

Part 3: Islam and Social Problems

Islam and Alcoholic Drinks

Islam is a faith which appeals to reason and conscience. Since alcohol is injurious to reason and diminishes a man's intelligence, moral sense, logical powers and spiritual sensitiveness, any drop of it is strictly forbidden to any Muslim.

It is tragic to think of the millions of liters of spirituous liquors consumed. The sole result is that they deprive the world of a portion of that mature manliness which distinguishes the human from the animal. They can hinder mankind's attainment of that pure and acceptable destiny of perfectness which was God's plan.

Islam appeared in a society in which alcohol was rife—and not only forbade the filthy habit but was able to extirpate it with the ignorance and corruption, the selfishness, violence and resultant misery which it had caused. All this blessed benefaction to mankind was started by one inspired man, one man of God who by the strength of his faith revolted against the tyranny of addiction and called men to freedom from slavery to such petty liquids, setting them on the royal road to life.

He showed that intoxication is a sin, explained its harmful nature and destructive powers, and issued his prohibition in the light of an appeal to commonsense and to conscience. In the Sura "The Table Spread" (Maida, 5, v.9) it was revealed through him:

"Intoxicants excite enmity and hatred amongst you and hinder you from the remembrance of God and from the fulfillment of His commands and statutes; and slavery to them diverts you from the sole road of happiness and leads to excess and abomination."

A group who were busy drinking at the moment when this passage was revealed and uttered, promptly under its influence went into the streets and broke the vessels containing intoxicating liquors and spilt their contents on the ground. It was related by Uns bin Malik that: "When that verse was revealed we were holding a drinking party in the house of Abu Talha when the Prophet's voice reached us, calling: 'O Muslims! Take note that intoxicants are a forbidden sin and should be poured out in the streets!'" Abu

Talha asked me to take all the intoxicants from his house and pour them out for him, which I did, taking them into the street where some of the bottles broke while others were washed and cleansed. So much was poured out on the streets of Medina that day that for a long time thereafter, whenever it rained, the color and smell of the wine came up from the ground."

The prohibition was obeyed with rapidity throughout all the lands under Islamic sway ; a swelling tide of character and pursuit of higher intellectual, social and industrial objectives swiftly followed.

To this very day Muslims are to be found in every corner of the world who have jealously guarded their lips and lives from the contamination of alcohol. Indeed, for many of them the mere thought of touching the stuff has never entered their minds. So profoundly endemic has the sounder habit become.

One of the defects of human laws is that the capricious changeableness of human nature affects them. For instance, when America introduced prohibition and tried to enforce it by police methods, the result was the opposite of that which was desired ; and bootlegging, contraband and illegal consumption of liquor loosened respect not merely for that law, but for all law, while social behavior and morals slid downhill at avalanche speed. Islam was successful in enforcing prohibition because it came with the force of a divine command, a God-inspired statute, interpreted to men in the light of reason and commonsense.

It is true that in America many well-meaning people had undertaken a far-reaching propaganda throughout the states against spirituous liquors, with books and films and speeches, for a decade, trying to explain the injuries to the spirit, to the body, to morals and to the finances of the individual and the nation which alcohol causes. The trouble was that the American efforts had their origin in the human idealism of a majority, who voted the 18th (Prohibition) Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1918. An agonizing reappraisal was forced upon these idealists after 14 years of tragic experience: and in 1933 they were compelled to revoke Prohibition.

Their experience proved the ancient rule that lawgiving which goes too far beyond the moral level of the governed, provokes a human reaction which not only brings the particular law into disrepute, but the whole body of law with it ; and a foul mob of unscrupulous gangsters rises to pander to the illicit desires which no legislation can extirpate. These mobs fight each other for control of the vast profits which come from moon shining and from bootlegging, and all the contraband that smuggles the object of unregenerate human craving.

How different is Islam's dependence on basic unalterable principles divinely dictated, germane to the inner essence of human nature in its creation, talents and destiny, and therefore those by which any sound human community must live. These are expressed in a flat, matter-of-fact pronouncement which reason comprehends and commonsense accepts as true. No propaganda —no expensive advertising—just a simple statement of a divine decree by God's Prophet (on whom be peace). No man-pleasing—no pandering to human frailty —no eye-service — no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts

thereof. It is not fear of punishment but love of God which keeps Muslims on the strait and narrow.

No human legislation can hope to track down every wrongdoer and transgressor, let alone exact from each his condign punishment. It is easy to dodge the eye of human law. But the eye of God is everywhere at all times. The Muslim's conscience knows this, and in reverence obeys in private as well as in public. The censor and the lawgiver is within him. The orderliness of God's creations is spread before his eyes, and he knows he should reflect a similar divine order in his private life and in the life of the society of which he is a part. The same Providence which supplies the commandment also supplies the spiritual power to put it into practice. For He is "King of doomsday and Master of both worlds" — this present and the next.

In such divinely inspired law, man finds the security which the mariner or the traveller over the trackless desert finds in the unmovable polestar. Such a law does not change with fashion or passion. It is outside and above the chops and changes of human caprice. It is the expression of a realistic assessment of man in the light of truth. It calls him to express that truth in his living and thinking—truth which is the sustenance of the soul, eternal, impassible, transcendent over winds of change and the transports of self-will.

Civilization boasts its safeguarding of "freedom"; and the West bases its government on "the public will" expressed in representative government. But "representative" of whom? As we said above, a "majority" of only 51% automatically means the suppression of the will of 49% of the people "represented". On the principle of "one man, one vote", if the 51% are gangsters, the nation will be represented 100% by gangsters. Is there any difference between such "majority rule" and enslavement of minorities?

Only obedience to the single sovereign authority of the transcendent divine lawgiver will lead men "to respect one another and seek the common good." Education will not do it. A thief is bad: an educated thief is worse: a thief educated to wield all the weapons of modern technology is worse still. An English leader proclaims that the West must repent in dust and ashes for the disaster which its introduction of alcohol to untutored and innocent races has caused. "Alcohol turns the cool heads of the frozen north into blockheads: but the warm hearts of sunnier lands into those of raging demons," he says.

Voltaire wrote: "Islam takes its faith seriously, and therefore puts the ban of sacrilege on habits like gambling and alcohol; and dubs them mere carnal gaming." Jules la Bourn writes: "Pre-Muslim Arabs drank to excess, gambled, took as many women to wife as they liked, and divorced whenever they felt like it. Widows were part of the patrimony of the heir, who married or sold them as he saw most profitable. Islam changed all that." Professor Edward Montay adds: "The Qur'an forbade human sacrifice and the exposure of unwanted daughters, alcohol and many other degrading practices. The consequent advance in culture is so great as to win the Prophet the title of one of the biggest benefactors of the human race known to history."

Islam and the Family

While the warp of society is the individual person and the woof is social order, the unit of the design is the family. Families in which mutual understanding, sincerity and tenderness reign, form details of a harmonious pattern. But a family in confusion and disarray distorts and mars the pattern.

The instinct for survival is innate in human beings. Producing children is the expression of one urge of this instinct, for a child seems like an extension of one's own personality, and a guarantee of the continuance of the same life-force. The primary origin of the urge to found families is sought by many thinkers in this instinct for survival.

The need to feed and support a family incites a man to industrial productivity.

Other thinkers hold that the primary urge towards family-founding was merely the sex instinct; others favor the gregarious instinct; others regard wedlock as a mere commercial transaction between families entered into for the profit of both.

In fact, communal living in society requires families as its units of construction. To degrade the pure love between husband and wife merely to sex, profit or protection, is to deny human nature at its highest.

Some say that, since in the inchoate days of human living the woman as a weaker being could not exist except under a man's protection, family life is merely a feminine institution imposed on man. This is manifest nonsense: for it ignores a man's need of woman, which may be different from woman's need of man, but is just as deeply and inextricably a part of his nature. True, man has to be the breadwinner in most cases. But he needs his mate as a partner in happiness, in joy and in sound living. In marriage is the end of loneliness. Each sex needs the other. This is why "male and female made He them."

God implanted the sex instinct. God created sex differences. He created the survival instinct, the security instinct and the society instinct of gregariousness. All these were part of His providence in preparing mankind to be His joyful family. Sociologists give each instinct its due weight in the scheme. They say that the exact role of each instinct varies with the changes in social structure. In primitive society the need to find food and housing is of primary importance.

In the ancient agricultural community the need for children became paramount since many hands make light work. Today the sex urge has come very much to the fore, since humanity has devised means to achieve adequate food, satisfactory housing and machines to do the work. But over and above the instincts, the urge to love and the need to be loved are amongst the highest attributes of human nature.

Islam answers the call of nature affirmatively, with its insistence on the family as the best safeguard of public virtue, and its asseveration that it is the only right and legitimate way. It is written in the Sura 16, Nahl – "The Bee" verse 72:

"God has made mates for you of your own nature and made for you of them children and grandchildren and posterity, and provided for you sustenance of the best. Are they then going to believe in vain things and not be grateful for God's favors?"

Islam sets out to protect young people from being led astray by the strength of the God–implanted sexual urge in the years before their character and conscience have matured and their will is governed by discretion. That is why it lays on parents the responsibility of admonishing youth, and of imparting rules of life and guidelines of prudence which will lead to godliness and the natural use of the power of procreation.

It also holds parents responsible for arranging early marriages for those who are mature enough to wed. Young people not yet economically capable of supporting a family may find the thrust of the sex urge so strong that, without the guiding hand of their parents on the reins, the horses of nature may run away with them and carry them into danger or into the trap of illicit sex. Parents must steer the life–force into its God–given legitimate channels where peace of mind and calm of conscience accompany the happiness of a shared life.

The Prophet is reported to have preached thus from the pulpit of the mosque: "O Muslim community! Your daughters are like ripe fruit on a tree. Fruit must be picked at its optimum moment; otherwise the sun or other agencies will rot or spoil it. You must likewise give your daughters in marriage at the moment when they are ripe, and neither later nor sooner. If you leave them hanging about too long, their inevitable corruption will be your fault. They are human, and their human needs must be met."

Ali bin Asbat wrote a reply to a letter which he had received from the 5th Imam, thus: "I find no young men who are suitable and fitted to be husbands for my daughters. What then is my duty?" In answer the Imam wrote: "Do not wait until you find young men who are exactly to your liking in all respects.

For our Holy Prophet said: 'If you do not find young people to wed your daughters who correspond with your personal desires, have regard only to their character, especially their morals and their religion, and let the qualifications you require in husbands for your daughters be faith and morals alone, since with these a young man makes a satisfactory husband; and if you choose someone without these qualifications you are personally responsible for misleading and perverting your young people."

Thus Islam not only does not put obstacles in the way of matrimony, but turns this force of nature to the advantage of society and of the individual— for his physical wellbeing, mental health, calm of spirit and contentment of heart. Islam regards marriage as a sacred union of hearts, a source of serenity and security for both partners. To fulfill this function it needs the qualities of purity, loving kindness, humanity, gentleness, goodness and faith in the depths of the heart. As it is written in Sura 30, "Rome" verse 21:

"Amongst God's signs for you is this, that He created mates for you from among yourselves for you to dwell with in tranquillity. It is He who put love and compassion between you. Verily in these are signs for those who reflect."

Islam lays down clear rules to govern the relationships within the family. Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" calls marriage "the firm bond" and is concerned throughout the first 42 verses with the practical details of the contract of marriage and its fulfillment.

The sense of belonging together is nourished. Fairness governs the share each partner gives and takes in the compact. Each gives according to their ability and each takes according to their need. As Sura II: Baqara — "The Heifer" affirms in verse 228:

"Wife and husband, women and men, have reciprocal and commensurable rights according to what is equitable."

Islam pays the closest and most meticulous attention to the capacities of each sex with regard to their occupation, profession and work. The man has the duty of being the breadwinner and providing for material needs and the production of things. The woman is the housekeeper with the duty of providing for the family's needs and for the production of new people, for nursing the new generation and caring for the upbringing of posterity.

Islam recognizes the natural consequences of the way a woman is made, and will not allow her to be demeaned or degraded in any way ; but preserves her from the wickedness of those who would lead her astray into corruption, and confers upon her a dignity, both at home and out of doors, which is worthy of her calling.

It is of course possible that in an emergency a woman may be called to undertake tasks outside her home. But Islam seeks to avoid the kind of contacts between the sexes in the course of their employment which could turn fellowship into familiarity and comradeship into concupiscence. Therefore women must not dress in a provocative or enticing fashion nor titillate men's sexual lusts so that the madness which leads to promiscuity of intercourse is –aroused.

Like any other institution, the family and its home needs a responsible head. Without a firm hand at the helm a family can drift in confusion. Either the wife or the husband must therefore take the lead, and nature shows that in general it is more fitting for the man to steer, even if in exceptional cases the woman must take command.

The man, in accepting the responsibility of the household, its livelihood, its wellbeing, its children and their care, merits the authority of a head, because his greater strength, perseverance and endurance make him more fitted than the woman to carry the heavy burden of safeguarding the family from collapse and confusion. Further, woman is a creature of emotion, and quicker to be swayed by feelings.

Woman is more ruled by her heart and man more by his head. So Islam gives the prime responsibility to the person of reason, precisely as Article 213 of the most recent constitution of France does. At the same time, Islam lays down that teamwork, partnership, consultation and joint planning are to be the rule.

The man is on no account to be left free to pursue his self-willed desires regardless. He must definitely never tyrannize over his wife or abuse or bully her. It is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" verse 19:

"Believers! You may not take over a brother's widow without her consent. You may not treat your wives harshly. You may not goad a wife into suing you for a khula' (divorce) by which she has to forfeit part of the dower which you gave her—save only if she be guilty of lewd conduct. Nay! live with your wives in kindness and equity. Should you dislike them for something, that very thing may be a point through which God will bring much blessing."

The husband, in shouldering the burden of external affairs for the support of the family, has full control of everything relevant to his task. But inside the walls of the home the wife is in full control, and hers is the duty of arranging the details of daily living, the disposition of the household effects and the upbringing of the children. The Prophet said: "The man is the breadwinner responsible for the family, while the wife has the responsibility for the house and for her husband and for the children." (Majmoo'e wa ram p.6/Collections and Remains.)

Modern disrespect for the bond of marriage is due to the negligence of this high conception of wedlock. Instead it has been degraded by a mass of petty dreams and twisted imaginations. Men's thinking about marriage was in ruins before their families began to fall apart. Too many have entered on the married state without a thought for the importance of harmony of mind and spirit between man and wife. Fortune hunters, Casanovas, women-chasers prizing a pretty face above all else, have pushed the spiritual values out of sight and trodden their own best interests underfoot.

The prevalence of such badly founded families forebodes a tragic future. The deep incompatibility of thought between man and wife sets them as far apart as the poles. The gap between them gapes wider daily. Contentment and peace of heart flee from them. They get on each other's nerves. The harmony which ethical values, unselfishness and human affection bring, as both sides do all they can to strengthen the spiritual life of each other, departs. A family must be founded firmly on due consideration of the environmental conditions, the proper setting for the wife, and the compatibility of the partners' ways of thinking and of their moral standards. Marriage must be thought of as holy and basic. Only from this correct viewpoint can the inevitable difficulties of living together be satisfactorily settled.

