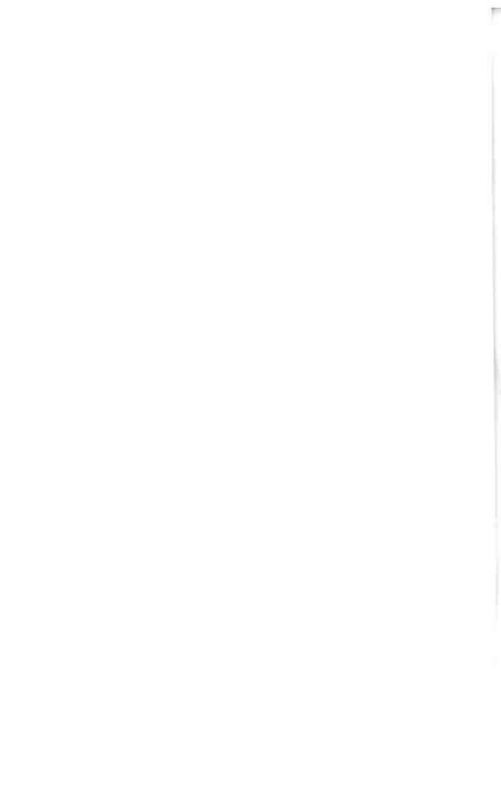


ISLAM and the
MUSLIM
UMMAH



ISLAM and the MUSLIM UMMAH

Selected Speeches by
DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD
Prime Minister of Malaysia

Edited by
HASHIM MAKARUDDIN



Volume 2

ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM UMMAH
SELECTED SPEECHES OF DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

Published by
Pelamduk Publications (M) Sdn Bhd
(Co. No. 113307-W)
12 Jalan SS13/3E, Subang Jaya Industrial Estate
47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

for the
Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia
Putrajaya, Malaysia

Visit us at www.pelamduk.com
e-mail: mypp@tm.net.my

Copyright © 2000 Prime Minister's Office, Malaysia
All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by
any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior
permission of the copyright holder.

Mahathir bin Mohamad, Dato' Seri, 1925-

Islam and the Muslim ummah / selected speeches
of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia;
edited by Hashim Makaruddin.

ISBN 967-978-738-9

1. Speeches, addresses, etc. 2. Islam—Customs and
practices—Addresses, essays, lectures. 3. Civilization,
Islamic—Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Hashim Makaruddin.
II. Title.

297.57

Printed in Malaysia by
Pencetakan Kim Sdn Bhd
(Co. No. 21648-U)

M

1001451

22 JUN 2001
Pustaka Negara

CONTENTS

PREFACE 9

- 1. ROLE OF RELIGION IN A MULTIRELIGIOUS SOCIETY 11**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGIOUS STUDIES: MEETING THE MILLENNIUM IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON DECEMBER 30, 1999
- 2. THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN FOSTERING INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING 17**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT A SEMINAR ON THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION IN FOSTERING INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING, ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING MALAYSIA (IKIM) IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON MAY 25, 1999
- 3. COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AMONGST MUSLIM NATIONS 31**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 2ND DEVELOPING EIGHT (D8) SUMMIT OF THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC) IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH, ON MARCH 1, 1999
- 4. THE CHALLENGES OF TURMOIL 37**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 52ND UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JUNE 19, 1998
- 5. TOLERANCE AND MODERATION IN ISLAM 59**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO, EGYPT, ON MAY 10, 1998
- 6. THE FUTURE OF MUSLIM NATIONS 69**
AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE 8TH ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN TEHERAN, IRAN, ON DECEMBER 9, 1997

- 7. LEARNING FROM THE LESSONS OF HISTORY 75**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING MALAYSIA'S REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON "TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY: REFORMATION AND CHALLENGES FOR MUSLIMS IN THE REGION" IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON AUGUST 22, 1997
- 8. COOPERATION FOR GROWTH 85**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 1ST DEVELOPING EIGHT (DE) SUMMIT OF THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC) IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY, ON JUNE 15, 1997
- 9. REGAINING THE PAST GREATNESS OF ISLAM 91**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT A SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING MALAYSIA AND OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES ON "THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND GLOBAL COOPERATION: PREPARING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY" IN PETALING JAYA, MALAYSIA, ON APRIL 25, 1997
- 10. ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM UMMAH 105**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE KING FAISAL INTERNATIONAL PRIZE IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, ON MARCH 22, 1997
- 11. ISLAM IS NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS 109**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE RISEAP'S 9TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY-15TH ANNIVERSARY IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON SEPTEMBER 6, 1996
- 12. ISLAMIC JUSTICE 113**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF ISLAMIC LAWS AT THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING MALAYSIA IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JULY 23, 1996
- 13. ISLAM: THE MISUNDERSTOOD RELIGION 127**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES IN OXFORD, UNITED KINGDOM, ON APRIL 16, 1996
- 14. ISLAM AND THE GLOBAL DAKWAH MOVEMENT 141**
A KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 10TH SESSION OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF JOINT ISLAMIC ACTION IN THE FIELD OF DAKWAH IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JANUARY 12, 1996
- 15. THE PLIGHT OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH 147**
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE 7TH ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN CASABLANCA, MOROCCO, ON DECEMBER 13, 1994

16. REVIVING THE GLORY OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION 151

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE WORLD ISLAMIC CIVILISATION FESTIVAL 1994 IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JUNE 17, 1994

17. GOING BACK TO THE QURAN 159

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE AL-QURAN IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON FEBRUARY 2, 1994

18. THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF RELIGIONS IN SOCIETY 165

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SEMINAR ON MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN MINDS ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING, MALAYSIA (IKIM) AND THE GOETHE INSTITUTE IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1993

19. ISLAM AND JUSTICE 173

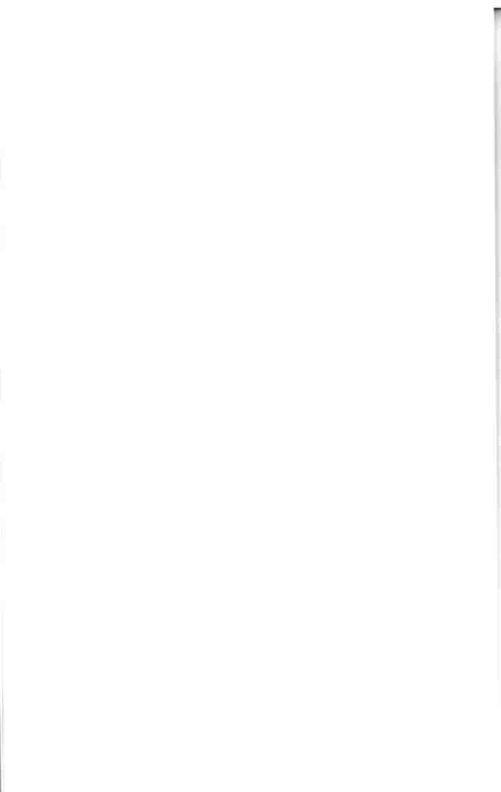
A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE ON ISLAM AND JUSTICE ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING, MALAYSIA (IKIM) IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JUNE 3, 1993

20. ISLAM AND INDUSTRIALISATION 181

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE ON ISLAM AND INDUSTRIALISATION IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, ON JANUARY 21, 1993

GLOSSARY 187

INDEX 193



PREFACE

ONE SUBJECT which is dear to Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's heart and which he takes seriously is Islam and the Muslim *ummah*. Being a respected Muslim leader who speaks his mind, Dr Mahathir has often been invited to address international and national conferences on Islam.

In this collection of speeches written and delivered in the 1990s, Dr Mahathir shares his thoughts on Islam, the Muslim world today and his concern that the Muslims are in disarray, unable to cope with the changes taking place in the world, and thus are sliding further and further backwards.

With characteristic directness and aplomb, Dr Mahathir laments the debilitated state of the Muslim world and its apparent inability to help itself to resolve the real problems confronting Muslims. Though endowed with rich resources, he regrets that Muslim countries are unable to put their resources to optimal use to serve and defend Islam and its adherents. He feels that Muslims have done nothing to help themselves. Instead, they have weakened themselves by their constant feuding, their confusing and contradictory interpretations of Islam, and their failure to obey the injunctions of their religion to help themselves.

In this book, Dr Mahathir also takes a look at Islam's commitment to justice, Islam as a tolerant and moderate religion, and why Islam is probably the most misunderstood religion often associated with unsavoury activities. He attributes the Muslim condition today in part to ignorance and continuing prejudice against Islam and Muslims.

Entering the 21st century, Dr Mahathir calls on Muslims to take up the challenges of the Information Age and globalisation. They also need to draw lessons from Islamic history.

It is hoped that this collection of speeches will provide readers with a better understanding of Islam and the Muslim *ummah*. Dr Mahathir's sincere, frank, profound and lucid views should make interesting reading.

Hashim Makaruddin
Editor

1

ROLE OF RELIGION IN A MULTIRELIGIOUS SOCIETY

ISLAM is the most misunderstood of religions today, misunderstood by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Such is the misunderstanding of Muslims about their religion that they have erected a high barrier against access to it and to the Muslims themselves by non-Muslims. They seem to have forgotten that most Muslims had ancestors who were not Muslims but who converted to Islam because they came into contact with Muslims. Had the Muslims of the past rejected contact with non-Muslims then the ancestors of present-day Muslims would not have learnt about Islam and would not have converted to Islam. If they had not, then the present-day Muslim might have been born non-Muslim and would not be Muslims.

Other manifestations of a lack of understanding of Islam amongst Muslims include the rejection of the Islamic concept and belief that all Muslims are brothers. The followers of various Muslim sects invariably regard the followers of other sects as un-Islamic or not Muslim enough and are therefore not to be treated as brothers. Today, with the emergence of political parties, the practising Muslim members of certain political parties are condemned as not being truly Muslim and are treated worse than non-Muslims by members of the opposing political parties.

Muslim nations are often at war with one another, a state of affairs that cannot be considered brotherly. If Muslims truly understand Islam, then they would regard each other as brothers despite their political or racial differences. We know of instances where practising Muslims re-

A speech delivered at the International Conference on Religious Studies: Meeting the Millennium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 30, 1999.

fuse to pray with other Muslims because of political differences. Despite the repeated injunction that Muslims must seek well-being in this life as much as in the hereafter, many Muslims believe that they should only seek merit for the next world. Consequently, they neglect their well-being in this world and this results in Muslims remaining poor and unable to help themselves and prevent themselves from being oppressed by others. The tragedies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and many West Asian and Central Asian Muslim countries are results of this mindset.

Muslims' failure to understand their own religion is nothing compared to the failure of non-Muslims, in particular ethnic Europeans, to understand Muslims and their religion. There is a historical basis for this. The long period of Muslim dominance and occupation of substantial parts of Europe has permanently affected the European psyche. The Crusade against Muslims and the struggle to liberate Europe and the Holy Land from Muslims seem never-ending. Initially it was Christianity which Europeans wanted to defend and save. But now it is just the memory of an inglorious past, of Muslim overlordship which influence the thinking and attitude of Europeans towards Islam and Muslims.

The Muslim countries and peoples of today are so weak that there can never be a repeat of the Muslim conquest of Europe as in the past. But the fear is still nascent. Responding to this fear, Europeans tend to distrust and suppress Muslims everywhere. They do this quite unconsciously, sometimes speaking to Muslims about the need to suppress other Muslims without thinking that their listeners might not be sympathetic to their point of view.

The Turkish Empire occupied most of Eastern Europe for centuries. It came near to capturing Vienna, a feat which would have opened the floodgates to Islam in Europe itself. As we can now see in the former Yugoslavia, ethnic Europeans did convert to Islam and have remained faithful to the religion despite decades of atheistic communist rule. It is not unthinkable that had the Muslims conquered Central Europe, Islam could today be the faith of many Europeans. To European Christians, whether nominal or practising, this would have been a tragedy of horrendous proportions.

The fall of the Turkish Empire was engineered by the Europeans, principally the French and the British, who had stirred up nationalist sentiments amongst the Arab subjects of the Turks and helped them to throw off the Turkish colonial yoke. But the Arabs soon found that it

was not independence that they gained. All the Arab land freed from the Turks were in turn colonised by the British and the French. The Arabs realised too late that they had exchanged Muslim overlords for European Christian overlords.

As much as the Europeans remember the Muslim conquest of their land, the Arab Muslims remember how they had been cheated into overthrowing Turkish Muslim rule for European Christian rule. Whereas Muslims in the past could live side by side with Christians, now they identify Christianity with the Europeans and they develop an aversion to the religion. That a significant number of Arabs are Christians and are also anti-European have not mitigated their animosity towards the European Christians.

For years after the fall of the Turkish Empire, the Arabs in West Asia and Northern Africa struggled to liberate themselves from the tentacles of European colonialism. They fought conventional as well as guerrilla wars against their colonial oppressors and inflicted large numbers of casualties. The bitterness against the Europeans built up to uncontrollable rage as they fought. Finally they won their independence. But the single Muslim empire had been carved up into many nation-states which were and still are very weak. There is no replacement for the Turkish nation which was a European power and had protected the Muslims. Rivalry between the Arab states also ensured that none can ever become strong.

The animosity of the Arab Muslims towards the European could have abated with their attainment of independence. Unfortunately, the European powers left a festering sore which cannot be healed. While allowing the Arabs to regain their territories, the Europeans decided to make Palestine the homeland of the Jews, a project which would rid Europe of its Jewish problem.

At the time when Palestine was made a Jewish state, there was only a small minority of Jews living in peace and harmony with a huge majority of Arabs. Naturally the Arabs regarded the creation of Israel as an act of expropriating their land by the Europeans in order to appease the Jews and solve the Jewish problem. With this the seeds of future Arab violence against all that represent the Europeans were sown.

Conventional wars can be fought between sovereign nations no matter their relative sizes. But conventional wars failed as Arab nations

tried to dislodge the Israelis. The only way for the Arabs to fight against what they perceived as gross injustice was to resort to guerrilla warfare.

Throughout the ages, the Europeans have demonstrated innovation in warfare. Methods of terrorism which involve putting innocent people at risk and killing them are largely European inventions. Some of these acts of terrorism are state initiated. In the 1960s and early 1970s, terrorists gangs abounded in Europe, one of which is the Baader-Meinhof gang. The Europeans were responsible for carrying out the first hijacking of a commercial airliner. In Northern Ireland, bomb explosions in cities killed men, women and children.

The Arabs soon learnt these methods of terrorism as they seek to regain Palestine. They hijacked planes, they bombed buildings and they rampaged with blazing guns against everyone, their own people largely but also against the Europeans whom they hate. There is no doubt that their methods are those of terrorists. But whereas others were called just terrorists, the Arabs were labelled "Muslim terrorists". It is known that a few of the Arab terrorists were Christians but the label Muslim terrorists is still attached to them. This labelling is a manifestation of the lack of understanding of Islam. Difficult though it is to believe, Islam is actually a religion of peace as the word "Islam" has its root in the Arab word for "peace".

Long before Islam came to the Arabs, they were divided into many feuding tribes who fought each other incessantly. Peace was something that all of them yearned for but never seem to achieve. Just as in famine-prone China the usual form of greeting is "Have you eaten?", amongst the warring tribes of Arabia this yearning for peace is expressed by wishing "Peace be on you" when they meet. Incidentally, the Jews who also belong to West Asia greet people with the salutation *shalom* which has the same connotation as *salam* (peace). It is thus natural for Islam to emphasise peace, to unite the warring Arab tribes, to unite Muslims so they will all live in peace. Islam emphatically rejects war as a solution to conflicts between people. Muslims may only fight if they are attacked by others.

But Western historians invariably attributed the spread of Islam to the sword. In the history of Christianity, there are many incidents of violence, torture and burnings at the stake as means of spreading the gospel. Muslim historians have never spoken of these instances of violence as a common feature in the spread of Christianity.

Europeans tend to forget or ignore their own propensity for violence when they glibly talk of "Muslim terrorists". They ignore the fact that there are more Muslims being killed by non-Muslims (as in Bosnia-Herzegovina) than non-Muslims being killed by Muslim terrorists. They never ever talk of Christian, Buddhist or Hindu terrorists. But they never miss to link the religion of the terrorist if he happens to be Muslim. Such is the extent of their misunderstanding.

The Malays in Malaysia are all Muslims. The history of Malaya and Malaysia is clearly one of peaceful coexistence between Malay Muslims and non-Malay followers of other religions. Even the racial clashes in 1969 were not religious in character. They were racial. Since then the Malay Muslims have lived in harmony with non-Malay non-Muslims.

Although Malaysia is governed by a predominantly Malay Muslim government, there has been no attempt to oppress non-Muslims. The Malaysian government is very tolerant and shows respect for the religious observances of the different religious groups. No one can say that by being so is not Islamic. Though lately we are seeing some aberrations but these are the exceptions which actually proves the rule. A country with a Muslim majority in power can ensure fairness and justice for everyone irrespective of religion or race.

Religion is still relevant in a multireligious society like Malaysia. To ignore or to sideline it would be most unwise. A totally secular society cannot be created in Malaysia. The religions of the people must play their role. Though Islam has been accepted as the official religion of Malaysia, other religions are allowed to be practised. In other countries where the official religion is also the religion of almost every citizen, the freedom to practise other religions is not of great consequence. But in Malaysia where Islam is the religion of only 60 per cent of the people, not only is freedom to practise other religions meaningful and important but it implies an acceptance of tolerance and accommodation on the part of the Muslim majority.

This is where the understanding of the official religion is most necessary. If Islam, Malaysia's official religion, is mysterious and its practice is hidden, there is bound to be suspicions and fear that the teachings of the official religion would be imposed on the followers of other religions. There would be fear that obstacles would be put in the way of other religions. There would be fear of forced conversions, etc. It is thus imperative that Muslims in Malaysia practise their religion not in seclu-

sion but in full view of all the people of the country irrespective of their faiths. While non-Muslims should not be required to participate in any religious rituals, they should not be denied their presence when such rituals are being carried out.

We are fortunate that in Malaysia the recitation of the *doa* (prayer) before any event is accepted by everyone. Each can pray according to his faith as the Muslim prayers are recited. Another phenomenon that could be seen in Malaysia is the joint celebration of religious festivals. The Malaysian practice of "open houses" during religious festivals have brought people of different faiths together and without doubt this has brought about greater understanding if not of each other's religions, at least of each other's culture. Even more interesting is the breaking of fast during Ramadan where hotels and restaurants prepare buffets for Muslims to break their fast, but non-Muslims join in, respectfully refraining from having their meals until their Muslim brothers break their fast. While the diversity of religious practices in other countries have resulted in violent clashes, in Malaysia, they resulted in bringing followers of different religions together. Malaysia's remarkable unity in diversity is the result of the openness in the practice of the different religions and in particular Islam, the religion of the majority and the official religion of the country.

Religions still have a place in the 21st century. We are now seeing a swing towards total materialism in the West, where wealth alone is expected to bring about happiness and a better quality of life. But we have only recently experienced how the quest for unlimited wealth by the avaricious could destroy the tranquillity of life in Malaysia. Without a religious anchor, we would have despaired. But we did not because we could fall back upon our spiritual values. Calmed by our spiritual beliefs we were able to face the material problems of our life, to understand them and to overcome them. Without spiritual beliefs it is doubtful that we can overcome the challenges of the 21st century without becoming unbalanced. Many societies today have discarded spiritual values and they often become unbalanced and feel lost when faced with the vicissitudes of life. Religion, according to Karl Marx, is the opium of life. But religions have survived and will continue to survive long after Marx and his ideology are relegated to the history books. It is clear that ideologies invented by man cannot replace religions.

2

THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN FOSTERING INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

WE ARE ON THE BRINK of a new millennium, a good time to reflect seriously on what has happened and what might happen. The former is of course the easier of the two. The last time the world ushered in a new millennium, Islamic civilisation was perhaps at its peak. But as we approach the third millennium of the Christian era, Islamic civilisation seems to be at its lowest ebb. Although Muslims have achieved political independence, they are very much dominated by other people. Muslims are being massacred by the hundreds of thousands without their co-religionists being able to do anything to help. We should not be surprised therefore if it is difficult to believe that Islamic religion and Islamic civilisation had played a role in interreligious understanding.

I say this because the present-day perception of Islam both by Muslims and non-Muslims is quite different and very often at variance with the teachings of Islam as practised by the early Muslims, particularly during the period when Muslims were revelling in their glorious civilisation.

Today, Muslims are seen to be aloof and isolated even when they live in communities which have large numbers of non-Muslims. They are seldom regarded as practising and contributing towards interreligious understanding.

A speech delivered at the International Seminar on "The Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Interreligious Understanding," organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on May 25, 1999.

The non-Muslims are at least partly to blame because they often propagate ideas about Islam and Muslims which are negative. Amongst ethnic Europeans the memories of the Crusades and the conquest of European land by Muslims many centuries ago are kept alive. Every fault of the Muslims is enlarged and linked with the religion even though it may have nothing to do with Islam. It is not acknowledged that Muslims are ordinary people divided by race and culture and are subjected to ordinary human weaknesses as anybody else. Instead, they are regarded as a monolithic group. This perception leads to frequent generalisations so that the crimes or misbehaviour of a few are attributed to the culture and practices of all Muslims.

Thus the stereotyping of Muslims as undisciplined backward people, unsociable, fanatical fundamentalists who are given to terrorism. That terrorism is not the monopoly of Muslims is ignored entirely. Every terrorist act is attributed to Muslims until proven otherwise.

In terms of terror and systematic oppression the ethnic Europeans have no match. Hitler's massacre of six million Jews during World War II ranks as the most heinous of crimes committed by humanity against humanity in the 20th century. And we are now witnessing the mass killings of Albanians in Kosovo preceded by the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet all these acts by ethnic Europeans are never described as European or Christian terrorism.

Even Buddhists have thrown up a number of terrorists as witness the killings by the shadowy Japanese Buddhist cult. Hindus have massacred Muslims off and on in India.

Acts of terrorism or even simple self-defence by Muslims in Palestine are invariably described as Muslim terrorism. The terrorists, if they are terrorists and in many instances they are not, are labelled Muslim terrorists. But terrorism by others, by ethnic Europeans, by intolerant Christians and Jews, by Buddhists, are never linked to their religions. There are no Christian terrorists, or Jewish terrorists or Buddhist terrorists or Orthodox Christian terrorists which the Serbs no doubt are.

That more Muslims have been terrorised by Christians and Jews has never been mentioned. Terrorism is made out to be a Muslim monopoly and others are just terrorists unconnected with their ethnic group or culture or religion.

There can be no doubt that today, the most oppressed people in the world are Muslims. Their independence and their rights as members of the human race have been ignored and violated over and over again. Their countries have been subjected to sanctions, to bombings, and to all kinds of humiliation. Is it any wonder then that Muslims seem to be perpetually resentful and antagonistic towards non-Muslims, to cut themselves off from others, and to reject the norms and the way of life that is common amongst the rest of the world? They seem to reject the religions of others and they do not seem to contribute to interreligious understanding.

But the Muslims are equally to be blamed for their tarnished reputation, their poor image and their isolation. However, this has not always been so. The early Muslims were outgoing people who tolerated and associated closely with people of other religions. Islamic teachings did not and does not proscribe such tolerance and association. Islam in fact enjoins upon Muslims to accept that there are people of different faiths who worship in different ways. They are not asked to force these people to accept Islam. Obviously, they must tolerate and understand these non-believers, and not regard them as enemies.

What is it that is part of the teachings of Islam which the early Muslims practised? As has been pointed out the *Quran* specifically mentioned that there would be people of other faiths who worship in other ways. Indeed, the *Quran* went further to advise the Muslims that they should not be critical or pass disparaging remarks about the practices of adherents of other religion for this may result in these people making similar remarks about Islam.

Forced conversion to Islam is not sanctioned by the *Quran*. Indeed, the Prophet was told not to be disheartened if non-Muslims did not convert, for if Allah so wishes, they would convert. If they didn't it was because Allah had not yet willed it. And indeed many of the early enemies of Islam accepted the faith.

The *Quran* also points out that Allah has peopled this world with people of different races so they may know each other. And the Arabs are not superior to the others except when they prostrate before Allah and practise the teachings of Islam thoroughly and sincerely.

And so the early Muslims were not only tolerant of non-Muslims but in their search for knowledge as enjoined by Islam they were willing

to study the sciences and the mathematical knowledge of the non-Muslims, in particular the Greeks. They translated Greek works into Arabic, studied them and developed them further. Soon their universities and their learned men led the world, and the European Christians were seeking knowledge at their feet.

Islamic civilisation in Spain reached its peak of glory when Muslims were tolerant of others and were prepared to learn from them. In Muslim Spain, Christians, Jews and Muslims lived side by side. Many were the Jews and Christians who served in the courts of the Muslim rulers and in their governments.

Then came the decline, earlier in Spain than in Eastern Europe. Muslim religious intellectuals and jurists began to reinterpret the teachings of Islam. They postulate that the Muslims had departed from the teachings of Islam when they sought other than religious knowledge and associated with non-Muslims. The learning of the sciences and mathematics pioneered by the Christians was regarded as worldly and not desired by Islam. Instead Muslims must lead a life dedicated entirely towards gaining merit for the life in the hereafter. Much stress was laid on Islamic jurisprudence, on punishment for those who had allegedly deviated from the religion. The Spanish and Jewish people who had converted to the Islamic faith were regarded with suspicion and toleration towards them began to diminish.

As the Muslims turned away from all learning which was not exclusively about religion, their skills deteriorated. They became weak and were unable to match the sophistication of European sciences, weaponry and military prowess. Eventually they lost their Spanish Empire. They were expelled from Spain unless they converted to Christianity.

The same fate later befell the Turkish Empire. At the height of their glory they were assailed by doubts about the quality of their Islam. While the Europeans modernised and were discovering new ways of defending themselves against the redoubtable Turkish forces, the Turks were concerned over trivialities such as whether tight trousers and peak caps were Islamic or not. Whereas the earlier Turkish forces were well-equipped with the best weapons of their time, their knowledge and their industry did not keep up with the knowledge, industrial skills and manufacturing capabilities which were rapidly making the Europeans superior in all fields.

The Turkish religious leaders were only concerned about ensuring that their narrow interpretations of Islam were adhered to strictly by the state and the people. They were not concerned over the weakening of the Turkish state and its defence capability. Parts of the Empire peopled by non-Turks began to break away to establish independent states. The Europeans encouraged this and even aided the Arabs to fight for their independence from the Turks.

The Arabs expected to be independent but in the end they found that their European allies replaced the Turks as their masters. All of them became colonies of the French and the British. In North Africa, Muslim lands were conquered and occupied by the Spanish and the French while in Central Asia the Russian communists imposed not only their rule but also their atheistic ideology on the Muslims.

By the time the Muslims realised that their glory days were over, they had become an extremely backward and weak people. Initially they submitted meekly to foreign rule. They deluded themselves into believing that this worldly life is not for them and that heaven awaited them in the afterlife. That the *Quran* clearly states that they should seek *hassanah* or 'bounty' in this world was ignored by them. They expect to achieve merit for their afterlife purely through the performance of religious rituals. They ignored the injunction to look after their community's well-being and interest in this world, and they refused to acquire knowledge except those related to what they interpreted as the teachings of Islam.

From being the most knowledgeable and advanced people, the Muslims have regressed in every field. That is why there is not a single Muslim superpower today, nor is there a Muslim nation at the leading edge of knowledge, of technology, of organisational or administrative skill. Hegemonised and oppressed by the non-Muslims they developed extreme resentment and hatred of their detractors. They blamed their enemies entirely for their misfortunes. They hardly ever examined and questioned their own role in their downfall and subsequent oppression.

Actually their downfall was at least partly due to their narrow interpretation of their own religion after the initial flowering of their civilisation. Discarding the so-called worldly knowledge, and quibbling about what constituted the true teachings of Islam, they neglected some of the most important injunctions of Islam. They neglected even

the injunction to prepare for their defence by taking the word of the *Quran* too literally.

True, the *Quran* enjoined upon Muslims to strike fear amongst their enemies by readying their war steeds and their swords. If the *Quran* had mentioned steel tanks, rockets, aircraft, bombs and guns, the teachings of Islam would not have been credible, much less accepted by the ignorant Arabs at the time of the Prophet. To ready horses and swords was more understandable in the days of the Prophet. But the real message of the *Quran* is to deter the enemy with a credible defence force. Had this message been understood then, the Muslims would not have forsaken the study of the sciences and other allegedly worldly learnings necessary for the invention and production of the ever changing weapons for defence.

The result is the defeat of the once mighty Muslim armies and the fall of all Muslim lands to the European. Having fallen they still failed to diagnose the cause of their downfall. They went on with their endless debate on Islam, Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic practices. This debate led to their fragmentation as new sects, cults and teachings threw up frequently antagonistic groups. Even the achievement of national independence did not result in the realisation of the need to acquire the skills and knowledge to defend the country and the religion and to catch up with the progress of the developed countries. Instead everywhere there was a tussle between the religiously educated and those educated in other disciplines for control of the state apparatus. There can be no doubt that the desire for power was not motivated by religion as much as personal greed and ambition.

As most Muslims are religiously inclined, each side tried to outdo the other by professing to be guided by the teachings of Islam. Each tried to be more Islamic than the others. That what they were doing was against the true teachings of Islam did not deter those who saw in their profession of faith a means of getting popular support and power.

The rallying cry of the orthodox religiously trained group is 'secularism'. Anything at all that is not directly concerned with worship, rituals and the gaining of merit for oneself is classified as secular and therefore irreligious or anti-religion.

It is unfortunate that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish patriot and founder of modern Turkey, had wrongly blamed Islam and not the

narrow interpretation of Islam as the cause of the collapse of the Turkish Empire. Believing that the solution to Turkey's problems lies in the rejection of Islam, Atatürk made secularism the Turkish state creed. Islam was proscribed in his belief that to be secular the Islamic religion must in no way influence the affairs of state. Thus he expected the country he had saved from Greek occupation would be like the European countries where there was a separation between the Church and the State. He attributed the progress and success of the Europeans to this separation and the secularisation of the governments.

Atatürk's secularisation of Turkey angered the Muslims in Turkey and the Muslim world in general. They attributed it to associating and accepting European or Christian values. They accordingly developed a fear of whatever was regarded by them as secular. In their anger and fear they did not pause to think about what was meant by secularism. They certainly did not examine it in the context of Islam.

Separation of Church and State, and separation between the secular and the religion may be possible in Christianity, but is impossible in Islam. Islam is a way of life, and a way of life cannot be confined to pure worship and rituals only. It cannot be about the hereafter entirely. A way of life must involve everything that Muslims do daily.

Thus the study of science and technology is related to the provision of a good life for the Muslims and certainly is concerned with the safety and defence of the Muslim *ummah*. Doing business and acquiring wealth are also for the well-being of the *ummah* in this world for how else can the alms and the *zakat* be expected to help the needy. Even improving the means of travel is related to the performance of the *Haj*. Today, millions of Muslims are able to perform the *Haj* because of the new modes of transportation developed by non-Muslims. The Muslims cannot claim they made this contribution to the performance of the *Haj*.

The development and prosperity of a Muslim country, good government, a good and just legal system, rules and regulation and laws, indeed everything that has to do with this world is a part of the way of life. The only thing that is required is that they do not go against the injunctions of Islam, that they do not lead to such arrogance that it denies that God exists. The communists, for example, are so taken up by human skills and power that they reject God and religion.

The way of life of the Muslims does not include being ignorant, without modern knowledge, without skills, being poor and forced to buy from others, including from those whom they regard as being secular, for sustenance and defence. Surely the present inability of Muslims to protect other Muslims who are being butchered and expelled from their countries is not in keeping with the Muslim way of life. And yet the inability of Muslims to protect other Muslims in distress is entirely due to their backwardness and their general poverty.

There is nothing secular about learning the sciences, the skills and the technologies that could undoubtedly contribute towards the well-being and the safety of the Muslims. Merit for the hereafter does not come from the performance of various rituals and worship and the study of religious matters alone. The whole community of Muslims will be committing a sin if none of them is able to perform *sardu kafayah* (to provide for the needs of the Muslims' well-being in this world).

The lack of understanding of secularism within the Muslim context, the fear of a repeat of the Turkish 'secularisation' has resulted in the Muslim becoming ignorant and backward and incapable of defending themselves. The blame must be put squarely on the Muslims for their inability to perform an essential part of the teachings of Islam.

But the fear of secularisation has led Muslims into trying to insulate themselves from outside influence. To do this they try to physically isolate themselves from the non-Muslims. This they do by propagating the fear that contact with non-Muslims will lead to contamination of their religion and what they regard as their Islamic way of life. As a result they do not contribute towards interreligious understanding as was done by the early Muslims.

In Malaysia today, there is a worrying trend amongst religious teachers to influence children into avoiding contact with non-Muslims. Because Muslims should only eat what is *halal*, the teachers try to create fear amongst the children that they may be eating food that is not *halal*. They create such doubts in the minds of the children that they do not trust even the food prepared in their own homes and in restaurants where their parents take them to.

This has led to fear that association with non-Muslims would cause them to be contaminated with what is *haram* in Islam. In a country where there is a substantial number of non-Muslims, the Muslim chil-

dren are being taught to keep away from non-Muslims, to be unsociable. They cannot, therefore, contribute towards interreligious understanding.

This attempt to isolate Muslims from non-Muslims is not limited to kindergartens. In schools and universities today, Muslim students are urged to keep to themselves and to avoid activities which cannot be confined to Muslim students only. As a result, it is rare for Muslim students to have non-Muslim friends, something that can contribute to interreligious understanding.

In contrast, the old generation was gregarious; they mixed well with non-Muslims and were able to interact with them without in any way becoming any less Muslim. However, the new generation is quite unable to adjust to a multiracial and multireligious society.

Such insulation and isolation would not help foster interreligious understanding. Indeed, in multiracial, multireligious Malaysia, these Muslims are not going to be able to adjust and live harmoniously and benefit from the numerous and varied opportunities which a multiracial, multireligious environment offers. This attempt to isolate and insulate themselves ostensibly to preserve the purity of their religion is happening not only in Malaysia but all over the Muslim world. If today the Muslims are misunderstood, and are unable to create better understanding of themselves and their religion, it is because they chose to keep themselves apart and are thus unable to show the true teachings of Islam.

But isolating and insulating themselves is not all that the Muslims do to cause the non-Muslims to have a biased and unfriendly view of them. The oppression of Muslims in places like Palestine and Eastern Europe has caused much bitterness and anger amongst them resulting in their resorting to violence and acts described as terroristic to vent their frustration. They very quickly learnt the methods of terrorism invented in the West. They hijack airplanes, they bomb buildings, they kill people, innocent and otherwise, and they indulge in other violent activities in order to further their cause. Unfortunately, their cause is not served but they do bring about greater condemnation and misunderstanding of their religion and the Muslim people.

Today, Islam and the Muslims have been made almost synonymous with terrorism. The whole world has this perception of Islam and

the Muslims. It is as if Islam itself advocates irresponsible terroristic acts. Between their use of their religion to isolate themselves and their violent reaction to oppression, the Muslims have contributed much to the lack of understanding between them and the followers of other religions. But does Islam in fact teach Muslims to isolate themselves, to create misunderstanding between them and the others?

Actually Islam does not teach this or advocate the isolation and the insulation of the religion. From the very beginning, the Prophet and the Muslims were made to understand that Allah created the peoples of this world of different races and kinds so that they may know each other, and understand each other. These people and even the Arabs may not all accept Islam. The *Qur'an* clearly states that there will be those who will worship in their own way and their religion would be theirs. Their refusal to accept Islam must be accepted. The Prophet must accept this because his duty was to spread the message. If Allah so wishes then everyone would embrace Islam. If they don't it is Allah's wish and the Prophet need not despair.

