

A New Challenge to ISLAM?

Islam has experienced many an apostatic upsurge during the course of its history. The most powerful of them was the one that manifested itself among the Arab tribes soon after the Prophet's death. By this we mean the mightily rebellious movement that was nipped in the bud by Caliph Abu Bakr through his matchless courage and strength of will. The then, again, the second great onslaught of apostasy within Islam was the widespread swing towards Christianity with the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain. This stole into other countries too that were then under the demonation of the Western Christian powers, and was actively supported and encouraged by Christian missionaries. Apart from these well-known episodes, there are also some stray instances such as that of a few faint-hearted Muslims going over to some other faith in India. But such cases have been very rare, and the fact is that with the exception of the large-scale conversion of Muslims to Christianity in Spain, if it can be described as an apostatic movement, the general opinion of Islamic historians is that the Muslim *millat* has never seriously had to encounter a general threat of apostasy.

Whenever an incident of this nature took place in Islam it always produced a two-fold reaction within the Muslim society: intense resentment and anger against the erring party, and the termination of social relations. Anyone who had the misfortune to renounce the Faith was the subject of the unqualified contempt and resentment of the Muslims and he automatically ceased to be a member of the Islamic society in which he had been born and brought up. All contacts and relations between an apostate and his kinsmen became non-existence immediately. The walking over from the fold of Islam into that of another faith meant indeed the walking over from one world into another. The entire family of the apostate would turn its face against him. Now, neither bonds of kinship, marriage, brotherhood nor inheritance remained. A larger wave of apostasy would produce international repercussions and arouse at once the self-protective instincts of Islam and the Muslims. Intellectuals, religious leaders and preachers of the Islamic country where such a thing occurred would array themselves as a united whole against the calamity. They would probe into its causes and draw pointed attention to the virtues and superior merits of Islam. A current of agony and disgust would run through the entire body of the Muslim society that was immediately concerned with it and shake it up at all levels. The elite as well as commoners would make it their own thought and concern. Such was the way in which incidents of apostasy would react upon the consciousness of Muslims although these were neither widespread nor of much consequence in life.

Now, however, the Islamic World has been confronted for some time with a threat of apostasy which casts its shadow from end to end. In its dimensions and vigour it has by far superseded all previous threats. No country is safe from its sinister influence. But, country is a far cry. There are, in fact, very few families which can claim to have been left unaffected by it. This is an apostasy that has come into the Muslim East in the wake of political domination by the West, and it has posed the most serious challenge to Islam since the days of the Prophet.

What does apostasy mean in Islamic terminology? The exchanging of one faith, of one spiritual creed for another; the refutation of the teachings the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought into the world, the rejection of the ideals and precepts that have been continuously attributed to him and are accepted in Islam positively as truths. And what course does an apostate adopt? He denies the Divine Apostleship of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Companions) and adopts the creeds of Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism or becomes

an atheist and rejects Prophecy, Revelation and the concept of the Hereafter. This was the sense in which the people of former times understood the term apostasy. Anyone who abandoned his Faith took the way of the Church if he adopted Christianity, and of the Temple if he accepted Hinduism, and so on. His apostatic deed would be there for everyone to see; there would be no concealment of it. Fingers would be raised at him and the Muslims would cease to associate with that person. In brief, such apostasy was not hidden from public view.

Europe introduced into the East concepts and ideologies that were based on the repudiation of the fundamentals of spiritual belief and the rejection of an Omnipotent Power holding sway over the entire universe, of that Supreme Consciousness which brought the world into creation and in Whose hands lay its dispensation. (*Beware! It is He Who both create and it is He alone Who rules*): concepts which had their origin in the denial of the Unknown, the Supernatural, Divine Revelation, Apostleship and transcendental values— this was the common feature of all the branches of thought brought by the West no matter whether they dealt with biology and evolution or with ethics, psychology, politics or economics. However varied their field of study, they all had as their meeting ground a materialistic approach to man and his world, and an interpretation of phenomena along materialistic lines.