Islam has paid due attention to all the deleterious consequences of wrongly based marriage, its divisions and unhappiness. It therefore founds the family not on fortune or passion or outward beauty or any material things, but on faith and virtue, and chastity and purity, and spiritual qualities and affections, and piety both in the man and in the woman. The Prophet is reported to have said: "Whosoever takes a wife merely because of her beauty will never find what he sought in her. Whoso takes a wife solely for her fortune, the Lord will abandon him.

Seek therefore a wife whose beauty is that of faith and whose fortune is purity of living." (Wasa'il ash—

Shia, Vol. 3, p.6.)

In the book "Man la yandhur" (p.209), "There is no institution more beloved than marriage" is stated as Islam's policy for matrimony. Persons who seek to avoid founding a family on unreasonable or false grounds are sternly rebuked, and condemned for every form of pretext to which they resort for perverting the God-given force of sex from its proper use. In the book "Safenatul- Bihar" (Vol. 1, p.561), we read: "Wedlock and matrimony belong to my religion. Whosoever protests against this way of life excludes himself from my religion and is not one of mine."

Similarly Islam is against the wedding of people who lack the qualities of personality and the excellences of spirit which are required: and against wedding into families which do not profit from religious upbringing in moral standards. As is written in the "Wasa'il ash-Shia" — chapter 7 of the "Book of Wedlock", "the Prophet in a sermon said: 'Avoid beautiful plants and flowers which grow by the side of filthy and polluted waters.' The Prophet was asked: 'O Prophet of Allah! what is a plant by a stagnant pool?' He replied: 'A beautiful woman brought up in a perverse family that has not known the restraints of instruction'."

It is natural that consorts who are not brought up on absolute moral standards and religious laws can never be sure of true family happiness and blessedness. The fruit of such marriages can only be delinquent children, rough, violent, without serenity or security of spirit. Therefore Islam, to ensure the happiness of both parties, lays particular stress on matters of morals and of mentality. It is to guard against the production of a generation that is corrupt and perverted that Islam seeks to avoid matrimony with members of families that are polluted and degraded.

If young people, at the moment when they have to choose their life's partner, would do so in accordance with Islamic rules and regulations instead of only looking at externals, and weigh the realities which are vital to happiness, setting aside false thinking inspired by polluted passions that so swiftly pass, there is no doubt that the unhappiness and family disasters brought on family life by the devotees of sexual freedom and permissiveness would all very rapidly disappear into thin air. Yet some of today's youth have been taught that a trial-marriage, to see if a couple suit each other in intercourse, is the right way and the ideal preparation for happy life-partnership.

How can they think that a brief experience of a fleeting pleasure of two bodies can plumb the depths of the spiritual qualities, mental abilities, moral gifts and personality-traits of another soul? To expect to found an eternal relationship on a few moments of pleasure is a nonsensical piece of illogic. That should be enough to condemn it out of hand, quite apart from all the moral and spiritual damage which such temporary liaisons cannot fail to cause. The inner qualities of a personality only appear in a long period of a shared life.

It is the ever-changing scene and stage of their living together which reveals the truth of two partners' inward nature to each other. Patience, forbearance, equanimity, steadiness, contentment, selflessness,

self-sacrifice are discovered when life's pressures crowd in on the soul. How can brief moments of rest and fun and trips abroad penetrate to the deep ethical characteristics? Can a visit to the cinema or some other place of entertainment reveal their true selves to a couple? Indeed, in trial-marriages both partners try to conceal their bad sides and put on a good mask to fool each other.

Can a young man in the heat of passion make a decision which is the most fateful of his life? Can a trial-marriage ensure that there is no difference in spirit and no weak point in their relationship? And how can a young person, ruled by the conditions of his years when the inclination to satisfy sexual instincts is so strong, weigh the essential conditions for a sound marriage dispassionately and detachedly? How can he be sure that quarrels and differences will not arise in the future?

It is for this reason that Islam recommends that, before the final signing of a marriage contract, the young people should meet each other and talk ; but also, and far more important, they should get an assessment of their proposed partner's character and tastes and traits and capacities from independent observers who are able to judge from long acquaintance.

Or, since the family happiness depends in the first place on the equality of the relations between man and wife in their shared life, the firmer the spiritual and ethical bonds the surer the happiness of the household and the greater its ability to stand the shocks of life in selfless self-sacrifice and union. This is why the Prophet said: "Best of my people is the man who shows his family not harshness but perfect kindness and goodness." (Moral Excellence: p.247 "Makarem-ul-Akhlaq".) And again ("Man la yandhur", p.625): "Best amongst you is he who treats his family well: and I am kindest of all to my own family." Similarly the wife should treat her husband with kindness, and this is called her "Sacred Jihad" (Tafseer-ad-Dorr al-manthoor "Gems of Wisdom").

One of the sad obstacles to early marriages today is the difficulty which finance poses for young people. Provision of the marriage portion, expensive ceremonies, the high cost of houses, and a dozen other extravagant charges are too much for the average youth. Islam insists that the state should take steps to enable these difficulties to be overcome in the interests of the institution of matrimony. The book "Gems of Wisdom" reports the Prophet of Islam as saying: "It is an auspicious and beneficent act that the bride's family should make their demands for dowry and terms of the marriage contract mild and lenient."

Excessive demands may reveal not only that the bride's family but possibly also the bride herself is grasping and hard. The chapter on marriage portions in the book "Wasa'il ash-Shi'a " tells the following story. One day the Apostle of God was seated with the assembly of his companions when a young woman rushed in and after the customary courteous salutations said: "O Apostle of God I want a young husband." The Prophet turned to all those present and asked: "Has anyone an inclination to take this woman to wife?" One man said he was willing. The Prophet asked what dowry he would give. He replied: "I have nothing I can give." So the Prophet said : "No!" The woman returned on a later occasion and requested to be married. No one replied. Finally the same young man who had no fortune or property at his disposition made a sign, and the Prophet addressed him thus: "Do you know the Qur'an?"

He said: "Sure!" The gracious Apostle then decreed: "I will marry you to this woman at the price of the dowry which will consist in your teaching her a portion of the Qur'an every day."

Islam therefore refuses to recognize that financial difficulties may put obstacles in the way of young people's matrimony. It allows indigent and needy persons to found families by law. Islam regards fear of poverty and of involvement as false excuses for avoiding the divine law of life in wedlock, and says that Providence knows a family's needs and will not let them fall into deprivation.

It is written in Sura 24: Nur — "Light", verse 32:

"Provide the means by which worthy and fitting persons who have no spouse may marry. If they are poor and indigent God out of His gracious care will supply their needs."

Of course hard work and industry is the way in which a man should supply his needs. When a man undertakes the responsibilities of matrimony, in order to make both ends meet he must increase his activities and his hard work. This is one of the functions of marriage in raising the standard of living for the whole of society.

Islam and the Position of Women

The West's vociferous partisans of Women's Lib. have no idea of the revolutionary leap forward in women's position which Islam brought about. In the days of Islam's first appearance the position of women was that of chattels of the men— little above the domesticated animals. Yet the West, for all their vaunted freedom, have added nothing to what Islam gave to women, except liberty for increased corruption and licentiousness. Islam prohibits debauchery, laxity, vulgarity, debasement and demoralization. Is that to hinder women's upward advance?

Islam regards both man and woman as created by God to rise to the full stature of the perfect human. This is in stern contrast with those versions of the Heavenly Book which Jews and Christians have tampered with and published as reading: "Amongst every thousand men appears one beloved of God: but amongst all the women in the world there is not to be found one who is included in God's grace and favor." (My quotation is from page 519 of "Islamic and Arab Civilization", an authoritative work to which due respect must be paid.)

Islam proclaims that in God's eyes there is no difference between man and woman. Each is a precious soul. In His eyes all that makes people stand out from one another is their excelling in virtue, piety, reverence, spiritual and ethical qualities. It is open to both men and women to achieve that type of excellence. At Doomsday each soul will be judged, regardless of sex, according to the fruits of their actions, by the above criteria. As it is written in Sura XXVII : Nahl — "Bee"

"Whosoever bath faith and performs decorous actions, man or woman, I decree as their destiny a life that will be satisfied and will win that soul a reward better than the good deeds they have

done."

Compare Sura 28: Qasas — "The Narration" (verse 84):

"To whosoever does good, the reward is better than the deed."

Islam regards men and women as complementary to each other. As it is written in Sura 3: Aal-i-Imran — "Imran's Family" (verse 195):

"Their Lord hath accepted their prayer and answered: 'Never will I suffer the work of any one of you, male or female, to be lost. Ye are complementary to each other.'"

Many women possess such personal excellences and intelligence that they attain great heights of true humanity and happiness. Many men, alas, fall to the lowest depths because they flout reason and abandon themselves to their passions.

It is related that on one occasion the Second Caliph, Omar, said from the pulpit in the presence of a large crowd: "I will fine any man who gives his bride 500 dirhams or more as dowry. He shall be made to give the same amount as that by which his dowry exceeds the Mahr-as-Sunna (traditional dowry) to the public treasury." At this a woman who was at the foot of the pulpit cried out in a loud voice her objection to Omar's statement saying : "Your proclamation contradicts God's law : for does not the Sura IV : Nisa'a — 'The Women', say (verse 20): ***'But if you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you have given the wife you put away a talent of gold as her marriage portion, take not the least bit of it back.'*** How can you, then, in contradiction of the Divine Law which has stated that it is permissible to give more than the legal minimum marriage portion, make your proclamation?" Omar could not deny the impeachment and withdrew his proposition saying: "It was a man who erred and a woman who uttered the truth."

Contrast with this the tragic depression of women in pre-Islamic Arabia. What a height of dignity has been conferred by Islam on the female sex to enable one of them to lift up her voice in public rebuke to a Caliph and cause him to reverse his own public utterance! Islam took from men the right to own women. It instituted equality of human souls, with due regard to differences of male and female constitutions.

In the 19th century religious leaders of France, after long discussions, decided: "Woman is a human being, but made to serve man." It was not until recent years that women in European lands had any rights to own property. In England it was not till about AD 1850 that women were counted in the national population census.

It was in 1882 that a British law, unprecedented in the country's history, for the first time granted women the right to decide how their own earnings should be spent, instead of handing them over direct to their husbands immediately. Until then, even the clothes on their back had been their husband's property. Henry VIII had in his day even forbidden women to study the Bible when the first English translations

began to appear.

Fourteen centuries ago Islam had decreed women's total financial independence, their right to own and dispose of property without the surveillance or control of any man, to conduct business, trade and all the transactions concerning their profit and loss, including the execution of deeds of gift, without having to check with anyone. As it is written in the Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women", verse 33:

"In no wise covet gifts bestowed by God seemingly more freely on some than on others. What so ever a man earns is his own. Whatsoever a woman earns is her own. Pray to God for the bounty of His Providence for He knows all things."

Besides property rights Islam bestowed dignity, liberty and freedom on women. This is not least true in the matter of marriage. Marriage is the most important and sensitive step in a woman's life. Islam did everything to secure her in it, and to enable her to consider the financial as well as all the other matters concerning the situation before she accepted him in wedlock.

Thus the rights and privileges which European women extorted after bringing forceful pressure to bear on the societies in which they lived, and only recently achieved, Islam bestowed upon all women voluntarily without any form of revolt or pressure many centuries back. Indeed there is no moment of a woman's life, and no problem she is likely to face, for which Islam has not made beneficent and wise provision.

It is true that today far too many women are condemned in the East to an unsatisfactory way of life. But this is not due to Islam's regulations. It is due to the neglect of religious precept in political, social and financial institutions.

Poverty is one important reason for the bad conditions under which Eastern women have to live. A few are too rich; but the majority far too poor, victims of hunger and wretchedness. The resultant weakness has deprived people of the strength to rise up and insist on a change in their environment, for the sake of their families and children. Nor have the women the power in such a situation to make use of their legal rights and to take the men to court for the violence and tyranny of their behavior. Women fear the difficulties of having to live without a male companion in a man's world.

The same economic needs cause a diminution in morals and in human affections. Violence and injustice replace moral values.

Although Islamic lands are amongst the worst sufferers from these modern disasters, it is not Islam itself, but the deliberate neglect and abandonment of Islamic principles by Muslims and their leaders which has brought these tragedies upon us. For Islam is the very acme of the counter forces to poverty and injustice, and insists that wealth must be fairly divided amongst people of all classes, declaring that it is wrong for people to have to live under the torture of indigence and its pressure on hearts and souls, not least those of women and children.

Have we not men wise and just enough to eradicate these wrongs? To cure the bitterness which they produce? To re-enact sound Islamic measures? To restore respect for the dictates of piety and reverence for God and men? Should not that same Islam which once rescued woman from degrading depression, now raise her again by instituting a new –society?

What is the situation in the West? Women have fallen victims to the bestial passions to which men have, abandoned themselves under the influence of subversive propaganda of all kinds, in which the mass-media, particularly cinema and TV, and the advertisements that disgrace the hoardings of our great cities, play so tragically fateful a part.

Nowadays a woman's good reputation and dignity does not come, as it used to, from her possession of moral excellences, education and knowledge. Too often women of piety and learning are left in obscurity. Respect, reputation go too much with the name of "artiste" which some women arrogate to themselves. They perform no useful function in society. They do not help the men forward. The name "artiste" seems to cover a multitude of sins of incontinence and debauchery, which are the very opposite of that virtue and chastity in which the honor of women once resided. How many earn a shameful living as "models"?

An American sociologist writes that the modern strip teaser can earn a million dollars a year: a fellow who is able to knock out another man with one blow of his fist gets half a million: a man who has spent a lifetime in the service of his fellows, in his white hairs finds hardly enough to live on.

Professor Albert Connolly writes: "In 1919 England's women fought for the right to be elected to Parliament, and in their battle went to prison and suffered physically in fearless vindication of their sex. What use are their grandchildren making of the privileges gained for them by these courageous women pioneers?"

And what would their grandmothers think of them? Maybe they are actually turning in their graves at seeing the liberties they fought for perverted to shameless license. This last half century has taught us that the liberation of women is not enough. Besides all their other sacrifices for their cause, women seem also to have connived at the sacrifice of the respect and the ancient realities, the moral dignity and the devotion to mankind's uplift which in former days brought honor to the name of 'woman' and 'mother'." ¹

Islam and Divorce

The first point this chapter must make is that divorce is contrary to the laws of nature. The annulling of the marriage-bond and the separation of those who should be life-partners is a denial of the true nature of man as created and as at his best. Any society in which divorces become numerous, with the consequent break-up of families, evidences its deviation from nature and her requirements.

