

MANJI —
ANOTHER PAWN
ADVANCED

A SO-CALLED INSIDER EXPOSED BY

ANSAR RAZA

Manji – Another Pawn Advanced

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*“... and you shall surely hear many
hurtful things from those who were given
the Book before you, and from those who
set up equals to Allah. But if you show
patience and fortitude and act
righteously, that indeed is a matter of
high resolve.”*

The Holy Qur’ān [3:187]

*My book is dedicated to this lofty principle
guaranteeing inter-religious peace and harmony*

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NOTE FOR READERS

This is now a well known fact in the Western world that the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), his companions and other sacred personalities like the Biblical prophets and the Muslim saints are always accompanied by certain salutations.

The actual salutations have not been written in full to make the text easy for our non-Muslim readers and replaced by symbols explained below. Muslim readers should treat the full salutation as being implicit in the text.

The symbol ‘sa’ stands for **صلى الله عليه وسلم** “*salallaho alaihi Wasalam*” or *Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him*.

The names of other prophets are followed by the symbol ‘as’ which stands for **عليهم السلام** “*alaihi Salam*” or *peace be upon him*.

The names of the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} are followed by the symbol ‘ra’ which stands for **رضى الله عنهم** “*razi-Allaho anho*” or *may Allah be pleased with him*.

The symbol ‘rh’ stands for *Rahimahullahu Ta‘ala* (may Allah have mercy on him).

In transliterating Arabic words the system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society has been followed.

References of the Holy Quran are given as Chapter No. followed by colon followed by Verse No. Thus 2:43 means Chapter 2 and Verse 43 of the Holy Quran. The same rule is followed in giving references of the Bible.

PREFACE

THE BACKGROUND

It has been a constant endeavor of the orientalist to prove that the Qur'ān is a product of human mind and hand. This attitude on the part of these orientalist is as old as the Qur'ān itself. The Makkan unbelievers, who were the immediate audience of the Quranic revelations, made exactly the same allegation, saying that the Qur'ān was only a man's utterances. Ever since the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa} non-believers and critics have merely reiterated the Makkan non-believers' views about the Qur'ān:

*“This is nothing but the word of man”*¹

In comparison to the earlier attacks on Islam, such as the crusades, modern attacks, such as literary attacks by pen, are more fierce and hostile. Allāh has foretold such events and has guided Muslims on how to counter these profane literary attacks.

“You shall surely be tried in your possessions, and your persons, and you shall surely hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you, and from those who set up equals to Allah. But if you show patience and

¹ The Holy Qur'ān 74:26

*fortitude and act righteously, that indeed is a matter of high resolve”.*²

It is further said in the Qur’ān:

“By the inkstand and the pen and by that which they write;

*Thou art not, by the grace of thy Lord, a madman.”*³

These verses clearly stipulate that a time shall come when Muslims shall encounter tormenting and scathing, literal criticism produced through the pen against the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and shall be rebutted with the pen. The Muslims are advised not to retaliate in a harsh and violent manner, but to respond to such profanity with dignity and honor. Regrettably, however, many Muslims have been reacting to such vilifications contrary to what they have been taught in the Holy Qur’ān.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT

The latest machination being added to the vicious endeavors of the opponents of Islam is to forward some pawns, Irshad Manji being one of them, from within the ranks of the Muslims. Apparently frustrated and upset with the restrictions on their unbridled carnal desires, these opponents wish to mould the

² The Holy Qur’ān 3:187

³ The Holy Qur’ān 68:2, 3

basic tenets of Islam to suit their designs. These so-called insiders, reformers, revisionists or ‘struggling Muslims’, as they call themselves, are defying alleged Islamic totalitarianism and vying for a pluralistic faith, sanctioning the religious approval to gays and lesbians to live an unbridled life.

"ہوئے تم دوست جس کے دشمن اس کا آسماں کیوں ہو"

“Hoay Tum dost Jis kay,

dushman Uss ka Aasmaan Kion ho?”

(One who has a friend like you

does not need any enemy)

Orientalists, keeping with their typical agendas, have tried to deface Islam by attributing the misdeeds of some Muslims, including some tyrants and despots, to Islamic teachings. As a result, the orientalist have declared the political maneuverings and intrigues by these Muslim rulers to be the direct consequences of Islamic teachings. However, it is inappropriate and unfair to blame Islam for the misdeeds of some Muslims, keeping in mind that the Holy Qur’ān cannot be held responsible for the actions of few Muslims. Quite contrary to sanctioning approval or acknowledging their misdeeds, the Holy Qur’ān admonishes those believers and conveys Allāh’s displeasure to them who have double standards and contradictions between their lofty claims and debased deeds.

