



Al-Risala 1987

January

Is This Islam?

A story published in an English newspaper, the Deccan Herald, of the 7th December 1986, was (*Naql kufr kufr na bashad*) entitled: Muhammad the Idiot.

The absurdity of the title is patent, but the degree to which Muslims have allowed themselves to be provoked by it is of an even greater absurdity – they attacked the office of the offending newspaper and burnt down its godown with its entire stock of papers worth one crores of rupees. Worse still they have labelled this act of vengeance an Islamic Jihad (a holy war), but it is more of the hue of a national revenge on the part of the Muslims than of the ‘holy war’ which is laid down in the Quran and Hadith as endeavour for the cause of God. It is simply adding insult to injury.

The absurdity of this nature is nothing new in the history of Islam. Everyone is free to act absurdly or responsibly, having been granted such freedom, because it was God’s intention to place mankind on trial. That is why it has been possible for such incidents to take place and they have indeed been taking place right from the very days of the Prophet, for it is recorded in history that when he brought the divine message to the Arabs, he received very bad treatment at their hands. Leaving aside physical punishments, they humiliated him with the titles of Storyteller, Magician, Poet, Madman and Great Liar.

If the Muslims concerned truly wished to engage in a ‘holy war’, it was their duty first and foremost to find out from the Quran and Hadith how the Prophet and his companions reacted in such situations, so that they could adopt the same course of action. The independent action they took, with no regard for the pattern set by the Prophet and his companions in such provocative situations, amounts to acting upon their own whims rather than carrying out the commandments of God or following the example of the Prophet.

When we examine the early, exemplary period of Islam, we find that the Prophet and his companions never reacted in the manner of present-day Muslims to the arrogance or rudeness of non-Muslims. The Prophet’s companions never marched in processions, burned homes, destroyed property or even shouted slogans in the streets against non-Muslims. On the contrary, they only prayed to God for their guidance. Then sound arguments were brought forward to counter the adverse comments of non-Muslims, and beyond that the matter was left to God.

This model provided by the Prophet and his companions shows us that the only thing to do in such matters is to pray for the guidance of those who offer provocation, to try to clear up misunderstandings in a proper way, by meeting them and reasoning with them, and to publish articles in a serious and academic manner so as to banish all misconceptions. Beyond this, Muslims should never go. Anything in excess of this will only bring down the wrath of God upon their heads, for the message that God sent with His envoy was that not of doom and destruction, but of peace and good will.

Reacting to provocation and remaining in a retaliatory mood has done a great deal of harm to the Islamic cause in modern times in that it has made it impossible for Muslims to be true Dayees, one who conveys the message of God to mankind. The *dawah* spirit can only be made manifest when it springs from love for and benevolence towards the congregation. When Muslims allow themselves to be provoked by the smallest incident, it means that they have descended to hatred and disgust for other nations, and – little do they realize it – this is a form of self-degradation, in which they have forfeited that psychological balance which is so necessary if the message of the Prophet of God is to be presented both forcefully and sincerely.

This is why, today, in spite of the fervour with which the Prophet's birthday is celebrated, the work of *dawah* has been allowed to lapse. It should never be forgotten that the greatest responsibility of the Prophet's community is to convey the divine message to all servants of God. This can never happen unless the Muslims wish other nations well. It is sad, indeed, that modern Muslims appear, in developing such a negative temperament, to have allowed all feelings of good will to have become submerged.

3 January 1987

Framing admonition in general terms

According to 'Aisha, when the Prophet used to hear something displeasing about a person, then he would not take that person's name when administering admonishment. Rather he would say: "What's up with people who do or say such things." Thus he would discourage people in a general way from following suit, without directing criticism at anyone in particular.

A Tried and Tested Solution

A close relative of mine, a Muslim gentleman who lives in a city in the State of Uttar Pradesh in India, had a twenty-four roomed house constructed for himself and his family. Adjoining it was another fairly big house owned by a Hindu contractor, the two being separated by a vacant plot of land. According to my relative this plot belonged to him, but his neighbour claimed that it was his. This naturally led to a dispute. The situation deteriorated to the point where the contractor saw fit to involve the local Jan Sangh elements in what should have been a private matter. When he informed them that a certain Muslim had 'seized' his land, they were naturally incensed, and one day their entire group of followers surrounded his house in a great state of agitation, shouting provocative slogans and adopting menacing attitudes. Our Muslim gentleman came out of his office, which was on the ground floor, to find out what could be the matter. He was informed that he, a Muslim, had 'seized' a piece of land belonging to their 'Hindu brother'. Besides saying this, they tried to bait him with a number of provocative remarks. In spite of all this, he showed no signs of anger, but simply asked who their leaders were. Taking only these few into his office, he requested the others to stay outside and assured them that if they would be patient; the matter would soon be settled. It being hot summer weather, he first offered them cold drinks, then began to enquire as to why they had taken it upon themselves to come to him. Their answer was again that their 'Hindu brother's land' had been usurped by him and they insisted that it be restored to its 'rightful owner'. Remaining very cool and calm, my relative pointed out that since they were all educated people, they must be aware of the fact that all matters relevant to land ownership were put down on paper and that the documents in question would be the best evidence by which to establish whom the land actually belonged to. They all agreed to this on principle. He then very humbly said, "Any papers I have I am handing over to you, and I suggest that any papers in the contractor's possession also be handed over to you. Please then scrutinize both sets of papers, and I give you my full assurance in advance that whatever judgement you arrive at will be unconditionally accepted by me".

At this point, the mood of the Jan Sangh's leaders underwent a remarkable change. Judging by their personal experience, they realized that the picture of this Muslim gentleman as painted by the contractor had been a false one. Up to that point they had been misguided by the contractor's wild statements, but now they began to hear the voice of their own consciences.

They came out of the office with the papers and requested the crowd to go home, telling them that 'Mian Sahib' had left the decision in their hands, and that they would finalize the matter after some 'deliberation'.

The upshot was that after a detailed study of the papers, the boundary dispute was fully settled in favour of the Muslim gentleman. This incident occurred in 1965 and many of the chief characters in this

incident are still alive today. If anyone needs confirmation, I can give actual names and addresses of people who can verify this story.

Recently, when the issues of the Babari Mosque (Ayodhya) and Idgah (Mathura), etc. were raised, I was repeatedly reminded of this incident. It occurred to me that if only the Muslim leaders in question had been sincere and serious enough to review the facts objectively, they would have resorted to the same policy in their communal matters as my relative had adopted to solve his own personal problem. They would then have been one hundred per cent successful in the sense that matters would have been amicably settled and there would have been no future recurrence of the problems.

