



Al-Risala 1990

March

Change Yourself

Violette Graff of France, a specialist on India's religious minorities, was recently interviewed by Vaiju Naravne in Paris. The interview was published under the heading of "Religious Pluralism is India's Wealth" in the *Times of India* of November 24, 1989. The Interrelated problems of the Muslim minorities and communal riots inevitably cropped up. When asked, "Do you think the Muslim community has failed to produce a viable leadership – the root cause of most of the problems of the community," she opined that, in the present situation, it was almost impossible to produce a "viable leadership" from amongst India's Muslims, it being both dangerous and impracticable. If any single leader of the like of Jinnah were to appear on the scene, the government would immediately dub him an obscurantist or a separatist. A new Jinnah! On the other hand, if a leader carried favour with the government, Muslims would regard him as a mere showman, a lightweight political stooge and one, therefore, who could not be considered a genuine spokesman of their community. Not to mince words, he would be looked upon, ultimately, as an agent of the government or of the Hindus.

The present-day Muslims of India are faced with an extremely complex situation. This is the prime reason for no effective leadership having emerged from the Muslim community. Jinnah-style leadership is suspect in the eyes of the Muslims. What is possible not useful. And vice versa.

The situation has but one solution. As the old adage puts it: "When it is impossible to change others, you must change your self."

Muslims cannot reverse the thinking either of the government or for that matter of the majority community. So let them change their own thinking to ensure the emergence of a sound leadership and to make the task of consolidating the community – at present in a shambles – a distinct and immediate possibility.

The Great Provider

“O Lord, I am certain that you will take care of me; that you will remember me when I have forgotten myself; that you will sustain me when I go astray; that you will be careful when I am careless; that you will forgive me when I have erred.”

The other day, my curiosity was aroused by the heading, “I was careless, they were not,” which appeared in the Opinion Column of the *Times of India* (November 30, 1989). These words, it seemed were the summing up of an experience which an inhabitant of Delhi’s Friends Colony East and while travelling in a train. He described his experience as follows:

I was careless enough to drop my wallet in the rail coach I took from Kalka to Delhi. I took it my pocket had been picked and had to hope of getting it back. The next morning came a telephone call from the office of Northern Railway’s divisional manager to say it had been found. They located me by an identity slip in it. All the contents were intact and I was treated with utmost courtesy by the officer and his staff. (Krishna Khanna)

The unexpectedly happy ending to his tale reminded me of a Persian verse, which very neatly expresses the relationship between God and man: “Our Lord is looking to our needs caring better than we can.”

This is very true of God’s relationship to man, and on a scale so vast as to be beyond human imaginings. But there is a condition to it. Man must have come to trust God to such an extent that he spontaneously exclaims: “O Lord, I am certain that you will take Care of me; that you will remember me when I have forgotten myself; that you will sustain me when I go astray; that you will be careful when I am careless: that you will forgive me when I have erred.”

When a man calls upon God in this way to be his Sustainer – in a sense making Him his Sustainer – God meets his expectations by “providing him with all the sustenance he requires.

A Living People

For a living people, there is no difference between saying and doing.

Mr. Edwin M Reingold is a senior American journalist who, in 1969, was appointed chief of the Tokyo Bureau of *Time* magazine. In this capacity he has studied Japan and the Japanese people for the last 20 years,

In the light of his 20-year experience, Mr. Reingold wrote an article on Japan (*Time*, June 5, 1989) in which, amongst other things, he notes that “even though the Japanese appear to be quite rigid, they can move quickly once they have decided it is to their advantage.”

This is the most certain sign of a living nation. For a living people, there is no difference between saying and doing. Once the truth of a principle is clear to them, they are immediately moved to action.

You can always go by their word, for their actions are always exactly in accordance with their declared intentions.

This virtue is found in the highest degree in the true believer. For the common man, self-interest may be the greatest incentive to positive action, but for the true believer, just being shown the truth of the matter in hand is sufficient to make him swing into action.

The true believer cannot conceive of a proven truth not being put into practice. Once the truth of a cause has been established by reasoning, he cannot then refuse to devote his life to that cause.

The Prophet and his companies are perfect models of this quality: where the truth was laid bare to them, they devoted their entire lives to its propagation. Although faced with seemingly insuperable obstacles and all kinds of hardships, they never once wavered, finally sacrificing their lives in the cause of truth.

A True Place of Worship

Simplicity of the mosque and the natural form of worship which takes place in it, have made it into a living call to Islam, serving a missionary purpose in the way that it impresses people. The *very* sight of it has a strong appealing force. The mosque, by its very existence, is a form of propagation of Islam.