These ideals and concepts invaded the East and penetrated deep into the inner recesses of its soul. This Western materialistic philosophy has undoubtedly been the greatest religion preached in the world after Islam. It is the greatest religion from the point of view of the extensiveness of its scope, the profoundest religion from the point of view of the depth to which its roots go and the strongest religion from the point of view of the capacity it possesses for conquering the hearts and minds of men. Educated and intelligent sectors in Muslim countries have simply been bewitched by it: they delightfully drink it in and eagerly assimilate it. They have become a follower of the new faith almost in the same way as a Muslim follows Islam or a Christian follows Christianity, to the extent that they now adore it with all their hearts, revere its ideals and swear by the greatness of its founders and torchbearers. They propagate its teachings, denounce the creed that may run counter to it and forge links of brotherhood and fraternity with other followers of this new faith. Thus, this new faith has become a sort of international family.

The Religion of Irreligiousness:

What, then, is this new faith —however shy its protagonists may feel in giving it the name of a faith? It consists of, as we have said earlier, the rejection of that All-Knowing, Well-Informed Being who is the Creator of the Worlds, the Owner of Destiny and the Architect of the life of Futurity, the Last Day, Heaven, Hell, Divine Reward and Punishment, Prophecy, Apostleship and the Holy Law, of the Truth that God has ordained for all mankind, and of obedience to the Holy Prophet. It rejects the idea that all salvation and enlightenment are dependent on that loyalty, rejects the principle that Islam is that final and eternal Message from the Divine which enfolds all that is good in this world and the Next, and embodies a programme of life which is higher and superior to every other system, and of the fact that the world has been created for man and man for God.

The ruling classes of Muslim States everywhere today are generally the followers of this new creed, although they may not all belong to the category so far as ardency and strength of spiritual allegiance are concerned. There is no doubt that in these classes are found individuals who bear faith in God and are believers in Islam but the dominant feature of them all is, alas, nothing else but materialism and a Western philosophy of life rooted in atheism.

I say again that it is this apostasy which is nowadays engulfing the Islamic World from one end to another. It has made its onslaught from house to house, family to family. Schools, colleges, universities have all been overrun by it. There is hardly a family fortunate enough not to include a follower of this creed among its members. Approach any Muslim family, talk to its members in confidence, question, scratch them under the surface and you are sure to find someone who does not believe in God or the Hereafter or in the Apostleship of the Prophet or in the Qur'an as a Divine, eternal Message and a complete code of life. Or, he will just say that he has given no thought to these questions because he does not attach any great importance to them. And his will be a lucky case.

A Forsaken Issue:

This, indeed, is apostasy but it has managed to evade the notice of Muslims. The reason being that its victims do not go to the church or the synagogue, nor do they proclaim their conversion. Society, consequently, remains blissfully blind to it. It does not take exception to apostates. It neither criticises them nor punishes them nor does it enforce other social sanctions. Apostates retain their place and rights in society and even get a chance to dominate it.

It is here that the most vital issue confronting the Muslim World lies. It is an issue that affects the entire Islamic *millat*. A fast spreading apostatic wave is sweeping over Muslim society and yet no one cares. Even the *Ulama* and religious leaders feel no anxiety about it. In the past, when a critical question faced theologians they used to cry out in desperation: "An issue and no Abul Hasan! (That is, an issue of vital importance to the *millat* has cropped up and there is no one with the wisdom of Hazrat Ali to solve it)." Now I say: "An issue and no Abu Bakr! (Apostasy is consuming the Muslim *millat* like wild fire and there is no one with the faith and fortitude of Hazrat Abu Bakr to put it down)."

But remember that war is no solution to the problem, nor is it wise to inflame public opinion over it. The problem cannot be solved by anger or by the use of force. Islam is not acquainted with the Holy Inquisition. It also does not allow for vindictiveness and violence. Instead, the matter calls for patience, perservance, sangacity and resolution. We will need immense study, thought and wisdom to deal with it successfully.

