

Good News

...And give good news to those who do good (to others) - HQ 22:37

April 2017

A Publication of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, South Africa

Vol. 008 No. 04

An 'Uphill Road' to Freedom

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South Africans have, after several years of democracy, come to the painful realisation that true 'freedom' is more than just political emancipation. The imbalance between rich and poor; the advantaged and the disadvantaged is still very much skewed in favour of those who benefitted from the oppressive 'Apartheid' system. The corruption within the present ruling hierarchy has, regrettably, slowed down the process of 'complete' liberation instead of accelerating the desired reform envisioned by the great stalwarts of the 'liberation struggle'.

Human 'enslavement', however, is not confined to South Africa. It is a much bigger 'monster' with widespread tentacles.

Enslavement is a Global Problem:

It is unfortunate that the 21st Century has produced the worst of what we have come to know - to our dismay - as the 'enslavement and exploitation' of humankind. The rise in human trafficking; forced labour; political and economic exploitation; aggressive profiteering; religious intolerance; racial hatred; proliferation of unverified false news to deceive; hegemonic power struggles; wanton accumulation, display, and use of 'weapons of mass destruction.' Nay, despite the human race's rapid technological advancement, corruption and immorality in just about all spheres of society, have reached alarming proportions.

The time has indeed come for collective soul searching - beyond the mundane - for a much needed moral super structure to save our crippling civilization from collapsing completely. Islam offers such a structure.

Islam in the Service of Humanity:

The service of humanity is the recurring theme of the Holy Quran. ‘Freeing of slaves’, ‘feeding the orphans and the poor’, ‘exhorting one another to patience and mercy’, were challenges that man had to face in order to pass the test of becoming a true Believer. It was indeed a test in ‘true humanity’ and not a mere superficial show of allegiance to some dogma. The Holy Quran draws attention to this in the following verses:

And (We) pointed to him the two conspicuous ways – 98:10

But he attempts not the **uphill road** – 98:11

And what will make thee comprehend what the uphill road is? – 90:12

(It is) to **free a slave** – 90:13

Or to **feed** in a day of hunger - 90:14

An orphan nearly related, -90:15

Or the **poor man** lying in the dust. -90:16

Then he is of those who **believe** and exhort one another to **patience**, and exhort one another **to mercy** - 90:17

These are the people **of the right hand**. -90:18

The doing of good to the under-privileged is called here an ‘**uphill road**’

because of the selfless struggle and extra efforts that are required. Islam lays much stress on the upliftment of the poor and the distressed and thus it is a moral duty of all Muslims to free slaves or break free from all forms of ‘enslavement’, take care of the orphans, and feed the poor.

In pre- Islamic Arabia, slaves were the most prized possessions of the Arabs. Their status in society was measured in terms of the number of slaves they possessed. They were their masters and they took great pride in the sense of power it gave them. For those of them who embraced Islam, to be told to give up the practice of slavery and set their own slaves free, were the greatest sacrifices they were called upon to make. In this regard, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led by example and set free all slaves that he ever had and helped in the freedom of others. For example, Zaid was freed and became his adopted son and close companion.

Muslims were taught that their prayers and fasting were for their own personal spiritual sustenance; and that the real manner to serve their Lord lay in what they were prepared to plough back into society. Without such selfless fervour to serve fellow humankind, their faith would have amounted to nothing in the sight of God. Islam thus provides the means to free humankind from the shackles of

enslavement this world presents and the unnecessary hardship that comes with it.

1) Freedom of Worship:

One of the biggest societal failings that has plagued humanity for centuries is the scourge of religious ‘intolerance’. The Holy Quran thus opposes all shades of religious ‘enslavement’ in the strongest terms and teaches absolute freedom of choice in matters of faith:

And say: The truth is from your Lord. So **let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve.** – 18:29

In the same vein, all forms of coercion in matters of faith are also strictly forbidden:

There is no compulsion in Religion — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. 2: 256

2) Freedom from the enslavement of low desires and erratic emotions:

The Holy Quran teaches us how to unfold the good within ourselves and not to allow ourselves to become slaves of our demanding lower desires, whims, and fancies:

And serve Allah and associate nothing with Him. – 4:36

We are taught to make God our goal and find our focus and pursue everything that is good. When we allow

negative emotions and desires to overpower us, whether it is sexual urges; the desire for money and power; blind attachment to certain material things and to persons; depression; fear; sadness etc, we lose our connection with the Divine and our own God-given faculties that empower us and we soon find ourselves in a trap of erratic emotional enslavement. How often have we not experienced the disastrous consequences of actions based on irrational, impulsive emotions or uncontrolled desires? However, if we allow nothing to gain power over us except the One and Only God, the ‘Creator, Who Sustains and Nourishes the entire universe and every living creature in it through stages of evolution to perfection’ (Our *Rabb* in Arabic), then we are able to conquer our human weaknesses, break the shackles of emotional enslavement, and step into a state of ‘Peace’ which is the meaning of ‘Islam’.