Psychologists, jurists and sociologists, concerned by the effects of divorce on the moral and juridical

personality of those involved, have gone deep into the subject, and given it as their considered verdict that the ejection of a man and wife, let alone the children, from the warmth of home-life into the cold unwelcome of any substitute establishment they may find, deals a mortal blow to their spirits and exposes their children to the onset of moral ailments and psychic traumas against which family life had immunized and protected them. These scientists further hold, almost to a man, that for these reasons divorce should be rendered practically impossible by severe sanctions, except in a few cases where some cause, generally from outside, like the onslaught of insanity or criminality, makes an exception to the rule.

But what should be done in cases of irreparable breakdown of relationships? Must the partners stay in the hell they have made? Or may a way-out be found for them? Christianity says blankly: "No divorce!" But Islam more realistically faces the consequences of irreparable breakdown as a fact, and provides a way-out. Every possible safeguard is laid down in the statute book to prevent such a way-out by divorce being abused.

But it is clear that the bankruptcy of the relationship is only worsened by forcing the partners to stick together; and their misery is only increased. Hence divorce, though stigmatized as "the most loathsome of states in the eyes of the Lord" is made possible when it is the better of two bad roads. It may even be that the very separation removes the cause of the irritation between man and wife, while the lapse of time in absence softens the hearts and recalls the good points which had been lost under the pains of discord; so that the couple seek reunion, and in some cases actually start the same partnership up again in pardon and joy.

Since Islam's aim is the firm establishment of marriages, in the interests of this objective certain liberties are denied. The right of divorce is given to the man only, except in very exceptional cases. This is to safeguard the best interests of women and save them from falling victim to passions. Manifestly, if two people both have the right to institute divorce proceedings, the basis of confidence is made very shaky on both sides. What better safeguard can there be, therefore, than to give the right of divorce proceedings primarily to the one who has by nature more subjection to the powers of reason, and patience in the face of lack of tenderness; and who stands to lose the sum he has given as a marriage portion, as well as having to undertake the financial burdens of the children's upbringing?

The differences in the constitution of a man and woman are manifest. The head takes first place in the man's decisions and the heart in the woman's. Reason and emotion are the gifts given to each respectively in their creation. As Dr. Alexis Carrel puts it : "The differences between men and women are, obviously, the physical ones: and then, less obviously, the internal ones like the dispositions of the nerves, the different mental and emotional talents, both of which are of supreme importance for the future of civilization. Partisans of Women's Liberation aim at a false conception of equality, as if that desirable condition meant precise similarity and identity in upbringing, employment, responsibilities and duties." ("Man, the Unknown" pp. 84-87).

It is for these reasons that Islam's Fiqh lays down: "Divorce is in the hand of the man." And it is in consideration of the woman's delicacy of spirit that the power of ending a shared life is not granted to her. Islam, in addition to the manifold measures it has taken to make it easier for people to enter the married state and start families, also makes it more difficult to break up the home. Everything possible is done to ensure happy sound home-life, for the sake of the family's members and of the society to which they belong. It is therefore that it is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" verse 19:

"O men, live with your wives in kindness and equity. If you dislike anything in them, that may be the very point which God will use to bring about much blessing."

In order to take away such feelings of dislike and prevent their turning to hatred, and to remove their discomfort, Islam awakens the man's conscience to live in kindness and equity with patience, and not to cast off a wife who is temporarily in disfavor, since it may be that goodness and blessing may come through those very wives; so that it would be stupid to end the relationship hastily. As is written in the same Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women", verse 128:

"If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no obstacle to their arranging an amicable settlement between them for which the wife must renounce some of her rights. But if they return through reconciliation and peace through such unselfishness, such a settlement is better than separation and divorce."

The same dislike of divorce, as the most detestable of extreme measures to be adopted only in the direst emergency, is advanced by all Islam's greatest scholars and leaders, an attitude summed up in the sentence in the book "Mustadrak" (Vol. 3, p.2): "Any woman who seeks to be divorced from her husband, save in cases of extreme necessity, falls out of the grace and mercy of the Lord." Or again in Vol. 3 of the "Wasa'il ash-Shi'a" (p.144): "Enter upon matrimony: but do not divorce your wives, since divorce shakes the very throne of God."

Islam fences in the man's power of divorce with many limiting safeguards. A man may not put away his wife by violence, harassment, injury or in a way which may drive her to a life of immorality and corruption. Thus Islam has for centuries surpassed anything yet achieved in Western countries, in its initiative to remove differences and restore understanding in family life.

This is particularly true of the family courts, where well-meaning relatives have a large say, and everything is done to bring about reconciliation. Causes of differences are deeply studied; and, as relatives, they are able to go deep into confidential matters without either of the couple feeling that their private secrets are being exposed or their feelings excoriated in too public an ambience.

When the causes of the difference have been brought into the light of day, the members of the family court exert all their powers of sincerity and heart and affection to bring about reconciliation and to quench the fires of temper, exhorting both sides to unselfishness, tolerance, and an effort to understand each other's point of view. Since both man and wife respect these elders and have full confidence in

their compassionate affection, they frequently accept the family court's recommendations for adjustments they should make in their relationships and behavior towards each other. As it is written in Sura IV : Nisa'a — "The Women" (verse 35):

"Should you fear that division will arise amongst them, appoint an arbitrator on the husband's side and an arbitrator on the wife's side from amongst their relatives and send them to them. As soon as they desire peace and reconciliation the Lord will vouchsafe it to them for He is all-knowing and all-wise."

Should the causes and roots of the initiation of divorce proceedings prove to be too deep, so that there is an irreparable breakdown in marital relationships, and all the efforts of the relatives fail to bring about any sort of hope of reconciliation, Islam in its realism recognizes that each party must take their own road. It must be plain that such a family court is far more likely to succeed than all the public courts of law or marriage guidance clinics.

In fact these only too often, being strangers to the family and not privy to their inmost secrets, merely increase the rift, because of the clumsiness of their well-meaning efforts. A public court has the duty to hear the evidences produced by both sides; and then, in the cold dry heartless atmosphere in which only exact truth and not mercy or clemency reigns, decide which side has most right and give verdict accordingly. It has neither the heart nor the spiritual influence of relatives to press for reconciliation, and cure the causes of the quarrel. In the Qur'an, Sura LXV "Talaq" — "Divorce" ordains in verse 2:

"Two just persons from amongst yourselves shall bear witness to the evidence before God when a divorce is settled."

Without these two witnesses, there is no legal divorce. An advantage of their appointment is that they can exert every pressure of affection and wisdom to avert the final catastrophe for quite a period before reluctantly, if they have to do so, agreeing that there is no other way out. They frequently succeed in the better course.

It is further laid down that no divorce may be made absolute save after the woman's period of purification after menstruation or childbirth is completed. This need to wait awhile often proves a breathing-space in which the man's feelings of tenderness once more assert themselves over his irritations, and make him decide against divorce.

Further when a man finds sharing his life with a particular woman wearisome and irksome and decides on divorce, this decision of his does not suffice in itself to end their living together nor does it become effective until the expiry of the "Iddat", i.e. the period fixed by the Fiqh during which a divorced or widowed woman may not be married to another man: and this period also gives a breathing-space which frequently results in the man's change of heart and decision to continue the married bond with the wife he planned to divorce.

Finally, after the execution of the formalities for a "revocable divorce" (Talaq-i-raj') a man may not expel his wife from the home until the termination of the period of the "iddat" which may last anything up to three months, nor may the wife quit their joint home except in a desperately exceptional case during that period. As the Sura LXV "Talaq" — "Divorce" enacts (verse 1):

"You may not expel women from their houses, nor may they themselves quit, except if they have been proven guilty of some open lewdness (during the 'iddat' period). These -are limits set by God. Should any man transgress these limits he does so at the peril of his own soul, and to his own harm: for you know not whether God may bring about some new situation later (than the decision to divorce)."

No formalities are necessary to abrogate a revocable divorce during these months. A mere indication of desire for renewal of the marriage relationship by the man suffices.

Should the wife feel such hatred for her husband that she repays him the statutory portion of marriage settlement he had given her, or a portion of her own property, that counts as her divorcing him; but this type of divorce is revocable within the stated period, so that if she changes her mind, and her husband agrees, he can still take her back into their home.

By these many means Islam safeguards the holy estate of matrimony from shipwreck on the rock of hasty decisions onto which emotional storms may drive some couples.

Islam had also done much to protect the wife's rights and to save her from having to continue to live in an unhappy environment. Among beneficent measures are the following:

1. The wife can insert a clause in the marriage contract ensuring that
 - (a) Incompatibility of temperament
 - (b) Maltreatment
 - (c) Refusal of maintenance
 - (d) Unannounced journeys
 - (e) The taking of another wife without consultation are so provided against that if any of the above five conditions is broken she can approach a lawyer to obtain a divorce for her through the courts;
2. The wife can make it impossible for her husband not to divorce her by being intolerably refractory, vexatiously shrewish or deliberately incompatible in relationships, familial, sexual or social;
3. the wife can resort to the courts if the husband has been incapable or negligent in supplying her with maintenance or has put obstacles in the way of her obtaining it; or if either partner deprives the other of conjugal rights or fails in marital duties; the Muslim Qadhi, if the woman's plea is proved, can compel the husband to treat her right, to be reconciled, to disburse the proper sums, to confer her rights upon her in every form : and if the husband proves recalcitrant, or refuses to obey the judge's orders, the judge can then compel him to divorce his wife;

4. The wife can enter a plea in the Islamic court and obtain an injunction if the husband accuses her of lewdness, unchastity or unfaithfulness, or denies his own paternity of her child : if the husband cannot prove his case the judge will order the husband to separate himself from his wife in accordance with the relevant legislation;

5. the wife may, in the case of intolerable revulsion or aversion, in a simple fashion bring about a discontinuance of their union by renouncing a large part of her marriage portion, while freeing her husband from his obligation to pay her alimony during the "Iddat" breathing-space period;

6. The wife, if the husband absents himself so that no news of him reaches her and she falls into financial or other difficulties, can resort to the courts and request a divorce; the judge will then perform the necessary formalities to annul her marriage contract.

It is written in Sura II: "Baqara" — "The Heifer" (verse 229):

"A divorce is only permissible twice: after that the parties should either hold together in equity or separate in kindness. It is not lawful for you men to take back from your wives any of that portion which you have given them except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the God-ordained limits. If you judges have reason to fear that the parties will be unable to keep the God-ordained limits, so decree, for there will be no blame on either of them if she hands over a sum in exchange for her freedom. These limits are God-ordained so do not transgress them since that is to wrong yourself as well as others."

In the "Exegetical Collection" it is related in Volume I on page 167 that 'ibn Abbas reported that Jamila, wife of Thabit bin Qais, sought audience of the Prophet and complained to him: "O Apostle of God! I cannot stand one moment more of life with Thabit bin Qais, nor shall my head ever rest again on the same pillow as his." After a pause she added: "I am not accusing him of a lack of faith or of moral and marital virtues: but I am afraid that I myself will fall into infidelity and blasphemy if I have to spend another minute with him.

I turned up the tent-skirting and my eye fell on my husband in the middle of a crowd of other men. He looked so ugly, a black-vised, dwarfish runt, and I hated him, and I can't go on. " She ran on thus, and the Prophet, after absorbing her -outpouring, tried to advise and admonish her, but she paid him no heed. So he sent for Thabit bin Qais and laid the situation before him. Thabit was deeply attached to Jamila, but self-sacrificingly and for her sake agreed to take back the marriage portion he had settled upon her— a beautiful garden – and give her a khul' divorce.

There are cases in which resort to the court by the wife is statutory. There are also cases in which she can divorce her husband without legal aid, as in cases of certain grave chronic diseases like leprosy or elephantiasis; or because of the onset of lunacy, or of physical defects which prevent marital intercourse, like impotence or castration of the husband. For these Fiqh gives the wife haqq-i-faskh— the right to the rescinding or annulment of the marriage, which "faskh" is not the same as the khul' divorce, and does not

involve the same financial renunciations by the wife as khul' does.

Germany and Switzerland, in Europe, also recognize lunacy as grounds for the annulment of a marriage or for separation. France does not admit either grave chronic disease or lunacy as an adequate ground, and insists that the healthy spouse must care for the leprous or lunatic partner. Undoubtedly such long-suffering and loving kindness is highly praiseworthy; while extolling it as a counsel of perfection, Islamic realism prefers to leave the partners free to choose separation or continued care, according to their own conscience.

The West is suffering terribly from the laxity it has allowed in the break-up of marriages and the violently increasing incidence of divorce. These disasters are really reactions to over-pressure by the churches, which prohibited and condemned divorce one hundred percent for many centuries, while the secular governments gave recognition to it.

For instance, divorce was totally prohibited in France until the French Revolution of October 1789. In 1804, in response to popular demand, divorce was legalised; but in the following 12 years it increased so appallingly that the religious bodies brought renewed pressure to bear, until in 1816 the law legalizing divorce was rescinded though physical separation of the parties was permitted. However, public pressure built up again so much that in 1884 divorce within certain limits was legalised once more.

Here follow the conditions on which in Western lands divorce for wife and husband was legal until recent times:

1. A criminal act committed by either party which involves the penalty of life-imprisonment, exile, loss of civil rights or temporary imprisonment with hard labor;
2. Physical violence, mercenary prostitution, and a few other similar criminal acts of the one partner against the other;
3. Adultery by either partner—though in such cases the wife has the right of divorce only if the man commits adultery with another woman in the house which belongs to his wife and himself.

The following is the road by which a wife's infidelity was proved: note it well! "The infidelity of a wife must be proved completely in the eyes of the police. The wife or the husband plan to be in different places for however a short time. They must agree about some third person to be cited as co-respondent and this person must be prepared to undertake this service. And then at the stated hour the wife must be caught in flagrante delictu with the third party; and the husband must have the police on the spot to catch her out and so prove her infidelity. Thus the police accompany the husband to the trysting-place; and when they catch the wife in flagrante delictu this is accounted adequate grounds for her husband divorcing her." (The Law of Divorce and Renewal of Marriage p.99).

See what a mass of further impurities the impurity which wrought the need for divorce in the first place

has carried in its train. And this is the "civilized" world of the West, which allows women entry into public and political life, and with the other hand takes away her honor, her femininity, and the high standards which it should be her privilege to set, and turns her chastity into a mercenary bargaining-point. It must be admitted that since I first put pen to paper on this matter, efforts have been made in many Western lands to eradicate the worst of these abominations.

America makes divorce easier for both parties. It is not surprising, therefore, that American divorce figures are the highest of all. The wise tremble at the results: the wisdom of Islamic dispositions shines by contrast like the sun in darkness. At a conference in Strasburg, statistics of one year's divorces which could be attributed to the overwhelming desire of wives to be "in the fashion", "a la mode", "comme faut" and to "keep up with the Joneses" in modernity of garb and guise were quoted as being:

1. in France, 27% of all divorces;
2. in Germany, 33%;
3. in Holland, 36%;
4. in Sweden, 17%.

