

Al-Risala

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Ayodhya's Sole Solution

The issue of Ayodhya's Babari Masjid has turned into one of life and death for the entire Muslim community. Repercussions in various parts of the country have by now claimed more Muslim lives than the number of stones used in the masjid's construction. This chain of death, destruction and humiliation, sparked off by the December 6 happening, continues unabated.

But let us first place this issue in its historical perspective. This mosque was built in Ayodhya by Babar's governor, Mir Baqi, in 1528. Later, it aroused a certain amount of controversy, but, at the outset, this was no more than a minor local problem. Then, shortly after independence, (on December 22, 1949, to be precise) certain local Hindus placed three idols inside the mosque. At that time, the problem created thereby did not assume dangerous proportions, because the door of the mosque was locked soon thereafter by order of the court. Subsequently, in February, 1986, however, the mosque door was opened by the administration, and the local Hindus were allowed inside for darshan and puja of the idols. It was from this point onwards that things took a turn for the worse.

Now certain Muslim leaders started a vigorous movement in the name of the Babari Masjid, while certain Hindu leaders started an agitation on their side over the issue of the Ram Mandir, but on a much larger scale. Both movements continued until, ultimately, on December 6, 1992, Hindu extremists contrived to demolish the Babari Masjid, replacing it with a makeshift mandir.

This tragic event gave a serious jolt to the conscience of the country, causing aware, serious-minded citizens everywhere to issue condemnations in the strongest of terms. The manner in which the Babari Masjid was demolished flouted the constitution, the law, the court verdict and religious and moral traditions. What was equally deplorable was that it made a mockery of the promises made by the leaders of the Ram Mandir movements. Given all these factors, the destruction of the mosque was not simply the demolition of a structure; it was akin rather to the utter negation of an entire history. Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, might well call the December happening a 'national tragedy.' Mr. J.S. Yadav went even further, saying that 'the very survival of our nation is at stake.'

In 1921, when Mahatma Gandhi launched a civil disobedience movement

against the British, he announced that it would be run entirely on the principle of non-violence, so that at no stage and under no circumstances would brute force be resorted to. But on February 5 of that year, certain Congressmen set fire to a police station at Churachuri, in which several constables were burnt to death. The moment Mahatma Gandhi learned of this tragedy, he pronounced it a Himalayan blunder, and announced the cessation of the movement forthwith. Yet, in the case of the much more serious violence which took place on December 6, 1922, the leaders of the mandir-masjid movement made no comparable announcement about the stoppage of their activities. On the contrary, their extremist elements are still repeating, *Ayodhya to jhanki hai, Mathura, Kashi baqi hai.*

This attitude is undeniably against the teachings of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi and, if not immediately rectified, will plunge the country into total destruction. The least compensation for the misdeeds at Ayodhya would be for their perpetrators and sympathisers to refrain absolutely from repeating such slogans, and to make a solemn pledge that a similar step will never be taken at any time in the future.

MATHURA MOSQUE

There is a large mosque at Mathura which was built by Aurangzeb in 1669. More than three centuries later, there is now a whole spate of propaganda about this mosque having been built at the very birthplace of Shri Krishan. It is now considered necessary to demolish the mosque and replace it with a Shri Krishan Mandir.

In order to find out the truth of the matter, I went to Mathura on January 16, 1993, where I talked to a number of knowledgeable people, both Hindus and Muslims, who belonged to Mathura. When I went to the site, along with several of my Hindu friends, I found standing adjacent to each other, a beautiful mosque and a grand mandir complex, the latter being the birthplace of Shri Krishan. In view of the Ayodhya experience, I had imagined the birthplace of Shri Krishan to be on some controversial piece of land inside the mosque – hence the demand for the site. But here, the locations being separate, there was no such clash of interests.

On a tour of various parts of the mandir, we reached a special room with a picture of Shri Krishan on a raised, decorated platform, with many other related objects placed around it.

We were told that this was the very spot where Shri Krishan had been born. This particular place was right inside the mandir complex. On seeing this, one of my Hindu colleagues said, 'Mathura should not be placed in the same category as Ayodhya, because the birthplace of Shri Krishan is inside the mandir and not the masjid.'

Anyone can go to Mathura and see for himself. When the birthplace of Sri Krishan is, in fact, inside the mandir complex, why should a masjid which is situated on a separate piece of land be included in their demands? If the justification for the movement against the Ayodhya structure was that it was built at the site of Shri Ram's birthplace, what possible, justification could there be for demanding the demolition of the Mathura mosque, which is so obviously *not* on the site of Shri Krishan's birthplace?

A fact that needs to be even more widely publicised is that the local Hindus and Muslims long ago reached an agreement over the Mathura issue. In 1954, this issue had become controversial and had been taken to court. But through the good offices of a Hindu saint of Mathura, Deodhar Shastri and certain other concerned individuals, a written agreement was reached between the two parties, according to which the Muslims handed over to the Hindus a large part of the waqf land surrounding the mosque. It is on this land that there now stands this large mandir complex dedicated to Shri Krishan. In view of this long-established situation, how is it proper now to re-open an issue which had already been settled long since to the satisfaction of all parties concerned?