But whenever such untoward incidents take place, unwise Muslim leaders are immediately up in arms, and out to retaliate. The making of emotionally charged speeches and the organizing of processions along the main thoroughfares are the only solutions that their limited intelligence suggests. While this modus operandi may further the cause of their continuing leadership, so far as the solving of the actual problem is concerned, this approach is doomed to being counter-productive. An affair, which, at the outset, is the concern of only a handful of people, when projected into the public arena, becomes a large-scale communal matter. Worse still, it becomes a prestige issue, and at this juncture, even the political leaders hesitate to do anything decisive, whatever little it may have been possible to do before matters escalated to this point. This is because they fear that any revolutionary step on their part may cost them the votes of the affected party at election time.

If, on the contrary, the Muslim leaders had quietly and seriously placed this problem in the hands of well-informed, educated people in high positions or trust and had allowed them to do the decision-making on the basis of an unprejudiced analysis of historical facts, they could, following the example of our Muslim gentleman, have announced that they would unconditionally accept their decision, thereby averting the complications which ensued. But this would have taken forethought. And courage.

The value of taking such a stand is supported by the fact that numerous Hindus have openly condemned the communally minded members of their own community. Many articles have been written by them, which do full justice to the subject. These have appeared in *Nai Duniya* (Delhi), *Tameer-e-Hayat*, Lucknow, *Naqeeb* (Patna) and in other Muslim papers and are on record in the newspaper files of 1986.

An excellent examples of such a fair-minded and just letter, bearing the signatures of twelve eminent, highly educated people, eleven of who are Hindus, is printed below.

Sir,—We have noted with growing concern a recent tendency in *The Times of India* to give a communal twist to news items and even to editorial comments. An example of this is a report from Mathura dated 15 September and entitled, "Krishna's Birthplace after Aurangzeb." It evoked considerable correspondence, some of which, as could be expected, was markedly communal in tone.

Your readers should know that historical analysis and interpretations involve more than a mere listing of dates with an eye to pious sentiments. The Dera Keshava Raj temple was built by Raja Bir Singh Deo Bundela during Jahangir's reign. This large temple soon became extremely popular and acquired considerable wealth. Aurangzeb had this temple destroyed, took the wealth as booty and built an Idgah on the site. His actions might have been politically motivated as well, for at the time when the temple was destroyed he faced problems with the Bundelas as well as Jat rebellions in the Mathura region. It should be remembered that many Hindu temples were untouched during Aurangzeb's reign and even some new ones built. Indeed, what is really required is an investigation into the theory that both the Dera Keshava Rai temple and the Idgah were built on the site of a Buddhist monastery, which appears to have been destroyed.

Your news report also gives credence to the suggestion that this site was the birthplace of Krishna. This is extraordinary to say the least, when even the historicity of the personality is in question. It creates the kind of confusion such as has been created, probably deliberately, over the question of the birthplace of Rama in the matter of Rama-janam-bhumi. A Persian text of the mid nineteenth century states that the Babari mosque was adjacent to the Sita-karasoi-ghar and was known as the Rasoi Sita mosque and adjoined the area associated with the birthplace of Rama. It would be worth enquiring whether there is reliable historical evidence of a period prior to the nineteenth century for this association of a precise location for the birthplace of Rama. Furthermore such disputes as there were between Hindus and Muslims in this area up to the nineteenth century were not over the Babari mosque but the totally different site of Hanuman-baithak.

It cannot be denied that acts of intolerance have been committed in India by followers of all religions. But these acts have to be understood in their context. It is a debasement of history to distort these events for present day communal propaganda.

The statement in your news report that the site at Mathura is to be "liberated" and handed, over to the "rightful owners" as the birthplace of Krishna raises the question of the limits to the logic of restoration of religious sites (and this includes the demand for the restoration to worshippers of disused mosques now under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India). How far back do we go? Can we push this to the restoration of Buddhist and Jaina monuments destroyed by Hindus? Or of pre-Hindus animist shrines?

ROMILA THAPAR, MUZAFFARALAM, BIPAN CHANDRA, R. CHAMPAKA LAKSHMI, S. BHATTACHARYA, H. MUKHIA, SUVIRA JAISWAL, S. RATNAGAR, M.K. PALAT, SATISH SABERWAL, S. GOPAL, MRIDULA MUKHERJEE.

The Times of India, New Delhi, 21, Oct. 1986.

7 January 1987

The day of death will be the day when man will come to life

The Prophet said: "People are asleep. They will wake up when they die." What he meant was that they are so preoccupied with the world that they have become oblivious to the hereafter. As far as this world is concerned, they are awake, but as far as the next world is concerned, they are fast asleep. It is as though there is a veil over their eyes, which obscures their vision of reality. Death will destroy that veil, and they will wake up to the world of reality.

Thinking of the Consequences

A man came before the Prophet Mohammad and asked him for some advice. "Will you heed the advice?" the Prophet asked him. The man said that he would. The Prophet said to him: "When you decide on some action, think of its consequences. If they are good, go ahead with it: and if they are bad, refrain from it."

The Prophet's words show that every prospective action should be weighed up according to the outcome it is likely to have. One should think before one acts: what will be the consequences of my action? If the prospects appear good one may carry on with what one is intending to do: otherwise one should rethink one's course of action. This is the Islamic method of going about things, and it was this method the Prophet taught his followers to adopt.

Generally people just take matters at their face value and rush into them without thinking. This is not the Islamic way of doing things. A Muslim should study matters carefully from every angle before deciding on a course of action. He should particularly, take note of others' probable reaction. Are people likely to stand in his way? If so, does he have the capability to overcome the obstacles they pose? Is he in a position to surmount all the hurdles which are likely to be strewn in his path, winning through to his final goal? He should consider what the psychological social and political repercussions of his actions will be. Only if he is confident that his work will have beneficial consequences should he embark on it.

The only initiative worth taking is one, which will yield positive results. If one embarks on a destructive course of action it will be oneself that suffers: therefore, one should steer clear of such actions, as any sensible person steers clear of destroying his own life (114:4).

8 January 1987

One who lies is a hypocrite

The Prophet was asked whether a coward could be a believer, and he said yes. Then he was asked whether a miser could be a believer, and he said yes. When asked if a liar could be a believer, he no. Khuzaiifa ibn'ul-Yaman remarked that in the time of the Prophet, one used to be counted as a hypocrite when one lied. "But nowadays I hear one of you uttering such lies at least ten times a day."