“O ye who believe! Why do you say what you do not?”

*It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not.”*⁴

In this renewed attack on Islam by Irshad Manji in her book in the guise of reformation and change, Islam is accused of being contradictory, ambiguous, and anti-Semitic, creating Arab-Imperialism and out-casting gays and lesbians. Furthermore, Islam is wrongly accused of commanding its followers to imitate the Holy Qur’ān without thinking independently, meanwhile oppressing and denying the rights of women, slaves and non-Muslim minorities. In addition, Islam is held responsible for all primitive, naïve and uncivilized traits of human behavior. However, all of these accusations have been made against Islam and the Qur’ān without providing any evidence from the Holy Qur’ān, Sunnah (practice of the Prophet) and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet). Wherever the true Islamic sources have been quoted, they are completely distorted and misrepresented. As it is impossible to genuinely blemish the perfect teachings of Islam, the orientalist have resorted to blame the Holy Qur’ān for all the delinquencies of the Muslims. Irshad Manji is also employing this baseless and worn out tactic.

⁴ The Holy Qur’an 61:3, 4

This book has been written to fulfill the prime responsibility of the Muslims in general, and the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam in particular, being the true defender of Islam; to defend Islam and remove all the misconceptions being spread against Islam. As mentioned above, the arsenal used by the Ahmadiyya Movement is nothing but the pen. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian manifestly declared over a hundred years ago that the time of religious wars is over. Islam shall now prevail by arguments as prophesied in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

It is important to mention that this book is not an academic research based thesis but a response to the allegations and distortions inflicted upon Islam and the Holy Founder of Islam^{sa}. The style adopted in this book is, therefore, not literary or scholarly. Instead the common vernacular and simple conversational style has been used to convey our message to all. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} has said “Talk with people according to the level of their intellect”⁵.

Irshad Manji's book was written for a general audience, and not for academics or scholars. As a result, to maintain an even level playing field, this rebuttal had to lower its mode and payback with the same coin.

⁵ كلموا الناس على قدر عقولهم

I have not endeavored to rebut each and every argument, allegation and sarcastic remark of Irshad Manji but restricted my response to the few topics only and to expose, as well as prove wrong, the deceptions and treachery of Irshad Manji and the false allegations she has leveled against Islam, the Holy Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Middle Eastern politics have not been included in this exercise. The reason I wish to confine my work solely to the defense of Islam, is that the fourth successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{rh}, in the collection of his comprehensive and highly impressive sermons titled, *The Gulf Crisis - The New World Order*, has already discussed in detail the Middle East problem and Israel-Palestine conflict, presenting the solution of this predicament based on the principles of justice and benevolence, عدل و احسان as enunciated by Islam.

The sole purpose of this book is to make it loud and clear to such 'reformers' that Islam has this built-in function of reformation, revival and restoration to its original beauty. Time and again, Muslims contaminate and pollute the sublime and pristine teachings of Islam by inserting their whims and desires into it, insisting to call them a part of Islam. Allah is not indifferent to such recurring intermingles. He has devised a perfect remedy to ascertain that the

fundamentals of Islam remain unchanged till the last day.

However, the possibility of incorporating new ideas in the exegesis of these fundamentals is not ruled-out. Rather, we welcome such ideas, provided they are not repugnant to the fundamental tenets of Islam, i.e., Oneness of Allāh, the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the infallibility of the Holy Qur'ān, angels, and the life hereafter.

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM

History has shown us that whenever a divine message is revealed to a Prophet of God and conveyed through him to the people, after a long time, it has the ultimate fate of being forgotten, distorted and misrepresented. The Holy Qur'ān also speaks of this:

*“that they should not become like those who were given the Book before them, but because the period of the bestowal of Allah's grace upon them was prolonged for them, their hearts became hardened, and many of them became rebellious?”*⁶

This has happened to all earlier scriptures, so much so that even their once sacrosanct texts have been changed. However, in the case of Islam, though not

⁶ The Holy Qur'ān 57:17

the conduct and behavior of the Muslims but the preservation and safety of the Qur'ānic text has been guaranteed by Allāh;

*“Verily We Ourselves have sent this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.”*⁷

Allāh took care of the periodical revival and reformation of Islam through divine reformers, as He proclaimed:

*“Allāh would not leave the believers in the state in which you are, until He separated the wicked from the good. Nor would Allah reveal to you the unseen. But Allāh chooses of His Messengers whom He pleases. Believe, therefore, in Allāh and His Messengers. If you believe and be righteous, you shall have a great reward.”*⁸

The Holy Prophet^{sa} is quoted as saying in a Hadith recorded by Abu Da'ood:

“Verily, God shall raise for this community, at the beginning of every century, one who will renovate for it its religion.”