Not every Parisienne is an excessive slave of fashion. Nonetheless it is reckoned that the costs of unnecessary purchases made by women simply to keep up with "mode" come to no less than 5,000 tomans per head (£300-£400 per head per annum). Yet all this expenditure adds nothing to the woman's natural beauty, moral stature, ease of spirit or calm of mind!

European statesmen and responsible thinkers everywhere, are well aware of the danger, and fear it acutely. All who possess the slightest sense of philanthropy must seek the means of stemming the sweeping tide of this flood of evil through the world.

Islam offers its regulations on family life, matrimony, and the respective positions of men and women, as a way which all nations might do well to follow, remembering that it was a Westerner, Voltaire, who said : "The Prophet Muhammad reduced the unlimited harems of unfortunate women maintained by pre-Islamic potentates to a maximum of four wives: and his legislation on marriages and divorces is the most noble and effective ever conceived, formulated and enacted by any authority at any time in the world's history, religious, political or social."

Temporary Marriages

Islam is a realistic and practical religion. Divinely inspired, it fits human nature like a glove. It does not exalt, as ideals, ways of life which are contrary to nature. It therefore rejected the doctrine (which the Christian Church had promulgated during its first six centuries) that celibacy was a desirable or meritorious way of life, estimable as a work of supererogation (i.e. adding to the store of merit which could be shared amongst the saints and even turned to the salvation of sinners for whom they prayed) while marriage, though not an unlawful state, falls in a moral category called "makruh" which lies halfway

between the "mubah" or "indifferent" and the "haram" or totally forbidden.

Popes and Catholics tend to follow this doctrine to this day, as also do the higher ranks of the Orthodox hierarchy. It was one of the Catholic doctrines against which Luther and his Protestants revolted, and it is forming a great source of controversy within the Church of Rome at this very date at which we write. After long discussions at a Vatican Congress, it was decided that "marriage is still less meritorious than celibacy; and no alteration in the Church's doctrine can be allowed on this point."

The sexual instinct has the deepest roots in human nature. Unless it is properly catered for and regulated, it avenges itself. It responds to suppression by psychological explosions that can be volcanic in their effect if they take place simultaneously in large numbers of people. It might well be held that the disastrous breakdown of the family institution in the West is precisely such an explosive reaction against Christian attempts to suppress the sex instinct instead of sanctifying and sublimating it in its natural channels.

Christians must ask themselves whether they have not committed the very sin of which their Lord and Master accused the Pharisees of His day, that of "binding on men's backs burdens too heavy to be borne." Like caged beasts escaping from captivity, the people of the West dash forth from the bondage in which Christianity had tried to hold them, and in an equal and opposite reaction go much too far in the other direction.

Islam makes a proper marriage, when a man and woman reach adult hood, a merit and a virtue. Thus it turns the God-implemented instinct to its correct operation in the strengthening of society. It bans bestial abuse of the instinct, but exalts its truly human use in accordance with the way in which God has made mankind. A man was made to love a wife and children. This is acknowledged in every race in every clime.

It is written in Sura 3: Al-i-Imran — "Imran's Family" (verse 14, in part):

"Fair in the eyes of men is the love of objects which are the desire of their instinct, women and sons."

Islam during the 14 centuries of its existence has done its utmost to end the scandal of prostitution which takes such a heavy toll in family and social life, and degrades both the women who are compelled to practise it and the men whose incontinence exploits them. The law of "the temporary marriage" (ezdevaj-i-muwaqat or mutā'a) by the formula (or seeghe) laid down in it, was instituted to establish conditions under which a man who was compelled by the necessities of his business or for other causes to be away from home for long periods, or who desired to give temporary assistance to a woman whose life had fallen into difficulties, could undertake a union for a specified period under strictly controlled conditions.

Remember that this beneficent piece of legislation was produced through the Prophet of Islam in the

environment of those "days of ignorance" when men walked in darkness; and when illicit relationships were as common as other types of immorality in those generations of unregenerate and unenlightened persons. Most places had official "red-light districts" and houses of ill-fame as a matter of course. To raise the thinking and living of men, and to put an end to illicit sex, the Prophet of Islam brought in this law of "temporary marriage", to –canalise the sex instinct in sound channels.

The chapters on "Temporary Marriage" in the book "Wasa'il ash-Shi'a " report that the Prophet posted an edict in the streets and bazaars which read: "O people! God's Apostle has made temporary marriage permissible for you, for the quenching of the fires of the sex instinct, and for turning it to sound uses, that ye may not be the slaves of sexual licence, fornication or illicit relationships."

By this law the man and woman enter upon a marriage, not of permanence, but of a limited time, and live as man and wife until the expiry of the stated period. The only difference in this type of marriage is that it does not carry with it the same rights of inheritance, nor does the man have to continue to provide the woman's food, clothing and shelter after the termination of their relationship. But to preserve proper order all the other rules that govern permanent marriage must also be observed in the temporary marriage.

A woman who enters such a contract is counted as the man's real wife and can claim all the rights which are legally specified as such. As it is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" (verse 24):

"To women whom you choose in temporary and conditional (muwaqat and muta'a) marriage, give their dowry, as a duty."

The only difference between permanent marriage and temporary marriage, so far as its social status is concerned, is its duration. If the contract specifies a definite and limited period, that is a temporary marriage. But the wife is as much a wife as if the contract had specified "a permanent and unlimited period."

The children of the temporary marriage are recognized on precisely the same footing as those of a permanent marriage, and enjoy all the legal and canonical and customary rights of children whose paternity is recognized. One reason for prostitution is that some men find it not within their reach to enter upon a permanent marriage, either because their personality or their finances prevent them undertaking the heavy lifelong responsibility, or because their stay in any one place can only be short. Merchants, soldiers, students and even tourists find themselves in these conditions. It is the realistic recognition of these facts, and Islam's consistent "yes!" to life, which have produced the institution of "temporary marriage".

What better solution could there be? Properly practiced, this institution is a powerful antidote and preventative of ills like prostitution and other social ailments. It blocks the way to women's selling themselves, raises the general tone of public morality, and gives needed assistance to women who, through no fault of their own, either by the death of their husband or some other disaster, have fallen on

bad times. We say "properly practiced", because there are licentious and ignorant persons who abuse this law, including opponents of Islam who make misuse of it a basis for false propaganda and misrepresentation.

Temporary marriage preserves the aspect of purity and saves people from sin. That something right can be misused by wicked persons exposes those persons' wickedness, but does not invalidate the right institution. The answer is to change them by replacing their wickedness with piety of spirit and absolute moral standards. The Prophet of Islam was "sent to bring about the excellences of virtue", and it is to this end that all Islam's efforts are directed.

There exists no law anywhere in the world which is not twisted by the wicked to their own ends and against its original purpose. This is true of laws which are of the greatest benefit to society. The law of "temporary marriage" is one such. It should be backed with the full authority of the state. Those who misuse it should be punished. Those who use it right should be supported and aided in their righteous living.

In the "Temporary Marriage" chapters of the book "Wasa'il ash-Shi'a " it is reported that the Fifth Imam said, quoting the Imam Ali: "If the 2nd Caliph had not prohibited temporary marriages, no Muslim, save perchance a few utterly degraded lewd fellows of the baser sort, would have ever committed fornication."

Close attention to the words of Omar (the 2nd Caliph) as reported by the learned Islamic leaders and Ulema, and reflected in both the Sunni and the Shia Fiqh, leaves no doubt that in the time of the Prophet himself "temporary marriage" was both permitted and frequent; but Omar, for reasons which are not clear, towards the close of his Caliphate prohibited it in the notorious phrase: "There were two dispensations which were both legal and frequently practiced during the time of the Prophet of God (on Whom be blessing), both of which I cancel, annul, prohibit and will punish; and they are (1) the dispensation permitting enjoyments prohibited to wearers of Ehram (Hajji's white garments) during the interval between 'umra' ('little pilgrimage') and the full Hajj: (2) the dispensation allowing 'temporary marriage' in particular circumstances."

Sunni Fiqh gives more information. But it is clear enough that in this proclamation Omar was acting merely on a personal viewpoint, which was far from carrying with it the assent of other companions of the Prophet, who both held that temporary marriage is a true Islamic institution, and also practiced it themselves in many instances.

Division is the hallmark of our age. Our magazines, newspapers, films and television are filled with meretricious pictures: our radio with salacious stuff: our hoardings with posters of erotic enticement, while our –women dress seductively and go around half-naked. The whole ambience entices youth off the path of virtue. Those who wish to be chaste are in grave danger all the time. People of poor background, and little knowledge of Islamic law, criticize the law of "temporary marriage" in foolish and illogical ignorance and prejudice; and this lays a further obstacle before the feet of our young people.

What then should we do? We can hardly expect even the best to master a total control of themselves and stem this powerful flood, so stimulating to sexual instincts, which, in the critical age of youth, are so close to the surface and so impatient of outward control. Even if we imagined that the ideal is the real, and that every one of our youth is endowed with what amounts to a supernatural self-control, will this not of itself annul the purpose of the creation of this instinct within humankind, prevent the continuance of the race, prevent the use of that vital sperm, prevent the spirit and teachings of Islam being truly practiced, in accordance with the law proclaimed in Sura XXII: Hajj — "Pilgrimage" (verse 78):

"Strive in God's cause as ye should ; for He has chosen you, and has in His religion not laid a difficult or insupportable task upon you"?

Should we now return to the low morals of our pre-Islamic past, and to that dirty habit of prostitution, with all the social ills and personal misfortunes with which it has filled the Western world? Shall we leave humanity to fall into that confusion of passions which is the law of the jungle and the behavior of brute beasts?

It is written in Sura II: Baqara — "The Heifer" (verse 61):

"Remember, O Israelis, that ye said: 'O Moses! We cannot keep on with only one kind of food; so pray thy Lord to give us vegetables!' And he replied: 'Will ye exchange the better for the worse? Go down to Egypt and there find what you want!' They were covered with humiliation and misery, for they had drawn upon themselves the wrath of God."

We should merit Moses' rebuke if we, who have been shown that is good, preferred to return to fleshpots of our own past and the West's present. Shall we barter a heritage of glory for a mess of pottage?

It is to prevent precisely this disaster that the law of "temporary marriage" was introduced. What better way could there be to rescue millions of women, who are divorced or unmarried or widowed, from the pressure to keep alive in wrongful ways and to prostitute their sex to meet the cost of living? Some might be able to get a job and so a livelihood.

But can that satisfy a woman's inmost feelings and spiritual needs? Can it satisfy the emptiness left in her soul by the loss of a husband's love and nearness? And what of her innate emotions and her instinct of motherhood? Are not all these temptations to lead her astray unless proper provision is made?

Men and women have taken up temporary marriages in the West without legal, social or religious sanctions— and their society has been cast into chaos. The West's thinkers are feeling after an institution like Muslim "temporary marriage" to end this chaos.

Thus Bertrand Russell writes: "Modern social and financial difficulties put obstacles in the way of youthful marriages, contrary to our liking. A –century or two ago the student completed his studies between the ages of 17 and 20; and, when the pressures of instinct and the age of puberty made him marriageable,

he was able to enter that state. Very few remained unmarried until they were 30 or 40. But today students only enter on their serious studies after the age of 20 and proceed to their specialization in industry or science.

Even after they have got their degree and left college, they have to spend quite a period securing their means of livelihood; so that they may be 35 before they can afford to get married and found a family. The long gap between adulthood and marriage causes emotional and instinctive upheavals in the sexual life, and drives the victims to find relief where they had better not.

Would it not be better for the sake of the proper order of human society that we should end this touchy problem by finding some proper outlet for the sexual instinct and the marital urge to replace or to fill in that lengthy gap, and so safeguard public health, posterity, morality, the principles of communication between men and women? Some sort of temporary marriage for our girls and boys would be a solution and prepare them for a permanent marriage later when they can afford it, saving them from the corruptions of illicit sex and the spiritual pangs of conscience which follow that type of wrongdoing as well as from the venereal diseases which only too often result."

Wilhelm van Loom "Matrimonial Health as seen by Islam" (p. 175) wrote: "Psychology has confirmed that when men pass early marriageable age without getting wed, tendencies to homosexuality or other forms of sexual satisfaction beset them. Statistics show that some 65% of men who have wives are unfaithful to them. To lessen their burdens the government ought to introduce legislation making temporary marriage by consent of both parties legal, with definite regulations and a proper form for them to sign and register."

Multiple Marriages

Laws for the ordering of society are truly progressive and profitable when they fit human nature and the Creator's laws, and take into account the widest possible conspectus of human needs in each particular society. Unless they fulfill these conditions they cannot be durable; nor can the society they set out to regulate. Islam has taken these points into consideration, and made reasonable and stable regulations, not for any particular region of the world, but for all humanity in all periods in every –clime. And so these laws will subsist and be beneficial for man so long as he continues to exist on the face of the earth.

Christians calumniate Islam as polygamous. The churches are hard put to it to maintain their footing in this lubricious age, and use contumely against Islam to bolster up their own position, exploiting the general ignorance of the truth of Islamic law and the regulations about the number of wives. In the West they go in for multiple marriages and change partners by their own caprice without any attention to legal conditions. But if they grasped the facts about Islam's law of marriage and then practiced that law, they could save themselves a world of troubles.

Before the rise of Islam the tribes went in for unlimited polygamy. Indeed it was a status symbol to have

many wives—the more wives, the greater the man. The prophets of God in the early ages, and the sacred scriptures of their different religions, reveal the same situation in mankind's early centuries. In China the Li-Ki law gave every man the right to have up to 130 wives. In Israel one man could have several hundred.

Charlemagne had 400 and Ardeshir Babekan had about the same. Nor did the Gospel, following the Torah, abrogate or condemn this practice or utter a decree to ban it; so that up until the second half of the 8th century AD and the time of Charlemagne polygamy was –customary in Europe and not condemned by the Church. At that date, or soon after, the Church promulgated a decree throughout Christendom which compelled men with many wives to divorce them all save one. They may have obeyed; but they were driven to fornication and adultery and prostitution in consequence.

In the days of ignorance the Arabs also practiced polygamy, and very unpleasantly. It was possible for a man to take as many women as he wanted into his harem; and these unfortunates had no rights at all of any kind, financial or otherwise. A woman's value sank to pitiable depths. All her legal and human rights were violated.

Islam changed all that. The number of wives was limited by law to a maximum of four. The social needs of the day made it essential that men should be prepared to take on more than one wife, if they could afford it, since in a nomad desert society it was next to impossible for a woman to make her own way through life unaccompanied by a man to stand between her and the worst buffets of those difficult days.

Even this beneficent provision was hedged in by Islam with a number of conditions, and in particular the basic demand that a man who took more than one wife must be quite sure he would treat them all equally, and not favor one above another in the dispensation of his own attentions or in his care for their needs.

Note that the law permitting four wives was not a command that a man must have more than one. On the contrary, if he did confine himself to one wife he committed no crime. The number four was a maximum limit. It was frequently charity and compassion for the widows of his comrades slain in battle that compelled a man to offer the shelter of his home to such a bereaved woman. Such was the case with several of the Prophet's wives. Such compassion saved the women from a fate that was worse than death.