No doubt, desires - when brought under control to ensure civilised, ethical norms and values are maintained in society, are the motive forces which are essential for our moral development and vital for the survival and growth of the human species. However it is when we exceed limits, behave erratically and violate the norms set by a civilised society that we end up with much of the strife and conflicts we come across today.

3) Economic Freedom:

The current exploitative, capitalist system that the West has subjected us to has reduced the working classes to nothing more than modern-day-slaves in the grip of a minority ‘mega rich’.

Studies conducted by the anti-poverty charity, Oxfam, predicts that by 2020 the one percent mega rich will own more than fifty percent of global wealth.¹

It is also generally felt that ‘mega bankers’ control some of the most powerful governments on the planet, forcing most of the world into an unenviable state of ‘economic servility.’ As a politician, referring to the 2008 economic crisis, admits:

Even after the financial crisis, the banks “own the place.”²

The Economic System of Islam:

The economic system of Islam on the other hand is based on free and fair trade; **compulsory charity based on an equitable wealth tax**; the prohibition of burdensome usury (interest), and loaded taxation.

Islamic banking is styled on a corporate banking system aimed at creating entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation through a partnership of profit

and loss sharing. Reckless speculation; market manipulations, and price fixing in general and in particular of essential food products such as wheat, grain, rice, etc are not allowed.

In a nutshell, Islam definitely offers a more balanced and equitable distribution of wealth and a solution to the universal problem of poverty, as opposed to the onerous, usurious-driven, Western style economic system suitable only to an elitist few at the expense of the majority of the human race.

4) Racial and Class Discrimination:

Racial and class discrimination are still very rife in society today. Although countries such as America have abolished slavery and in South Africa the ‘apartheid’ system is no more, racial prejudice and injustices still persist.

Islam came to do away with all forms of racial based inequalities. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca by Muslims from all corners of the world is an excellent example of racial and class equality in practice. Muslims who do not uphold these practices in their normal day to day lives are behaving in a hypocritical manner opposed to the pure teachings of Islam.

5) Mental Slavery:

Nothing can be worse for intellectual and moral progress than the mental enslavement humankind is subjected to on

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30875633>

² Admati A and Hellwig M, *Bankers and Politicians: A Symbiotic Relationship*-, June 2014

a daily basis. From the irresponsible dissemination of ‘fake news’ in social media circles to the proliferation of ‘unverified propaganda’ by large media corporations being the order of the day, it has become even more imperative not to allow our natural intellectual abilities of discernment to stagnate and perish. Question! Question! Question! And take nothing at face value, is a good guiding principle to follow to avoid mental enslavement especially when dealing with politicians, religious zealots, and marketing pundits.

The same goes for the enslavement to all forms of superstitions, customs, and rituals. These practices are often confused with religion and therefore difficult for people to give up despite being openly outdated and meaningless in an advanced age. For example the covering of the female face with a veil is derived from medieval ‘national’ customs pre-dating the advent of Islam and has nothing to do with the faith of Muslims as often portrayed in the media.

6) Enslavement to Intoxicants and Gambling:

Islam prohibits the abuse of all forms of intoxicants such as alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, morphine, methamphetamine etc., etc., etc.:

O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance...are only an

uncleaness, the devil’s work; **so shun it** that you may succeed. - 5:90

However, prescribed, regulated doses of some of these drugs that are useful in treating some sicknesses may be used for medicinal needs under strict control by the authorities and medical profession:

They ask thee about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them is great sin and (some) advantage for men, and their sin is greater than their advantage. – 2:219

The free social use of all kinds of intoxicants is a sin and was strictly forbidden by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It is reported from A’isha, (wife of the Prophet) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘Every drink that intoxicates is prohibited.’ – (Bukhari 74:3) and

A companion of the Holy Prophet, Jabir, also reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘Of whatever thing, a large quantity intoxicates; even a small quantity is prohibited.’ – (Abu Dawud 25:5)

There is general consensus in all societies that ‘intoxicants’ as well as ‘gambling’ are cancers that disintegrate the

moral fibre of society. Nations across the globe spend trillions of dollars annually on rehabilitation centres in order to deal with drug and other addiction- related problems. Over and above that, the funds needed in dealing with the **consequential damage** caused to society by these addictions, are exponentially increased; thus the advice Islam provides for the well-being of humankind is simply:

‘So shun it that you may succeed.’- 5:90

Wasteful Funding on Addiction-Related Issues:

Valuable funds that are used on drug related issues that could have been avoided, plus the billions of dollars spent on destructive weaponry to support futile ‘war addictions’ could have been used easily for raising the literacy levels of millions in under-privileged countries and for alleviating the financial burdens of poverty stricken nations across the globe.