Dr. Ralph R Sisson, a professor of communication at the New York State University, had occasion to visit our Islamic Centre on January 27, 1989. At this meeting, I introduced to him the Islamic, concepts of monotheism, prophethood and the life hereafter. In, the course of the conversation I asked him, "Having been born into a Christian family, do you go to church?" He said that formerly he had been a regular attender, but that now he had stopped going altogether. He explained that the atmosphere in the church was strangely incongruous. Ornamentation, music, different voices and rituals made it seem more like a club than a place of worship.

What this American professor had to say about the church holds true of all other places of worship, with the exception of the mosque. The distortions in the religions of today have made their churches, synagogues, etc. seem more like places for social gatherings than places of solemn worship. The Islamic mosque, on the other hand, is extremely simple. It looks genuinely like a place of worship, whereas other places of worship have all kinds of distracting elements in their external appearance. This simplicity of the mosque and the natural form of worship which takes place in it, have made it into a living call to Islam, serving a missionary purpose in the way that it impresses people. The *very* sight of it has a strong appealing force. The mosque, by its very existence, is a form of propagation of Islam.

If present-day Muslims have closed the doors of the mosque to non-Muslims, it is because they themselves are deplorably lacking in *da'wah* consciousness. Even in those mosques which are considered historical monuments to which non-Muslims may freely gain admission, at the time of prayers all non-Muslims are asked to leave. In what way is this supposed to be consistent with the spirit of *da'wah*?

It is only when Muslims freely and gladly throw open the doors of their mosques to non-Muslims that they will be able to bring to them all the hope and enlightenment of Islam. You cannot warm the hearts of your potential *mad'us* by making them stand outside your mosques. This is no better than telling them to stand apart from your community.

6 March 1990

The role of the head of a household.

Umar ibn Khattab having asked for the hand of Ali's daughter, Umm Kulthum, who was considerably his junior, Ali instructed his sons, Hasan and Husayn, to make arrangements for their sister's marriage to their uncle Umar. "She is a woman no different from others," they replied, "She can look after her own affairs." At this, Ali became angry and was about to walk out, but Hasan caught hold of his cloak. "Father", he said, "we could not bear it if you left us." Hasan and Husayn then made the arrangements for their sister's marriage to Umar.

(Kanz al-Ummal)

6 March 1990

Cheats are not true Muslims.

Passing through the marketplace, the prophet noticed a man selling from a heap of grain. The Prophet ran his fingers through the grain whereupon his fingers became wet. "How is it that your grain is wet?" he asked the owner, who said that it was because of the rain. "Then why not put the wet portion on top, so that people can see it," said the Prophet, adding: "Those who deceive others do not belong with us."

(Al-Bukhari, Muslim)

The Revival of Islam

There are many people in this world who would like to see the revival of Islam reduced to a programme, rather than have it develop into a full-fledged movement springing naturally from a vital and personal sense of mission. But human life is just too vast – and complex – to be confined within such narrow limits. It is indeed unfortunate that they feel they cannot understand what has to be done unless they have a definite plan outlined for them by someone else, for this, ultimately, means substituting the bare bones of a programme for a real flesh-and-blood movement. It is also to underestimate the potential magnitude of any such movement. The truth is that if individuals must have a programme, they themselves must actively become its makers, as opposed to being passive recipients. They themselves must breathe life into it.

This is the true function of Islamic *da'wah* to arouse the minds of individuals, and to inspire them to become the programme makers. We must remember that all that the Prophet Muhammad may peace be upon whom, did was to call the people of Mecca to worship one God. He did not give the people a 'programme' as it is understood in modern times. Yet, whoever was influenced by that *da'wah* call, was able to fabricate the whole 'programme' for himself. After imbibing the concept of monotheism from the Prophet, he would himself discover all the forms of practical action required. It is especially noteworthy that although those Muslims who left Mecca for Abyssinia were given no actual 'programme', they were so successful in representing Islam in Abyssinia that, from there, Islamic call became international in its scope. Those Muslims too, who left Mecca for Medina before the Prophet's emigration were likewise able to launch the Islamic *da'wah* movement so effectively – with nothing other than the verses of the Quran to support them – that Medina eventually became the greatest focal point for Islam.

Religion as a conscious option, as opposed to an inherited tradition.

The spreading of religion is the greatest revolutionary undertaking. It brings into existence such people as are in themselves a complete programme. Such a mission makes its impact on a man's whole existence. It stimulates his nature in such a way that a whole fountain of divine wisdom springs up within him. Once the Prophet had awakened this divine wisdom in his companions, they had no need of anything else in this world, its effect is such as to make people hold God by the hand, walk with God's feet, hear with God's ears, see with God's eyes. In the words of the Hadith, they become limitless, profound human beings, unsurpassed in wisdom.

Such man become substitute for everything else. No matter how difficult a problem they can always be relied upon to produce best solution. Whatever the occasion, they can decide upon the most propitious course of action. One should rightly tremble before the insight of a believer, for it is through God's eyes that he sees.