THE VARANASI MOSQUE

Let us now consider the question of Varanasi (Kashi). The leaders of the mandir-masjid movement made a point of saying that the mosque there, known as the Gyanvapi mosque, was built by Aurangzeb after demolishing the mandir which was already standing on that site. They say they are now justified in demolishing the mosque so as to build a mandir on its site. They call this plan 'correction of history.'

Leaving aside the rights or wrongs of this claim, the theory of the 'correction of history' has been universally rejected today. Putting such a theory into practice would mean reverting to the age of religious persecution, darkness and barbarism, only in a new garb. In reality, this theory smacks of blatant fanaticism rather than of any urge to 'correct' history.

Dr. Vimal Kirti, a Bodh intellectual of Nagpur, has most pertinently asked if those

Hindus who today talk of the correction of history will want to push the basis for their theory even further back in time, i.e. to the period when they themselves mistreated the Bodhs in exactly the same way that they accuse Aurangzeb of having mistreated them. Considering too that the wrongs they inflicted on the Bodh were on a much larger scale, would they now be ready to suffer Bodh vengeance in the way that they are at present avenging themselves on the Muslims?

In past centuries, when religious persecution was the order of the day, places of worship were routinely demolished. Now that age has been ended forever, such acts are seen as misdeeds. Today, any move to carry out similar demolitions is a kind of anachronism.

The upholders of this movement must surely realise that the age factor stands in their way; those who struggle towards such destructive ends must be prepared for being rejected by the age as reactionaries and for being thrust ultimately into the background by the more immediate priorities of modernity.

The way to save themselves from this fate is not to send delegations abroad to improve their image in the hopes of being absolved of any blame, but rather to refrain from such acts as are against the established norms of our times, and certainly to desist from any such activity as will make them look small in the eyes of the world.

In days gone by such acts of destruction took place everywhere. Many different groups were culpable. As such, if the principle of the 'correction of history' is to be adopted, it will be applicable not just to one group, but to all groups. The result then will be not the correction of history but the destruction of history. It will amount to losing the present in the attempt to reconstruct the past.

To be precise, the option for the upholders of this movement is not between masjid and correction of history, but between masjid and total destruction.

It has thus become universally acknowledged in modern times that in such controversial matters, closed chapters of history should not be re-opened. A more positive approach would be to keep one's eyes on the present and future, so that the task of national reconstruction may proceed unhindered.

HINDU-HINDU PROBLEM

In this connection, the Kashi Vyapar Mandal's decision is worthy of mention. It is based on the contention that repetition of the Ayodhya experience in Varanasi will not only have serious consequences in terms of the Hindu-Muslim problem, but that there will be a flare-up of a Hindu-Hindu problem. That is why the Hindu

business community itself has turned against the possibility of any further punitive action against Muslims.

An article by Vivek Bharati, published in *The Times of India* (January 6, 1993), is in the nature of a warning to the upholders of this movement. The gist of this article is that the Hindus have learned that the movement launched in the name of Ayodhya, given the reaction to it in Varanasi, was of a destructive nature. In this city there is a strong business community numbering five lakhs. Their organization, the Kashi Veapar Mandal, had generously supported the B.J.P. in the monetary terms. They even collected donations for the kar sevaks who ran amok at Ayodhya.

However, when they learned, after December 6, 1992, that the “conquerers” of the Babari Masjid were now to launch their campaign against the Gyan Wapi mosque, the Kashi Veapar Mandal opposed this move. It issued a strong worded appeal to the 5 lakh businessmen of Varanasi to remain detached from Mandir-Masjid politics. This appeal was followed up by peace marches also organized by the Kashi Veapar Mandal.

The reason for this action was fear of business losses. It was felt in Varanasi that to keep business flourishing, it was essential to prevent an Ayodhya-like movement finding its way also to Varanasi. If this were to happen, the business community would be the hardest hit by the consequent rioting and lawlessness. Business would, in effect, come to a halt, because the inflow of tourists who throng the city would cease. The most affected would be the sari and carpet businesses which, at the moment, are flourishing in Varanasi.

This response from the people of Varanasi needs to be made more generally known. The time has now come to make people throughout the country understand that the launching of such movements only makes a great issue out of something which, in fact, should be treated as a non-issue. I would go further and say that it is such action that has caused India to be so halting in its pursuit of progress over the last forty years. It is as a result of such short-sightedness that India has lost its position in the world. Many countries, far poorer than ours, such as China, Korea, Singapore, etc., have left us far behind. Now the need of the hour is not to make a big issue of religious matters, but to concentrate on developing a sound economic policy for the construction of the country.

THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEM

In terms of consequences, the gravity of the problem is so great that profound

concern is being expressed not only in India, but all over the world. Here, I should like to cite just one example from *Asia Week*, a journal published by the *Time* group. In its editorial of January 20, 1993, entitled 'A Dangerous Pass,' *Asia Week* says of the situation, 'Asia may have to pay a heavy price for Ayodhya,' and categorizes the present movement as 'Hindu fascism.' It says, moreover, that if this movement is taken to its logical extreme, India shall have to pay a terrible price, which is unconscionable in a country where 500 million people are far below the poverty line, and 70 percent are still illiterate.

In such a situation it is vital that the mandir-masjid controversy should be ended forthwith. In this lies the good not only of both Hindus and Muslims, but also of the entire country, because only then will the country be able to make any true progress.

