



Al-Risala 1987

December

RECOGNITION

Wilfred Blunt (1840-1922) travelled extensively in several Muslim countries and, greatly impressed by Islamic civilization, wrote a book called *The Future of Islam*, which was published in 1882. More recently, an article of his was reproduced in a special number – ‘The World of Islam’ – brought out by the *Times* in connection with the Festival of Islam celebrated in London in 1976.

The following are excerpts from his article:

“Islam is one of the great religions of the world – numerically second only to Christianity. Iran is no more than a small corner of that vast territory, stretching from the Atlantic to the South China Sea, where the Muezzin’s voice is still to be heard, though today often recorded, calling the faithful to prayer.

“There is, perhaps, nothing more amazing in the whole long history of mankind than the extent and the rapidity of the dissemination of Islam. Who could possibly have foreseen that a middle-aged one-time Meccan tradesman and caravan leader, driven in the year 622 from his birth-place to take refuge in Yathrib (Medina), was to found a religion which within a century of his death would have established itself over half the civilized world, would have struck westwards into the heart of France and eastwards crossed the Indus and penetrated to the frontiers of China.

“And supposing the tide of Islam had not been stemmed? Nothing so delayed the advance of science in the West as the clumsiness of the Roman numerals. Had the Arabic numerals, which had reached Baghdad from India towards the end of the eighth century, been soon afterwards introduced into and adopted by western Europe as a whole, much of that scientific progress which we associate with the Renaissance in Italy might have been achieved several centuries earlier.”

2 December 1987

Islamic revolutions are brought about by Islamic people

In the Battle of Badr, a brave idolator asked the Prophet's permission to join the Muslim army. His request was not granted. "Do you believe in God and His Prophet?" the Prophet asked him. No, "the man replied. I cannot accept help from an idolator," the Prophet told him. Afterwards, the man proclaimed the testimony of faith, and entered the field of battle as a Muslim.

Peace and Justice for All

During the time of his imprisonment by the British in the Ahmad Nagar Fort, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote his famous book. *The Discovery of India*, between the months of April and September, 1944. It is significant that the postscript he added on the 29th of December, 1945 concludes with the words:-

“We are on the eve of general elections in India and these elections absorb attention. But the elections will be over soon – and then? The storm and trouble, of conflict and in India or elsewhere except on the

Approximately one and a half years gain its independence, and Jawahar govern the country single-handed been closely associated with him death. But that precious quality of than ever it seemed in December, but it has certainly not gained peace.

A political revolution can have meaning only if it is preceded by, and consistently upheld by a moral revolution is worth the name unless it brings in its wake peace and justice for

coming year is likely to be one of turmoil. There is going to be no peace basis of freedom”. (PP. 693,694).

after these lines were written, India did Lal Nehru had the opportunity to till the end of his life. Those who had remained in power even after his life called ‘peace’ is further away today 1945. India has gained its freedom,

Changes of leadership have done little to amend this situation. Zealous leaders have too often equated a change in the status quo with betterment, progress, the weal of the common man, only to find that their aspirations have been illusory. Most often, such changes only bring new faces to the political scene, without there being any improvement, either qualitative or quantitative, in the existing state of affairs.

A political revolution can have meaning only if it is preceded by, and consistently upheld by a moral revolution. Its genuine fruits should be not just changes in the wielders of power, but changes in attitudes and behaviour from the top to the bottom of the social and political hierarchy. No revolution is worth the name unless it brings in its wake peace and justice for all. (U A/124 / 22).

Towards Annihilation

“Nuclear conflict would cause as much damage as World War II every second. Survivors, if any, would live in despair amidst the poisoned ruins of a civilization that had committed suicide!”

The greater part of the world's wealth is spent on defence. According to a statement made by the President of the World Bank, Mr. A.W. Clausen in 1984, the affluent countries would spend one thousand billion dollars in the course of the following year on either the manufacture or the import of arms. (*The Times of India*, 7 December, 1984).

We are left wondering what logic or what humanity there is in expenditure on armaments, given the casualty list of the first and second world wars. In the First World War 10 million people lost their lives and 20 million were seriously incapacitated. No lesson obviously having been learnt from this, the Second World War killed off fifty million people and maimed another 90 million for life. The destruction of property was estimated to run into billions of dollars.

Although the world has seen no repetition of a war on that scale in the intervening period, there have been a number of minor wars whose death toll, according to Moscow's News Times, has mounted to ten millions, with colossal amounts of property destroyed.

The former U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, in a televised farewell speech, which he made on the 15th of January 1981, warned his countrymen of atomic warfare, which seemed to him to be a certainty, sooner or later. In the event of an atomic war, the very first few hours would bring the annihilation of as many people as had been killed in all the known wars of human history. “Nuclear conflict would cause as much damage as World War II every second. Survivors, if any, would live in despair amidst the poisoned ruins of a civilization that had committed suicide! (*The Times of India*, 16 January, 1981.)

4 December 1987

Two eyes that will not see hell-fire

The Prophet said: "Two eyes will not be touched by hell-fire: the eye that cries for fear of God, and the eye that spends the night keeping watch for the cause of God."

Rising to the Occasion

While the Battle of Qadsia was raging, Abu Mehjan Thaqafi, one of the bravest soldiers in the Muslim army found himself chained up, a prisoner in his own tent, because his Commander, Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas had been constrained to punish him for his indulgence in liquor. The Muslims were having difficulty in resisting the determined attacks of the Persians. Abu Mehjan was beside himself when he discovered that Sa'ad was wounded and heard him issuing instructions to the army from a vantage point near his tent. Alas that horses and spears should be doing battle, and I should be left out, tied up in chains." It was then that he conceived the idea of sending a message to Sa'ad's wife to have his chains removed and to let him have Sa'ad's horse that if his life was spared, the moment he immediately put on his chains again. She Mehjan was able to charge out into the soldiers while Sa'ad ibn abi Waqqas looked of this intrepid horseman. The Muslims Abu Mehjan, true to his promise, returned went back into the confinement of his tent. remarked to his wife that it was a man – sent horse who had saved the day. 'If I hadn't chains, I would have thought it was he, for

The true Muslim does not need to be punished to make him refrain from misdeeds. Faith produces a positive response to the merest hint or reminder about defaulting.

and weapons. With the promise battle was over, he would agreed to this and so Abu battle, valiantly fighting enemy on in wonderment at the feats finally emerged victorious, and Sa'ads horse and sword and When Sa'ad went home he by God – riding on a spotted trussed Abu Mehjan up in only he can charge in that way!