God has indeed imbued human nature with everything that man needs in life. But it is only when man responds to the call of Islam that God's bounties stand revealed. Before that, they remain concealed behind an impenetrable veil, causing man to be a prey to mental and moral stagnation, prejudice and thoughtlessness. But once Islam has removed these imperfections from man's psyche, human nature is at once illumined by that divine light which radiates upon the heavens and the earth. After that man sees everything as it actually is. And for one who can see things as they are, the problem of having no 'Programme' is as easily solved as taking a lift – and not a staircase – to the top of a very tall building.

The following incident is an apt illustration of this point.

An Indian woman living in Tripoli with her husband once found herself in a terrible predicament. One night her husband told her that he had a severe pain in the stomach and obviously needed a doctor. Now, in Tripoli there is no arrangement for house telephone by means of which a doctor can be directly summoned from his house or the hospital. Even if there had been, the wife knew no Arabic, and being a simple housewife, had no contact with anyone outside her own home. But the sight of her own dear husband writhing in agony was enough to make her overcome all her drawbacks. Out she went into the night, ignorant of the streets and with no idea even of the names or addresses of any of the local doctors. Her determination to save her husband drove her on and despite her unfamiliarity with the local language and topography, she eventually found herself on the doorstep of a Pakistani doctor to whom she could speak in Urdu. To her great relief, he promptly agreed to come and see her husband. On examining him, he found that it was a case of appendicitis which required an immediate operation. The doctor thereupon took him in his car to the hospital where he was operated upon without delay. The patient took only a few days to make a full recovery.

Most people find themselves in similar straits at some time or the other in their lives. Every individual is sooner or later confronted with situations for which he has made no advance preparations. But he pulls himself together, faces up to whatever crisis it is and ultimately wins through. Such situations, however, tend to be handled well only when they are of direct material interest to the person concerned, or to the members of his family. If we were to develop the same personal interest in religion, it would be a simple matter to become familiar with the demands of religion and to make sacrifices for its cause; problems relating to religion would in fact begin to solve themselves, just as non-religious problems are solved everyday by the interested parties. Then people would have no difficulty in finding their 'programme' or religion, just as the above-mentioned lady was able to find a doctor for her husband in the face of considerable odds.

I am often questioned about our Islamic Center's programme. Ah! How to tell our questioners that we need *people – devoted workers* not a programme! Be the issue Islamic, or non-Islamic, it is, in any event, men who are needed, rather than a programme, or a plan of action. Revolution in congregational life is invariably brought about by those who are in themselves programme-makers rather than by those who need to be given a set programme to follow.

On one occasion, when Aurangzeb (1618-1707), the last great Mughal emperor had just completed his prayers (namaz) he again raised his hands in supplication, his eyes filling with tears. In this state he continued to pray in silence for a very long time. All the while, his vizier (minister) stood by his side. When the emperor's supplications finally came to an end, the vizier, Sadullah addressed him thus: "Your Majesty, the flag of your empire can be seen flying everywhere, right from Kashmir to the Deccan. Is there still some wish in your heart which has been left unfulfilled and because of which you are so grief-stricken?" Aurangzeb remained silent for a while, then, his voice changed with emotion, he replied, Sadullah, *marde khwaham*. " (Sadullah, I need a man.)

Aurangzeb's plan of action lacked nothing, and he had all the resources necessary for good government. Yet he failed to consolidate the Mughal rule, because he had no worthy men to shoulder this responsibility. If Aurangzeb had had a team of true, sincere people, the course of history after his reign would have been very different from what it was, and what we see it as today.

The mission of Islam means searching among the crowd – among the multitudes who are loquacious in the name of God, for a man whom fear of God has left speechless. Amongst those who are in pursuit of the world, it is looking for one who has stopped dead in his tracks for the sake of the Hereafter; amongst those who revel in the name of God, it seeks those whose eyes fill with tears when they remember God: amongst those who are fighting for God's cause, it seeks those who have desisted from fighting and quarrelling for the sake of His Religion; amongst those who are bent on settling accounts with others, it awaits those souls *who know how to reckon with themselves*. Such are the people of whom Islam has the greatest need. It is through such people, and such people alone, that Islam will once again be able to resume its position of intellectual ascendancy.

Today, Islam needs such people as can purify themselves, demolishing appearances in order to penetrate to the reality: who have the foresight to steer clear of irrelevant problems; who have the patience to give their full attention to the real target, who consider this world of paltry insignificance when compared to the Hereafter, so much so, that no sacrifice of worldly things appears too great for them; who are such great realists as can see greater virtues in others than in themselves and who can in consequence, step down in their favour; who see the truth so clearly that nothing can make them waver in its pursuit; who are so free of negative feelings that no personal grievances can make them deviate from the right path: who cannot be made to feel jealous of others: who are in love with reality and not with appearances, having the eyes on the future rather than on the present. To sum up, Islam has need of those who live in the Hereafter rather than in this world; who have lost themselves, not in their own greatness, but in God's. If it was people such as these who made Islam the dominant theology in its earliest stages, it will be people of like bent who will raise it to the highest position of honour in our time.