DETERRENT EFFECTS

The blood in the human body circulates under great pressure. That is why whenever a part of the body is injured, the blood starts pouring out. This is a dangerous state of affairs. But, thanks to a natural mechanism in the body, the moment the blood starts flowing after an injury, various deterrent forces come into play inside the body to stop the overflow such as the contraction of blood vessels, blood clotting, etc. This natural system is called hemostasis. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, iv, 1015)

This is a universal law which prevails in all states of affairs. As such, whenever any negative activity assumes alarming proportions, forces are produced at that very moment which act as deterrents to the destructive process. This is why such an act or movement in any human society will last for a while and then it will of itself lose momentum.

Here I would add that this natural process has come full circle in the matter of Ayodhya. Whether or not the extremist leaders wish it, the truth is that these deterrent forces have already appeared so that the possibility of such a tragedy ever taking place again has been quite finally ruled out. In view of this situation, if the extremist leaders were to announce the cessation of their movement, this would work in their favour. They would receive the credit, albeit unmerited, for a positive and forward-looking act.

I agree with the view expressed by Mr. J.N. Nanporia, (former *editor of the Statesman*) which was published by the daily *Pioneer* on January 20, 1993. He writes that the B.J.P. expresses its political aims by the word Hindutva, and has

entirely depended upon inciting communal feeling in order to attain its goals. But communal feelings have a limit. And recent events tell us that the B.J.P. has reached that limit now. Hindutva as interpreted by the hardliners, crossed its danger limit on December 6 and is, therefore, no longer exploitable.

I share the desire of all serious-minded people for this matter to be settled once and for all. I have been personally involved with this problem since 1986, and am only now seeing a solution emerge after much consideration and many exchanges with both parties. This solution consists of a three-point formula – to my way of thinking the only possible strategy if this problem is to be solved. I feel certain, however, that it will be acceptable to all of the concerned parties.

THREE POINT FORMULA

There are three parties to the Ayodhya or Mandir-Masjid controversy-Hindus, Muslims and the government. This problem could be solved if all three parties accepted the responsibility of abiding by the following guidelines.

1. The movement launched by Hindus in the name of Masjid-Mandir should be stopped at Ayodhya. It should in no circumstances go beyond Ayodhya. Assurances to this effect could take form of a written declaration by the Hindus signed by all the four Shankaracharyas and by responsible people belonging to those Hindu movements involved in the mandir-masjid movement. This should expressly state that after Ayodhya's Babari mosque no mosque's right of continued existence will ever again be challenged by the Hindus; that all mosques in India, whatever their historical origins, will always be recognised and maintained as holy places of worship; that Hindus will never seek justification of demanding any change in future.

2. Muslims should preserve a strict silence on the issue of Ayodhya. If the protection of the Babari Masjid was their responsibility, they have now discharged it by the sacrifices they have made. Now they have reached a point where there is very little else that they can do. As such Muslims should consciously resolve to distance themselves entirely from this issue. Till now they have been forced to take up this cause, but henceforth they should leave it to the conscience of the nation.

3. The government of India took a step in the right direction by passing the Places of Worship Act of 1991, maintaining the status quo as on August 15, 1947, in order to guarantee the security of all places of worship, (barring the Babari Masjid). Now the government should take the even more important step of

making this act a part of the constitution of India. Once this step has been taken, the security of all other places of worship will have a lasting guarantee.

This three-point formula makes concessions to all the parties and looked at with seriousness, it can be acceptable to all. With the adoption of this formula, the present situation will not only be marked by normalization, but the resultant atmosphere of peace and stability will ensure the unhampered progress of the country.

The change of circumstances after December 6, 1992, at national and international levels is extremely perturbing. It calls for a final decision to be made that at no place will the Ayodhya experience be repeated. In the present circumstances, the demolition of the mosque in order to replace it with mandir is no simple matter. The December 6 event has proved this to be so. It became a possibility only when constitution, law and moral traditions were all demolished along with it. The demolition of a single structure has meant the demolition of the structure of the whole country.

The truth is that for the extremist leaders of the masjid-mandir movement the choice lies not between masjid and mandir, but between masjid and destruction. J.K. Galbraith, the former American ambassador to India once called India a 'functioning anarchy.' If the present kind of masjid-mandir movement continues, future commentators will be compelled to call it all-out naked anarchy.

The present generation of India has to decide what kind of India it is going to bequeath to the coming generation – an advanced, prosperous India, or a poor, ruined India, unfit to be inhabited, by Hindus, Muslims or any other person.

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Wide support for 3-point formula

The majority of both Hindus and Muslims in Bombay approve of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's three-point plan to resolve the Ayodhya problem and reduce communal tension in the country, according to an opinion poll conducted by MARG. The poll, commissioned by SUNDAY MID-DAY, involved 805 personal interviews with men and women of all social strata.

The interviews were carried out between February 3 and 5. In view of the recent communal violence in Bombay, MARG used Muslim interviewers to seek the opinions of Muslim citizens and Hindu interviewers to obtain the reactions of the majority community. In each interview, the three-point plan (Muslims give up any plan to rebuild the Masjid; Hindus give up any demands on other Muslim religious sites; and the Constitution be amended to ensure that the status of no place of worship other than Ayodhya can be changed) was explained to the person being interviewed and then his or her reactions sought.