In fulfillment of this promise, many revivalists, renovators and reformers appeared amongst the Muslims in every century to complete this divine task assigned to them. In the fourteenth century of the

⁷ The Holy Qur'ān 15:10

⁸ The Holy Qur'ān 3:180

Islamic era, in continuation of this heavenly arrangement, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^{as} appeared and ushered the Ummah in a new era. He declared that according to the prophecies of the Holy Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet^{sa}, religious wars had to come to an end and a new phase of peace, modernity and tranquility had begun. He restored the original beauty of Islam and cleansed the impurities inflicted upon Islam not only by its opponents but also by its own followers.

He also taught the Muslims to create and foster a pluralistic society, promote tolerance and diversity of ideas, seek knowledge from whatever source they may find and be grateful to those who treat them with justice, equity and benevolence. By practicing what he preached, he praised the British government of India for providing freedom and liberty of religion, time and again in his more than eighty books without any apprehension of reprimand from his fellow Muslims. So, you see Irshad Manji, while you are praising the West after your arrival in it, we praised the good deeds of the West when we were still in the East.

In 1889, the Promised Messiah^{as} established the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam which has since been flourishing and spreading the message of Islam in a peaceful manner all over the world under the

leadership of the successors of the Promised Messiah^{as}. This divine arrangement for the restoration of Islam from *within* makes it self-sufficient to not beseech the help of outsiders or so-called insiders. I must say that this is not an arrogant statement. Islam does not discourage wisdom found elsewhere. Rather, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has instructed Muslims to acquire wisdom wherever they find it as their lost property. What we are denying, saying **“thank you but no thank you”** is the tamper and perversion of the fundamentals of Islam.

CHAPTER 1

IRSHAD MANJI — AN ANALYSIS

IS SHE A MUSLIM?

Irshad Manji has “*trouble*” with Islam yet she claims in her book to be a “Muslim”, beginning it and addressing the Muslims as, “My Fellow Muslims”. Confused? Expect more! This is just the beginning.

Before analyzing her claim to be a Muslim, I must say that Islam prohibits calling anyone a non-Muslim who claims to be a Muslim. This is because it is the sole prerogative of Allāh Almighty to declare anybody Muslim or otherwise. However, for the sake of comparison and in order to present the Islamic point of view, I hereby elucidate the definition of a Muslim according to the Islamic law .The minimum requirement for anybody to enter in the folds of Islam is to proclaim that:

There is no God but Allāh and Muhammad^{sa} is the Prophet of Allāh!

Belief in a person as a Prophet of God requires believing in him as the most truthful person on earth whose mission is to take people out of darkness and guide them towards light.

“This is a Book which We have revealed to thee that thou mayest bring mankind out of every kind

*of darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.”*⁹

It has to be believed that such a Prophet has no vested interest in his mission and the sole purpose of his appearance is the salvation of humanity.

*“Say: ‘I ask not of you any reward for it.’”*¹⁰

Obviously, those who do not believe in such a prophet accuse him of being an enemy of society, a liar or a crazy person. But it is unimaginable that a person claims to believe in an individual as a true prophet of God, yet at the same time accuses the prophet of plagiarizing from earlier scriptures, bringing contradictory, savage and discriminatory teachings solely for the purpose of political and racial domination.

My purpose here is not to initiate any “*fatwā*” (religious decree) because, first of all, I do not have the capacity or authority to issue any *fatwā*. Secondly, I myself am a victim of *fatwā* against my community and me. The mullah hierarchy of Pakistan has issued a *fatwā* against the Ahmadiyya Community declaring them outside the pale of Islam. So, I wish not to do to others for which I am a victim of. However, what I would like to do in the case of Irshad Manji is merely

⁹ The Holy Qur’ān 14:2

¹⁰ The Holy Qur’ān 6:91

to highlight her contradictory statements and leave the rest upon the fair judgment of readers.