The question of having a programme, is in actual fact, the question of how human should be prepared for a specific way of life. Individuals of the right mould cannot be formed only by training, and certainly not by exposure to the hue and cry of processions, speeches from platforms, and so on. There is only

one way to prepare pure individuals, and that is by launching an unadulterated movement based on pure established religion in such a manner as to influence human nature and arouse the dormant, inner, spiritual personality of man, striking some chord deep within him. It should so colour human thought that man's being should become dyed in the hue of the Almighty.

Such a movement cannot be launched in the negative spirit reaction, for, in essence it should sing the eternal, divine melody to the rhythm of nature. It should be a model of the beauty of divine creation, emanating the fragrance of the flowers and the splendour of the sun. Such a movement, in giving temporal expression to the prophetic message, should – in the idiom of our times – reveal the wisdom of the Book of God, thus presenting medium of contact between God and man.

The advent of such a movement in a society is the great guarantee that such divine souls will emerge as are able to 'programme' themselves. For them, there will be no difficulty in discovering what their role ought to be. The history of the prophets shows, however, that even after such a *da'wah* movement has been set in motion, it is only those whose soil is fertile who can receive its seeds. In other words, only those will benefit who have the innate capacity to receive its message. It is common knowledge that barren land will remain barren, even after it has been lashed by the rain.

If Islam is to launch itself on a new phase of its history, its first prerequisite will be people so vital and responsive, that when the call of Islam is addressed to them, they will feel the awakening of a vast potential. When the seed of Islam is sown it must bring forth a blessed verdure – a great and wonderful crop: for that to happen the soil on which it falls must be sufficiently fertile. The call of Islam simply awaits the right people to receive it.

If people of high spiritual vitality emerge from the Muslim community itself, that will be a matter of the greatest good fortune: But if no such individuals make their appearance, we shall have to come to terms with the fact that God will eventually give His blessing to some other community. It will then be for the members of that to come forward, not only to bathe in the light of Islam, but also to devote themselves whole heartedly to enabling the rest of the world to benefit from that enlightenment which only Islam can bring.

12 March 1990

Avoiding condescension

“Craftsmen are not to be looked down on,” said the Prophet Mohammad, “for Zacchariah – himself a Prophet – was a carpenter.”

(Muslim, *Sahih*)

12 March 1990

Impartial decision-making

Juadah ibn Hubayrah once came to Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and asked him what he would do if two men were ever to come before him, one of whom was so fond of him that he would put him before his own self, while the other hated him so much that, given the chance, he would cut his throat. Would Ali decide in favour of the first and against the second? "If the decision were truly in my hands, I should please myself. But it is not. It is in the hands of God."

(Kanz al-Ummal)

The Making of the Community

The greatest sufferers in the wake of modern scientific and technological developments have been the Muslims. This is because most of the areas which came to be dominated by materially better equipped Western powers were formerly under Muslim control. Muslim reaction did, of course, lead to movements for reconstruction on a vast scale, but although this struggle has continued for two hundred years, the Muslims have failed to regain their lost position. The reason for this is not far to seek. Muslims have largely misunderstood the true nature of the problem, and have persisted in trying to brighten their future prospects by introducing measures of a purely superficial and shortsighted nature in an atmosphere which is unstable because it is so emotionally charged.

If we need proof of what havoc can be wrought by misconceptions of this nature, we have only to compare Turkey's lacklustre performance with the all-round brilliance of the U.S.S.R. which today is sending rockets into space. Considering that modern developments in both these countries derive respectively from their almost contemporary revolutions in 1917 and 1922, and that 'Lenin (1870-1924) had 15 years less of a lifespan than Ataturk (1881-1938) in which to be effective as a revolutionary leader, why should Turkey's achievements not be on a par with those of the Soviet Union? Why is it that the U.S.S.R. has been able to launch an ambitious space programme, while Turkey has not yet been able to reconstruct itself even on the ground? This shortfall in Turkish achievement is not just a matter of accident. There are profound historical reasons for it.

When Kamal Ataturk came into power in Turkey, he imagined that the secret of progress and nation-building lay in all-out imitation of Western culture. He therefore made Turkey a secular state, instead of the theocracy it had been since time immemorial. Then, rescinding canonical laws, he enforced in his own country the civil laws of Switzerland, the criminal laws of Italy and the German laws of international trade. Religious education was banned, and the observation of purdah (the veil) for women was declared illegal. Turkish vernacular script was ruthlessly replaced by the Roman alphabet. Turks were not allowed to go to Mecca on the Hajj pilgrimage, and even the use of Arabic when calling the faithful to prayer was prohibited. The national dress was Europeanized and the wearing of a hat instead of a fez was made compulsory. Turks who refused to wear hats, or who ridiculed them, were subjected to violence. There were innumerable cases of men actually having been hanged because they were not willing to discard their national fez in favour of the hat. When the long drawn-out battle in favour of the hat had finally been won, Ataturk expressed his jubilation by sending a "hatted" representative – a Member of the Turkish Parliament, Adib Sarwat – to the Islamic Conference at Mecca in 1927. The only delegate to the conference with a hat on his head, he was given a cold reception by the other Muslim delegates. (Irfan Orga Margarete: *Ataturk*, Micheal Joseph, Ltd., London, 1967, p. 265).