Sa'ad's wife then told him the whole story, with the result that Abu Mehjan was promptly released from his chains and Sa'ad made a pledge to him never again to punish him for drinking. For his part, Abu Mehjan Thaqafi promised never to drink again.

The true Muslim does not need to be punished to make him refrain from misdeeds. Faith produces a positive response to the merest hint or reminder about defaulting. Only one who is totally devoid of these qualities will be deaf to entreaties and insensitive to rebuke.

Divinity Inborn

One of the most prominent atheists of our times, British philosopher Bertrand Russell, has published a number of books and articles which justify his atheistic cast of mind. *Why I Am Not a Christian* is specific on this issue, as the title suggests. Yet, in his autobiography, he writes of his journey to Greece :

I had never before been in Greece and I found what I saw exceedingly interesting. In one respect, however, I was surprised. After being impressed by the great solid achievements which everybody admires, I found myself in a little church belonging to the days when Greece was part of the Byzantine empire. To my astonishment, I felt more at home in this little church than I did in the Parthenon or in any of the other Greek buildings of Pagan outlook had a firmer hold upon me than I had imagined. The hold was not upon my beliefs, but upon my feelings" (p.561).

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These words were evidently a heartfelt an indicator of how it is that man has

cry from his innermost being. It is been unable to rid himself of such

feelings, even when all of his conscious actions have been motivated by the purest of logic. Even the staunchest of atheists and unbelievers admit from time to time that they remain dissatisfied in their state of unbelief. It is at moments such as that experienced by Bertrand Russell in Greece that they are forced to relent, to give in to such impulses as they have reasoned themselves into suppressing, and have been at pains all along to disavow. Truly, man can never free himself from his inborn ties with divinity.

Mu'awiyah went out, and reached the spot where Abdullah Ibn Amir and Abdullah Ibn Zubair were sitting. When they saw Mu'awiyah, Abdullah Ibn Amir rose to his feet, and Abdullah Ibn Zubair remained seated. Mu'awiyah told them that the Prophet had said that whoever likes people to get up for him should prepare a place for himself in hell-fire.

- Hadith

The Facade of Human Greatness

The 'greatness' of human beings should be viewed as a mere facade which is erected as a test of man in this world to be seen through, penetrated and cast aside as irrelevant to the truth that no one besides God is Invested with true greatness.

In the days of the Companions and the generations immediately succeeding them, there was a remarkable atmosphere of tolerance. Only God was great, and people lived in awe of His greatness alone. If people criticized one another, such criticism was acceptable, for it did nothing to diminish the greatness of God. It was therefore possible for one of Caliph Umer ibn Khattab's congregation to stand up during a speech he was making in Medina and say, "By God, Umer, if we detect any crookedness in you then we will put you straight with our swords," without eliciting any reproof either from the Caliph or from other members of the congregation.

In modern times, however, this is no longer so. Anyone who attempts to criticize any leading personality nowadays will find that, no matter how well founded his critics, his action will have the same effect as disturbing a hornets' nest. He will find himself the object of innumerable attacks by the followers of whatever dignitary he has chosen to criticize, and will be hard put to it to make whatever point he had felt was worth making. The reason for this is that society mistakenly attributes greatness to human origins and people have forgotten that the words routinely uttered in prayer: "God is great" are meant to be taken quite literally and seriously. Too many individuals allow themselves, erroneously, to be dominated by the 'greatness' of other human beings, whereas their sole preoccupation should be the greatness of God. The 'greatness' of human beings should be viewed as a mere facade which is erected as a test of man in this world. It has to be seen through, penetrated and cast aside as irrelevant to the truth that no one besides God is invested with true greatness. Only those who appreciate this fact can have any hope of success in the next world.

Arriving at the Truth

In 1859, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) published his now celebrated *Origin of Species* in which he put forward the very curious theory that human beings have evolved from animals. Now, man is outstandingly different from other living species. How could the amoeba's brain have conceivably developed into the human brain? Darwin himself felt uneasy about this notion, and he writes in the final chapter of his book "Can the mind of man, developed from a mind as low as that be trusted when it draws such grand throw the least light on such abstruse

It must be conceded that the interpretation matter of such magnitude and complexity, imagination even to contemplate it. No man, purely human (as opposed to supernatural) mortality which puts an untimely end to all task. The conditions of human existence in him to undertake so monumental a pursuit. Those who bravely embark upon it, cannot but be assailed by persistent doubts on the question of human limitations. Some, like Darwin, accept that this must be so. Some do not.

It is our own cerebral shortcomings which show us the necessity for prophetic guidance. Without this, we cannot, otherwise arrive at the truth.

which has, as I fully believe, been possessed by the lowest animals, convulsions? I cannot pretend to problems."

of life and the universe is a that it almost defies the with the limiting factors of his abilities and an ineluctable endeavours, can be equal to the this world simply do not equip

Self-doubt is in itself a proof that if we are to penetrate the mysteries of life and the universe, our thinking must of necessity be on a higher plane than that of which we are humanly capable. In the last analysis, it is only God who is capable of such thought, and if we are to have access to His thinking, it can only be through His messengers. It is our own cerebral shortcomings which show us the necessity for prophetic guidance. Without this, we cannot, otherwise arrive at the truth.

Never Say Die

Those who forget what has been destroyed, and concentrate on what they still have, can achieve wonders, provided they have the determination to do so.

Mr. Stanley L. Jaki, a Hungarian-born Benedictine monk, theologian and physics professor, says losing his voice for ten years helped him win a \$ 220,000 prize for his writings on science and faith. "A surgical mishap on my throat in 1953 gave me time to write and to think, and that's not always the case. Many writers of best-sellers don't think at all," the scholar said. Mr. Jaki, who won the Templeton prize for progress in religion, holds that Christianity created the intellectual climate which allowed science to flourish. He is a stern critic of the view that science and God are unrelated. (*The Times of India*, New Delhi May 14, 1987). Those who do nothing but lament their losses only push themselves further towards total ruination. But those who, like Mr. Jaki, forget what has been destroyed, and concentrate on what they still have, can achieve wonders, provided they have the determination to do so.

