

A Ten Point Programme for the Islamic World

The events and causes of Islamic renaissances stated earlier lead us to the conclusion that the Muslim society requires, in every age, vigilant, high-reaching, truthful and godly souls who can heal spirit, create a living awareness of God and bring about the moral regeneration of the people even in the most trying and adverse circumstances. At a time when Muslim states are degenerating, the masses are being swept away by materialistic urges and worldly desires, and a mad race for get-rich-quick has caught the imagination of the people, it becomes all the more necessary that virtuous and godly people should give the Message of hope to the despondent, strengthen their Faith in God— His all embracing love as well as His awe—and make them realise the value of contentment and reliance on God. Such people should reach others to raise themselves above their petty interests, to disdain wealth and power and to hate time-serving attitudes that stoop to sell countries and nations for petty personal gain. They should promote the urge for making sacrifices for the sake of Faith, of laying down one's life in the way of God. In this manner, they can usher people groping in the darkness of hopelessness to the light of God's Message of hope and Divine succour and cause degeneration and decaying societies to bring up men who are honest and courageous, able to shoulder the heaviest responsibility and solve the intricate problems facing the Muslim society as well as protect Islam and its interests. Such virtuous and God-souled persons should perform the same function in their own societies as Khwaja Hasan Basri did during the reign of the Umayyads and al Hafiz Ibn al-Jauzi, *Imam* Ghazzali and Saiyadna Abdul Qadir performed during the time of the Abbasids.

The presence of such pious and righteous men of God is a must for the Muslim society in every time and clime for they can succeed even where states and administrations fail to face the challenge of time and ultimately die and dwindle away. The absence of such righteous persons constitutes the greatest danger for any Muslim society. In smoke Islamic and Arab countries, those presently rolling in wealth, one finds a spiritual void which cannot be filled by their vast organisations and educational institutions nor yet by their ambitious programmes for missionary activities and other projects for serving the cause of Islam.

Islamic revivalist and missionary movements are nowadays active in different parts of the world. Their techniques and methods differ according to their peculiar needs and circumstances, and some of them are undoubtedly doing a service to Islam, but it seems necessary to identify certain points and lines on which endeavours in this field should be made so that not only the present decay in Muslim society is arrested but a vigour and comprehensive movement for Islamic renaissance may also emerge in the near future. In this respect, it is hoped that these hints will be useful to organisations and individuals committed to upholding the cause of Islam.

1. The faith of the Muslim masses, which, in any case, still exists, though in subdued form, has to be strengthened and their religious consciousness aroused to make it a living and dynamic force. The emotional attachment of the Muslims to Islam is the greatest hurdle in the way of many so-called leaders of Muslim countries to openly take the path of *Kufr* and apostasy or to invite their people to take that course. Despite all the conspiracies hatched within or outside these Muslims countries to oust Islam from these lands, the existence of an Islamic consciousness in the masses, even in a weaker form, or a minority amongst them, discourages these leaders from acting on their nefarious plans. God forbid, if this

consciousness were to perish and the Muslims were to lose their spiritual and emotional attachment to Islam, no guarantee and no promise to administer these lands as Muslims would stand in the way of these leaders to turn their countries into another Spain or Turkistan. The masses of any country constitute its real wealth; they like a fertile land on which they can either plant a grove or construct a palatial building. They are really the raw materials from which every kind of human prototype can be moulded. The masses of the Muslim countries, notwithstanding their faults and failings, have been the object of the labour of love on the part of many a Prophet and man of God. They still excel all other nations and religious groups in their purity of heart, sincerity of purpose, warmth of feeling, selfness and readiness to make sacrifices for a just cause.

At the same time, the Muslims have to be helped in inculcating those qualities which entitle a people to overcome all difficulties with the help of God, no matter how insurmountable the hardships are. These qualities are an implicit Faith in God, without the least trace of *shirk*, and the Islamic character of the individuals which make up society as a whole. Basically all vestiges of un-Islamic customs and usages should be shaken and a distaste for copying others in the walk of life developed. This can, however, only be actualised by eliminating those elements of hypocrisy and duplicity which have unfortunately found a way into our society. Both of these are against the teachings of Islam and militate against the character of a truly Islamic society. Similarly, every effort has to be made to protect the Muslim society against immoral habits and evil practices, the gratification of carnal desires and the demoralising effects of wealth and power which aforetime invited the wrath of God and caused the downfall of several peoples of the earlier Prophets. The Muslims also have to be protected against the moral depravity of the West which has made European nations dissolute and overindulgent. Now the West wants the whole of the East, especially the Muslim countries, to become intemperate and licentious like it.

However, this entire reformatory endeavour will be unrewarding unless a truly Islamic consciousness is created among the Muslims and unless they are provided with correct intellectual guidance. The need of the hour is that they learn to discriminate between friends and foe and become conscious of the problems as well as the realities of their situation. Their understanding of the problems and their deeper religious sense should be so developed that they will not be duped by interested politicians with ulterior motives nor by any slogan mongering or false promises which mislead. There should be no recurrence of the tragic events recently brought about by the machinations of foreign powers and selfish politicians who fanned the national, linguistic and cultural chauvinism of an intensely religious section of Muslims.