On the contrary, when Lenin was invested with supreme authority in Russia, one of his first acts was to appoint the *Cominolit*, the Committee for Foreign Translations (1922). The main objective of this committee was to collect scientific and technical books in foreign languages and to translate them into Russian. Lenin considered this so important that, despite innumerable other engagements, he took it upon himself to supervise the work personally. As a result, the Soviet Union has acquired a massive collection of scientific data. This work has continued till today without a break. Nowadays, if a scientist requires any scientific information, all he needs to do is consult just one publication – the Soviet journal, *Referativyi Zhurnal*, which, in each edition, presents the gist of one million scientific and technical articles published in 70 languages in 117 countries. The journal employs, for this work, a hundred thousand expert translators. The All Union Institute for Scientific and Technical Information alone keeps a permanent staff of 2,500 translators. Besides, there are 22 thousand experts in translation working part time for the Institute. The Russian government has today more than five thousand scientific institutions in which about one million scientific workers are engaged. The Russian education system has produced a large number of people capable of writing and translating two languages at the same time. Thus it was the result of such unceasing effort that Russia became the first country in the world to launch the first Sputnik into space in 1957. Today Russian science is so important that America imports 250 Russian science journals, translates them word for word and prints their English translation.

From the Quran, we derive three main principles for the construction and strengthening of the community:

- (a) establishment on a sound footing;
- (b) unity;
- (c) intimidation as a means to power.

The Quran describes goods – material things – as a support. They have been devised by God as an economic support to mankind, for it is through them that man perforce meets his own and his dependents' physical demands. He is thus constrained to become the possessor of such resources as are essential to the success of any human endeavour in this present material world. Once, in the course of a prayer, the Prophet said, "God, spare me from poverty!" His wife, Ayesha, was surprised at this supplication and asked him to explain it. The Prophet replied, "Yes, O Ayesha, poverty drives a man to unbelief!"

Five hundred years ago, Muslims dominated the world economy. But today, from the economic standpoint, they are at a decided disadvantage. The reason is that they have never fully grasped the essentials of modern economy and have, therefore, failed to find a place for themselves within the framework. In ancient times, earnings depended directly on land produce (farming and orchards). But, today, earning is a much more complex matter, for the economy of our times has undergone a fundamental change. Today the greatest sources of earning are industry and trade: even agriculture has begun to take on some of the attributes of large-scale industry. Modern technology plays so great a role

in every field today that its possessors have the top earning capacity. Wealth naturally flows to them. The Muslims' greatest problem in present times is their inability to go beyond traditional agriculture and traditional trade. In consequence, they have become second-rate communities all over the world, the sole possible exceptions being such countries as the Gulf Emirates which have contrived to become rich on the basis of natural resources, without, however having made any personal contribution in terms of human endeavour or indigenous technology.

If Muslims are to hold their heads up in the world of today, they must, inevitably, begin to understand modern economic changes, and must try to carve out their own niches in today's economic scene. If they cannot rise to this, they will continue to be the world's economic underdogs and, worse still, in terms of today's economy, will ultimately find themselves outcasts.

Without exception, the great Muslim movements of modern times have made the mistake of giving political revolution the maximum importance, unaware that the enhanced role of economics, politics have actually become of secondary interest. Today, politicians are subservient to the economically powerful. Without economic power, there is no question of having political influence.

In the recent past, we produced political personalities who were Himalayan in stature. Yet we do not have the global position which ought to have resulted from their struggle. The reason is that, great as these personalities were, they were nevertheless incapable of grasping the fact that times were changing. Basing their judgement on past achievements, they devoted all their energies to politics, without making any real efforts towards economic progress and the consequent reinforcement of the Muslim position.

It must be conceded that modern economics has had a profound impact on present-day knowledge. And every human endeavour – from farming to the operating of machines – requires up-to-the minute knowhow. In this, too, Muslims have demonstrated a surprising unawareness. Having totally misconstrued the relationship between education and economics, they have for a whole century remained content with traditional learning. The consequences of this unawareness are grave, but are only now becoming apparent: whole generations of Muslims have come into existence who are, by traditional Islamic standards, well-educated, but also, in terms of times in which they live, are desperately undereducated. This is, largely because the Madrasas (Muslim schools which impart traditional learning) are still following a syllabus which was drawn up in Baghdad 500 years ago.