Social history is full of examples of the blind, the deaf and the dumb having successful careers, the most notable of whom was Helen Keller, the now celebrated American who was blind and deaf mute. Born on June 27, 1880, she lost the senses of sight, hearing and smell when only 19 months old. She had the good fortune to be aided by Anna Sullivan of the Perkins Institute of the Blind, who taught her to read by the deaf and dumb alphabet, and also to write and typewrite. In 1890, she learned to speak, going on to graduate with honours at Radcliffe college, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She wrote several books including *The Story of My Life*, 1903, and *The world I live In*, 1908. In 1932 she visited Scotland to receive honorary degrees at the universities. (UA/128/S)

9 December 1987

God requires heartfelt devotion on our part

Abdullah Ibn Jud'an was an idolator, but a noble Arab also. He died before the start of the Prophet's mission. In the time of ignorance, he performed many deeds that were commonly considered admirable. The Prophet was asked whether he would be rewarded for his good deeds. "He never uttered the words: 'God, forgive me,'" the Prophet answered.

SETTING DISAGREEMENT ASIDE

When Uthman, the third of the rightly-guided Caliphs, was nearing the end of his life, he found himself besieged in his house in Medina by a thousand-strong horde from Egypt who had descended upon Medina in a great state of wrath because of some false rumours they had heard about him. Despite their accusations being utterly without foundation they refused to allow him to leave his house, and they cut off his water supply. The siege lasted forty days, then finally, on the 18th of month of Dhil-Hijjah, 35 AH, after raising a great hue and cry, they attacked Uthman and killed him. He was then 82 years of age. During the period of siege, because he was surrounded on all sides by rioters, he was unable to visit the Prophet's mosque for prayers. As Caliph, Muslims in prayer. When he was leader of the insurrectionists, Ghafiqy ibn Imam.

"As long as they do good, do good alongwith them, but if they do evil, then you should refrain from doing evil along with them."

it was Uthman's duty to lead the prevented from doing so, the Harb, took over the duties of the

This placed the Muslims of Medina in a hand, they considered themselves duty-mosque, while, on the other hand, they the person leading the prayers was himself a blatant mischief-maker and wrong-doer. During these critical days, one of them managed to meet Uthman and asked him what it was proper to do under such circumstances. The Caliph told him that they should follow the lead of this man in offering their prayers. "As long as they do good, do good alongwith them, but if they do evil, then you should refrain from doing evil along with them."

serious dilemma. On the one bound to attend prayers at the could not overlook the fact that

In giving such a reply, the Caliph set us a wonderful example of how we should always keep our sense of justice while passing judgement on anyone-no matter how strong the grudges we may bear against him. Our disagreements with him should be limited to the actual subject of disagreement and should not be allowed to influence either our thinking on other matters of mutual concern, or our general opinion of the offender. The fact that we are at odds with him should not make us deviate one whit from the path of justice in our dealings with him. This is not an easy attitude to adopt, but it is one to which, out of fairness, we should give much serious thought. (UA/128:3)

SUCCESS IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

O my daughter, be not haughty, lest that open the gates to divorce. And refrain from showing anger, for that will only breed ill-will." If things go against her, she must have the fortitude to bear with this, and if her feelings are constantly hurt, she must be the one to forgive and forget.

Abdullah ibn Jafar, one of the Prophet's companions, gave this piece of advice to his daughter at the time of her marriage: "O my daughter, be not haughty, lest that open the gates to divorce. And refrain from showing anger, for that will only breed ill-will."

This is the best advice that a father can give to his daughter at the time of her marriage. That is the point in her life when she is leaving the warmth, affection and tolerance of father and mother, brothers and sisters, to go and live in surroundings which can so easily turn hostile to her, particularly when none of her own blood relations are within reach. In her own home, if she was ever proud or angry, people would make allowances, and would be kind and patient with her. But in her husband's home, the atmosphere would be entirely different, any untoward behaviour on her part would elicit an unfavourable reaction, and her mistakes would not easily be forgiven or forgotten.

In such a situation, the only way that a girl can make a success of her married life is to remain sensitive to the atmosphere of her new home, and to adjust her temperament accordingly. If things go against her, she must have the fortitude to bear with this, and if her feelings are constantly hurt, she must be the one to forgive and forget. This is the only way for her to have a successful life with those now related to her by marriage.

The Price of Truth

The contemporaries of Mohammed ibn Abdullah (may peace be upon him), finding it hard to believe that God had chosen such an ordinary man to be His messenger, refused to acknowledge his prophethood. Mistakenly under-rating him, they asked why God had not chosen one of the great men of Taif or Mecca for prophet hood – thinking of Urwah ibn Masood of Taif and Walid ibn Mughirah of Mecca. It is a matter of history that the Prophet conquered Mecca and only withdrew from the siege of Taif to Medina when it became too protracted.

It was at this time that God enlightened Urwa ibn Masood as to the Truth. He then followed the Prophet until he met him in Medina, whereupon he accepted Islam. When he sought the Prophet's permission to go back to his own people to call them to Islam, the Prophet warned him that they would offer resistance. But he replied, "O Prophet of God, I am their leader. They hold me as dear as the eyes in their heads."

So he took his leave of the Prophet and journeyed to his home town, where he gathered together the townsmen and announced to them, from a raised platform, that he had accepted Islam. When he called upon them to follow the same path, they responded by shooting arrows at him from all sides, fatally wounding him.

It is sad reality that most leaders attribute the continuance of their leadership to their willingness to fall in line with the wishes of their followers. They know full well that any move to run counter to them would mean their rejection or even their brutal assassination, as in the case of Urwah ibn Masood. Urwah had followed the Truth, but it was a Truth which was alien to his people. From the position of an honoured leader, he had fallen in their eyes to that of the lowliest of creatures. They did not stop to think that their action, carried out in such haste, would be to their eternal shame.

12 December 1987

A good society is one in which one can freely criticize and rebuke others

It happened once that a certain group of people had a grudge against Abdul Aziz ibn Abu Bakra. On one occasion they even went to the extent of knocking him down. His son ran to his assistance, but his father told him not to make a move. "Really," he said, "if anyone has to die, I would prefer it to be myself." His son asked him why. "I am afraid," Ibn Abu Bakra answered, "that I should be alive at a time when I will not be able to call for righteousness and forbid evil, for then there will be no good in the world."

Initial Preparation

One of the innumerable processes of the textile industry is the dyeing of fabric. For instance, most saris are originally woven in the natural colour of cotton and then dyed to make them attractive. Dyeing, however, is never done by dipping the woven saris straight into a cauldron of colour, because it takes a great deal more than this to make the colour uniform and permanent. Before dyeing, pre-treatment is necessary. Only then can the cloth go through the processes of dyeing, printing and finishing. In fact, statistics show that 70 percent of all the defects occurring in dyed fabrics are traceable to the imperfect preparation of the base material.

