

THE FUTURE ROLE OF ISLAM IN TODAY'S WORLD

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The future role of Islam in the world depends solely on the correct perception of the true concept of Islam, and its right application to the practical aspects of human endeavour.

The very word "Islam" has been wrongly interpreted today, the world over, by modern western nations, the religious elite of the Muslims and the Christian and Jewish clergy, and has been misused since ages by the vested interests which, in our country, include the civil and military dictators, *jagirdars* and *sardars*, capitalists and religious leaders. They have been exploiting the sentiments of the Muslims for acquiring state power, amassing wealth and securing self-interests. This exercise of misinterpreting Islam has been performed especially to keep the people at large ignorant about their rights and obligations, to keep them away from living a life of understanding, dignity, peace and affluence and to make them ineffective as a political force.

Islam is a "faith" and a "way of life", meant for facing the challenges of the world successfully. But it has been willfully termed a "religion" by the vested interests, and relegated by them to the realm of metaphysics and rituals alone. 'Faith' and 'religion' are two divergent concepts; faith unites human beings, while religion divides them. Religion has been shaped into a device for keeping the ruled into docile creatures, playing easily into the hands of despotic rulers against their will. It has been used to nullify democratic progress and development of democratic culture. It has been portrayed as an inheritance from forefathers that needs no efforts on the part of the inheritors to possess and uphold it. It is also being portrayed by the imperialist powers as a fundamentalist, aggressive and terrorist ideology bent upon finding excuses for indulging in repressive measures against a large section of humanity, for acquiring political and economic gains. The human beings have been divided into numerous incompatible and mutually antagonistic religious groups, on the basis of immaterial and illusory differences, instead of forging them into

mutually benefiting human material for economic, social, political, cultural and spiritual development.

If we use the word "Islam" in its true meaning, it will necessarily lead to unity and solidarity of human beings on a universal level, irrespective of caste, creed, race, colour or religion, as well as unity among the exploited against the exploiters and the oppressed against the oppressors. Islam, in fact, means submission of human beings to the will of God – the Creator, the Nourisher, the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, the Compassionate and the Merciful for creating peace and plenty in our world. The universe has been formed with fixed laws of nature, which, if followed, will necessarily lead to peace, progress and prosperity. Islam is a "way of life" presented in various forms by God, through the prophets, in various periods of history, according to the needs of the times. Their basic teaching was "belief in God and performance of good deeds beneficial to the society." Good actions, of course, entail opposition to and rejection of suppression by the vested interests of human rights, and active participation of the people in management of the state and government. All the prophets were thus "prophets of Islam" emanating similar messages to humanity – the message of 'faith' – in order to promote unity and amity among human beings, and to enable them to improve upon their inherent capabilities for creating a better world. This message was not intended to create various religions for giving birth to dissensions among human beings and alienating them from the real Truth.

Religions have been tailored, all over the world, by the vested interests in order to evoke sentimentalism in their adherents so as to alienate them from the political process of their countries, and to use them to their personal advantage, unhindered by organized public opinion. They have thus kept the common men, especially women, unaware of their rights and their true role in life. They have created disunity and disharmony among human beings on various pretexts such as religious, sectarian, ethnic and national.

The future of mankind, however, requires that we shed all kinds of prejudices and, by indulging in constant dialogue, develop a forward-looking demeanor, practice tolerance and open-mindedness towards all people and thought processes, including the various religions, and thus broaden our vision of the future world to the extent of preparing ourselves for doing away, at least

conceptually, with all national boundaries, and treating all human beings inhabiting this world as one family.

The future role of Islam is to unify, fraternize, glorify, humanize, modernize, spiritualize and develop the human society; to do away with exploitation of one nation by the other and work for their economic and social betterment; to get rid of religious intolerance, sectarianism and all sorts of bigotry, dogmatism, fanaticism and terrorism; to use the nuclear power and other scientific and technological achievements of man towards the common benefit of humanity.

Without giving due importance and deference to the true concept of Islam, as explained above, there is no secure future for humanity.

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