The other pre-requisite for the construction and strengthening, of the community is a sense of togetherness. 'Do not dispute with one another,' says the Quran, 'lest you should lose courage and your resolve weaken.' (8:46) Disunity creates cowardice and engenders disrespect for the community. If, on the other hand, the community has genuine unity, every number of it considers that he has the strength of millions. With this attitude of courage and confidence, Muslims cannot but inspire awe in other communities.

Unity is so important to religion that even two separate religious assemblies in the same mosque at the same time, are looked upon with disfavour. The following incident is a good illustration of this.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, one of the Prophet's companions, having noticed two groups in the Mosque of Kufa, went and stood between the two to ascertain which had started earlier. Then he said to the group which had started later, 'Arise and unite with them!' Thus he united the two. (Tabarani)

When the Prophet died, his companions were so keenly aware of the importance of unity that they gave the selection of new leader (caliph) priority over the last rites and burial of the Prophet.

According to Ibn Kathir, Ubada bin Saamit tells of how the prophet once set out to inform people night of *lailat-al-qadr*. At that moment, two Muslims started fighting about a loan. The Prophet said, "I came out to inform you of the *lailat-al-qadr*, but two men – and here he gave their names – fell foul of each other. So the knowledge of the *lailat-al-qadr* is now lost to us." Ibn Kathir then comments that "this hadith tells us that Islam considers quarrelling among Muslims so pernicious that it can even deprive us of such great blessings."

The people of Islam possess the 'Preserved Book', which means that no one on this earth can cause their destruction. They will remain on earth so long as the Quran is in existence. No external power will even be able to inflict real harm upon them: the only thing which could be really damaging to them is their own lack of awareness. This unawareness will cause them to have many shortcomings, not the least of which is the tendency to internal dissension. In a speech which he made at the time of the Hajj pilgrimage, the Prophet said, "Beware! Do not become disbelievers after I am gone, and cut each other's throat! Listen, Satan has despaired of his being worshipped by believers, but he will set you up one against another!" (Ahmed, *Musnad*)

History, astonishingly, has borne out this prophecy. How was it, after all, that the Tartar hordes were able in the thirteenth century to bring death and destruction to the entire Muslim world very soon after Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi (1137-1193) and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Christian world? The success of the Muslims in the crusades had so proven their military superiority that this in itself might well have discouraged war-mongering foes from looking at their kingdom with envious eyes. Yet within the relatively short period of twenty years, and despite the Muslims' forbidding reputation in battle, the Tartars had attacked and overrun the Islamic Sultanate (empire).

The sole cause was disunity among Muslims. At the time of the Tartar attack, Nasir Le-Din-Allah (1158-1225) was the Caliph in Baghdad, and Sultan Alauddin Muhammed ibn Khwarzam Shah (1120-1225) ruled Khurasan and Transoxiana. The latter had set about suppressing any reference to the name of the Caliph in religious discourses throughout the length and breadth of all the lands under his jurisdiction for he planned, by attacking Iraq, to annex a part of it to his kingdom. When Caliph Nasir Le-Din-Allah came to hear of this, he tried to pre-empt such a move by sending a secret letter to the Tartars, inciting them to attack Khwarzam Shah. The Caliph thought that Khwarzam Shah would then be so preoccupied with the defence of his own country that he would drop all plans for the annexation of Iraq. Taking advantage of this dissension among the Muslims, the Tartars lost no time in attacking Khwarzam Shah and destroying his kingdom. But then, not content with this, the locust-like swarms of Tartars marched

under the leadership of Chengez Khan (1192-1227) on the kingdom of Nasir Le-Din-Allah, so that it too was laid waste from end to end. Had there been no infighting among the Muslims, the Tartars, no matter how barbaric their methods, nor how great their military might, could never have dared attack the greatest kingdom of the time.

The end of Muslim government in Spain was likewise the result of internal strife. The Spanish Muslims were far in advance of the Christians in knowledge and science at the time of their defeat, so that if they were defeated, it was because the Christians were united, unlike the Muslims' who were distributed across the country in separate groups which were not necessarily supportive of each other. This relative disarray in Muslims' affairs had come about because the Muslims had rebelled against the central caliphate and had established their own autonomous governments; a stage came when they did not even feel ashamed to side with the Christians in fighting against the Muslims.

When the Christians gained control of the fort of Grenada in the fifteenth century, that signalled the defeat of the Muslims in Spain. Even then it took a hundred years for all Muslims to leave Spain. In spite of three large-scale massacres in the course of a single century, the last Muslim caravan did not leave Spain until 1605. This protracted stay was possible because the arts and the economy of the country were dominated by Muslims. The Christians, despite their political authority, did not, therefore, find it practical to banish all the Muslims at once. Yet, banished they finally were, thanks to their own internal strife.