Thus the minimum criterion according to the Holy Qur'ān, for any person to be a “*Muslim*” is that he accepts the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} as an undisputed judge and submit before the Prophet's decisions without any resentment.

Looking at what Irshad Manji is bellowing about Islam and its teachings, I would ask readers to ponder whether her comments and actions are consistent with the above mentioned standard of the Holy Qur'ān:

“Islam is on very thin ice with me. I'm hanging on by my fingernails, in anxiety over what's coming next from the self-appointed ambassador of Allah’ (Manji, 1)

“What's our excuse for reading the Koran literally when it's so contradictory and ambiguous?” (Manji, 2)

In addition, try to reconcile the following antagonism:

“[A]fter my expulsion from the madressa, I didn't damn the whole religion and get on with celebrating my “emancipated” North American self... Most of us Muslims aren't Muslims because we think about it, but rather because we're born that way. It's “who we are.” (Manji, 17)

Now we can tell her loud and clear that we have deciphered her self-contravening statement. In one sentence she expresses herself emancipated from the clutches of “*the whole religion*” and in the same paragraph she counts herself amongst the Muslims.

I’ll also quote her later amongst whom she claims to be. Take another step on this mazy “*Irshad Manji Avenue*”. Check this blind and dark alley. You may not be able to discern the dark images of contempt disguised under the cloak of reformation. Let me raise the lantern of logic and reasoning. Manji states that there is a “*serious problem with the guts of this religion*” (Manji, 17) and still, she calls herself a “Muslim”.

GRAPES ARE SOUR!

“Why would I aspire to be part of an intellectually atrophied and morally impaired mainstream?” (Manji, 55)

I believe that every one of you must have read that story of a fox that couldn’t reach the grapes and finally, forsaking the idea of further futile attempts, consoled herself by murmuring that the grapes were sour.

Drawing a parallel between Manji and that frustrated and desperate fox is not rocket science. Manji’s dejected outcry proves that her main problem

is with mainstream Muslims. Secondly, if she is not part of that atrophied and morally impaired mainstream, why does she call them “my fellow Muslims”.

THE FAMILY

It is time now to fulfill my promise I made above to unveil the true identity of our self acclaimed fellow *Muslim* and *reformer*. In her tour of Eastern Jerusalem, she visited the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque with a bitter mind and alien attitude and later happily visited the Western Wall. She claims herself to be a Muslim but she prayed neither at Al-Aqsa Mosque nor at the Dome of the Rock. However, she prayed like the Jews at the Western Wall. Manji writes:

“The Western Wall is the stone façade whose innumerable crevices hold bits of paper inscribed with the prayers of Jews from all over the world..... I borrowed a pencil and scrawl a request to God, then weave through the crowd to approach the wall. As I spend time in search of an unused crack that will clasp my prayer, I realize I’m holding up the Jews behind me. Still, I don’t feel like an interloper. I feel at home. More viscerally than ever, I know who my family is.” (Manji, 91 and 93)

THREE CHARACTERISTICS

Allāh has mentioned three characteristics of the Jewish and Christian scholars in the following verses of the Holy Qur’ān who were opposing and resisting the emergence and spread of Islam:

1. Hiding the truth:

*“Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it even as they recognize their sons, but surely, some of them hide the truth knowingly.”*¹¹

2. Perverting words:

*“There were some among the Jews who pervert words from their proper places”*¹²

3. Confounding truth with falsehood:

*“O People of the Book! Why do you confound truth with falsehood and hide the truth knowingly?”*¹³

These tactics were employed to malign Islam; by concealing the true prophecies and facts in their scriptures about the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}; by quoting the verses of Holy Scriptures out of context; and by intermingling truth

¹¹ The Holy Qur’ān 2:147

¹² The Holy Qur’ān 4:47

¹³ The Holy Qur’ān 3:72

with falsehood rendering the truth indiscernible and vague. The modern adversaries of Islam are walking on the footprints of their predecessors and have adopted the same strategy to combat Islam.

Clearly manifested in this book, Irshad Manji has knowingly used all of the above-mentioned methods for the slanderous portrayal of Islam. The isolated verses of the Holy Qur'ān have been quoted in a very selective manner. The most obvious facts have been avoided and concealed to prove her point. For example, she censured the Muslims of Toronto and Montreal in Canada for remaining silent on the demolition of pre-Islamic statues of Buddha by the Taliban in Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan. To set the record straight, I would remind her that Muslims were indeed vocal in their opposition, for example, Mr. Haroon Siddiqui of *The Toronto Star* wrote against this stupid act of the Taliban. I also wrote a protesting letter and sent it to *The Daily Jang*, a prominent Urdu newspaper of Pakistan. My letter was published and found great support and appreciation from Muslims.