One can never satisfactorily reach one's ultimate destination without passing through and giving due attention to all of the preliminary stages.

Different kinds of pretreatment, such as desizing, scouring and bleaching or added matter in the cotton which would adversely affect its absorbency and whiteness.

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Mercerizing enhances the accessibility and reactivity of cotton cellulose.

The characteristics possessed by cotton and the cloth made from it have been directly, invested in them by God. The physical rules governing them are, therefore, universal and invariable, and it is only by accepting them as such that man can take the right steps in the correct order to make the clothes of his choice. In this, God gives us a clear sign as to how we should construct our lives. That is, we cannot jump to the later, more refined stages, without going through all the processes of pre-treatment.' It is only when the initial conditions have been fulfilled that we can proceed to the next stage to achieve the desired success. One can never satisfactorily reach one's ultimate destination without passing through and giving due attention to all of the preliminary stages.

Ibn Umar heard Allah's Messenger as saying: He who has to taken an oath, he must not take oath but by Allah. The Quraish used to take oath by their fathers. So he (the Holy Prophet) said: Do not take oath by your fathers.

-Hadith

A RUSSIAN KING OF OLD

The commandments of Islam, as laid down in the Quran and expounded by the Prophet of God, are permanent in nature and Muslims are required to observe them. Although these commandments may not be subjected to any kind of curtailment or amendment, in special cases they can certainly be waived.

Vladimir I of Russia (956-1015 AD) was the first King of that country to convert from idolatry to Christianity. Many of his subjects followed his lead and the idols which had been the objects of their worship were cast into rivers. An eleventh century Christian monk, named Jacob, has recorded the details of King Vladimir's conversion to Christianity. He writes that the Russian King, having suffered a loss of faith in the polytheistic religion of his ancestors, summoned scholars of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in order to find out more about their respective religions.

According to Jacob's account, the Jewish theologians admitted, in the course of detailed discussions, that they, the Jewish people, had incurred the wrath of God and, in consequence, did not know their true abode either on earth or in heaven. Discouraged at this, Vladimir said that he had no need of such a religion.

After having the teachings of Islam explained to him by Muslim theologians, Vladimir became interested in Islam and was on the point of accepting that faith, when one fatal drawback emerged. "I am in the habit of drinking," he told the Muslim theologians, "I am ready to follow all the teachings of Islam – but drinking, – that, I am unable to forego." They informed him that Islam prohibited the drinking of wine and that if he was to accept Islam, he should have to give up this habit. He pleaded with them at great length to exempt him from the law forbidding wine-drinking, but the theologians could not bring themselves to agree. There the matter ended, and the Russian King refrained from entering the fold of Islam.

King Vladimir then held discussions with the Christian theologians, who proved themselves wiser and more tactful than their Muslim counterparts. Although unable to give the King complete satisfaction as to the tenets of their faith, they did agree that he would be allowed to continue drinking wine. Despite his reservations about Christianity in principle, he gave it his approval out of purely practical considerations. His adoption of the Christian faith was, as Professor Roberts puts it, "a turning-point in Russian history and culture." (*The Pelican History of the World*, by J.M. Roberts, p. 355). The future of Russia might well have lain in Islam, had it not been for a purely tactical error made by its missionaries.

The Muslim scholars who made this exposition of their religion were well-versed in the legal aspects of Islam, but appear to have been in the dark about its other aspects. With their concentration on what was

lawful and unlawful, they paid scant attention to the strategy to be employed in propagating the message of Islam. This explains their failure in the case of Vladimir I.

Wine-drinking is, of course, prohibited by Islam, but it should not be forgotten that at the very beginning, there was no such prohibition; this came at a later stage. For those who accepted Islam in the early stages of the Prophet's mission in Mecca, the teachings of the Prophet centered on the oneness of God and belief in prophethood, and it was to these tenets that Muslims were required to swear their allegiance. They were not commanded by the Prophet to give up drinking wine. In the early Mecca days, there were, therefore, some amongst the Muslims who despite their acceptance of Islam, continued the practice of drinking. It was only after they had emigrated to Medina – the final verse on prohibition having been revealed at that time – that they renounced this pernicious habit.

It is quite clear from this sequence of events that the propagation of Islam should not begin with a bald statement of the Islamic standpoint on the drinking of wine. The renunciation of this habit is not such a condition for admission to the fold of Islam that it should be laid down as a prerequisite, regardless of the circumstances. If it appears impossible for a potential convert to give up drinking at the very beginning, this problem can always be tackled at a later stage. It may be objected that this lenient attitude to drinking was acceptable only before the Quranic verse prohibiting it was revealed, and that now no further concessions are possible. This argument, however, does not stand up to inspection, for it does not tally with the Prophet's own methods.

In the course of his own mission, the Prophet was quite flexible on certain points whenever inflexibility would have harmed the cause of Islam. There is one very good example of this in the way he dealt with the Thaqeef tribe, which hailed from Taif. In the year 9AH, they sent a delegation to Medina to announce their acceptance of Islam, with the proviso, however, that they would neither pay *Zakat* nor engage in *Jihad*. At that time injunctions both on *Zakat* and *Jihad* had been revealed in the Quran, yet the Prophet accepted their conditions, adding that in time they themselves would include both *Zakat* and *Jihad* in their practice of Islam.

Abu Daud relates this incident in his Sunan:

“Wahab recounts how he asked Jabir about the Thaqeef at the time of their swearing allegiance. Jabir told him that the Thaqeef had imposed the condition on the Prophet of their not having to pay *Sadaqah* or participate in *Jihad*. He then heard the Prophet say that they would give *Sadaqah* and perform Jihad at a later stage, once they had entered the fold of Islam.”

(*Seerat Ibn Hisham*, Vol. IV. p. 56)

The commandments of *Islam*, as laid down in the Quran and expounded by the Prophet of God, are permanent in nature and Muslims are required to observe them. Although these commandments may not be subjected to any kind of curtailment or amendment, in special cases they can certainly be waived.

Indeed, the need to be flexible in the imposition of Islamic injunctions is in itself an obligation which Islam requires us to recognize.