Why Irreligiousness Succeeds:

But how did this new faith infiltrate the Islamic World? How did it come to acquire the strength to engulf Muslims within their own homes; what can explain the mighty hold it enjoys over the hearts and minds of men? All these questions require careful examination.

In the nineteenth century, Islam had begun to show signs of fatigue and decay. In matters of faith, religious endeavour, knowledge and learning it had indeed reached a nadir.... Islam, in fact, knows no old age and no decline. Like the sun, it is every young, ever new. It was the Muslims, themselves, who had fallen prey to senility and degeneration. They had become narrow of in outlook, their thinking had become stereotyped— it had lost originality— their minds had grown fossilised, they had lost enthusiasm for Religion, and, exceptions apart, the ability to present it in an effective manner.

In addition to this, no attempt was made to establish contact with the young educated classes and to influence their minds although the future belonged to them. It occurred to no one to

impress upon them the basic truths that Islam was an eternal, evergreen Faith, the Faith of humanity, that the Qur'-an was a miracle of a Book, permanent, unchanging, deathless, whose wonders knew no limit and whose treasures were boundless, that the Holy Prophet was the Prophet for all times and the leader of all men, that the Islamic *Shariah* was a marvel of legislation, endowed with the ability to march hand in hand with life and answer all the demands it may make upon jurisprudence. Faith, morality and spiritual values are the only foundations on which a civilised, enlightened society can be built. Modern civilisation, however, has only the means and the channels. The ends and the real springheads are contained in the teachings of the Prophets. And a healthy and balanced system of civilisation can come into being only when there is a harmony between ends and means.

This was the thing and situation when the West made its assault on the Islamic World. An assault which contained its whole armoury of thoughts and ideas, designed and hammered into shape in the minds of the foremost thinkers and philosophers of the time and garbed in such philosophical phraseology that they gave the impression of being the very essence of human wisdom and learning, although quite a good deal was purely empirical and had no basis in fact. Western thinkers took a lot for granted and drew conclusions that were in a measure just hypothetical. The systems of thought they had built up were an amalgamation of fact and fiction, of knowledge and ignorance, and of firm reality and poetic imagination—yes, poetry, for you must not imagine that poetry is confined only to verse and rhyme; it is practised also in the realms of philosophy and the social sciences.

These ideologies came under the shadow of political conquest by the West, and the people of the East bowed down them both emotionally and intellectually. Eastern intellectuals welcomed them with open arms. Some of them, of course, accepted them intelligently and consciously, but their number was few. With the majority, it was a case of unthinking acceptance, dazzled as they were by the material superiority of alien rulers. They saw and they surrendered. Their minds were hypnotised and belief in Western ideas became synonymous with progress and enlightenment and the most important criterion of learning and wisdom.

Thus it was that this new apostasy spread its wings over the Muslim East without any hitch or opposition. Neither the father objected to the downfall of the son nor the teacher to that of the student. Religious leaders also felt no qualms about it. It was a silent revolution. The apostates did not make their way to any Church or Temple; they did not prostrate themselves before any idol nor make any sacrificial offerings at any polytheistic altar—signs which, in the past, indicated spiritual metamorphosis.

The apostates of old used to walk openly out of Muslim society and associated themselves freely with the society of those whose Religion they had accepted. They used to declare boldly their change of Faith and submit cheerfully to what they had to bear as a result. They did not insist upon clinging to the benefits accruing from membership of the society they had in fact forsaken. But present-day apostates who turn their backs on Islam do not at the same time also walk out of Islamic society in spite of the fact that of all societies it is only an Islamic society which is based entirely on spiritual beliefs since it cannot come into being without the presence of a particular set of religious doctrines. These modern apostates continue to avail themselves of all the possible advantages of membership of the Islamic society. This is a unique situation for Islam.