Another classic example of intermingling truth with falsehoods and trying to hoodwink her readers:

“From university on, whenever people did agree to a discussion about Islam’s intolerant bent, they would caution me not to confuse religion with culture. “Stoning women has every thing to

do with tribal customs and nothing to do with Islam,” tutored one woman at a dinner. I remained a skeptic. If Islam is flexible, then it can adapt for good and not only for ill, right? So why didn’t anything----about my mosque resemble Richmond’s democracy—the very democracy that allowed Muslims to erect a mosque there?” (Manji, 24)

What a twisted argument! Feeling unable to rebut the argument of that woman at a dinner, a sharp turn is taken and frustration is diverted to Islam by attributing the narrow-mindedness and medieval thoughts of her madressa to Islam. Whenever she indicted Islam, she knew in her heart that she is doing a sinister act of deception. This inner guilt dormant in her conscious becomes apparent in the next sentence and paragraph. Then she has to suppress that truth by innovating new charges against Islam, and this vicious circle goes on. You’ll find many examples of these quirks. Taste one of them!

“What’s that? I should understand the context of the Koran’s violent passages? Let me assure you: I’ve read the scholarship that explains these verses “in their context”, and I think there’s a fancy dance of evasion going on. It’s not choreographed by conspiracy, just by a deep-seated assumption that the Koran is perfect, so

there must be perfectly valid reason for the hate it often preaches.” (Manji-48)

But please don't offend her by asking about the authenticity of the “scholarship” she read. That's her trade secret.

HER LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

Manji's book reveals how scanty, distorted, biased and perilously flawed her knowledge about Islam is. Her real trouble is that she is not a scholar of Islam and has never studied the original sources of Islamic faith, but relied upon or used secondary sources mostly written by the opponents of Islam. Check these two statements and you'll conclude her level of general knowledge, let alone Islamic knowledge:

“Jinnah had a non-Muslim wife whom he adored” (Manji, 137)

As a matter of fact Jinnah's wife became Muslim before her marriage.

Here's another blunder!

“Commander of the faithful, a term reserved for Prophet Muhammad's successors” (Manji, 137)

Oh God! If this is her level of knowledge about Islamic history, I wonder how she could argue with her teacher Mr. Khaki about the Jews of Medina. Had she concentrated on her Islamic history lessons in her

madressa instead of arguing about the Jews, she would have known that firstly, this term “Commander of faithful” is not exclusively reserved for the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}’s successors. Secondly, this epithet was never used for the first successor, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra}. He was simply called “*Khalifat-ur-Rasūl*” **خليفة الرسول** (the successor of the Prophet). It was Hadhrat Umar^{ra} who adopted this title for himself on the suggestion of some Muslims. Umayyad and Abbāsīd caliphs were also called “Commander of Faithful”. Even in this age, the Taliban bestowed this title on Mullāh Umar.

She revealed the falsity of her claim that she studied the Holy Qur’ān by objecting upon the veil, saying:

“While the Koran requires the Prophet’s wives to veil, it never decrees such a practice for all women.” (Manji, 154)

The following verse ostensibly shows that the wives of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, his daughters and all the believing women are required to observe the veil. Irshad Manji is trying to make you believe, Muslim ladies in particular, that the veil is not required. Don’t get trapped!

“O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the women of the believers, that they should pull down upon them of their outer cloaks from

their heads over their faces. That is more likely that they may thus be recognized and not molested. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.”¹⁴

Pretending to be very academic and intellectual, she adds to our knowledge of Islamic history that there were blood-soaked feuds for the caliphate or succession of the Holy Prophet^{sa} between Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra} and Hadhrat Ali^{ra} and these “*blood-soaked squabbles precipitated Islam’s first schism: the breakaway Shia (“faction of Ali”) versus the majority Sunni (followers of Sunnah, or tradition).*” (Manji-64)

Even a novice student of Islamic history knows that there was not even a skirmish between these companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} (May Allah be pleased with all of them).