In propagating the message of Islam, one must never lose sight of this need to avoid rigidity. It has to be accepted that the adoption of Islam by an individual or a nation is a gradual process. When one is engaged in the preaching of Islam one must recognize that gradualness can be a virtue, and should accordingly, draw up a phased programme of action. The Prophet and his companions were keenly aware of the necessity to proceed step by step towards total Islamization. By virtue of this very awareness, they were able to spread the message of Islam from one end of the world to the other. It was at a later stage that Muslims neglected this aspect of their mission, thus hindering the further spread of Islam. (UA/129 / 8-10).

Abu Hurayra reported: A person sat late in the night with Allah's Apostle, and then came to his family and found that his children had gone to sleep. His wife brought food for him, but he took an oath that he would not eat because of his children (having gone to sleep without food). He then gave precedence (of breaking the vow and then expiating it) and ate the food. He then came to Allah's Messenger and made mention of that to him, where upon Allah's Messenger said: He who took an oath and (later on) found something better than that should do that, and expiate for (breaking) his vow.

-Hadith

Reward and Punishment

The ugly and ill-tempered hero of *Dostoevsky's novel, "Crime and Punishment" murders an old woman without heirs in order to further his education by means of her ever-increasing but unavailed of wealth. The other characters in the novel, cannot but hold him guilty of a heinous crime as tempting to the murderer as the when a lion kills a deer to eat its flesh, a concern may be shown, but no one would as a moral issue. No one would feel the such acts. On the contrary, when a man as a whole joins in protest and efforts are made to ensure that the murderer does not go unpunished.

*Justice is only
partially obtainable
in this world:
absolute justice is
attainable only in the
life hereafter.*

and, of course, the reader, crime. The old woman's wealth flesh of a deer is to a lion. But certain amount of sentimental seriously raise this kind of killing urge to frame laws prohibiting commits a similar offence, society

This is because man, although often as instinctive in conduct as the predatory animals, is superior in moral status to them, in that he is capable of distinguishing between right from wrong, and is therefore expected by society to act in accordance both with the laws of the land and the dictates of his own conscience. If he fails to do so, he must expect, in his capacity as an ethical being, to be brought before a court of law.

The guilty of conscience, however, are not invariably brought to justice. This is because there exists no temporal court, with an all-seeing eye, which can unfailingly dispense justice on all the myriad occasions on which it is warranted. At best, the courts set up by human beings can try only a certain number of identifiable offenders, and many are the wrongdoers who go scot-free because their crimes are never discovered, because they are able to cover up their offences, because they find loopholes in man-made laws or because they are able to use their wealth in order to corrupt. Justice is only partially obtainable in this world: absolute justice is attainable only in the life hereafter.

Take the case of 34 year old Gerson Vitoria, a Philippino Treasury clerk, who had a case registered against him for forgery. After lengthy court proceedings, he was held guilty in 17 cases by the judge, Mr. Romeo M Escareal. Since Philippine law lays down 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for each such crime committed, the accused found himself sentenced to 170 years Of rigorous imprisonment and a penalty of \$ 4,625. If he was unable to pay the penalty, his term of punishment was to be extended. (*The Times of India*, 9 November, 1979).

* Dostoevsky, a celebrated Russian novelist (1821-1881).

The culprit at the time of sentencing was 34 years of age. Even if he lived to a ripe old age, there would still be about a hundred years left for him to serve. He would never, therefore, in the eyes of the law, fully expiate his crimes. Our world is too limited by human mortality for there to be any possibility of total justice.

In a similar case in Thailand, a case was filed against a policewoman, a Mrs. Phenphanhong Imsap, who had been posted in the frontier region of Pelchabun where she was in charge of the registration office for foreigners. The court found her guilty of earning \$ 25,000 illegally over a period of 17 years by accepting bribes for registration. She was then sentenced to 1000 years of rigorous imprisonment, with no possibility of being released on parole or being granted mercy. In the judge's view such punishment would serve as a preventive to others.

Clearly, this policewoman was not going to stay alive for one thousand years to serve her full term, but since it was felt that a criminal's punishment should be in direct proportion to the magnitude of his crime, this verdict expressed the court's desire for total justice.

In the present world, no judge, however well-intentioned, can ever hope for anything more than partial justice in a large proportion of the cases he presides over. If, to expiate his crimes, a criminal must serve a prison term of 1000 years, his death is going to provide him with an escape route. This inexorable reality calls for the existence of an unlimited world in which man is granted so long a life that he can never escape the full consequences of his deeds. Since, in human terms, this is an impossibility in the present world, we must seek true justice in the eternity of the after-life.

18 December 1987

The inevitability of the Grave

One day, when Umar came to see Abu Ubaidah, he found him lying on a piece of sacking used to saddle camels, with a bundle serving as a pillow. "So you have not done as our companions did?" Umar remarked, meaning that he had still not adopted the more prosperous ways of the times. Abu Ubaidah replied: "Commander of the faithful, this is enough to take me to my final resting-place."

(Hilyatul Auliya)

STRIKING A BALANCE

A gentleman by the name of Qamruddin, who was from the same part of the country as myself, being a very devout person, was extremely regular in his prayers and fasting. But the strange thing about him was that he generally found it difficult to reach the mosque in time for the congregational prayers on a Friday. His intimates knew, of course, that he was delayed, not by sloth, but by his being over-particular about the bath laid down by Islamic law. So extreme were his views that, whenever he started bathing on a Friday morning, he would be beset by doubts about his thoroughness, and, agonizing over which parts of his body he might have missed, would repeatedly bathe all over again, sometimes he would become so distraught that his tears would mingle much to his own inconvenience. So punctilious about religious duties, it the Quran, addressing the People of the Book, says quite specifically, "Exceed not in your religion," (5 : 77). Excess in religion actually produces the antithesis of religion. Innocent in intention, it is far from being innocuous in effect.

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Sometimes he would become with the bath all over again, Sometimes he would become with the bath water. This self-for, although one should always should be borne in mind that

Worship of God is one of obligatory observances laid down by Islam. But, supposing a worshipper every night spent the whole night reciting the *Quran*, this would amount not to devotion, but to excess.

Islam approves of one having a sense of honour, but if this developed to the point where one were loth to accept the truth if it detracted from one's honour, this too would be considered excessive.

Respect for men of learning is also taught by Islam, but if this is interpreted to mean that they should never be subjected to criticism, this likewise would be a form of excess.

It should be appreciated that religious fervour alone does not make an action acceptable in the eyes of God. It is also essential that one's actions should be free from phobias and fanaticism, for only then will they conform to the commandments of God and His Prophet.