If the numbers of nubile men and women were equal, there would be no need for a man to take on more than one. But men are always fewer in number in the world's population than women. For this there are numerous causes. First, men are more prone to illness than women. –Second, it is the men who are killed in war. Third, work in heavy industry or in the mines often causes fatal injuries. And fourth, more girl–babies survive infancy.

Thus, in France statistics show that for every 100 girls 105 boys are born; and yet, out of France's population of 40 million there –are 1,765,000 more women than men. This is because 5% of the boys die

during the first year of their life. Another 5% have died before they are 25. Male mortality continues until the final figure cited above is that of the total living population at any one moment.

Furthermore, women live longer than men, so that for every 100 widowers in France there are 150 widows.

In America there are 20 million girls without husbands. Because of this deprivation many fall into unfortunate habits. Professor Peter Mudawar, zoologist at London University, confirms this in his writings.

It is in the nature of woman to desire a home, a husband and children. This need can only be met properly in a society which supports sound family life. The same need is germane to the nature of man, though he is also made to undertake a number of different tasks besides the basic one of fathering a family. It is downright unhealthy for a woman to have to live alone. Because of her nature a spinster always lives looking out for the man who will be her partner.

The spinster is always living in the waiting-room of life. She begins to cease to feed herself properly. Her natural care enjoys preparing food to be shared with others, while it seems pointless to her to go to all that trouble for herself alone. The spinster wakes to a purposeless day with nothing to live for and goes to bed with a sense of emptiness and of nothing done. So the psychologists tell us.

Islam is the only system which has deliberately set out to plan a satisfactory life for all these supernumerary women, in allowing them to become wives of men who have a wife already, and so save themselves from a life of loneliness and multifarious deprivation. It must also be remembered that men preserve their power of begetting children pretty well to the end of their days, while a woman's physique is only capable of bearing children for some 35 years in the middle period of her life. Unless she can find a husband for that period, she is bound to live in the misery of failing to fulfill a function for which she was made and for which she longs.

Sometimes an unfortunate wife finds that she is sterile. Because she and her husband love each other they do not wish to part. Yet both desire children. Is the man to live in the burning hell of frustrated desire for the whole of the rest of his life? Why should he not give the joy of being a mother to a second wife? In practice the first wife, who is herself sterile, frequently expresses her desire that he should do that very thing.

Our national daily "Ettela'at" on the 20th of the month of Bahman, AHS 1348 (February 9th 1970) carried an interesting story from Rasht under the headline: "A man's three wives accompany him to the registrar to witness his fourth wedding".

The gentleman explained to the registrar that his three wives had all proved barren, but all helped on the farm and were a happy company, so he did not wish to divorce them; and it was with their full accord that he now wished to marry a young woman who had taken his fancy in order that he might have

children. The young bride, for her part, said: "My husband-to-be is one of the good men of our village, where there are 1,000 women and 400 men, half of whom are children below the age of 16: that is one fifth of a man per woman. So you can see why I am very glad to become a fourth wife."

A law which deprives a man of the right to fulfill his innate desire to be a father violates his human rights; and a law which forces women to live in solitary childlessness violates their human rights and undermines society's institutions. How can these two injustices be cured save by the legalisation of a limited polygamy? Realism; truth; social, vital, and spiritual needs demand such a measure.

If a wife falls victim to a chronic disease, what is a charitable husband to do? He does not wish to cast her off in her incurable illness. Islam makes his way plain before him. If a husband falls to an incurable and chronic disease which makes intercourse with him dangerous for the wife lest she also be infected, she may go to the shari'a court where the Islamic judge will order her husband to grant her a divorce, and use the powers which the law gives him to enforce his decision even on reluctant husbands. But many women themselves refuse to take this way, saying that they have shared their husband's home in joy and sorrow, and their conscience will not allow them to desert in his illness a husband with whom they have enjoyed the days of his health and wellbeing. A painful disease needs a nurse and care and kindness, so that humanity and good sense both outline the path to be followed.

Financial poverty hinders marriage and family-founding. This too prevents a number of nubile women from finding husbands. Why should those who can afford it not relieve them both of poverty and spinsterhood in an ordered union? Islam's law has conferred this blessing on millions of women.

In World War II millions of men died leaving women husbandless. These husbandless women in Germany formed an association which asked the German government to enable a man to have more than one wife. Unfortunately church opposition prevented the desired result (v. "Ettela'at" for AHS 29/8/1340 — AD 20/11/1961).

More recently "Ettela'at" (AHS 3/3/1349 — AD 24/6/1970) carried an article asking "if the fear of spinsterhood haunted 20-year-old girls, what must the feelings of the 30- and 40-year-old spinsters be?" Eve still looks for her Adam. For Eve, employment, which in Federal Germany is easy for all women, does not replace the desire for marriage. Women of 20 — find it hard to discover a husband: women of 30 and 40 almost impossible: women of 50 despair. Yet in Germany only 50% of 30-year-old women and 20% of 40-year-old women are married.

Six million women of 40 and over in Federal Germany are and will always be husbandless. There are no unmarried men in this age-range; and the total number of unmarried men in Germany is not above 350,000; so, even if they all got married, not more than one in twenty of the unmarried women has a hope even of the most unsuitable of husbands. Some emigrate to find husbands. Nothing but a law allowing limited polygamy like that of Islam could solve the problem of Germany's post-war women.

Why does not the West, which vaunts its respect and compassion for women, and bows to the Women's

Liberation movement, not also yield to their desire for family life and for the fulfillment of their primary function, the bearing and bringing up of children? We must leave the answers to the consciences of our readers. The fact that so many women, in lands where it is lawful, opt to marry men who already have a wife proves that they think such a shared life better than spinsterhood. If a man is prepared to undertake the added burdens of the responsibility for a more numerous family, which will be for the benefit of so many, why should the state prevent him from doing so?

A highly skilled woman lawyer, who took her doctorate in matrimonial law, writes: "To be part of a family where there is more than one wife brings no disadvantages to the first, the second, the third or the fourth. The men, it is true, have to undertake heavier loads of responsibility, and are bound by law, by morality, by statute and by common usage to provide a fitting form of living for each wife with all due respect to her dignity and position, insure her against illness, see to her medical care and cure, and defend her rights and interests to the last. Should he fall short of these duties, both canon and common law can dictate penalties to compel him to their performance: while before God and man he is held to his obligations. The women's silence, and the absence of feminine objections to multiple wedlock bear its rightness out.

"Some women parrot objections invented by men, it is true. Men do not take naturally to permanent unions and the responsibilities they entail. The worst of them put ideas into the heads of silly women who do not grasp that their comments tend to undermine marriage and family-life as such, and instead, to encourage illicit sex for the gratification of male sexuality.

A woman does not suffer sexually from her husband having two wives: and spiritually and mentally she is at rest in peace of mind. It is only men who have played on some women's suggestibility to pretend otherwise. Men are promiscuous. But from the dawn of history families with several women and one man have lived happily under the feminine influence. Islam's shari'a (religious law) brought order into these relations and laid down beneficent regulations for their welfare. The institution of multiple wedlock proves its worth from its ancient tradition and practical application."

Western permissiveness frustrates its own ends, and denies nature. Islam regards justice as the guarantor of human welfare and happiness, both for the individual and for society. It therefore lays down just regulations on which multiple marriage can be founded, and right be observed. Islam's Fiqh establishes independence, equality and full recognition for the rights of women in marriage. It is in this assurance that so many women voluntarily enter on the marriage state with a married man. The fact that they do so shows that the condition fits the feminine nature. Those few women who object, do so on the grounds that their husband's position does not permit him to do justice to the rights of more than one woman. Such conflicts as arise spring from a man's failure to do justice to his wives.

It is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" (verse 3):

"If you fear that you will not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice,

two or three or four. But if you fear you will not be able to deal justly with that number then take only one."

This verse was revealed after the battle of Uhud which left the Muslim community with many widows and orphans, and some captives of war. In order that the orphans and widows might be given the best protection and perfect justice, the Muslim men were told to marry the number they could deal with justly, up to the maximum of four. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of humanity and equality. The precise occasion is past, but the principles remain.

The fact that the behavior of some men is harsh and wrongful and causes the breakdown of family life is the exception that proves the wisdom and value of the rule. Islam's shari'a lays down a moral code of the duties of husbands to wives, and decrees that the family must be the source of love, kindness and sincerity. Without this it can be hell. Muslims who contravene it must be recalled to Islam's lofty laws, to Islam's profound principles, to Islam's fascinating philosophy. Then in the light of its true face, corruption and wrongdoing will vanish and the sound society come to view.

The laws governing a man's just treatment and equal care for each of his wives lay down:

1. That he must provide enough for each wife to have the proper food;
2. That he must pay the same marital attentions to each;
3. That he must fulfill all the heavy responsibilities he has undertaken for each wife and her children.

Human nature being what it is, a man may well feel more drawn to one of his wives than to another. The three provisions above are meant to ensure that such personal preference does not injure the rights of any wife to her livelihood, her home and her conjugal rights, or to any need of body, mind or spirit—all things which are within a man's reach quite apart from his predilections.

By ensuring these rights to women, Islam provides the basis on which heartfelt affection and loving-kindness can flourish, while the necessities like food, clothing, a house and the other material needs are properly cared for. It is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "The Women" (verse 129):

"It is not given to man to be able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire to be so. But you must not turn away so as to leave a woman hanging in the air (meaning if you have married her and she in your house you must treat her in absolute equality with your other wives, and not leave her as if she was an unmarried woman). If you come to a friendly understanding and practice self-restraint (you will find that) God is oft forgiving and most merciful."

Thus a man may not neglect one wife, or show her disfavor, or treat her as a creature that is hanging, like a garment, on the wall of his house, or deprive her of her conjugal rights.

In the days of the Apostle of God, on whom be peace, the enactment of this commandment made men who had up to four wives, should they prove unable to do due justice to each, reduce their household to

one wife: while ensuring that even those who could do justice to many married only a maximum of four. Thus from the very beginning Islam brought order into the multiple marriage which the society of the day made necessary, outlawing neglect of a woman's rights, depriving the men of the unlimited freedom and absolute authority which they had in earlier days, and totally banishing the tyranny and oppression of women which pre-Islamic Arabs had exercised.

We find exemplary histories of Muslims who religiously performed the duties laid down for married men by Islam. In the "Majmu'-ul-Bayan" (Vol. 3, p. 121), we read that one of the companions of the Prophet named Mu'az bin Jabal had two wives who both died of the same illness during the plague at about the same moment. Mu'az was so desirous to maintain true Islamic equality even after their death that he didn't want to bury one before the other, in case it seemed to show an irreligious preference, so he cast lots which should be the first to receive the funeral rites.

Some Westerners have a just and realistic attitude towards marriage as a social institution. Thus Arthur Schopenhauer in his book "Some Words about Women", writes: "In nations in which multiple marriage is legal, it is made possible for practically all women to have a husband, children and a true family life which meets their spiritual needs and satisfies their feminine instincts.

Unfortunately church laws in Europe have not allowed multiple marriage and left many women to a lonely life of spinsterhood. Some died unsatisfied; some were driven by their desires, or by the need to earn their livelihood, into immorality; some perished with qualms of conscience and broken hearts. Nor can I understand, after giving much thought to the matter, why a man, whose wife falls ill of a chronic and incurable disease or proves barren or unable to bear a living child, should not take a second wife alongside the first.

This is a question the Church should answer. Unfortunately it cannot. Good laws are those which ensure a happy life when obeyed, not those which deprive people of happiness or bind them hand and foot in trammels of unnecessary bondage or which incite people to despise them and so to rush to the other extreme of corruption, prostitution or other kinds of vice."

Mrs. Annie Besant, the theosophist, wrote: "The West claims to reject multiple marriage. But Western men have found ways round the official law, and take many women without the responsibilities of proper marriage, so that they are able to throw off their unwanted mistress when they have had their will with her, leaving her no alternative but to take to the streets. He never meant to take any responsibility for her future.

The fate of such a woman is a hundred times worse than that of one who enters a multiple marriage, who although she shares her husband with another woman, at least enjoys a husband's care and becomes a mother of a family in a family. When I see the thousands of women on our streets at night I am convinced that the West must learn from Islam and cease to be so hypocritically shocked by its dispositions concerning multiple marriage; for Islam makes it possible for a woman to have a husband

and children in her bosom legally, with all due respect, instead of enduring the shame of walking the streets trying to sell her body, probably bearing an illegitimate child in circumstances in which the law will do nothing for her, and she is simply the victim of the passions of men."

Dr. Gustave Le Bon writes: "Nothing has been more criticized in Europe than Eastern customs of multiple marriage. No view held in Europe has shown the same amount of ignorance and error as this criticism. Surely the legal multiple marriage of the East is better than the hypocritical secretive multiple marriage of the West. The clandestine nature of the illicit relationship is degrading to both parties. The legalisation of multiple marriage is far more seemly in every respect."

Islam and Racism

The "Unity" is the basis of Islamic theology: and therefore "Unity" is the ground of its philosophy of society. All humanity is one; a great unit. Its individuals are members of one society incorporate, which is so comprehensive that it includes all differences within its oneness. The many find within the one that brotherhood, affection, friendliness and human blood-relationship which is of the essence.

Hence distinctions do not become differences -- not color, nor culture, nor class, nor custom, nor conversational idiom. Mutual respect as fellow-humans in pursuit of the common good is the rule throughout the world-wide society of Islam, without superiority or inferiority, since all mankind were created in one human soul to start with, from whom man and woman, black and white, poor and rich, civilized and savage, all evolve, sharing one common humanity. Truly "God made of one flesh all the nations upon earth if haply they may feel after Him and find Him."

So it is written (Qur'an: Sura IV, Nisa'a ---- "The Women" 1st verse):

"Reverence God Who created you all from one person", leaving no room for nationalistic divisions. Differences in skin and tongue are merely tokens of the Creator's power. They call on men to study the Holy Will and Might of Him Who from one elemental root created so many variations of color, countenance and conversation"

As it is written (Qur'an: Sura XXX "Rome" verse 21):

"Signs of His Power are His creation of heaven and of earth, and the varieties of tongues and skins; in all of which are sermons for the wise."

It is further written (Qur'an: Sura II, Baciara -- "The Heifer" verse 213):

"Mankind was one single nation. Then we sent messengers to them to give them glad tidings and warnings; and with them we sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed . . . and God by His grace guided believers to the common truth on points about which they differed; for God guides whom He will onto a path that is straight."

This verse reveals that in the beginning mankind was one single nation without differences or splits or conflicts but enjoying unity, cooperation and harmony.