2. Spiritual realities and concepts emanating from Qur'anic expressions, the true features of Faith as well as a comprehension of Religion have to be protected against all distortions and deviations. Any effort to make these sub-seviant or identify them as compatible with the ever-changing modern political and economic concepts and systems of the West, or to interpret Islam in terms of any political philosophy, or even to treat it as a view of life on a par with other modern philosophical and political systems ought to be scrupulously avoided. The Political philosophies and their systems of government represent a changing, developing phenomena while religious realities and Faith in them are abiding; they form the central point around which revolves the entire religious life of a people. These realities constitute the beginning as well as the end of the moral spiritual teachings of all the earlier Prophets of God (Peace be upon him) who, from time to time, invited their people to receive these truths. Their struggles and endeavours were for reposing trust in these abiding realities. Thus,

everything not based on the concept of life after death, or which weakens the desire to attain propinquity to God, or yet enfeebles the spirit of Faith and action to win the pleasure of God ought to be avoided. Every concept, approach and methodology employed for the exposition of knowledge and the cultivation promoting idolatrous thoughts and ideas of a pagan past, which are will alive and thriving,²² are likely to decrease one's aversion to *shirk* and its manifestations. Iqbal was correct in assertion that:

The believer is aging but still young are the *Lat* and *Manat*.

3. The spiritual and emotional attachment of the Muslims to the blessed Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) has to be maintained at all costs. Efforts should be directed into making the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) dearer to every Muslim than his own self and the nearest of his kin for this is the criterion of true Faith according to the undisputed *ahadith*. Tender feelings of the last Prophet of God (Peace be upon him) with complete assurance in his being the most perfect and infallible teacher of humanity should be inculcated and everything that decreases love and regard for him or stands in the way of following in his footsteps should be rejected. Actually speaking, love and regard for the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has been the only binding force that has kept the non-Arab Muslims aligned to Islam and saved them from losing their identities in their respective non-Islamic cultures and nationalities.

This point has still greater significance for Arab countries where nationalist movements promoting the literary creations of Jewish and Christian writers and certain protagonists of modern Arabic literature lacking ardency for the Holy Prophet have weakened the people's attachment to Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to such an extent that one feels the need for a fresh Islamic literature in Arabic in order to revive the dormant Faith and to rekindle the flame of love for the Prophet in peoples hearts. The situation obtaining in this regard in some countries has made a non-Arab poet, enamoured by the Holy Prophet, say:

"From the land of love, I bring a new contingent;

For the *Haram* is in danger from the revolt of intellect."

4. The intellectual and political leadership of the Muslims is in the hands of the modern educated class who also control the press and publicity media. This class has, either owing to the educational system borrowed from the West or because of its mistaken values and judgements, erroneously lost its confidence in Islam's capacity to solve every problem and provide guidance to humanity. The conviction that Islam is the abiding Message of God, that it transcends all barriers of time and space, that it is capable of saving humanity, like Noah's Ark, from drowning in the sea of its own follies, has to be re-installed in the hearts of these people.

This Muslim *elite's* loss of confidence in Islam, or its weakened faith in Islam's potentialities, is the real cause why it so often opts for un-Islamic measures or wants to reform Islam itself even in this amounts to an intellectual and cultural repudiation of Faith. This calamity has now assumed such alarming proportions that almost the entire world of Islam is passing through a widening chasm between the masses and their rulers, without little prospect of this gap being bridged in the near future. This duality of feelings and interests between the two classes has given rise to an intense emotional, intellectual and cultural conflict between them

which often erupts in the shape of military takeovers of the administration or revolts and insurrections against the ruling junta.

5. The curriculum and education system in Muslim countries needs fundamental change; a reshaping of the concept and approach to education, so that it becomes compatible with the values and judgements of Islam. The education system should never be imported from a foreign land nor can it be borrowed from an alien school of thought. It can only be formulated through a deep study and correct comprehension of Islam, and its details can be worked out by Muslim scholars and educationists themselves by people who should not pay any heed to artificial distinctions of old and to new or Eastern or Western systems of education. This is, in fact, the most pressing need of the time one which cannot brook the least delay. Unless this important task is undertaken Muslim countries can neither regain their self-confidence nor can they think out the solutions to the problems they face. It is no exaggeration to claim that if they do not meet this imperative need Muslims will not be able to administer their own countries according to their genius, nor will their educational institutions, press and other means of publicity discharge their functions in accordance with the teachings of Islam, nor will they be able to meet the peculiar needs of their people.