The External Reality

It has been seriously claimed that religion has been rendered outmoded and unnecessary by modern civilization. But what actual contribution has western civilization made to humanity? New modes of travel, new architectural designs, new means of communication, new styles of clothes. In short, commodities and conveniences have become more luxurious, more glamorous, more effective than ever before. The question we must ask ourselves is what the existence of such amenities has to do with belief in God and religion.

Does the possession of a modern in God into a meaningless cipher? Do of communication leave no room for revelatory transmission? Does the atmosphere and beyond preclude the cosmos? Does the availability of and elegantly designed furniture Paradise and the Fire of Hell to things women can move their fingers daintily nullify this Quranic verse : "Men are in legislative capacity of certain parliament buildings invalidate the acknowledging the importance and utility of modern technology and its resultant amenities we fail to comprehend in what way these things verify or negate religious truths.

The true meaning of Islam is the guidance of man by God. Just as man requires a constant supply of the Sun's light to sustain his material existence, so does he require God's constant guidance for the moral sustenance of his spiritual life.

house and a luxury car turn belief telegraphic and telephonic means belief in inspirational forms of ability to fly in the earth's possibility of an afterworld in the gourmet food, high fashion clothes reduce belief in the Garden of of the past? Does the fact that over their typewriter keyboards command over women"? Does the individuals seated in grandiose guidelines of the Shariah? While

The relevance of religion is its concern with fundamental values rather than with social manifestations. Social phenomena undergo constant changes, whereas the values of life are immutable. Although fast, modern forms of transport have replaced their slower forerunners, does not mean that the ethics of vehicle manufacture and use are thereby invalidated. Modern means of communication may have rendered the older methods obsolete, but whether these facilities should be utilized to convey truth or falsehood is as pertinent a question as ever it was.

Whether M.Ps go to work on foot or by helicopter does not alter the fact that they are bound to fashion laws in accordance with the Divine Order which rules the entire cosmos. Whether they are housed in huts or in magnificent buildings, judicial bodies are still bound to mete out justice by the same absolute standards so that the innocent are upheld and the guilty punished.

Quran,4:34

Speaking of 'Islam in modern times' has, as little meaning as referring to 'the sun in modern times.' The true meaning of Islam is the guidance of man by God, and, being an eternal reality, is unaffected by considerations of modernity or antiquity. Just as man requires a constant supply of the sun's light to sustain his material existence, so does he require God's constant guidance for the moral sustenance of his spiritual life. Rejecting Islam is like eliminating the sun from the list of human priorities. Just as the world would be plunged into darkness, chaos and ultimate extinction without the light of the sun so will the Hereafter be plunged in eternal gloom and damnation without the divine guidance of the Almighty.

The Mirror of the Mind

The Prophet Mohammad (may peace be upon him) taught the truth, and nothing but the truth. Yet, in his early days in Mecca, when he visited Taif, he found that the people there were unwilling to accept the truths he brought to them. Their reasoning in this was of the shallowest. They felt that great truths could not be at the behest of someone who appeared so insignificant and so low in rank as the Prophet. The Jews likewise reviled him out of their own mistaken sense of superiority. The Emperor Heraclius, on the other hand, did recognize the truth of Islam, yet he rejected it because he did not want to suffer isolation from his people. Similarly, Abu Jahl fiercely opposed the Prophet because concern for his own power and position came between himself and the truth.

We tend to consider the human mind a mirror of reality. But is it really so? The reflections thrown back by it, are so often distorted by pride, conceit, attachment to the material things of life, and by preconceived ideas which no amount of reasoning can correct. But surely, when we have to grapple with the truth, we should so burnish the mirror of the mind that the image it reflects is untarnished by any such base motivations. When reality is placed before this mirror, its every detail should be reproduced in totality with the most scrupulous and persevering exactitude.

Getting a Fair Picture.

“There is no one who has related more of the Prophet’s traditions than I have, with the exception of Abdullah a in Amr ibn Al Aas, for he was in the habit of writing them down, whereas I was not.” So said Abu Hurayrah.

It would appear from this statement that the number of traditions related by Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al Aas is greater than those attributed to Abu Hurayrah, whereas the traditions traced back to himself numbered, 5,374, those traceable to Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al Aas number only 700.

Anyone accepting this statement at its face value, and then finding that the recorded figures apparently did not tally with this, might find himself in a quandary as to which set of figures was correct – Abu Hurayrah’s statement, or the figures.

The reason for this apparent discrepancy was quite simple. Up to the period shortly after the *Hijrah* (emigration), it was a fact that Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas had recorded more of the Prophet’s traditions than Abu Hurayrah. But subsequently, the former, being of considerable military capability, was placed in command of an Islamic army, after which he spent most of his time away from Medina. During this period, Abu Hurayrah spent much more time in the company of the Prophet and, therefore, was in a position to hear many more *Hadiths* than Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas, and pass them on to posterity.

It so often happens that there is more than one side to a question, and if we concern ourselves with only one side of it, we are not really getting at the truth. Only when a question is looked at from all sides do we do justice to all concerned.

22 December 1987

To criticize is to point our mistakes, not to blame

Abdullah Ibn Umer stayed absolutely apart from all the civil strife that followed Ali's martyrdom. He used to say time and time again that he did not believe that it was right that Muslims should be spilling Muslims' blood. That, he said, was why he was staying aloof. No one has any doubt about Ibn Umer's sincerity, piety and discernment, but some of his contemporaries blamed him from one angle. "Why," they said to him, "do you not go out and fight in this "holy war?" "Because I don't think it is a holy war," Ibn Umer replied. "this is internal strife amongst the Muslims themselves, nor hold war." But they were not satisfied with his answer. "We dismiss *your* opinion out of hand," they said. "It seems that you want the companions of the Prophet to die out fighting among themselves. Then, when no one besides you is left, your name will be put forwards for leadership of the Muslims."

ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

This world has one God. He is *its* Creator and Master. The greatest proof of God's existence is the existence of the world itself. Spread around us in all its vastness, it bears witness to the existence of a great God who, in His infinite power, controls it. If we have no choice but to believe in the world, we have no choice but to believe in God as well, for the world would be meaningless if we did not accept the existence of a Maker and Master along with it. Look at how exquisitely the world has been fashioned.

