploded the myth that a small quantity of wine has no bad effects on a man's physical health. "Moderate drinkers" writes Christine Doyle, "can no longer comfort themselves with the appealing and growing belief that a few drinks a day may actually be good for them and even lower their risk of heart disease."

Much publicity has been given recently to investigations, which show that moderate amounts of alcohol might give protection against heart disease. This is by apparently raising the blood level of a substance known as high-density lipoprotein, (HDL) one component of cholesterol – the fatty culprit of clogged arteries.

The high blood level of HDL and consequently lower levels of the harmful components of cholesterol are believed to lead to fewer fatty plaques and thus less risk.

But biochemical research, using new and more sophisticated ways of analysing HDL, shows that this substance itself may be split into three components, and that alcohol leads to high levels of a component that is believed to have minimal or no protective effect, say number of researchers.

This finding is bad news for heavy smokers who also drink and who hope that alcohol may do battle with nicotine leading to a reduction in the high heart risk associated with smoking: a recent British heart study disclosed high HDL levels among smokers who drank regularly.

Further dismal news for hopeful moderate drinkers comes from another study announced recently by the US National Cancer Institute, which suggests that men who drink two cans or more of beer every day triple their chances of rectal cancer. The 14-year study of 8,000 men also suggested that drinking more than 50 ounces of wine – about 12 small wineglasses – a month, or the equivalent in whisky, leads to higher rates of lung cancer. Why this should be so is not known.

The Prophet of Islam, may peace be upon him, laid down that whatever intoxicates in greater quantities is unlawful also in smaller quantities. People used to ask, however, "why is it that wine in small quantities is prohibited in Islam, considering that it has no bad effects on human health?"

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19 January 1990

No adverse reaction to rude behaviour.

Anas ibn Malik tells of how, once, when he and the Prophet, who was garbed in a thick-bordered Abyssinian shawl, were walking along together, they came across a man of rustic appearance, who came up to them and caught hold of the Prophet's shawl. He pulled at it with such force that marks appeared on the Prophet's neck. "O Mohammad, give me some of God's wealth which is in your keeping," said the man. Quite unaffected by the man's rudeness, the Prophet smiled and gave orders for him to be provided for from the Treasury according to his needs.

(Al-Bukhari, Muslim)

20 January 1990

You can Always Reconstruct what has been Destroyed

America may have destroyed Japan in 1945 with its 'super bomb', but it Could not take away Japan's potential with its computers, and now this latest supercomputers, Japan revolutionized its own economy in a mere matter of 45 years.

A report with a New York dateline, "Japan's Bid to Excel the US in Super computers' and reproduced in the *Times of India* (April 13, 1989, section 2, page 4) casts serious doubts on the USA's ability to hold its own any longer in the field of super computers. Despite the USA's long dominance in this area, it will, in 1990, be upstaged by Japan, which will be launching in world markets a super computer, which they rate as the fastest working machine in the world. This gloomy picture is confirmed by a study recently completed by the analysts of an American Computer Corporation.

The Japanese computer, named SX-X, can perform 20 billion operations of scientific calculations in one second flat. At this rate, it is 25 percent faster than the fastest American computer. Besides its perfect performance, it has another specialty : its relative cheapness.

This supercomputer has a key role to play not only in scientific research, oil exploration, weather forecasting etc., but also in national security, particularly in the field of nuclear weaponry.

America may have destroyed Japan in 1945 with its 'super bomb', but it could not take away Japan's potential. With its computers, and now this latest supercomputers, Japan revolutionized its own economy in a mere matter of 45 years. Destruction, however massive, can never put an end to opportunities for construction. And the power of construction undoubtedly far exceeds that of destruction.

21-23 January 1990

New Spirit of Cooperation Realistic Approach

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV, the last Soviet communist party leader to address the general assembly, pounded a shoe on his desk and assured Americans that “we will bury you.” Mr. Mikhail Gorbachov’s arrival 28 years later starkly underscores the transformation in the US – Soviet relations since he took control of the party. In diplomatic circles today, the talk is of cooperation, mutual interests, and multilateral diplomacy. Confrontation between the capitalist and socialist systems has taken a back seat. US tycoons woo Mr. Gorbachov and his staff hints at a visit to Wall Street, the antithesis of Soviet ideology. In 1960, Khrushchev was enraged over the then UN secretary-general, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold’s action in sending US peacekeeping troops to the Congo, then a key Soviet client state. “The general assembly of 1960 was the greatest circus in the history of the United Nations,” recalls Mr. Brian Urquhart, who then was under secretary-general in charge of peacekeeping operations. Sometimes crude, profane and easily angered, Khrushchev created the most memorable scene in the history of UN debate when he interrupted a delegate’s remarks by pounding a shoe on the Soviet delegation’s desk for a point of order. “Khrushchev got so abusive that the Irish president of the assembly, Mr. Freddie Boland, broke the gavel in calling him to order, and the head of the gavel flew off into the general assembly,” said Mr. Urquhart. Mr. Gorbachov is likely to provide no melodramatic fireworks. Unlike Khrushchev, Mr. Gorbachov has rejected the idea that capitalism and socialism are mutually exclusive. This stress on cooperation in areas of mutual interest has been spilling over for some time into the UN.