The martyred Imam Ali left us the priceless legacy of the Nahj-ul-BalaghA, amongst which is his historic address to Malik Al-Ashtar in which he expresses this truth as follows: "Make thin heart a throne of mercy towards thy people. Show them perfect love and care. Never treat them as a ravening beast that tears and rends their properties and their persons. For they are in one of two groups. Either they are thy brothers in the Faith –or they are thy fellow–human beings of one flesh with thin own." This broad view embraces all races, all cultures, all –tongues.

Unity and union amongst individuals will subsist under the aegis of unity of thought and spirit, oneness of conviction and aim; nor can any unity obtain save under that orderliness. Should a society fall into division of thought and conviction, its bonds of affection will be loosened: and, when adversity arises, material needs will increase differences, conflicts and tensions. That is why the strongest tie of unity amongst nations is the religious bond.

It is in this bond of union that Islam has brought people and peoples together, freeing them from the trammels of division and difference, and calling them to establish the bases of accord and agreement in a society of brotherhood which is the natural state of man.

Islam treats mankind as one great family of brothers and sisters. In the human family the relationship of father and child is a stronger bond than that of brotherhood. But the qualities of respect and of difference of age deprive the father–child relationship of full equality. That is why it is brotherhood which Islam exalts as the expression of that perfect and heartfelt affection which should reign within the human family. It should reign on the surface and in the depths. Brotherhood is therefore the Qur'an's call.

The most sublime levels of love and the most sincere of friendships are those which arise between Muslims. They are called brothers because of their brotherhood, because of the existence of the fact of this most tender and beautiful of manifestations of equality; it is not the command to be brothers which called the fact into existence. The command was uttered, but the natural upwelling of the spirit engendered by that surrender (tasleem) to God (which Islam is) issues in brotherhood.

This brotherhood is deeper and higher than mere natural brotherliness, for it is the unity of a shared aim, the unity of shared convictions, the unity of joint beliefs, the unity of hearts.

It is written (Qur'an: Sura XLIX, Hujurat —"The Inner Apartments" verse 10):

"Believers are a single brotherhood. Make peace amongst your brothers and fear God that ye may receive mercy."

The Prophet decreed: "The members of the assembly of the believers are by love and affection one body, and any limb of that which is pained causes all the other limbs to suffer in sympathy. If any

individual Muslim falls into a painful situation all the other members of the community must run to his help and share in his sorrow." (Safeenatu-I-Bihar, Vol. I, p. 13.)

Islam, Freedom, and Justice

Since all power and authority belongs to God, men in any office which confers authority must exercise their delegated power as stewards and ministers of God to men. Thus tyrants, imperialists, slave drivers and exploiters of fellowmen are outlawed. Islam enhances each person's self-respect: it establishes that true and only equality open to man— the equality in surrender to God for His service amongst mankind. Such surrender enables each to find his place in the whole without faction, partisan rule or superiority. Each is his own master.

Islam champions and interprets human rights. It regulates every detail of personal and community life in equity. It is the trustee and guardian of freedom before the Lord. Its first and paramount thought is unity. It excludes no one—though some exclude themselves: it opposes no one— though some may oppose themselves to it: it makes no differences—though some may insist on being different. Muslim calls to Jew who calls to Mage who calls to Nazarene, saying: "Why stand apart? Let us join in our common creed that 'God is One'."

It is written: (Qur'an: Sura III, Al-i-Imran — "Imran's Family" verse 62):

"Say: O Peoples of the Heavenly Books! Resort to that word which is common to us and you, which is that we worship none save God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we exalt not from amongst ourselves any lord or patron other than God."

The peoples of today's world yearn for unity, justice and freedom. They long to be saved from exploitation and war. They wander lost, like –sheep gone astray. Let them turn to the sunshine of Islam's regulations of life and living. Under that common sun, all —black, white, red and yellow —are at one in justice, freedom and equality.

For Islam, true excellence lies, not in the intellectual or manual attainments of people of differing gifts; but in the moral attainments of a pure heart. These are equally open to all whatever their other gifts. As it is written (Qur'an: Sura XLIX, Hujurat — "The Inner Apartments" verse 13):

"O, Mankind: We created you from a male and a female; and made you into –tribes and nations that you may get to know each other : and verily, most honored before God is the most virtuous."

The Prophet (on Whom be Peace!) explicitly affirmed: "Arab is not more privileged than non-Arab, nor white than black. Spiritual excellence and true piety is the only distinction amongst humans recognized by God."

After the Prophet's victory at Mecca, a proud self-seeking group of Arabs claimed privilege for their

tongue and race. To them he said: Thanks be to God that by the sublime doctrines of Islam He has freed you from the times of ignorance, and stripped off pride, conceit and power-lust. Know now that in the Courts of God only two groups exist. –The group of the righteous who are precious in God's eyes: and the group of the sinful who hang their heads in shame."

A man said to the 8th Imam: "There exists no man on earth with an ancestry more noble than yours." To him the saint replied: "Their greatness and honor lay in their piety and zeal to do God's will." By these words the Imam rebuked the man who wished to flatter and aggrandize the Imam's pedigree; and turned his mind to thoughts of piety. Another said to the Imam: "By God! You're the best man alive." The Imam replied: "No oaths, man! There lives a man who is better whose piety is greater and obedience to God more complete. In God it is true that verse of the Qur'an has not yet been abrogated which says: 'Most honored before God is the most virtuous'."

God's service is perfect freedom. It is neither restrictive nor limiting. Restrictions diminish a man's capacities and happiness. But to serve God clothes the soul in the whole armor of God, protects when evil attacks, and foils all the fiery darts of the wicked.

True, serving God means obeying His laws. But this obedience is the free choice of love. And His laws are those absolute moral standards which formulate the essence of man's true nature, as his Creator means him to be at his best.

No man who has bowed his neck beneath the yoke of money-grubbing or power-seeking can ever enjoy a free life in a free society. The Imam Ali said: "Piety is the key to honesty and purity and to the acquirement of merit in store against judgment-day. It is freedom from the chains of every bondage; salvation from the blows of every adversity. Piety puts a man's aim within his reach, wards off evil, his soul's foe, and assists him to attain his heart's desires." (Nahjul-Balagha: 227.)

Remember that he gave this message in an epoch when violence, oppression, wrong, class wars and racial strife raged amongst men. Distinctions repugnant to reason, to virtue and to freedom were rife. The weak and the poor were bereft of every human right and social safeguard. With matchless moral courage the pioneer of Islam outlawed all those differences and conflicts, so illegitimate, so superstitious and so mistaken.

He replaced them with the command that equality and perfect equity should be observed for all individuals. He ordained that, under the auspices of total submission to the will of God, every sort of reasonable freedom should be put within the possession of men; in such a way that the underprivileged classes of society, which had never before had any sort of power to express their desires but had merely provoked the reaction of violence and oppression if they dared to protest against the will of the powerful ruling classes, should now, under the life-giving justice of Islamic laws, find the political and social power they lacked, and shoulder to shoulder move forward until they had their full and rightful share in the leadership of their nations.

Islam and Classes

Anyone who thinks that other nations have raised up the under-privileged classes in society in a way in the least like that which Islam has successfully followed in its fight against tyranny and oppression misses the point and shows that he has not the faintest perception of the inner truth of Islam, and its humane social justice. No other system has hitherto been able to bring such an ideology so effectively into practice.

Even the Communists, who call themselves foes of religion, acknowledge the amazing renaissance brought by the powerful and fundamental doctrines of Islam. The monthly "Mardum", organ of Iran's "Tudeh" (Marxist) party, (No. 2, Year 3), wrote: "The appearance of Islam at the beginning of the 7th century AD is a turning-point of history. It changed the face of community living. Its victorious progress, in the course of less than a century, from the Arab -homeland as far as the Loire in the West and as Sind and the Amu Darya in the East, forms a fascinating page.

The Jezirat-ul-Arab provided the center for the spread of the religious ideologies of Judaism and Christianity. Yet the Arabs and Bedouin were still idolaters. Mecca was a commercial center run by the moneymakers, turning the nomad tribal way of life into feudalism: and it was here that Arab nationalism first began to be felt and to break out. Its people were money-grubbers and small farmers owning slaves.

To this world Islam came as a revelation and as a democratic revolution against the money lending oligarchy, who drove the first Muslims out of Mecca. Islam possesses the idiosyncrasies of all moralistic religions, yet it has kept its feet firmly on the ground of this material world we live in.

It eschewed mockery and concentrated its attention on the equality of human beings regardless of race and tribe, -the equal rights of women with men, the manumission of slaves, the care of the indigent; and provided so simple a set of principles that it is distinguished from all other religions. It was these qualities that enabled it to arouse a social renaissance of life-giving inspiration. It brought a heavy pressure to bear on the minds of the bloodthirsty arrogant ruling class: offered villagers and poor town-dwellers a road of salvation in this world, expelled the troops of Roman and Persian emperors and installed its own form of rule from the Himalayas to the Pyrenees."

Illustrations of Islamic Practice

When we weigh the conduct of the pioneers of Islam against the behavior and system of the socialist countries and of those of the "free" world, we see a difference as great as chalk from cheese. Islam is against all class distinction and renounces the conceptions of "boss" and "underling".

A report was brought to the Imam Ali that a banquet had been held in Basra in honor of the governor, Ali's representative, Uthman bin Hunaif. He was wrathful that his governor should allow himself to be

drawn into a special relationship with Basra's "nobility", and be made the mark of particular distinctions by the powerful class. He therefore sent a stern letter to Uthman rebuking him, which letter is contained in the Nahj-ul-Balagha.

After World War II all governments have had to occupy themselves with the clamour for freedom and equality. They produced the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" to enshrine those ideas. Practice has been slower than precept. Developed countries find it hard to admit that differences of color and race are not criteria for excellence but that only character counts. Islam has recognized this fact from the start. The Prophet's first Mu'azzen was an Ethiopian: and he gave his girl-cousin in marriage to Zaid bin Harethé, who was a slave.

One day the Prophet said to Juwaiber, a poor Negro of great piety: "How good it would be if you could take a wife to share your life with you and be a help in this world and the next!"

Juwaiber replied: "May my mother and father be your sacrifice! What woman would be ready to become my wife? I have no health or wealth, no books or looks."

The Prophet replied: "Our God annulled any rights of one man to be owner of another as they were in the days of ignorance; and gave nobility to those who had been the underprivileged and downtrodden before the coming of Islam. Those who in the dark days of the night of ignorance were despised are shown in Islam to be precious to Him. Pride of place, face, race and grace ruled in the days of ignorance. Islam changed all that, and made everyone, white or black, Qureish, Arab or non-Arab, equal, as children of Adam, the man whom God made from dust. In God's thoughts, most beloved is the most obedient and chaste. Juwaiber, we know no person superior to you, save anyone, if such there be, whose chastity and obedience excel yours. Go at once to Ziyad bin Lubeid, most noble of the Bani Biyande, and say: 'God's Apostle sent me to you to ask your daughter's hand in marriage'."

Juwaiber went, and found Ziyad sitting in his home with a group of his fellow-tribesmen. He asked for an interview saying: "I am come from the Prophet to confirm a principle, bearing a message. Should I pronounce it in private or in public?"

Ziyad replied: "Why not right here? A message from the Prophet is an honor."

"Very well", said Juwaiber, "His Eminence the Prophet sent me to bid you wed your daughter to me."

Ziyad responded: "We Ansaris (i.e. the Prophet's helpers in his first days) only wed our daughters to our peers. Go! carry my excuses to His Blessedness."

While Juwaiber was returning, Ziyad repented, and sent a man who caught up with Juwaiber and brought him back. Ziyad said with the greatest courtesy: "Please be seated and wait here until I return." He then went off to see the Prophet, to whom he said: "May my father and mother be thy sacrifice! Juwaiber came from thee with a message to me to which I wished to bring the reply in person. It is this. We

Ansaris only wed our daughters to our peers."

Islam's pioneer replied: "O Zyad! Juwaiber is a man of faith and is thus the peer of a woman of faith; for a Muslim man is the peer of a Muslim woman. Therefore wed thy daughter to him, and think it no disgrace to have him as thy son-in-law."

Zyad went home and told his daughter what had befallen. She said: "Dear papa! what has seemed good to the Prophet, and his command that you make Juwaiber your son-in-law, is beyond price!" Zyad left his daughter's room, took Juwaiber's hand and led him to stand in the midst of the men of the tribe where he acknowledged him as his son-in-law and gave him his daughter in marriage. He himself provided his daughter's dowry and trousseau, and had a house made for them with all the furnishings and equipments required. It was thus that Zyad's daughter became the mother of one of the greatest of the Qureish tribe, and the black-skinned Juwaiber father of the same, a man whose hands in this world were empty but who was rich towards God and who has earned eternal fame for the beauty of his soul.

It is told that once upon a time three Muslims of three different racial stocks, to wit Salman the Irani, Saheeb the Byzantine and Balal the Ethiopian, were sitting together when an Arab called Qais joined them. This Arab, observing the precious sight of three Muslims of pure hearts and humble souls, said: "Aus and Khazraj were Arabs who stood by the Prophet in service and sacrifice. What have these three aliens to say? Who asked them to be amongst the Prophet's aides?"

Qais' words reached the Prophet's ears. He rose and called his people to assemble in the mosque where he said to them in wrath: "God is one. Adam, common father of all, one. Your faith, one. Then Arabism, however proud you may be of it, comes neither from your father nor your mother—merely your tongue." The Prophet strove to crush racialism and promulgated a decree making equality the law and condemning any contrary reaction.

One day a Muslim whose father was a Negro was received by the Prophet. One Abu-Zar Ghaffari, who was nourishing a long-standing grudge against him, said to him in the Prophet's presence: "O son of a nigger!" Immediately the Prophet, hearing this took him to task, saying: "Why is his mother's black skin a reason for despising him?" Abu-Zar fell on his knees, kissed the Prophet's feet and hands, repented in all humility and poured dust over his head until he received the Prophet's absolution.

The institution of the Hajj, or annual pilgrimage to Mecca, incumbent on all Muslims everywhere at least once in a lifetime, has also been a profound influence for unification and equality above color and class. In the words of the Lebanese professor Philip Hitti in his book on "The History of the Arabs": "At the Ka'aba, to which the Lord of all men calls them to assembly, Ethiopian, Berber, Chinese, Irani, Indian, Syrian, and Arab, rich and poor, high and low, give each other the hand of brotherhood and together pronounce the double creed that, 'there is no God but God: Muhammad is His Prophet.' Thus for Islam the only distinction that exists between people is that between belief and unbelief. And the Hajj has done the greatest service in making equality and brotherhood the rule of life for millions in every clime."

It is sad to have to admit that slogans of class or race-ideologies have in recent years penetrated certain Islamic states, with the tragic result of producing similar racial and class divisions to those in less privileged lands. Our task is to restore the sound ideology of Islam and make it worldwide within one generation.

Chapter 11 Equality Before the Law

The equality which obtains in Islamic law courts should be taken as a world model. Haroun-al-Rasheed, the Abbasid Caliph, had to testify on oath in a court before a judge, and his servant Fazl bin Rabee' witnessed in his favor. The judge refused to accept Fazl's testimony. The Caliph demanded to know why. The judge replied: "Fazl himself says he is your servant. If he is telling the truth, the Islamic court does not accept a servant's testimony to the advantage of his master. If he was lying, his testimony is void on that account."

