

Seeking the Inner Muslim

Dr. Abdullah Hakim Quick

The Message - Canada, August 1997

Surely all Praises are due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His assistance, and ask His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of ourselves and the wickedness of our deeds. Verily whomever Allah guides there is none to take him astray; and whomever Allah allows to stray, there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is nothing worthy of worship but Allah, He is one and has no partners; and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and last Messenger. May Allah send His choicest blessing and Peace to Muhammad, his companions, family and all those who call to his way and establish the Sunnah till the Day of Judgment. As to what follows:

Muslims are finding themselves under great pressure today. From all sides, and in various forms, subtle and blatant, attacks are being launched against Muslim individuals, families and communities. Pressure is being applied to our eyes with the scanty summer fashions and rash of indecency on the television and in the movies. In Canada, women have been given the legal right to walk around topless in public places. Already, women can be seen mowing their lawns, sunbathing, or strolling down the street without any blouse, bra or shirt. Pressure is being applied to our ears by the constant swearing, backbiting, and scandal that we are confronted with daily. Pressure is being applied to our hands by the unavailability of jobs or loans and the growing availability of interest, mortgages, and gambling. Attacks in the media against Islam are on the increase. Muslims are blamed for slavery, wife assault, terrorism, female circumcision, ignorance and animosity to civilization. Recently, the Yahud in Israel have drawn pictures of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a pig and posted them on Muslim homes and businesses.

Many Believers feel that their back is against the wall and the whole earth is closing in on them. They do not see any escape or relief in the next few decades. Allah tells us in the Blessed Qur'an: "And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, Allah will make a way out for him and provide for him from where he knows not. And whoever depends on Allah, Allah is sufficient for him. Surely Allah will achieve His purpose. He has made a limit for all things." (65:3)

Even the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself, who was the best of humanity, and his Companions, who were the best generation, were severely tested. For thirteen long years, the Muslims were tortured in Makkah, driven out of their homes and even killed. They were afflicted with diseases and malnutrition. One day, the Prophet (pbuh) was passing the family of Yassir (ra) who were known for their piety and their submission to the will of Allah. They were being savagely beaten and tortured. Allah had not given the Muslims the right to fight back, so the Prophet could only ease their burden by revealing to them a special part of His mercy. The Prophet said: "Patience, family of Yassir, your promised abode is Paradise."

The pain and suffering of the Makkah period forged a tight relationship between the Muslims and purified their relationship with Allah. If a person had accepted Islam for fame, glory, wealth or position, he would soon turn back on his heels. Arrogance, pride, envy and racism were eliminated and the Muslims came to see each other as being closer and more important than their own families. We should remember their struggle as we endure today's trials and tribulations.

Muslims throughout the planet are in a state of siege. Some find themselves in a hot war where the fire of the military is all around them. Others find themselves in a war of ideas where the bullets are propaganda and insults. Sometimes the effects of psychological warfare are more devastating than military warfare for they can last for more than a generation.

In the wake of this crisis, people are making critical choices about Islam. Many are choosing to accept Islam, for despite the negative attacks, they realize that Islam is the only way out of the present corruption and tyranny. Islam is the only organized way of life that can categorically oppose homosexuality, racism and secularism. Only the Qur'an and Sunnah have cohesive arguments and a moral system that can be applied in conjunction with science, politics, business and every day life. Other people are asking themselves, "Should I practice Islam completely or should I continue being Muslim in name or by culture?" They see Islamic practice in today's society as swimming against a tidal wave. So they justify selling pork, liquor, gambling tickets or committing adultery as part of modern life. They fail to recognize that "Harám" is for everybody and for all times.

How do we bring about change in our conditions and enable those who are undecided about practicing Islam to see the light of Allah's guidance? The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was reported to have said, "Islam began as a stranger and will return to being a stranger so glad tidings (or a certain huge tree in Paradise) is for those who are strange. They asked, "O Messenger of Allah" Who are the strangers?" He replied, "Those who rectify (themselves and others) when the people are corrupt." (Al-Tabarani: Sahih)

Muslims who have been blessed to revert to Islam or to practice Islam in the full sense have a great responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was "Uswatun Hasanah" (a fine example) of the practical application of Islam. He not only talked about Islam but he lived it in all spheres of his life. In order for us to make this critical change, we need to re-analyze our Islamic theory and practice. Great emphasis has been placed upon "ibadat" or the ritual aspects of Islam. Now we need to focus on Muamalat or inter-personal relationships. How many times do we hear about a Muslim who prays and fasts but he is untrustworthy, or a Muslim who wears Islamic clothing yet cheats in business! We need to look at the "Inner Muslim" and bring this personality to the surface.

In Islamic history there were many illustrious scholars who searched for the inner aspects of Islam yet were also versed in Shari'ah. With so much falsehood being presented today as scholarship, it is important for us to find

those scholars who were balanced and respected by all. Imam Yahya ibn Sharaf ibn Murri ibn Hasan an-Nawawi was in this category. He was born in the village of Nawa in 1233 CE and in his early years rose to be a recognized scholar for his knowledge of Hadith and his piety. He recognized that the Prophet (pbuh) was visited by the Angel Jibril and asked about Islam and Iman. He was also questioned about Ihsan (righteousness). The Prophet's response was that "Ihsan is to worship Allah as though you see Him and if you cannot do this, then worship Him as though He sees you." So Jibril asked about the inner Muslim, the conscience or the essence of the person. Muslims today need to look into themselves and find that inner person. We need to ask ourselves, "Why do we pray, fast, give Zakat or go to Hajj? Are they done for Allah or for the people's attention and pleasure?"

Imam An-Nawawi laid down five principles for Ihsan which we need to study and implement into our lives. He also gave us an action plan as to how to attain them.

1. Fearing Allah in the secret and the open. This is attained through scrupulousness and being upright. The Prophet (pbuh) once said to one of his companions, "Say, I believe in Allah, and then be upright." We need to constantly look at ourselves and examine our intentions for doing what we do.

2. Living according to the Sunnah in word and deed. This state can be attained through caution and good character. Remember that the Prophet has informed us, "Haste is from the Shaitan." Putting Islam into our character will force us to implement the guidance instead of just spouting it from our mouths.

3. Indifference to whether others accept or reject us. This state can be attained through patience and entrusting our affairs with Allah. We need to stop looking around us and being afraid of whether society accepts us or whether people will be angry at our Islam. If we are right with Allah, then there is nothing to fear!

4. Satisfaction with Allah, the Most High, in scarcity and plenty. This state can be attained through contentment with what one has and submission to the Will of Allah.

5. Turning to Allah in happiness and affliction. This state can be attained through having gratitude to Allah in happiness and taking refuge in Him in affliction.

May Allah give us the benefit of the scholarship and striving of this humble yet profound thinker and may Allah help us to embody the words and warnings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who left us in an authentic hadith reported in Al-Tirmidhi: "Two characteristics are not found together in a hypocrite: good manners and understanding of religion (fiqh fi-Din)."

May Allah protect the weak and oppressed of the Ummah of Muhammad (pbuh) and give us the strength to be shining examples of this clear way of life. Surely Allah is the Off-forgiving and He has power over all affairs.