The Soviet Union has in recent years relinquished its practice of vetoing many Security Council actions, and has negotiated consensus positions with the US, China, Britain and France. This new spirit of cooperation has led to the political settlement in Afghanistan and the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war, both of which would have been unlikely under the confrontative Soviet style of Khrushchev or Mr. Leonid I. Brezhnev. Under Mr. Gorbachov, the Soviet have been promoting an aggressive though hazy new plan for comprehensive international security. In which the UN would play a key role in monitoring, verification and peacekeeping. Mr. Gorbachov has also suggested that rulings of the world court, now merely advisory, be made binding on UN member nations, especially Security Council members. In his speech to the world body, Mr. Gorbachov may expand upon previous Soviet proposals, which have included the establishment of a world space organization, having all nations earmark troops for a standing army of UN peacekeepers, establishing a UN navy to escort commercial shipping in danger zones, and UN monitoring of disarmament and international arms sales. The US and other Western allies have lauded parts of the Soviet security proposals, but feel the whole package is too vague to endorse. A UN visit by a Soviet leader is a rarity-the foreign minister usually delivers the annual address

to the general assembly. Between Khrushchev and Mr. Gorbachov, the only other top ranking Soviet visitor was premier Alexei N. Kosygin, the head of the Soviet government apparatus but less powerful than party chief Brezhnev, who came to the UN in 1967 to support Arab complaints against Israel. Mr. Kosygin held a summit with the US president, Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson.

The thaw in East-West relations since Mr. Gorbachov's ascension to power is all the more striking when compared with the tensions that prevailed at the UN only five years ago after the Soviet downing of Korean airline flight 0071, with the loss of 269 lives. The Soviet foreign minister, Mr. Andrei Gromyko, planned to come to the UN to explain his country's actions, but the governors of New York and New Jersey denied permission for his plane to land at their commercial airports, and the state department insisted on a landing at a military base. Mr. Gromyko cancelled his visit. In the meantime, homeless activists angered by Gorbachov's plans to visit New York city's opulent Trump Tower are inviting the Soviet president to a homeless shelter and food line to get "a more balanced and realistic view of our nation."

The Times of India, December 7, 1988.

Time magazine (13 February 1989) has on its cover in bold letters 'Comrades again'. As we all know that although China and Russia both are communist countries, the enmity was going on between them for about 30 years. But now both countries are drawing nearer. This is the topic, which has been made cover story in the said issue of the *Time*. Inside the article carries this heading.

'To mend a rift – an era of hostility is coming to an end.'

When both China and Russia saw that the enmity between them is only incurring harm to both of them then both of them decided to end this enmity and develop friendly relations. To reach this new decision they had to admit many of their past mistakes. They had to be willing to forsake their demands against one another. They bore the unbearable so that they may construct a better future for themselves. This is what is known as realism. No success can be achieved without this realism in the present world.

The USA, USSR and China are the most powerful nations of the world. When the powerful nations too can have no choice but to pursue the path of realism and understanding because there is no other way for their existence. Then, how on earth can weaker nations survive by adopting the policy of clash and confrontation. In such a state of affairs the weaker nations need to follow an approach of realism and understanding more than it is necessary for powerful nations.

Illness: A Warning

Illness is a warning. It is nature's alarm, which awakens the slumbering individual To the necessity of preparing in advance for what is to come.

In a letter written anonymously to the *American Journal of Medicine*, a doctor gives a detailed account of a woman patient's protracted illness when all efforts towards her recovery had failed. He tells of how tired she had become of her life, and of how he brought that life to an end: "I put a patient suffering from terminal cancer to sleep forever to end her misery."*

Man considers death to be the end of life. But it is, in reality, the event which launches man on his migration from the temporary, to the eternal life. It is the decisive moment when man, after the expiry of his time of trial, is faced with the results. In the words of a *hadith*, it is the Great Day of Reckoning, when man will appear before his Maker to be judged.

There is no doubt that illness is a great affliction. But if looked at as a great reality of life, it should be regarded as more of a blessing. This is because it brings one a timely reminder that the final stage of life is near at hand. It also alerts one to any laxity of which one may have been guilty. It is, therefore, nature's alarm which awakens the slumbering individual to the necessity of preparing in advance for what is to come. Illness, in that sense, is a warning. But the ignorant, who take illness purely as an affliction, remain unaware, to the very last, of the lesson that it is designed to bring them.

* This incident was referred to in an article entitled, 'Knowledge Explosion' by Mr. Rajendra Prabhu (a resident of Washington) published in the *Hindustan Times* of April 7, 1989.

25 January 1990

Sizing Oneself Up

“The most important thing is to get rid of the defects which prevent me from improving my performance. My coach and I know that I have reserves which we must put to use.”