Inventing New Myths

In ancient times, the whole system of life was riddled with superstitious beliefs. Many strange, unfounded ideas were generally in vogue. Nicolson, in his *Astronomy* (1978) has recorded an interesting historical curiosity: "When an eclipse occurred, the Chinese thought that the Sun was swallowed by a huge dragon. The whole population joined in making as much noise as possible to scare it away. They always succeeded!"

It is now known that the eclipse of the sun or the moon can be predicted, its causes are known, and it is also known that the period of time for the eclipse is fixed. There is no question of its beginning or ending at a different time because of human intervention. But, in their ignorance, the ancient Chinese thought that the great noise they made caused it to disappear!

This kind of superstition has largely come to an end in modern times. But other kinds of myths are still extant, and are accorded a similar degree of acceptance. The occurrence of events, which are caused by external circumstances, is attributed to human effort. For instance, the modern age has seen a revival of religions all over the world. This phenomenon has definite universal causes and score of books on the subject have been published. A noteworthy article on this topic appeared in the American magazine *Span* (December 1984), entitled, 'A Return to Religion.' But there are people in this world who believe that this revival is attributable solely to their own religious leaders, and proclaim this fact to the skies. These leaders are then regarded as the heroes, if not the creators, of the modern age.

Such mythical beliefs have the bedrock of modern 'religion'. When one set of myths disappears, man's fertile mind invents another. Thus myths and myth-making will survive as long as man himself.

9 January 1987

When knowledge is reduced to an avenue towards personal prestige

'Ubayy ibn Ka'ab said: "Acquire knowledge, and practice it. Do not acquire it in order to beautify yourselves thereby, for there will come a time when learning will be used as an adornment, as people adorn themselves with clothes."

10 January 1987

Speaking with Sincerity

The Prophet Mohammed is reported by Abu Hurayrah as having said: "One who sits in an excessively noisy meeting, then before leaving the meeting says: 'Glory be to You, O Lord, and praise. I bear witness that there is no God save You. I seek Your forgiveness, and turn to You in repentance,' will have all that passed in that meeting forgiven him by God" (*Tirmidhi, Nasai*).

But it is not just a mechanical recital of these words which will earn us God's forgiveness. That will be forthcoming only if we utter them in all earnestness and with a keen awareness of their meaning. The sentiments they convey must be endorsed by both heart and intellect. The Prophet in this instance was describing the action of a person who stands in fear of God. We have to imagine such an individual so forgetting himself in the course of a conversation that he raises his voice in anger, quarreling quite unnecessarily with his companions. But before matters have gone too far, his conscience comes into play and he realises that he has spoken out of turn. Ashamed of having gone to extremes and offended others, he turns to God for forgiveness.

One example of the form his supplication takes is that given in the saying of the Prophet quoted above. But, in order to be effective, the words of the prayer must be uttered in their true spirit; they must be spoken with full consciousness of their inherent meaning.

One should be moved in one's heart of hearts to offer this prayer. No mindless parroting of the words will ever earn the forgiveness of God.

10 January 1987

Lust for fame the worst single danger for man

When Shidad ibn Aus was near death, he said to those around him: "What I fear most for this community is ostentation and secret desires." Sufyan Thauri explained the meaning of "secret desires". "It is to like being praised for one's good deeds," he said. The Prophet himself was asked about secret desires, and he attributed them to one who seeks knowledge because he likes the idea of people coming to sit at his feet.

(Jame Bayan al-Ilm wa fadhlihi)

11 January 1987

The Task to Be Performed

Maulana Mohammad Ilyas, founder of Tablighi Jamaat – a worldwide Muslim reform movement with its centre in New Delhi – used to issue this instruction to preaching groups that he sent out. “Lower your gaze,” he would tell them. “Go out with thoughts of God in your heart, His remembrance on your lips mentioned here: a serious outlook, a sense of responsibility, an Your journey will be easy if you advance in unison.” Four things are awareness of God’s greatness and unity. Any group, which adopts these characteristics, is bound to be successful.

How important these four things are. It would be true to say that it is this awareness, this spirit, which really needs to be aroused in people. This is the real task to be performed. Success in both this world and the next is dependent on its accomplishment.

A nation, a social system, does not have an independent, separate existence; it exists only by virtue of the individuals that form it. A collection of individuals make up a nation, while their social system comes from the way they, as individuals, act. If reform is to come in a nation or society, it has to be the individuals who make up that nation who undergo reform.

Keeping this fact in mind, one can see that any reform programme has to be targeted at individuals for it to be worthwhile. If society is made the target, one may seek social reform, but the result will be social chaos. What one is seeking on a mass level will only come about when it has been achieved on an individual level. Slogans raised in the name of social reform are meaningless without the initial reform of individuals. Those who raise such slogans are either power-seeking, or plain foolish; there is no other way their action can be interpreted.

Each and every individual has to be imbued with deep faith so that his gaze lowers in humility; awareness that he is answerable to God for his actions becomes embedded in his heart; such is his consciousness of God’s greatness that he forever makes mention of the Lord; having no thoughts of self, he is able to become one with others. If individuals acquire these qualities, the reforms that people seek in society will automatically come about. (114:20).

12 January 1987

The Greatest News

June 30, 1985 was historic day for Gwalior. At the military airport, there was a special flurry of activity, for India had recently bought from France a war plane, the Mirage 2000, and the ceremony to mark its addition to the strength of the Indian Air Force was to be held. The twelfth Air Chief Marshal, L.M. Katri, (1927-1985) looked very happy that day, and participated in this ceremony with great enthusiasm. No sooner had he returned to Delhi after this splendid ceremony than he suffered a heart attack. He was immediately taken to the military hospital, where he was declared dead only a matter of hours later on 1st July 1985.

Air Chief Marshal Katri had the distinction of being India's ablest fighter pilot, and had set up a splendid record in a number of aerial attacks he had made against the enemy. But this great fighter enemy planes could not combat the silent attack of death. He, who had flown so high to achieve military victories, was defeated when brought face to face with the forces of death below, for the power to counter them was not in his hands.

The confrontation of power with powerlessness is faced every day in one form or the other. Every day, some "Air Chief Marshal" is defeated by the silent attack of death. This experience announces to others the truth that man lives in a world where every victory finally ends in total defeat, that life is a journey from power to powerlessness. Death warns man of this reality, but, at this point in time, when one is riding on the crest of a wave, this is news that no one wants to hear.

12 January 1987

When pleasures seem empty

Abu Darda was a trader by profession, but, after accepting Islam, his commercial activities came to an end. "By the One who has control over Abu Darda's soul," he once said, "I would not even like to have a shop at the door of the mosque, where I would not miss a single congregational prayer. Not, even if I made a profit of forty dinars a day and gave it all away in charity." Abu Darda was asked what had made him feel this way. "The rigours of the Day of Reckoning," was his reply.