As they have turned and twisted moral and spiritual values, so also have these ideologies sown the seeds of paganish sentiment and feeling in the Muslim World upon which Islam has declared an open war. For instance, take paganish factionalism which is founded on race, country and nation. It is currently being venerated with fanatical enthusiasm and reverence. The human family is cut into pieces in its name. It has been raised to the status of a religion and given complete control over people's thoughts and emotions. It is indeed the most powerful rival to Religion judged by the extensiveness and intensity of its influence. It gains ascendancy over one's entire existence. When it sweeps over a society it pushes the work of the Prophets into oblivion and reduces Religion into a soulless programme of rituals and ceremonies; the organic unity of mankind about which God had declared; *Lo! This your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me*, is destroyed and the human race is divided into a number of warring camps.

Why is Islam Opposed to Factionalism?:

Islam originally dealt a deadly blow to this spirit and administered a clear warning to its followers against the dangerous possibilities it contained. Factionalism is the very anathema of a universal Faith since the basic oneness of humanity cannot endure, even for a brief while, in its presence. The negation of factionalism is an undisputed feature of the Islamic Shariah. There are innumerable provisions to this effect in it. Anyone who has an awareness of the inner nature of Islam— in truth, of Religion— will have no hesitation in realising the truth of the assertion that Religion can have nothing to do with racial or national prejudices. It is beyond dispute that a majority of the ills that are poisoning the world-atmosphere today and dragging humanity to the verge of destruction are the direct result of national factionalism. Naturally, therefore, a man who came to the world only to weld mankind into one whole, to bring it under the banner of a single Faith, to call into existence a new society based on the consciousness of God Almighty, the Nourisher of the World, and to give it peace in place of war, love in place of hatred, unity in place of division, could not but wage a relentless war against it till it became a thing of the past.

Waves of Nationalism in Islamic Countries:

Thanks, however, to the political and cultural domination of the West, the Islamic World, which owes its very existence to the Prophet, has now wholeheartedly adopted the creed of nationalism as if it were a proven scientific truth from which there can be no escape. Almost all the different people who go to make the family of Islam are today ardent admirers of factional prejudices, prejudices which their Religion they are doing best to revive them, including even those paganish national practices which openly amount to idolatry.. For some, pre-Islamic era of their history, which Islam emphatically condemns as paganish and steeped in *Ignorance* is being recalled as a thing of pride. Yet for Islam, there is nothing more detestable than. The Qur'-an declares the deliverance of Muslims from it as one of the choicest favours of God and calls upon them to be duly grateful to Him for that:

And remember Allah's favour unto you. How ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire

Nay, but Allah doth confer a favour on you, inasmuch as He hath led you to the faith, if ye are earnest.

He it is Who sendeth down clear Revolutions unto His slave, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and lo! for you, Allah is full of Pity, Merciful.

The Muslim Standpoint:

Such being the case, a Muslim should be filled with repugnance and disgust at the sight of paganism— whether modern or ancient. Have you ever seen a person released from prison who does not look back at the period of his imprisonment with anguish and displeasure, or a man who having been cured of a foul disease does not shudder at the thought of his illness? Or, has there ever been a man who has not thanked God at the dawn of the day after having experienced a terrible nightmare during the night? Why, then, should it be different with paganism which is many times worse than any term in prison, an illness or a nightmare? Why should a person having been freed from it by the grace of the Almighty not tremble at the thought of it and offer earnest thanksgivings to his Maker for delivering him from a curse which contains innumerable misfortunes both in this world and the Next? Says a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) recorded by Bukhari: "There are three things and if they are present in any one he will taste (the joys of) Faith: firstly, that God and the Prophet be dearer to him than anything else, secondly, that his love for any one (or anything) is only for the sake of God, and, thirdly, that he dreads returning to the state of paganism like being thrown into the fire." Says God in denunciation of paganism, its rites, its customs, its practices and its heroes:

And We made them patterns that invite unto the fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped.

And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the hateful.

Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they did follow the command of Pharaoh, and the command and Pharaoh was no right guide. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and will lead them to the Fire for watering-place. Ah, hapless is the watering-place (whither they are) led. A curse is made to follow them in the world and on the Day of Resurrection. Hapless is the gift (that will be) given (them).