The entry of Muhammed ibn Qasim via Multan in 713 into that is now Pakistan was not an imperial thrust like that of Mahmood Ghaznavi or Babar, but the arrival of the Religion of Mercy. In the words of a historian, he was more just and kinder to subjects than the Persian Emperor Nausherwan. That is why, within just a few years, Islam spread from the coast of the Arabian Sea to Kashmir. The local population thought of Muhammed ibn Qasim as their god, wept on his departure and set up a statue of him to commemorate his rule (Balazuri). But Suleman ibn Abdul Malik (died A.H. 99) deposed him, recalled him to Damascus because of a personal quarrel and imprisoned him. He died in prison with the following couplet on his lips:

“They lost me and what a youth they lost ... a youth that helped in need and protected the borders.”

After Muhammed ibn Qasim, the advance of Islam across the Indian subcontinent came to a halt for three centuries. When, after three hundred years it recommenced, it was in order to advance not religion, but political ambitions. The later generations did not have the same zeal to propagate Islam as Muhammed ibn Qasim had. Analysing the spread of the Arab empire, Jawahar Lal Nehru writes: “Widespread and apparently easy as the Arab conquests were, they did not go far beyond Sind in India, then or later ... Partly it may have been due to the internal troubles of the Arabs. Sind fell away from the central authority at Baghdad and became a small independent Moslem state”. (*The Discovery of India*, p. 263) Almost all of the failures of Muslims in later history can be traced to a similar state of disunity.

The Quran says that believers are each other's friends and that the same applies to non-believers (8:71-72). This means that despite the dissimilarities in nature of different human beings, if a man is sincerely committed to a cause, he will find common areas of co-operation among people with a similar sense of commitment. Earnest devotion to his cause compels him to ignore differences among his compatriots so that he may unite with them, for, without co-operation, no success is possible in this world. Similarly, non-believers, in spite of any dissension or differences that may exist among them, do find a point of common consent which makes cooperations a possibility. Believers, despite their natural differences, find an area of social life where they look upon one another as brothers. The reverse could be conceivable only if men's hearts were entirely bereft of goodness (8.70).

The third factor – the power of intimidation – which is of importance to the topic under discussion, derives from the following verse of the Quran: "Muster against them all the men and cavalry at your disposal, so that you may strike terror into the enemies of God and your enemy." (8:60) What is the significance of acquiring the power of intimidation in our world? The following historical example will elucidate this point:

Sultan Salahuddin of Egypt (1137-1193) and Sultan Tipu (1751-1799) were both men of great religious fervour, courage and military ability. Both, in their different historical periods, were confronted with 'western power.' But where the former became the conqueror of Palestine, the latter's lot was defeat and martyrdom at the hands of his opponents. There is no magical secret to explain this success on the one hand and failure on the other. The facts are simply that in the eighteenth century, the west had acquired a monopoly over military industry and technique, having replaced traditional weapons with superior, long-range arms, and had gained complete control of the high seas. This meant that Sultan Tipu was not nearly well enough equipped to put himself against such overwhelming military odds. Sultan Salahuddin, on the other hand, lived and fought in the twelfth century when Muslims led the world in military industry. All that time, there were numerous factories in Syria, Egypt and Iraq, where the best arms of that period were manufactured. The defence against Roman attacks in the Abbasid period and the arrest of the European nations' attacks during the crusades owe much to the existence of these factories. Especially during the crusades, the military industry of the Muslims had made great progress. It is remarkable that whenever there was a lull in the fighting the European themselves would come to Syrian and Egyptian markets for the purchase of arms. Muslim *ulemas* (religious scholars) found themselves obliged to issue a religious decree against the sale of arms to Christians, considering that they bought them to use against Muslims. (Dr Mustafa Saba'i, *Min Rawe Hadharatina*, Damascus).

It is this power which the Quran calls the 'Power of intimidation': it commands us to acquire it for the explicit purpose of inspiring awe in others.

There are two dimensions to its acquisition. One relates to all Muslims, i.e. any Muslim group may try, to the best of its ability to acquire it. The other relates solely to a Muslim society which already has authority. The acquisition of such powers by Russia and Japan respectively provides a telling analogy.

The end of the Second World War saw the landing of American military forces in Japan, and the latter's defeat and disarmament. Japan then found all doors to military and political ambition closed to it. The Japanese Emperor, Hirohito (1901-1989) said in a speech on the occasion: "We have to bear the unbearable for the reconstruction of the coming generations of Japan." The whole of Japan then engaged itself in making progress in non-political areas. They paid their teachers ministerial salaries and gave them magisterial powers in order to raise the standards of education to the highest. Journalism was given such an impetus that today, the publication with the highest circulation is a Japanese newspaper. They brought science and industry to such a peak of perfection that though they possess no iron, they manufacture the biggest vessels in the world – the supertankers. Their products have such high quality standards that they have reached the zero-defect level. Indeed, they have made such great progress in nationalism and discipline that no nation of the world can compare with them today. This progress was ostensibly non-military and non-political but it proved so powerful that America withdrew its forces from Japan without there having been any confrontation.