(Seerat Ibn Hisham)

13 January 1987

Here to Be Tested

While in an examination hall, a student has several objects at his disposal. Over his head, there is the roof of the examination hall itself. Then he has a table on which to write, a chair on which to sit, ink and paper for his answers, and attendants to see to his requirements. He sits in his place and uses these facilities freely, without restriction.

If he did not have an examination hall in which to sit, the examinee would be exposed to heat and cold. If there were no desk and chair at his disposal, he would not be able to sit comfortably. Without pen, paper and ink, there would be no question of his writing answers.

But a student only has these things because of the examination he is taking. They are his only so long as his examination lasts. As soon as the exam is over, all its accessories will be taken away from him. Judging from the freedom with which he used them within the confines of the examination hall, one would have thought they were his; now it will become clear that they were only lent to him for a short while.

It is much the same with man in this world. Here, man has many objects at his disposal. He considers himself free to use them as he pleases, to live the life of his own choice. But the truth of the matter is that whatever man has in this world is his because of the test he is undergoing. God has put man in this world so that he may be tested. For the purpose of this test, man is provided with a number of essential accessories, things that will only remain in his possession for the duration of his test. As soon as man's trial has run its Course, everything will be taken away from him. One who seems to own everything will be left with nothing. Man will stand alone, like a traveller stranded in the middle of a desert, or a man left to drift in the voids of space.

And only one thing – the invisible wall of death – lies between man and the end of his test on earth.

13 January 1987

Death of the soul comes from seek in worldly gain from religion

Imam Hasan Basri the famous eighth century religious scholar, said: "A learned man is punished when his heart dies," asked how his heart died, he replied, "By seeking the world through actions which should be directed towards the hereafter."

Working Together

What a laborious task the preparation of honey is. Only through continuous effort by a host of bees does this delicacy come into being. The reason for this is that there is only a minute amount of honey in one single flower. Nectar has to be collected from countless flowers for a substantial amount of honey to be produced.

At times, honey bees have to travel a cumulative distance of up to 300,000 miles in order to produce just one pound of honey. Since the life-span of a bee does not extend beyond a few months, no single bee can produce this amount in its entire life, not even if it spends every second of its life gathering juice from flowers.

Bees have found a way out of this difficulty. The task that they cannot perform alone, they perform by concerted action. A single bee cannot travel the long distances, or suck at the myriads of flowers needed to produce a substantial amount of honey. But what is impossible for one is possible for many, and bees make honey by working at it together.

Why should there be this involved and complicated method of producing honey? Could God not have placed vast reserves of the substance in the earth, just as He has stored petrol and water under the ground? Indeed He could, but He has conceived of things in this way so that man may take heed; so that he may learn numerous lessons from this sign of nature.

In life, there are some tasks that a person can perform in a short while, on his own. But there are other tasks that cannot be performed by one person alone. The only way to perform these tasks is by adopting the method of the bees – that of combined effort.

This, however, can come about only through the self-sacrifice of individuals. People have to be patient with one another, putting others' needs before their own, thinking of the good of others rather than what they themselves desire. It is through the sacrifice of individuals that there can be such a thing as conceded effort.

14 January 1987

One who will be saved from Doom on the Day of Judgement

"On the Day of Resurrection. God will save from Hell-fire one who has saved his brother from humiliation in this world;" these words were spoken by the Prophet Mohammad.

Airing Suspicions

After the Battle of Hunayn (8AH) the Prophet distributed the spoils of battle in the valley of Jiranah, about ten miles from Mecca. Abd Allah Amr ibn al-Aas witnessed the scene. One incident that occurred during the distribution of spoils was thus described by him:

A man called Dhu'l-Khuwaysirah of the Banu Tamim came and stood next to the Prophet as he was giving things away. "I have seen your day's work, Mohammad," he said to the Prophet. "Indeed," the Prophet replied, "and how did you find it?" "You do not appear to have been just," was Dhu'-Khuwaysirah's response (*Sirat Ibn Hisham*).

A similar incident occurred during the caliphate of Umar, when Uaynah ibn Hisan came to Medina, where he stayed with his nephew, Hur ibn Qays. Having obtained permission for a meeting with the Caliph, he came before him and said:

"By God, son of Khattab, you do not bestow any wealth upon us, nor do you pass judgement justly among us" (*Riyadh as-Salihin*).

Both these allegations were unfounded. Yet, despite this, words were found with which to accuse the Prophet and Umar, both of whom were innocent of the accusations levelled against them. This shows that the levelling of accusations is not enough to prove a person guilty. There is nothing on earth, which will stop people bringing charges, no matter whether they are true or false. It is only when God's judgement comes to pass that people will feel constrained to stop uttering falsehoods, and that justice will be done to all.

15 January 1987

Weighing up one's own actions before they are weighed up on the divine scales of justice

"Reckon with yourselves," 'Umer said, "before you are reckoned with in the next world; and weigh your own actions before they are weighed on the divine scales of justice; and prepare yourselves for the great appearance (before God)."

Renovation of Religion

In 1509 Michelangelo (1475-1564), painter, sculptor, architect and poet was commissioned by Pope Julian to design and paint the frescoes for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The project was completed in 1512. In the 450 years that have elapsed since then, the original colours used by Michelangelo have become considerably subdued and, therefore, distorted. One reason for this was that a coating of animal glue 'was spread over the surface of the fresco in the 17th century to keep the plaster from flaking. This glue then collected centuries of soot from the torches used to illuminate the chapel before the advent of electricity.

Under Pope John Paul II, the Vatican has ordered restoration of the fresco. At the beginning of 1986 the first results of the cleaning work were displayed to the public. Renovation has revealed some startling things about Michelangelo's original work. The master was previously believed to have used subdued, twilight colours, but it now appears that the colours he used were so vibrant that softer lighting will be needed when the cleaning is finished in 1988. Art historians now have to revise their whole concept of the Florentine school, which Michelangelo represented, for the Florentines have been considered masters of design, but not of colour. George Armstrong writes in *The Guardian Weekly* (February 16, 1986) that the axiom of Tintoretto (1518-1594) "draw like Michelangelo, paint like Titian" – "has been thrown off balance by the Sistine's restored colours." The renovation, Armstrong says, has revealed "Michelangelo in a new light."