In other words, Muslims must accept that there will be people of many races and creeds who profess different religions and that they are so created that they may know each other, i.e. that there should be understanding amongst peoples of different religions.

And so the first Muslim community in Medina was able to live amongst the Hebrews and the Christians. No attempt was made to force the others to become Muslims. If later on the Jews were expelled from Medina it was because they abetted and sided with the enemies who attacked Medina and the Muslims. It was not because of religious differences.

The early Muslims conquered many lands where the people were of other religions and these people retained their faiths to this day. In Muslim Spain, Jews and Christians were able to practise their religions and way of life, and even participate in the administration of the country. It is significant that following the reconquest of Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, non-Catholics disappeared. Jews and Muslims either accepted Catholicism or migrated to Muslim North Africa.

In Eastern Europe, the Christians were happy to accept Turkish Muslim rule because of the very heavy taxes imposed by their former

Christian rulers. These Christians remained as Christians although a few chose to embrace Islam.

It is a testimony to Muslim tolerance and understanding that in practically all countries ruled by Muslims there was and there still is a significant non-Muslim minority. By contrast the European countries had in the past only an insignificant number of Jews and almost no Muslim or people of other religions. Whereas the Jews thrived and even prospered in Muslim societies, they were subjected to periodical pogroms in Europe. This culminated in the Holocaust when some six million Jews were exterminated.

The early Muslims adhered closely to the teachings of Islam which recognise the rights of the *Dhimmi*, the non-Muslims who had no quarrel with the Muslims. Right through the period of Islamic glory the non-Muslims were not only tolerated but played important roles in Muslim societies.

This tolerance and cooperation with non-Muslims began with the Medina Charter, enacted by the Prophet which encouraged solidarity amongst Muslims, Jews and Christians of the City of Medina. Succeeding Caliphs all showed tolerance and understanding of the non-Muslims and their religions. After the surrender of Jerusalem the Caliph Omar in the treaty of surrender assured Sophronius, the Patriarch of the City that "The Caliph Omar guarantees (the Christian) the safety of their persons, their goods, their churches and crosses, whether in good state or otherwise and in general their religion. Their church will not be turned into dwellings or destroyed, ... etc". And the Caliph honoured his treaty undertakings. Even on his deathbed Omar reminded the Muslims to show kindness to their non-Muslim neighbours.

The same terms and conditions were granted by Muslim leaders to the inhabitants of Damascus, al-Hijrah and others. Count Leon Ostrog, a Western scholar wrote, "The Muslim thinkers of the 9th century have expanded a doctrine of toleration of non-Muslims."

The culture of tolerance of other religions and faiths developed by the Islamic civilisation was totally in keeping with the teachings of Islam. This tolerance was not passive. In medicine Jewish and Christian doctors worked closely with Muslim doctors and produced medical research works together. Even comparative religion was studied together by the scholars of the three monotheistic religions.

In administration the Muslim rulers of the Umayyad, Amirid and Taifa periods employed Jews in diplomacy, finance and public administration. Hasday ibn Shaprut was a Jewish physician in the Caliph's court and he openly looked after the interest of Jews in Muslim Spain. This practice of employing Jews in positions of importance was found also in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and even the Mamluk periods.

Further East, the Muslims came into contact with polytheistic religions. Although there was practically no reference to these religions and their adherents in the *Quran*, the Muslims found little difficulty in according to them the same treatment that they gave the monotheists. Thus Hindus and Buddhists were able to thrive in lands conquered and ruled by the Muslims. That this is so is seen from the existence of Buddhists and Hindus in lands still ruled or formerly ruled by Muslims.

When the Sultan of Malacca embraced Islam he did cause to be destroyed all the Hindu temples where his people used to worship. But there is no evidence that he forced the foreign Hindus and Buddhists in his country to convert to Islam or to destroy their places of worship. And so to this day these people, although they had adopted the Malay language and culture, retained their religious beliefs.

This tolerance and understanding of other religions is a part of the teaching of Islam. Throughout history this teaching was accepted and practised. Of course, like other teachings, there were, in practice, frequent deviations and distortions. Those with their own agenda may twist the interpretations to serve their purpose. And so throughout history and also presently there are incidences of interreligious misunderstanding between Muslims and others. But these merely serve to prove the rule.

The Islamic civilisation has indeed contributed much towards interreligious understanding. This is borne out by the fact that whereas in Muslim societies there are almost always thriving and prosperous non-Muslim communities, in most non-Muslim societies only one religion is found and practised. It is only lately that mosques and temples are found in Europe and America for example. It is also significant that there are hardly any Europeans who are Muslims, or Buddhists or Hindus.

This is not an attempt to make comparisons or to say that non-Muslims and the civilisations that they built contribute less towards in-

terreligious understanding. It is merely to emphasise that Islam and the Muslims believe more in religious tolerance and understanding than they are made out to be.

It has been pointed out that the Muslims of today seem to be isolating themselves and resorting to violence, but they are a minority. Despite the decline of Muslim civilisation, and the deviation and distortion of true Islamic teaching, the majority of Muslims throughout the world today still tolerate and show understanding of other religions and their adherents. Thus in Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the massacre of Muslims by the Serbs, the Muslims never wavered from their objective of building a multireligious nation in which the Serbs have an active share in the government. The same is true in Lebanon. With few exceptions, in Muslim majority countries throughout the world, non-Muslims are free to practise their own religions. In Malaysia, the Muslim Malays who make up the majority of the population, have deliberately opted to form multiracial and multireligious governments which work assiduously for interreligious tolerance and understanding.

Islam and Islamic civilisation have indeed contributed much towards interreligious understanding. This is the direct result of the teachings of Islam. It is perhaps difficult to acknowledge this but it is nevertheless true. If there are Muslims who seem not to be contributing towards interreligious understanding today, it is not because of the Islamic civilisation or the Islamic religion. It is because circumstances have given rise to many misinterpretation and deviations from the true teachings of Islam and because Islamic civilisation has declined somewhat.

3

COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AMONGST MUSLIM NATIONS

IT IS FITTING that we should meet in Bangladesh, for this nation of poets, artists and great intellectuals truly reflects the true potentials of the Muslim world. Since its independence on March 16, 1971, Bangladesh has never ceased to struggle to rebuild itself, and that struggle has been rewarded. I hope this struggle would serve as an inspiration and a model for us in the other D8 countries. (The D8, consisting of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey, was set up in Istanbul in June 1997 to improve economic cooperation through manageable and concrete projects.)

We, the developing Muslim nations of the D8, meet in Bangladesh today in the 19th year of the 15th century of the *Hijrah*. It is not a significant year in the history of Islam. It marks no particular turning point. But we cannot work on the basis of a significant date, century or millennium. And being in the 15th century means we are more than 1,400 years from the emergence and flowering of our faith or religion. In that period of time all the religions which inspired and guided humanity have undergone changes and have lost their true meaning and their influence on the lives of their adherents. And Islam is no exception. Let us admit that Islam and the Muslim world today are divided and in disarray; they are unable to cope with the changes that are revolutionising life in this world, and are thus sliding further and further backwards.

A speech delivered at the 2nd Summit of the Group of Eight Islamic Developing Countries (D8) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on March 1, 1999

There is a great deal of wealth and potential amongst Muslim nations, but they have not been utilised for the well-being and progress of Muslims at large. No Muslim country can claim to be a force of consequence in the international arena today. Many Muslim societies are unable to make their nations stable and are incapable of making progress to match advanced countries, none of which are Islamic.

While the rest of the world is in the 20th century, we seem to be in the 15th century. They are now approaching the 21st century and the third millennium. In many ways, they are centuries ahead of us. The Muslim world must understand the situation where advanced countries have introduced new ideas and technologies which the Muslim nations are not prepared for and unable to handle.

Amongst these are new concepts of government and international relations. We find ourselves unable to reject these concepts and offer our own alternatives. Yet we are unable to apply these concepts effectively. The concept of democratic government has been largely mis-handled by us. We enjoy the rights conferred, but we do not recognise that along with these rights come the need for responsibility. As a result, our governments are seldom stable long enough to make governance effective and beneficial to our countries and peoples.

While we are still experiencing domestic turmoil due to the mis-handling of these modern ideologies and concepts of government, new ideas about international relations have been introduced. Concepts such as globalisation have broken down the barriers which we had depended upon to protect our countries, cultures and religions. Exposed to these assaults, we find ourselves quite helpless and unable to adjust and take advantage of these new ideas and concepts.

Globalisation in its current manifestation is benefiting the West, as their idea of a borderless world simply means the unbridled flow of capital across borders. The huge amount of wealth some of us have accumulated through the extraction of our natural resources has not been invested in our own countries. We have instead taken advantage of the free flow of capital to invest in the developed countries. Effectively we have enriched them. But we do not know how to use this investment in order to influence them.

They have instead used our money to invest in our countries, and then destabilise and impoverish us by pulling out their investments

suddenly. They then take advantage of our poverty to gain control over us. We are obviously not adept in the use of our wealth and the free flow of capital. Much of our money is held hostage abroad and is actually used against us. In fact, we are not even able to use our natural resources to enrich ourselves. Our very resources are the cause of our present impoverishment and weakness. But we know that they can provide us with powerful means to assert our influence on the whole world, to strengthen us and to protect us from oppression. All we need is the will to regulate the supply. Yet we cannot even do this.

Globalisation is being promoted in every field. Malaysia has experienced one of the effects of globalisation. Malaysia allowed its currency to move in and out of the country freely and to be traded. Malaysia accepted that the value of its own currency should no longer be determined by the Malaysian government. For a long time nothing untoward happened. Then currency traders who treated currency as a commodity emerged. They devised a trading system that enabled them to fix the exchange rates in order to give them unlimited profits. With this ability to enrich or impoverish any country at will, they have become more powerful than national governments.

Malaysia was relatively prosperous when we were attacked. Suddenly we found our wealth diminishing as currency traders devalued our the ringgit. Our initial inability to counter these attacks clearly showed that we have not understood what is meant by globalisation and the consequences of giving up control over our own currency. Learning this lesson has been a painful and costly affair for us.

Globalisation assumes many forms. When we agreed to globalisation, we thought that we would be able to share the wealth and technology of the rich countries. But the rich countries are actually thinking about how globalisation would enable them to exploit the untapped resources of the poor countries by using their huge capital and sophisticated technology. The attack on the currencies of Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea and Malaysia is just one example of how they exploit globalisation. Even though exploiting the poor to enrich themselves cause more poverty and misery, so long as it is done in the name of globalisation, it is considered fair and proper.

Currency speculation and stock-market raids are just the beginning. We can be assured that newer interpretations of globalisation will

be made which will open up newer ways for the exploitation of the poor by the rich.

Islam stresses a balance between materialism and spiritualism, between life in this world and the hereafter. The loss of spiritual values in the West has resulted in unbridled materialism. Money is the most important thing in life. Magazines, newspapers and television shows focus endlessly on the making of money and on making more of it. Spiritual values and religion are regarded as *passé*. As a result, money is literally worshipped as an end in itself, not a means to an end. Nothing must get in the way in the acquisition of more money. And in the process of doing so, economies have to be devastated, people killed, children starved—that is perfectly all right as long as the objective is to make more money.

Currency trading has destroyed the economies of whole regions, impoverished millions and destabilised governments. But because money is being made by the currency traders the destruction is acceptable. The free market must not be obstructed. The market knows best. It will regulate itself. It will certainly rein itself in if it sees itself destroying the very source of its profits. Unfortunately, by the time the market realises the damage it is doing to itself, massive damage has already been done, damage which will take many years to repair. But again, that is all right. The market will learn this with experience.

During the present turmoil, all that the market has learnt is that there are other markets to be exploited once the present one has been destroyed. Until the whole world has been destroyed, there is no real necessity to rein in. And so those in a position to curb the exploitation will do nothing. After all, they are not only not affected, they are actually profiting from the destruction that is being wrought.

While the exploitation takes place, the developing Muslim nations are struggling to cope with modern ideologies and systems of government. We are trying hard to make democracy work, but as soon as we succeed, the goal post is moved or shifted and democracy is reinterpreted. And this is when the Muslim world finds itself unable to cope with the even more liberal interpretations of democracy.

Some of us have opted to remain with our old systems. This we are permitted to do if we pose no problems to the developed West. A few of us have tried to be innovative in our own ways. We devise our own phi-

losophies and systems, but unfortunately it has not helped us to compete with the developed West. We are harassed by them and locked in so that we become paralysed and impotent.

The D8 is attempting to cope with a world which has become as threatening as when the Muslim empires were under siege a few hundred years ago. We are really ill prepared at coping with the threats that we are facing. We have no time for personal ambitions and petty quarrels. We must look at the world from the point of view of the *ummah* as a whole. There is only one reason for us to be together, to talk to each other—and that is because we see benefit in working together, in helping each other, in recognising our mutual responsibility.

However, all is not lost yet. We still have our assets and intrinsic strength. What we need to do now is to recognise and audit them and jointly work out how we can put them to optimal use. There are enough skills and intellect in the Muslim world, but Muslims are applying their gifts elsewhere because the Muslim nations cannot provide them with the facilities they need. We must bring them back, we must create an environment that is conducive to their work. They can help us rebuild our nations and catch up with the rest of the world. God willing, with their help and our dedication to Islam and the honour of the Muslim *ummah*, we will triumph eventually.

4

THE CHALLENGES OF TURMOIL

WE ARE NOW almost a year into the financial crisis. When we last had the Umno annual general assembly in 1997, the effects of the economic crisis had not yet been felt. Even now, many have not really felt the burning effects of the crisis. Oil-palm growers, for instance, until now have not felt any effect at all; in fact they are happy that the price of palm oil has escalated. Nevertheless, many of the rural people have begun to feel the economic impact by virtue of the fact that the prices of basic necessities have increased.

If we observe the hustle and bustle in towns, including Kuala Lumpur, it is difficult for us or foreign visitors to believe that there is an economic downturn in the country. The roads are still as congested as before, shopping malls are packed with shoppers, while hotels and restaurants are not without people, and cranes actively work through the night carrying building materials.

So where is proof of an economic problem? Where is proof of a declining economy? Where is proof that supposedly there are foreigners who have victimised us by devaluing our currency and shares? Currency and shares are the preserve of the rich. Let them feel a little bit of pain as a result of the currency devaluation and the tumbling of share values. They are too rich, owning Mercedes-Benzes, some having their own aeroplanes, yet others have their own ships. Let them feel a little of the suffering that has befallen the poor, perhaps this will make them remorseful.

A speech delivered at the 52nd Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on June 19, 1998

The *Mat Sallehs* (Westerners) have said it, and supported by members of the Opposition, that those currently facing economic problems are the cronies of ministers and the prime minister. They robbed us of the country's money, the people's money, via many ways, including the privatisation of government projects. Today they have lost not only their money but are being sought after by banks for not paying their debts. Their companies may go bankrupt. They may go to prison. This is very fair. This is retribution for them, and the government which is corrupt, non-transparent, and so on. Our currency devaluation is because of them and so it is only right that they are made to suffer. The *Mat Sallehs* should know because they are *Mat Sallehs* and they are smarter than we are.

AVOID TEMPTATIONS AND EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL DURING CRISIS

People generally love to see those at the top fail. Envy and hatred are strongly anchored in their hearts. But people, unlike animals, are endowed by God with intelligence, they know what justice is, they are able to distinguish one from the other, even in matters which cannot be measured or weighed physically. Human society which allows itself to be controlled by desires alone will never build a civilisation that is advanced and successful, one that can bring happiness.

In facing the economic problems, we—especially Umno members and leaders at all levels—should not allow our desires to control our thoughts. On the other hand, our thinking should, at the very least, curtail our desires. Let others be dominated by feelings of vengeance, hatred, envy. Whatever we do, it should be based on our thoughts and judgements consistent with the needs of an advanced civilisation, God willing.

Is it true that problems and the economic recession are caused by inefficient, non-transparent and corrupt East Asian governments which practise crony capitalism and others? If so, since when? Did it start from July 1997? Or is it possible within several months or a year before 1997, that the poor management of these countries had been just as obvious? Maybe. But until July 1997, these countries have been praised for their efficient rule. They were called Asian Dragons and Tigers with economies that were growing very rapidly, having industries of international status and capable of producing sophisticated products

that could compete successfully in world markets. Their people were prosperous, had jobs, did not strike or vandalise shops to steal goods. Undoubtedly there is corruption, lack of transparency and other things in the governments of Southeast Asia. Even advanced countries of the West are not immune to this phenomenon. But if these countries are so badly managed, how could it be possible to develop them so rapidly. Many countries which are not able to develop at all are those with corrupt, non-transparent and inefficient administrations. Why is it that these countries which are clearly corrupt and non-transparent do not face currency devaluation as badly as countries in Southeast Asia? It is puzzling how the value of the currencies of some developing countries which previously could not register even average or moderate economic growth is higher than ours today. On the other hand, countries in the Asian region which are said to have bad governments, nevertheless, have experienced such phenomenal growth to the extent that they were referred to as the tiger economies.

NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF CURRENCY ATTACKERS

Actually, crony capitalism, corruption and non-transparency, which are said to be found in Asian countries, are only excuses to attack the economy and finance of these countries. We admit to some extent there is truth in these accusations, but these attackers cannot deny that the attack on Asian currencies have resulted in lots of profits for them. Within a short span of time, in fact within a few hours, millions of dollars of profits were made through currency trading. On the other hand, the ordinary trader would require a huge investment, be involved in work which is time-consuming and delicate, and face great risks before a small profit could be made. For those managing funds or banks, currency trading is more attractive compared to giving out loans just to get interest. Currently, the world's big banks are increasingly involved in currency trading which generates highly profitable returns, even though such trading could destroy people's lives. Today they may need to justify their action for devaluing currencies. Tomorrow they may not need to. So long as huge profits can be made, these people are willing to do anything to achieve this end.

They are currently making preparations by expanding their companies and banks through mergers, acquisitions, buy-outs, and so on.

The recent merger of two large American banks resulted in their combined assets rising to US\$653 billion. Compare this to Malaysia's reserves which total about US\$20 billion. If giant banks like these sell ringgit, for instance, we would lose all our dollar savings if we try to defend the ringgit. They can do whatever they please because they know we are unable to defend our currency. Those amongst us who frequently talk about human rights should remember that those who are greedy consider greed to be their right.

The amount of funds owned by huge banks in developed countries totalled about US\$28 trillion. Hedge funds, meanwhile, own about US\$180 billion. With this US\$180 billion, they can borrow from banks twenty times the value of their funds to trade in currency, that is about US\$3.6 trillion.

NEW METHOD OF COLONIALISM

Colonial control of land by military strength can no longer be accepted by societies worldwide. But physical colonialism like this is no longer necessary. Control through currency trading has similar effects. Wealthy countries could also be colonised by weakening their economies and turning them into beggars in a short period of time. This form of colonialism could be achieved without sacrificing the life of a soldier. When a country becomes poor, it will be politically unstable and a power struggle will ensue. As a result, there will be successive change in leadership until a candidate who is willing to submit to the world power is found. In other words, colonisation has occurred.

Although Malaysia is not under the full control of foreign powers, its economy has begun to be dominated by them. By devaluing our currency and shares, our companies are in a critical state and are no longer able to reap big profits. Without tax revenue from these ailing companies, the government would not be able to meet its operating expenditure. As a result, the government is unable to pay towards its administrative costs. This can even cause unrest and pressure to topple the government. The needle they use is so fine that we may not realise we are being manipulated.

We have seen this happening elsewhere, countries which were severely attacked and are even worse off compared to us. Perhaps there are those who believe that a change in government will resolve their

economic problems but let there be no doubt that the attacks will not cease until they attain complete control and recolonise the country. What is important for them is not a government which is democratic or transparent. What is important to them is a government that is more submissive to certain powers.

Can we convince ourselves that what happened to other countries will not happen to us? When Mexico was attacked, we were not the least apprehensive. Our economic fundamentals were strong. There must be something bad that the Mexican government had done that made them weak enough to be attacked by currency traders.

Other countries studied the reasons behind Mexico's problem. They took the necessary steps to save themselves. Slovenia and Chile did not allow investments in their share markets without downpayments as well as a guarantee that their investment will not be withdrawn until such time as determined by them. Their actions were radical, inconsistent with the practices and regulations created by the developed countries for their own interests. We would not do the same because we strongly uphold the normal practices adopted by developed countries. Besides, we like to be praised by certain people.

Such is the strength of our orthodoxy and confidence in our fundamentals that we deliberately open up widely our share markets. Many groups travelled to the United States to go on roadshows in order to attract foreign funds to invest in our major industries. Our shares increased greatly in value because they attracted foreign investors. Although the government repeatedly warned that too high a value of shares that was not reflective of assets' worth or company performance was unhealthy and dangerous, many managers could only see the profits resulting from the increase in share prices.

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF SHARE BUSINESS

With the increase in share prices, heavy borrowing was made while share-swapping amongst companies created giant companies. That companies did not quite make profits did not matter so long as such shares could be sold or pledged at a higher price. The original purpose of issuing shares was no longer important. What was important was the price of the shares and the business of the shares. The issuance of shares

was no longer to raise capital but to be bought and sold as a commodity. It is similar to buying and selling currencies. Meanwhile, shortselling was allowed, and even encouraged. Shares which were meant to be sold no longer needed to be bought. Suffice if it was loaned, and sold at a high price and rebought at a low price and then returned to the lender. With this facility many directed their focus on the share market instead and lost interest in businesses involving goods and services.

All this is created by the West and we follow them because many are willing to go after anything that is Western and sophisticated. All warnings to link the value of shares with company performance were ignored. Finally, when foreign investors repeatedly sold their shares, prices of shares plummeted. They made profits from such sales because they had bought them at low prices. Through shortselling they were able to make huge profits.

When the price of our shares dropped, our debts exceeded the value of our shares pledged. Banks then pressured borrowers to increase their margins. But shareholders and companies were no longer able to do so. So the banks had to sell shares which were pledged and this further caused the value of the shares to fall. Banks no longer lent money because debts had become bad. The business of these companies deteriorated, profits reduced and finally losses were incurred. Government taxes will definitely decrease, making it difficult to pay administration cost.

What we should note is that when businessmen and big entrepreneurs are faced with problems, we the small-timers will also face problems eventually, in fact the whole nation will suffer. It is from the profits of big companies that we are able to obtain taxes for the nation's expenditure. As such we should not be influenced by the Opposition's jubilation when big companies are faced with problems. Their problem is also our problem. It is not wise to incite hatred and envy towards those having problems. We should understand because whether we are successful or not in our effort to overcome the economic crisis will depend on how much we understand the problems we are facing. Not understanding what exactly attacked us is equivalent to being blind and not knowing exactly the source of the attack. People who do not know what exactly attacked them will create enmity with others, the innocent. Thus the attackers will have a big laugh.

ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE LEADERS

Countries which are able to exert great pressure do not only confine their power to the economic and financial areas alone. They intend to control politics too and to determine who should lead that country.

Initially the method used was to suppress their national economies and finances. Banks, companies, wholesaling and retailing businesses, the transportation industry, and so on, were all pressured until they became bankrupt and could no longer function properly. Then workers would lose their jobs and their income. Since countries in Southeast Asia do not have unemployment benefits as in the West, no gainful employment means that no income is available to buy food or medicine or milk for the baby.

Through the world media which they control, and with their influence on the local media, which do not want to be accused of having no freedom or are afraid of the government, they blamed governments for the economic deterioration and currency devaluation. With that, anti-government movements are initiated, resulting in demonstrations and riots. This approach gives them political power until such time when they will determine the leadership of that country. They will definitely choose leaders whom they feel can be manipulated. Otherwise, the leader will again be changed. At that time, independence is meaningless.

An attempt to change leaders in Malaysia had taken place before when leaders were alleged to be anti-Jews. Now they allege that the current leaders are obstacles to efforts at economic revival, that the present leaders are ignorant of the intricacies of world financial systems. Their objective is to cause political instability because their allegations in turn have created misunderstanding amongst the leaders. One faction of the leaders' supporters then strives to defend their existing leader and remove the challenger, while supporters of the challenger pressure their leader to challenge the current leader. As a result, campaigns which smear the respective leaders are carried out until the situation has become tense and the politics strained. Under such circumstances, the economic and financial problems cannot be overcome, and the economic situation will worsen. Finally, the problems worsen when leaders are unable to work together, and either one will fall. Irrespective of who is successful, the attack on the country will continue

until a leader is chosen, one who will submit to the wishes of the foreign powers, and is prepared to have his country recolonised.

FOREIGN POWERS MAY CONTROL LOCAL COMPANIES

When this happens, the economy will be open to foreign funds acquiring major local companies. At that time, they will revive the economy and the value of the currency. This can be easily done as they will claim that their confidence has returned, thus allowing the value of the ringgit to appreciate. With the large amount of US dollars in their possession, they will buy the ringgit repeatedly. According to the trading system they formulated, each time any currency is bought using the US dollar, the value of that currency will appreciate. This way, not only will the economy recover, but the ringgit which they have bought cheaply will increase in value, giving them a large profit.

Thus, if they had bought the ringgit at RM4.00 to the US dollar and revive the value to RM2.50 per dollar, they would make a profit of RM1.50 for each dollar they used to buy the ringgit. In dollar terms, when a dollar is worth RM2.50, a profit of RM1.50, which is equivalent to about US\$0.60 is made, that is, a 60 per cent profit for each dollar used to buy the ringgit.

What is evident is that they can profit either by selling the ringgit and devaluing it, or by buying and appreciating its value. After acquiring our companies cheaply, due to the devaluation of the companies' shares through repeated selling, they are able to increase the share value through repeated purchases. If the share value reaches the original high price, they would again make capital gains. Through this method, they can profit twice, once through the increase in the value of the ringgit, and again through an increase in the share value.

That is the reason their newspapers keep highlighting the large number of investors who are interested in acquiring companies in countries affected by the economic turmoil. They say there is a fire-sale in Southeast Asia. According to them, Asian companies and banks are like dead fish, floating belly up. They need only pick and choose. The others can be left to die. This is their attitude, seemingly responsible for the protection of human rights in the world. What is worse, after having destroyed our economy, these foreign quarters would claim that their acquisition of our companies is intended at rescuing us and reviv-

ing our economy. Their action does not differ much from robbers who steal our money and then returning half of it, claiming that they were out to help us.

Malaysia can still defend itself. We still impose conditions that foreigners can only acquire a limited 30 per cent in Malaysian companies and banks. In the insurance sector, we have to allow foreign investors up to 51 per cent ownership due to pressures imposed on us by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They are still not satisfied as they want 100 per cent. They asked why we should own companies. It is adequate for us to work in foreign-owned companies. They will pay us better as they are larger and can better afford it. This is what they say. But after having achieved their objective, will they keep to their promise?

At the WTO, we still have a voice to defend ourselves, although we are now alone. But if we have to resort to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s assistance because our economy has suffered badly, the conditions imposed by the IMF will require us to open up our economy 100 per cent to foreigners. With that, not only can foreigners own 100 per cent equity in our companies and banks, but they can also carry out their business in our country without our involvement. Maybe lower-rung positions will be given to us, but because they will claim that we are incapable, therefore senior positions will forever be held by them. There will definitely not be any *Bumiputera* quota as the New Economic Policy (NEP) is an injustice, and supposedly unacceptable to their concept of liberal democracy.

There will obviously not be any giant *Bumiputera* companies. And we will be happy as there will not be any more *Bumiputera* billionaires and millionaires with their Mercedes-Benzes, private jets and luxury yachts. All those who are accused of being cronies of political leaders will be got rid of. The only ones left will be the ordinary workers with salaries commensurating with their limited abilities. The foreigners will earn high wages. They will in turn be the millionaires and billionaires with their Mercedes-Benzes, private jets and luxury yachts. Surely they will claim that they—and not cronies of our political leadership—are amongst the deserving ones. This situation is definitely fair. Critics, both foreign and those amongst us, will be happy and satisfied as unwanted practices have all been eradicated. What is unfortunate then is

that all of us will become servants to foreigners who will rule our country.

BUMIPUTERAS MAY BE ENSLAVED AGAIN

This scenario is not something I have conjured up to frighten Malaysians, particularly the *Bumiputeras*. This is the scenario desired by our critics, the critics of the NEP and the Malaysian leadership. If we try to imagine the situation in Malaysia without the NEP, this is the scenario that we will get.

Perhaps there are those who say they agree with the NEP, yet say that the NEP have been misused to enrich a few Umno leaders' cronies in particular. But if there are others who, apart from those we know, have become billionaires through the NEP, would they not also be branded as cronies of the leaders? In fact, most who became rich because of the NEP are not known to party leaders and the government then. Those known to the leaders of the Barisan Nasional government are politicians who support them—divisional and branch leaders, Exco members and others. Leaders of the Federal Government know them better. They are genuine cronies. If there are cronies who should be enriched, then it is these cronies who should be made millionaires and billionaires. Obviously when political cronies become business cronies, the political backing for the government leadership will increase. Helping non-politicians will not give government leaders political mileage.

In reality, almost all who became rich from government assistance were themselves successful businessmen. They were assisted and given the opportunity as they had proved their ability in business. The probability was that if they were given the opportunity, they would succeed.

If someone who had never been involved in business (or had never succeeded in business) was suddenly given a chance, they would only waste that opportunity and might even lose or trade off the opportunity given to them. As such, the government is not keen to provide opportunities to those who are inexperienced and unsuccessful although they are amongst the political cronies who would certainly reciprocate through their support for the leader.

Unfortunately, whoever is given the opportunity and support is branded a crony. Before he succeeded, there was no accusation of cronyism. But if he succeeds and becomes rich, he will be accused of be-

ing a crony although he has not received any government assistance and is not close to any leader. Due to accusations of cronyism, the government is not able to assist anyone, especially during this economic downturn. Any assistance rendered is termed a bail-out. Apparently a straight and transparent government should let problematic companies, especially those owned by *Bumiputeras*, to wind-up. It seems as if certain quarters want to see *Bumiputeras* remain unsuccessful forever. They see this economic downturn which they have caused as an opportunity to kill all *Bumiputera*-owned companies. To them, maintaining poverty amongst the *Bumiputeras* is fair.

When such accusations are made by foreigners, locals and *Bumiputeras* respond and believe these allegations. What is strange is that those taken in by these accusations are themselves the beneficiaries of the favourable treatment accorded by the NEP. They have benefited from education, high positions and have received shares because they are *Bumiputeras*. If they are forced to compete with the non-*Bumiputeras*, chances are they will not get scholarships or gain high positions in the government or receive shares.

Look at oneself before accusing others of being the cronies of the leader. Without the NEP and the preferential treatment enjoyed by *Bumiputeras*, could we have reached the level we are at today?

There are people who receive Malaysian scholarships, but arrogantly criticise the positive discrimination system of the NEP. Ask yourself why you are given a scholarship? Is it so that you will receive a big income by working overseas, or is the scholarship given so that one day you may contribute to the people of this country, especially the poor?

It is easy to talk about merit after you have benefited from a system without merit. Just because we believe that we can compete openly and successfully we should not suggest that we stop giving the opportunity to those who cannot afford to compete because they are poor.

Actually, allegations that the Malaysian government's leadership practises cronyism in enriching certain *Bumiputeras* were made out of jealousy of the government's initiative in socioeconomic engineering. Which country has succeeded in its social engineering programme to achieve fairness in society? The socialist and communist systems failed and the capitalist system is even worse. It is only here in Malaysia that

the restructuring of society has succeeded without causing riots and without denying anyone their rights or the seizing of property.

ISLAM AS A GUIDE TO OVERCOMING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Although Umno has opened its doors to non-Muslims, its commitment towards the religion and its teachings has not faded. In facing this economic turmoil, Islam becomes our guidance. Islam is *ad-deen*. The life-style does not merely involve several compulsory rituals but also activities and actions to ensure a peaceful life.

One of the more evident lessons in Islam is the act of migration. Migration means to move. Why did *Rasulullah* (Prophet Muhammad) move from Mecca to Medina? The reason is because of the pressures and opposition he faced in Mecca. The *Jahiliyah* (pre-Islamic civilisation) Meccans opposed Islam which Prophet Muhammad propagated. They attempted to assassinate the Prophet.

The Prophet could have left it to fate. After all, did the Prophet not enjoy God's protection? What need was there for the Prophet to act to save himself? But we know that the *Quran* tells us to strive and help ourselves before Allah would help us. That is why the Prophet migrated, to try and save himself and not merely to surrender to God's will. This does not mean going against fate as whatever happens after we have made an effort is still determined by fate.

Migrating does not merely involve physically moving from one place to another. When the Prophet shifted from Mecca to Medina, he also underwent 'mental migration'. Obviously, the Prophet's thinking and approach while in Mecca were not the same as when he migrated to Medina. The shift in the Prophet's thinking and approach was to ensure the successful propagation of Islam in Medina where the community comprised not only those who were sympathetic towards the Prophet and were interested to embrace Islam, but also those, besides the Jews, who still doubted the teachings of Islam.

We see a display of the Prophet's wisdom in the drafting of the Medina Constitution which took into account the interests of all parties. Emphasis was given to brotherhood between migrants from Mecca, the *Muhajirin*, and the *Ansar* of Medina. Prior to this, both were at odds, but the Prophet succeeded in closing the gap and uniting them

to create an *ummah*, a single Islamic community. And we know how Medina turned out to be the base for Islam's expansion and for the defence of its *ummah*. In the end, Mecca fell and the whole Arabian peninsula embraced Islam.

Umno is an instrument that has adopted the struggles of the Prophet as an example to change the fate of Malay Muslims and other *Bumiputeras* in Malaysia. From a race proficient only in farming and light handicraft, Umno has helped the Malays and other *Bumiputeras* to advance to a world of knowledge and industry. From a race lacking in discipline and confidence, they have progressively transformed into a more disciplined and confident race. They are now successful and can compete with others, and are more willing to face challenges.

Rightly, the development process of the Malays, 'migrating' from farmers to entrepreneurs and educated traders, ought to continue. However, it seems there are quarters who will not allow this. Irrespective of whether it was planned or not, the economic pressures imposed on Malaysia are directly affecting the Malays and other *Bumiputeras*. We are being pushed to become a backward and weak race, that is at risk of being recolonised and having to serve others.

There are those who do not want to see our continued success and are trying to destroy all that we have built, the progress we have achieved and the corporate figures we have nurtured. Their intention is to enslave the Malays and *Bumiputeras* once again.

There are those amongst us who do not believe that what is happening now can throw us back to the early days of colonialism. There are those who say that what is happening now is only temporary and will return to normal on its own. There are also those who say that this is merely the market's character or market forces. These market forces are apparently aimed at forming transparent governments, free from corruption, nepotism and other forms of crime by the leadership. Therefore, if we were to follow their prescriptions immediately, if we were to practise good governance, then the market forces would reward us by resuscitating our economy so that it becomes more progressive and dynamic than before.

This is merely a fairy tale. Market forces are not meant to bring benefits, to improve governments, financial management and practices of the countries under attack. Market forces are driven ultimately by

huge profits. It is all right if something favourable happens. But benefits, if they do occur, are merely side issues. The most important is huge profits for the market forces. The bigger the profits, the better it is to the market forces.

If in the course of amassing immense profits, their victims are destroyed, this is unavoidable. Thus, when these market forces, through currency trading, cause currencies to devalue severely, to the extent that whole countries and their population suffer, workers losing their jobs, famine occurring and diseases spreading widely due to lack of medicine, people migrating, resulting in riots, bloodshed, death and the collapse of governments—all these are acceptable if these market forces can gain huge profits.