The MARG poll suggests that the Maulana's plan would find favour with Bombayites of all communities. Of the 517 Hindu men and women interviewed, 69 per cent said they would approve of such a plan, while 25 per cent expressed themselves against it. Among the 170 Muslim men and women interviewed, 63 per cent were in favour of the Maulana's proposal while 29 per cent were against it.

Those who did not indicate their clear approval of the Maulana's plan were asked by MARG whether or not the plan could serve at least as a useful starting point for discussion. About a third of such respondents felt that the plan could fulfil that purpose. Thus in total only about one in five of the people interviewed rejected the Maulana's plan outright.

(Courtesy: *SUNDAY MID-DAY*, Bombay, February 7, 1993)

Everything Created in Pairs

Nothing is complete without its pair.
So this world must also have a pair.

Many of the basic teachings of the Qur'an can be well understood in the light of modern knowledge. The Qur'an says, for example, that this world is not the final one; after it will come another world. At present, that world is invisible to us, but it is present nonetheless; it exists in real and absolute form. Early theologians resorted to speculation in support of this claim. But the proof that the Qur'an has given is one that can be better understood when put to the test of scientific investigation.

The Qur'an says:

And all things We made in pairs, so that you may give thought. (51:49)

Everything is in accordance with this law of nature. Nothing is complete without its pair. So this world must also have a pair, for only then will it be complete. It is this pair of the present world that is called the hereafter.

It was known in ancient times that there were pairs in the human and animal worlds. Later on man learnt of pairs in trees and plants. In 1928, however, it was discovered that solid matter also had a pair. In that year the British physicist Paul Dirac demonstrated the possibility of other, invisible particles existing alongside those of matter. Then, in 1932, K. Anderson discovered, while studying cosmic rays, that with electrons there were other particles with an opposite electric charge. These particles were called anti-electrons. This research was pursued further and finally it was learnt that all particles in the universe existed in the form of pair-particles: particle and anti-particle, atom and anti-atom, matter and anti-matter; there was even, as Dirac showed in 1933, an anti-world. Many present-day scientists are of the opinion that this anti-world is an entity apart from us, having a parallel existence of its own. This world is made up of matter; according to the law of opposites there should be another world made up of antimatter. It is estimated that 20 million years ago, when the Big Bang explosion occurred, photon-matter and anti-matter came together in two separate forms. The two then started to form the world and the anti-world.

The first people to work on this theory were a Swedish pair, physicist Oskar Klein and astrophysicist Hannes Alven. The results of their research were published in 1938. The Soviet mathematician, Dr. Lev Landau, further consolidated the theory. According to him, the anti-world cannot be fully explained by known theories and laws of physics, yet he is convinced that the anti-world exists, even now. It is, however, independent of us, existing on its own, parallel to this world. In the present world all anti-particles are in an unstable condition; but in the anti-world they will all be stable, for the nuclei of atoms have a negative electric charge, while electrons are positively charged.

Since this world is ephemeral, it follows that the anti-world, or to use its religious term, the hereafter, must be an eternal world. The discoveries of modern science, then, have given us a picture of the next world which accords with that of the Qur'an.

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Grievances arising from misunderstanding

During the reign of Muawiyah, a man came before Suhayl ibn Saad and told him that the Amir (Governor) of Medina, Marwan ibn Hakam, was abusing Ali. "What does he say?" asked Suhayl. "He calls Ali 'Abu Turab' (father of the earth)," replied the man. Suhayl laughed and said: "The Prophet himself gave Ali that name; it was the Prophet's favourite name."

(Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*)

Fate of the truth-teller

This is a true story which appeared in an American magazine.

One Greenland Eskimo was taken on one of the American North Polar expeditions. Later, as a reward for faithful service, he was brought to New York for a short visit. He was filled with amazement and wonder at the miracles of sight and sound that he saw there. When he returned to his native village, he told stories of buildings that rose to the very face of the sky; of tram cars, which he described as houses that moved along a track; of artificial lights, and all the other dazzling concomitants of the metropolis.

His people looked at him coldly and walked away, and forthwith throughout the village he was dubbed 'Sagdluk', meaning the liar. In shame, he carried this name to his grave. Long before his death his original name was entirely forgotten. The simple minds of the Eskimos were unable to visualize the startling pictures drawn by 'Sagdluk'. So they simply rejected the truth.

Just as the Eskimo was made to see a hitherto unknown world, so God gave the prophets a glimpse of the world that lies beyond death. They came to their peoples and conveyed to them the truths that God had embedded in their consciousness. But since these truths belonged to an unseen world, which man was unable to visualize, people dubbed them madmen, liars (Qur'an, 11:27). This was the fate of all the prophets of God. (Qur'an, 36:30)

Indeed, every truth-teller in the history of man has had to tread the same rocky path. In this world a veil of falsehood clouds the truth. Man has not seen the world in which truth will come into its own. The prophets were made to see that world before its coming, so that they could warn man of its advent. But they met with disbelief from people who had seen nothing beyond the world which meets the eye.

Total Involvement

Elias Howe (1819-1867) was born in Massachusetts; U.S.A. He died at the young age of 48. Although his life was short, his contribution to the world of clothes – that of the sewing machine – will always be remembered.