The next Abbasid Caliph, Mansour, hired numbers of camels to make the Hajj. On his return he made a series of excuses as pretexts for not repaying the hire. The camel drivers took the Caliph into the courts. The judge summoned him and sat him alongside the camel drivers. When he had heard the evidence he judged against the Caliph, who was compelled to pay the camel drivers what he owed them before he was allowed to leave the court.

This immediate verdict and execution of sentence is recognized by Western jurists as one of the greatest advantages of Islamic law courts. It saves a great deal of time and expense, for plaintiff, defendant and judge alike. Dr. Gustave Le Bon relates his own personal observation from a court he attended in Marrakesh in Morocco. Plaintiff and defendant with their lawyers and papers entered the court. The judge entered. All rose. Straightaway each side presented its case. The judge summed up. The verdict was given. Sentence was pronounced and immediately executed, to the great benefit of all concerned. "If only Western courts with their long delays would learn this art of dispensing justice fairly, swiftly and economically!" he comments.

When litigants are all secure in the knowledge that the laws by which their case will be judged are based on eternal principles revealed by God Himself, and that therefore the powerful cannot swing judgment in their own favor; and when the judge has principles of judgment to go on which enable him with a detached impartiality to seek his guidance from the law of God in total freedom from any emotional bias; the law is observed and respected, injustices are cut out, certainty and security reign in society and bring trust and confidence in their train.

Islam does not aim to level men down, but to level them up to an equality on the highest level, where true affection and the real love of one's fellowmen call the tune— a unity of heart based on a unity of faith in the one God, Who is Maker of all and Judge of all, and Who makes no distinctions save those of obedience between one of His creatures and another. This is made plain by the Qur'anic verse 10 from the Sura Hujurat already quoted where it is written:

"We made you into nations and tribes that you might learn to know each other."

It is the practice of this creed which has produced that marvelous hospitality which so many –Western travellers have noticed among Muslims and of which they bewail the absence in the materialistic civilization which has grown up in the West. One traveller commented: "I found in Iran that if I walked into a village and knocked on any door, and introduced myself as a stranger within their gates to whoever addressed me through the lattice, the door was at once opened and I was welcomed in as one of the family.

They sat me down to share whatever meal they were having, however frugal, gave me a palliasse and lehaf for a comfortable sleep through the night, and sent me on my way rejoicing after a breakfast of sweet tea, fresh-made bread and sour milk (mast) next morning."

The Jihad and the Holy War

Islam's aim, in its wars, battles and national uprisings against polytheism and materialism, has not been conquest, expansionism, imperialism or the seizure of others' financial resources. The early impact of Islam on Mecca caused loss to those vested interests which profited from the service of the ancient idols in the Ka'aba and the pilgrims who flocked to those shrines from all the Arab world. These vested interests therefore revolted against the spread of the new pure faith. The Qureish cut off relations with the Prophet and his adherents; and forced them to flee into the mountains, where they hid starving, until they finally found refuge in friendly Yathrib, 200 miles north.

Even here polytheists mounted further attacks. The necessity to defend the believers and ensure the survival of the faith forced the Prophet to elaborate and elucidate the concept of a "just war". His raids from Yathrib (which from his adoption of it and its adoption of him won the glorious name of "Madinat-an-Nabi" meaning "the City of the Prophet") were made to prevent the Meccans mobilising large supplies of ammunition and huge forces to attack and wipe out his faithful few.

This concept of "a just war" led to that of "the Jihad" or "Holy War", and the first revelations on this subject to the Prophet are enshrined in the Qur'anic texts (1) Sura XXII : Hajj — "Pilgrimage" (verses 39 and 40):

"Those upon whom war is made by unbelievers are granted permission to fight because they are being oppressed (Verily God is most powerful to aid them) and have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right for the sole 'crime' of saying 'Our Lord is God'."

And (2) Sura II: Baqara — "The Heifer" (verse 190):

"Fight in the cause of God against those who attack you. But be careful to maintain the limit, since God does not love transgressors."

By "limit" is meant that the force used must be limited to that which is the minimum adequate to restrain the evildoers who attack. The force used must never exceed that limit in order to exact revenge or impose an imperialistic conquest.

As a world faith for everyone everywhere, Islam knows no geography; but must extend to every last soul in every last region of the world, and carry them its word of truth. History shows that no established order was ever replaced by a new superior order without some warfare. Examples are the revolutions in France, India, America, Russia, China. Since Islam sets out to change men's living and thinking, and to end racialism and exploitation, it is bound to run into opposition from people with vested interests in corruption.

Indeed, the more successful it is in winning adherents by word of mouth and of pen, the fiercer is the reaction of those who find themselves losing their hold on people they have previously victimised. In the end the victory of arms confirms the earlier victory already registered by propaganda appealing to men's reason and conscience.

Addicts of uncleanness, dishonesty and power work up a violent resistance in the endeavor to stifle the new faith and the sound society it is producing, which is putting them out of business. Since they refuse to attend to sense they must attend to the sword. As the Prophet expressed it, according to "The Book of the Jihad and its Methods": "Goodness and blessing flourish where law wields the sanctions of force to prevent ill doing. For, alas, there are people who will not submit to what is right unless they feel that sanctions threaten penalties for transgression."

When freedom of thought and of choice of the best way of life is taken from men, force, either of police or of army, must be called in. It was to reduce oppressors and tyrants to subjection, in order that the oppressed might be freed to listen to the challenge of Islam, that the first Muslim battles took place. The masses must be given freedom to make their own choice; for without that the truth cannot come to control societies, nations and the world. As it is written in Sura IV: Nisa'a — "Women" (verse 75):

"Why should you not take up the Jihad in God's cause, and -for the cause of the weak in Mecca, your own men, women and children, who cry out: 'Our Lord! rescue us from this town of oppressors; and raise up for us a protector, coming from Thee to aid us'?"

Islam does not war against people. It wars against oppression, tyranny and wrong. These false ideas it seeks to root out, and to replace them by the superior ideas of purity and faith. It seeks not to win over enemies, but to win enemies over to its—that is God's—side, in the eternal battle between good and evil.

For humanity faces the choice between self-annihilation through evil on the one hand or the kingdom of God on earth through obedience on the other. There is no third way. To serve or to seek anything other than God and His will is idolatry. The worship of possessions, self, or power is as much idolatry as sacrificing to stock and stone. It is a negation of man's true nature and destiny.

Therefore, before embarking on hostilities, Islam always sends a herald to the enemy bearing the invitation to accept Islam and make peace on the spot. Thus, when the Muslim armies entered Iran, the Muslim Commander-in-Chief sent a messenger to the Iranian General Rustam Farukhzaad inviting him to a conference at which the Muslims explained to the Iranians why they were there, saying: "We have come to free your people from slavery to false deities and vain superstition and to lead them to the freedom of worship of the One God. In His Apostle's Name we invite you, as you will face the dreadful day of judgment, to be saved and replace your dark and inane customs with the justice and equity of the true Faith."

These conferences lasted three days. All the Muslim spokesmen promised that the Iranians should be left to run their own country in peace if they accepted Islam as they were being invited to do.

It is related, in the book above quoted on the Jihad, Volume 2, page 421, that the Prophet said to Ali: "Never be the aggressor who starts a war. First invite your enemy to turn to the true God. If God leads one person through you to enter the life of faith, that will be of greater benefit for you than if you owned all that the sun shines upon."

Islam's aim is that the knowledge of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and His kingdom extirpate violence and lust and degradation and oppression and injustice; and to this end Muslims are prepared to give their lives in peace or, if necessary, in war. As it is written in the first verse of Sura XXXVII : Saffat — "Those ranged in ranks":

"By those who range themselves in ranks and so are strong against evil and in proclaiming God's message 'verily, verily your God is One'."

Similarly, in Sura VIII: Anfal — "The spoils of war" (part of verses 47 and 67) the Prophet sternly rebuked some of his fellow-fighters who followed the dark customs of the age of ignorance after a victory saying to them:

"Be not like those who started from their homes insolently and to be seen of men. Your lusts are for the goods and delights of this world while the Lord desires for you an eternity of joy."

In his book entitled "War and Peace in Islam", Dr. Majid Khadouri writes on page 214: "Islam changed the old Arab conception of the 'Darul-Harb' or House of War into that of the 'Dar-ul-Islam' or House of Islam, which truly sought to minister Islam to the people of the world. its first success was in uniting the nations which accepted it within themselves, so that civil wars ceased. It went on to found a family of – Islamic nations at peace with each other. It aims to bring that blessing to the whole world. Thus the aim of the Jihad is peace on earth, and that will be its final result."

Western Crusaders developed their concept of chivalry from the conduct of the Muslim paladins in war. One great principle was that the lives of the many poorer folk should be saved by settling the issue of the dispute in a single combat between two champions each chosen to represent his own side.

A whole range of courteous attitudes and actions was developed to govern such contests. They were carried over into the peaceful contests called "jousts", in which knights fought each other to show their prowess before their monarch and their people, and also to practice against the day when they would be meeting the champion of an opposing army in serious warfare. The chivalrous and knightly conduct towards the fallen foe, which these contests taught, altered the entire manners of nascent Europe as it emerged from the barbarism of its latest invaders from the North. Ransoms were exacted and paid with honor.

Muslim armies were forbidden to cause the destruction of property, the burning of houses, the wasting of crops and pastures, the filling of wells or the deprivation of food. Mercy must be shown to the conquered. The utmost consideration must be manifested towards the enemy's children, aged, women and sick, whether mentally or physically afflicted.

Professor Muhammad Hameed-ulla of Paris University in his book on "The Prophet and War" (p.9) writes: "The Arabia which acknowledged the Prophet and Islam is a peninsula of over one million square miles in area—the size of all Europe west of Russia. Yet no more than 150 persons lost their lives in the reduction of that entire peninsula, so that in the course of ten years a maximum of 15 deaths per annum because of fighting must be reckoned. Few other conquerors in history can show such a record."

The Prophet, sending his troops to fight, is reported by the book on the Jihad (Volume 2, p.424) to have addressed them in the following terms: "Go in God's name for God's cause with God's aid, and act as God wishes you to act. Show no treachery or falsehood towards His commands. Mutilate no one. Show mercy to the aged, the incapable, women and children. Only when it is inevitable cut down a tree. Grant sanctuary to any prisoner from the least to the highest in order that they may hear the word of truth. Whoso follows that truth becomes your brother. If he refuses, release him to go to his home when peace is made. At all times and in every situation pray for God's help and obey His guidance about your conduct."

Similarly the Imam Ali, when the army of Mu'awiyah came to attack him in Iraq, gave his final command to his troops as follows: "If your foe takes to flight on the field of battle, pursue him not nor slay him. Persons who have lost the power to defend themselves or have fallen wounded on the field of battle must not be harmed. Women must be respected and must not be caused to be afraid or to be troubled."

In war it sometimes happens that the enemy does something which moves a Muslim to a desire for revenge; but the Muslim is bidden in such a case to return to his first aims and basic principles and to fight against the desire to transgress against the truth and against that excellence which he has been tempted to forget, and to be first of all victor over his own passions, which is the true victory, prerequisite for an Islamic victory in war.

We were all brought up on the story of the Imam Ali laying an opponent prone and sitting on his chest to reason with him about the true faith: whereat the foeman spat in the saint's face. Ali at once rose and

walked away. His followers asked him why, and he said: "I felt rage rising in my heart at that man's insult, and was tempted to slay him on the spot. If I had done so, it would not have been a just execution of a recalcitrant infidel because of his invincible ignorance, but an act of personal revenge under the impulse of passion. What is the good of my seeking to reason with him and bring him to a true faith unless I am living that true faith with a pure heart and free from pollution myself?"

In the Holy Qur'an such an attitude is enjoined in many places, for instance in Sura II: Baqara — "The Heifer" (verse 194):

"If anyone transgresses against you requite him with an exactly like action and restrain yourself for God; and know that God is with those who so restrain themselves."

Or again Sura V: Ma'idé — "The Table Spread" (verse 9):

"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not others' hatred of you make you depart from justice and swerve towards wrong. Be just: for justice is next to piety. And fear God; for God knows all you do."

And again, in the same Sura (verse 3): "Let not the hatred of some who shut you out of the sacred mosque lead you to transgression and hostility. Help one another to righteousness and piety, not to sin and rancour. Fear God, for punishment is God's and He is strict with all." Or, in connection with conflict between believers, Sura XLIX: Hujarat — "The Inner Apartments" (verse 9):

"Should a group of believers split into two opposing parties, make ye peace between them. If the violence of one against the other goes beyond bounds, bring force to bear on the group which is transgressing so badly, until it once again complies with God's commands. When such compliance has been exacted, then make peace between the two parties with justice. Be fair in arbitrating, for God loves those who are fair."

The emphasis of this passage on the blessing God gives to peacemakers, and His command that Muslim fighters should be peacemakers, even if they have to use force to bring the recalcitrant to heel, rather than ask the weak to forgive and to renounce his rights as is too often thought godly, is particularly worthy of remark.

Islam enjoins renunciation of one's own rights in the interests of peacemaking, while still recognizing that human nature is bound, willy-nilly, to feel resentment at injuries. It calls on believers to replace the passion of resentment with the greater passion for God's will, and with obedience to His calling to end division, violence and the use of force on earth. It is in the light of this command that Islam has always showed the utmost compassion towards nations which it has conquered, and exerted itself to give them that true sense of real independence which comes to people whose hearts are fixed on God and who live to make His will regnant upon earth, starting with their own community.

The people of Homs closed the gates of their city in the face of the army of Heraclius. They told the Romans that the Muslim rule with its justice and law courts was preferable to the tyranny and force they feared.

When the Muslim army under the command of Abu 'Ubeida entered the territory of Jordan the Christians of those parts sent a letter to the Muslims which read as follows: "O Muslims! You are preferable to the Byzantines for us, even though they are of the same creed as ourselves. You are more trustworthy, more just, more kindly, more beneficent to us. They not only took dominion over us but also plundered our houses."

Philip Hitti writes in Vol. 2 of his "History of the Arabs" (p.638): "Wherever the Islamic army set foot, the people of those parts received them with open arms and brought them viands and water, and vied with each other in leaving their entrenchments to join the Muslim—not difficult to understand for those who realize what the tyranny of the Visigoths had been!"

Nor did the Muslims force peoples of occupied lands to change their religion.

Islam arranged a system by which they guaranteed freedom of religion to believers in any of the heavenly books by forming them into "Millats", semi-autonomous communities within the state with the right to their own forms of worship, to their customs at birth, at marriage and at death, to their own schools and the use of their own tongue if they had a language of their own like Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, or Aramaic. They were exempt from the "Zakat" or "Tax in aid of the poor" which was incumbent on all Muslims.