Hoping for market forces to create a stable currency exchange, stable economy and stable politics is the same as not doing anything and leaving everything to fate. Market forces profit from chaos and economic and financial instability. Why should they stabilise the conditions at the expense of their profits? Therefore, it is illogical that to resuscitate our economy and currency, we should submit to the demands of market forces. The Prophet did not submit to the demands of the *Jahiliyah* in Mecca to save Islam.

The fact is, we cannot rely on market forces' confidence to lift us out of the current economic turmoil. Yes, we want to clean up our practices, but not because we are pressured by market forces. We want to do so because we believe it is good to rid ourselves of any ill practices.

SPENDING WITH PRUDENCE

Today, these market forces have destroyed half of our wealth, therefore we must be willing to live with half of our earnings. Can we do that? Of course, we can. Twenty years ago, our income was half of what we were getting before the 1997 turmoil. Back then, we did not spend like what we are doing now. If we are disciplined and prudent in managing our spending, then we can do it.

There are those amongst us who has called for a stop in spending and to increase our savings in fixed deposits or bank savings accounts. This will increase the bank's ability to provide loans. Companies will not be deprived of credit facilities to sustain their businesses. But if we were to refrain from spending below our affordability, business will suf-

fer, traders will not gain profits and the government will not be able to collect taxes to finance its spending. Therefore, spend prudently and buy imported goods, according to one's needs, but buy as much local goods as possible. We do not have to boycott goods and foodstuffs which have risen in price unless the hike is caused by traders' greed. No one should try to take advantage of this economic problem to rake in excessive profits. We can also make less trips overseas, or send our children overseas to seek further education; in fact, our children should be brought home to further their studies locally.

Each of us possess our own personal wealth which is not bringing us any benefit. The wealth ought to be mobilised and converted into cash so that it can be invested and deposited in banks and churned out as loans to traders in need of credit. This personal wealth can be valued at billions of ringgit. It will not just disappear. If we invest in unit trusts, not only will they remain our property, but will increase in value, God willing.

The Umno-led government has formulated several strategies and approaches which I cannot elaborate at this juncture as this is not the right time, and because there are certain quarters who want to see us fail. We are confident that we can deflect the attacks against us and implement plans to rebuild the economy. God willing, with the support of the people, our efforts to revive the economy will succeed.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY THE WEST

All Malaysians should work together to defend the sovereignty of the nation. What we are doing is actually defending our independence, no less than that. Do remember, those who created the economic turmoil that we are facing now are just like the colonialists who once colonised us. Do not think their behaviour has changed. As the Malay adage goes, 'Tigers will always have their stripes.'

When they were confronted by the communists, they showed a smiling face. They were more concerned with basic human rights, with suppression amongst human beings, with violent communism and injustice in the world. They claimed they would take action to prevent injustice and any form of suppression anywhere. They would preserve the country's sovereignty with the might of their military. They try to pro-

ject themselves as Hollywood's *Rambo*, one who is bold, strong and successful and who never dies.

But do remember Bosnia-Herzegovina. When the Serbs attacked the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia, the West did not do anything. Muslims were slaughtered and massacred in front of Western soldiers who were supposedly sent to save the Bosnians, yet did not lift a finger to save the Bosnian Muslims.

Their planes were busily flying in the air to display their strength and might. But they did not shoot the Serbs nor attack with their intelligence bombs. Slaughter, rape and killings continued unabated. Some 300,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed senselessly before the West dared take any action against the Serbs and Serbia.

Having witnessed tragic events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Rwanda and now the Serbian province of Kosovo, can we still believe that the West will fight for human rights, including the right to work and be paid?

It is most unfortunate that there are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Malaysia that are so influenced by the West that they constantly condemn Eastern countries, including Malaysia, for allegedly abusing human rights. But when actions of the new Western capitalists caused twenty million workers to lose their income and jobs, we do not hear any NGOs condemning them for abusing workers and their rights. Surely the West will not bother about their fate.

With some twenty million workers unemployed, while those working are getting pay cuts and starving due to lack of food and medicine. The main thing for them is the enforcement of a trading system that is free and that payments of loans are made to their banks which are bigger and richer than all the countries which they had attacked and destroyed put together. They have made the act of bullying weak countries something noble.

ONLY UMNO CAN DEFEND MALAYSIA

To safeguard our independence and sovereignty, the only hope we have is ourselves, it is we Malaysians, we in the Barisan Nasional, the members of Umno who lead the government of Malaysia, who are ultimately responsible for the well-being of the country. After 40 years of independence, Malaysia under the Alliance and the Barisan Nasional gov-

ernment led by Umno has been successful in preventing racial conflicts, and has succeeded in rapidly developing the country, providing a better standard of living for the people and most importantly, in redeeming the dignity of our nation, the honour of the Malays and other *Bumiputeras* so that we are no longer looked down upon, but are instead treated as models to other races, as an example of how a race which has been suppressed for hundreds of years is able to regain its dignity and place itself on par with others who are more developed, who once used to colonise and humiliate us.

All this, the regeneration of ourselves and the regaining of our dignity is because of a political party which was established more than 50 years ago. Umno was created not with a big ambition for, at that time, the thinking of the Malays was shackled by the colonialists, such that it was never dreamt that the Malay states which were then factionalised, and driven to parochialism, would ever be able to unite and rule themselves. For a hundred years, we had surrendered the autonomy of the Malay states to foreigners and to that extent we no longer believed we were able to take over the mettle of power and to govern ourselves. Our self-confidence was so low that there were Malay leaders advising activists, who opposed the Malayan Union, that Malays should never indulge in politics, that politics are the prerogative of the aristocrats and the British. Only they had the right and were eligible. The aristocrats were only required to follow the footsteps of the British who claimed to know everything.

But when the Malay associations agreed to set up Umno, the process of reviving their self-confidence soon began. After successfully abolishing the Malayan Union, Umno continued its demand for independence.

Success in any struggle does not mean that success will be permanent. Challenges and danger lurk all the time. If we allow ourselves to be weakened by success and prosperity, believe me, the success that we have attained will be alienated from us. Therefore, it is imperative that Umno be prepared and united at all times, and we should be wary of the possibility of attempts to bring it down.

Beware of the West's subtle propaganda. We will not realise that we have been used by them. They create concepts all the time which supposedly reflect an advanced civilisation, a civilisation that is more consistent with the evolution of time. There will be amongst us (in fact,

there already exist) those who do not want to be regarded as being left behind. These people always accept the current thinking of the West. When we accept them in a subtle way, then we are praised and accepted as members of their club. The injection of this fine needle continues, until they are able to separate those who are receptive to their concepts and thinking from those who are said to be backwards for rejecting them.

THE SUCCESS OF UMNO'S STYLE OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy was invented as a governing system by the people to replace feudalism. The objective was to establish a fair government for the people. The West now argues that a government that can bring happiness to the people is not important, and that a more vital factor is to uphold democracy even though it causes suffering to the people. We can see how in certain countries elections after elections are held, but a credible government cannot be formed. The people's problem cannot be solved, resulting in continued suffering and a country that cannot be developed. But the liberal democrats say this is perfectly fine as long as their form of democracy is practised. In other words, mankind becomes the tool of democracy, not democracy as a tool for mankind, for the good of the human race.

We accept democracy as a good system with a greater probability of producing a fair and effective leadership, though this is not definite. In Malaysia, democracy has been successfully practised. We have been able to form governments and choose them through fair elections. The country is able to develop and the people live in peace and prosperity.

But never think that the success of democracy in Malaysia is due to democracy being a perfect form of government without any weaknesses. Democracy is successful in Malaysia because we Malaysians, both politicians and political parties, know how to use this democratic system.

If democracy merely refers to majority rule, the Malays who make up the majority of Malaysians can use racial sentiments to establish a 100 per cent Malay government. With the rights of a majority government, chosen through a democratic process, the Malays can then claim all the country's riches for themselves, deny and suppress the other

racess, alter electoral boundaries so that Malay political power would be bigger, stronger and permanent. All these can be done without discarding democracy. But will this form of democracy bring peace and success to Malaysia?

Democracy in Malaysia has been beneficial because we have not taken advantage of the system to our interest. Instead, we choose to work alongside other races, we do not discard minority rights and we emphasise justice for all. With this, all races, as well as the Opposition, will benefit and gain from the Malaysian way of practising democracy. With this, politics becomes stable and democracy, including elections, can continuously be practised. With this, the same party-led government has been given the mandate to rule this country repeatedly.

There are accusations and allegations that democracy is non-existent in Malaysia because there is no change in government after every election. They say change is part of democracy. If there is no change, then there is no democracy. And many amongst us feel slightly embarrassed as there is no change. But remember, the right to maintain governments is not contradictory to democracy; in fact, it becomes part of democracy if the preservation is in accordance with the people's wishes.

Similarly with our country and party. Umno is a democratic party, which accepts the principles and methods of democracy, for we believe that democracy is a system and method that suits us best. Democracy provides us with the rights and opportunities as ordinary members to change, topple and elect leaders according to our desires. With this we believe that good leaders will steer the party all the time.

Although we believe humans will not do anything that is self-destructive, man will almost always indulge in unhealthy activities, which would only bring misfortune in the end. We know what is good, but we continue to do something bad, maybe out of lust or for short-term gains.

It is human nature to act aggressively when one is angry compared to when one is in a state of satisfaction or joy after achieving something. Therefore, because of anger towards a good thing, the bad is also supported.

This is also true of short-term gains. Because of the obsession with short-term gains, people are willing to do anything which ultimately will not benefit them. Confronted with bribes, people today will forget about something bad that will befall them later, even in the hereafter.

This is why, even though we believe that democracy is good for ourselves, its practices should be carried out cautiously. If there are attempts to use democracy to avert such bad intentions, then we need to tighten the procedures of democracy to avert such bad intentions. Let us remember that the West which claim that they are democratic did not allow the communist party to exist in their countries. Democracy also did not prevent them from colonising others up to now.

Democracy is not a revealed religion. Even religions can be misinterpreted and twisted by people with vested interests, let alone democracy. This being the case, not all that is preached by the Western liberal democrats will be practised by us. We will pick the good and discard the bad.

BEWARE OF GLOBALISATION

We are living in a fast-changing world. The era of information technology has dawned upon us, bringing with it new opportunities that can better our lives. But the opportunities to damage our society have also emerged.

As usual, the West, which from the beginning foresaw these opportunities, made use of the opportunities that came with this new technology to their own advantage. Realising that this technology would enable them to penetrate borders that isolate and safeguard peoples of the world, they created new philosophies and values which legitimised and supported their invasion.

Globalisation, a world without borders, deregulation and liberalisation are new terminologies introduced by the West. Not even one was created by us, by the East, by Asia. Surely the West did not come up with these new thoughts to lose out. Globalisation, the borderless world, deregulation and liberalisation are for their own interest. Let us not accept all these without scrutiny, without suspicion. Let us not accept all these because we want to be regarded as sophisticated. Let us not be proud of being praised by them when we show how up-to-date our thinking is.

Those who survive and succeed are those who are always cautious when a new thing is introduced, people who are wary of ulterior motives. Globalisation, liberalisation and deregulation might bring many benefits to us, but this new thinking could destroy us too. The attack on

our currency is part of globalisation, liberalisation and deregulation and we only end up losing.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF UMNO

Umno has successfully survived for over 50 years. Not many political parties that fought for independence have managed to survive this long. Most have disappeared soon after independence. But for more than half a century, Umno has not only survived but is a success story in politics, successful in leading the Malaysian government.

Whether we will continue to survive will depend on our culture, our character, and whether we are cautious and careful, especially when something new is introduced. Do not, for whatever reason, allow short-term gains to blur our vision of long-term losses.

Nothing is permanent in this world. As with everything else in the world, Umno too is not permanent. But its lifespan need not be shortened because we are careless, inefficient and obsessed with quick, short-term gains. The Umno struggle is not over yet. There is more that needs to be done. The Malays and other *Bumiputeras* are still not strong enough to be left alone to fend for themselves without Umno's leadership and protection. They are still not strong enough to compete in this ever-changing world. Our independence is still not assured. Even nations that are more powerful than us have been defeated. Are we able to save ourselves without unity and brotherhood amongst us, without working together with other races which are in concert with us in saving our blessed nation? The answer is NO. The answer is that we still cannot afford to practise Western-style liberal democracy if we want to survive.

So we have to save and protect Umno. Leaders are not permanent, leaders can be replaced and leaders can be found. But Umno can endure longer than its leaders. We need to be cautious and careful in running this organisation. It has served us well and we have to serve it well too. God will bless our sincere and noble struggle.



5

TOLERANCE AND MODERATION IN ISLAM

I AM DEEPLY HONOURED for being invited to speak at this august and ancient seat of Islamic learning. I am aware that despite my efforts to learn about the teachings and practices of Islam, I am in the presence of those who are truly learned in the subject. I accepted this invitation because I hold very strongly to my religion and I regret the perceptions of it by both the Muslims and non-Muslims which have led to Islam and Muslims being vilified, being associated with unsavoury activities and even made fun of. All these perceptions and vilifications are due not to Islam itself but to the interpretations given to it by Muslims and non-Muslims with vested interests, wanting to justify the wrongs that they have done or intend to do. Islam is a perfect religion, but we are not perfect. It is our imperfections and refusal to adhere to the true teachings of Islam that have led to the decline and to the unfortunate circumstances that Muslims worldwide are in today.

Toleration and moderation in Islam is a very pertinent topic given the fact that Islam as a religion and Muslims as a community are currently being equated with intolerance and extremism not just by non-Muslims but even by some Muslims of professedly liberal views.

Islam as preached and propagated by Prophet Muhammad is a tolerant and moderate religion. This is evident from many of the Prophet's *sunnah*, his attitude towards those members of his family who did not embrace Islam, his attitude and treatment of the people of Mecca, his

former enemies when Mecca surrendered to him, by his injunctions against the ill-treatment of prisoners, of Muslims who had erred and even of the apostates. In none of these was he extreme and rigid. In all he showed understanding, moderation and tolerance.

At no time did his tolerance and forbearance manifest themselves more than during the drawing up of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. We know how the *Jahiliyah* citizens of Mecca ill-treated him and his followers and how they prevented the pilgrims from Medina from performing the *Hajj*. We know too how arrogant the Meccans were when the treaty was drawn up, rejecting the inclusion of the Unity of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad in the text. His followers resented the behaviour of the *Jahiliyah*. They wanted to stop negotiation and reject the words and terms of the treaty. But Prophet Muhammad prevailed and accepted the text of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and sealed it. He was not just being diplomatic and wise but he was showing the greatest degree of tolerance and moderation even in his dealings with his bitter detractors and enemies. And we know what happened the following year. He and his followers entered Mecca without much resistance from the citizens who eventually accepted Islam. He was magnanimous to them, even to Hendon who had eaten the liver of Saidina Hamzah at Uhud. And the behaviour of the Prophet at Mecca won over all the Arabs of the whole peninsula so that all of them embraced Islam and united as an *ummah*. From then on the spread of Islam as a faith and as the motivating spirit to build an empire could no longer be resisted. Such was the significance and the miracle wrought by moderation and tolerance for Islam and the *ummah*.

In case we still doubt that Islam enjoins us to be moderate and tolerant, and that the Prophet followed the injunctions of Islam when he was magnanimously tolerant and moderate to his followers and to his enemies, let us look at what the *Quran* says about moderation and tolerance in Islam. Surah Al-Mumtahinah Verse 8 says, "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just."

Surah Al-Imran Verse 159 says,

"It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have

broken away from about thee: so pass over (Their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou has Taken a decision put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)."

The Constitution of Medina encouraged cooperation and solidarity amongst Muslims, Christians, Jews and others. The Constitution which was put in writing ensured freedom, including the freedom of worship, equality and justice for all.

Thus in Surah Al-Kafirun, the non-believers were told, "To you your religion, and to me my religion."

It was the same teachings of Islam which united the Ansar and Muhajirin into "an *ummah* distinct from all other peoples of the world", but he also referred to the Jewish clans who allied themselves with him, as "an *ummah* along with the Believers", even though each continued to practise its own faith.

One of the most significant teachings brought by the Prophet to the Arab tribes was the futility and the wrongness of the eternal feuds. We know that before Islam these tribes fought against each other continuously over some quarrel that they had had in the distant past. They had even forgotten the reasons for their quarrels but for generations they remained enemies and attacked each other whenever they met. They were wholly consumed by tribal loyalties and hatred for each other.

This fanatical unquestioning espousal of tribalism and a tribal cause through generations can only result in wasteful fighting, disunity and weakness. Islam condemns fanaticism which invariably leads to and is associated with extremism, lack of moderation and tolerance. Certainly, one of the greatest achievements of the Prophet and of Islam was to bring the tribes together, to give them a new common and sensible loyalty and to enable Islam to spread worldwide eventually.

In Surah Al-Imran Verse 103, *inter alia*, Allah says, "And remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you, For ye were enemies And He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, Ye became brethren."

The loyalty to Islam was not fanatical. It was based on reason, on the knowledge that unity brought strength and enabled success to be

achieved. It was a loyalty that tolerated differences even in the practice of Islam. It was not rigid. Only if the articles of faith, the acceptance of the one Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet are rejected is a person no longer Muslim. Today, there are literally millions of non-practising Muslims but they are still people of the faith because they have not rejected the Oneness of Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet. We accept them as our brothers praying that one day their hearts will open and they will be practising Muslims once more. And indeed today we see millions who were forced to give up Islam or had lived in an anti-Islamic environment returning to Islam with such great ardour, fighting against terrible odds in order to uphold their belief.

But do Muslims follow the teachings of Islam regarding tolerance and moderation? The answer is "Yes". The vast majority of Muslims throughout the world are faithful to the injunctions of Islam to be tolerant and moderate. But in any society, in any grouping and in any religion there are the 'black sheep', the exceptions to the rule.

There are Christian extremists who are more cruel and intolerant than Muslim extremists. We see them in Bosnia-Herzegovina, raping, torturing and killing fellow Slavs simply because these Slavs are Muslim. Historically, of course, the Spanish Inquisition which lasted 300 years or more exhibited an extreme degree of intolerance on the part of the Catholics, expelling Jews and Muslims from Spain, and questioning even those who had converted to Christianity as to whether they were 'real' Christians. In Ireland, religious intolerance amongst Christians resulted in a long-drawn out war between the Protestants and the Catholics. And the Christian militia in Lebanon wrecked that jewel of a country.

We see intolerance in the Jewish state of Benjamin Netanyahu and some of the Jewish religious parties of Israel. Forgetting their own oppression by the Christians of Europe, they oppress the Arabs of Muslim and Christian faiths and confine them to ghettos in the same way that they themselves were treated by Hitler's Germany during World War II. The Hindus and the Buddhists are also given to extremism, leading to intolerance and oppression of others not of their own faith. No one has a monopoly of tolerance and moderation.

In any society, in any religion, there will be aberrations. We are tempted to label everyone in a society with an aberrant minority with

the same label. And having done that, we then proceed to act in a manner that reflects our prejudices towards the whole of that society.

Within the Islamic community, the *ummah*, we must admit that we have a fair share of aberrations, of extremist intolerance and immoderation despite the fact that these are against the teachings of Islam. And as is usual we, the Muslims, are all tarred with the same brush by our detractors. The unfortunate thing is that quite often the extremist and the intolerant have gained such power over their own communities that they are able to influence almost everyone with their perception of things. And so amongst non-Muslims, in particular the ethnic Europeans, there is almost total belief that Muslims and terrorists are one and the same. They perceive Islam as a religion which preaches intolerance and immoderation no matter how much we try to explain that it is not, that it is due to misinterpretations, that it is as much an aberration as the Spanish Inquisition was to Christianity, as much as the cruelties and intolerance of the Serbs are not typical of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This unfortunate perception of Islam somehow persists.

Do we need to worry about how others, in particular our detractors, perceive Islam and the Muslims? I think we do. When the Prophet received his *wahyu*, the first followers came from amongst those who saw in Islam a means of salvation. The *Jahiliyah* community was intolerant and cruel and given to infanticide, to taking innumerable wives of dubious legality, to ill treatment of slaves, servants and prisoners, to oppression of the poor by the rich, the weak by the strong. Islam preached salvation of the oppressed, just laws, abolition of infanticide, limitation of wives to four, equality between the wives and a host of other teachings which would create a better society. And so the oppressed turned to Islam and Bilal, the oppressed slave, was amongst the first to accept Islam.

Whether we want to spread Islam or not, we have a duty to explain Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. We have to explain it in such a way as to reduce the wrong perception of our religion that is now common worldwide. But the best explanation, the most convincing argument is through demonstrating visibly the true teachings of Islam with regard to tolerance and moderation, and the rejection of fanaticism and extremism.

Islamic justice is based on equitability between crime and punishment; roughly exemplified by the aphorism, "an eye for an eye". But what is less known but nevertheless equally strong a principle is the stress on moderation and the quality of mercy in the dispensation of justice.

The *Quran* repeatedly enjoins us to be considerate and merciful. It gives the person wronged the right to demand equity, to demand an eye for an eye, a life for a life but it also provides for compensation in lieu of, for forgiveness and mercy. An eye for an eye is not mandatory; it merely evaluates the crime and the appropriate punishment.

In Surah Al-Maaidah Verse 45, Allah says,

"We ordained therein for them: Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal. But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (No better than) wrongdoers."

Allah is merciful and compassionate. Can we really believe that He does not want us to be merciful and compassionate? To be merciful and compassionate requires tolerance and moderation. Certainly, the single-minded quest for revenge, the consuming desire to inflict upon our enemies what they have inflicted upon us is not in keeping with being merciful and compassionate.

If we are to correct this image of Islam, if we want to banish the perception that Muslims are implacable enemies, intolerant, immoderate and extreme, then we must demonstrate a willingness to forego the desire for revenge, for unmitigated violence. Killing each other and killing others in order to emphasise the depth and strength of our commitment to our struggle may succeed in drawing attention to our grievances, but they will not lead to the success of our struggle. We know that the more the injustice and the oppression that are heaped upon us, the greater will be our determination to fight on. Similarly, the more we inflict the same on our enemies, the more determined they will be. And the greater will be their resistance. We will not win that way unless of

course it is not winning or success that we are after but the desire to seek revenge for the sake of revenge, to satisfy our animal desires.

It is therefore imperative that we cultivate the values of tolerance and moderation that are enjoined upon us by our faith. We know that the *Quran* says that failures and wrongs are due to us and that success comes from Allah, our Creator. So far we have failed. We have failed to regain our past glory. We have failed to protect ourselves. We have failed even to keep up our strength and our knowledge. All these are due to our own faults, faults which emanate from our failure to adhere to the teachings of Islam as contained in the *Quran* and the verified *hadith*. It is not due to Allah or to what He has ordained for us.

But there will be those who believe that they are truly following the teachings of Islam because they perform all the rituals and more, because of their superficial appearances being compatible with what they think is the image of Islam. I am not questioning the strength of their faith. But Islam is not just about rituals and appearances. Islam is complete a way of life, *ad-deen*. And the way of life is reflected not just in religious piety but also in those characteristics of tolerance and moderation in all that we do.

How can we pray and then go forth to seek revenge against fellow Muslims by slaughtering them? They may not pray as much as we pray, but can we really know whether they have gained less merit than we have? Surely only Allah will know who adheres more to the teachings of Islam, we or they. Can we then take it upon ourselves to pass judgement on the Islam of others, to punish these people and in the process weaken Muslims and allow those who are against Islam and the Muslims to triumph over us? How many times have Allah repeated in the *Quran* that we may not assume that those whom we condemn are less pious than us, that they may be even more Muslim than us. Our condemnation of others is in fact a reflection of our intolerance and that certainly is against the teachings of Islam.

Surah Al-Hujuraat Verse 11 makes this clear and I quote:

"O ye who believe! Let not some men amongst you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive)

nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong."

Islam is a pragmatic religion. It is not meant as an imposition on its followers. It is not meant to bring hardship on them. Thus in Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 256, Allah says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion", and in Surah Al-Maaidah Verse 6, Allah says, "O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands, Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that ye may be grateful."

We know that not all Muslim communities live in countries with a population made up wholly of Muslims. Today, more and more Muslims are living in non-Muslim countries, in non-Muslim communities. There are things that a wholly Muslim community can do which cannot be done in a community in which the Muslim majority is small, or indeed in which they are a minority. Those Muslims living in a purely Muslim country must remember that in this shrinking world anything that is done in one Muslim community or country will affect the lives of other Muslim communities.

We may, in a largely Muslim country, be intolerant and oppressive towards the few non-Muslims in our midst. But we must always remember that this may affect the lives of those Muslims who make up the minority in another country. We would not like these Muslim minorities in so many countries to suffer because of our actions against the non-Muslims in our midst.

True, sometimes even when we are fair and just, tolerant towards the non-Muslims in our midst, Muslim minorities in other countries are still oppressed. What did we do to deserve the atrocities against Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere? But the ways of Allah are beyond us to reason. What we do know is that we are far from living up to the way of life as enjoined by our religion. We pick and choose those

teachings which can justify our desires and disregard those which would show that we are wrong.

In Malaysia, Muslims are in the majority, but only just. More than 40 per cent of our population is made up of non-Muslims. Under British rule, the races were separated from one another physically and by occupation. The separation was augmented by religious differences, the Malays being entirely Muslims, the Chinese Buddhist or Taoist and the Indians Hindus. Clearly all the elements for conflict were there when independence forced the races to come into contact with one another.

But the tolerance and moderation of Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman brought the ethnic-based political parties under one coalition, the Alliance. The racist extremists left the Alliance to form alternative parties. But the majority stayed with Tunku Abdul Rahman and the resulting coalition won the first election held under British rule and subsequent post-independence elections. In 1969, race riots broke out because political unity was not enough to overcome extreme economic disparities. The violence and the killings did not last long. Within a year the leaders, especially the Muslim leaders, calmed their people by drawing up a policy to correct economic imbalances. Since then there has been no race riots of any kind in Malaysia. Attempts by extremists, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to stir up feelings of intolerance and hatred failed. The government curbed any tendency towards religious extremism through judicial and psychological persuasion.

Malaysia is today stable and peaceful. Not even attempts by foreign elements to stir up racial and religious extremism, to destabilise the economy and recreate economic disparities between the races have succeeded in bringing the forces of intolerance and immoderation back.

As a result, Malaysia has been able to develop fast.

The economic wealth, the technological know-how, the administrative skills have grown amongst all, including the Muslims. Today, the Muslims are as capable as the non-Muslims in administration, politics, science and technology, business and industry.

Malaysia's Muslims believe in moderation and tolerance because that is what our religion tells us. That is reciprocated by the majority of the non-Muslims. Indeed they actively support the Muslims in order to

enable them to achieve the same degree of development and success. Tolerance and moderation have therefore paid off handsomely for the Muslims in Malaysia. We see not just a religious dogma in the teachings of Islam but truly a good way of life. And tolerance and moderation is clearly a part of the teachings of Islam. If we ignore these teachings then we will not only be sinning but we will also be depriving ourselves of the benefits of Islam. If because of this we fail, if we become weak and oppressed, we have only ourselves to blame.

6

THE FUTURE OF MUSLIM NATIONS

AS WE GATHER HERE in Teheran on the threshold of a new Western century and millennium, we realise, with renewed urgency, the enormous challenges that have to be faced. This Summit takes place at a time when the world is subjecting the *ummah* to new threats and pressures. The Palestinians continue to remain, by and large, refugees, and the promises of Oslo are in tatters. Acknowledged statehood for Palestine seems as distant as ever unless Palestine takes unilateral action, a move which will surely result in unnecessary bloodletting. The objective of the struggle of our Palestinian brothers is clear. We must not allow it to be clouded by our outrage and indulge in uncalculated risks.

Malaysia is deeply saddened by the killings of foreigners and Muslim brothers alike in some Muslim nations. They are not in accordance with the precepts of Islam and they really do not help the cause of Islam. We should shelve our own quarrels in order to present a united front in the face of combined threats against us. We should not be our own enemy. Yet we see in so many Muslim nations fratricidal wars and instabilities which render most of our governments impotent either to develop and compete with our detractors or even to govern effectively. Personal quarrels and personal ambitions for power are allowed to disrupt government administration, leaving it incapable of addressing the needs of the people. As a result, Muslim nations remain largely undeveloped and the Muslim *ummah* poor, unskilled, uneducated and inca-

An address delivered at the 8th Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Teheran, Iran, on December 9, 1997

pable of contributing positively towards the well-being of Muslims, their faith and their nations.

Though many of us are endowed with rich resources, we are unable to put such resources to optimal use, to serve and defend Islam and Muslim nations against those who loudly confess to having a dislike for us and our religion and equally loudly proclaim their intention to frustrate us.

Such is the state of our nations that the best of our people emigrate and contribute to the wealth of knowledge and skills of the nations of their domicile, often nations which are hostile to us. We have no facilities to offer these talented people and the conditions in our nations are unsuitable for the application of the considerable attributes that they possess. We are too busy with our petty quarrels to attend to their needs.

We have not yet found or developed a system of determining how our government should govern. Some of us are monarchies, some are theocracies and some are democracies. Despite all that the West claims about the efficacy and fairness of their brand of democracy, it is still far from being a perfect system or even a good system for them or for anyone. Far too often the wrong people are chosen to form their governments. Vested interests often deflect them from the duties they have to perform. Corruption is rife and immorality is common.

To deflect from their problems at home, they often focus on the so-called misdeeds of other governments and other nations. They accuse our nations, in particular, of human-rights abuse, of terrorism, of mis-managing our nations, of environmental degradation. With their NGOs they are able to actively interfere in our affairs, instigating our people to violence against our government and against each other. They give refuge to those of our people who promote disruptive activities in our nations.

The present Western-style system and concept of democracy is no better than the feudalistic theocratic states which had preceded them. Their ways may be different but the objective and the end result are the same. One must not forget that it was they who kindled the Spanish Inquisition. Though they no longer burn people at the stake, the economic heat they place under and around their victims is no less searing. It is still recant, submit or be liquidated.

Muslim nations need not invent systems of government because systems can never be perfect and can never guarantee good government. What creates good government is the quality of the people who are entrusted with ruling the nation. And for the right quality of people we need only revert to the teachings of Islam, the true teachings, not the teachings which are interpreted to justify what we are doing, right or wrong, good or bad.

If we are not sure what is meant by the true teachings, we need to ask only a few questions. Does Islam advocate wars and violence amongst Muslims whether as groups or as sects or as nations? Does Islam advocate oppression of the people by the government or destabilising and subverting of governments through irresponsible acts by the people? Does Islam advocate the rejection of a good life in this world or a good life in the hereafter, or does Islam preach *hassanah* in this world and in the *akhirat*? Can we really say that it is our religious duty to be poor, without knowledge and skills, incapable of defending ourselves against our enemies, or is it our religious duty to have wealth and knowledge and skills in order to be able to defend the *ummah* against our detractors, our oppressors? Did the Prophet depend on the wealth and the skills of his followers or did the Prophet buy bows and arrows, swords, horses and camels from those whose manifest objective was to make money for themselves, or worse still, to destroy Islam and the Muslims?

We know the answers to all these questions. And yet we do not care to follow the Islamic answers to these questions. Instead we quibble about small things such as how a Muslim should look or what he should wear. At times we fight each other over minor differences in the expression of our faith. We are forever trying to outdo one another in various external manifestations of religious piety, in inventing newer and more restrictive practices in our desire to exhibit the strength of our faith. And then we try to impose these practices on everyone, and condemn them if they refuse. Where Muslims are living in peace and unity we divide them and cause them to fight each other because of differences created in our practices of Islam.

Islam is a religion of peace, of brotherhood and of flexibility. The practice of Islam is never rigid. There is always a leeway given so that Islam does not become a burden to the faithful. In prayers, in fasting, in the disbursement of the *zakat*, and in the performance of the *Hajj*, Islam

allows for circumstance to dictate the practice. Thus, one can perform the *solat* in various ways, depending on the situation and one's own fitness; one fasts in accordance with one's physical capacity and the place where one is; one pays the *zakat* according to one's means; one performs the *Hajj* if one is able to. It is only in the profession of faith in Allah and the acceptance of Muhammad as His Rasul in one's heart that one cannot be flexible, though one may be forced to renounce openly.

I am not trying to preach but we all know that we are always urged and at times threatened to be rigid in the practice of Islam. Indeed, we seem to want to compete in exhibiting how much more we are willing to endure unnecessary discomfort, hardship and even pain in order to demonstrate the high degree of our adherence to our faith.

We seem to want to reject the bounries of Allah in this world, including the faculty to think because we often consider that this world is not for us. It is not the unthinking enjoyment of life that I refer to—it is the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to defend and contribute to the greatness of Islam, the religion we refer to as *al-deen*, as a complete way of life, a whole system of thought and action. And because of all these we find the *ummah* trodden under and oppressed everywhere and insults thrown at our religion, while we are completely incapable of doing anything to protect and safeguard our honour and the sanctity of Islam.

Today, there is not a single Muslim superpower, nor is there a Muslim nation, which is strong enough to defend itself, much less defend other Muslim nations or Muslims who are attacked. We have seen 200,000 Muslims slaughtered in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the soldiers of non-Muslim nations watched without raising a finger. We cannot blame these soldiers because we ourselves did nothing. We had to place ourselves under the command of others. If they decide to let our co-religionist be tortured, raped and massacred, we had to stand by like them, whether we are there or in our own nations.

Malaysia realises its own weaknesses in terms of defence capabilities. We had concentrated on achieving economic independence, believing that we could free ourselves from political pressures, from being recolonised and dictated to, from having others determine who our friends and our enemies should be, if we are economically strong.

Today we are not so sure that that alone is enough. Globalisation has changed the whole equation. We may not want to accept the changes. We may want to stay out. But there is no way we can do this. One way or another, the process of globalisation and the breaking down of borders will take place and become a fact of life.

The speed and ease of travel, of telecommunication, of multimedia technologies and the spread of information; all these will render us exposed to everything that is happening around us. They can easily undermine our faith or they can push us into self-destructive extremism or into rejection. In the end the advances in science and technology will engulf us. We cannot resist these changes any more than our immediate forebears were able to resist the cannons and the guns, the steel-hulled warships and the warplanes and the changing character of battles and wars. They had to retreat not just from their lands but also from the fields of knowledge and skills they were once masters of. They lost because they failed to adjust to a changing world and the new knowledge and skills that fuelled these changes.

Today, we are witnessing two simultaneous revolutions, a technological revolution and a revolution in the concept of relationship between nations referred to as globalisation. Whether we like them or not, they will engulf us as much or much more than the Industrial Revolution did a few centuries ago. Fortunately, our detractors are as new to these changes as we are. They are groping around to find a way through the maze of knowledge and capabilities which the Information Technology creates and the breakdown of borders poses. We are not so far behind them in these fields. Indeed, many of us are pioneers and contributors to these new skills, knowledge and concepts of international relations.

We have an opportunity to leapfrog over the Industrial Age into the Information Age and the global world and be at the same level as the others. Unfortunately, it looks like we are again going to miss this opportunity to catch up. And if we fail this time we are going to be so disadvantaged that we will lose hope, become desperate and do the very things which will ensure our defeat and resubjugation.

Is it important therefore that we take up the challenges of the Information Age and the global society concept now? If we do, we can help shape the response and the changes and devise our own usage and concepts so as not to lose our faith, our identity and our way of life. As

much as the early followers of the faith adopted and adapted to life outside the Arabian peninsula and built an empire of the faithful which included peoples and cultures of the non-Arabs in Asia, Africa and Europe, we can, by mastering the changes now taking place, enhance our faith and preserve our way of life. If we employ all our skills, we will not only survive but we will direct the application of the technologies and the concepts.

