

Dr. M. Raziuddin Siddiqi

## THE VALUE OF ISLAM IN THE AGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Message of Islam, as revealed to the Holy Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم), has spread at all corners of the Globe during the last fourteen hundred years, claiming the allegiance of about a quarter of the humanity at the present time. There is a spirit of revival and resurgence all over the Muslim World, and the whole of mankind seems to be interested in knowing the true facts about the religion whose followers dominated the world politically, socially and intellectually for almost a thousand years.

A section of intelligentsia in the western countries, particularly among the communist bloc of nations, voice from time to time the opinion that religion has become outdated and outmoded in the modern age, making it necessary to discard the concept altogether, or at least relegate it to the background of the personal life of a believer. Under the influence of the western type of education, this view has permeated even among the younger generations of Muslim societies, so that a considerable number of young people among the Ummah are not conversant with their own higher values and cultural heritage. It has become imperative to counteract these un-Islamic and anti-religious influences and to convince the world at large about the need and value of Islam at this critical juncture in the life of the human race.

The destructive forces let loose by the phenomenal progress in the scientific and technological fields during the last few decades are bringing home to the leaders of thought and intellectual classes in the free world the dangers inherent in a lopsided development of only the physical and material side without a corresponding evolution of the moral and spiritual aspects of the human personality. This kind of imbalance has given rise to the paradoxical phenomenon that the ever-increasing prosperity and affluence have not brought any happiness and peace of mind to men who are becoming more and more dissatisfied with their life. This shows that there is some thing basically wrong with the existing conditions, and with the fundamental premises under which man is conducting

his affairs today. In fact, the malaise and imbalance from which modern man is suffering have been caused by his neglect of the spiritual factor in his personality and his total pre-occupation with the physical side alone. This is reducing him to the status of a mechanical robot, as pointed out by Allama Iqbal:

ہے دل کے لیے موت مشینوں کی حکومت  
احساس مروت کو کیچل دیتے ہیں آلات

It is only Islam which can rescue him and restore the balance by developing the moral and spiritual aspect of his personality.

Let us analyse the characteristic features of the modern age, and see how Islam handles them. To start with, take the question of knowledge, which occupies a central position in this age of science and technology without which no advancement is possible. It is well-known what value Islam attaches to knowledge. It was the subject of the very first Revelation to the Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم). For the first time in History, acquisition of knowledge was made obligatory on every one. This democratization of knowledge, and the consequent liberation of the human mind, was the greatest revolution in human affairs which was the precursor of all other revolutions such as the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution. In numerous places in the Quran and Hadith, the importance of knowledge has been emphasized. Says the Quran:

ویرفع اللہ الذین آمنوا والذین اوتوا العلم درجات

*i.e.* "And Allah exalteth to higher ranks those believers who have been vouchsafed knowledge." It is quite obvious that this could not have referred to knowledge of religion only, otherwise the Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) would not have urged the believers to go to China in search of knowledge if it is available there. As a matter of fact, the Quran has enjoined repeatedly that the believers should study Nature and contemplate about the universe. The scientific inquiry, its scope which consists in explaining the inter-relationship between phenomena, and its method of observation, experimentation and systematization, are in accordance with the spirit of Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam encourages such a study of the physical world and the concomitant subjugation of the forces of Nature for the benefit of man. The Quran has laid down:

وسخر لکم ما فی السموات و ما فی الارض

*i.e.* "All that is in the heavens and in the earth has been subjugated to you", and the Holy Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) has declared: (العلم سلاحی)

*i.e.* "Knowledge is my weapon". However, the words (سخر لکم) show that subjugation should be for the benefit of man, and not to his disadvantage. This principle has been expressed very aptly by the two terms: (حکمت فرعونى) and (حکمت کلیمى), *i.e.* the 'prophetic science' and the 'satanic science'. There is a well-known Hadith which says that a Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue other believers are safe. This prohibits scientists from developing chemical, bacterial and nuclear weapons, and from creating Frankenstein monsters through genetic technology.