PUZZLED REFORMER

Her statement, “*If Islam is the “straight path,” then why there are detours in practice?*” (Manji, 147) is very ironical, stemming out of her frustration about Islam. On one side, she demands freethinking for Muslims to interpret the Qur’ān and Islamic teachings by themselves, and on the other hand she condemns the diversity in Islamic practices. If the women in

¹⁴ The Holy Qur’ān 33:60

Peshawar, Pakistan, have one type of veil and the women in the Middle East have another, that shows the diversity, freedom and option to practice Islam according to their own environments, thinking and level of knowledge. Still, Manji is upset with geographical interpretations. This criticism of hers loses ground and backfires when we read the following paragraph:

“What I knew was that believers in the historically “reformed” religions don’t operate on a herd mentality as much as Muslims do. Christian leaders are aware of the intellectual diversity within their ranks. While each can deny the validity of other interpretations – and many do – none can deny that a plethora of interpretations exist. As for Jews, they’re way ahead of the crowd. Jews actually publicize disagreements by surrounding their scriptures with commentaries and incorporating debates into the Talmud itself.” (Manji, 33-34)

There is a famous couplet in Urdu:

تمہاری زلف میں پہنچی تو حسن کہلائی
وہ تیرگی جو میرے نامہ سیاہ میں تھی

*Tumhari Zulf Main Pohnchi To Husn Kehlai
Who Teergi Jo Merai Nama-e-Sia Main Thi*

(The abhorred darkness of my debased deeds became adorable when reached your long black hair)

What the poet is trying to say is that how is something so adorable with you and despicable with me at the same time. So I ask Irshad Manji, if intellectual diversity is the sign of a reformed religion, how can that diversity become a detour from the straight path in Islam?

Manji says, “[m]y intent was to suggest that Islam isn’t as explicit on all matters as Muslims tend to be told.” (Manji, 147-148)

If Islam is not explicit on all matters, that’s fine. This proves that Islam is not a totalitarian religion and that is what Manji does not like, right? She deprecates “totalitarianism” because it suffocates the breathing souls and thinking minds. However, Islam allows ample room for thinkers and invites them to contemplate, ponder and discover progressive ideas. Islam intends to bring harmony amongst people, not monotony. Consequently, the Holy Qur’ān recognizes the diversity and plurality of human minds. Allāh says in it:

*“And everyone has a goal to which he turns his whole attention. Then vie with one another in good works”*¹⁵

This verse clearly stipulates that humans think differently, act differently and behave differently. Hence “the difference in practice”. During the time of the Holy Prophet^{sa} people recited verses of the Holy Qur’ān in different accents. Hadrat Umar^{ra} complained about this trend to the Holy Prophet^{sa} who comforted him by saying that the Qur’ān can be recited in seven different ways. Similarly, the Holy Prophet^{sa} has permitted diversity in practice of righteousness.

¹⁵ The Holy Qur’ān 2:149

CHAPTER 2

DECEPTION vs. REALITY

CONFUSING CULTURE WITH RELIGION

While imputing the cultural, racial and ethnic characteristics of Muslims to Islam, diverse in nature and some times poles apart, Manji knew that the true and natural response from Muslims would be that not all that is practiced in the Islamic countries is necessarily Islam and that Muslim behavior and true Islamic teachings can not always be equated. Professor Philip K. Hitti in his renowned book, “*History of the Arabs*”, has very beautifully presented the distinction of culture and religion. He wrote:

“The term Islam may be used in three senses: originally religion, Islam later became a state, and finally a culture. Unlike Judaism and old Buddhism the religion of Islam proved as such of an aggressive and missionary religion as Christianity. Subsequently, it builds up a state. The Islam that conquered the northern regions was not the Islamic religion but the Islamic state. The Arabians burst forth upon an unsuspecting world as members of a national theocracy. It was Arabianism and not Mohammedanism that

triumphed first. Not until the second and third centuries of the Moslem era did the bulk of the people in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia profess the religion of Mohammad. Between the military conquests of these regions and their religious conversions a long period intervened” (Hitti, 145)

EXCESSIVE LAUGHTER

Ms. Manji’s research is bent upon seeking excuses to reprimand Islam one way or the other. By doing so, she forgets the normal social behavior and the prevalent norms of the civilized Western society which she is praising so much. In this context, she states that Islam has a popular teaching against “excessive laughter” (Manji P-25). True! Islam is against all kinds of excesses including laughter. But this popular teaching is not only common amongst Muslims but also accepted as a standard norm in non-Muslim circles.

Health experts say that excessive laughter can lead to hysteria. An English physician, Dr. Harry Angelman, has described excessive laughter as a symptom of a neurological disorder, called Angelman syndrome, characterized by severe congenital mental retardation, unusual facial appearance, and muscular abnormalities. It is considered as a negative impulse.