It is important that we appreciate the powerful forces which are gathering around us, forces which most of the time are hostile. If we Muslims insist on remaining without knowledge in this area, we can be sure that we and our religion will be under constant attack and will be in retreat all the time. If we buy these skills from them then it will be like our purchasing of defence capabilities from them. We will get only what will not give us ultimate success in the preservation of our faith and way of life.

Let us thus ponder over the debilitated state of the Muslim world today and its apparent inability to help itself and try to resolve the very real problems which confront us now.

7

LEARNING FROM THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE, we must first of all look back on the past so that we know where we are coming from. If we do not do that, then we may actually be moving backwards even though we may feel we are moving forward.

The same thing applies when we face the 21st century—an era where information made available through sophisticated technology will change people's lifestyles and where borders between nations can no longer prevent the inflow of information and other activities. Accompanying the inflow would be challenges in such fields as economics and finance besides social and cultural activities. This means we need to seek guidance and draw lessons from world history, Islamic history and history of the Muslims.

This does not necessarily mean that we can find all the right answers through Islamic history. But we may be able to learn the strategies and approaches used by Muslims who were so successful in the early years but these strategies were no longer suitable in the later years and instead brought negative results. At least we can identify what were the ineffective ways used to counter problems at that time, challenges and problems which may be similar with the ones we will face in the future.

A speech delivered at the Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia's Regional Conference on "Towards the 21st Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslims in the Region," in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on August 22, 1997

Even if we do not go deeply into Islamic history, it was obvious that ignorant Arabs who were living in the desert, whose culture was so backward that they were willing to kill their own children and were obsessed with their ways, later accepted Islam and its teachings and succeeded in creating a vast empire and developed a civilisation far superior than others during their time. From Spain to China, the once-ignorant Arabs helped spread Islam to the point that half of mankind accepted the religion and changed their lifestyles, language and written scripts. Against the fact that Prophet Muhammad himself was illiterate, the achievements of the Muslim Arabs were indeed outstanding. Within a century after *hijrah*, the ignorant desert Arabs, by just accepting and practising Islam, had built a big and strong empire. The spread of Islam after this was not as wide even though efforts to this end continued successfully.

We also know from history that after the Muslims were ousted from Spain in 1492, the Islamic Turkish Empire emerged in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Subsequently, the Turkish Empire also fell to the point that Turkey no longer became the centre of an Islamic Empire, and instead it rejected Islam in its administration and declared itself a secular state which had no involvement in the Islamic world.

The rise and fall of Islam and its followers in history have close connections with the religion they practised. But why was it that when the ignorant Arabs adopted Islam they became such a dynamic group of followers? But in the later years, a lot of teachings deviating from the true path of Islam were spread and more Muslims became involved in a power struggle while declaring that they were doing so in the name of Islam.

That is why three out of four Caliphs were murdered. Only the first Caliph, Saidina Abu Bakar, was not killed. Saidina Abu Bakar was known to be humble. When he was appointed Caliph, he told everyone that they could criticise him because he said he was a mere mortal and not a prophet. The killing of Saidina Omar and Osman was surely because there were followers of Islam who did not agree with their leadership.

But when Saidina Ali was appointed Caliph, the opposition to him was very strong. War ensued between Saidina Ali and the Mu'awiyah which eventually ended with the murder of Saidina Ali, resulting in a split amongst the Muslims—the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. The differ-

ence between the Sunnis and Shi'ites was great but both argued that their religion was Islam. How is it that the one religion brought by Prophet Muhammad could become two with wide differences? Surely one of them is not Islamic, or probably each of them have different interpretations of the religion which are both correct and incorrect. What was clear was the fact that the different interpretations and teachings were a result of a political struggle to become Caliph by certain leaders.

But different interpretations of Islam continued to be made. Whether these were the results of problems brought about by changing eras or the political leaderships in these two sides, scholars continued to make rulings (*fatwas*) all the time. At the same time, some scholars introduced their own ruling and formed groups or *ta'riqat* and others. To support them, many of them created *hadiths* which had no real basis.

Two hundred years after *hijrah*, Imam Bukhari collected a total of 600,000 *hadiths*. Out of these, he only verified 7,000 and rejected about 593,000 which he believed were false and not genuine.

Other *hadith* scholars such as Muslim and Tarmizi accepted even less than the 7,000. There were *hadiths* accepted by Imam Bukhari but rejected by other scholars who also studied them, and vice versa.

This happened only 200 years after *hijrah*. After this, a lot of *hadiths* were created by other people. There were many opinions, interpretations and *fatwas* made and supported by various means. Some of them were rejected by scholars who came much later but this did not deter anyone from continuing to make *fatwas* without proper procedures approved by Islam. Hence, the different interpretations.

The truth is that in Islam's 1,400 years, Muslims were exposed to a variety of teachings, each claiming to be Islamic but were different from one another. There were 1,001 beliefs ranging from narrow interpretations which rejected the present world outright, and a desire to bring Islam back 1,400 years before, to one that alienates Islam and accepts secularism. As a result, the followers became very confused. Some lost their minds and their way in the process.

Can such Muslims face the challenges of the 21st century when the world is just a village with sophisticated information technology, rockets, laser, spacecraft and nuclear bombs? In a world dominated by the big powers where none is Islamic, where such injustice exists that

Muslims without weapons are left slaughtered by their enemies, where an Islamic country can be isolated and its people made to die of starvation; and where Muslims are fighting each other, and who are confused by their own teachings; are backward, poor and weak; can they enjoy any benefit from the 21st century?

The answer is that they will not enjoy any benefit. Instead, they will become weaker and will be suppressed and colonised, directly and indirectly.

But this fate should not befall Muslims. Going by history, we can see that the progress and achievements of the Islamic Empire in its early days were due to the fact that there were not many differing interpretations of Islam, not many false *hadiths*, and not many shallow *fatwas* which could have confused the followers. That was why they were not hindered from furthering their studies about the world which were pioneered by others. They even translated the studies by others and made extensive and deep research on their own which surpassed those of other civilisations during their time. They came up with astronomy, algebra, logarithm, medicine, navigation and various other branches of mathematics. They were so skilled in the use of metal that Damascus was known to have the best steel for weapons.

It was possible to study all this knowledge because there was no prohibitions against them. There was also no instructions that only Islamic studies could be pursued. They knew that the *Quran* wanted Muslims to look at everything created by God—the hills and mountains, the earth and the sky, rain, flora and fauna, animals which can be turned into food, vehicles, clothings, the moon and the stars, the days and nights, the weather and the climate and many other God-created things. In the eyes of the Islamic personalities at that time, looking was interpreted as not just looking in the physical sense but also studying them in detail so that they can bring benefits to mankind.

A *hadith* says: "Seek knowledge even as far as China." It was pointed out by detractors that this was just a saying of the Prophet and it was not a command from God. When they disagreed with a particular *hadith*, they were quick to discredit it and refused to acknowledge it as a source of Islamic teaching. But if they subscribed to it, then they would not cease to highlight it repeatedly, even if its authenticity is doubted. Surely seeking knowledge in China does not mean Islamic knowledge. During the Prophet's period, China was also known to

have deep knowledge in such fields as medicine, literature and paper, explosives and many others.

Since Muslims then followed the teachings of the *hadith*, they were clever and efficient, able to comprehend all of God's gifts for the benefit of themselves and Islam. That was why they could build a credible and big empire and filled it with institutions of knowledge, industries, business and commerce, modernise agriculture through new engineering techniques and many others.

Unfortunately, some personalities who disputed and questioned the Islam practised in the progressive years emerged. They began rejecting all the knowledge which they said were against Islam and Muslims were prohibited from studying them. Those with especially strong leanings on the *fiqh* began inventing and spreading their teachings so that Muslims were discouraged from studying those which the former claimed to be un-Islamic. Institutions of higher learning were no longer supplied with books on science and philosophy which did not specialise on Islam. Big libraries ceased to be built and those in existence were no longer equipped with books on areas of studies pioneered by other communities and those pioneered by Islamic philosophers in these fields. Many of these books, especially those considered un-Islamic, were destroyed by this anti-knowledge group.

Instead, a heated debate took place in trying to define what constitutes Islamic and what were the Islamic laws and regulations pertaining to crimes in the eyes of Islam. Muslims froze and were unable to move forward when confronted with rules and regulations based on narrow interpretations.

In certain parts of North Africa and several other locations, individuals claiming to be Imam Mahadi surfaced promising to cleanse Islam before Doomsday. They battled every Muslim who failed to acknowledge them. In Spain, they succeeded in bringing down the administration and forced their narrow teachings to be accepted. Hence, Muslims became even more backward and they were ousted from Spain and could not even save themselves in North Africa.

The history of the Turkish Empire is also similar. The hold over the Turkish Sultanate by scholars with vested interests made it impossible for Turkey to adjust accordingly with the times. The Turkish army became weak and often opposed the government over problems of uni-

forms and weaponry said to be un-Islamic. In the end, Turkey was overcome by the western powers. The intellectuals and military leadership of Turkey were so disillusioned with Turkey that they began to believe that the country they liberated was secular.

The Turkish and Arab empires fell because Muslims rejected knowledge which they considered to be un-Islamic, and therefore unnecessary and prohibitive to Muslims. Muslims had failed to face and counter the problems brought about by a rapidly changing world.

The 21st century is already regarded as a very challenging one. Modern technology, including information technology, will radically change people's lifestyles. No one can isolate themselves from sophisticated technology and the world. People can travel anywhere in the world in less than a day. They can also converse with one another anywhere across the globe on real-time basis as if they were in the same room. Dispatching letters by hand has been replaced by instant dispatch through the Internet. Those in possession of information and the know-how to use them will influence world politics and economy. By the same argument, wars will be won by those in possession of the latest information and the know-how to use them.

Many inventions close to magic can be created by those in possession of deep knowledge in certain fields. As such those in possession of such technology can do anything they like, including oppressing Muslims and Muslim countries.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, they allowed the mass slaughter of Muslims in broad daylight. Worse than that, they confiscated weapons owned by Muslims so that this would facilitate the killings by the enemies of Islam. It is the same in Chechnya, Pakistan and South Asia.

But Muslims were hapless when this injustice took place. They dared not even voice their objections. Such is the fate of Muslims today. For as long as they reject the teachings of Islam which allow them the ability to defend themselves and seek knowledge for this purpose, and as long as they fail to seek happiness in the present world and the hereafter, the fate of Muslims will remain the same.

Obviously, religious knowledge has to be pursued, but there is no reason for Muslims to merely specialise in this discipline. Should Muslim scholars become experts in religious fields alone and not seek knowledge in other disciplines which can help bring progress and save

Muslims? Doesn't the knowledge in other fields which are important to save the Muslims form part of mandatory lessons in the interest of the *ummah*? Isn't the Muslim community guilty of a sin because amongst them there are no experts in fields which can help save Muslims? Aren't the Muslims at fault because today there is not even a single major Islamic power? Aren't the Muslims wrong if because of their own weaknesses and disappointments, they reject Islamic brotherhood and make enemies of themselves? Isn't the Muslim community generally at fault, if, due to their disappointment with the weaknesses of Muslims as a result of their neglect in the pursuit of other knowledge, other Muslims reject Islam and turn their country into a secular nation.

We accept that knowledge alone does not guarantee that Islam and Muslims will be saved. For this, many other important Islamic teachings will have to be practised. Islam asks Muslims to remain in brotherhood. But instead, they fight each other because there are those who claim that only they are Muslim, while others are either less Muslim, or are apostates. This is happening in most Muslim countries, in fact even in Malaysia there are those who easily decide for themselves that only they are Muslims while the rest are apostates.

The *Quran* tells us to be patient. Efforts to rehabilitate the strength of Muslims and Muslim nations will take a long time. It requires political stability, efficient administration, knowledge proficiency, wealth, ownership of sophisticated industries and the development of defences which are capable of saving the nation and the Muslims. But many Muslims, especially the extremists, are impatient, they like to take harsh unplanned actions, rebel and run riot without reason, especially against other Muslims. Due to such unprepared actions, they waste the little strength that Muslims have without achieving any progress or development. On the contrary, they create a state of chaos in the Islamic states and weaken the Muslims. In fact, they indirectly or unconsciously, conspire with enemies of Islam, including the Zionists.

Because of these people, there is almost no Muslim nation which is well-administered or developed. There is no Muslim nation which is ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century. While other races and followers of other religions become mightier and progressive, and while world powers become arrogant and oppress Muslims, Muslims and Muslim nations continue to remain backward, weak, disunited and easily used by enemies of Islam to weaken them. They frequently blame

the enemies of Islam for disuniting them, but this situation does not encourage them to stop their own actions which do not benefit Muslims.

In view of this situation, what is the reformation needed by Muslims everywhere which can help prepare them and ensure their success in the 21st century? The much-needed reformation is one which can make Muslims return to the true teachings of Islam, which do not contain mixtures of the various deviant interpretations, teachings and *fatwas* made throughout the 1,400 years after *hijrah*.

This reformation must be able to ensure that Muslims return to the teachings of the *Quran* and the *sunnah* of the Prophet which everyone knows had happened during the days of the Prophet. This includes how the problems posed by the group of *Jahiliyah Quraysh* were handled by the Prophet and other early Muslim followers. This also includes the situation in Medina, as well as the philosophy behind the diplomatic and military struggle to take over Mecca.

What we know from the teachings of the *Quran* and *hadith* is that brotherhood amongst Muslims is given paramount importance. They do not wage wars against each other because of differences in opinion on the facets of Islam. During the time of the Prophet, Islamic brotherhood was the main factor.

It is true that all religious problems could be referred to the Prophet to be solved. However, Islamic teachings have provided for Muslims to solve their problems through *musyawarah*. All parties have the right to voice their opinions, but decisions made through *musyawarah* have to be obeyed. No one, including Caliphs, can make their own unquestionable decisions and force them upon Muslims.

For sure, no small groups stooped to their own teachings and interpretations and acted violently to force society at large to accept their opinion. All parties were tolerant. The Prophet himself did not force his family members who did not accept Islam, to embrace it.

Muslims during the days of the Prophet were patient, courageous, disciplined and loyal to the Prophet's leadership. They were not prohibited from working, even on Fridays, in pursuit of worldly wisdom and *halal* wealth. They were given the responsibility of defending Muslims. Security and defence were important, not the manner in which it was done or the equipment used. Therefore, if defence required different equipment, these equipment must be invented and used. If for this pur-

pose, certain knowledge has to be acquired, it will be wrong to ignore its pursuit.

To save the Muslims, a strong and stable government is also needed. Islamic leadership must be elected through *musyawarah*, a democratic method, and not by cheating or instilling fear in Muslims through untrue teachings.

Differences in opinion and teachings remain in the Muslim community. While deviationists must be returned to the true path, it must be done through *musyawarah* and not pressure, oppression and injustice. If an agreement cannot be reached, tolerance and brotherhood must be practised. Attempts through the use of force which will only bring about disunity and neverending riots, must be avoided.

In short, to face the 21st century which is full of challenges of the Information Age, the reformation needed is one which emphasises the values of Muslims and based on true Islamic teachings which are free from confusing beliefs and interpretations which are not based on the *Quran* and *hadiths*.

The actual situation of this new Age must be acknowledged. Cheating oneself on the real situation will bring about failure in facing the challenges of the 21st century. The main reformation is the reformation of thoughts for those who are trapped within the teachings which are not truly Islamic and which confuse Muslims.

8

COOPERATION FOR GROWTH

WE MEET HERE in Istanbul, a historic city which was the seat of Empires. The Ottoman Empire has now been replaced by modern Turkey, a dynamic country which I believe will reclaim its past glory. The vision for that has already been set by its founder and it remains only for the successive governments to strive towards it. I am sure that the people and the leaders of Turkey will not fail in their duty to their motherland.

We are glad to be associated with Turkey and other nations, in the long struggle to achieve our common visions. The members of the D8 have two things in common: first, we are all developing countries wanting to lift our countries and peoples to a higher stage of development; and second, we are countries with large Muslim populations. Other countries could also fall into this category but we are conscious that large memberships tend to slow down the process of cooperation. So Malaysia subscribes to the initial small membership. It is not, I am sure, a desire to be exclusive. It is merely the need to be manageable. Once progress or success has been achieved we should open our membership to others. By confining ourselves to the eight countries we are not doing anyone any disservice. I am stressing this because I would not like to create misunderstanding or to offend anyone.

Cooperation between countries is now the accepted formula for accelerating progress and development. Even the developed countries are forming unions in order to expand their economy. It is now recog-

A speech delivered at the 1st Developing Eight (D8) Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Countries in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 15, 1997.

nised that the most important objective of any government or country is the well-being of its people. And economic development would contribute much to that well-being.

Certainly, for developing countries like ours, cooperation for economic development is even more important. Our people are in need not so much for affluence as they need just the basic necessities of life in order to live with dignity as befitting members of the human race.

It is true that there is strength in numbers. But numbers can also weigh us down. The total population of just the eight countries in this grouping is almost 800 million. Whether this will contribute to strengthening us or whether it will weigh us down depends very much on us, the governments responsible for the development (or lack thereof) of our countries.

Malaysia, with a population of only 20 million, is the smallest member. We have succeeded in overcoming some of our problems because our numbers are small. We cannot claim to know how to handle large populations, especially now when we are expected to become more democratic and to give voice and power to our people. More people must mean more different views which may become difficult to reconcile. Our experience with such a system is not long enough. Yet unless we can handle the democratic system and achieve political stability, economic progress will evade us.

I am not suggesting for one moment that we should discard democracy. But I do want to suggest that since we cannot wait for years of experience to teach us and our people how to make democracy work, we should really hold crash courses in order to educate our people on how to make democracy work and to understand the limitations of democracy. A system is as good as the practitioners. A good system does not work simply because it is good. Good people are still needed in order to make a good system work.

In many of our countries, the freedom of democracy simply leads to irresponsibility. Elected governments are not given an opportunity to govern. Newly elected governments are brought down through democratic strikes and democratic demonstrations and new governments are put in place, only to suffer the same fate. And so despite the virtues of democracy what we get from it is anarchy. And anarchy cannot help us to develop. Developed countries may not need governments for

them to advance. But developing countries in a state of permanent turmoil cannot be expected to lift themselves out of the economic morass they are in.

We are being harassed into accepting democracy as interpreted by those who are mature and strong and can survive perpetual crises. We have a need to formulate our own form of democracy, a democracy in which the most important thing is that governments can be brought down through the ballot box and not by other means. Between each election the governments must be allowed to govern. If they fail to satisfy the people, then they should be voted out of office at the next election. Everyone of us must accept that our office is not permanent. The important thing is public good, not our political survival.

We, the D8, have come together in order to cooperate. The first thing that we should cooperate on is the defence of our system of democracy. We must be democratic but democratic in our own mould. Liberal democracy may be good for some, but not for everyone. And I do not think, from what I have observed, it will work for everyone of us. The welfare of our people is more important than the right of a few to disrupt peace in order to promote themselves. We have seen time and again how their accession to power accomplishes nothing. Our countries continue to slide backwards despite the changes in government.

The democratic system is not divine law. It is concocted by very human and fallible people. We cannot be accused of heresy if we disagree and reject some of the interpretations of the new prophets.

Developing countries like us especially need political stability more than ever before. Empires may be a thing of the past. But political and economic hegemony is very much alive. If we do not put our houses in order, if we remain weak politically, we will all revert to being colonies again, in fact if not in name.

Without political stability, even the economically strong will become weak. Certainly, the economically weak will become totally paralysed. And we are economically weak and often politically unstable.

I am not advocating authoritarian rule. I am advocating democracy as it was practised by the Western democrats during their democratic infancy. When they were less liberal democratically no one condemned them or threatened them. We are asking that we be allowed to

evolve our form of democracy at our own pace, without harassment and threats. That is all.

Only when we are politically stable can we focus seriously on economic growth and the welfare of our people. We can probably manage to grow on our own. But growth would be made easier if we cooperate, if we exchange information and learn from one another. No country is so capable that it can know everything about the management of its own self. Malaysia has copied openly and unashamedly from others. We copied from the West and when the East did well we initiated our Look East Policy. We even learn from the failures of others for then we would know what to avoid. And still we are looking around in order to learn from others.

That is why we welcome membership in the D8. We hope to learn from the other members and to cooperate and trade with them. It is believed that poor countries are not good trading partners. But what is a fact is that the rich have always traded with the poor. Obviously they benefited from this trade. If they can extract some benefit from the poor, we should be able to do the same from one another. Only with us the extraction and benefits should be mutual.

Since we launched South-South Cooperation, for example, the trade amongst the members of the G15 and with other developing countries has grown by leaps and bounds. Similarly, trade amongst the developing countries of Southeast Asia has trebled in just five years.

The D8 countries can increase trade amongst them as well if we put in place the necessary policy and legal framework. For this we need to exchange information. I am glad that various working groups have been set up to look into these matters. There will be delays and obstruction but if there is political will, I am sure, we can overcome them. Again I would like to stress here the need for strong political leadership. Political will is going to be very necessary if we are going to make any progress at all.

As I have mentioned, apart from being developing countries, we all have large Muslim populations. Islam has been blamed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike for the backwardness of our countries. I happen to think that this is not true. Islam had not only inspired the feuding primitive Arab tribes to unite and build the greatest empire in history but it has also enriched materially, spiritually and in terms of human

knowledge all those who accepted the faith. If today's Muslims are backward it cannot be due to Islam. It is most likely due to erroneous interpretations of Islamic teachings.

There are in our countries many who are learned in Islam. The majority of them wish to see the return of past greatness. We should call upon them to sincerely study and interpret the teachings of Islam. In the first 100 years of the *Hijrah*, Islam changed primitive tribes, united them and built a great civilisation. It is illogical to think that a religion that brought greatness to such people could be the cause for a great civilisation to decline and fall. It is not Islam which is wrong. It is the *um-mah* who have failed the religion. How else can we explain the quarrels and wars between Muslims when Islam enjoins us to be brothers? Yet there are many amongst us who blatantly preach enmity amongst us and not brotherhood. Is Islam wrong or are those who interpret the religion wrong?

The D8 must serve as a purposeful forum of like-minded countries to exchange views and devise specific programme of action for effective cooperation amongst ourselves. At the initial stages, we should not become over-ambitious. It is more prudent to be cautious and to plan our moves. But we must move, deliberately and positively. Development does not just happen overnight. It has to be made to happen.

If the D8 is going to gain any credibility, we must show results which are irrefutable on a yearly basis. If we fail then we should not make a pretence of being useful. We should fold up rather than hold meaningless meetings. That is the challenge we have to face.



REGAINING THE PAST GREATNESS OF ISLAM

LET ME START by looking at the Islamic World itself. There are at the moment not less than 56 countries which are members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Not all these countries have Muslim majorities and fewer still officially accept Islam as the state religion. But Muslims are sufficiently influential as to cause the governments of these countries to seek membership of the Islamic community of nations.

All told, Muslims make up more than a billion of the world's population. But they are far from being a monolithic group, being broken up as much by their own loyalty to their countries as they are by the differences in their interpretations of Islam or indeed allegedly by the degree of commitment to the faith. They certainly do not make up one cohesive Islamic civilisation which can pose a meaningful threat to other civilisations or indeed anyone. They are, after all, too busy fighting and undermining one another to be a threat.

Today, there is not a single Muslim nation that can be classified as developed, although a number of them are very wealthy, endowed with natural resources. But almost all are lagging behind in modern knowledge, technological skills and, in many instances, effective government. In fact, a state of near-anarchy prevails in quite a number of countries. By no criteria can any of these countries be classified as developed. Pov-

A keynote address delivered at a symposium organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia-Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on "The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the 21st Century," in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, on April 25, 1997

erty, ignorance and instability have become such common features in Muslim nations that it is assumed that these are a natural consequences of following the teachings of Islam.

It is therefore not surprising that today the world associates Islam with backwardness. This angers many Muslims. They think that it is an unfair judgement. They are right, of course. It is unfair. It is not due to the teachings of Islam. But the fact remains that the Muslim nations are poor, backward, weak, disunited and dependent on non-Muslims for all kinds of things, including their own security and the continued existence of Islam itself.

Anarchy, or at least bad government, prevails in most Muslim societies. Unseemly struggles for power take place everywhere, resulting in millions being killed or forced to migrate, property being destroyed, and food being so short that death from starvation becomes almost a regular feature of some Muslim societies. Still, the fightings and conflicts continue simply because one person or group wants to grab power. It is to our utter shame that the faithful have to appeal to non-believers to help bring about peace and feed the starving. Are we incapable of managing and administering our own people? Are we incapable of using modern concepts of government, of administering justice, of dealing with an increasingly sophisticated society? If we look around us, it would seem so.

With the powerful weapons in the hands of the non-Muslims it is possible for them to wipe out the Muslims from the face of this earth. It is only by the Grace of Allah and His mercy that those whom we label as the enemies of Islam have not done so. But, sadly, the Muslims have done nothing to help themselves. If at all, they have weakened themselves by their constant feuding amongst themselves, by their confusing and contradictory interpretations of Islam, and by their failure to obey the injunctions of the religion to help themselves even as they pray to Allah for His protection.

The *Qur'an* is very clear on this. Surah IV An-Nisaa Verse 79 states that, "Whatever good happens to thee is from God but whatever evil happens to thee is from thy soul."

That Muslims were at one time the most advanced people in all fields is a historical fact. Apart from being the best strategists and warriors, they were the most learned, the most enlightened and the most lib-

eral of the people in the world then. It is difficult now to think of Muslims as being enlightened and liberal. But consider the situation and the civilisation of Europe in the Middle Ages. What we now call the West was then one of the most backward communities of nations in the world. They were hopelessly superstitious that they banned the sciences and regarded them as witchcraft, and books were kept locked because knowledge was much feared. Witches were burnt at the stake. Only the priests may know about their religion and other subjects. Since knowledge meant power the priests ruled directly or indirectly and they imposed a reign of terror through the Spanish Inquisition for centuries. Such was the oppression by the priests that many migrated, seeking freedom from Christian intolerance.

By comparison with the Muslims of that period, the Europeans were indeed primitive, superstitious and anything but liberal. They were certainly feudalistic and oppressive. Their oppressive governments led their own Christian subjects to welcome conquests by Muslims, going so far as to abet in these conquests. Even the Jews preferred to live under Muslim rule and left Spain together with the Muslims to settle in North Africa. All these must indicate the tolerance and liberalism of Muslims and their governments in the past, in the great days of the Muslim Empire. Everything was not rosy of course. There were oppressive Muslim rulers too. But for long periods non-Muslims in Muslim countries were free to go about their business and to practise their own religions.

When Islam came to the Arabs over 1,400 years ago, they were wallowing in superstition and ignorance. Living in the arid and inhospitable desert, forced to wander in search of water and meagre pasture for their animals and food for themselves, they had broken up into a number of feuding warring tribes. Such were their feuds that for generations they would fight their sworn tribal enemies even when the cause of their enmity had long been forgotten.

The Arab tribes developed their own codes of honour which were at once gracious and cruel. They would be the most considerate of hosts to strangers who sought shelter from them and yet if they believed they had been slighted they would take revenge in the most cruel and unforgiving manner.

For these Arab tribes, the main cause of shame was always their women. They regarded women as mere chattel, as property to use in

exchange for alliances, as the objects of their lusts. Yet in their wars they always feared the capture of their women by the enemy. This they regarded as most dishonourable and shameful to their family and their tribe. So in order to avoid this possibility they would rather kill their daughters or sisters, who might dishonour them or were likely to cause shame to them. And so it was their custom to bury alive their female infants, to commit infanticide in order that the chances of being dishonoured later would be less.

They were inordinately fond of praise for themselves. And so the beggars could always expect the rich or the prominent to throw them coins if their praises were sung. Flattery was always the best way to win them over.

Their superstitious fears led them to attribute godly powers to various objects of stone and wood. And they would regularly visit the places where these objects were kept in order to offer sacrifices, including human sacrifices, for their salvation, for protection from the unkind elements which buffeted them. And when the feuding tribes met during their pilgrimage they would fight and kill each other.

There were amongst them a few who professed the Christian or the Jewish faith, who believed in one Almighty God, who were People of the Book. But the ignorant *Jahiliyah* Arabs preferred to believe in the gods of their ancestors. They rejected the messages of the apostles who came before Muhammad although it is clear that they knew of them. That they knew of the Christian faith is clearly shown when the Christian *Warraqah* was consulted about the voices heard by Muhammad.

This then was the primitive, superstitious, feuding people and tribes to whom Muhammad was sent with the message of Islam. It is no wonder that he found difficulty in convincing them to give up their beliefs and customs, to honour and save their women, to reject lust and the taking of innumerable wives, limiting them to only four and even then only if they could do justice to all four, which he pointed out they never could. The *Quran* in Surah IV Verse 129 enjoins, "Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women." And so they should take only one. Knowing their fondness for alcohol and the difficulty in giving up this vice, they were enjoined to forego alcohol little by little until it was forbidden altogether. A sudden injunction to stop alcohol would not have been accepted by them.

They were instructed to befriend their enemies if the latter accepted the faith. And under the leadership of the Prophet they became united, forgetting their feuds and their tribes. This is clear from Surah III Al-Imran Verse 103: "Be not divided amongst yourselves. And remember with gratitude God's favour on you; For Ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love so that by His Grace, Ye became brethren."

In Medina their society was finally organised with proper laws detailing crimes, the methods of judgment and the punishments. Always justice and mercy were stressed. Those who repented should be pardoned.

The feuding, barbaric tribes which accepted Islam united and became a nation under the Medina constitution, the first written constitution in the Islamic world. Thus was the core of the first Muslim nation created. From Medina the Prophet sent envoys to neighbouring countries urging the rulers of those countries to accept Islam. The Prophet followed scrupulously the teachings of Islam in peace and in war. No one should be forced to accept Islam. This is made clear in Surah II Al-Baqarah Verse 256: "Let there be no compulsion in religion."

Unfortunately, his followers were not so patient and ready to tolerate the taunts and the opposition of those who rejected the teachings of the Prophet. While the Prophet fought only defensive wars and was ever ready to make peace and enter into treaties to settle disputes, his disciples were more aggressive, believing in spreading the faith through force of arms. And so within the first century of the *Hijrah* the definitive Muslim Empire was conquered largely through force of arms. While the conquests resulted in the spread of Islam and the enlargement of the Muslim Empire, they also presaged the trend towards disregard for the teachings of Islam. Anything and everything was accepted as legitimate if the perpetrators invoke the interest of Islam. And so today the Greatness of Allah is often proclaimed as dastardly acts are committed often against other Muslims. Surah II Al-Baqarah Verse 41 says, "Nor sell my signs for a small price." Again in Verse 224, "And make not God's (name) an excuse." And in Surah III Al-Imran, "They will not sell the Signs of God for a miserable sum."

Only angels and the Prophet could not be corrupted by the success of the Islamic enterprise. Of the four enlightened Caliphs who suc-

ceeded to the leadership of the Muslim *ummah*, only Abu Bakar As-sadik died a natural death. The other three, companions of the Prophet, were killed by those envious of their position. Clearly there were members of the Muslim *ummah* who did not respect authority as enjoined by Islam. They were prepared to assassinate their own leaders, something the *Quran* forbids.

By the time of the fourth Caliph, Saidina Ali, the warring had become as serious as the tribal feuds of the old pre-Islamic Arabs. The Muslim *ummah* was permanently split in two. The opponents of Ali followed Muawiyah and became known as the upholders of the traditions of the Prophet—*Ahlil Sunnah Wal Jamaah*. The followers of Ali, probably against the wishes of Ali himself, split off to form the Syiah Muslims, venerating Ali as the true successor of the Prophet.

From then on each sect not only sought to justify itself through numerous and contradictory interpretations of the teachings of Islam, but they invented many traditions or *sunnah* of the Prophet in order to justify the frequently un-Islamic practices in which they indulged. So many were the traditions that by the time Imam Bukhari studied them in order to verify their authenticity there were said to be 600,000 of them. Of these, Imam Bukhari verified only 7,000. Other scholars verified an even smaller number, including a few which had been rejected by Imam Bukhari. Obviously there are more than 590,000 false traditions which continued to be quoted on and off to justify dubious Islamic practices.

As the empire grew many sought to inherit the mantle of Caliphs and Amir ul Mukminin. Wars were fought between Muslims as the different claimants sought worldly power. Regional governors ignored the authority of the imperial government in Medina, Baghdad or Istanbul as the case may be. They began to rule independently, to set up their own domain.

New Islamic sects were founded and groups of Muslim jurists who emphasised the supremacy of the *syariah* over the *Quran* began to emerge. Through the passage of time, the tolerant and forgiving nature of Islam gave way to the rigid interpretations of the jurists whose rulings could neither be disputed nor questioned. Only religious subjects were allowed to be studied. The sciences, the mathematics and the arts were not only neglected but proscribed. All non-religious subjects were labelled un-Islamic. The vast libraries fell into neglect and left to crum-

ble. The Muslims became more and more ignorant even as the European Christians availed themselves of the opportunity to study the writings of Muslim scholars. Success and power corrupted the Muslim leaders, and deviations from the teachings of Islam became more and more common. Thus began in earnest the decline of the Muslims and their civilisation as we once knew them.

Success and power corrupted the Muslim leaders and deviations from the teachings of Islam became more and more common. This gave rise to reform movements intended to bring back the fundamental practices of Islam. Caliphs were overthrown and new governments set up, principally by the Al-Murabitun (Almoravids) and then the Al-Muwahhidun from North Africa and Spain. Unfortunately, the reformist governments either became corrupted themselves or they interpreted Islam to suit their extremist views. Whatever, they too contributed to the decline of Muslims and their empire. Weakened by their narrow-minded interpretation of Islam, rejecting so-called un-Islamic knowledge and skills, they lost the capacity to defend their territories in Spain.

Finally in 1492, Granada, the last bastion of Muslim Spain, fell to the armies of Ferdinand and Isabella. Bo Abdul, the King who never led his army on the battlefield was forced to surrender and departed for North Africa. The Muslims remaining behind were eventually forced to forsake their religion or face death. Thus ended the last Muslim enclave in Western Europe.

But the Europeans were not about to leave the North African Muslim states in peace. France and Spain extended their domain to Magreb and eventually all of Arab North Africa from Egypt to Morocco fell under European rule.

However, even as Muslim Spain ceased to exist, the Turks began to expand and build a new Muslim Empire. Turkish armies conquered most of the Balkan and actually knocked at the Gates of Vienna. The Mediterranean Sea was dominated by Turkish naval forces, regular and irregular.

But the courts of the Turkish sultans soon became corrupted by their wealth and their love of luxury. The sultans no longer led their armies into battle, nor were the armies made up of Turkish soldiers. The children of Christian citizens were recruited and brought up as Muslims

tions met to draw up the Bretton Woods Agreement, the purpose of which was to agree on a mechanism for determining the value of one currency against another. The system worked very well and enabled the countries bankrupted by the war not only to recover but to prosper as well. Of course, the Marshall Plan and the opening up of the American market to Japan played a role. But if there had been no system for stabilising currency values, all the plans in the world would not have succeeded. But then some countries in the West decided to devalue their currencies in order to enhance competitiveness. Very quickly a currency market emerged which took advantage of the mildly unstable exchange rate. True speculation took place because the funds were relatively small and depended on intelligent guesswork as to the movements of the exchange rates.

But soon the funds grew huge and were in fact able to move the exchange rates through their interventions. The famous herd instincts replaced economic fundamentals. With the invention of arbitrage and futures trading, the need for exchange-rate stability for the purpose of trading gave way to the desire of currency traders to make massive amounts of money in the shortest possible time. An artificial system of devaluation and revaluation of currencies was devised which enabled currencies to be appreciated or depreciated literally within seconds. Thus the Indonesian rupiah was at one time devalued by more than 600 per cent, then in the space of a few days recovered by 200 per cent. It is still moving up and down by 100 per cent to 200 per cent in the space of one day or even half a day.