As a result of being over-awed by Western philosophy and its peculiar mode of approach to life many Muslims in Islamic countries have begun to recall the pre-Islamic period of their national existence with pride and pleasure. They are being drawn, intellectually and emotionally, to the customs and practices of that period as a part of their national heritage. They want to resuscitate them and to give a place of honour and privilege to those kings, leaders and other noteworthy personalities of that period in their history as if it was a golden age which Islam snatched away from them. God bless our souls! What colossal ingratitude and lack of appreciation of the worth and value of Islam and the Prophet this is! It signifies that all dislike for paganism and idolatry and the contempt for their senseless practices has disappeared and this is hard to imagine with respect to a conscientious Muslim. It will be no wonder if, because of these follies, Muslims are totally deprived of their Faith; the blessing of Islam is withdrawn from them and some heavenly curse is sent down in place of felicity. The Qur'-an has warned:

And incline not toward those who do wrong lest the fire touch you, and ye have no protecting friends against Allah, and afterward ye would not be helped.

Besides nationalism, another calamity that is bringing ruin upon the Islamic World is the blind admiration for the material things of life enjoined by its upper classes. They are ready to sacrifice all other considerations and values in the pursuit of their worldly ambitions. There is at work among them a strong tendency to prefer this material world to the Hereafter, and to avail themselves whole-heartedly of its pleasures. The appeasement of sensual appetites has become the chief object of their existence with the result that moral perversion, drinking, debauchery and other vices have freely crept into them and they have obtained, more or less a complete freedom from the moral obligations imposed by Religion or that the Islamic *Shariah* has been repealed. With a few exceptions, the ruling sections of Muslim countries everywhere present a picture very much like this.

This, in brief, is the moral and spiritual state of present-day Muslims. A wave of paganism is sweeping across the Muslim world and carrying away with it the glorious heritage of Islam. Never has Islam experienced a danger so powerful and so all-pervading. And the tragedy is that there are few who are willing to take stock of this dismal situation and fewer still to place all that they have at stake in order to combat it. We remember that when agnostic tendencies raised their head in Islam under the influence of Greek philosophy there sprang up a number of outstanding men who put them down with all the unique resources of their minds and hearts and with their social prestige. Similarly, when the *Batiniyah and Mulahada* otheists seets made their appearance, the crusaders of Islam jumped into the arena to take issue against them with both pen and speech. Thus, Islam, on account of these timely services, continued to command such a strong position intellectually and logically that it could beat off any storm that arose.

The Real Problem

The real problem before Islam now is not that of moral degeneration or slackness in matters of Prayer or other supererogatory observances or disregard of religious practices or imitation of foreigners. These are important things, no doubt, but the real and foremost issue which has worked itself up like a mighty tidal wave and is striking directly at Islam's roots is one of belief and disbelief. This will determine whether Islam survives in the world or is cast away instead like an old garment. The battle that is being fought today in the Muslim World is between Western materialism and Islam, the last of the Messages from God. on one side there is agnosticism and on the other Divine Law. I believe this it the last struggle between Religion and irreligiosity after which the world will swing full-scale towards one side or the other.

The *Jihad* of today, the greatest need of the present hour, is to repulse this storm of atheism, nay, to go ahead and make a direct assault at the very heart of it. The chief task of religious renovation in modern times lies in the revival of Faith among the young and educated classes of the *Ummah* in the basic tenets of Islam, in its moral and spiritual scheme of things and in the Apostleship of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). There can be no better deed or worship today than to release the educated young of the intellectual and psychological confusion and frustration they are going through and to satisfy them mentally with regard to Islam. The basic characteristics of paganism that have dug themselves into their minds must be weeded out to make room for the spiritual truths of Islam.