The sewing machine invented by Elias Howe was at first utilized, not for sewing clothes, but for stitching shoes. The main breakthrough was the development of a lock-stitch by a shuttle carrying a lower thread and a needle carrying an upper thread which passes through a hole situated at the tip of the needle.

For thousands of years, man had been accustomed to making a hole at the base of the needle. So, following the common practice, Elias However, made the needle of his machine with a hole at the base, instead of at the tip as is now the case. The placement of an eyelet, simple as it may seem to us now, remained a big hurdle for its inventor for quite some time. It was only a dream which finally brought about the desired solution.

As he was racking his brain to perfect his machine, Howe dreamt that he had been captured by a primitive tribe and was ordered to produce an operational sewing machine within twenty-four hours, failing which he would be speared to death. He tried hard, but could not accomplish it. When the deadline was up, they surrounded him and raised spears to kill him. Scared, yet still concentrating, he observed that each spear had an eyelet at the tip. He kept on gazing at the eyelet and then woke up with a start. The solution was right before him. For the machine to work, the placement of the hole had to be neither in the middle nor at the base, but at the tip. His lucky dream helped him, in 1845, to produce a sewing machine that would complete 250 stitches a minute.

What is a dream? It is the result of complete involvement. What we think about during the day, we dream about at night. Howe succeeded in inventing a machine only because he had engrossed himself in it to such an extent that he came to dream about it. Such is the case with any undertaking, whether one wants to invent a machine, or bring a revolution in human life. One achieves success in one's aim only after complete involvement – only when the thing one has set one's mind on becomes a part of the subconscious being that is reflected in one's dreams.

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Working in one's own sphere, and avoiding conflict with the government of the day

The Prophet asked Abu Dhar Ghefari what he would do when the leaders, or rulers started taking more than their fair share. "I will take to the sword, Prophet of God," ventured Abu Dhar. "Rather than take to the sword, it would be better to be patient until you meet me in the hereafter," said the Prophet. Abu Dhar never ceased to proclaim the truth, but never – right till the moment he left this world – did he take up the sword against the government of the day.

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Fearing no one in giving admonishment

One who finds himself in a situation in which he is morally bound to proclaim the truth should not refrain from doing so because he feels his own position to be weak. One who hesitates in this way will be in a sorry state on the day of Judgement. God will ask him why he did not speak the truth. He will reply, "For fear of men." But God will say to him, "Was not God before you to be feared?"

(Ibn Majah, *Sunan*)

True Message of the Qur'an

16-17 January-February 1993 There is a new method of studying history that is very popular in the West. It is called "the hobby-version of history." What you do is take something you are interested in, be it swords, disease-bearing parasites or time-pieces, and then start seeing the whole of human history in terms of that particular thing. McNeill, a historian from Chicago, U.S.A. did it ten years ago with a history of civilization written entirely in terms of disease. Now a Harvard Scholar, David S. Landes, has done the same thing with clocks. To him, clocks do more than tell the time; they were the key to the development of the modern civilization. His book is aptly entitled "Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World".

Muslim scholars have, in recent time, applied the same method to their study of the Qur'an. Some are especially interested in politics; they see the whole of the Qur'an as a sort of political treatise, telling man how a political system which corresponds to the will of God can be established on earth. Some see law and jurisprudence as the all-important factor in human life; to them every verse of the Qur'an bears legal implications. Some see the Qur'an as a book of science, and some as a book of sociology. Each one sees the teachings of the Qur'an in a particular light, depending on his own interest.

History is the study of man's life on earth. If one looks at history objectively, taking into account all the factors concerned, one will find that it has much to say on how to be successful in this world. The Qur'an is a study of man's eternal life. It shows him how to act on earth for success in the next life. One cannot learn from history if it is seen in the light of one particular theme, because so many other factors which have contributed to the development of human civilization will then simply be passed over. Likewise the true message of the Qur'an cannot be understood if it is viewed from the subjective angle of one's own special interest: the fact that the Qur'an is essentially a book of divine guidance, showing us the way to eternal salvation will simply not register; one will fail to realize that its message is such that it must permeate to the depths of one's immortal soul, in order to be manifested in all one's thoughts, words and deeds.

Wisdom should go hand in hand with bravery

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

(Shah Wali Allah, *Izala al-Khafa'*)

The Opportunities Awaiting Us.

In 1891, when Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, the great champion of Pan-Islamism, was in Istanbul, the Japanese Emperor Magi sent a letter to the King of Turkey, Abdul Hamid II. Expressing his friendship he wrote:

We are both Eastern rulers. It is in our interests that we should be familiar with and have closer contacts with one another. There should develop between us a strong bond so that we can defend ourselves against nations and empires; for they see us all in one light. I have noticed that Western nations send their missionaries to our country, for there is religious freedom here; but I have not noticed you doing the same. I would like you to send missionaries to Japan to preach Islam here. Perhaps in this way a stronger, meaningful relationship can be established between us.

(Jamaluddin Afghani by Mahmood Aburia)

On receiving this letter, King Abdul Hamid gathered several Islamic scholars, including Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, and showed the letter to them. But none showed any particular interest in taking up the Japanese Emperor's offer. The official envoy who had brought the letter returned with a mere formal note of thanks.