The field of reconstruction and progress is open to all Muslim groups, whether in the majority or the minority, and whether in a position of authority or not. Being in a majority does not necessarily mean being in authority, however. It is regrettable that in many African countries with a Muslim majority, it is the Christians who are socially and politically in control. This is simply because they have so far outstripped Muslims in education, science, industry and discipline. For instance, Muslims constitute 65% of the Nigerian population and Christians only 20%, but in 1974, Nigeria's 15-member Cabinet had only five Muslim ministers as opposed to ten Christian minister. When we talk of the educational advancement of the Christians and the backwardness of the Muslims, we have to remember that Muslim students represent a bare 25% of Government school enrolments, and that in higher education, the percentage drops even further; Christians, although in the minority manage to overcrowd the educational institutions. This is a situation which surely requires reversal.

An instance of the second dimension in the acquisition of power is that of the U.S.S.R., which found it self encircled after the second world war by US bases set up on the soil of bordering countries. In order to establish these military bases, America had entered into pacts with countries which shared borders with Russia. Through NATO, CEATO and CENTO, America sent its war machine across the Atlantic not only into Europe, but also into North Africa and Asia. America was thus in a position, through its two dozen military bases, to strike at its enemy from just across the latter's border. Whereas Russia would have had to travel across a quarter of the globe to strike at America. American bases were so close to the Russian border that within five to ten minutes, the US could strike at all important Soviet targets.

In view of the dangerous encirclement, Russia now appointed an army of scientists to invent such rapid long-range weapons as would enable Russian rulers to strike at American targets directly from the Soviet Union. The landing of Lunik 2 on the moon in September 1959 was carried out with such great precision that it was a tacit announcement to the world of the success of Soviet scientific research and of

the super-sophistication of its technology. The distance from the earth to the moon being fifty times greater than from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A, it became quite obvious that the rocket which carried the box of machines to the moon could also carry bombs to far-off countries. Successful space flights which have, with the utmost exactitude, been directed by radio-control, are an adequate proof that atom and hydrogen bombs can likewise be dropped with deadly accuracy on the furthest targets on earth. The sheer power and scope of such inventions have reduced American military strategy to a complete shambles.

The U.S.S.R. had a challenge thrown down to it on earth, but it was in the skies that it found its solution. This shows that there is no barrier which cannot be surmounted if human beings are sufficiently in earnest about achieving progress. God, in fact, has placed no limit on the power available to man in the universe: it is simply a question of man having sufficient courage to go out and seize hold of such power. The hostile intentions and actions of our adversaries will then be rendered ineffective, just as Pharaoh's magicians' "false devices" were "swallowed up" by the staff of Moses, when it came to a show of strength. "Thus the truth prevailed and their doings proved vain."(Quran, 7:118)

The actual mission of believers on this earth is the propagation of Truth. But, all too often, they find themselves obliged to counter materialism with materialism. That is, they have to spend precious time in acquiring material backing for their religious aims, because the opponents of truth derive so much strength from their material possessions. When the Prophet migrated from Mecca in the thirteenth year of his Prophethood, he was extremely ill-provided for. But, ten years later, when he marched on Mecca, propagation of Islam had become so wide-spread that he had ten thousand able-bodied men with him. Of these, two thousand were so covered in armours that only their eyes were visible. (Tabarani)

In the modern world, the importance of following the same line of action as the Prophet has in no way diminished. Today, machines have become so vital in warfare, as opposed to mere muscle-power, that the concept of a martial race has become a thing of the past. Similarly, economic power has so increased in our own times, that the whole of humanity has become subservient to it. In former times, there was no direct link between the dissemination of truth and the state of world economy. But today, if the pen is to be wielded for such a purpose, its effectiveness will be in doubt unless it receives colossal economic backing. Moreover, when it is inevitable that other religions should resort to the use of aeroplanes and radio stations to propagate their views, the importance of material support increases a hundredfold.

The importance of economic resources even for personal requirements is far greater today than in any preceding era. Today a man's practical needs have so increased that it is impossible for him to live out his life with legendary simplicity of old.

Although the real responsibility of Muslims is *da'wah*, modern exigencies demand that side-by-side with the *da'wah* struggle, Muslims must play a much more significant role in contemporary economy, on the levels of both the individual and the community.

24 March 1990

The deeds dearest to the companions.

Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he would prefer to provide sustenance for a Muslim for one month, or one week, or as long as God pleased, rather than perform pilgrimage after pilgrimage; also, he would prefer to give his brother before God a present of One penny than spend a large amount in the cause of God.

(Hilyat al-Auliya)