Volcker in a speech in Hongkong stated: "An exchange-rate system that produces a 60 per cent swing in the yen/dollar rate over a period of 18 months cannot reflect the fundamentals in any sensible sense." Well, the Indonesian rupiah moved 600 per cent in the space of five months. Can it be that all the assets of that huge country with 220 million hardworking people are suddenly worth only one-sixth of its previous value? What indeed is the worth of a nation if suddenly someone can devalue and even bankrupt it?

If currencies can be made useless so easily then, what is the point in a country issuing its own money? We should go back to barter trading.

It is said that the currency will strengthen if confidence is restored. But there is no certainty as to what will bring back confidence. Who is monitoring what and who determines whether confidence should re-

form rather than the substance of Islamic teachings. And so they not only proscribe or forbade so-called non-Islamic knowledge, but also anything that did not originate in the Muslim past. Thus the modernisation of the Turkish army was considered un-Islamic. They ignored the injunction in the *Quran* that Muslims must always be prepared to defend themselves. Instead they cling to the form rather than the substance of the teaching. It was more important to relive the past than to consider the present.

The *Quran* speaks in parables, the real meaning of which must be interpreted in the context of the situation faced by the *ummah* through the ages. But most interpreters insist on the literal meaning of the words in the *Quran*. And so the defence of the *ummah* lost its importance to the need for 'steeds of war' as stated in Surah VIII (Anfal) Verse 60, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including 'steeds of war', to strike terror to the enemies."

It is a fact that once upon a time there was a great Muslim empire. It is also a fact that the empire is now no more. Defeats in the battlefields and in the conduct of diplomatic relations had not only whittled the empire down but had broken up the Empire into ineffective Muslim states which for a period of time became colonies of Western powers. The fragmentation and colonisation of the Muslim world is no doubt due to the machination of the Europeans and their military power. It was the Europeans who manoeuvred the Arabs into fighting against the Turks for their independence.

Muslims all over the world often talk longingly of the empire they once had, of their past greatness, of their domination of the world. They had ruled Spain for 800 years and much of Eastern Europe for almost 400 years. They talk of their past mastery of the sciences, the mathematics and the arts, their past prowess in battles and their victories. They point to the artefacts of their past glory, the astrolabe, the armour and swords of their past commanders such as Salah el Din Al Ayubi and the great architectural tributes to their engineering and construction skills as evidence of their worldly achievements.

And then they think of the reality of the present. They and their nations are backward, disunited and weak, mere pawns in the political games of the Europeans. They are powerless to help their fellow Muslims who are being slaughtered by their enemies. They see their holy Palestine divided and given to their sworn enemies, the Jews. Their in-

initial belief that they could defeat tiny Israel proved unfounded. The Israelis defeated them again and again, aided and abetted by the Europeans. Not only is the empire gone, but whatever little respect and honour that they had is also gone. They are openly caricatured as bumbling incompetents whose chances of recovering their past greatness will forever remain pipe dreams.

And the more they think of their parlous state, the angrier they become. Frustrated, they feed on their anger, frequently getting themselves into a state of frenzy. And like most angry people, they react irrationally. They resort to acts which gain them nothing at all except to intensify the hatred others have for them. Terrorism is not the invention of the Muslims. The first aircraft hijacking was by an American. But the Muslims learnt this quickly enough. Soon, terrorism, the invention of the non-Muslims, became synonymous with Islam and Muslims. Far from being ashamed for giving themselves and their religion a bad name, the Muslim extremists went on to commit more frightening crimes. They would think nothing of killing the children of their enemies in order to strike terror in the hearts of their tormentors. But their acts have availed them of nothing except the increased hatred of their enemies, who retaliate with equal ferocity. And this increases the anger of the Muslims even more, driving them to commit worse acts. And so the vicious circle continues.

Muslims must come to terms with the irrationality of such acts because they can only contribute to the demonisation of Islam. It seems that for some Muslims, winning their fight or achieving their objective is neither important nor relevant. It is the fight that counts. One is again reminded of the tribal feuds of the pre-Islamic days. There was no objective, only hatred for the enemy tribe. And so they mounted fights and killed for generations without seeking settlement or even victory. For so long as the obsession with hurting the enemy prevails, for so long will Muslims fight their enemies. There will be no peace because peace is not the objective. The only end is the total destruction of the enemy. That this is not likely to happen is irrelevant. The important thing is that the enemies must be fought against, irrespective of the result.

But is this in accordance with the teachings of Islam? It is true that in Surah II Verse 190, the Muslims are urged to "fight in the cause of God those who fight you" and in the next Verse "and slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned

you out." But immediately following this Verse Muslims are told in Verse 192, "But if they cease, God is of forgiving, Most Merciful." And again in Verse 193, "But if they cease, Let there be no hostility, Except to those who practise oppression." (And we know who practises oppression today). But despite these, Verse 194 says, "But fear God and know that God is with those Who restrain themselves."

It is natural for Muslims to yearn for their past greatness, their Empire and their dominance over the rest of the world. But they must know that Imperialism is a thing of the past. Neither the Muslim Empire, nor the British Empire, nor any Empire can be resurrected.

All that we can hope to aspire is the development of independent Muslim countries to the level of the developed countries of the world. This is not an impossible task. Muslims are not created by Allah to be inferior. Indeed the opposite seems true if past history is anything to go by. If they want to, Muslims can master all the skills and technologies now monopolised by non-Muslims. If they want to, Muslims can govern their nations well and effectively. But they must decide to do this, decide that Allah created this world for them too, and that it is their duty to show that Islam is a great religion which can bring greatness to those who profess and practise it.

The *Quran* says in Surah XIII Verse 11: "Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves." Again it must be remembered that, as enjoined in Surah IV Verse 79, "Whatever good comes to thee is from God; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy soul."

They can develop their countries to the desired level without attempting to come together as an empire. Of course, they must cooperate with one another as they are all members of the Muslim *ummah* and their loyalty to their own nation should not extend to warring against other Muslim nations purely out of national ambition. They can strengthen organisations such as the OIC and help the members in distress. But that is as far as they should go. Coordination and cooperation, but no empire.

Muslim nations must be independent, strong and developed so as to take their places as members of the world community of nations. They must remain Muslim of course and they must uphold Islam. However, they must be true Muslim fundamentalists, that is, they must do

what is right and reject what is wrong. The *Quran* says in Surah III Verse 104, "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong." Islam has always upheld what is right and just and has never advocated that Muslims should plot or support each other in doing what is wrong. If Muslims do what is wrong, other Muslims must condemn it. And they must condemn it even if the victims are not Muslims. For the *Quran* enjoins in Surah V Verse 9, "Let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice." Surah V Verse 45 stresses, "If thou judge, judge in equity between them, for God loveth those who judge in equity."

In this modern world, Muslims have a real mission; they must bring back spiritual values to a world that is fast becoming godless and materialistic; so arrogant that it thinks it knows all the answers to everything; a world which will develop the ultimate means of destruction and place it in the hands of irresponsible and insane individuals; a world tittering on the brink of a man-made Apocalypse.

These people think that they know enough to play God Himself. Already they believe they can create anything that God creates. They may want to create a world according to their wishes. And they have become insufferably arrogant, accepting no one as being greater than them.

They forget that for all their brilliance they cannot answer the question "why". They cannot answer why there is life in this world, why there is a universe, why matter acts in the way it does, why oxygen and hydrogen form water and a myriad other chemical and physical reactions. They may know how all those things happen but never why. They are not the genius they think they are.

And because the human race is becoming more and more arrogant, religion and spiritual values are needed even more. And Islam can provide the spiritual values, to those who believe and to those who do not. The Islam that can provide these values is the true Islam. True Islam advocates peace, charity and caring—not the committing of crimes and the calling out of Allah's name to justify such actions.

The 21st century is not relevant to Muslims. It is just a period in time. But the 21st century will bring about many changes and Muslims, whether they like it or not, will be part of these changes. It is better for

them to face the new century with their eyes wide open and with a clear vision of what they want to do and the role they wish to play. And if they chose to play a constructive role while retaining their faith, their spiritual values and their true brotherhood, they would be able to contribute positively to the development of mankind, to put it on an even keel again and to prevent the self-destructive course which the human race appears to be heading for.

Muslims can be a force for human good in the 21st century. Far-fetched, perhaps, but not impossible. It remains for Muslims to decide, and remembering that Allah will not change their destiny unless they themselves make the effort to change.



10

ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM UMMAH

FIRST, let me express my sincere appreciation to the Saudi government and to the Selection Committee in particular, for conferring on me the 1997 King Faisal International Prize for service to Islam. I am honoured and overwhelmed by this recognition and it is with pride and much humility that I accept this prize. This prize is also a great honour to Malaysia and its people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, without whose tolerance, sensitivity and respect for each other Malaysia would not be what and where it is today, a multiracial, multireligious, yet politically stable and economically prosperous country, which accepts Islam as the state religion.

But then the bases for these achievements were laid some 900 years ago, when Islam came to Malaysia. Like all Muslims today, our distant ancestors were not Muslims. In the Arabian peninsula too the idol-worshipping *Jahiliyah* became Muslims over 1,400 years ago. The other Muslims were blessed with the religion at different periods after that, some through conquests, but many more through the exemplary behaviour and achievements of the Muslims who came in contact with them. Even the Muslim conquerors influenced the conversion through their worldly success as much as their preachings on Islam. And so the Spaniards and Europeans, Christians though they were, embraced Islam when Al-Andalus was under Muslim rule.

But the Malays were not conquered or forced in any way. They converted because the Muslim traders from Hadramaut, the first West-

A keynote address delivered at the Conferment of the King Faisal International Prize in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 22, 1997

ern people to come to the Malay states, were obviously successful people in the worldly sense. They were great shipbuilders, sailors, celestial navigators and traders. They were learned not just in matters of religion but also in medicine, geography and mathematics. As Muslims they were not just devout, performing their prescribed rituals, but were kind and charitable, not arrogant and domineering as were the later Westerners from Europe. They were simply good people who reflected the true teachings of Islam, who probably excited the curiosity and admiration of the animistic Malays and their Rajas or rulers. And so these exemplary Muslim traders gained influence over the Rajas who accepted Islam and caused their subjects to embrace it.

Had the first Muslims who landed in Malaysia been ignorant paupers belonging to different sects of Islam, constantly fighting each other and slitting each other's throats, even if they prayed and fast, the ancestors of today's Malays would have rejected Islam. In the context of today's world, it is very doubtful that today's Muslims would succeed in spreading the blessings of the Islamic religion to the Malays if they were not already Muslims.

But the Muslims who came to the Malay states 900 years ago were the equivalent of today's developed and advanced races. They were well-educated, skilled, technologically superior and true practitioners of the teachings of Islam not just in matters of religious rituals but in demonstrating that Islam was indeed *ad-deen* or a complete way of life. And so the animistic ancestors of the Malays embraced Islam with such enthusiasm and faith that they destroyed all their old idols and temples. Today, Malays are constitutionally only Malays if they are Muslims.

The progress of the Malays after conversion and presently owes much to Islam as a way of life. There had been lapses of course but by and large Malay civilisation and its progress in the arts and the sciences, in the systems of government, the concept of justice and the rule of law, have been the result of attempts to adhere to the teachings of Islam.

I say attempts because there have always been conflicts and contradictions in the interpretations of Islamic teachings. Despite the fact that all Malays are Sunni Muslims and followers of Imam Shafie (a famed Muslim scholar), the interpretations are not always standard or uniform. There is thus a great deal of confusion when we attempt to follow the tenets of Islam.

Still, we have managed to remain faithful and committed to Islam, to use it to guide us so that in our desire to make material progress we have not forsaken religion or relegated it to the background. Indeed, we believe that our material progress is in accordance with and in full support of the teachings of Islam, in particular the injunctions regarding the brotherhood of Muslims and the need for us to be strong so we may be able to defend ourselves and our faith against those who wish to separate us from our religion and destroy it.

To us political stability, good government, knowledge of all the sciences and technology, material wealth and modern sophistication are all part of the process of strengthening the Muslim *ummah*, so as to defend successfully the faith and our need to *amal ma'arif nahi munkar*. To us rejection of the brotherhood of Muslims, violent feuds between us, the killing of other Muslims in the name of Islam and Allah when in fact the objective is political, to us all these cannot be Islamic. Indeed, we believe that being just to the non-Muslims who are not against us simply reflects the true teachings of Islam. We must always remember that as much as we do not like Muslim minorities to be oppressed in non-Muslim countries, we must not oppress non-Muslim minorities in our midst.

Guided by these Islamic or Islamically acceptable principles, we have found no difficulty in achieving *hassamah* in this world and in the next world, in the *akhirat*.

Many Muslims will of course disagree with us and try to make out that we are secular. We are not going to argue with them because we know that debating with them or opposing them will not convince them that we are right. But we believe and we are equally convinced in our beliefs that what we do is in the service and in accordance with Islam. Nothing will convince us that Islam requires us to pass judgement on other Muslims who are our brothers and to act violently to negate Islamic brotherhood, to destroy the unity of the Muslims, to weaken them and to cause them to be dependent on non-Muslims rather than Muslims and in many cases to cause them to be enslaved by the professed enemies of Islam.

This is our faith and our creed in Malaysia. We do not ask to be complimented or to be condemned by anyone on this earth. Allah will be our Judge and in the hereafter we will receive our just rewards or our punishments. No one, but no one, should presume that they, and they

alone, are privy to the Day of Judgment, to what Allah's judgment of us in the *akhirat* will be. Only Allah knows.

ISLAM IS NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS

AS WE ALL KNOW, in this region of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, only three countries have Muslim majorities, i.e. Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. In the other countries of the region, the Muslims form minority communities living under non-Muslim rule. In most of these countries, the Muslims have by and large integrated themselves into the local societies while maintaining their faith and identity as Muslims. They have also formed their own organisations not only to maintain contact amongst themselves but also to build mosques, schools and welfare institutions for the benefit of the *ummah*. In some of these countries, the governments have been considerate and helpful towards the Muslims through providing land for building mosques and facilities for the teaching of religion to the children. It would seem that the only problems they have are with themselves. Divided along ethnic lines, they have yet to learn to live together and cooperate as true Muslims in accordance with Islamic teachings. Much depends on the leadership of the community. If they can find people with the dedication and commitment to serve in the path of Allah, free from other considerations, there will be greater unity and cooperation amongst the different communities which will make the unity of the *ummah* a reality.

In the few countries where the governments previously restrict religious freedom we are glad to note that there are already signs of a change of policy on the part of the governments concerned which hopefully will lead to a more liberal attitude over religious matters. Let

A keynote address delivered at the Riseap's 9th General Assembly-15th Anniversary Celebration in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on September 6, 1996

us hope and pray that this change will not take too long to happen and that in the meantime, the Muslims in the countries concerned will prepare to rebuild their faith and the institutions underpinning them so that Islam can regain its rightful place in society.

Today, Riseap has grown in strength, not only in terms of its membership but also in the resources that it can mobilise to support its programmes. There are now 50 Muslim organisations spread out in 18 countries of the region which are affiliated to Riseap. What is interesting is that, amongst the new requests for affiliation, quite a few are from outside the region—Europe, America and Africa. While this may seem complimentary to Riseap, the present constitution of Riseap does not permit their admission. Nevertheless, it should be possible for Riseap to enter into ties of friendship and cooperation based on the spirit of brotherhood of the *ummah*, without formally admitting them as members. I think it would be wrong for Riseap to take the attitude that because an organisation is from outside the region, therefore it cannot have any kind of relationship with it. As we all know, Islam transcends ethnic and geographical boundaries and all Muslims are brothers. As such, they should always be willing to cooperate whether during good or bad times. Such cooperation will strengthen them and enable them to face any crisis when it comes.

Thus, although Bosnia-Herzegovina is not in the Pacific region, Riseap did not hesitate to lend a helping hand to the refugees seeking refuge in Malaysia. Together with other NGOs, Riseap helped to provide not only support and shelter for them but also education for their children and jobs for the adults so that they could be self supporting. Later, it found itself having to provide basic teachings of Islam to the new converts from Africa and other countries in Europe. These people had come to Malaysia because of the peace and harmony prevailing in the country. And when the Chechens were being slaughtered by the superior Russian forces, Riseap and other Muslim NGOs in Malaysia took a firm stand in demanding that the international community help stop the carnage and provide humanitarian assistance to the victims.

Today, as Riseap and its members commemorate its 15 years of existence, a new approach to the *dakwah* movement is being launched. It is called *Dakwah Bil Hal* and it stresses on action—good deeds which anyone with the right attitude and inclination can do to help his immediate neighbours and fellowmen in times of distress or trouble. The ob-

jective is not proselytisation as much as it is to display the true teachings of Islam and its practice. This will help to correct the wrong impression of Islam that prevails amongst non-Muslims in particular. Even Muslims are under the mistaken impression that their help and sympathy should be confined only to Muslims and that the distress and misfortunes of non-Muslims are not of concern to them. On the other hand, Muslims are not against receiving help and sympathy from non-Muslims. Indeed in many instances we find only non-Muslims are actively helping Muslims while Muslims apparently ignore the fate of their co-religionists.

All these do not help to give Islam and Muslims a good image. Muslims must know that it is their duty to help other Muslims and that the misfortunes of non-Muslims too should attract their sympathy and active help. While *Dakwah Bil Hal* may not be intended to proselytise, it should at least help to generate greater understanding and appreciation of Islam and what it means to be a Muslim.

The lack of understanding and sometimes outright antagonism of non-Muslims towards Islam is not entirely their fault. We Muslims are often to be blamed. Once upon a time, the Muslim civilisation was highly respected. Muslims were economically wealthy and very learned in all fields, in the sciences and mathematics, in navigation and astronomy, in engineering and in construction. Muslim countries were united under one Caliph and were powerful. They never forsook Islam even when they were successful. In other words, they were as enjoined by the *Quran* to be equally attentive to their well-being in this world as they were to the next, to *akhirat*.

But then came those who preached exclusive dedication to *akhirat*. They even condemned this world as being created by Allah only for the infidels whom they said would enjoy life in this world but will be damned in the hereafter. As this teaching spread, Muslims began to lose interest in learning other than those subjects designated as religious. Over the centuries, Muslims began to lose their skills and knowledge and eventually their strength. Today, they are totally weak, dependent upon and often subservient to the big powers. Gone are the glory days of the Muslim Empire, and with it the respect for Islam by the non-Muslims. Indeed some Muslims have also lost their faith in Islam.

If we wish the world, the Muslim *ummah* and the human community to once again respect Islam and hold in high esteem its teachings,

Muslim nations must recover their strength and their superiority in all fields, in modern knowledge, in administrative skills, in the conduct of their relation with themselves and with others, in industry and commerce. In other words, they must be successful in this world as much as they believe they will in the next world. And I would like to repeat that this will be in accordance with the teachings of the *Quran*. Non-Muslims cannot be impressed by what we tell them will be our glorious life in the hereafter especially when they see us weak and cringing before the worldly powers, disunited, even fighting each other and generally not practising what we loudly proclaim to be the teachings of Islam.

The best form of *dakwah* is to demonstrate through practice the goodness of Islam, the tolerance and sympathy for the less fortunate members of the *ummah* and also those not of our faith, the peace and stability and consequently the prosperity of well administered Muslim nations. For the faithful the rewards and the punishments in the after-life will be meaningful but it is too much to expect those who do not even believe in the afterlife to be awed by hell and heaven and to appreciate Islam because of it.

This is what is really meant by *Dakwah Bil Hal*. It is not just doing good deeds to others such as helping the poor, building schools and hospitals but it must also be the demonstration that Islam is actually not an obstacle to worldly progress, to skilful administration and development, to the wealth generated by skills in industry and commerce and to the strength to defend those in need of help, regardless whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. The success of the Muslims and their nations will prove more convincing of the essential goodness of Islam than all the preaching about Islamic teachings and beliefs especially when Muslims often do not practise what they preach.

This emphasis on *Dakwah Bil Hal* has come at the right time. If Muslims believe that they can be as good as others in all fields and they set out to achieve this, then they will surely be able to bring to a return of their past glory and greatness. And in doing so they will in fact be practising true *Dakwah Bil Hal*. If we Muslims are dedicated to explaining Islam in this easily understandable way, through deeds and demonstrable achievements, we will succeed in our mission. We will all be true missionaries, not just by calling upon all to do good and reject evil, but by actually doing good and rejecting evil ourselves.

ISLAMIC JUSTICE

ISLAMIC JUSTICE is a subject of utmost importance to the Muslim *ummah* and the stability and development of Muslim nations. No society can prosper or even exist without some capability to administer justice. The greater the sophistication in the administration of justice, the greater will be the level of development possible. It is therefore in the interest of Muslim countries to take this matter seriously. When Islam brought ideas of justice and its application to the *Jahiliyah* community, they became united and they prospered. When Islamic laws and justice became distorted later, Islamic civilisation began regressing.

Before I continue, let me quote several verses from the *Quran* so that in our discourse we may be guided by them. These verses are from many which consistently carry the same spirit of Islamic justice. I have chosen them simply because they are typical and they reflect the ideals which permeate the concept of justice in Islam and its application.

Of necessity I have to give the English translation by Yusof Ali. The Arabic text and Malay translations are available for anyone to check against Yusof Ali's translation.

Surah Al-Mulk Verse 12

"As for those who fear their Lord unseen, for them is forgiveness and a great reward."

A keynote address delivered at the International Seminar on the Administration of Islamic Laws at the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on July 23, 1996

Surah An-Nisa Verse 58

"Allah doth command you to render back to your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice ..."

Surah An-Nisa Verse 92

"Never should a believer kill a believer; but (if it so happens) by mistake, (compensation is due): If one so kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belong to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom you have treaty of Mutual Alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed. For those who find this beyond their means, a fast for two months running; by way of repentance to Allah, for Allah has all knowledge and all wisdom."

Surah Al-Maa'idah Verse 42

"(For those who are fond of) listening to falsehood, of devouring anything forbidden. If they do come to thee, either judge between them, or decline to interfere. If thou decline, they cannot hurt thee in the least. If thou judge, judge in equity between them. For Allah loveth those who judge in equity."

Surah Al-Israa Verse 33

"Nor take life—which Allah has made sacred—except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand *qisas* or to forgive) but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life, for he is helped (by the Law)."

Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 272

"It is not required of thee (O Messenger) to set them on the right path, but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the 'face' of Allah. What ever good ye give shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly."

I would like to add here a particular verse which influences the interpretation of the verses of the *Quran* and that is Surah Al-Imran Verse 7 which clarifies, "It is He [Allah] who has sent down to you [Muhammad] the book [*Quran*]. In it are verses that are entirely clear, and others not entirely clear."

Obviously, the Muslim *ummah* are expected to apply the unclear verses to different situations using the faculty of thinking which Allah has endowed on Man and Man only. On the question of justice and what constitutes justice the *ummah* has to think and think carefully.

I think we all subscribe to the view that the source of our Islamic faith and therefore our laws is the *Quran* and the *hadiths*. I have to reiterate this because there are some who declare that some of the verses in the *Quran*, particularly the Meccan verses, have been revoked and have been superseded by the *hadiths*.

The *Quran* we believe has never been altered. On the other hand, Bukhari, when examining reputedly 600,000 *hadiths*, rejected most of them and accepted only about 7,000 as *sahih*. Muslim, Tarmizi and others also rejected most of the *hadiths* they examined. Those they accepted sometimes differed from those verified by Bukhari, Muslim's teacher. The number of *hadiths* that each of these scholars verified is often less than that of Bukhari. We can conclude that even these scholars and acknowledged *ulamas* disagree over the verification of many of the *hadiths* current during their lifetime. Obviously there were many false *hadiths*. This is a fact or why should they reject so many of these so-called *hadiths*.

We are inclined to accept the verification of these *ulamas* but it must be remembered that although they were very knowledgeable and learned in Islam, they were not prophets. They were ordinary human beings with all the strengths and weaknesses of humans. While they might be largely right and correct in their findings on the *hadiths*, they might also be wrong. It may well be that they accepted some false *hadiths* and they rejected some genuine ones. It is said that the *ulamas* are the *warith* of the Prophet. If so, can we accept just anyone who declares himself to be an *ulama* as the *warith* of the Prophet, whose pronouncements are infallible? Can we accept political *ulamas* with definite worldly agenda as infallible? And in history there had been many political *ulamas* who justified everything that their political masters did.

It is difficult to believe that *hadith* can be so strong that when they contradict the *Quran*, we should accept the *hadith* rather than the *Quran*.

But what about Islamic laws? Although in some instances the *Quran* mentions crimes, laws and punishment specifically, in most cases Islamic laws are the results of the interpretations of the *Quran* and *hadith* by generations of Muslim jurists of both the specific as well as the general misdeeds and sins narrated in the *Quran*.

If Bukhari, Muslim and Tarmizi were mere humans and might be wrong, the chances of many Muslim jurists of the past being wrong are even greater. Most of them interpreted in the context of their period which varied from the glorious days of the Muslim empire to the years of decline. These jurists worked under or during different governments of different periods, countries and systems. Some might have been under pressure of the rulers of their times to justify royal deeds or proclivities. How else could they rule that it was permitted for the Sultan of Turkey to keep a harem of 300 concubines, or the murder of all the new Sultan's brothers upon his accession to the Othmaniah throne, or their virtual imprisonment in order to prevent any challenge to the Sultan's position?

Surely if we cannot accept all the *hadiths* without verification, we cannot accept all the laws formulated by all Muslim jurists as inviolable, as the words of Allah almost. These laws are the work of ordinary humans with their fears and prejudices, influenced by the cultures and practices of the time.

We are always told that when we are lost in matters of religion we must return to the *Quran*. No true Muslim can do otherwise. If we do not return to that source, then we are going to be confused by the plethora of pronouncements and interpretations made by a host of *ulamas*, some of whom may be truly learned but certainly many may be charlatans. Indeed, we see in our times the practice of politicians making interpretations and casually declaring other Muslims as infidels and non-believers simply because these people do not support their political parties or accept their politically motivated interpretations of Islam.

In the time of Prophet Muhammad, there was only one Islam. There was no Ahlil Sunnah Wal Jamaah or Syiah. There were no sects according to the various *imams* (Shafie, Hanafi, Hambali and Maliki)

as there are now amongst the Sunnis, and the various sects amongst the Syiah. There was only one Muslim *ummah* believing in one Muslim religion.

Islam under the guidance of the Prophet succeeded in uniting all the Arab tribes into one Muslim *ummah*. And as one Muslim *ummah* they succeeded in spreading Islam and in taking the whole of the Arabian peninsula, including Mecca.

Under Abu Bakar, Omar and Uthman, there remained only one Muslim *ummah*. But when Saidina Ali became the *Khalifah*, his authority was disputed and the Muslim split into two. And this split resulted in two different interpretations of the beliefs and practice of Islam which have persisted to this day.

If there had been one Islam only during the time of the Prophet, then the two that exist today cannot be both absolutely right and in accordance with the true teachings. Only one can be right and the other wrong. Or it can be that both are wrong. But most probably both are right most of the time but both are wrong in some areas of beliefs and practices.

Here is all the more reason why we should return to the *Quran* for guidance. Certainly, in matters regarding Islamic laws and their application, we should at least check with the *Quran* to determine whether the laws as interpreted and applied by the Muslim jurists through the centuries are in fact in accordance with the teachings of the *Quran* and the *sahih hadith*.

Already I can feel many here and elsewhere are concluding that this is heresy. But is it heretical to question the interpretation of the Islamic jurists? Are they prophets that we cannot question them even? Are they more correct than the *Quran* and the genuine *hadiths*? We should not rush to condemn anyone who questions the correctness of the interpretation by the jurist as an apostate, un-Islamic and a heretic.

Even a casual scrutiny of some of the Muslim laws in the present form would show that they do not seem to reflect the spirit of Islam. In the verses that I have quoted and in many others found in the different *surah* of the *Quran* the most important aspect of Islamic justice is equity and forgiveness. Simply stated the judgment must be equitable, i.e. equal between the crime and the punishment, equal between the individuals concerned, equal between ranks or positions; accepting differ-

ences in punishment only because of circumstances surrounding the crime. Beyond that the *Quran* enjoined forgiveness, mercy refraining from taking life which Islam regards as sacred.

These aspects of equity are contained in Surah An-Nisa Verse 58, "And when ye judge between man and man, you judge with justice" and in Surah Al-Maaidah Verse 42, "If thou judge, judge in equity between them." Clearly, equity equals justice. When we talk of 'man and man' we mean humans, whether they be women or men. Judging between man and man does not mean excluding judging between man and woman or woman and woman. They are all man in the sense of being members of the human race.

In Surah An-Nisa Verse 135 Allah enjoins, "Oh ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourself, or your parents, or your kins, and whether it be (against) rich or poor, for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts) lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that you do." Here Islam enjoins us not to discriminate when dispensing justice. Again in Surah Al-Maaidah Verse 8, Muslims are enjoined to "stand out firmly for Allah, as witness to fair dealings, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, for that is next to piety." It is clear that even those who hate you (your enemies) you may not depart from justice. And certainly there is no distinction made as to gender in the dispensing of justice. "An eye for an eye." This has long been equated with Muslim justice. Clearly this is meant to indicate equity in punishment. But should it be taken literally or should it be taken metaphorically? Equity, yes, but does equity mean exact identity between crime and punishment?

In Surah An-Nisa Verse 92, it is stated that, "Never should a believer kill a believer, but (if it so happens) by mistake, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave and pay compensation to the deceased family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belong to a people at war with you, and he is a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom you have treaty of mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave freed. For those who find this beyond their means (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah, for Allah has all knowledge and all wisdom."

This particular verse explains a lot about the Islamic concept of justice. An eye for an eye may be equitable but the killing of a believer need not be punished by death for the killer under certain circumstances (as by mistake, or in war, or when there is a treaty of alliance). It is sufficient to free a believing slave and/or to compensate the family, or when these are beyond the means, to fast for two months running.

The circumstances of the crime are taken into consideration. Thus mistakes, being enemies or being allied, influence the kind of punishment to be meted out. More than that the life of an enemy who is a believer is as sacred as that of other believers. Thus the punishment is the same—the freeing of a believing slave.

Life is precious as clearly indicated in Surah Al-Israa Verse 33, "Nor take life—which Allah has made sacred ... let him not exceed the bounds in the matter of taking life."

Clearly wars and the killings of Muslims by Muslims are not encouraged or proscribed. Yet today Muslims go to war with each other or assassinate their Muslim enemies more frequently and with greater abandon than they do non-Muslims. We do not see anyone compensating in any way or fasting, since slaves are no longer available for freeing.

But forgiveness is encouraged, if not specifically enjoined. Indeed, in many verses forgiveness is stressed. Thus in this verse punishment may not be required if the family chose to remit freely. And in Surah Al-Mulk Verse 12, Allah stated, "As for those who fear their Lord unseen, for them is forgiveness and a great reward."

The element of forgiveness and mercy is strong in Islam. Yet today in the formulation and enforcement of Muslim laws, the tendency is to be as harsh as possible. Mitigating circumstances are not often recognised and certainly the stress is on "an eye for an eye". Thus when a woman kills in defence of her honour, the preferred punishment is death. That the woman concerned is a believer is ignored. The right of the family to forgive is also not respected. And in current Muslim laws as enforced in many Muslim nations the element of forgiveness is not reflected. Even when Allah can forgive, Muslim jurists will not do so.

Muslim laws have not been properly codified. The application of Muslim laws in many countries is casual and haphazard. The *Quran* and the verified *hadith* do not deal with every crime. Indeed, the nature

of crimes at the time of the Prophet was far different from the crimes which plagued Muslim societies through the ages. Certainly, in modern times new crimes are being committed which are not specifically mentioned in the *Quran* or the *hadiths*. Commercial crimes, drug-related crimes, distribution and abuses, misrepresentations in the print and electronic media and numerous sophisticated ways of abuse of authority, fraud, and so on, are not specifically mentioned in the *Quran* or *hadith*.

Laws could therefore be made to govern these so-called new crimes. The most important thing about such laws is that they are at least in conformity with the spirit and the values which permeate the administration of Islamic justice as in the cases illustrated in the *Quran*.

How the laws are formulated or codified and enforced is not as important as their conformity with the spirit and the injunctions as clearly illustrated in the various specific instances given in the *Quran* and those *hadiths* which reflect the teachings in the *Quran*. Thus a law cannot be regarded as Islamic only if it is formulated as *syariah* laws. Other laws can also be Islamic if they do not transgress the principles and the spirit of the laws specifically mentioned in the *Quran*.

As we all know, the *Quran*, like the other *kitab*s of the People of the Book, teach through parables. They are anecdotal and serve as examples. It is left to the Muslims to structure their lives and their society and societal rules, regulations and laws to be reflective of the interpretation of these parables. Circumstances may change but the parables and the other examples can generally be related to the particular episode or instance in any age.

As has been pointed out through the ages, Muslim jurists have interpreted the *Quran* and the *hadith* and indicated or suggested the way Islamic laws should be formulated and applied. Naturally these Muslim jurists were influenced by the stage and the circumstances in the evolution of Muslim society. There were periods of glory when Muslims ruled vast continents, made up the majority of the inhabitants or by their conquests, their prowess and superior knowledge and skills dominated societies in which they formed a privileged minority. Under such circumstances, the Muslims were in a position to impose whatever it was that they considered to be laws in accordance with Islam. The non-Muslims in these countries had no choice but to submit. Thus if they had to pay a head tax where the Muslims paid *zakat*, they accepted this

imposition. Similarly, if they were not required to do military duty they submitted. On the other hand, at a different period the sons of non-Muslims were inducted into the army at a young age. The non-Muslims accepted this too.

But those days of glory and power are over. Today, even in countries where Muslims form a majority or make up the entire population, they cannot ignore opinions, pressures and powers outside their countries. The mores of the times are such that many practices which were once regarded as normal or morally and ethically correct are now totally rejected and condemned. Thus slavery is universally abhorred. Even in their own countries Muslims cannot keep slaves. This poses the question as to how they are supposed to atone for killing a fellow Muslim by releasing a believing slave. But it must always be remembered that Allah has already provided alternatives. When you do not have slaves you can always fast.

Then there are countries where Muslims have lost control over the government or where they have migrated to and form a minority. The Muslim laws as formulated by past Muslim jurists simply cannot be enforced by them. Instead, they have to submit to the laws of the country which are not at all of Islamic origin and may in fact be against the teachings of Islam.

But if the basis of Muslim laws and their administration is the *Quran*, there can be no real difficulty. The *Quran* allows for alternatives. Thus if a Muslim cannot release a believing slave, he can always fast for a prescribed period. He can always pay compensation in other forms. The law can always punish by other means, by specific fines or jail terms. Nowhere in the *Quran* or the verified *hadith* are alternatives absolutely forbidden.

When a Muslim lives as part of a minority in a foreign country, then he may not enforce *Quranic* laws or those formulated by Muslim jurists elsewhere or in the past. In all things, the *Quran* is flexible. Circumstances have to be taken into account. Thus if one cannot pray in the normal prescribed manner one can always do away with the prescribed rituals. If one is not able to fast for certain acceptable reasons one need not do so. One is urged to use the power of persuasion or preaching if one cannot employ force.

Throughout the *Quran* and most of the verified *hadith*, flexibility is evident. The religion of Islam is not an imposition on its followers. It is not to be a burden on them, to force them to do what they manifestly cannot do. Yet Muslims do things they can avoid; killing other Muslims, for example, but fail to do what they can do, like forgiveness.