In very much the same way, the nature of true religion has become distorted over the centuries. Originally, religion is revealed by God and taught in its pure form by the prophets. Then, when it falls into the hands of ordinary men, they corrupt its true message, making it conform to their own desires. Whereas religion had originally been based on belief in the hereafter, it later became an instrument for the acquisition of worldly wealth and power. True faith, as painted by the prophets, springs from the heart, but religion in its corrupted form becomes a mere accumulation of rites and ceremonies, devoid of any true spirit. Religion in its pristine form breeds humility in its followers, fostering human unity; but when religion becomes distorted, it becomes a source of pride, with one group using it to assert their superiority over another.

When this happens, it means that grime and dust have collected on the face of true religion. Its true colours have become distorted and it is in need of restoration to its original form. When the renovation is completed, it will be revealed that religion is something quite different from what men have made it out to be. Theologians will be exposed as misleading in their interpretations, just as the public has been misguided in its opinions.

Taking Heed

Sufyan ibn Husayn once spoke ill of a person in the presence of Ayaz ibn Muawiyah. Ayaz looked him in the face and asked: "Were you among those who took on the Byzantine Empire?" Sufyan said he was not. "And what about Sindh, India and Turkey?" Again Sufyan replied in the negative: he had not been with the Muslim army when these countries were conquered. Ayaz reprimanded Sufyan: "So Byzantium, Sindh, India and Turkey have been saved from your wrath, but not your Muslim brother." Sufyan says that after this admonition he never repeated this error.

Now another incident. Sufyan Thauri came to Medina, where he heard Al-Muafiri saying irresponsible things just for the sake of making people laugh. "Shaykh," Sufyan Thauri addressed Al-Muafiri, "do you not know that a day will come when the dealers in falsehood will perish? According to Ibn Abi Hatim, until Muafiri met his Lord, he could be seen to heed this warning.

In both these incidents the people who were reprimanded immediately took heed and corrected themselves. That is the way people whose conscience is alive react to good advice. As for those whose conscience is dead, no inner voice will echo the voice of admonishment when it reaches their ears. So they fail to take heed. Missing the opportunity to mend their ways, they remain exactly same as they were before, or even go from bad to worse.

18 January 1987

Working on the Individual

A man was riding his bicycle one day when all of a sudden his brake jammed. Luckily there was a cycle repair-shop nearby, so he took his bike there to have it fixed. Thinking that the mechanic would fix the brake at the point where it was jammed, the cyclist was surprised to see him tap away with a small hammer at a completely different place. Before he was able to express his surprise, however, the mechanic handed the bike over. "That's fixed it. You can take it away now," he said. And off the cyclist rode, with his bike once again running smoothly.

What was true of this bicycle is true also of human society. When there is something wrong with society, people usually jump to the conclusion that where the malaise lies, there also lies the cure. But this is not the case. Usually the root of the malaise lies in a different place, far away from the symptoms. Until the cause is removed, the malaise itself will not go away.

For instance, there might be a lack of solidarity in society, or one's people may be the victims of oppression. Maybe society is beset with an atmosphere of intrigue, with the result that its voice carries no weight in the world. Detecting these symptoms, one who determines to right the ills of society might well think that the cure lies in calling meetings and conventions in order to bring people together, feeding them emotional speeches and passing high-sounding resolutions, and so on.

But this is not the way to cure the actual ills of society. To do so, one has to work on the cause, not the symptoms, for usually one will find that while a problem seems to be afflicting one part of society, the cure lies elsewhere. If there is a lack of solidarity, for instance, the reason for this is the failure of individuals to stand together. It is the individual, then, who has to be worked on. Solidarity has to be achieved at an individual level before it can come about in society. For it is a law of nature, and human society, that for a tree to bear good fruit, it is the seed, not the fruit itself, that has to be improved.

Saying What One Likes

In November 1985 Acharya Rajneesh – the self-styled Guru of the rich – was expelled from the U.S.A. He had been living in the American state of Oregon since leaving India in 1981. In Oregon, he had developed a town of his own: Rajneeshpuram, which he sought to make his capital of the world and the first city of the 21st century. But conservative America in which Rajneesh had fashioned his Utopia did not take kindly to the Bhagwan's activities. After a spell languishing in an American jail, he returned to India, then went on to Nepal. From there he left suddenly for Athens, where he was declared a public menace by the Greek Orthodox Church. His disciples were accused of indulging in sex orgies. There was even talk of him and his entourage being stoned to death if they did not leave Greece.

The authorities followed up the Church's demands, and on March 5, 1986 Rajneesh was expelled from Greece. Along with a group of his wealthy followers, the Bhagwan boarded a special plane for Spain. Talking to the press at Athens airport, he said that the Greeks had learned nothing since Socrates was executed in 399 BC for corrupting youth and preaching false gods.

In referring to Socrates, Rajneesh was making out that his case was the same as that of the great Greek philosopher. This was no more than arrogance on Rajneesh's part. In actual fact there is no comparison between his case and that of Socrates.

As far as Rajneesh is concerned, a major reason for his popularity among western youth is the attractive theoretical sanction he provides for free sex. Not only does he preach the virtues of free sex; he also practices it in his own life. In an interview with the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (September 25, 1985), he admitted to a lack of innocence as regards his relationship with women. He also suggested that the reason for his beard becoming grey so quickly was that he had "lived so intensely... I have compressed into 50 years almost 200 years."

The Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399BC) was of an entirely different nature. Though condemned to death by an Athenian court, he was absolutely innocent of the charges brought against him. These were that he "was guilty of riot worshipping the gods the State worshipped... introducing other new divinities, and further that he was guilty of corrupting the young by teaching them accordingly." (Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 103). But in fact his only crime was to take steps to eradicate the evils of the Athenian society of his day. The authorities decided "that it was easier to silence him by means of the hemlock than to cure the evils of which he complained" (ibid. p. 102).

Two of Socrates' pupils, Xenophon and Plato, wrote voluminously on Socrates. Both are agreed on his pious and upright moral character. According to Xenophon "Socrates was eminently pious and had a thoroughly wholesome effect upon those who came under his influence" (ibid. p. 101). Plato called him

the most upright and selfless man of his day. He was not punished because of any fault in himself; rather he fell foul of those in power for pointing out their faults.

How vastly different the cases of Socrates and Rajneesh. Socrates sought to reform Greek youth, while Rajneesh has aimed his efforts at accustoming young people to unrestrained gratification of their sensual desires. Socrates was hounded by society for pointing out its faults, whereas with Rajneesh it is he himself who is at fault. Yet Rajneesh was able, convincingly enough, to equate his own case with that of Socrates. That is the way things are in this world. Here, people are free to say what they like and win over to their line of argument, be it true or false. But they should never lose sight of the fact that will all come to an end when God's justice comes to pass, and nothing but truth will prevail.