This exemption was because the Zakat has a religious as well as a political side. Instead they paid a poll tax –because they were not Muslims. Payment of the poll tax guaranteed their citizenship rights in the whole community. Thus Islam guarded the tenderest scruples of conscience of followers of the revealed religions. It extended this care in its law giving to the treatment of criminals, of civil causes, of commercial matters, as well as the strictly religious side of life, so that the minorities were free and safeguarded in the following of their convictions.

In the Qur'an rules are laid down for the relationships of Muslims with non-Muslims. If the non-Muslims maintain a friendly attitude they are well-treated, though of course hostilities must be repulsed, whether overt or covert. But Muslims are forbidden to begin aggression of either type. As it is written in Sura LX: Mumtahana "(The Believing Woman Refugee) Who is to be tested" (verses 8 and 9):

"God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who are not hostile to your faith and do not drive you out of your home. For God loves the just. But God forbids you to turn to those who are against your faith and drive you out of your homes or support others in driving you out. Those who turn to such do wrong."

Christian and Jewish minorities live under exemplary conditions in –Islamic countries, in a coexistence

where each respects the other's rights. When the Prophet first came to Yathrib many Jewish groups lived there, and dwelt alongside the Muslims without the least friction, a condition which was continued by the Caliphs after the Prophet's death. The Founder of Islam said: "Whosoever harms a tribute-paying infidel living amongst us has harmed me." And again: "Beware! whosoever injures a non-Muslim, or steals even a worn-out piece of cloth or takes the smallest thing he owns without his consent, will find me on the side of the prosecution when he comes to trial on the Day of Judgment."

When the Imam Ali was Caliph he one day came across a blind and helpless old man and asked for information about him. His officials told him that the old man was a Christian who in his youth and strength had been a civil servant. The saint replied: "You used him for work when he was young and cast him off when he is old and weak! He must be given a pension from the public treasury to ensure his livelihood."

Dr. Laura Veccia Vaglieri writes that the words of the Prophet and the Fatwas (ex-cathedra decrees) of the great Islamic jurisconsults show up the falsehood of the story that Islam imposed its religion by the sword. The Qur'an lays down that "compulsion has no place in religion."

The Prophet safeguarded the Christians of Nejrán and ordered that reverence should be shown for their place of worship. He further ordered his commanders that even the fleas in the houses of the Jews were not to be touched. Adam Metz writes that the Muslims showed a respect for synagogues and churches which no European land in medieval times showed for synagogues and mosques. And Professor Gustave le Bon writes –that under Muslim rule in Spain great Christian conferences were held in Seville (AD 872) and Cordova (AD 852). Nor was any post under the government or any other job forbidden to Jews or Christians.

The Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem was a horror of brutality. Pyramids of heads were constructed. 1,000 Muslims who had sought sanctuary in their mosque were mercilessly put to the sword. Blood flowed knee-deep in the Temple courts. Kenneth Clark writes that in the history of mankind no worse warfare has been waged than the brutal –Crusades, with the Normans' lust for lands and the Europeans' desire for the profits of the fruitful Eastern luxury trades behind them.

The Crusaders held Jerusalem for 88 years, and lost it again after that period to the Muslim armies led by the great Kurdish General Selah ad-Deen Ayyoubi, whom the Christians called Saladin. This was in October AD 1187 (AHL 583, Rajab month). Instead of massacring all the Christians in imitation of the Christian massacre of its Muslims 88 years before, peace-loving wise Saladin proclaimed a public amnesty ; and forbade the execution, the plundering, or the torture of any Christian, so adding another glorious page to the world fame of Islam.

The true spirit of Islam governed all its troops in this as in its other wars. Saladin ordered a constitutional security for all the inhabitants of Palestine. He gave one dinar to every man and to every woman and two dinars to every child, with the permission to settle where they would. Security was greater in

Jerusalem than in any other city, so that the Latin citizens preferred to stay there.

The Bishop, who had riches beyond the dreams of avarice, said he wished to leave. Some Muslims asked Saladin to keep him and divide his riches amongst the Muslims, but he refused, saying: "It is impossible that I should perpetrate such a crime. I will take ten dinars from him and no more."

The savagery shown by Christians in Andalusia in the West was no less. After all the services which the Muslims had performed for Spain, the religious leaders of the victorious Christian army ordered the execution of every Muslim, old and young, woman and man, at the instigation of the Pope and of Philip II. Not one in four of the Muslims escaped the ensuing massacre. Even some of these were dragged before the Inquisition and condemned for their beliefs.

John Davenport writes (p. 133; "Apology to Muhammad and the Qur'an"): "Who can fail to admire the chivalry shown by the Islamic rulers of Spain or to wonder at the monuments of civilization, both architectural and cultural, which they have left behind them? And who can fail to feel shame at the conduct of Christians, the fanaticism and bigotry and ignorance and barbarism which brought torture and oppression in its train?"

Georgi Zeidan narrates that the Christian conquerors of Andalusia made Muslims, Jews and criminals carry labels to make them known to all men wherever they went: and even presented Muslims with a choice between accepting Christianity or dying (p.282 of the 4th volume of his "History of Islamic Civilization"). He adds that the Christians turned Muslims' mosques into churches, deprived them of all freedom of religious observances, destroyed their cemeteries, stripped them of the necessities of existence, and smashed up their hammams.

In the time of Henry IV of Spain the 4,000 defenders of the town of –Dulan were strangled by Christian hands. Such was the Christian understanding of the blessing proclaimed on peacemakers by the Messiah Himself! Is modern imperialism in our civilized world much better? Does it not tread underfoot the dignity and personality of those under its dominion, and strip them of the benefits of its vaunted "civilization"?

Does it not enslave mind and soul and spirit as much as the body of its underlings? In order to ensure its own profits, does it not suppress all freedom of thought amongst the masses, so that they may never even think of raising a finger against their tyrants, and so that any rising murmur of a demand for justice may be stifled before it can be heard? Let the great powers mouth fine words about peace as they will. When it comes to action they set all that idealism aside. Even their so-called diplomacy is merely an extension of their imperialistic aims. Idealists can do no more than draw pictures on water until moral conditions of peaceful coexistence are established worldwide in a family of nations.

The units of a social structure are individual men and women: a harmonious structure can only be built with individual persons in accord with each other, and each at one with and within the self. Islam's primary endeavor is, therefore, to create that inner peace within individuals by filling hearts with the faith

and conviction that sets the conscience at peace, and which streamlines all the gifts of brain and body in a harmony of joint action towards a God-given end. Islam applies faith practically, in such a way as to produce a world which runs aright. For this reason its second task is to guarantee an environment which will promote the certainty that justice prevails; and, by obviating threats to health and property, to make all feel secure.

Islam deprecates the exploitation of one class by another. Islam instead advocates co-operation and mutual aid in quiet neighborliness and friendship. Islam propounds norms of behavior, and trains its citizens in serene living as these norms, practiced, shape habits and customs. Of course, the frailty of human nature and the limitations of human ability, insight and purview, prevent these ideals from being always and everywhere realized without error. Even the best of leaders can be so busied with one set of events that he fails to notice another series going awry, into error, division — even into violence and oppression. But the will to redress the wrong and put things right again is always there; and above all, God's guidance and illumination exist to enlighten consciences and inspire restitution, reminding all that they will face their Judge at Doomsday.

Islam and World Peace

A peace imposed by an imperialist power controlling the masses for its own benefit is no peace. "Divide and Rule" generates no peace. Conferences, agencies and idealist slogans beget no peace. The U.N. Security Council debates limitations of armaments and gets nowhere. The Eastern bloc and the Capitalist camp both say they want a world-system: but they cannot agree on its shape. Class differences rage in both their camps. Both err in thinking that economics is the sole cause of divisions, and in believing that economic measures will by themselves suffice to eradicate conflicts and substitute peace.

For Islam, peace is only one among many ingredients in the effective recipe for human happiness. People must be free to think what they will as they will, to weigh all possibilities, and, having thought them through in the light of reason, to decide on the best way to live together. This is the Qur'anic prescription as laid down, for instance, in verse 256 of the Sura II (Baqara — "The Heifer"):

"In religion is no compulsion. Truth stands out clear from error,"

etc. or Sura VI: Ana'am — "The cattle" (verse 104):

"Proofs from your Lord come to you. He that hath eyes to see, let him see. Whoso will see will do so for his soul: Whoso refuses, does so against himself. I am not your guard or warder."

Or again in verse 22 of Sura LXXXVIII: Al-Ghashiyya — "The Overwhelming Events":

"Admonish! Thou art for admonition, not for surveillance, of -them!"

Conviction and faith are matters of heart. No compulsion can force the heart to conform. Education, training, instruction, logic, demonstration, font-family: can help. But whatever the lips say, the heart remains unmoved. Even Galileo murmured "Eppure si muove" after his recantation! or so we are told. Only his lips and his pen recanted, in effect.

Christian propagandists sedulously spread lying reports that Muhammad forced his religion on people by the sword. They cite the Prophet's proclamation of the Jihad, and his raids from Medina. We have shown how false is this misinterpretation.

What of their own religious wars and nationalist wars and imperialist and expansionist wars? What of the pressure brought by the Inquisition font-family: on non-Christians and on Christians suspected of heresy? Were they better than the Tartar barbarism of the ant-like hordes of Genghiz and Tamurlane?

One item of the pact of Hudeibiyya made between the Prophet and the Qureishi idolaters of Mecca read: "Any Qureishi who shall flee from Mecca without the permission of his superior and join the Muslims and accept Islam, the Prophet of Islam binds himself to send him back to the Qureish. But if a member of the Muslim forces flees to the Qureishi side, the Qureish are not obliged to return him to the Muslims."

Some of the Muslims, rendered uncomfortable by this clause, asked the Prophet: "Why do we have to return refugees from the Qureish while they are not obliged to return a fugitive to us?"

The Prophet replied: "Any so-called Muslim who is ready to desert the banner of Islam in favor of idolatry, and to prefer an inhuman religion and idolatrous environment to the sound sane environment and religion of monotheistic Islam, simply proves that he had never entered into the inwardness of Islam and that his faith had never been so real as to satisfy his soul. Such are not the Muslims we need. Whereas we are quite sure that the Lord of Heaven will Himself take measures for the salvation of anyone whom we may hand back to the Qureish, if he was sincere in his flight from them."

So true was this prophecy, and so shaking the series of events which occurred amongst the Qureish on behalf of Muslims who had been sent back to them, that in terror the Qureish themselves very soon requested that this item be annulled, and that no more of their refugees be sent back to them to become conscious missionaries or unconscious instruments of divine action in this world.

Islam condemns the territorial and commercial wars of modern great powers, with their merciless involvements of the innocent. Islam demands that ethical values, humanity and respect for the rights of others, in submission to truth and to what is right, shall be made regnant over the thinking and living of all mankind, and insists that until that demand is realized the world can never find its way to peace and quiet.

The more progress technology and the material side of civilization makes, the more men quote the maxim "Si vis pacem, para bellum" as a pretext for an arms race not merely in quantities but also in destructive ness, the more obvious is the truth made that humanity stands at a crossroads of choice

between mass suicide or salvation by faith, annihilation or acceptance of ethical principles, the brutal dictatorship of a man or the merciful government of God.

When man wakes up to this situation — and the very horrors which face him may themselves open his eyes—we pray that the light of reason and of heavenly wisdom will lead him onto "the good road, the road of those to whom God is gracious, not the road of those who continue to grope in darkness." It is our conviction that mankind will choose this superior way.

On the warp of individual change Islam weaves the woof of social structure. It brings to human living the delicate feelings of brotherhood and of belonging together. It designs a beautiful pattern of long suffering, gentleness and goodness in the hearts of people; and omits all the ugly tears and rents and weaknesses that injustice and the pulling and hauling of rival interests cause in a fabric. The result is a harmonious whole like that of the most beautiful carpet in which every color and shape is fully itself and the ensemble so fitly joined together that it presents a perfect picture.

Islam Today?

What has happened to us, the heirs of so brilliant and magnificent a civilization? What has reduced us to our present living conditions? Why have we ceded the hegemony of our world to others? What has caused the decline in our culture, in our science and our political power? What stopped our progress in its tracks? Why have we yielded our leadership in manufactures and science to Westerners so that we now need them where they once needed us? Why must Muslims, with all their splendid past in East and West, hang their heads in the modern world?

It was not blowing our own trumpet or banging our own drum that raised Islam to world pre-eminence in its time. It was our culture, our remarkable spiritual and social revolution. Shame that we should waste our strength in conflicts amongst ourselves and in internecine tugs-of-war which have reduced the glory of Unity to an empty phoneme.

A strong nation can only be built on firm principles of manners, morals, order — sole sources of progress. Islam never owed its power to cannons and tanks and weapons but to the pre-eminence in thought — amongst its Ulema, in character amongst its peoples and in following the guidance of God on the good road (for which we pray in the Fatiha 17 times a day), the road of justice, fellowship, brotherhood.

History demonstrates unmistakably that whenever the Muslims have constructed their philosophy of life in the spirit of the teachings revealed to them by Heaven, they have prospered: and whenever they have deserted those teachings, adversity and misfortune have been visited upon them. The Muslims who founded the brilliant culture and social wellbeing of the past followed those teachings more closely than we do, individual, society and nation alike.

The sun of culture shone while just measure and proportion was given to science, thought, matter and

spirit. When we deserted those, the banner of endeavor, diligence and combat for right fell from our hands, only to be grabbed by the West in self-aggrandisement.

Where is the old Muslim sincerity, integrity, honesty and truthfulness? These were once the fences on either side of our path. When we transgressed across them we were lost in a trackless desert, and abandoned the holy calling, announced as God's purpose for us, of leading mankind to live as God wills. Abandoning that destiny, we sank in the quicksands of corruption, ignorance and wretchedness which engulf us today. Yet a truly united Islam could return to that heavenly vocation and lead mankind's feet on to the spiritual road. This would be a blessing for all.

Napoleon's companion in exile on the island of St. Helena wrote: "In Egypt Napoleon constantly repeated his amazement at the blessings which the Prophet of Islam and her other great men in history had brought to the foreign lands they took under their sway. He looked with hope to Islam as the force which might again confer such blessings on the world, even saying: 'I think I will take up Islam as my religion'."

A true Islamic society would be very different from that which obtains anywhere in the world. Its thinking and its living must once again incarnate those heavenly principles of its inception. As the poet said: "Islam's pure truth's from spot or blemish free:

Our Muslims blame for any fault you see."

To take its full share in that moral and spiritual revolution which must come to the entire world, Islam must orient itself in today's global realities. It must then undertake those internal reforms which will be its –restitution for past backwardness. It must balance spiritual and material conditions in the right proportion in accordance with those principles of perfection which shaped the glories of its past and which are dictated by the Lord of both worlds — this one and the next. In these it will find, not merely its own internal stability, but also the secret of stability for the world and the way to mediate it to all mankind.

¹. Quoted from "The Enlightened Thinkers' Magazine", No. 829.

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