But Muslim jurists of the past tended to give rigid interpretations of the *Quran* and formulated rather harsh laws which seldom take into consideration the circumstances of the crime, the criminal or the ability to enforce. Some of these laws are most probably wrong in terms of the principle of Islamic justice. For instance, a Muslim family living in a foreign land killed a daughter because she had apparently committed adultery with a non-Muslim, thinking and believing that it was their Islamic duty to do so. As far as the local authorities were concerned murder was committed. It is even disputable that the killing of a daughter for such a sin, without any trial by a qualified judge, is in accordance with Muslim law or Islamic justice. It is probably more old Arab culture than Islamic injunction. But the family believed that what they did was to carry out the teachings of Islam. No forgiveness, no mercy, no consideration for the circumstances prevailing in a foreign country with a culture totally different from Islamic culture. To them rigidity indicates submission and piety in Islam. Nothing else mattered. More likely they were responding to the *Jahiliyah* concept of family honour and shame.

There is a tendency to insist that the concept of justice in Islam is different from justice as perceived by non-Muslims, in particular the dominant Europeans. Certainly, in modern times especially, the concept of justice in the West tends to differ very much from that of universal justice and that of Islam. In the past adultery was considered a crime in Western society; today, it is acceptable and widely practised and no one is punished by the state for committing adultery. The most that can happen is a divorce. But Islam still perceives adultery as both a sin and a crime. Society will punish and not just the couple concerned.

In the past the universal punishment for murder was death for the murderer. Today in the West the death penalty is considered inhuman. In Muslim society, murder is still punishable by the death penalty, a sort of "an eye for an eye" principle in terms of punishment.

But apart from these differences in the principle of what constitutes justice, the ideas of right and wrong and punishment for crimes in Islam differ very little from those of other faiths and societies. If it is evi-

dently unjust, it is considered as unjust by Muslims as it is by non-Muslims. To aver that although it may seem unjust in the eyes of non-Muslims, that it is still just because Islam is different, is to make a mockery of justice. For Islam is an eminently just religion and justice is so frequently stressed in the *Quran* that it is impossible to think that any gross injustice would be permitted by Islam.

Thus in Malaysia, where there are Muslims and non-Muslims, the idea of applying certain questionable interpretations of *Hudud* laws would be repugnant for the obvious injustice that it would cause. Merely because such laws can result in injustice is sufficient for concluding that these interpretation of *Hudud* is wrong. To insist that the laws formulated by the Muslim jurists are more important than the upholding of justice as enjoined by the *Quran* seems to be totally against all the principles of faith in Islam. Fanaticism and a holier-than-thou attitude is not faith. They are a manifestation of *nafsu* or lust, of giving in to the baser instincts. In the case of *Hudud* laws as proposed by certain parties, the Muslims of Malaysia would be punished more harshly than non-Muslims, resulting in inequity, which is against the Islamic principle of equity in justice. Thus if these laws are applied, a gang of Muslim and non-Muslim thieves stealing at the same time will result in the Muslim having their hands amputated while the non-Muslim fellow criminals would probably serve a short jail sentence. By no stretch of the imagination can this be considered as equity or justice. Indeed, it would amount to gross injustice, and therefore un-Islamic.

A woman who has been raped and is unable to produce four witnesses for it would not be able to have the rapist punished even if she knows who he is. On the other hand, if she were to give birth to a child as a result, she would be guilty of *zimah* and could be punished by stoning to death. By no stretch of the imagination can this be considered as justice.

In these two examples and in many others, Muslim jurists insist that justice is done and that Muslims must accept this verdict of the jurists. They insist that the Muslim perception of justice is different from those of others. Even if it is manifestly unjust, it is just because it is Islamic. And Muslims must not question it. They ignore that while Muslims may not question the *Quran* or the true *hadith*, nowhere are Muslims forbidden from questioning the pronouncement of Muslim jurists who are as human as other Muslims.

What is said to be Islamic justice is nothing more than what some Muslim jurists in the past interpret as justice. The *Qur'an* does not specifically prescribe this in all and every situation. Certainly not in a multi-racial and multi-religious situation. If the punishment for the Jews of Medina was harsh (for e.g. stoning for adultery), it was because that was the punishment prescribed by the Hebrew religion.

What the *Qur'an* and the verified *hadith* emphasise is justice. Islam lays a premium on justice and abhors injustice and inequity. What needs to be upheld in Islam is justice and justice all the time. If a particular punishment is clearly unjust, it is wrong to say that although it may appear unjust, but actually it is just in the eyes of Islam. Therefore, it must not be questioned by Muslims. To question it is to display a lack of faith and to be un-Islamic to the point of apostasy or heresy. Muslims are expected to condemn those Muslims who do not accept unquestioningly these perception of justice as interpreted by Muslim jurists. They, the jurists, have been elevated to infallible people, with the same status as the Prophet. Even when they go against the *Qur'an* and the verified *hadiths*, their interpretation and pronouncements must be accepted and the *Qur'an* and *hadith* rejected. The result is an image of Islam so intolerant, extreme and unjust that it is almost certain that if the Prophet were to preach such an Islam there would not have been any converts at all and that Islam would not spread. It was the gentleness, fairness and justice of Islam that contrasted so much with the injustice of the *Jahiliyah* community which attracted followers in Mecca and Medina. While the *Jahiliyah* approved of female infanticide and unlimited wives and cohabitation with female slaves, Islam forbade infanticide and limited the number of wives to four. It is not surprising that many in Mecca and Medina forsook idol-worshipping in order to accept Islam. But today it would be hard to convince non-Muslims to accept Islam if the kind of justice as proposed under the so-called *Hudud* laws are in fact applied. Islamic laws must above all be clearly equitable and just. Fanatical adherence to the formulation of laws by Muslim jurists of the past is only justified if the end result is justice, not hidden justice but clear and unequivocal justice. If these laws result in obvious injustice then they must be reviewed. The reviewers must go back to the *Qur'an* and the verified *hadith*. All the flexibility inferred by the *Qur'an* must be exploited, particularly in the quest for justice. For justice is the basis of Islam and all its teachings.

If we accept that in Islam justice is of paramount importance, then the next thing that Muslims must consider is due process. The processes of the law are not rigid in Islam. Indications as to the manner of its administration are given in "unclear" ways both in the *Quran* and the *hadith*. Very often the Prophet himself was the judge. But there is nothing in the *Quran* or the *hadith* to forbid standardisation of the procedures for the better administration of justice.

In certain Muslim countries, the administration of the law can only be described as casual and haphazard. In one case, a magistrate found a foreigner guilty when his car was knocked from behind by a car driven by a national of that country, because, so declared the magistrate, the accident would not have occurred if the foreigner had not been in the country. Many foreign drivers involved in accidents in certain Muslim countries found themselves thrown into the police lock-up irrespective of the causes of the accident. If they did not know someone with influence they are likely to languish there for quite some time.

Procedures for trials are not clear. In some cases the magistrate listens to the police officer about the crime and then asked the accused to explain. Based on the words of the two and sometimes after referring to unspecified religious books, the verdict and the sentence is pronounced. The procedures in other courts may be completely different. No specific laws are quoted although some vague reference to the *Quran* or the *hadith* may be made. In Malaysia, procedures in a *syariah* court are fairly well standardised. Elements of the practices in other courts have been incorporated in those of the *syariah* courts. Lawyers are given a role to argue for the defendant. Usually the officers of the courts are qualified. Verdicts and sentences are usually fairly uniform except when different states have different ideas about what constitutes Islamic justice. A substantial portion of the *syariah* laws have been codified.

If Islamic laws are to be implemented, the interpretation of justice and punishment, and formulation of procedures must be examined carefully. It is important to go back to the *Quran* and the verified *hadiths*. It is important to note that Islam accepts circumstances as influencing the implementation of the laws and of justice. The changes in modern times which have resulted in newer perceptions of what constitute justice in new crimes and new social problems cannot be ignored. It is clear that the administration of justice during the time of the

Prophet was in accordance with the mores of the time. The administration in the age of information, computers and the science of evidence cannot be the same. We and our judges are not prophets but we can always refer to the *Quran* and the verified *hadiths* and then use our faculty for thinking. The *Quran* is specific on some matters but many of the *ayats* or verses are not specific. The *Quran* states this very clearly in Surah Al-Imran as quoted before. If something is not specifically forbidden then it can be allowed as long as it is still in conformity with the *Quran*. Modern Muslims must be prepared to interpret again the *Quran* and the *hadith* even as the old jurists were in fact prepared to interpret and to make pronouncements on their own. Their interpretations cannot be taken as infallible and final. Only when Islam is interpreted so as to be relevant in a world which is so different from what it was 1,400 years ago can Islam be regarded as a religion for all ages. If we say that only by returning to the conditions prevailing 1,400 years ago can we practise Islam then we are saying that Islam is not for all times. But we know that Islam is for all ages. As it is for all ages, then it must be practised in the context of these ages. And Islam in this modern age must be relevant to this age.

The administration of Islamic law is a serious matter. The people who are entrusted to interpret Islamic laws must not act alone without consultation. While those who know Arabic and have studied extensively the *Quran*, the *hadith* and other *kitab*s may know all about what are in these books, their knowledge of the social and scientific facts may be deficient. It is necessary that people who are *alim* in non-religious subjects be consulted as well. Certainly on matters of procedure, legally qualified people should be brought in. Only when all the various experts are found and consulted, can Islamic law be administered in order to ensure justice. Even then it is important to remember that as mere humans they may still be wrong. But like the Muslim jurists of old they are honestly striving to follow the teachings of Islam. Future Muslim jurists may still find them erroneous and change the interpretations of those which are not pure articles of faith, with which we may not question.

ISLAM: THE MISUNDERSTOOD RELIGION

ISLAM IS PERHAPS the most misunderstood religion in the world today and indeed throughout history. It is not only misunderstood by non-Muslims, but by Muslims themselves. How else can there be so many Muslim sects with beliefs and teachings which are so different and contradictory? Something must be wrong, the result of not understanding or misunderstanding Islam.

The Muslim condition today is partly attributed to ignorance and continuing prejudice against Islam and its adherents. However, the Muslims themselves are not entirely absolved from blame because their predicament is largely of their own doing, a consequence of their inability to change with time and, to that extent, their salvation remains largely in their own hands.

One of the missions of the Prophet of Islam was to bring peace and unity to the feuding tribes, the *Jahiliyah* or the ignorant Arabs of the pre-Islamic days. This he succeeded in doing as narrated in several verses of the *Quran*.

The messages of Allah were brought by one Prophet and recorded in one *Quran*. There is no other *Quran*, or versions or editions, which carry different texts. The *Quran* is not in the form of Gospels by Muslim saints or *ulamas*. The *Quran* is just the record of the messages of Allah in the Arabic of the period. Translations of the *Quran* may be different

in minor ways, but these are not accepted as the *Quran*. Only that in the original Arabic is accepted.

So there can be no differing texts or Gospels or versions which can result in differences in the messages or teachings of Islam. Yet, clearly there are differences, serious differences, so serious that Muslims are divided sometimes into warring sects. Why is this so?

Actually people who are merely literate in Arabic cannot understand the language of the *Quran*, or at least the whole of it. To understand, explanations must be made by those learned in Islam, the *ulamas*, who understand the language of the *Quran* and are knowledgeable of the circumstances under which the messages were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Most of the messages were about or referred to events which occurred before or during the life of the Prophet. The *ulamas* felt a need to add words to the verses in order to make them clearer. These words are bracketed, particularly in translations of the *Quran*, and are clearly not part of the original message. They are necessary in order to make the messages clearer.

Although there is only one *Quran*, there are two categories of verses in the *Quran*: the specific or *muhkamat*, and the general or *mutashabihat*. There should be no mistaking the meanings of the specific verses, but in fact interpretations differ owing to elaborations by the *ulamas*. But the general ones are more subject to differing interpretations. In Chapter 3, Surah Al-Imran Verse 7, the *Quran* states, "It is He who has sent down to you [Muhammad] the book [*Quran*]. In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book, and others not entirely clear."

The general verses must necessarily be so, for they are intended to provide guidance in different situations and for untold problems that Muslims have to face not only during the life of the Prophet but for all times. The learned in Islam, the *ulamas*, can refer to these verses for guidance on any and every issue or problem.

The procedures for referring to the *Quran* and interpreting the verses have been determined by the early Muslim jurists in order to prevent casual interpretations. But since the procedures were made by mere men, however learned they may be, misinterpretations and wrong usage can and may occur, leading to wrong teachings.

The procedures involve, first, reference to the *sunnah* or traditions of the Prophet, and second, through *ijmak* or consensus of opinions of the *ulamas*. Where the *Quran* or *hadith* are not clear, the scholars may express an opinion or *ijtihad*, by analogy or *qias*, or through *istihsan*, the use of the capacity to think, applying the *Quran* to the realities of the situation.

The *Quran* is comprehensive and provides guidance for all things at all times but clearly if individual verses are taken in isolation, the teachings can become distorted and contrary to the teachings of Islam as a whole. Thus justice and avoidance of injustice is stressed in many verses of the *Quran*. Yet the tendency is to take just one verse and to interpret it without concern for the result, justice or injustice. And so Islamic justice can become quite contrary to the claim that Islam upholds justice.

After the *Quran*, the next most important sources of Islamic teachings are the *hadith* and *sunnah* of the Prophet, that is, his sayings and deeds as related by those who had heard or seen him in his lifetime. These must be good and truthful witnesses and these traditions must be passed on by word of mouth through reliable good Muslims through the years. With the passage of time, identifying a series of good Muslims who related these traditions became more and more difficult. By the time Imam Bukhari studied and sifted through the 600,000-odd *hadiths* and *sunnahs*, 200 years had passed. The learned *imam* selected only about 7,000 as *sahih* or genuine which he recorded. His student, Muslim, verified even a lesser number. Other learned theologians verified many others. These collection of *hadiths* and *sunnahs* are now accepted as genuine by most Muslims of the Sunni sect. The Shi'ites have their own verified traditions.

Since the learned *imams* and scholars were not Prophets but were mere men, they too could be wrong. The traditions which they reject may be genuine and those they accept may not be genuine. Of course, many still quote unverified *hadiths*.

Sometimes the pronouncements of the religious authorities at a given time and in a given situation are mere opinions or *ijtihad*, based no doubt on their wide knowledge of Islam and their understanding of the problem or situation. But, again, these are the opinions of very human individuals and they, too, can be wrong. In today's world, with the advances made in science and technology, new problems often arise. In

the medical world, all sorts of procedures and cures are being devised or discovered all the time. Some of these procedures alarm even the agnostics. Yet Muslim *ulamas* are often asked to make a ruling on them.

To do so, they must understand not just the injunctions of Islam but the very complex nature of the subject requiring a ruling. The most learned *ulamas* cannot possibly know everything about everything. They must rely on the expertise of others. Even then they may still not understand all aspects and the religious implications of the problem. They may reject simply because they cannot understand or because they are dogmatic. And, of course, an *ulama* or a group of *ulamas* may reach quite different conclusions from those of another *ulama* or group of *ulamas* on the same subject. Both cannot be right, although both can be wrong. It may require further consultations before an acceptable interpretation can be made which is compatible with the realities of the situation.

The *ulamas* or the learned in Islam are admittedly indispensable to the understanding of Islam. Even those laymen who understand Arabic and the language of the *Quran* need them. For non-Arab Muslims, the *ulamas* must also be linguists in order to explain the *Quran* verbally or in written form. Such translations of the *Quran* and *hadith* invariably contain a lot of bracketed words which help to interpret the particular verse but which are not a part of it. The choice of words reflects the particular *ulama's* understanding. It may also reflect the view and opinion of the *ulama*. Again, as the *ulamas* are not prophets, they may be quite wrong.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency amongst Muslims to treat the pronouncements of the *ulamas* as infallible. There are many people who claim to be learned in Islam and call themselves *ulama*. Some of these are clearly charlatans and people with vested interests, including, of course, politicians with very worldly personal ambitions. If all these people are considered to be the successors of the Prophet and are qualified and infallible in their interpretations of Islam, then it is easy to see why there is confusion and misunderstanding of the teachings of Islam.

Thus, not so very long ago, Muslims considered even the printing of the *Quran* as forbidden, *haram*. For a long time, the Turkish government which bought a printing press was not allowed to use it. The *Quran* must be handwritten. Electricity was considered *haram* for use in mosques. Mecca was lighted by oil lamps long after electricity bright-

ened the cities of the rest of the world. Turkish soldiers were forbidden from wearing Western-style trousers and peak caps because these, too, were considered *haram*. Paintings of humans or animals were banned until the advent of printing, photography and the television rendered the ban impractical. Yet all these pronouncements had been adhered to religiously for centuries by Muslims.

But these are trivialities. They do the Muslims no real harm although they may have retarded their progress in a fast-changing world. Much more serious are the *fatwas* which relate to relationships within the Muslim community, and between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Arab society at the time of the Prophet was given to feuding, to incessant wars between tribes which weakened them and retarded their progress. The feuds were the result of excessive tribal loyalties. Those given to these excesses were said to be *taasub* or fanatical. Islam condemned this excessive tribalism or fanaticism and the Prophet preached against it, promoting unity instead.

Thus in Chapter 3, Verse 103, the *Quran* says:

“And hold fast all together by the Rope (religion) which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided amongst yourselves. And remember with gratitude Allah’s favour on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that By His Grace You became brethren.”

But after the Prophet passed away, the Arabs returned to their feuding ways. Tribal loyalties returned. Disputes over which tribe had the right to succeed the leadership of the Muslim *ummah* after the death of the Prophet eventually led to the most serious schism amongst the Muslims. The followers of Saidina Ali, a nephew of the Prophet who became the fourth Caliph, broke away to eventually found the Shi’ite sect, while the followers of Muawiyah, claiming to abide by the traditions, formed the Sunni sect. Subsequently, both sects divided up again and again as different *imams* and *ulamas* interpreted the teachings according to their own understanding or sometimes their political affiliations.

The feuding between the Muslim sects and the Muslim nations are obviously contrary to the teachings of Islam. Certainly, the fanaticism

and violence with which they oppose each other, reminiscent of the pre-Islamic and *Jahiliyah* days of feuding, are not in keeping with Islamic teachings.

The Muslim world today is in grand disarray. Hostilities, rebellions and disorder exist in Muslim nations because of the stubbornness of feuding groups and because of their greed for power. They refuse to follow the real teachings of Islam and tend to interpret the religion in a way which serves their self-interest. This is the politics of *assabiyah*, of giving loyalty to one's faction at the expense of loyalty towards other Muslims and the *ummah* as a whole. Because of the activities of such groups, many Muslim nations cannot establish strong governments, and are thus chaotic, weak and looked down upon. That is why Islam is often ridiculed by others.

All this is not fated. It is so because of the greed of Muslims who refuse to follow the real teachings of Islam, especially the teachings of *ikhwan Muslimin* or Muslim brotherhood. If these leaders do something that is against their religion, they will hand down rulings to legitimise such actions. They will also accuse other Muslims who oppose them as infidels. That the existence of *assabiyah* goes against Islamic principles and that it breaks up and weakens the *ummah* is somehow lost upon them.

MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

That there is a misunderstanding amongst Muslims regarding the teachings of Islam on relations with non-Muslims is even more obvious. The *Qur'an* clearly stated that the Christians are the friends of the Muslims. Indeed, when the first few converts to Islam were persecuted by the Quraish idol-worshippers, they were advised by the Prophet to seek refuge in Christian Abyssinia. The Christian King of Abyssinia protected the Muslim refugees so well that attempts by the Quraish to extradite them failed.

If the Sunnis believe in the Traditions, surely being friendly with Christians should be one of their beliefs. But we know that Muslims do not accept this. The *ulamas* explain that the present-day Christians are not the Christians referred to in the *Qur'an*. And, therefore, they are justified in regarding all Christians as enemies.

All Jews are also regarded by Muslims as enemies because the Jews of Medina had been disloyal to the government of the Prophet. Yet the

Quran states that only those who take up arms against the Muslims are their enemies.

In Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah Verse 190, the *Quran* states:

"Fight in the cause of Allah
those who fight you
but do not transgress the limits
For Allah loveth not transgressors."

In Chapter 8, Al-Anfaal Verse 61, the *Quran* stresses:

"But if the enemy
inclines towards peace
Do thou (also) incline
towards peace and trust
in Allah, for he is the One
that heareth and knoweth."

This means that the Zionists and their supporters who advocate violence against the Muslims must be regarded as enemies. But when they sue for peace they should get a positive response from the Muslims.

Yet Muslims regard all Jews as eternal enemies against whom Muslims must forever fight. This sounds very much like fanatical feuding and against the teachings of Islam. Woe betide anyone who may suggest that the Jews are not the eternal enemies of the Muslims.

MISUNDERSTANDING AMONGST NON-MUSLIMS

If Muslims frequently misunderstand certain teachings of Islam, the misunderstanding amongst non-Muslims, in particular, Jews and Christians, about Islam and Muslims today, is even worse.

The clash between Muslims and Christians occurred quite early when Byzantium was still a Great Empire and stood in the way of the spread of the Islamic faith. But Christian Europe really worked up feelings against Islam during the time of the Crusades. The Crusaders whipped up anti-Muslim feelings to a frenzy. The perpetuation of this anti-Muslim feeling and the consequent violence against them can be described as a kind of feud.

And so the deliberate whipping up of anti-Muslim feelings has been going on for centuries. Nothing good that Muslims do, in particular in their relations with non-Muslims, is recognised. Thus the fact that Christians and Jews could practise their religions in Muslim Spain was hardly ever mentioned in European history books. The fact that the Christian reconquest of Spain led to the expulsion of the Muslims and the Jews, and forced conversions and executions, have never been condemned. That Jews actually preferred migrating to Muslim North Africa rather than stay in Christian Spain is regarded as of no significance.

In the Balkans, the mainly Christian Slavs preferred Turkish rule to that of Christian Byzantine. They actually helped the Turks to defeat the Byzantines. For the most part they were not converted to Islam, but remained Christian, surely testifying to the liberalism of the Turks towards non-Muslims.

The misunderstanding of Islam by the West today is perhaps at its peak. Forgetting that Christianity, too, had experienced extreme aberrations as exemplified by the Spanish Inquisition and the burning of witches in Europe and America, the West has regarded aberrations in the practice of the Muslim faith by a minority of Muslims as true manifestations of Islam.

No one, neither Muslim nor non-Muslim, can deny that many terrorist acts have been perpetrated by Muslims. But then a lot of terrorism has also been perpetrated by non-Muslims. The difference is that if a Muslim does it, the deed is somehow immediately attributed to his faith. When a non-Muslim commits the most heinous of terrorist crimes, his deed is not linked to his religion.

The immediate reaction to the bombing of a government building in Oklahoma City was that it was another Muslim terrorist act. When it was discovered that it was not a Muslim who did it, the fact that the bomber was a Christian was ignored. It was not described as Christian terrorism.

The bitter fighting in Northern Ireland is the result of religious differences between two Christian sects. But at no time have the bombings, killings and maimings by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and their Protestant rivals been termed Christian, Catholic or Protestant terrorism.

The terrorism by people of the Christian faith in Northern Ireland pales into insignificance when compared to the brutality of the Christian Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tens of thousands of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been raped, starved, tortured and massacred by the Serbs. Mass graves are found everywhere. The Bosnian Serbs openly declared that they were carrying out ethnic cleansing to prevent the setting up of a Muslim nation in Europe. Because of certain implications, Europe refuses to describe ethnic cleansing as genocide, which is what it really is.

Yet at no time have the massacres and terrorism by the Christian Serbs been described as Christian terrorism. Instead, European forces willingly handed over safe havens for the Muslims to the Serbs who subsequently massacred thousands of young Muslim men.

Supposing, just supposing, it was the Muslim Bosnian Slavs who had the weapons and the numbers, and they were supported by Muslim countries and they had committed the atrocities. The world would be screaming 'Muslim terrorism' from the top of mountains. And Nato would have moved in and ended the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina in no time.

But such is the perception of Muslims by the West that it is not even noted that the victims of Muslim fanatics and the misnamed fundamentalists are insignificant compared to the number of Muslims and non-Muslims who have been massacred by terrorists of the Christian faith. The misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims is such that the West naturally assumes that terrorism is a Muslim creed and is confined to Muslims. Evidence to the contrary is simply ignored.

There have been a few Western writers who have tried to be factual and fair. But these writers are either ignored or condemned. Attempts by Muslims to point out that the Muslims who are terrorists are a minority, and that Muslims desire peace as much as anyone else, have also been brushed aside.

FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism is the most abused of words. It is equated with extremism. Yet if the teachings of Islam were studied, it would be clear that the best Muslims are the fundamentalists. The fundamentals of Islam are based on peace. Indeed, Islam means peace. The people who

are usually described as fundamentalists are far from following the fundamentals of the Islamic religion. On the contrary, they are people who reject the teachings of Islam or who deviate from them. Most of them have seemingly reverted to the pre-Islamic *Jahiliyah* ways of extreme loyalty to their groups, to fanaticism or *taasub*.

By calling these deviationist Muslims 'fundamentalists', the West has displayed its lack of understanding of Islam. The West certainly fails to appreciate the problem faced by many Muslims. When beliefs are strong and widespread, whether they are right or wrong, it is not easy for anyone to differ. To do so would risk accusations of heresy. The consequences can be very unpleasant. People who go against these extreme deviationist groups risk ostracism or even violence. For these reasons, the majority prefers not to be openly critical or to oppose. But when non-believers condemn all Muslims as terrorists and plain bad people, they certainly are not being helpful. They are simply pushing the good Muslims into the arms of the deviationists.

Islam is the religion of people who once dominated the world, not only in terms of territorial size and political strength, but in the sciences, the arts, technology, skills in exploration, navigation, trade and industry. For almost 800 years the Muslim Arabs ruled the largest empire known up till the 15th century, and then the Muslim Turks and Mongols presided over an even bigger Empire.

Empires, as we well know, rise and decline and the Muslim Empires did not escape this cycle. But throughout, their greatest foes were the Europeans. Having embraced Christianity, another Asian religion, the Europeans were quite fanatical in their opposition to Islam. From the very beginning, there was a deliberate campaign to distort Islamic teachings, to prevent the Europeans from understanding it and so risk their conversion.

It is not surprising that the fall of the Turkish Empire was largely due to the machinations of European powers. Playing on Arab nationalist sentiments and the promise of independence from Turkish rule, the European powers obtained Arab cooperation to break up the Turkish Empire. But almost immediately, the Arabs found that they had exchanged domination by fellow Muslims for European domination. All the Arab territories were occupied and exploited by the Europeans.

Despite their enforced close association with the Muslims in their Middle Eastern and North African empires and elsewhere, no attempt was made to understand Islam and its influence on Muslim life and thought. There was always that latent antagonism which the Europeans never manifested against other non-Christian faiths. While many races which came into contact with Islam accepted it to some extent, the Europeans almost universally rejected it.

The people of European origin today may not be so fanatically Christian but the attitude towards Muslims and Islam remains. And this is manifested in very painful ways for the Muslims. Whole nations are isolated, blockaded and punished for the faults of few. Muslims have been allowed to be slaughtered in full view of their so-called European protectors.

Is it any wonder then that the Muslims are bitter and seek to avenge the wrongs visited upon them? Is it any wonder then that they resort to violence? But still only a few do so.

The Europeans should be able to understand this, for this is also the European reaction to their real or imagined repression by their own people or others. But no attempt is made to understand or appreciate the frustrations of the Muslims. True, the fall of the Muslims and the deterioration in their practice and interpretation of Islam can largely be blamed on them. But the anti-Muslim propaganda and deliberate misunderstanding of the religion by the Europeans have merely aggravated the frustrations of the Muslims.

Malaysia has a Muslim majority and the government is Muslim-dominated. Although the Muslims have a sufficient majority to rule the country on their own, they have chosen not to do so. Instead, they deliberately chose to share power with the non-Muslim minorities.

On May 13, 1969, race riots broke out in Malaysia, resulting in the death of some 200 people, mostly non-Muslims. An emergency was declared and the Muslim Malays took over the government. The Western press declared that democracy was dead in Malaysia and wrote it off as another developing country destined for the waste-basket of history.

Yet today, Malaysia, still under a Muslim-dominated government, is peaceful, stable and prosperous, growing at 8 per cent per annum for almost a decade: The Muslims of Malaysia are apparently not terrorists.

Indeed, they have proven themselves capable of living and working with non-Muslims to create a united and progressive nation.

There are no feuds in Malaysia, not between Muslims nor between Muslims and non-Muslims. The official religion of Malaysia is Islam but Buddhist, Hindu and Taoist temples and Christian churches are to be seen everywhere. Religious festivals of the different races and faiths are celebrated by everyone together. The non-Muslims in Malaysia do not regard Muslims as terrorists or Islam a violent creed.

One would have thought that Muslims and non-Muslims would recognise Malaysia as an example of the practice of Islam. But the West and their media refuse to recognise that the Muslims of Malaysia actually exemplify the teachings of Islam. They prefer to regard Malaysian Muslims and their behaviour as aberrations. They keep on asking about fundamentalism in Malaysia and when told that there are really no Islamic fundamentalists of the kind they describe, they reject the claim. The prejudice against Islam and Muslims remains even with Malaysia.

Islam is indeed a misunderstood religion. Such is the misunderstanding and the prejudice against it that Muslims and non-Muslims alike often regard it as an impediment, as a barrier to good, peaceful relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and even amongst Muslims. Both regard this religion that brought greatness to the Arabs and built a very progressive empire as being responsible for everything bad that has happened between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Ignorant of the teachings of Islam and frustrated by the apparent failure of Islam and their own countries, some Muslims tend to deride and even condemn the religion. Others, again due to frustration with the Muslim communities in which they live and ignorant about the teachings of Islam and its history, suggest that the *Quran* itself is at fault and needs to be revised.

When such frustrations are aired, the Western media, the principal guide to Western intellectual thinking, would make heroes or heroines of these religiously illiterate and untutored people. The Western countries would confer upon them awards and make them out to be brave people fighting the injustices of Islam.

The West would love to hear me condemn Islam for the failures of Muslims and their nations. But I know that their concerns about Islam and the Muslims are at best academic. I suspect that all they want to see

is the removal of Islam as a faith, the way that communism was debunked. But that will not serve the cause of good interreligious or non-religious relations between Muslims and the others.

The answer lies in correcting or abandoning the tendentious and incorrect interpretations of Islam by some of the *ulamas*. These interpreters of Islam, no matter how learned they may be in the teachings of the religion or how large their following may be or how established their teachings are, are not prophets. There is only one Prophet for the Muslims and he is Muhammad, the last of Allah's messengers who brought and spread the faith of Islam amongst men. Muhammad and the *Quran* cannot be wrong. But the interpreters of Islam can be.

If Islam appears rigid and doctrinaire, it is because the learned interpreters make it so. They tended to be harsh and intolerant when interpreting during the heyday of the Muslim Empires. And they and their followers brook no opposition to their writs once they were made. And so, long after the Muslims had lost their predominant position, long after the worldly environment had changed, the Muslims were exhorted to adhere to interpretations which are no longer adequate, relevant or practicable.

What Muslims must do is to go back to the holy *Quran* and the genuine *Hadiths*, study and interpret them in the context of the present world. It is Allah's will that the world has changed. It is not for Man to reverse what has been willed by Allah. The faithful must look for guidance from the teachings of the *Quran* and the *Hadiths* in the present context. Islam is not meant only for the 7th-century Arabs. Islam is for all times and for every part of the world. If we Muslims understand this, then there will be less misunderstandings amongst us. If the non-Muslims appreciate the problems that the Muslims have in trying to adjust to modernity, then they will not misunderstand Islam and the Muslims as much as they do now. And the world will be a better place if all these misunderstandings are removed.



ISLAM AND THE GLOBAL DAKWAH MOVEMENT

IT IS OBVIOUS from the history of Islam that Islamic *dakwah* was intended to spread the teachings of Islam amongst non-believers and to win more adherents to the faith. However, when we talk of *dakwah* today, we seem to confine it to spreading the teaching of the faith amongst fellow Muslims, those who are already believers. It would seem that *dakwah* is now meant mainly to instruct Muslims in their faith with no attention at all given to its dissemination amongst the non-Muslims. Indeed, at times we seem not to care if in the process of instructing Muslims, we inadvertently create an image of Islam that is repugnant to the non-Muslims. We do this by being unnecessarily antagonistic towards others and by adopting a holier-than-thou attitude.

Perhaps we should not be concerned about what non-Muslims think of us as long as we believe we are creating good Muslims of the Muslims. If we are not concerned then of course we are rejecting the injunctions of our religion to spread the faith, i.e. to propagate it amongst non-Muslims. Imagine how many Muslims there would have been at the time of the Prophet and now had the Prophet not cared for those who were not yet Muslims.

The Malays converted to Islam some 800 years ago. They converted because the Arab and Indian Muslim traders who came to our shores took pains to explain Islam to our ancestors and were rewarded by the voluntary mass conversion of the Malays to Islam. Had the Arab

A keynote address delivered at the 10th Session of the Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of *Dakwah* in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on January 12, 1996

and Indian Muslim traders been solely concerned with performing only the *fardhi ain* and be concerned only about how Islamic they were and cared little for the impact they had on the non-Muslim Malays, the Malays of today would not be Muslims. We are grateful even if others may not be concerned whether we are Muslims or not.

Indeed, if we go back further, we must admit that the Prophet never adopted an uncaring attitude towards the doubting members of his family and the idol worshippers of the Arabian peninsula. He was concerned enough to explain Islam to them and to win their adherence to the faith. And because he did that, Islam spread amongst his family, his friends and companions, the people of Medina, and finally all the peoples in the Arabian peninsula and beyond. If we are gathered here today, it is because Muslims in the past cared enough for non-Muslims even as they sought to understand and strengthen their own faith in the religion they were born to or had accepted.

Knowing this, it would be wrong for us to disregard the impact on non-Muslims when we carry out *dakwah* amongst us. We may not be able to convert them but surely it is better that they should understand our religion than harbour suspicion and fear from lack of knowledge and understanding of the truth about our faith.

Amongst the first persons to accept Islam was Bilal the black slave. It was the kindness of the Prophet and Muslims towards a slave which convinced him to accept the faith. Those were the early days when the teachings of Islam were not fully revealed yet. Such was the faith of Bilal despite his incomplete knowledge of the teachings that he was prepared to endure pain and punishment for his faith. Such was his role in the early days of Islam that we honour him to this day by designating one of the principal mosque officials as the Bilal.

The quality and the completeness of the knowledge of Islam is important to the *ummah*, but the behaviour of the *ummah* is equally important in *dakwah*. Bilal's acceptance of Islam was influenced by the way the Prophet treated him as much as by the faith of the Prophet. Clearly we cannot be effective in *dakwah* if our behaviour is at variance with the profession of our faith and the goodness of its teachings.

We say that we are enjoined to do what is right and to reject what is wrong. This clearly implies that it is not just knowledge of the religion that is required of us, but we should also be seen to do what is right and

reject what is wrong. Surely what we do is not for us alone, for our place in the hereafter. That would be very selfish and selfishness is not a quality that Islam promotes. We have an obligation to the *ummah* at least, if not to those outside our faith. But if we always do what is right and avoid what is wrong, surely the non-believers too will respect our faith and ourselves. Is it wrong to have Islam and the Muslims respected even by non-Muslims?

And yet many of us, while carrying out our duties in spreading the teachings amongst ourselves, care very little whether Islam and the Muslims are respected by the non-believers. Many of us are merely concerned with spreading what we interpret as the true teachings. More than that, we seem to regard fellow Muslims as being not Muslim enough. We are seldom gentle in our words of advice. We seem to demand that Muslims do nothing else except the performance of the obligatory rituals to which we often add the optionals and even those which we concoct ourselves, believing that they are good and they are the pious things to do. And if other Muslims do not practise these then we criticise them for not being good enough. We imply that they are wanting in piety. In extreme cases we reject them merely because they do not belong to a particular political party.