At this time, Syed Jamaluddin and other Muslim leaders were arising. These movements, though seemingly different, had two basic things in common: they were all essentially political in their nature, being reactions against the long period of colonial domination: they all failed in achieving their objectives.

The letter from Emperor Magi, however, shows, that had Muslims, cared to make constructive efforts toward preaching the word of Islam, instead of engaging in fruitless conflict, their aims would have been better served.

It is highly regrettable that open invitations to preach Islam go unheeded, or are met with apathy. We need to shake ourselves out of our lethargy, and go out with energy and enthusiasm to preach the word of God.

All Praise is due to God.

A tree is unaware of its own extraordinary significance. A flower does not realize what a delicate and exquisite masterpiece it really is. A bird is oblivious to its own breathtaking beauty. Though all things in this world are classic specimens of the most exquisite art, they never come to know themselves as such.

For whom then, is this beautiful and gracious display? It is all for men's benefit. Man is the only being in the known universe who can perceive beauty in a thing and appreciate its excellence. God has created an exquisite work of art in worldly form and enabled man to apprehend it. He has given man a tongue to express his wonder and veneration at God's stupendous feats of creation. This is praise, or admiration of God. Praise is a tribute of the most sublime sentiments, cast into human words to be offered before God.

Praise is to be moved at the sight of God's craftsmanship and to spontaneously express one's realization of His perfection in words to this effect." God, all praise is due to You. You are chaste and exalted. God, count me among the believers, and raise me not up blind like those who failed to acknowledge Your perfection or perceive Your beauty."

Praise is constant remembrance of God in this manner. In Arabic or any other language.

Big Bang Theory

E.O Wilson, the inventor of socio-biology, once said in an interview that the Big Bang theory is more interesting than any religious theory regarding origin of the universe. In fact the Big Bang theory is clearly mentioned in the following verse of the Qur'an

"Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were one solid mass which we tore asunder, and that we have made every living thing of water?

Will they not have faith? 21:30

The Quran is here addressing all mankind. It is speaking beyond the level of time to all unbelievers, it is telling them that there is proof of the existence of One God in the universe before their very eyes. Why then do they deny it?

In 1912, the American astronomer Vesto Melvin Slipher discovered from his observation of the stars from Lowell Observatory in America that some constellations were rapidly moving outwards. This theory was later confirmed by Edwin Hubble and Milton Humanson. In fact, their observations through the 100 inch telescope at Mount Wilson showed that all constellations were moving in the outward direction. The Dutch astronomer, Willem de Sitter later accumulated further evidence in support of this theory. Then in 1965, New Jersey scientists Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered some radiation emitted by the explosion that marked the origin of the universe. So much evidence has accumulated in support of the Big Bang theory that it has now come to be regarded as an established fact.

This theory implies that the universe is not infinite: it has a definite beginning. It shows that we live in an expanding universe. On all sides of us constellations are careering outwards at a stupendous pace. It has been calculated that if this outward movement were to be reversed, it would take 20,000 million years for the whole strung out universe to converge into one mass. This theory has proved the existence of God from the law of nature, for only an external agent could have made a solid mass move in an outward direction at a specific time.

The more science advances, the closer it comes to the Quran. One is compelled to agree with what Dr Maurice Bucaille writes in the following

paragraphs of his book, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*:

"In view of the level of knowledge in Muhammad's day it is inconceivable that many of the statements in the Qur'an which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Qur'an as the expression of a Revelation, but also to award it a very special place, on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statement which, when studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms."

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One's next of kin have the greatest right to one's charity

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: "By the one who sent me with the Truth, God will not accept charity from one whose kinsfolk go in want because he spends on others instead of on them." According to another account, the Prophet said that God would not look with favour upon such a person on the Day of Resurrection.

(Al-Tabarani)

Why be on the defensive?

Communist China has recently been facing a new kind of pollution – spiritual pollution, following upon the all too familiar industrial pollution.

Following the Sino-American pact made during Richard Nixon's presidency China adopted an open door policy towards the West. This resulted in an influx of unwelcome liberal values and religious ideas into the country. The entry of greater number of people, and an increase in books and journals coming in from the West, represented a kind of cultural invasion, the ideas of which ran counter to the official ideology of Red China. Ideological crusades were launched in China to resist this invasion. As a result, many people have been arrested and the publication of suspect articles in Chinese newspapers has been banned. A recent example of the rigid censorship that has been enforced was the closure, in September 1983 of a Jean-Paul Sartre play in Shanghai. Sartre's writings were criticized last year for having a negative impact on Chinese youth.

The government is making tremendous efforts to encounter this "spiritual pollution". Communist party officials have realized that this pollution has entered China because of its opening to the West in recent years. The head of the communist party's propaganda unit, Mr. Deng Liqun, has defined spiritual pollution to include "articles and speeches, which criticise or question Marxism and Socialism."

The communists hold that their ideology is supreme. As they see fit, man has finally, after a long ideological search, discovered ultimate truth in the form of communist philosophy. If this is the case, then why is the communist world afraid of non-communist ideas? Why should truth feel insecure in its encounter with untruth? Why should a superior ideology have cause for alarm in face of inferior ideologies?

Darkness can never be afraid of light. When darkness and light

come together, the one to flee will certainly be darkness, even if it calls itself light.