In order to draw our attention to this and make us re-focus on the real issues that affect our societies and the urgent humanitarian needs that face us, the Holy Quran outlines the **real aims** of a truly responsible and trusted **‘Liberation Movement’**:

(It is) to free a slave or to feed in a day of hunger an orphan nearly related, or the poor man lying in the dust. – 90:13-16 and to

‘exhort one another to patience and exhort one another to mercy.’ – 90:17

We need to conscientise ourselves all the time of the needs of the enslaved, the orphan, and the indigent. If we do not then we have failed miserably to alleviate the woes that beset society. We need to have empathy for all regardless of religion, race or class.

As already indicated above, Islam teaches that faith in an Almighty Being is meaningless unless translated into a practical commitment towards the welfare of the most disadvantaged members of society especially **the orphans**.

We live in a vicious, often brutal world where mothers are widowed and children orphaned on a large scale, as a result of meaningless and merciless wars driven by nations ‘enslaved’ by their greed and lust for power. Society has reached the stage where practices that are lower than the animal are common even among some Muslims. As we witness these human atrocities, we realise just how essential it is for us to keep on to...

‘exhort one another to patience and exhort one another to mercy.’ – 90:17

...with the **utmost urgency** for, who knows, perhaps one day we might just earn the honour of being classed with ***‘the people of the right hand’*** - 90:18

Labour in Balance

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Islam aims at creating a society in which peace and prosperity prevail among the citizens. This includes material progress, and for this purpose God has provided mankind with the natural resources of the earth [31:20, 2:30].

Asceticism:

An ideal society includes a flourishing economy and for this reason Islam encourages labour. However, it is possible that people get so involved in labour that they lose sight of the spiritual side of life. As a result, many unlawful and irresponsible means (corruption, gambling, etc.) might be used to earn as much money as possible, without hesitation. To avoid this situation, some groups within various religions (including Islam) went to the other extreme and established the institution of 'asceticism'. The thought behind this is that people who seclude themselves from the temptations of the world, such as wealth and sex, will automatically achieve a pure, spiritual life. This, however, is not the view of Islam. The Quran states that God has established times for working and time for rest:

We (God) made the night a covering, and the day for

seeking livelihood [78:10-11]. Man can only develop his moral self when he is exposed to the attractive and tempting things of life. He can make spiritual progress by making efforts to restrain these temptations. Thus, Islam aims at finding a middle course and for this reason the Quran teaches the believers to pray for the good, both of this world and of the Hereafter [2:201]. Asceticism is not an Islamic institution, therefore, the Quran mentions it as being an invention of man [57:27].

Labour and the collection of wealth are not only necessary for the progress of society, but they play an important role for the individual, too. The Quran mentions property as being a means to support [4:5]. This support is not only for one's household, but, in fact, for every poor and needy fellow-man. Islam does not consider property to be the possession of an individual even if he has earned it with his own hands but property is considered as the possession of God, which has been entrusted to the people. For this reason, the Quran describes the true believer as one who spends of what God has given him [2:3]. By spending his property on his fellow-men, he tries to lessen their sorrow, he develops a feeling of compassion for them, and he learns that wealth is not everything in life. This last point is very important, for, as was mentioned earlier,

the desire for more and more wealth can drive one to unlawful and irresponsible means to achieve it.



Always Make Place for God:

Labour and wealth are only a means to achieve certain goals and not the ultimate goals of life. One can earn as much money as one likes, there is no restriction on this, except that extravagance should be avoided [5:87-88, 7:31-32], for even if the roofs and stairs of his house are from silver and gold, as the Quran states, the Hereafter will be only for the dutiful believers [43:33-35].

The Quran describes these believers as:

Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the paying of the poor rate. - [24:37].

So even if you are busy earning money, God desires that you always have a place for Him in your heart and that you spend part of your property on your poorer brethren. Only in this way can a flourishing, peaceful society exist, which consists of righteous and pious people who earn and spend their property in a sound way.



We strongly condemn all forms of human right violations; the wanton abuse of the environment and the rest of God's creation. We especially condemn, from the top of our voices, the ruthless killings of all innocent parties in the name of Religion or State!

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