20 January 1987

When Pleasures seem empty

Abu Darda was a trader by profession, but, after accepting Islam, his commercial activities came to an end. "By the One who has control over Abu Darda's soul," he once said, "I would not even like to have a shop at the door of the mosque, where I would not miss a single congregational prayer. Not, even if I made a profit of forty dinars a day and gave it all away in charity." Abu Darda was asked what had made him feel this way. "The rigours of the Day of Reckoning," was his reply.

(Seerat Ibn Hisham)

Mark of Greatness

After the Prophet emigrated to Medina, his enemies did not leave him in peace. Even in Medina, they posed a threat to him, and the Muslims were forced to fight back. Battle after battle ensued, none of which decisively turned the scales towards either the Muslims or their enemies. Finally the Prophet made peace with his opponents, unilaterally accepting all the conditions they laid down. This peace treaty, signed at Hudaibiyyah in the year 6AH, opened the way to final victory for the Muslims. In Abu Bakr's words: "There was no greater triumph in Islam than the triumph of Hudaibiyyah."

But it was no easy task for the Muslims, accepting the terms of this treaty, for it was made entirely according to the dictates of the enemy. With the sole exception of Abu Bakr, all the Companions opposed it. In later life, Umar ibn al-Khattab recalled the episode in these words: "Were the Prophet to have given someone authority over me, and he were to sign the peace that the Prophet signed, and make the concessions that he made, then I would not listen and I would not obey. One of the concessions the Prophet made to them was that anyone who joined the Muslims from the idolators would be returned, while the idolators would not have to return anyone who joined them from the Muslim camp" (*Kanz-ul-Ummal*).

In the whole of human history, no group has achieved success on the scale of the early Muslims. But there was a price that had to be paid for this huge success. On the way to their success, the Muslims had to bear the unbearable, not insisting on the return of something of theirs, which went to their enemy, while at the same time agreeing to return to their enemy anything of his that was in the Muslims' possession.

21 January 1987

Sincerity is to avoid what is forbidden

Zayd ibn Arqam reports this saying of the Prophet: "Whoever says with sincerity that there is no god save God, shall enter Paradise." He was asked the meaning of this sincerity, and he replied: "It is for his testimony to keep him away from what God has forbidden."

Group Loyalty

"A fisherman once told me that one doesn't need a cover for a crab basket. If one of the crabs starts climbing up the side of the basket, the others will reach up and pull it back down" (Charles Allen, *The Miracle of Love*).

The nature of the crab has been bestowed upon it by God and the ways of the crab are indeed divine ways. It is through such examples as this that God conveys to mankind how social life should be organised, for unity is one of its most important elements. The best way to establish this unity is that which God has ordained in the world of crabs. This is to say that the moment an individual shows signs of deviating from the norm, it is the duty of the rest of society to bring him back to what is normal, human and decent. The individuals in the "basket" should not let even one of their number slip out of it.

Islamic history presents a splendid example of how just such a problem, which arose after the death of the Prophet, was satisfactorily solved. It seems that Sad ibn Ubada Ansari of Medina held divergent opinions on the issue of the Caliphate. Most of the Prophet's companions were of the view that the Caliph should be of the Quraysh tribe, which was the most influential of all. Sad ibn Ubada, for his part, felt that either the Caliph should be one of the Ansars (Medinans) or there should be two Caliphs, one from the Ansar and the other from the emigrants (Meccans). But history shows that the entire tribe, by presenting a united front, managed to prevent their leader's wishes from materializing. At the crucial moment, they pulled him back into the "basket" again and saw to it that he stayed there.

22 January 1987

How to tell between good and bad

“When should I think of myself as pious?” someone asked Aishah. “When you start thinking of yourself as impious,” she replied. “And when should I think of myself as impious?” the person asked once again. “When you start thinking of yourself as pious,” came Aishah’s reply.

“Sadullah, I Need a Man”

During his last days, there was an occasion once when Aurangzeb (1618-1707), the last great Mughal emperor, shed tears as, raising his hands in supplications, he said his prayers. He went on praying silently like this for a long time with his vizier (minister) standing by his side. When his prayers finally came to an end, the Vizier, Sadullah, addressed him thus: “Your Majesty, the flag of your empire can be seen flying everywhere, right from Kashmir to Deccan. Is there still some wish in your heart which has been left unfulfilled and because of which you are so grief-stricken?” Aurangzeb remained silent for a while, then, his voice charged with emotion, he replied:

“Sadullah marde khwaham.”

(Sadullah, I need a man.)

What kind of man was this that the emperor was so desperate to find? What was this great problem, which was so, tormenting him? It was simply his own awareness that his successors, who were to inherit the great Mughal empire, were all thoroughly self-centered people, who were incapable of foresight, objectivity or self-sacrifice, and who thought only of short-term gains. He sensed that they would fight amongst themselves for personal power and glory, thus fragmenting and destroying his vast, hard-won Mughal empire.

After having reigned for half a century, he passed away on the 20th of February, 1707, survived by three sons, Muazzam, Azam and Kam Bakhsh, who were governors respectively of Kabul, Gujarat and Bijapur. Aurangzeb had felt that the only practical solution to the problems of succession was to leave a will dividing the empire into three parts in order that each son might live in the separate sphere assigned to him, and would not, therefore, clash with either of his brothers.

But this idea met with no success. Soon after the death of Aurangzeb, all three princes claimed the throne of Delhi. They then proceeded to do battle with one another for two years until Prince Kam Bakhsh and Prince Azam had been killed, whereupon prince Muazzam ascended the throne of Delhi in 1708, choosing for himself the title of “Shah-e-Alam” (King of the world).

Shah-e-Alam, however, did not realise at that time that he did not have long to live. Hardly four years had elapsed after his capture of the throne when he expired in 1712, leaving behind him four sons, Jahandar Shah, Azimushshan, Jahan Shah and Rafi-ush-Shan. Without exception, they took after their father, losing no time in entering into conflict with one another, each one, of course, aspiring to the throne, irrespective of the cost. Ultimately, in the ensuing battle, three of them were killed. Jahandar Shah, the victor, then seized the throne. But his rule, too, was short-lived – barely one year – for Farrukh Ser, the son of his murdered brother had set himself to avenging his fathers’ death. His plot was successful and Jahandar Shah was dethroned and hanged in the Red Fort in 1713.

Although, having killed his uncle, Farrukh Ser carne to possess the throne of Delhi; he retained it for barely six years, for his enemies finally succeeded in overpowering him. One day in the year 1719, he was dragged down from his throne, beaten cruelly, then thrown into prison where he was killed by strangulation. After this murder, Prince Rafiud Darjat ascended the throne of Delhi. But his reign was even shorter than that of his immediate predecessors, having come to the throne on the 28th of February 1719 only to be ousted on the 4th of June 1719. A few days later, he died of tuberculosis.