For a full century the West has been preying on the hearts and minds of Muslims. It has played havoc with its scepticism, doubt and disbelief. Transcendental truths have been tramped underfoot by the materialistic concepts of political science and economics. We have watched all this like mere spectators, heedless of what it was leading to. We sat pretty on what our ancestors had left behind to us and did not realise that it was essential to bring it into conformity with the changing pattern of time. Furthermore, we made no effort to really understand the thought-process the West had released. We never critically examined Western philosophy and its way of life. Our time was wasted in superficial discussions and, now, after the passage of a century, the time has come when the foundations of the Faith itself are in danger and a generation has come up which has very little real trust in the spiritual values of life.

The Call of Faith

The crying need of the hour is to call Muslims back to Faith. The rallying cry of this new religious endeavour should be: "Let us re-create Faith in Islam." But more slogan-raising will avail nothing. WE have to think of a way though which to approach the inner selves of the ruling sections of the contemporary Muslim World so that they can be brought back to Islam.

Today, Islam needs workers who are ready to dedicate their entire resources and abilities, their learning, their time their money and their energy to its cause; people who will not any heed to the attractions of worldly advancement. They must be wholly free from malice, bearing no grudge against anyone. They should serve, but take no service from others; give and not take. Their conduct, of course, should be different from that of political workers who are motivated mainly by lust for power. Sincerity should be their habit, and freedom from every kind of self-seeking vanity and prejudice their chief mark of distinction.

Furthermore, we require such academies which may produce a literature forceful and inspiring enough to bring the educated youth back to Islam in its wider sense, emancipating them from the bondage of Western ideology which they have thoughtlessly accepted mainly under the stress of the times— a literature that can lay down the foundations of Islam anew in their minds and provide healthy, whole some food for their souls. For this task, many devoted scholars are needed in every nook and corner of the Muslim World, scholars... who will not leave the intellectual front of the battle till the last shot is fired.

For my part, I want to state clearly that I have never been one of those who believe in the separation of Religion from politics or one who seeks to interpret Religion (Islam) in a way that it may fit into every pattern of life. Nor do I belong to that category of theologians, who include politics among the 'condemned tribe of the Qur'-an'. I am second to none in my desire to see the development of proper political consciousness and learningship among Muslims everywhere. I believe that a theocratic society cannot be established without the ascendancy of Religion and this resting on a political structure based on the precepts of Islam.

The question, however, is one of precedence, of first things first, and of the exigencies of time. So far, our time and our energies have been directed towards political and agitational activities. This was done primarily on the assumption that the condition of the *Ummah* was sound so far as Faith was concerned. Leadership was in the hands of the Muslims themselves and the ruling classes were alive to their responsibilities towards Islam and eager to bring about its victory in the world. But now the state of affairs is just the reverse of this. The *Ummah* has suffered a serious degeneration both morally and spiritually without even being

actually aware of it. Speaking in a general way, its educated and privileged sections have almost been weaned away from the Faith by Western ideas and they are, so to speak, openly in revolt against the basic ideology of Islam, thinking that what they have borrowed from the West represents the *sine qua non* of truth and progress and that unless society is reorganised in the light of material concepts there can be no hope for the future. They are pushing forward the Western way of life with all the enthusiasm of new converts, and, in the process, bringing the whole of the Muslim *Ummah* very close to atheism. It is a different matter that some of them want to hurry through the process while others believe in a more graduated course. The modes of their approach are also different. But so far as their destination is concerned, it is the same with all of them.

Two Divergent Groups among the Theologians

With regard to this section, our theological class— if the term be correct for there is no clerical or priestly class in Islam— is divided into two divergent groups. One of them is emphatically opposed to worldly pursuits and does not want any truck with those who do, but it is also completely unceremonious with the question as to what causes and factors are responsible for producing such atheistic tendencies among the privileged Muslim classes. It abhors having any contact with them and does little by way of purging them of their erroneous beliefs. The other group associates with them to the full and seeks advantages in terms of worldly gain as a result of its association. It pays no attention to their spiritual redemption. Hence, this group has no call to give or religious pride to display. It seems to have abandoned those sections to their fate and has no solicitude for correction and reformation.