How can it be that it has no Maker? Look at maintains. Could it really be that no one is course, is that it could not. The truth is that, in the world around him, so also is he

Suppose we pebble on a potter's wheel, and very fast. The pebble would, of course, fly wheel can hardly reach a speed of 25 miles moment that the earth we live on is also rate than the potter's wheel. Yet we do not

continuously on its axis at a speed of 1000 miles an hour – much faster than the average passenger plane – yet we move around on its surface, and live our daily lives without any fear of being thrown off like the pebble from the potter's wheel. What a miracle this is. The explanation scientists give us is that the earth pulls us with great force from underneath, while the pressure of the atmosphere from above pushes us firmly to the ground. A force attracting us from below, and a five hundred mile thick blanket of air enveloping us from above are miracles enough in themselves, and to say that they explain our not flying off into space is to lend even greater credence to the miraculous nature of our entire world.

Everything in this world, is, in fact, a miracle. Just think what happens when we put tiny seeds into the ground. The soil in which they are planted is uniform in constitution, but they bring forth a vast array of plants – radishes, carrots, turnips, guavas, mangoes, mustard plants – everything indeed from the humblest blade of grass to the mightiest oak. Each plant has its own distinct appearance, taste and fragrance, and, according to its species gives certain benefits to mankind.

On all sides of us, a whole world of miraculous diversity and proportions stretches out before our eyes. Moreover, at every instant, a great variety of life forms are continually coming into existence, quite unaided by man. Yet if all of the human beings in this world were to come together, they would not be able to create even one tiny grain of sand. This all amounts to a miracle of such amazing proportions, that words fail us when we have to describe it. When we try to do so, we only degrade it, for we are

Man himself is ample evidence for himself, however much he may excuse himself.

To come close to Him is to live in an everlasting garden of splendid colour and superb fragrance.

the perfect order which it controlling it? The answer, of just as man is bound to believe bound to believe in God.

then spun the wheel around off, even although a potter's an hour. Now, just think for a revolving, but at a much faster fly off. The earth spins

unable to do justice to it with mere human words. All we can do is look on in wonder, and ask ourselves: "Besides God, who could have made manifest such a miracle?"

Everything in this world is made up of atoms. In its final analysis, every object is a collection of these tiny particles. Yet by some strange miracle, when these atoms come together in certain proportions, they form the dazzling globe of the sun, and when the same atoms accumulate elsewhere in different proportions they flow in cascades; in yet other places, they take the form of subtle breezes or are fashioned into fertile soil. All these things may be made up of the same atoms, but the nature and properties of each separate object are widely different.

This miraculous world provides man with endless resources which he puts to good use whenever he learns how to tap them. Massive supplies of whatever he needs in life are constantly being accumulated, and man himself has to do very little in order to avail of them. Take, for instance, the food that he eats. He has but to stretch out his hand for the huge quantities of valuable nourishment which, as part of the order of the cosmos, has been made available to him. Once he has it in his possession, all he has to do is move his hands and mouth so that the food should reach his stomach. Then without any further effort on his part, the food is absorbed by the body and is turned into flesh, blood, bones, nails, hair and other parts of the human body. Where food keeps the human body going, petroleum, another great earthly phenomenon, keeps his activities going. All man has to do is to extract it from the ground, put it into his machines and, astonishingly, this liquid fuel keeps the entire mechanism of his civilization running smoothly. Countless resources of this type have been created in this world, and there is enough of everything to meet man's needs. Man's part in bringing these things into being, or in changing them into some useful form is a relatively small one. Therefore, with the minimum of effort, he has his clothes, houses, furniture, machines, vehicles and all the other components and accessories of his civilization. Are such occurrences not sufficient to prove that there is indeed a Maker and a Master of this world?

But we must not forget that there is another side to all this. Nature has provided us with a pure and beautiful world, yet what have our own actions made of it? We may have refined petroleum and made machines out of iron, but we have also filled the land and sea with corruption. We have converted the world into an arena of smoke, noise, pollution, vandalism and war. We have taken these things to such extremes that quite frequently there appears to be no solution to the man-made problems surrounding us. Very little has been accomplished in our factories, and indeed, in the whole field of technology. The world around us accomplishes much more than we human beings do. No problems are created by the works of nature, but man's work is constantly bedevilled by problems.

The earth rotates unceasingly in two ways – on its own axis and in orbit around the sun? But it does not create any noise in the process. A tree goes to work in the way of a great factory, but it does not emit any smoke. Daily, innumerable creatures are dying in the sea, but they do not pollute the water. The universe has been running in accordance with the divine Order for billions of years, without ever having to reorganize itself, for everything about the way it is organized is so perfect. There are countless stars

and planets moving around in space: they keep to the same speed, never lagging behind, and never exceeding their set pace. All these are miracles of the highest order, they are far more wonderful than anything that man can create, and they happen every instant in this world of ours. What further proof do we need that the power of a Great God lies behind this world?

When we look at the different life forms, we witness an astonishing spectacle. Certain material objects come together in one body and a creature like a fish swimming through water, or a bird soaring in the skies, comes into being. Of the great variety of creatures which abound on the earth, the one of greatest interest to us is Man. In ways that are a mystery to us, he is moulded into a well-proportioned form. The bones within him take on the meaningful shape of the skeleton, which is covered with flesh and sealed in by a layer of skin, out of which sprout hair and nails. With blood coursing through channels within this frame, all of this adds up to a human being who walks about, holds things in his hands, who hears, smells, tastes, who has a mind which remembers things, accumulates information, analyses it and then expresses it in speech and in writing.

The formation of such an amazing being from inert matter is more than a miracle. The particles of which a man is composed are the same as that of earth and stone. But have we ever heard a piece of earth talking, or seen a piece of stone walking around? The word miraculous is barely adequate to describe the capabilities of man. But what else is there to this walking, talking, thinking, feeling man which distinguishes him from earth and stone? This factor – life – is still a mystery to us: there must indeed be a superior Being who has imbued inert matter with this quality, thus accomplishing a unique feat of creation.

Man has only to think of the nature of his own being to understand the nature of God. The self, the ego in man, has an individuality of its own, which is quite distinct from that of others of his kind living here on this earth. The ego in man is absolutely sure of its own existence. It is the part of man which thinks, feels, forms opinions, has intentions and puts them into practice. It also decides for itself which course of action to take. Every human being is thus a separate personality with a will and power of his own. Since our experience of such a being is an everyday matter, what is astonishing about the existence of God, who also is a being wielding personal power, although on a scale far greater than ourselves? Believing in God is a very similar mental process to believing in one's own self. That is why the Quran says that man himself is ample evidence for himself, however much he may excuse himself (75 :14-15).