We forget that the *Qur'an* has stated that we may not criticise others as being less Muslim for it is possible that we are less Muslim than they are. We forget that Allah has decreed in the Verse of An-Nahl, line 125, meaning:

"Invite (all) to the Way of
thy lord with wisdom
And beautiful preaching;
And argue with them
In ways that are best
And most gracious;
for thy Lord knoweth best,
Who have strayed from His Path,
And who receive guidance."

We should win Muslims and non-Muslims alike as much by example as by precept. Today, the Muslim *ummah* cannot by any means be regarded as examples for others to respect, much less to follow. We may

declare that the *Quran* says in Surah Al-Imran Verse 110 that, "We are the best of Peoples", but can we honestly say that by example we are the best people?

Today, the Muslim world is in a state of turmoil. We are fighting each other and we cannot agree even to cooperate to help ourselves. And we are weak, unable to defend ourselves, and are frequently forced to side with those whose good intentions we doubt but whose support we need because we are weak.

The Muslims are poor and are lacking in essential knowledge to master the skills of a modern world. We sometimes console ourselves by saying that this world is not for us, that our kingdom is in the hereafter. And yet we know that this is not in consonant with being the best people.

We know that poverty destroys faith but we do nothing about it, preferring to associate poverty with piety despite the teachings of the *Quran* that poverty is one step away from loss of faith.

It may be that when we are spreading the word, i.e. carrying out *dakwah*, all we need is to explain the *Quran* and the valid *hadiths*. It may be, but it is doubtful if the faithful have nothing good to show as evidence of Allah's favour for the pious Muslims. If the learned amongst us are so poor that we cannot convince anyone that we are the best people; if the Muslim countries are so weak that we are completely dependent upon the charity and help of the non-Muslim powers; if it is obvious that we are willing to sell Islamic brotherhood in order to survive; if Islamic brotherhood becomes obviously a farce as we fight each other; can we really convince ourselves that we are following the correct teachings of Islam? Can we really convince others that Islam is the right path?

Words can be convincing, but in the face of contrary actions and obvious failures, can we expect ourselves and others to be convinced? Muslims today are being slaughtered by others who occupy their lands. They suffer untold hardships and humiliation. Their women are raped, their men tortured and killed. And they come to us for help. Is it evidence of the goodness of Islam when we can offer them no help? Is it Islam which is wrong or is it our interpretation of Islam? Is it enough for us to make Muslims who are already safe more pious or is it also our duty to defend and protect our brothers? Don't we know that while we are

busy trying to make ourselves more Islamic, many Muslims in conquered territories and those who have been forced to seek refuge in non-Muslim lands have lost faith, have forsaken their religion and have even converted to other faiths? Or is it that we know, but we don't care as long as we can ensure heaven for us in the hereafter. Are we really sure that there will be a place for us in heaven when we neglect other unfortunate brothers? Is selfishness promoted by Islam that we think we can ignore the needs of our brothers because we are busy trying to gain merit for ourselves?

We are here to discuss Islam and the *dakwah* movement. Be true to your faith and be honest to yourself. If we think we have not sinned, then forget the realities and concentrate on ourselves. But I feel that some of us, at least, are not interested in being holier-than-thou but regard *dakwah* as our duty to our brothers and to humanity as a whole.

15

THE PLIGHT OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH

ON THIS AUGUST OCCASION, it is only appropriate that we pay tribute to the founding fathers of the Organisation whose vision and foresight have given Islamic nations and the *ummah* an indispensable forum to pursue their common aims and aspirations. In this regard, Malaysia is proud to have been able to contribute to the Organisation during its formative years.

As we look back towards the past 25 years, we can take reasonable pride in the fact that our Organisation had been able to articulate the common concerns and interests of member states and the *ummah*, and had succeeded in bringing these issues to the forefront of the international agenda. Our Organisation has gained recognition in pursuing the cause of the Palestinian liberation and Al-Quds. We have been continuously engaged in trying to find peaceful solutions to the conflicts and disputes which have affected many of our members. We have also evolved organisationally, from one primarily concerned with the challenge following the tragedy at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, to the promotion of economic, commercial and cultural cooperation amongst member states. The enlargement of our membership from the initial 22 in 1969 to 52 today, including significantly those from the newly independent states of Central Asia, has further enriched and strengthened the Organisation.

While we have moved many steps forward, it would be to our detriment to ignore our failures. We could have done more if we are more

A speech delivered at the 7th Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca, Morocco, on December 13, 1994

united. We could have a stronger voice in world affairs if we are more cohesive. We would have been more credible if we are more efficient, and truly committed to our cause. Muslims would have been held in higher esteem and respect if our economies are strong and our governments are more effective and stable. It is therefore appropriate on this auspicious occasion for us to reflect on our weaknesses as well as our strengths, and to reaffirm our sincere resolve to seek ways to strengthen our Organisation so that it can play the role as the credible voice of Islamic solidarity and cooperation.

On this occasion, it is appropriate for us to take note of the rapid transformation that is taking place following the end of the Cold War. A new world order, or more likely disorder, will unavoidably impact upon us and our interests. This Organisation and the *ummah* need to be appropriately equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities that the 21st century will present. We need to be more serious and committed towards enhancing the effectiveness of the Organisation when called upon to do so. It is imperative that we discard practices and values which are neither truly Islamic nor relevant, and instead promote greater discipline in our observance of those Islamic virtues which in the first century of the *Hijrah* helped to spread the faith far and wide.

Our meeting here has taken recognition of these realities. Our Ministers have agreed to the establishment of an Eminent Persons Group to take stock of our achievements and our weaknesses and to provide guidance for the future direction of this Organisation. We, the Heads of Government, should endorse it. I am confident that with Your Majesty's wisdom, we will successfully evolve a strategy for the rebirth of Islamic unity and the restoration of our credibility as a force for a more equitable and just world.

In the short space of time available, I would like to go straight to the matters which are of concern to the Muslim *ummah* and their countries.

We must admit that the Muslim *ummah* and Muslim countries are still under threat and are very weak. We do much damage to ourselves by our lack of cooperation and our frequently violent and debilitating struggles for power in our own countries. As a result, whenever our brothers are in need of help, not only are we unable to extend meaningful help, but we are even unable to influence those agencies whose decisions and actions will affect the fate of our brothers.

We understand that in our society as in other societies, there are groups outside the power structure who feel strongly and are frustrated about what takes place within their societies. But extremism and violence is not the answer. Extremism begets extremism and violence begets violence. Even if they succeed in seizing power the same extremism and violence will assail them. In the end, Islam and the Islamic *ummah* will remain weak and continue to be pawns in other peoples' political games.

We cannot achieve everything that we wish to achieve overnight. The road to strength and greatness can be accelerated, but it will still take time. We must accept small gains if we cannot achieve quantum leaps. Most of us, I believe, are unhappy with the progress of the peace process in Palestine. The Israelis have been dilatory and insincere. But wrecking the peace process will not get us anywhere. Indeed, if the sabotage succeeds it will force us to begin all over again. And how can we believe that the strategy which got us nowhere after decades of costly struggle will achieve success if we begin again? I appeal to all our Palestinian patriots of all shades and political leanings to unite and strengthen their resolve so that the small gains that they have made can be consolidated and enhanced. In time, you will achieve your objective. It is absurd to think that by fighting each other you will advance your cause. You will, albeit inadvertently, be helping the Israelis and the other enemies of Islam.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, we must admit that we are ineffective, if not completely irrelevant. The Europeans have blatantly declared their intention to leave our Muslim brothers in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the mercy of the genocidal Serbs. If they do, we will be equally guilty. For we have left our Muslim brothers at the mercy of the Serbs long ago.

There is quite a lot that we can do. I need not elaborate them here. It needs only the political will. There is no doubt as to what Islam wants us to do. Whether we do it or not is really a measure of our commitment to our faith.

I am sure that we are all here because we take our responsibilities to the Muslim *ummah* and to humanity in general seriously. Malaysia is ready to contribute whatever little we have to resolve the problems facing us. We pray that God will guide us and give us courage so that we will make the right decisions and succeed in our endeavours.



REVIVING THE GLORY OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

A FESTIVAL OF SUCH NATURE should help to enlighten Muslims and non-Muslims alike regarding the achievements of Muslims in the past. But that is not the main reason for this festival. The more important objective is to show to Muslims today that if they are prepared to acquire the relevant knowledge and use it for the benefit of the *ummah*, it is not impossible to revive the glory and the achievements of the Islamic civilisation.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Islam spread widely outside the Arab world, and finally covered about three-quarters of the known surface of the earth then. Though military strength and sophistication played a role, the lasting contribution of the Muslims was in the fields of mathematics, science, medicine, astronomy and other areas of human knowledge. This was possible because in the early period of Islam, the quest for knowledge was not restricted by narrow interpretations of the religion. In other words, the early Muslims followed closely the examples of the Prophet in leadership, in the acquisition of wealth and knowledge, while not neglecting the performances of the compulsory *ibadah*. It was when knowledge and skills for the advancement of the Muslims were neglected that decline set in for the great civilisation the Muslims had built. Attempts were repeatedly made to revive the glory of Islamic civilisation after its decline, but they all failed because those who fear that worldly progress would result in neglect of religion insisted and persisted in dividing knowledge into

A speech delivered at the Opening of the World Islamic Civilisation Festival 1994 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on June 17, 1994

the religious and the secular and regarding or condemning secular knowledge as inimical to Islam. Coincidentally, it was at about this time that in the Christian world the church was separated from the state, with the consequent loss of power by the church. It was felt that secular knowledge could reduce the influence of religious leaders on the state and on society. This may be denied but we know of many instances where professionally-trained people are persuaded to give up their professions in favour of what is regarded as a religious calling.

Clearly, if we want to regain the glorious age of Islam, we have a great need to learn the history of the founding and the spread of Islam. History is the greatest teacher. Unfortunately, because of the downgrading of knowledge that is regarded as non-religious, Muslim historians concentrated almost exclusively on the contribution of the spiritual to the successes of the Muslims. On the other hand, Western historians tend to be biased. We are thus left with the artefacts and relics of the Islamic civilisation in order to learn and to assess the other causes for the early successes of the Muslims. Still, there is much to be gleaned from these which can help us to reconstruct the past and teach us about how the greatness of Muslim civilisation was achieved and how we can go about trying to revive it.

But, first, there is a need to debunk some of the beliefs which had contributed towards the decline. Principal amongst these is the teaching that the world is not meant for the believers. It is meant for the non-believers to enjoy. While some things which the non-believers enjoy are things which Muslims should not hanker after, is it true that we should also not benefit from the abundant bounty that Allah has bestowed upon this planet? The world is not a gift of Allah to the non-believers but it is a gift to the believers. Not to appreciate and not to use this gift seems to be particularly ungrateful and Allah does not like those who are not grateful, not just for His blessings but for anything good that is done to us, even by mere man.

In no other religion is there so much stress on observing our surroundings; the fields, the mountains and the seas and the bounty they hold for man; the animals and the plants and how they contribute to life; the rain and the sunshine and how they bring to life that which we would have assumed to be dead.

Does observation mean that we should only make a casual glance and then mechanically praise Allah? Is it not true that the more we ob-

serve, the deeper we study the creations of Allah, the more we would be amazed and beholden to His greatness? For while our studies into the minutest structure of matter, the atoms and beyond can contribute to our understanding of how all matters are formed and structured, we can never discover why they are so structured; why they function as they do; why they react with each other and form substances which are ever more complex; and most puzzling of all, why they contribute to life on earth. We can explain at length as to how all these happen: but we can never understand or explain why they happen: why one atom of oxygen combining with two atoms of hydrogen, two invisible gases, would form the ordinary water that is so tangible and so essential to life? Why not atoms of other gases? Why water? Why is water a source of life and its sustenance? We, through the most thorough observation, i.e. study, can understand and unravel how all these matter and compounds and actions and reaction take place, but we can never answer the question why they are so or they do so. The only conclusion we can make is that it must be a power beyond human understanding, it must be Allah.

Surely our studies would make us appreciate and believe in Allah even more strongly. Surely the deeper and the more extensive the knowledge, the greater would be the faith for what we discover through our studies to be even greater miracles than we thought after a casual glance; miracles which only Allah can create.

And yet Muslims are afraid to study all the mysteries around them, to discover the wonder of Allah's creations, and to utilise plants and animals for food and all the other creations of Allah to sustain and enhance the quality of life. Because we do not pursue knowledge in depth, Muslims today have to rely on the results and discoveries of those of other faiths. Today, many of us are totally dependent on the results of the non-Muslims' application of their knowledge for our food, transport, defence, clothing and the roof over our heads. Indeed, even in the performance of our religious duties, we depend on the non-Muslims. If this life, this bounty on earth, is not for us, then why do we share the discoveries and inventions of the non-believers who study the creation of Allah, and use their knowledge to better their life on earth?

Yet we know that during the glorious centuries of Islamic civilisation, it was the Muslims who led, who discovered the bounties of Allah through their learning, and made them available to the non-Muslims

then. And the Muslims led because they were very advanced in all fields of learning, in the sciences, in medicine, in mathematics, biology, astronomy and in a whole lot of other disciplines.

Unless and until we stop dividing knowledge into the religious and the secular, unless we start regarding all knowledge as faith-enhancing and hence not only permissible but vital to Muslims and their faith, we are never ever going to rebuild Islamic civilisation. Worst still, we are going to remain in the modern equivalent of the Dark Ages.

And so the first step towards achieving an Islamic renaissance is to debunk the belief that this world is not for the believers but for the non-believers only, that knowledge other than spiritual knowledge is secular and therefore must be proscribed. Instead, such knowledge should be sought for it can truly strengthen faith and revive the greatness of the Islamic civilisation.

We know the great scholars of the golden period of Islamic civilisation were not just specialists in their fields but almost invariably they were learned in the teachings of Islam. They were thus able to relate their knowledge to their faith. Today, Muslims either know the teachings of Islam exclusively or they are learned in other subjects, equally exclusively. They are therefore unable to relate the one with the other. As a result, they either become spiritually fanatical and reject anything they do not know as being secular and proscribed, or having studied non-religious subjects, they find themselves unable to defend their knowledge as it relates to their faith. When challenged by religious fanatics as to the relevance of their knowledge to Islam, they are at a loss for an acceptable answer. They often feel guilty, or alternatively they reject religion, because of their inability to reconcile what they have learnt with the teachings of Islam. For as long as this dichotomy remains, there will always be a dearth of scholars, of subjects, which are not specific to the faith amongst Muslims, thus condemning the Muslims to backwardness and preventing the achievement of a glorious Islamic civilisation.

But when we talk of recreating the Islamic civilisation, we do not mean to build a fair copy of the Muslim world from the 7th century until the decline of the Turkish Sultanate. Even when we are enjoined to seek guidance from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, we are not expected to reproduce exactly the achievements and the life of the Prophet. Indeed, the golden period of Islamic civilisation was not brought about by

the reproduction of the life and times of the Prophet in Mecca and Medina. The Islamic civilisation was the result of following the true teachings of Islam which the people in the lifetime of the Prophet were not able to benefit from fully because of time. In size and in the span of knowledge and achievements, the Islamic civilisation that was built after the demise of the Prophet was far greater than the Muslim world in the Prophet's time. This is because the application of Islamic teachings and creed over the centuries was able to bring about the maximum results.

Similarly, the building of modern Islamic civilisation should be in the context of the achievements of humanity at the present time. It should reflect contemporary life and thoughts which are relevant to modern times, but still compatible with the teachings of Islam. If we believe that Islam is for all ages, then we will be contradicting this belief, if we consider Islamic civilisation possible only in conditions prevailing in the 7th century of the Christian era in Medina.

But even if we have disabused ourselves of the restrictive compartmentalisation of knowledge into the religious and the secular, and if because of that we have the knowledge compatible with modern civilisation, there are still many conditions to be met before a great civilisation can be achieved. Chief amongst these is the establishment of a workable system of administration and government compatible with both Islam and the needs of modern times. Again it must be remembered that the forms of governments in the Muslim empires were not identical with the Medina or the Mecca governments of the Prophet. Many different forms of governments were practised without in any way making these un-Islamic. It is not the form of government that matters. It is whether they are compatible with Islam or not.

It is sad that anarchy or at least bad government prevails today in most Muslim countries. We are quite unstable. Unseemly struggles for power take place everywhere, resulting in millions being killed or forced to migrate, properties being destroyed, anarchy prevailing, food being so short that death from starvation becomes almost a regular feature of some Muslim countries. Still the fighting and the conflicts go on simply because one person or one group wants to grab power. It is to our utter shame that the faithful have to appeal to the non-believers to help bring about peace or to feed the starving.

Are we incapable of administering our own people? Are we incapable of using modern concepts of government, of administering justice, of dealing with an ever more sophisticated society with its complex social and economic imperatives? If we look around, it would seem so. For so many Muslim countries are unstable, insecure and unable to develop. Yet the modern systems of government are more in keeping with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet than the authoritarian governments which existed during the past Islamic civilisation.

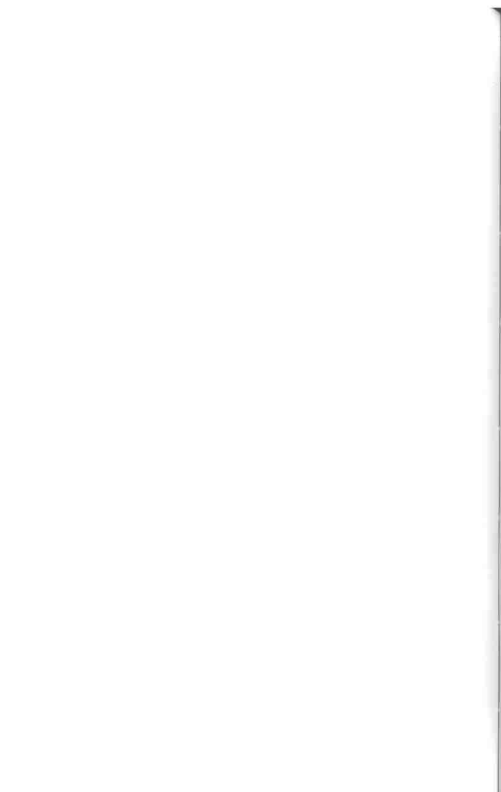
Of course, we need not accept systems developed by non-Muslims wholesale. Like everything else, there are good and bad points. And the bad points can be as damaging as any. We see anarchy and moral collapse in the Western democratic system which has brought about their decline. But we can avoid them and practise only those that are not against our own beliefs and values. But we cannot recreate the society as it existed in the Prophet's time or even those which prospered during the golden age of Islamic civilisation as a prerequisite for the revival of the golden age.

The civilisation that we build must not be for the purpose of confronting other societies or civilisations. It should contribute towards the sum total of human progress. It should show the compatibility and balance between the spiritual and the material, between progress and moral values, between religion and worldly concerns. It should provide the alternative to a world that has so obviously lost its direction. It should be a viable and an acceptable alternative, based on reasoned arguments rather than blind faith in certain tendentious interpretations of Islam.

Islam can still show the way. There can be a modern Islamic civilisation which is not an attempt to reconstruct life in the Arabian peninsula in the 7th century nor a slavish copy of a decadent Western system. There can be a modern Islamic civilisation which can provide both the spiritual and material answers to modern man's needs. If we say that these are but dreams, that they are worldly and irrelevant, that the only way is to recreate the life in the 7th century, then we should accept that Muslims will forever be oppressed and impoverished. In that state, we can be separated from our faith. If therefore the faithful decrease in number and in some places are wiped out completely, then we must only blame ourselves. It is we who have sinned, for we insist on doing

what is obviously wrong because we dare not question the correctness or otherwise of the popular contemporary interpretation of our faith.

Perhaps it is too much to expect that our Islamic Civilisation Festival would awaken us all from the stupor that we are in. But we would be failing in our duty to our religion if we do not try to seize the opportunity to learn from the lessons that the history of Islamic civilisation holds for us. There is more to this exhibition than to bask in the glow of a great past. Those who harp on the greatness of the past are in fact admitting and accepting their present decline. This exhibition is not for reflected glory. It is a reminder and lesson on how a great faith can lead to greatness, to the establishment of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, civilisations on earth. What has been done once by man can be done again. It is for us to decide. God willing, we will awaken and we will decide.



GOING BACK TO THE QURAN

ISLAM is a religion based principally on the teachings provided by the *Qur'an* which contains guidance for every aspect of Muslim life. It is therefore not just a Holy Book, the reading of which will earn us merit. If Islam is to be a way of life, then the contents of the *Qur'an* must be correctly understood. Islam as a way of life cannot mean the Muslims should have a miserable life and be oppressed by others. Nor should they be dependent on non-Muslims for all their needs.

While we must, as Muslims, revere the *Qur'an*, we must accept that in order to fully understand it we need to study also the *Sunnah* and the *hadith*. Indeed, we need, in the process of *ijtihad*, to analyse and interpret the contents. While the *Qur'an* is never wrong, it is, however, possible for those who study, analyse and interpret the contents of the *Qur'an* to be wrong. It is for this reason that different sects have emerged amongst the Muslims with different interpretations of the teachings of the *Qur'an*, the *hadith* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. If one sect rejects the interpretations of another sect it does not mean that it rejects the *Qur'an* or Islam. It merely rejects the interpretation of another sect, which may well be wrong. Thus, the Sunnis generally disagree with the teachings and interpretations of the Syiah sects and vice versa.

These differences in interpretation are possible because in many instances the *Qur'an* gives general guidance which covers every kind of situation. It is up to the learned in religion to make the interpretations.

A speech delivered at the Opening of the 4th International Seminar on the Al-Quran in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on February 2, 1994

The teachings of the *Quran* are not just for the time of the Prophet, nor are they confined to the Arabs. All Muslims, everywhere and through the ages, can seek and find guidance in the *Quran*.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency amongst some sects and some *ulamas* to be rigid in their interpretation and to believe only in their own interpretations. It is such people who cause misunderstandings amongst Muslims, resulting not only in the division into sects and groups but also in conflicts and wars. Obviously these divisions and conflicts amongst Muslims are not due to the *Quran*. They are entirely due to bigotry on the part of the *imams* and *ulamas*.

Quite often, the *Quran* is interpreted by people with vested interests. These people, in the furtherance of their own objectives, very often misinterpret the *Quran*. Throughout the history of Islam there have been many such people. Indeed, immediately following the demise of the Prophet, another pretender emerged who deliberately interpreted the teachings of the Prophet wrongly. But for his defeat at the hands of Saidina Abu Bakar, his wrong teachings could very well have spread amongst the followers of Islam, thus misleading them.

Today, the Muslims cannot be said to have achieved a gracious and glorious life and civilisation. Everywhere we look we see them oppressed and backward. They are weak and incapable not only of defending themselves but of defending their faith even. Some indeed have become so disillusioned that they have either forsaken Islam or are Muslims in name only.

Surely their parlous state cannot be due to their following the teachings of the *Quran*. If they fail to achieve glory and graciousness in life it cannot be due to Islam or the *Quran*. But it is entirely possible for their unfortunate situation to be due to the wrong interpretations of the *Quran*. Indeed, it is the only logical explanation for the failures and weaknesses of the faithful today.

We know that following the spread of Islam amongst the backward Arabs, they became a great people who mastered all kinds of knowledge and skills which enabled them to go forth and spread the teachings to almost the whole of the known world then. A glorious and powerful *ummah* emerged which enhanced the influence and power of Islam. Muslims lived a gracious life, honoured and respected by everyone and they were masters of all the skills and knowledge known to men then.

All these must have been achieved as a result of their learning the contents of the *Qur'an*. A backward people like the Arabs, given to much rivalry and feuding, became a peaceful people with mastery of all the arts and sciences, which in turn brought them universal respect. Such were the results of the teachings contained in the *Qur'an*.

Why then are the Muslims of today backwards? Why are they weak and oppressed, unable to defend the *ummah* or their faith? Why are they no longer the masters of themselves? Is it possible that the *Qur'an* which moulded the wild Arabs into a world power for centuries after *Hijrah* is now responsible for the weaknesses and miserable conditions of the *ummah*? It is not possible. The *Qur'an* is the same. Not a word has been changed. There is no such thing as a revised *Qur'an* as there are for many other holy books. The *Qur'an* of today is the same as in the times of the Prophet and when it was first written and inspired the faithful.

Yet the people of the *Qur'an* of today are different from the people of the *Qur'an* in the early years of Islam. The only possible reason for the difference in the achievements of the faithful believers lies in the numerous interpretations of the *Qur'an* by many different scholars and teachers. The *Qur'an* is for all times. It gives guidance for the different ages. It cannot, therefore, be absolutely specific. Thus, the Muslims were exhorted to have horses and swords ready for their defence. Instructions on how to breed and rear horses or forge swords are not given. Obviously Muslims must learn how elsewhere.

Equally obvious is that this refers to the early period of Islam when horses and swords were the principal requirements of defence. No mention was made of bows and arrows, camels and foot soldiers, armours of iron and leather. But the fact that these have not been specifically mentioned did not mean that the armies of Islam should not have them. If they were required for defence in that period, then the Muslims must have them. And we know that the Muslim armies had all these defence equipment.

By the same token the same verse on preparations for defence by Muslims in this day and age should be interpreted within the context of modern warfare. Swords and horses are of no use. This does not mean that the *Qur'an* is out of date or irrelevant. The defence needs now must involve strategies and weapons of modern defence. Only the most dogmatic interpreters of the *Qur'an* would insist that we prepare horses and

swords. It is these kind of people who make the *Quran* irrelevant and obstruct the progress of the Muslims to master all the arts, sciences and technologies of modern warfare. That they have not mastered all these is because the teachers of Islam are more interested in esoteric issues which are not critical to the welfare and strength of the Muslim. They would debate endlessly on these issues and they would split up and weaken the Muslims because of them. But they ignore such important verses on defence, for example. It is these people who miss the message of the *Quran* to the detriment of the Muslim *ummah*.

The *Quran* should not be interpreted literally. To do so would be to limit the vast lesson that are contained in it for the Muslim *ummah* and for humanity. To do so would make the *Quran* misleading and out of date. And the *Quran* is far from being misleading or out of date. It is the interpreters who are misleading, lacking in knowledge and out of date.

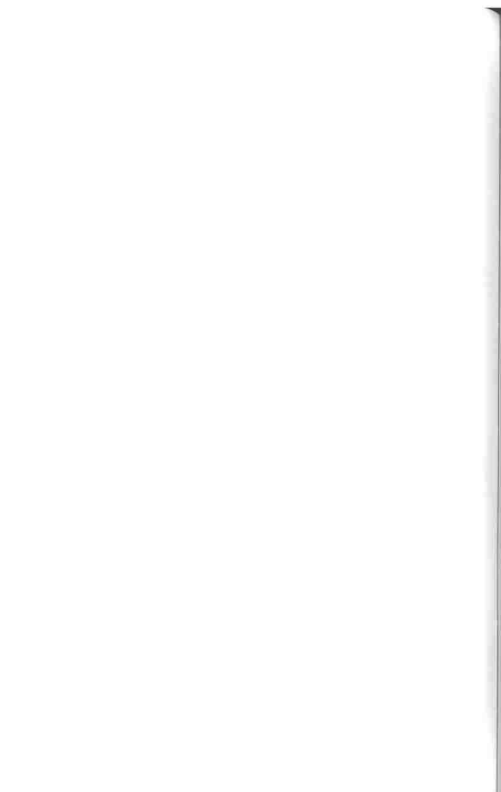
It is no longer possible to confine the interpretation of the teachings of the *Quran* to religious scholars only. Contemporary problems require that scholars of other disciplines be also involved in the interpretations. The progress in medical science, genetics, space explorations, commerce and industry requires deep knowledge in these subjects in order to relate to the teachings of the *Quran*. If they are not, then there is a grave danger of the *Quran* being regarded by some Muslims as irrelevant. The non-Muslims might even ridicule it.

It is necessary now to go back to the *Quran* and disregard the interpretations made by some of the *ulamas* after the period of Islamic glory. There is evidence to show that some of these *ulamas* were more interested in preserving their influence over the Ottoman government than they were in making correct interpretation. Thus seeing that the Christian Churches had lost their influence after the separation of the Church from the State, they condemned the learning of non-religious subjects in the hope that those with such knowledge do not emerge to displace them. All such learnings were condemned as secular and proscribed. As a result, Muslims who used to lead the world in the arts and the sciences began to lag behind non-Muslims. Eventually almost every Muslim country fell under the rule of Western imperialists. Clearly, the interpretations of these *ulamas* were self-serving. Unfortunately, their teachings are still largely accepted today.

The only way out is to go back to the *Quran* and reinterpret it correctly. The interpretations must be in the interest of Islam and the

Muslims. They must take into consideration the current milieu. They must not be made to serve the interest of those who interpret them or of any individual, group or political factions.

This seminar on the *Qur'an* must be motivated by and directed to making the *Qur'an* the guiding light of the Muslims. As the *Qur'an* served the early Muslims and made them a glorious people, so will it bring back that glory to the modern Muslims. But first we have to interpret its teachings correctly in the context of a world that has changed radically. This seminar is therefore useful, if not crucial, in order to bring the *Qur'an* back to the mainstream of our thinking and our approach to the problems of the Muslims today and in the future. I hope that you will not miss the opportunity to help sustain the faith in the teachings of the *Qur'an*.



THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF RELIGIONS IN SOCIETY

THE MAIN ASPECTS of human life, namely philosophy and the state, law, education and family as well as economics should be critically analysed and examined through the mirrors of both Islam and Christianity if we want to have a better understanding of the importance of religions to society.

Man is almost schizophrenic by nature, being both a physical person and a spiritual soul. The holy *Qur'an* has clearly described man's creation in two distinct phases: the first phase being the creation of the body or physical being from clay and the second phase is the breathing of the soul into the body of God's Spirit which completes man's creation. The relevant texts of the verses read as follows:

Al Hjr (15): 26-29

"We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape; while the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind. Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape;

"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

A speech delivered at the Opening of the Seminar on Muslim and Christian Minds organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (IKIM) and the Goethe Institute in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on September 14, 1993

Al-Mumminun (23): 10-15

"Man did We create from a quintessence (of clay);

"Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed;

"Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood, Then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump, then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh, then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the Best to create!

After that, at length ye will die."

This process of man's creation signifies three pertinent points. First, the breathing of Allah's Spirit into man. This signifies that man is provided with the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, if rightly used, gives man superiority over other creatures. This also implies that man is created innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to doing right and to virtue, and endowed with true understanding about his own position in the Universe and about Allah's goodness, wisdom and power.

Second, because of his lowly origin of clay, there is always the possibility of man being caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires and false teachings. It is this situation that may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish, hankering after what is wrong or forbidden, and deflected from the love of his fellowmen and the pure worship of the One True God.

Third is that this evil touches those who yield to it, and has no power over Allah's sincere servants, purified by His Grace. This means that sincerity towards submitting oneself to Allah's will is the best shield against Satan who is out to destroy man.

It is for this reason that men's behaviour keep fluctuating between good and bad. They turn to God when they are in distress or in suffering. However, when they are in affluence or prosperity they forget God and His bounty. Indeed, they should be grateful when in affluence or prosperity and remain steadfast and patient when they are in adversity. In order to ensure that man is consistently inclined to right and virtue, he needs to be endowed with a true understanding of himself, his Creator and his environment. Such knowledge can only be obtained through the continuous guidance of religion. As such religion provides man with the right *irame* of mind, encourages him to do good and

avoid evil. Religion is the anchor that prevents man from drifting aimlessly and being caught in the meshes of evil.

In the real world, we have on one extreme a society that completely rejects all religions and godliness. After about seventy years of practising life without any religion, the communists in Eastern Europe and Russia have failed miserably and disintegrated. Clearly, there is no spiritual anchor in such a society and their failure in achieving their purely materialistic objectives must in some way be due to this spiritual emptiness. The failure is total and complete so much so that a great power is now forced to literally beg for help from its former enemies. In Albania, where Enver Hoxha, the former President, outlawed religion and destroyed Bibles and *Qurans* and all literature pertaining to religion, there is now only a shell of a country.

A great people with a proud civilisation is reduced to being the poorest nation in Europe. But a government cannot destroy faith by legislation, or even by force. Today, the Albanians have returned to their religions, to Islam, to Christianity and to Orthodox Christian beliefs. Peace and calmness have now returned and there is a new sense of purpose and confidence in the future.

Man does not live by bread alone. The spiritual hunger must be assuaged also. Otherwise, even though the stomach is full, there will still be an emptiness, a void that renders life meaningless. To live in order to eat is to be no different from animals. Surely man is created for a greater purpose. The world is what it is today because of man. A creed that ignores the difference between man and animals, an ideology that is based exclusively on the gratification of the senses, and nothing more, is decivilising and denies the greatness of the mind and the superior feelings that man is endowed with. To reduce mankind to merely existing without purpose is to deny reason and the rationality of creation.

We have, on the other hand, the predominantly Christian Western societies which separate religious life from the secular. Hedonism, the love of pleasure and the gratification of the senses, has gradually displaced religion and made it more and more irrelevant. With this the structure of society has changed.

The relation between members of western society is now largely based on material gains and sensual gratification. Selfishness dominates in the search for these objectives. The community has given way to the

individual and his desires. Inevitably the result is the breakdown of established institutions. Marriages, family, respect for elders, for conventions, for customs and traditions have all but disappeared. In their place emerged new values based largely on rejection of all that relates to faith. And so there are single-parent families which breed future incests, homosexuality, cohabitation, unlimited and unrestrained materialism and avarice, irreverence, disrespect for all and sundry and, of course, rejection of religion and religious values. Society and its members have nothing to hold on to. They are adrift and directionless. Even their hedonism, the pleasure-seeking lifestyle begins to pall and bore them, leaving them totally empty or seeking thrills from drugs and other vices.

The West has not yet gone the way of the communist, but the decay has begun. We cannot foretell the future but there is a good chance that, unless sanity and a return to religion takes place, what has befallen the communist will also befall them.

The Muslim community suffers from a different malady. Weak and oppressed, suffering all kinds of psychological ailments, many seek solace and escape in esoteric religious practices. In so doing they interpret Islam in ways which are un-Islamic. As a result of this, Islam and the Muslim have acquired a bad name. It is regarded as a millstone around the neck of the followers, retarding their development. It has become associated with unprincipled practices such as terrorism and injustices to their co-religionists and the followers of other religions. It has split them into warring factions, causing untold misery and carnage amongst them. And it has brought this noble humanising religion to disrepute. The Muslims are no longer in control of their destiny. They are being manipulated and made the tools of and proxies for the conflicts of others. And they suffer this willingly, blaming others and blaming fate.

Muslim extremists pride themselves in their adherence to Islam. But in fact they are the bane of Islam. It is they who give Islam a bad image, who prevent the world from understanding the true teachings of Islam, who repel would-be followers and indeed it is they who exasperate and drive other Muslims to forsake the faith and succumb to the blandishments of materialism and ungodly ideologies.

The only redeeming feature with the Muslims is that whether they are practising Muslims or not, they still consider themselves Muslims, they generally believe they have a faith.

From the different models of society across the globe, we can hardly find a society worthy of emulating. We have on one extreme the communists who have completely rejected all religions and have eventually destroyed themselves. On the other end of the continuum, we have from time to time seen the emergence of some extremist religious groups who devote their whole life and self to the pursuit of their beliefs to the exclusion of all else. In trying to effect their escape from a world beset with problems, they themselves become a problem to the world.