Disunity: The Enemy's Weapon

Israel's former minister of defence, Moshe Dayan (1915-1981), wrote in his autobiography *The Story of My Life*, "The Arabs, disunited and at odds with one another over every issue, big and small, present no threat."

1983 has seen the PLO disunited and at odds with one another. After their expulsion from Lebanon, a large proportion of Palestinians are dissatisfied with Yasir Arafat's leadership. They have united behind Abu Musa in their attempts to dislodge the veteran PLO leader. But Yasir Arafat is not willing to step down. Thus the Palestinians are split up into two groups and are fighting it out amongst themselves.

Reporting these event, *The Washington Post* has quoted this statement of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, "I must say that it is good for Israel that there are domestic quarrels, breakups and divisions within the organization of the PLO." In addition, *The Washington Post* has quoted an Israeli defence ministry official as saying that there is a belief in Israel that the increased intensity of the revolt against Mr. Arafat in northern and eastern Lebanon has reduced the number of attacks against Israeli soldiers in the south last week. In the same vein, another official said, "They are busy among themselves, and that is good for us." (*Guardian Weekly*, July 3, 1983).

To fight with one's friends is to become one's own worst enemy: It is to destroy oneself as one's enemies are always seeking to do.

Diversion

The world of nature is characterised by its equilibriums. Human society must acquire the same equilibrium if it is to function smoothly.

There are many ways in which God maintains the equilibrium of nature. One of these ways is diversion; that is, the channelling off of a force that has reached excessive proportions. Think of the amount of rain that falls in the rainy season. Immense damage would be done if it were to remain in cultivated and populated areas. So what nature does in such situations is provide the land and human population with an amount of water which is only just adequate while the rest of water is diverted into rivers.

Man has made use of this principle of diversion in the building of dams. The purpose of a dam is to control the free flow of water in a river. Whenever there appears to be a surplus water, the excess amount is channelled off in another direction. In this way the river is prevented from deluging the surrounding area. This water then flows into a large pool, or reservoir. So it is with many machines. When the amount of steam in a steam-engine, for instance, exceeds specified proportions, then it is diverted and funnelled off.

This principle of diversion should also be applied to human society. If one lives with others one is bound to have cause for complaint against them from time to time. These grievances will end in social strife if allowed to escalate. The smooth running of society will then become well nigh impossible.

The strife and conflict can be avoided only if man finds an outlet for his excess emotion. This is the function that faith in God and the hereafter performs. The prophet Joseph had been separated from his father by his half-brothers. Later on the same thing happened to Joseph's full-brother, Benjamin. It was quite natural that Joseph's father should have been thrown into a profound emotional crisis by these events. If he had made Joseph's half-brothers the target of his emotions, then his family would have been beset by savage strife.

So instead of this, he turned the flood of his emotions towards God. "I address my sorrow and sadness to God alone," he said (Quran, 12:85). A similar incident occurred during the caliphate of Umer. The Caliph dismissed the commander of the Muslim army, Khalid Ibn Walid. This was a severe blow to a man of Khalid's standing. But he diverted all his emotions towards God. He reacted to the Caliph's decision with these words:

I do not fight for the cause of Umer

I fight for the cause of the Lord of Umer.

Human society is deeply indebted to faith in the hereafter for this function that it performs. Faith in God enables one to turn to Him for recompense in times of grievance. A man of God does not make others the target of his negative feelings. Instead, he diverts them towards God.' The deluge of his emotions, which might have caused immense damage to human beings, falls instead into a diversion pool.

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Confirming the truth' of statements at their source

Abu Al Aaliyah, one of the generation which succeeded that of the Prophet's Companions, tells of how, when in Basrah (Iraq's capital at that time) they used to hear statements which were attributed to the Companions, but that in order to be certain of their authenticity, they would travel to Medina to hear them from the Companions themselves.

(Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi)

Healthy Criticism

In the June 1983 British General Election, Mrs. Thatcher easily won another term as Prime Minister. One of the first things she did after her election was pack her foreign minister, Mr. Francis Pym.

A descendent of John Pym (1584-1643), whose power during the reign of Charles I was so great that he was known as 'King Pym,' Sir Francis Pym had all the qualities and dignity of a capable and respected statesman. He had held high cabinet office. Why, then, did Mrs. Thatcher dismiss him from her government? The reason was that he had said something during the election campaign that Mrs. Thatcher had not liked. Discussing the role of the opposition in government, he had said that "a strong opposition is indispensable ingredient of good government," the reason being that "no government is perfect." Mrs. Thatcher was unable to tolerate this remark, and dismissed Sir Francis from his cabinet post.

Being unable to abide criticism is a common human weakness. Its most damaging effect is to rob one of one's friends.

No great task can be accomplished without the help of friends who are fully equipped for the task. The only way to bring such people together is to put up with their criticism. Intelligent people cannot suppress their thoughts. A broadminded leader, then, will let them freely express themselves; he will not be angered at their dissent. In this way he will ensure the continued allegiance of valuable friends. One who is narrow-minded, however, will not be able to appreciate the worth of such people. The result will be that a mediocre group of people will gather around him who have the calibre neither to perform great deeds, nor to comprehend them.