6. It is also necessary to build up a strong and worldwide movement for study and research in Islamic Literature so as to create a rapport between the literary creations of earlier Muslim savants and the new rising generation. Only in this way can the Islamic branches of learning be revitalised and the claim of Islamic jurisprudence to be an expanding and progressive legal system be demonstrated. Based on everlasting principles which are never antiquated, the Islamic legal system has the capacity to develop with the changing times. There is, thus, no need to take recourse to man-made laws in this presence. The step suggested here really amounts to a revivalist endeavour for Islam since it meets an urgent requirement for all Muslim countries and communities and saves them from the danger of intellectual and cultural waywardness, or rather dams the flood of westernisation which threatens to inundate the whole of Muslim world.

7. Islamic culture is drawn from the norms and values upheld by Islam. Its concept of purity and cleanliness: the moderate, upright and just behaviour demanded by it, the Qur'anic teaching and the way of life practised by the Holy Prophet, (Peace be upon him) in short, the totality of the teachings of Islam which were given practical shape by the earlier adherents of Islam are actualised in its culture. We must, therefore, take every possible step to make the Islamic culture a distinguishing feature of every Muslim society. The dichotomy of accepting only Faith and ritual observances and rejecting the culture brought forth by that Religion's comprehensive, flexible and liberal norms or values in favour of an alien culture or civilisation is nothing short of opening the gates to intellectual and cultural apostasy. There are, in fact, Muslim countries which have so completely modernised themselves under the impact of the West that their entire public and private lives— from their homes and modes of living to their hotels and public offices— have undergone a complete change. Save for a few religious observances one can find no trace of their national identity and sometimes is hard to believe that one is not in a Western countries. The actual identity of Muslim societies is an essential factor in maintaining their rapport with the Religion they profess; for, the lives of individuals and the socio-cultural norms and institutions go to make a complete whole. It is, thus, absolutely necessary that the Islamic culture and its way of life reassert itself in these countries.

8. The world of Islam needs today an intellectual leadership which can face the challenge of the West with courage, confidence and creative thinking and which can chart out a new way in the midst of the different norms and concepts of Western civilisation—it should be a way that is neither imitative nor extremist. This new leadership has to rise above the non-essential collaterals and shallowness of the West. It has to pay attention to intrinsic truths and treat Western knowledge and learning simply as raw materials for recasting and remoulding a new cultural pattern consistent with the ideas, beliefs, philosophies, dogmas and doctrines of Islam. This would be a revolutionary achievement in the real sense since the Islamic world cannot attain complete independence in its absence.²⁵

9. The governments of Muslim majority countries which are waging a war of attrition against their own Islam-loving populations are virtually engaged in a religious genocide. The leaders of these countries who have come to hold the reins of government either through conspiracy or military takeover are frittering away their energies and resources aimlessly. Similarly, the rulers of certain Arab countries want to change the religious precepts and the rules of the *Shariah* in such a manner that they become helpful in achieving their own political ends or help them cover up their own personal weaknesses, or else become instrumental in implementing programmes instigated by foreign powers inimical to Islam. It is necessary to make these leaders realise the futility of their efforts which have not only failed miserably in many a Muslim country but have also proved a hindrance in the achievement of national unity. The attention of these leaders should be invited to the ends and means which would really help them in making their countries strong and united.

The leaders of other Muslim countries who have a reverential regard for Islam should, in like manner, be persuaded to create conditions favourable to the introduction of the Islami *Shariah*. They have to be convinced that their endeavours in this direction attract the succour and blessings of God for their countries and their people.

Simultaneously, an all out effort should be made to re-establish a central leadership for the entire Islamic world. The central leadership should be based on the principles of mutual consultation and cooperation in goodness and God-fearingness. There should be a general feeling of remorse and sorrow over the abolition of the Caliphate which was made incumbent for the Muslims and whose absence has been the main cause for the calamities suffered by them.

10. In so far as non-Muslim countries without Muslim minority communities are concerned, the Message of Islam should be disseminated in an effective and rational manner, keeping in view the existing conditions and the psychology of each nation to which the preaching is addressed. The present state of materialistic nihilism has created a spiritual and moral void in most of these countries which, along with the explicit failure of modern civilization, has created bright prospects for galvanizing man to the Message of the One God and the unity of mankind preached by Islam.

In those countries where Muslims exist as a minority community, they should devise ways and means to impart religious education to their children without taking recourse to any assistance from their national governments and they should also safeguard their personal laws. Muslims in these countries ought to be ever watchful of the new rules and laws promulgated in their countries, exhibit their trustworthiness, dignity and noble-mindedness and try to fill the void of moral leadership for they are best fitted to do so. They can, in this way, not only afford a proof of their usefulness for their countries but can also become the

saviours of the morally decadent in these societies. This is the only way to gain love and respect for themselves as well as to enhance the regard and confidence of their countrymen which has been lost by the Muslims owing to peculiar historical circumstances in the recent past.

At the outset of this new century of the Islamic era, the Muslims or rather the whole of the human race is looking forward to those masterminds who cannot only satisfy the needs of Islam but also meet the requirements of the present age by changing the course of history through their initiative and courageous action. The scribe of time is holding its breath with an unrolled scroll of history in its hand so as to pay homage and record the brilliant achievements of such leaders of mankind.