The famous Russian athlete and champion long-jumper, Robert Emmiyan, (born February 15, 1965) has won extraordinary fame by winning a number of gold medals in international competitions.

In an interview with Indian journalist V. Krishna Swami (*Times of India*, April 5, 1988) he explained what he did to achieve his successes.

“The most important thing to get rid of the defects which prevent me from improving my performance. My coach and I know that I have reserves which we must put to use.”

The secret of success in games as portrayed by Robert Emmiyan is one which equally applies to life in general. Whenever one fails in life, it is due to one's own defects and to try to remove them before entering any arena of action. Better preparation is the sole secret of success in this world. In the world of today, the truly successful are those who fulfill this condition. Those who fail are the ones who omitted to prepare themselves adequately for the battle of life, and who did not therefore, exploit their own potential to the full.

25 January 1990

To curse a Muslim is a great sin.

Salmah ibn Akwah says that in the days of the Prophet, if anyone was heard cursing his Muslim brethren, he would be considered to have entered one of the gates of mortal sin.

(Tabarani)

Patience- Piety

Believers, you are accountable for yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path (5:105). If you are patient and guard yourselves against evil, their machinations will never harm you. Allah has knowledge of all their actions (3:120).

The Believers have the assurance of the Quran that as long as they accept the true guidance to the tenets of their faith, then they will not be harmed in any way by the measures which their opponents take against them. Here are two of the verses on this subject:

Believers, you are accountable for yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path (5:105). If you are patient and guard yourselves against evil, their machinations will never harm you. Allah has knowledge of all their actions (3: 120).

This statement means that believers should pay attention to their internal state, as opposed to the external state of affairs in which they find themselves. What is all-important for them is that they should adhere to the guidance which they have received from God. If they are true to this guidance, they will find that it leads them on a path of piety and patience. These qualities will act as a protective barrier against the machinations of others. Patience and piety will provide them with a defence that is impenetrable. No scheming and plotting on the part of those alien to their cause will be able to break through their line of defence.

No individual or nation is alone in this world. Far from it: there are innumerable people inhabiting this world besides ourselves, and all of them have been given freedom by God. Everyone is trying to improve his situation in life. If someone else comes in their way, they will push him aside, just to ensure that nothing interferes with their own progress. This being the case, it is inevitable that individuals should be hurt by others from time to time, or suffer a loss at someone else's hands. That is the way God has made the world, and there is no changing His order of things. It is not just where Muslims are living together in one country with non-Muslims that this happens. Even in places with an entirely Muslim population, the same situation prevails.

Under such conditions, problems cannot be solved by coming into conflict with everyone who clashes with one's interests. There is only one way to solve the problem, and that is by adopting the method with the Quran calls *iradh*, avoidance. Only by avoiding those who try to obstruct one's progress is a person able to successfully continue his journey in life. But there is a virtue that must be cultivated in order to adopt such a course – patience. To remove oneself from the path of someone who is trying to block one's progress requires a high degree of patience and forbearance. But if one does not do so, there is no way that one will reach one's destination.

Why is it that patience is such a difficult quality to acquire? It is because it involves suppressing one's feelings when one has been provoked, and putting up with temporary losses in life. Only one who has risen above a mindlessly vengeful mentality is able to achieve patience. How is it possible to do so? The answer, also alluded to in the Quran, is that this can come about through piety. Piety is the virtue of having the fear of God eternally in one's heart. Generally, people live on a human level. Their characters are gauged by what they say and do. A pious person, however, takes to living on a divine level. This means cherishing God's promises above all else. A pious person's every action in life will be aimed at consolidating the blessings promised to him by God. Externally, he appears to be living in this world, but-in fact, he is living on a higher plain than that of this world, for his inner senses are attached to the everlasting world of God. It is for this reason that piety endows a person with such unconquerable strength that no calamity can upset his mental balance. No loss in life will be too great for him to bear. Piety imbues a person with the loftiest of human qualities. Once a person possesses such qualities, he acquires an indomitable spirit, which no power in the world is able to stamp out.

There is a deep-rooted connection between patience and piety. Piety involves keeping within the limits which God has laid down. However, when one loses patience with a person who has taken action against one, then inevitably one strays beyond the bounds of piety, committing all kinds of deeds which have been prohibited by God. For instance, in one's dislike for a person, one may act in a provocative manner towards him. Antagonism and anger may incite one to speak unjustly about a rival. One may be led to play down one's own excesses, while portraying the excesses committed by another in an exaggerated light. It may be one person who has wronged one, yet one wreaks revenge on some other person. A person's first loyalty should be to the truth, yet when one falls prey to antagonistic feelings, one loses sight of the truth, always putting oneself in the right and others in the wrong, though the reality of the situation may be very different to what one makes out. These are just some of the ways in which a person who loses patience forfeits piety also. And there are many other ways in which this can happen.

To maintain a pious course through life is to ensure that one will be successful, for one will always enjoy the help of God. If one strays from the path of piety, one will be denied God's help: and nothing but failure and ruin await a person who is without the aid of divine succour.