There is, unfortunately, no group among our religious leaders which can devote itself to the reformation of the Muslim upper classes thinking that they are merely the victims of a disease from which recovery is not impossible— a group which may carry the message of religious reclamation to them with tolerance and wisdom and discharge among them the obligation of selfless service. As a result of this handicap, the Westernised ruling section of our society get no opportunity to come closer to Religion and to the religious atmosphere. The result is that they spend their lives in ignorance and disrupt of Faith, and the distrust is further strengthened by the conduct of that group among the ecclesiastics which comes forward as its rival in the political field or fights against it for political power with Religion as the major instrument of its action. Such religious leaders help only to make their secular counterpart more suspicious of Religion, for it is natural for man to dislike those who compete with him for a thing which he holds dear. This regardless of whether it belongs to the realm of wealth or of power and prestige or of pleasure and self-indulgence.

The cure for the ills of the Muslim World lie in our capacity to produce a band of dedicated workers who can be above all personal considerations and have no worldly aspirations for themselves. Their entire endeavours should be directed towards loosening the intellectual and psychological knots of by ruling classes of society. This can be achieved by establishing personal contact with them the bringing forth an effective religious literature for them, and by reforming them through their own piety, sanctity of character, earnestness of purpose, sincerity, selflessness and Prophet-like moral conduct.

The Verdict of History

History records that it is men of this class and calibre who have rendered genuine service to Islam during all the phases of its career. The credit for changing the course of Umayyad rule and bringing Ummar ibn Abdul Aziz to the Caliphate belongs to this very class of men functioning under the inspired leadership of Raj'a ibn Haywah. In India too, the revolution of an identical nature that was wrought during the time of the Mughals owed its origin to a similar band of devoted servants of the *Ummah*. A powerful Emperor like Akbar had resolved, so it seemed to all intents and purposes, to cast the sub-continent in the mould of paganism, in opposition to Islam, after it had remained for four hundred years under the benign shadow of Muslim rule. But by virtue of the determined action of an inspired man of Faith and endeavour and his illustrious successors the land was won back for Islam— and more firmly than before. Each of Akbar's, successors proved to be better than his predecessor till there came Aurangzeb on the throne whose reign constitutes a most glorious chapter in the annals of Islam and religious renovation. History, as you know, is always ready to repeat itself— it never tires of the process— the only thing is that there may be some force strong enough to turn its tide, and the only force which can bring back the golden era of Islam is the earnestness, the sagacity and the missionary zeal we have just spoken of.

The Crisis and the Action Needed

We should face the current crisis with wisdom, courage and fortitude. A woeful tragedy of moral, cultural and intellectual apostasy has struck Islam. It should be the object of serious concern to all those who have any solicitude for Islam. Today, the leading sections of Muslim society almost everywhere are on the verge of dissolution of Faith. They have already discarded, in the main, the moral obligations imposed by the *Shariah*, their mental outlook has become wholly materialistic and, in politics, they are enthusiastically pursuing what must be described as the course of irreligion. There are many among them— to avoid saying a majority of them— who do not believe in Islam as a creed and an ideology. And the Muslim masses, although they possess all the seeds of goodness and virtue and constitute, innately, the most virtuous segments of humanity, are under the influence and overlordship of these sections due to their educational and economic backwardness. If the present situation continues as it is apostasy will infiltrate the masses as well and destroy the Faith of simple minded Muslim peasants and artisans. It has been so in the West and it will happen here in the East if events are allowed to take their course and if the All-Powerful Will of Providence does not intervene.

There is not a day to be wasted. The World of Islam is threatened with a most dangerous wave of apostasy. This wave is a revolt against the moral and social values that are the most precious treasures of Islam. If these treasures are lost, which are a sacred heritage from the Prophet handed down from generation to generation and for whose protection the soldiers of Islam have borne enormous hardships and gone through the severest of trials, the World of Islam will also be there no more.

Shall we awake to this great reality, to this mighty threat to the times? Or shall we not?