Dr. Harry Angelman, an English pediatrician, first described Angelman syndrome in a paper published in 1965. He had observed several children who had similar features: unusual happiness, severe mental delay, no speech, a marionette-like gait, seizure disorder, and similar facial appearances. Dr. Angelman initially called this disorder "Happy Puppet Syndrome"; its name was eventually changed to Angelman syndrome.

Dr. Angelman writes in personal correspondence, 1991:

"The history of medicine is full of interesting stories about the discovery of illnesses. The saga of Angelman's Syndrome is one such story. It was purely by chance that nearly thirty years ago three handicapped children were admitted at various times to my children's ward in England. They had a variety of disabilities, and although at first sight they seemed to be suffering from different conditions, I felt that there was a common cause for their illness. The diagnosis was purely a clinical one, because in spite of technical investigations, which today are more refined, I was unable to establish scientific proof that the three children all had the same handicap. In view of this I hesitated to write about them in the medical journals. However,

when on holiday in Italy I happened to see an oil painting in the Castelvecchio museum in Verona called . . . a Boy with a Puppet. The boy's laughing face and the fact that my patients exhibited jerky movements gave me the idea of writing an article about the three children with a title of Puppet Children. It was not a name that pleased all parents, but it served as a means of combining the three little patients into a single group. Later the name was changed to Angelman syndrome (AS). This article was published in 1965, and after some initial interest lay almost forgotten until the early eighties."

The first reports of AS reached the US in the early 1980's and the University of Florida became one of the first important centers of AS research under the direction of pediatrician Dr. Charles Williams. In 1987, a genetic "marker" for the disorder was discovered--a missing genetic code on a tiny portion of chromosome #15. Ten years later, in 1997, Dr. Joseph Wagstaff, and Dr. Arthur Beaudet discovered that the cause of AS is a mutation in the UBE3A gene (which is missing in the case of a deletion.) To date, there are four different genetic confirmations for AS that can be determined by genetic testing.¹⁶

¹⁶ <http://www.geneticalens.com/history.htm>

Excessive laughter is something that is not recommended and prescribed by the other religions as well. Rabbi Noah Weinberg in his series of lecture(s) entitled “48 Ways to Wisdom,” says:

“B’miyut s’chok literally means “minimize laughter”. Understand the dynamics and use laughter wisely. Laughter is double-edged sword. When used improperly—e.g. insulting others or causing light-headedness—laughter can be destructive.”

We see in the life of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and his companions that they used to laugh and had fun in their lives. It is related:

“Hadhrat Qatāda stated that someone asked Hadhrat Abdullah son of Umar^{ra} whether the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} used to laugh some time. He replied that yes they did laugh and faith in their heart was stronger than mountains. Bilāl bin Sa’ad stated that I saw them exercising archery (Teer-andazi) and laughing at each other.” ¹⁷

¹⁷ Mishkāt bāb-ud-dhahak

ONLY THE MUSLIMS BEAT THEIR TOMASI?

“I knew this to be happening in many more Muslim households than mine, and the bondage continued well after my family left.” (Manji, 6)

I would like to analyze Ms. Manji’s comment here. The area that she speaks of where the South Asian / Indians ethnic group had settled in East Africa did not consist of Muslims only. A large number of Hindus were also part of that community. However, by her sweeping comments, does she mean to say that only Muslims were so ruthless to beat their black servants and the Hindus were innocent angels that they never exploited or even touched their black servants and treated them like equals?

Her modus operandi is to amass divergent statements, put them in a clay pot, shake them well and offer to her readers a heap of irreconcilable oscillating philosophy. Her animosity and resentment is so obvious that any beauty in Islam and any benign deeds of the Muslims are declared to be based on ulterior motives. For Manji, any good deed by the Muslims is sooner or later reciprocated by some wicked actions culminating the balance into zero or minus. Adding these pluses and minuses gives you a heap of negativities enough to demonize the Muslims.

Any wrongdoing or harm to the global society done by a small segment of fanatic Muslims is

unfairly ascribed to the whole Muslim Ummah and alleged to be duly supported and ordained by the Holy Qur'ān. On the other hand, any oppression and injustice on the part of the West or Jews, is trivialized and attributed to a very small segment, acquitting the mainstream. Could this be because Manji feels constrained to portray a fair and balanced position on the issue?