Another characteristic of the modern age is the annihilation of time and space which is taking place through the development of ever faster means of communication and transport. This has rendered the concept of geographical and territorial nationalities an anachronism, and shown that the only method of avoiding the destructive world-wars and resolving the international and inter-racial conflicts and catastrophes, is provided by the Islamic teaching of one Ummah and the Brotherhood of Man. It has been amply demonstrated by now that first dividing humanity into so many nations and then trying to bring these nations together, is not a rational way of solving the world's problems:

اس دور میں اقوام کی صحبت بھی ہوئی عام  
پوشیدہ نگاہوں سے رہی وحدت آدم  
مکہ نے دیا خاک جنیوا کو یہ پیغام  
جمعیت اقوام کہ جمعیت آدم

An important principle of Islam is that of consultation and consensus. The modern world stands greatly in need of this value since it is often threatened by such forces as the Dictatorship of the 'Right' or the 'Left' or even by the law of the jungle *i.e.* the brute force. The Quran has prescribed that the worldly affairs should be conducted on the basis of consultations:

و امرهم شوریٰ بینہم

At another place there is an injunction in the Quran which says: (وشاورہم فی الامر). This is also borne out by the actions of the Holy Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) himself who used to consult the 'Sahaba' in the practical affairs, so much so that such an important matter as the 'azan' the Call to Prayer, was determined on the basis of consultation.

The cardinal principles of Faith which were laid down by Divine Revelation, were, of course, outside the purview of consultations, but

in other matters including the conduct of (غزوات) the Prophet (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) invariably consulted his companions. It was the same with the first four Caliphs. The difficulties of the Muslim Ummah started when this principle was not followed faithfully, and it gave way to autocratic practices and hereditary rule. However, the validity and value of the Islamic principle of consultation and consensus has never been questioned or doubted in the Muslim societies.

The modern principle of democracy may appear to be similar to the Islamic principle of consultation and consensus, but it is not exactly the same, and that is where the troubles of the present times start. Modern democracy has been described in a most eloquent couplet by Iqbal:

جمہوریت اک طرز حکومت ہے کہ جس میں  
بندوں کو گنا کرتے ہیں تو لا نہیں کرتے

I shall now take up the Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights which are talked about so loudly and proudly in the so-called advanced countries. Let us see how Islam formulated them in a more just and rational manner fourteen hundred years earlier.

There is first of all the oft-proclaimed Freedom from Want. In this context the Quranic Dictum is:

وما من دابة في الارض الا على الله رزقها

*i.e.*, "There is no living being on this Earth but Allah has taken upon Himself the provision of his needs." This verse has been explained in the sense that the genuine and essential needs of each and every citizen have to be provided by the authorities. The institutions of 'Zakat' and 'Bait-ul-Mal' are meant exactly for this purpose. This does not, however, give a license to the sluggards and professional beggars to become parasites on the Ummah; they have to do whatever work they are capable of, and make their contribution for the collective welfare of the group. They will get the benefits commensurate with their efforts:

ليس للانسان الا ما سعى

Another Freedom is that from Fear. It means that no citizen should be subjected to fear from any individual or group, including the government. Now, in Islam this Freedom from Fear is not absolute or un-conditional, but more realistic. The Quran proclaims:

الا ان اولياء الله لا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون

*i.e.* "Beware that only the people of Allah (*i.e.* those who are Godly and observe the Divine Laws) are free from Fear and Sorrow". This

is as it should be. It is not correct that evil-doers should go scot-free without any fear or apprehension. The menace of the police state is not sufficient to keep a man on the right path. It is only the conviction that Allah is Omniscient and Omnipresent, and sees and hears everything whether it is open or secret, that can provide a real guarantee for keeping men from transgressing the moral hands. What is happening in the "advanced" societies is enough to establish the validity of the Islamic principle that only the (اولياء الله) can and should be free from Fear.

Then there is a Fundamental Human Right, viz. the Right of Association and Cooperation. Here again, Islam gives the correct guidance, and enunciates that cooperation should be in matters of piety and goodness, and not in evil and wrong deeds. Says the Quran:

تعاونوا على البر والتقوى ولا تعاونوا على الاثم والعدوان

I have given here only a very few examples to show how Islam gives a correct lead in dealing with the problems of the modern world. A detailed analysis will show that this is true for all worldly affairs. The principles of Islam are as valid and applicable today as they were at any time since they were revealed to and enunciated by the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) fourteen hundred years ago. It should be remembered that the principle of 'Ijtihad' (اجتهاد) is an integral part of the Islamic system, and one cannot conceive of any possible situation for which Islam does not offer a better solution than that suggested under any other ideological or socio-political system.

George Bernard Shaw was well-known as an outspoken man who was no respecter of personalities. Even he had to admit openly that the problems of modern world could be solved only by one man, and that is the Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم)! The system propounded by the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) under Divine Revelation has been preserved in all its entirety and purity throughout the ages. It is for people of all times to study, understand and follow it to gain their salvation in this world and Hereafter.