The domestic war between the Mughal princes considerably weakened the central government of Delhi, which lost its hold on the provinces, thus sparking off a tendency among the different provinces to seek their independence. To quote from a standard history of India:

“On the decline of the central authority at Delhi, the inevitable centrifugal tendency was manifest in different parts of the Empire and the provincial viceroys made themselves independent of the titular Delhi emperor” (*An Advanced History of India*, 1978, p. 529).

Events had borne out Aurangzeb’s worst misgivings. The Deccan province became independent in 1724 under Qamruddin Khan (Nizam ul-Mulk). Awadh province established independent rule in 1754 under Saadat Khan. Bengal saw its independence in 1739 under Sarfaraz Khan, who was known as the Nawab of Bengal. Similarly the Rajput States, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, etc., abandoned their allegiance to Delhi and assumed independent status. The vast empire of Aurangzeb had thus torn into pieces.

After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal empire continued apparently to exist for a further 150 years, but this was a period frequently marred by internecine bloodshed. There was a constant struggle for personal power going on between the Mughal princes, nobles and ministers and the result was that the Mughal empire was being weakened and diminished day by day. The English were quick to exploit this situation, and made greater and greater inroads into the country until a stage was reached when they succeeded in wresting control of the entire country. The Mughal emperor at the Red Fort was emperor only in name, and almost all power was vested in the hands of the English. Two of the phrases coined at that time aptly sum up the state of affairs:

“The government of Shah Alam stretches from Delhi to Palam.” and “Bahadur Shah sits on the throne, but the company gives the orders!” (i.e. the East India Company).

Finally, in the wake of the 1857 revolution this mere figurehead was removed from the scene for ever.

The story of the Mughal empire is the story of all Muslims, the greatest reasons for their downfall in later times being the same as they were in Mughal times – the pursuit of personal glory, the resulting internecine warfare and the sacrifice of higher and greater things. Personal objectives may have been temporarily achieved, but no great social order has resulted.

It is only when the individual is willing to step down in favour of higher principles that society as a whole can benefit. The sacrifice of the individual is the price to be paid for the glory of the nation. No nation can ever hold up its head, far less take pride of place amongst the nations of the world, if the individuals of which it is comprised think of nothing but personal gain and self-glorification. This has never been so, and nowhere is this evident in the world of today.

25 January 1987

Attachment to the world makes one lose sight of eternity

"There will come a day when you will be as insignificant as the flotsam carried by a flood," the Prophet once said to his Companions, who asked him why that would be. The Prophet told them that something he termed "Wahn" would develop within them, and the Companions once again asked what "Wahn" was. "It is to love worldly things, and be reluctant to face death," the Prophet explained.

The Lessons of History

Saint Bernard was one of those Christian priests who, during the Crusades, called upon the Christian nations to take part in the 'holy war' as a matter of sacred duty. But after a struggle, which lasted for 200 years, they ultimately suffered a total defeat at the hands of the Muslims.

Commenting on the crusades, Bertrand Russell writes:

“Although he preached the Crusades, he did not seem to understand that a war requires organization and cannot be conducted by religious enthusiasm alone”
(*A History of Western Philosophy*, p.431).

What Bertrand Russell has to say about the Christian crusaders can be applied in like manner to the Muslims of modern times, and what the Prophet Muhammad had to say on the subject so many centuries ago still rings true today:

“You (Muslims) will follow in the path of past communities, and even if they had entered the hole of a lizard, you will follow suit.”

Just as the Christian nations made the mistake of thinking that religious fervour was sufficient to bring them victory in the crusades, and then were virtually beaten because of their own lack of discipline, so in modern times Muslims have waged innumerable wars against their conquerors, but have achieved little thereby because their efforts lacked the cohesion brought about by discipline. They have, in fact, been defeated on every front.

This striking similarity between the thinking and behaviour of the ancient and modern peoples of the Book (i.e. peoples who possess revealed scriptures, especially the Jews and the Christians) shows how little human capacity there is for learning valuable lessons from history.

It would appear that when a nation goes into a decline, all that remains of patriotic sentiment is a kind of empty enthusiasm unsupported by wisdom. There is no seriousness, no realism in tackling the affairs of the nation and, all too often, a basic sense of responsibility is unceremoniously dispensed with: the same unbalanced approach is evinced as was prevalent amongst Christian nations at the time of the crusades. How long will it take modern Muslims to realise that they are falling into the same error?

Pride Comes Before a Fall

“Evil can have no beginning but from pride nor any end but from humility.”

When the English author William Law (1686-1761) wrote these words, he placed them in an ethical context. But they could well be interpreted in a spiritual sense, for the most sinful attitude that man can adopt before God is one of pride. Other sins may be forgivable, but for pride there is no forgiveness.

Pride, whether overt or covert, is at the root of all the wrongs and injustice perpetrated by man. It is pride, which prevents the wrongdoer from acknowledging his guilt: to do so, would detract from his personal status. He forgets that in denying, or ignoring what is true, he places himself *above* truth. It is folly to do so, for truth rides high, far and above everything and everyone else in this world. There is no mortal creature who can take precedence over it.

It is only the individual who lives out his life in consonance with the true nature of things who will receive God's blessings. To attain to this state of blessedness, he must realize that truth transcends all, and that he should bow before it. But those who are puffed up with a sense of their own importance are seldom capable of doing so. Instead of bowing before truth, they want truth to bow before them. Instead of living in harmony with reality, they demand that reality should harmonise with their wishes. This is as unrealistic as it is egoistic, for things can never happen in this way in the world. The perpetually proud man – without his ever realising it – is doomed to moral bankruptcy and can never find favour in the eyes of God.

27 January 1987

Hardness of heart comes from using religion for worldly ends

"The punishment of a learned man is for his heart a die," said Hasan al-Basri. He was asked what was meant by the death of the heart, and he answered that it came from seeking the world by means of actions which should be gauged towards eternity.

(Jami' bayan al-'ilm wa fadhlihi)

Reading Between the Lines

True believers, the Quran tells us, are those who, “when angered, are willing to forgive” (42:37). Everyone knows the turbulence that is aroused within a person when he becomes angry with someone. This being the case, forgiveness is only possible when this turbulence is suppressed. When set against this background, the full meaning of this verse of the Quran becomes: “When angered, they are willing to forgive, even if this means curbing their emotions and suppressing the turbulence within them.”