In between these two extremes we have three major categories of societies in relation to religion. First, we have the predominantly Christian Western societies which confine religion to only their private and personal life. Religion has no place in their economic, political or social pursuits. They claim their state to be secular and that "God is dead". Whilst they may have achieved tremendous progress in their economic pursuits, they have failed miserably in upholding truth, justice and other virtues. Their societies are suffering from moral decadence. Their social lives are filled with all kinds of psychological and physical problems. They are living in stress and fear of new fatal diseases which their way of life has engendered and now threaten to spread wildly as they refuse to give up their hedonistic lifestyles.

Second, of course we have the East Asian models which have also demonstrated tremendous success in economic pursuits whilst at the same time keeping quite strictly to their own values, traditions and religions. Although they do not adhere strictly to their religious teachings, they do not reject or secularise their religions. They adopt a very flexible approach.

Finally, we have the Muslim societies who have a firm belief in Islam but have now become confused by the emergence of numerous sects and creeds, some of which plainly deviate from the true teachings. Their weaknesses and worldly failures do not provide humanity with a good model to follow.

History has invariably taught us that the rise and fall of civilisations has been chiefly due to the citizenry. It is the people that make up civilisations. It is the quality of the citizens that is the most important ingredient to effect dramatic changes to society and nations. Islam, for example, nurtured its earliest community based on truth and justice such that within a short span of time it had spread its influence throughout Arabia, Central Asia, North Africa and even Southern Europe. It was

also Islamic civilisation that had tremendously contributed to the various fields of knowledge to the world. This was merely because of the deliberate and concerted efforts undertaken by the early Muslims to integrate both the physical and spiritual aspects of life in all spheres. As a complete way of life, the separation of Church and State and the secularisation process which had deeply affected Christianity in the Middle Ages was never a problem to Islam and the Muslims. However, fear of a loss of influence by the *ulama* following upon the Christian separation of Church and State led to the confinement of knowledge purely to religious rites, laws and duties. With that began the decline of Islamic progressive civilisation and the breakup and subjugation of the Muslim World.

From even this cursory review of the realities that have taken place in different societies, we should find that religion has a very pertinent role to play. Religion should never be regarded as simply the rituals which affect people only at the individual level. Religion which seeks truth to establish justice in all aspects of societal life should be regarded as beneficial to society. It is religion which acts as the anchor or underlying principles that govern not only the physical and material well-being but also the spiritual growth and upliftment of man. It is religion that steers people towards a more balanced life. It is also religion that provides true guidance and the strongest motivation towards achieving a more fruitful and meaningful life.

The issue at hand is to find out the ways and means of how a nation can produce a people or society that has as its core the deep sense of religious consciousness, committed to the highest standards of ethical and moral values and yet is most progressive, industrious, dynamic and dedicated towards advancement and progress. This is indeed very necessary and pertinent because we can easily achieve material progress by physical planning and development. But, the stark truth is that all the material wealth that we have accumulated can be completely wiped out if we do not have the morally right set of values amongst the people who manage them. We have repeatedly seen this happening at the individual and family levels; we have also read in history about the fall of empires for invariably the same reason. And we are seeing today the destruction of many civilisations.

Second, we must be conscious of the need for a balanced and integrated development in the sense that planning and development

should incorporate the need for spiritual upliftment right from the start and not to leave such ingredient at the end. We have so far completely ignored this aspect of development, especially during the initial planning stage. If we do include them at all it is only as an afterthought.

Third, it is essential to realise that in the past we have concentrated almost entirely on physical development. Of late, we have been incorporating some aspects of human development in the form mainly of non-spiritual human-resource development. What is most pertinent is that there is a great difference between human-resource development and human development. The former involves matching of the demand for different categories and skill levels of manpower with the supply so that we do not face acute mismatch in terms of numbers as well as categories and skills. Human development entails the kinds of education, training, environment and the like that are necessary to develop all the potentials of the human individual in both body and soul, that is, his dual nature. This aspect of development has not been given sufficient attention. It is no surprise, therefore, that we are faced with numerous human problems. As the Holy *Qur'an* puts it:

Al-Rum (30): 41

"Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the deed) that the hands of men have earned. That (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)."

From the above verse of the Holy *Qur'an*, we should realise that we are completely responsible for all the mischief that have appeared on this earth as well as in the whole environment. This mischief is the result of our own proclivity for evil. After all, the result of evil cannot be other than evil. But Allah will restore the balance in the end by purging and purifying those that break His Harmony and Law. We are witnessing some of these today.

This meeting of the Muslim and Christian minds should serve to correct not only the distorted view each has of the other but to bring back religion to its proper perspective in the whole scheme of things.



ISLAM AND JUSTICE

SEVERAL CENTURIES after the decline of the Islamic Empire, the world has been dominated by the non-Muslim countries of the West. They not only succeeded in dominating almost the entire world but also in influencing the thinking of those they control, and in imposing their values and philosophy on these people. Their concepts and principles of justice are also widely disseminated so much so that the world is very engrossed with them and no one would question whether it is good or bad.

At the same time, the West became powerful militarily and economically and they controlled various kinds of knowledge, including information technology, which enabled them to suppress anyone who challenged them or their principles, as well as the values they uphold and disseminate.

This is their concept of justice. They speak eloquently of the rule of law, human rights, democracy or the voice of the majority, without taking into account the existence of certain man-made laws that are unfair, excessive human rights, and unwise majority voices. Hence the laws in the West place too much priority on the individual's right that allows him to do anything he pleases, even though his actions may threaten the peace and security of the society.

International laws, meanwhile, were formulated to provide the mighty with the right to suppress the weak. The same applies to human

A speech delivered at the Conference on Islam and Justice organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (IKIM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on June 3, 1993.

rights which are highly valued to the extent that groups, in the name of democracy, are given protection even if their activities threaten society, peace and progress. Democracy or the voice of the majority, as found amongst the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is respected even though the objective is to suppress the Bosnian Muslims. Even though democracy clearly leads to disunity, breakdown in the rule of law, suppression, cruelty and widespread poverty, as seen in the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe, it is still highly regarded.

At the same time, the West would not hesitate to turn their backs on the very principles of justice they profess to uphold if such moves benefit them. In West Asia, they appeared to be protecting the Kuwaitis from the cruelty inflicted by the Iraqis. It appeared that their action was based on humanitarian grounds and a sense of justice. But when it was evident that the Serbs were terrorising and killing the Bosnian Muslims, the West had a thousand and one excuses for not acting on the Serbs. The truth is that they acted in Kuwait because they wanted to protect their source of petroleum. Since they have no interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they are willing to allow the Serbs to kill, terrorise and suppress the Bosnian Muslims.

The actual principle subscribed to by the West and the majority of present-day world civilisation is based on Might is Right. Since the West is powerful, everything they do is fair. Since the Serbs are strong, their annexation of Muslim land is condoned. As Islamic countries and Muslims everywhere are weak, everything they do is wrong and unfair. Efforts by Muslims to reassert the concept of justice, as expounded by Islam, were criticised by the West as an attempt to revive old and antiquated thinking. The danger is that Muslims, in their frustration with their weaknesses and failures, will react contrary to their religious teachings. Because of disappointments, Muslims may act rashly and commit the same offence as that committed by their foes. This would then confirm the allegations of the West that Muslims are extremists.

History is replete with examples of Islamic justice. When the Romans conquered Palestine, the Jews were expelled, reducing them to exiles across the world, in what is known as the Jewish Diaspora. But when the Caliph, Umar Ibn Khattab, conquered Palestine, the Christians and the Jews were allowed to stay. The same thing happened when the Caliph, Salah el Din Al Ayubi, conquered Palestine, the non-Muslims were protected. But today, when the Jews, with Western help,

annexed Palestine, Muslims, including children, are suppressed, evicted and killed everyday.

The same thing was seen in Spain where Muslims ruled for 800 years. During that time, the Jews and the Christians stayed within their faiths and lived together with Muslims. But when Ferdinand and Isabella regained control of Spain, Muslims and Jews, who failed to escape to Africa, were killed, tortured or forced to accept Christianity. This is the reason why despite 800 years of Muslim rule, there were still Jews and Christians in Spain; but when the Christians ruled, not a single Muslim could be found.

When the communists were in power in the Soviet Union, Islam was suppressed to the extent that no Muslim dared to admit his faith. The same is true in Albania during the Marxist regime.

Now, we can clearly see the injustices in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Islam is suppressed almost everywhere in the world even though the world alleges that it subscribes to the principles of justice and rule of law.

On the other hand, in Islam, a religion which is also a complete way of life, justice is supreme and clearly defined. In Islam, it is clearly emphasised that the objective of the creation of the universe is primarily to uphold justice and truth. Verse 85 of the Surah Al-Hijr (15) in the *Quran* says:

"We created not the heavens, The earth, and all between them, But for just ends."

This is true in Verses 38-39 in the Surah Ad-Dukhaan (44) which says:

"We created not The heavens, the Earth, And all between them, Merely in (idle) sport. We created them not Except for just ends: But most of them Do not understand."

The Verses clearly state the real objective of creating the earth and the sky, and in fact the whole universe, that it is to uphold justice and remove cruelty and evil. In the Surah Ad-Dukhaan (44), the said Verse 38-39, Allah made it clear that the universe was not created for noth-

ing. The Universe was created for a reason. The Verse clearly denies that the Universe was created without a reason. In fact, it was created to uphold truth and justice.

If we accept the fact that the Universe was created to uphold truth and justice, we, being one of Allah's creations, should also uphold justice. In fact, upholding justice is one of our responsibilities as a human being.

In Islam, justice means placing something in its rightful place. There are three very important aspects of justice in this context. First, placing someone in a post or function appropriate to his capabilities. Second, to mete out sentence or make a decision appropriate to a situation or the person about to receive it. Third, to place wealth or property to those who rightly deserve them.

In selecting someone for any post or function, especially for important posts such as that of a judge, Islam demands that only the most qualified person be given such responsibilities. If we appoint someone who is not an expert in a particular field, we would be committing two acts of injustices. The first injustice is on the person so appointed because he will not be able to perform his duties as he lacks the necessary expertise. He will feel pressured, bored, lacking in confidence and has no interest in doing his job. The second injustice is on the people or community whom the appointed person is supposed to serve. This is because the individual will not be able to provide the service expected of him.

When selecting someone for an important post, the Prophet once said that "in appointing someone to an important post, when there is someone more capable for the job, is a betrayal of Allah's trust, a betrayal to His Prophet and a betrayal to all believers." This means that in making such appointments, a meticulous exercise should be undertaken to find the most suitable candidate possible amongst those available, so that we will not be doing an injustice to ourselves, the appointed person, and the society he is supposed to serve.

When meting out sentences, Islam provides various guidelines as contained in the *Quran* and the Prophet's traditions so that the sentences are fair. Islam ensures that the judge is selected from the most eminent of persons in terms of knowledge, ability, wisdom and integrity. The method to be used in meting out sentence should enable that

all relevant facts be obtained, scrutinised and considered so that all doubts are removed. Witnesses, too, should place justice above all other considerations, even if this results in their personal loss, their family and friends.

In making decisions, be it social, political, economic, management or administrative, justice must prevail. Decisions, which could lead to adverse situations, are unfair and unjust.

Justice is also demanded in the distribution of wealth, be it in the physical form or opportunities to accumulate them. In this matter, besides the direct distribution of wealth, the distribution of the opportunities, too, must be done fairly. This includes the distribution of opportunities in the fields of education, business and others.

Islam demands justice not only from its leaders but also from the community, as long as one of the said three aspects are present. If the masses are given the right to choose their leaders, they must select the most qualified and capable. All forms of corruption, such as demanding personal rewards, or for certain quarters to reciprocate an earlier assistance, run counter to Islamic justice.

The world's present chaos is a result of the international community's disregard for the principles of justice. The international community cares not and is cruel to those who are weak. Again, the Bosnian experience can be cited as an example. The weak Bosnian Muslims are not allowed to obtain arms even for self-defence. The Serbs who are already strong are allowed to increase their weaponry. Now, the big powers agreed to give the territories forcibly taken by the Serbs to them without due regard to the rights of the Bosnian Muslims.

To the big powers, the powerful Serbs are right and the weak Muslims are wrong and have no right. The big Western powers still insist that they are right and fair. Can we accept the Western concept of fairness as the basis of justice for our community? Should we not reject their concept and principle of fairness unless they do not run counter to that of Islamic justice as outlined earlier?

Legal history has proven that the process of making laws into statutory legislations was initiated and implemented by Muslims. This process has helped Islamic laws become more accurate and structured. But it should be noted that since the process of making Islamic laws into statutory legislations were done by people, who are not immune to im-

perfections, adjustments and corrections on these documents need to be made from time to time depending on time and place. In this way, laws which were based on the *Quran* and the sayings of the Prophet would be applicable at all times.

Crimes change with time. In this modern times, there are subtle and complex commercial crimes which are difficult to detect and determine. If no efforts are made to identify these crimes and determine the appropriate penalty consistent with religious teaching, then such crimes will engulf society. The same applies to hundreds of other crimes today. Efforts should be made so that the country's legal system is not inconsistent with the concept and principles of justice found in Islam.

There are many flexibilities in Islam which take into consideration the prevailing environment. Flexibilities are allowed in all Islamic practises. Hence the Islamic way of life does not become a burden and cause Muslims to face hardship, thus alienating them from the changing times.

Today, Muslims are found throughout the world and not only in Islamic countries. In most countries they are a minority. As minorities they are unable to implement Islamic laws that are practised by countries wholly controlled by Muslims.

It is important that Islamic rule is accepted as fair by all, including non-Muslims. Islamic rule in Medina and later in Mecca, since the time of the Prophet, were fair to non-Muslims. Under the Prophet's rule and under the Al-Rashidin caliphates forcing non-Muslims to accept Islam and Islamic laws, confiscating property and suppression, did not take place. There are times when sentences imposed on non-Muslims were based on the laws of their religion. As a result of the fairness of Islamic rule, many non-Muslims embraced Islam and placed themselves under Islamic laws.

In multireligious Malaysia, the government, which is led by Muslims, has to show to all quarters, Muslim and non-Muslim, that its administration based on the concept and principles of Islamic justice is truly fair. If there is a perception today that Islam is extremist or cruel, the reason is not that Islam is cruel but because there are Muslims who, when in power, become arrogant and do not abide by the teachings of the *Quran* and the sayings of the Prophet and the examples of the rule of the Prophet and well-known caliphs in Islamic history. Muslims who

are in power, judges and Muslim administrators in Malaysia should not be arrogant because of their power and should not forget Islamic principles of justice. It is important that the administration in Malaysia led by Muslims, prove that their rule is fair to all, is non-partisan and non-oppressive. It is the responsibility of all Muslims to correct the wrong image of Islam caused by extremists and deviationist groups who have given a negative image of the religion and its followers.

We must not forget that the world today views that Might is Right. Islamic countries, including Malaysia, should strengthen themselves. To achieve this, the important thing is to ensure that a fair and efficient administration is established so that our achievement is at par with that of other developed countries. Only after we have developed can we undertake preparation to strengthen our defence capability to be on the same level with that of other developed nations in all fields. This is necessary as it is stated in the Surah Al-Anfal Verse 60 of the *Quran*:

"Against them make ready Your strength to the utmost Of your power, including Steeds of war, to strike terror Into (the hearts of) the enemies, Of Allah and your enemies, And others besides, whom Ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know: Whatever Ye shall spend in the Cause of Allah, shall be repaid Unto you, and ye shall not Be treated unjustly."

If today certain countries and races, such as the Serbs and the Jews, dare and able to suppress and terrorise, the reason is because the Islamic countries are all weak. The *Quranic* teachings on the preparation for defence are not heeded. Their administration is often unfair and fail to create peace and order vital for the development of knowledge, efficiency and wealth, all of which are needed for attaining strength and respect.

Hence, before we Muslims blame others, we should question ourselves on our Islamic practises, especially in respect of ensuring fair administration. If Islamic justice is not evident and is difficult to be accepted by all, then we are partly to be blamed.

Therefore, it is important not only to deliberate on Islamic justice, but also to prove that the concept and the principle of justice in Islam can ensure righteousness and create a harmonious society. We must at-

tempt to clarify the concept and principles of justice in Islam so that any misconceptions and negative image can be corrected, and that the world can learn and gain from the wisdom of Islamic justice which can overcome the prevailing injustices caused by the arrogance of the present world powers.

20

ISLAM AND INDUSTRIALISATION

ISLAM AND INDUSTRIALISATION may seem odd a topic to some Muslims. Is there such an entity as an Islamic industry or an industry based on Islam, or can the industries we know and are familiar with today be Islamised? Hitherto, we have not considered the significance of industry's contribution to Islam or to Muslims or to Islamic practices. We believe that without industries, we can still be Muslims, indeed even good Muslims. In fact, during the time of Prophet Muhammad, there were no such industries as we know today, yet Islam was able to spread and to prosper. Why then is there a need to link industry with Islam? Indeed, why is industry necessary at all.

We often consider industry merely as a business, a quest for excessive profits. Consequently, we regard industrialists as people who are greedy, who are interested only in an affluent lifestyle, and are thus linked to being irreligious. We also tend to think that any venture to accumulate wealth will involve cheating and other forms of abuses. Therefore, we regard all industries as un-Islamic or deviational and obstructive to the performance of our religious duties or *ibadah* in Islam. However, if we examine industry from the truly Islamic perspective, we will realise that industry is a service. While this service can bring evil if misapplied, it can also be beneficial and important to religion and our religious duties.

Before the invention and introduction of printing, for instance, the *Quran* was handwritten. Even for this purpose, a paper industry was

A speech delivered at the Opening of the Conference on Islam and Industrialisation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on January 21, 1993

needed, if leaves were not to be used as writing materials. When the *Quran* had to be handwritten, the number of copies of the *Quran* was limited. The possibility that copies owned by a particular society would be destroyed because of war, calamities or fire was great. Thus it became necessary for some people to memorise the *Quran*. This was in order to prevent the text of the *Quran* from being lost.

When printing was first invented many Islamic clerics issued religious rulings that Islam forbade the printing of the *Quran*. This ruling was also influenced by the scribes who wrote the *Quran*. They felt that printing the *Quran* would threaten their livelihood. As a result of this ruling, for many centuries Muslims generally, religious teachers and officials could not own or read the *Quran*. On the other hand, when the ruling was revoked later, Muslims were able to own and study the *Quran*. As a result, Muslims were able to enhance their Islamic knowledge. Today, it is unthinkable for anyone to issue a *fatwa* preventing the printing of the *Quran*. But *fatwas* can and are still being made based on narrow perceptions. And this is true with industry as a whole. Because of a wrong perception of industry, it does not get the focus nor the support from the religious perspective.

Today it must be acknowledged that the printing industry has benefited Islam tremendously. True, the printing industry can be misused as, for example, in the printing of pornography. But we cannot blame the printing industry. The blame should be placed on the printers. If all new inventions in this industry are made by Muslims who are conscious that industry is a service to the community, it is possible that they could find ways to prevent the abuse of the industry. For example, if only Muslims have expertise in the field of design and production of printing equipment, they could supply them with conditions imposed or they could refuse to supply them altogether. Such has been the case when Islamic nations were supplied with arms by other countries. They could not use them freely.

Without industry, many religious rites would be difficult to perform. The textile industry is important in order to pray, indeed to cover the *aurat*. More Muslims are able to perform their pilgrimage with the invention of aircrafts and the development of the aerospace industry. The construction industry has enabled us to perform our prayers in mosques which can accommodate the increasing number of Muslims.

In other words, there is no industry that would not provide service to Muslims in their daily life and in performing their religious duties.

One responsibility of an Islamic community is to prepare for defence. During the Prophet's time, defence equipment meant horses and swords. And during the Prophet's time, there existed industries to produce swords and warhorses.

Preparation for defence in this modern era requires a defence industry consistent with modern technology. It is the duty of those who adhere to the teachings of the *Qur'an* to invent, produce and supply defence equipment. The defence industry is very important to Muslims. But because Muslims paid no attention to industry, a sophisticated Muslim defence industry is not available. What is important to remember is that the arms industry cannot exist without thousands of other industries. All kinds of knowledge and capabilities are required to invent and produce arms, land, sea and air transports and spacecrafts. Muslims must therefore master all industries and not just the production of defence equipment.

Today we witness with sorrow the killing and torturing of thousands of Muslims, including the abuse of women, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nothing can be done by the Muslims because no Islamic nation has the capability in terms of a sophisticated and strong military force. All this is due to a perverted view of modern industry and the assumption that industry is not related to Islam. Industrialists are not respected by Islamic society or recognised as contributors to the well-being of Islam.

When Turkey was a world power capable of conquering large parts of Eastern Europe, the country's military modernisation process was hampered because its religious experts objected to the soldiers wearing trousers. For decades this trivial matter was debated by the religious experts while the attacks on the Turkish Empire were intensified. Today the wearing of trousers is no longer a controversial religious issue. Anyone can wear them. We do not become un-Islamic just because we wear Western trousers. But the time spent on debating the problem had hindered the process of modernising the Turkish army and its defence industry to the extent that Turkey lost its empire. To some extent the fate of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina today is due to the polemic over the trousers which had hampered the modernisation of the Turkish army. In the end, young Turkish army officers were so frustrated with

the attitude of the religious leaders that they blamed religion. When they gained power they set up the so-called "secular government". Many Muslims are critical of these Turkish officers (the "Young Turks") for supposedly choosing a secular system of government. But before we condemn them, it should be remembered that at that time, the Turkish Sultanate Government was so weak that the Western powers planned to divide Turkey amongst themselves. Only the bravery and actions of the Young Turks saved Turkey. As a result of this, Turkey, including its territory in Europe, was saved and remained an Islamic state.

What is the relevance of Turkish history to Islam and industry? Its relevance lies in the fact that Muslims are often distracted by trivialities that they forget their bigger problems and responsibilities. We often focus on trivial issues, yet ignore serious matters like the Muslims' capability in industry. True, industries which are established purely for wealth with no consideration of service towards society is not compatible with Islamic ethics. But Muslim entrepreneurs can always emphasise the services aspect and what industry could do to the society. Profits may be enjoyed, but profits too must be spent on research and development so that the service rendered could be further improved and made less costly. In this way, more profits could actually be obtained. But this does not mean that industry should be regarded by the Muslims as a charity. Legitimate and reasonable profits are permissible in Islam. But the service aspects must be emphasised. With this, industry will be more acceptable to the Islamic community. Regardless of the Muslims' stance on industry, we should realise that although industry, which is being controlled by non-Muslims, has no religious objectives, it can indeed destroy the Muslims. Cases in point are Bosnia-Herzegovina and West Asia.

Industry will continue to play a role as a provider of services needed by society. No industry can be successful if it does not supply something that is needed by society. A food entrepreneur is no less important than an entrepreneur in heavy or sophisticated industry in terms of service to the community. If we can look at industry from this perspective, that is from the perspective of the supplier of services, then the role of industry to Muslims and Islam would be better understood and supported. Indeed, Muslims who venture into an industry would be more aware of its links to religion if they look at industry as a service to society and religion. In considering industry as a service, focus should be made not only

on wealth and profits, but also on the quality and value of services provided. If Muslim entrepreneurs have this character and approach towards industry, inevitably their industries would become more developed in terms of quality and profits. And why not? Goods produced by entrepreneurs who wish to give service in addition to obtaining profits, will definitely be more sophisticated, and have better quality and be reasonably priced. Customers would prefer to buy sophisticated, good quality and reasonably priced goods. To regard an industry as a service is not only consistent with the Islamic viewpoint towards any venture and wealth, but will actually contribute towards success.

If we accept industry as a service to the *ummah* and religion, I am confident there would be an enhancement of Muslim interest in industry. With this, various types of industries, researches, acquisition of knowledge and the creation of a noble attitude could be promoted amongst the Islamic countries and amongst Muslims. God willing, this will also make Islamic nations and Muslims more progressive and successful as well as ensure that the Islamic religion and Muslims are more respected.

Seen from this angle, this conference is most crucial and timely. Muslims should regard industry as a means to strengthen the Muslim states and the Muslims so that they are better respected and capable of defending themselves. Ignorant Muslims cannot contribute towards the greatness of Islam. On the other hand, industrial capability, as well as the extensive command of all kinds of knowledge necessary for industrialisation, will make Islam and Muslims more respected.

The negative view and attitude of the Muslims towards industry will not only be unprofitable for them but will in fact be against Islam and its teachings. The time has come for Muslims to mould an approach and attitude towards industry that is truly Islamic. Muslim attitude towards industrialisation must be consistent with Islam. If this attitude can be moulded, then numerous efforts could be made to ensure that Muslims are able to own and manage industries effectively that will benefit Islam and all Muslims.



GLOSSARY

Ad-deen refers to the religion of Islam as a complete way of life, a whole system of thought and action. It includes all the connotations and significations associated with the faith, the beliefs, practices and teachings experienced and lived by Muslims individually and as a community.

Adl social justice

Akhirat 'belief in the afterlife', a fundamental creed of Islam. It incorporates the notion that Man is accountable to God for his actions, and life on Earth is a test. Ultimately, all will be called upon to render an account of one's acts of commission and omission to God.

Alim religious learned or scholar; theologian

Assabiyah the giving of loyalty to one's faction at the expense of loyalty towards other Muslims and the worldwide Muslim community as a whole

Aurat that portion of the human anatomy that Islam decrees should not be exposed and should be covered up: for males, it extends from the navel to the two knees; for females, it refers to the whole body except for the face and the two hands up to the wrist.

Barisan Nasional the 'National Front' party which governs Malaysia. It is a coalition of political parties representing various ethnic groups and regional interests.

Bumiputera After the May 13 incident of 1969, it became common to refer to the Malaysian population as consisting of *Bumiputeras* ('sons of the soil') and non-*Bumiputeras*. The *Bumiputeras* comprise the

Malays, Malay-related and indigenous or aboriginal groups. Non-*Bumiputeras* consist of Malaysians of Chinese and Indian ethnic origin and members of other small non-Malay groups. The May 13, 1969 outbreak of ethnic violence and wanton destruction represents a cathartic watershed in Malaysian history and forced a search for fundamentally new ways of managing a multiracial society.

Dakwah Islamic religious outreach or mission activity. Modern *dakwah* movements work primarily amongst Muslims, instead of reaching out to members of other faiths.

Duakan a native physician; a village medicine-man

Fardu kifayah socially requisite knowledge; a Muslim's religious obligations to society

Fatwa the written legal opinions or rulings issued by Islamic scholars or *ulamas*

Fuqh intelligence

Hadith the deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad as transmitted by his companions and others from the first generation of Muslims. These recorded traditions were subsequently compiled and codified by scholars. Hadith literature is an accepted source of Islamic law (*syariah*). It also helps Muslims to interpret the *Quran* by giving meaning to obscure verses and words, and by recounting incidents in which the *Quranic* verses were applied to situations in life.

Haj the annual pilgrimage to Mecca undertaken during the twelfth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Every physically and financially able adult Muslim is expected to perform the *Haj* at least once during one's lifetime. The focus of the *Haj* is the Ka'aba, a cube-shaped House of God in which a sacred Black Stone is embedded. Muslim tradition teaches that the Ka'aba was originally built by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail. The Black Stone was given to Abraham by the angel Jibrail (Gabriel) and thus is a symbol of God's covenant with Ismail and, by extension, the Muslim community. The *Haj* itself includes an intricate series of highly symbolic and emotional rituals performed in unison by all pilgrims. Collectively, it celebrates the reunion and renewal of the *ummah*, the worldwide community of Muslims.

Halal legitimate; permissible according to Muslim law and covering all aspects of life, usually pertaining to food

Haram forbidden by Muslim law

Hassanah bounty

Hijrah the emigration of Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Mecca to Medina in 622AD. To commemorate this event, that year has also been accepted as the first year of the Islamic calendar. The *Hijrah* is also interpreted as a symbolic refusal to lose hope in the face of persecution, suggesting that withdrawal from an oppressive to a more conducive environment is an acceptable option.

Hudud the mandatory punishments in Islamic criminal law for crimes against morality (adultery, fornication and false allegations of adultery), property (theft and highway robbery), apostasy and drunkenness. Though severe, *hudud* punishments are tempered by the strict rules of evidence. For example, the first offence of theft, on the proof of two witnesses or a confession, results in amputation of the hand at the wrist, and the second, further amputations. For fornication, on the proof of four male witnesses or a confession, a married person is sentenced to stoning to death, and others to a hundred lashes.

Ibadah the rituals of worship and religious duties

Ijtihad independent reasoning based on the texts

Ikhwan Muslimin Muslim brotherhood

Imam leader of prayer in a congregation

Jahiliyah pre-Islamic civilisation

Kafir non-believer of Islam, infidel, pagan

Khalifah caliph; in the past, a Muslim ruler; a title given to the acknowledged successors of Prophet Muhammad, regarded amongst Muslims as being vested with supreme dignity and power in all religious and civil-policy matters

Madrasah a place to pray as well as a religious school which usually also teaches secular subjects

Mufti a position created by the administrators of Muslim countries after the death of Prophet Muhammad to help make decisions pertaining to religious affairs. The position of *mufti* is needed because of the overzealousness of those who claim to be *ulama* who issue *fatwa* or make their own interpretations that constantly contradict one another and confuse Muslims. With the existence of the *mufti*, only the

mufti may issue or rescind a *fatwa*. This way, there will be no conflicting *fatwa* on the same subject matter.

murtad apostate

Musyawahah consultation

Quran the Holy Book of Islam

Solat the ritualised prayers performed by Muslims five times a day, at dawn before sunrise, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and sometime between sunset and midnight, facing in the direction of Mecca wherever they may be. Ritually, prayer is preceded by ablutions, which involves both the cleansing of the body and the purification of the mind and heart, and bestow the ritual purity essential for divine worship.

Sunnah Prophetic traditions. Muslims revere Prophet Muhammad as the quintessence of Muslim life, the yardstick of human behaviour and practice. Belief that he was inspired by God to act wisely and in accordance with God's will has also lead to the acceptance of his example or *sunnah* as a supplement to the *Quran*, and therefore a material source of law. The *sunnah* includes what the Prophet said, what he did and actions that he permitted. Together with the *Quran*, it constitutes a source for establishing norms for Muslim conduct.

Syariah Islamic law

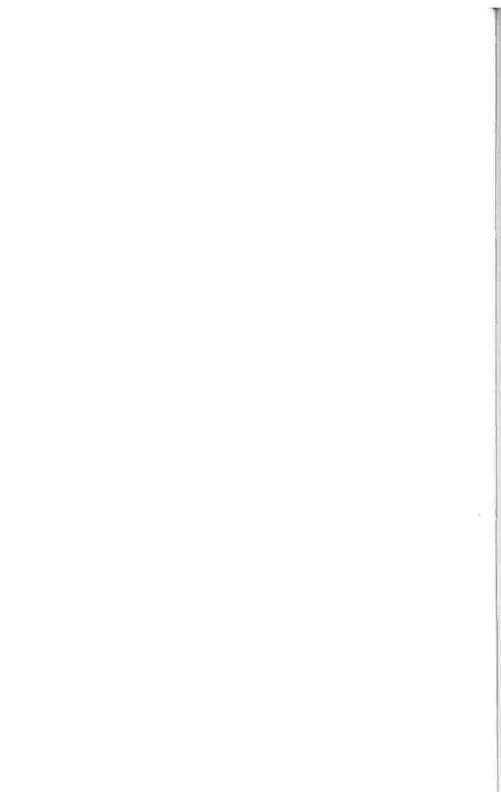
Ulama plural of *alim*, which means 'learned' or 'scholar'; Islamic scholars or those learned in Islam; seekers of knowledge; theologians. Though, traditionally, *ulamas* have claimed the right to interpret Islam, the modern period has seen an erosion of their traditional powers and authority. Most of them continue to maintain that they alone possess the requisite religious learning and thus ought to be the ultimate authority to determine what the law should be.

Ummah the worldwide community comprising all adherents of the Islamic religion; the *umamah* is a supranational notion that extends beyond national boundaries and political borders to encompass all Muslims, regardless of political affiliations.

Ustahuddin philosophy

Zakat a religious obligation requiring Muslims with the economic or financial means to contribute a certain percentage of their wealth as alms and tithes, *zakat* (an Islamic property tax) and *fitrah* (a special

tithe during the festival of *Aidil Fitri*). Alms are used to help the poor, widows, orphans and to assist in the spread of the religion. The payment of *zakat* is a formal duty, not subject to choice, and is not charity; it is an act of worship or thanksgiving to God and of service to the community. In this way, society is not faced with the problem of excessive imbalance.



INDEX

- Arabian peninsula, 49, 74, 98,
105, 117, 142, 156
- Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, 22-23,
98
- Bangladesh, 31
- Bosnia-Herzegovina, 12, 15, 18,
29, 52, 62, 66, 72, 80, 110, 135,
149, 174-175, 183-184
- Burundi, 52
- Christianity, 12-14, 20, 23, 62-63,
134, 136, 165, 167, 170, 175
- Communism, 51, 139
- Crusades, 18, 133
- Democracy, 34, 54-56, 70, 86-88,
137, 173-174
liberal democracy, 45, 57, 87
- G15, see Group of Fifteen
- Globalisation, 10, 32-33, 56-57, 73
- Group of Fifteen, 88
- Hitler, Adolf, 18, 62
- Human rights, 40, 44, 51-52,
173-174
- IMF, see International Monetary
Fund
- Indonesia, 31, 33, 109
- Information Age, 10, 73, 83
- International Monetary Fund, 45
- Kosovo, 12, 18, 52
- Malaysia, 15-16, 24-25, 29, 31,
33, 40, 43, 45-47, 49, 52,
54-55, 67-69, 72, 81, 85-86, 88,
105-107, 109-110, 123, 125,
137-138, 147, 149, 178-179,
187
- Marx, Karl, 16
- Mecca, 48-50, 59-60, 82, 115,
117, 124, 130, 155, 178,
188-190
- Medina, 26-27, 48-49, 60-61, 82,
95-96, 124, 132, 142, 155, 178,
189
- NEP, see New Economic Policy
- New Economic Policy, 45-47
- NGOs, see Non-governmental
organisations

- Non-governmental organisations, 52, 70, 110
- OIC, *see* Organisation of Islamic Conference
- Organisation of Islamic Conference, 69, 91, 101
- Prophet Muhammad, 48, 59-60, 76-77, 116, 128, 151, 181, 188-190
- Rwanda, 52
- South Korea, 33
- South-South Cooperation, 88
- Spanish Empire, 20
- Spanish Inquisition, 62-63, 70, 93, 134
- Turkish Empire, 12-13, 20, 23, 76, 79, 98, 136, 183
- Turkish Sultanate, 79, 154, 184
- UMNO, *see* United Malays National Organisation
- United Malays National Organisation, 37-38, 46, 48-49, 51-55, 57
- World Trade Organisation, 45
- World War I, 98
- World War II, 18, 62
- WTO, *see* World Trade Organisation

DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, one of the most durable and outspoken figures on the world political stage, has been prime minister of Malaysia since July 16, 1981. He first came to prominence in 1969 when he was expelled from the ruling party, Umno, for writing a letter critical of the then prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. Before being readmitted to Umno in 1972, he wrote his famous, highly controversial work, *The Malay Dilemma* (1970), which examined the economic backwardness of the Malays, and advocated the intervention of the state to bring about their rehabilitation. The book was promptly banned in Malaysia. In *A New Deal for Asia* (1999), Dr Mahathir reflects on Malaysia's fight for independence and rails against those who blindly worship the free market.

As Malaysia's fourth prime minister, Dr Mahathir has played a pivotal role in the confident march of his people towards Vision 2020, his blueprint for Malaysia's advance towards fully developed status. Born in 1925, Dr Mahathir studied medicine in Singapore, where he met his future wife, Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali. After working as a doctor in government service, he left to set up his own private medical practice in his hometown, Alor Setar. In 1974, he gave that up to concentrate on his political career. Dr Mahathir and his wife have seven children and ten grandchildren.