People demand some miraculous proof before they will believe in the truth of God and His message. But what further proof do they require when they have the miracle of the whole of the universe which has been functioning perfectly for millions of years on the vastest of scales? If the doubter is not prepared to accept such a great miracle, then how is he going to shed his doubts when he sees lesser miracles? In truth, man has been provided with everything he needs to enable him to believe in God and then to place himself at His service. If, in spite of this, he does not believe in God and fails to acknowledge God's power and perfection, then it is he himself and not anyone else who is to blame.

One who has found God has found everything. After the discovery of God, no further discovery remains to be made. Thus, when a man has discovered God, his entire attention is focussed upon Him. God, for him, becomes a treasure which he cherishes, and it is to Him then that he has recourse to for all his worldly and eternal needs.

Suppose someone eats an apple, but detects no flavour in it and receives no nourishment from it. He might be said not to have eaten an apple at all, but only something which looks like an apple. The same is true of one's realization of God. A man who has truly discovered God will blissfully savour the essence of the experience. Anyone who claims to have discovered God without this accompanying sense of elation has certainly made no such discovery. He has only discovered something which he mistakenly thinks is God. He is like the man eating a fake apple and deriving no satisfaction from it.

God's world is a collection of atoms. In its elemental form, it all consists of one and the same type of inert matter, but God has moulded this matter into countless diverse forms: light, heat, greenery flowing water. He has also invested lifeless matter with the properties of colour, taste and smell; and everywhere, he has set things in motion, but has carefully controlled this motion by gravity. Discovering the God who has made such a world is much more than just acquiring a dry creed; it means filling one's heart and soul with the radiant glow of divine light and opening one's mind to incredible beauty and delicacy.

When we eat delicious fruits, this gives us a great sense of enjoyment. When we hear beautiful music we are quite entranced by it. When a handsome child is born to a couple, their joy knows no bounds. Then what of our experience of God, who is the source of all beauty, joy and virtue? On discovering Him, can one remain unmoved? This is something which is hardly imaginable, for such a wonderful experience must surely leave its mark on one.

To discover God is for Him to become like a fragrance in one's nostrils, a taste which excites the taste buds, a texture which it is a joy to caress. When one discovers God, His beauty opens out before one like the blossoming of the most wonderful flowers. His melodies so touch the heart and bring such joy that one might wish them to last forever. God Himself having created light, He must appear to us bathed in the most splendid radiance. He has given things their special flavours so He Himself must have qualities that we can savour. The truth is, God is the most resplendent of all lights, the most delightful of all pleasures. To come close to Him is to live in an everlasting garden of splendid colour and superb fragrance. It is like coming close to a source of dazzling radiance.

God is the greatest treasure-house of all true wisdom and, for this reason, whoever discovers Him turns into a truly superior human being. He is the light of the Heavens and of the Earth, giving radiance to the personality of one who discovers Him. God is the source of all strength and His servant who comes to know Him is so fortified by His strength that no flood or hurricane can carry him away.

WIN OR LOSE, IT'S THE GAME THAT COUNTS

"As far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter who wins or who loses so long as it was a good game. And I am always on the side of the team that wins!"

In the semi-finals of the World Reliance Cup Cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at Lahore on November 4, 1987, Pakistan was defeated. This news proved so shocking to the Pakistanis that many of them suffered heart attacks, and one of them actually died of heart failure.

The following day, India lost its match to England, and the repercussions were even more disastrous. The fans of both the Indian and Pakistan teams clashed with one another and there were many serious casualties in the ensuing 'match riots', as they were headlined in none of the national dailies.

What has happened to our sense of sportsmanship?

Where is that old spirit of gallantry which used to enable players and spectators alike to accept a loss or defeat without complaint and a victory without gloating? As we remember the sportsmen of yesteryear, they treated their opponents with fairness, generosity and courtesy and gave credit where it was due. This showed a healthy state of mind, more preoccupied with excellence of performance than with personalities or national images.

One of the baneful consequences of the 1947 revolution is that this healthy mentality has disappeared from India and Pakistan. It is no longer possible for the peoples of these two countries to enjoy a game of Cricket for the sheer thrill of the sport. They have so determinedly built it up into a grim test of national superiority, that their only concern is with the victory of their own side. They are still concerned with excellence of play, but are not prepared to applaud it unless it is displayed by their own team. It is only their own victories that they will celebrate, for a defeat sends them into a state of total shock. This is surely a sign of diseased thinking, rooted in narrow communalism. It is unfortunate that this failure to be objective is so obscured by mass hysteria on sporting occasions, that excellence of performance becomes lost in the projection of national images.

A good corrective to this approach is the example set by modern Japan. Instead of being nation-conscious, or community-conscious, the Japanese are single-mindedly quality-conscious. Undeterred by issue of national prestige in terms of their defeat in World War II, the Japanese gave their entire attention to producing top Quality goods. Anything in the slightest degree sub-standard was abhorrent to them. It was this dogged concentration on high standards which ultimately led to their capturing world markets.

Similarly, the character of a nation is reflected in its attitude to sports. What kind of a nation is it which exults in the defeat of its opponents, reviles their positive qualities as evils, learns nothing from their performance and is ready to riot on a cricket score? A nation with a true sense of sportsmanship should surely be able to accept victory without jubilation, and defeat without acrimony. The perfect example of the correct attitude has been handed down to us by a defeated Jewish wrestler who, in a bout organised just before the birth of Israel as a nation surprised his Indian Muslim opponent by rising from the floor to embrace him. "It is not your person", he said, "which I appreciate, but your skill. The art you displayed in defeating me was of an order which I had never thought possible".

This Jewish wrestler's mentality was such that he could see good in his adversary, he could learn from him, and he was not afraid to acknowledge these facts. This is the kind of mentality which will spur a man on to greater and greater heights, whereas allowing everything to become coloured by communalism deflects a man from seeking true excellence.

We need to return to the days of being able to play and watch a game for the pure enjoyment of its skills, without allowing it to assume political and nationalistic overtones. A friend of mine, a Mr. Shakeel Ahmad Khan, an Indian engineer working in the Arab Emirates, has the correct attitude, On a visit back to India shortly after the Reliance Cup matches, he was asked his opinion of the 'match riots', Professing his inability to understand why they should have taken place at all, he said, "As far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter who wins or who loses so long as it was a good game. And I am always on the side of the team that wins!"