Likewise, whenever a statement is made or an injunction laid down, some words are mentioned and some are left unmentioned. That is why we have been urged to ponder over the teachings of religion, to turn them over in our minds; in this way we are able to grasp on a deeper level what has been said, fathoming what is implicit as well as what has been explicitly stated.

When the simple words – “Speak the truth” – are uttered, what they really mean is: “Speak the truth, even if the truth appears harmful to yourself.” When we are commanded to “hand back your trusts to their rightful owners” (Quran, 4:58), the full meaning of this would be: “Hand back your trusts to their rightful owners, however difficult it may be for you to part with them.” The same verse of the Quran exhorts us to “pass judgement upon men with fairness.” This means that even when justice appears detrimental to our interests, we should still adhere to it.

The same applies to the words “Fast”, “Pray” and “Pay *zakat*”. Fasting implies abstaining from food, however much we may desire to eat; prayer is worship of God, no matter what other preoccupations we may have; paying *zakat* incorporates the fuller meaning: “Pay *zakat*, however difficult it may be for you to give up your hard-earned profits.” The same is true of all Islamic injunctions: in order to implement them, something has to be sacrificed; the order is laid down, the sacrifice involved is for us to infer.

We must spend in the cause of God, in spite of our attachment to our wealth. We must proclaim the word of God, in spite of the persecution that might be inflicted upon us by those we address. We must acknowledge the truth, in spite of the fact that this involves disclaiming all personal greatness. Something is written in the lines, something else between the lines. For what is written to be put effectively into practice, it has to be read along with what is in between the lines.

Destined for Great Deeds

One always finds two types of people in the world. On the one hand, there are those who want immediate reward for all that they do, with their recompense exceeding the work they have put in. Then there are those who are not for any material reward. The knowledge that they have contributed in some way to a worthwhile cause is sufficient reward for them. If they receive no recompense for their efforts, it does not cause them concern or arouse their anger. They play their part, but forget about their personal contribution, so engrossed are they in the cause for which they are working.

Outwardly, both groups appear the same, but in reality there is a world of difference between the two. The first group, one might say, keep the markets of the world turning over, while the second group turn over new pages in human history. Such is the extent to which the two differ.

It is the second group who make meaningful, valuable contributions to the betterment of humanity, for it is they who are able to join in a common struggle, without which no worthwhile work can be achieved in this world. Whenever a number of people work together for a common goal, it is inevitable that some should receive more credit than others. Some are hailed for their achievements, while others are denied all recognition. This is true of all movements, whether popular or prophetic in nature. There is only one way for a common effort to prosper, and that is by people forgetting about their rights, and remembering only their responsibilities.

Unless there is a spirit of selfless struggle among those participating in a common cause, it is not only those who receive no recompense who will feel ill-treated. Even those who are rewarded for their contribution will feel that they have not been done justice. Seldom does the reward a person receives for his efforts live up to his expectations. It is a case of either being satisfied with nothing, or never being satisfied at all.

Those who are destined to perform great deeds in life are those who do not seek reward for what they have done; the very fact that they have done something is sufficient reward for them. The knowledge that they have played their part is enough to make them content, even more so than those who have been abundantly rewarded for their efforts.

30 January 1987

Potential for Preaching the Word of God

In September 1985, news appeared in the Arabic weekly *Al-Dawah*, published from Riyadh, that a Dr. Girennier from France had embraced Islam. Here is part of what Dr. Girennier said on his reasons for becoming Muslim:

I looked into all the verses of the Quran dealing with the physical and medical sciences which I have studied since youth and with which I am well-acquainted. I found that these verses of the Quran tally completely with our modern knowledge. I have accepted Islam because of my conviction that Mohammad came with the plain truth. Born a thousand years ago, he studied in no worldly school and had no human teacher; still, all that he said has proved true. I suggest that every expert in each separate field of the arts and science should do as I have done and compare the relevant verses of the Quran with the knowledge at his disposal. If he is intelligent and free of self-motivation, he will surely accept Islam.

Such is the impact the Quran has on one who studies it objectively. He instinctively feels that this is the work of One who, as early as the seventh century, knew facts that have only come to light much later, in the twentieth century. This is a unique feature of the Quran, proving beyond all doubt that the Quran was revealed by God, who knows all things; it could not be the work of man. This is the living miracle of the Quran. When we say that the Quran is the Book of God, the miraculous nature of the Quran itself backs up our claim, leaving people no choice but to believe. Only those dominated by self-interest will discard the truth after it has been plainly demonstrated to them.

30 January 1987

Acting 'to be seen of men'

Abu Hurayra reported the Prophet exhorting his followers to seek refuge from the Pit of Grief. He was asked what this Pit of Grief was, and he said it was a gorge in Hell which Hell itself sought refuge from four hundred times a day. The Prophet was then asked who would enter that Pit. "Those scholars who act to be seen of men," he replied.

(Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah)

31 January 1987

LETTERS

I am a regular reader of your esteemed journal AL-RISALA for the last one year. I find it well-written and informative.

MOHD ZUIFIQAR HUSSAIN
Hyderabad

I have greatly appreciated both the quality and the contents of AI-RISALA. The anecdotes and messages are a source of guidance in one's daily living and I have often quoted them on occasions when I have had to address various meetings.

REHMUT FAZELBHOY
Bombay

Thank you so much for introducing GIFT Coupons for AL-RISALA magazine. It has greatly facilitated in communication the word of God regularly to near and dear ones, especially for whom one cares.

PARVEZ K MENON
Bombay

Recently I saw monthly AL-RISALA and I found myself liking it, and hence, I am willing to be an annual subscriber of it.

YUSUF HUSAIN SHAD
Bombay

I have read AL-RISALA recently and it delighted me. It is really a great Job for the community of Muslims in particular and Non-muslims in general

SHAIKH M HUSAIN
Bhopal

I had the opportunity to read a couple of AL-RISALA I have found its style very different. Its articles are replete with real honesty and sincerity which appears to be quite scarce these days. I found its articles most rational and fun of profound wisdom.

KANEEZ FATIMA
Hyderabad

I am indeed grateful to you for sending me AL-RISALA and will read the magazine diligently.

ARUN SHORIE
Executive Editor
The Times of India
New Delhi

We are grateful to have received a copy of AL-RISALA. It has been read with great interest.

SARDARNI SAHIBA
NIRINJAN KAUR
California, USA

Thank you for sending me your most interesting magazine AL-RISALA.

RABBI DOUGIAS S CHARING
Leeds, U.K.

I happened to go through your esteemed magazine AL-RISALA (English) at Shri Aziz Ahmad Advocate's Office. I appreciate the idea being Presented through the magazine, The vision presented is multi-dimensional and would enlighten the society.

ROBERT ANTHONY
Bhopal