An Old Woman's Courage

Mamun Rashid (108-218 .H.), a Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, although known for his ruthless treatment of political adversaries was very kind and considerate towards the common people. Once an old woman of Baghdad entered his court and approached him. "I am a poor woman," she complained to the caliph. "I once owned a plot of land, but it has been taken away from me by a tyrant. He would not listen to my cries, so I have come to you to ask for justice."

"Who is it who has maltreated you in this way?", the caliph asked. The old woman pointed to the person sitting next to the caliph. Mamun Rashid saw that it was his own son, Abbas, that she was pointing at. He ordered his Vazir i.e. his chief advisor, to take Abbas and stand him up next to the old woman. This order was carried out. Now the caliph asked them both to state their cases.

The prince spoke falteringly and in an undertone. But the old woman spoke firmly and in a loud voice. The Vizir admonished her to talk softly and with respect as she was in the presence of the caliph. But the caliph intervened, and said that she should be free to express herself as she wished. It was the truth that had made the old woman speak loudly; and falsehood which had made the prince dumb. She was found justified in her claim. The case was decided in her favour and the land returned to her.

The truth is a force in itself. The conviction of being in the right makes one bold. One who utters the truth does so without fear. His speech is free from contradiction and artificiality. There is no inconsistency in what he says. There is no trace of guilt on his face when he speaks, and no hesitancy in his voice. As a result, there is a power in the voice of one who is in the right which convinces the listener.

If one's case is false, however, one cannot speak convincingly. One's guilty conscience will manifest itself in one's voice; one's face

will reflect a lack of inner conviction. The attempt to make one's lies credible, will be full of obvious contradictions. In spite of having a tongue, one will be as good as speechless. One should remember always that God is one's witness.

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Two eyes that shall be saved from the Fire

“There are two eyes that the Fire shall not touch,” said the Prophet Mohammad. “One is an eye that has wept in fear of God, and the other is an eye that has spent the night keeping a vigil in the path of God.”

One has to lose in order to gain

Kaab ibn Ujrah relates how one day he came before the Prophet and, noticing the marks of strain on his face, he asked him what was troubling him. The Prophet replied that for three days his stomach had had nothing to fill it. Kaab then went out and found employment with a local Jew. He had to give water to the Jew's camel and in return for each bucketful, he received one date. When he had a collection of dates he came before the Prophet, who asked him where he had found them. After he had explained how he came by them, the Prophet said, "Kaab, tell me, have you any love for me?" Kaab's answer was that he would sacrifice his own dear father and mother for the sake of the Prophet. "Do you know the fate of one who loves God and His Prophet?" asked the Prophet. "Poverty, which will overtake him even more swiftly than flood waters streaming down a hillside."

(Al-Tabarani)

A Perfect World

Until recently, people in heavily industrialized areas of the world considered the smoke pouring from their factory chimneys as a sign of prosperity. They saw in it the solution to their problems, and security for the future.

The problem of pollution first reared its head in the 1960's. At that time the Germans tried to deal with it by building colossal chimney stacks which, it was hoped, would serve to protect the environment. It turned out, however, that this measure only succeeded in spreading pollution farther afield.

Now the destructive properties of the smoke which used to be considered a sign of prosperity are becoming fully apparent. This smoke contains a high quantity of sulphur dioxide, which is transformed into sulphuric acid in the atmosphere. This sulphuric acid then mixes with the rainfall, and falls to the ground in the form of acid rain.

Acid rain is causing immense damage to man's environment. A report recently published by the National Academy of Sciences in America states that in eastern Canada and the north-eastern part of the United States, some lakes and streams have been stripped of aquatic life. Scientists are also concerned that the acids may free metals in lake and stream sediments, posing a potential threat to drinking water supplies.

The damage is heaviest where industrialization is heaviest. In Germany, for instance, 300,000 acres of trees in Bavaria alone are reported to be suffering from the effects of acid rain. At the last count, in 1982, 10 per cent of the German forest was said to be dead or dying. Vast measures are being proposed to meet this threat, but all of them are either scientifically impractical or economically unfeasible.

What hopes man associated with industrial civilization but how

savagely those hopes have been dashed. He thought that industrial civilization would provide the perfect world he longs for, but it has only provided him with more affliction. Man has been given everything he requires in this world: he feels hungry and has been given food to satisfy his hunger; he feels thirsty and has been given water to quench his thirst. But he feels tired and has been given sleep to replenish and restore him. There is one thing the man has not been given, and that is the perfect world that he longs for more than anything. The means required for such a perfect world are present in this world, but every time it seems to be within man's reach, worldly limitations prevent him from achieving it. One can only conclude that the perfect world that man desires is destined for another world; only if we seek it there can our dreams be fulfilled. But man's misfortune is that he seeks perfection in this ephemeral world where experience shows that it cannot be obtained.

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Meditation the greatest of activities

Abdullah ibn Utbah once asked Darda's mother how her husband had spent most of his time. "In meditation, and learning a lesson from everything that happened," she replied.

(Hilyat al-Auliya)

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The Companions worshipped by thinking of God and the Hereafter

When Abu Dhar died, a certain man rode from Basra to Medina just to find out from his wife what the nature of her late husband's worship had been. "He used to spend the whole day alone, engrossed in thought," she told him.

(Hilyat al-Auliya)