QUESTION AND QUESTIONING

The term “questioning” has two different meanings; challenging the authority and authenticity; and seeking knowledge. Let’s see how our “redeemer” used these two polar opposite terms to grind her own axe.

She is praising the environment at Rose of Sharon Baptist Church where her questions were always met with an inviting smile. But to make a fair judgment we have to see how old she was when she was at church and later at the madressa and what kind of questions she was asking her baby-sitter at Church and her teacher at the madressa.

When she was “dumped” in the Church by her “refugee immigrant” father, in her own words, who threw his religious affiliations on the back-seat by just hearing the word “free”, she was only seven and the

questions she asked her baby sitter were very innocent and do not fall under the bold category of questioning.

“Say “free” to an immigrant and religious affiliations take a back seat to the bargain at hand.”

This remark is outrageous and derogatory to all the immigrants settled in Canada. We reserve our right to protest and file the defamation and libel case against her. Manji goes on to write:

“Obviously, the questions I posed as a seven year old could only be simple ones. Where did Jesus come from? Where did he live? What was his job? Who did he marry? These queries didn’t put anyone on the spot, but my point is that the act of asking – and asking some more – always met with an inviting smile.” (Manji, 7)

Suddenly, the religious affiliations of her father woke up and jumped on the front seat when she won the *Most Promising Christian* award. He plucked her from the Church and threw her in the Madressa. Amazingly, we don’t find any mention of her father after this incidence. If she couldn’t reform her father, how can she reform more than one billion stubborn Muslims?

I believe she has not done justice to her father. When a well-off person running a Mercedes’ agency

is thrown out of his country of long-time residence, and has to seek an asylum in another country where he cannot find a job equal to his earlier status, he naturally becomes frustrated and desperate. Shouldn't he also be sympathized with and not forsaken?

Now, the make believe project is about to start, you automaton Muslims, hitherto in the name of Allah and now in the name of Irshad Manji. You have to believe whatever she says; otherwise you shall be ostracized and dejected.

“From age nine to age fourteen, I spent every Saturday there” [at the madressa] (Manji, 11)

So she was nine when she was admitted in the Madressa and remained there till she was fourteen. There she *“insisted on being educated rather than indoctrinated”* (Manji, 13) and put these questions to her poor teacher, Mr. Khaki. I am at loss why she kept the teacher's real name a secret. Are you thinking what I'm thinking? No Mr. Khaki ever existed? As per general observation and practice, girls from nine to fourteen are taught by female teachers and not by male teachers in Islamic schools.

The intellectual questions she asked relate to women subjugation and Jew bashing by the Muslims. Before coming to the Madressa, she was in Church, but she never asked question(s) such as why women

cannot be priests and lead the services at Church and for that matter at Synagogues?

Furthermore, it is a bit too difficult to believe that a teacher can advise a teenager living in North America, having no clue of Arabic, to read the Qur'ān in order to find the answers to her questions. What are we to think with all of these inconsistencies in Manji's story—another story that has been stretched from the truth?

Her concern at a very early age about the Jews is also doubtful, provided there were hardly any Synagogues in Richmond. What further leads me to doubt her story is that students of her age at Sunday schools are not taught these intricacies about Islamic history. This is the age to learn about the basics of Islamic history. I have not come across any student of this age concerned, or even having knowledge about the clashes between the Jews of Medina and the Muslims. But, if Irshad Manji can create Mr. Khaki, she can also concoct such stories. After all, a precocious child shows the man (or woman) inside him / her.

DOES ALLAH KNOW BENGALI?

Two years ago I was on a cruise and met an Iranian Muslim woman who had immigrated to Canada a couple of years ago and was now working in Toronto.

While discussing Hāfiz and Sa'adi; great Persian poets, she commented that Iran has a very rich and strong cultural heritage but Islam has imposed an alien (Arab) culture on the country. I looked at her astonishingly because she was dressed in western attire, drinking wine and speaking English. I tried to reconcile her remarks and her newly adopted Western way of life. I failed!

Tasleema Nasreen is a Bengali writer famous for her criticism on Islam. Her question in her childhood (*what a striking similarity between Tasleema Nasreen and Irshad Manji—both were genius and non-conformists in their childhood*) to her mother, quoted by Irshad Manji (page 152) of her book, reminds me of the above incident. Tasleema Nasreen's question was;

“When I want to talk to Allah, why do I have to use somebody else's language?”

Of course she can use English and any other European language, but why does Arabic all of sudden become “*somebody else's*” language?

Sarcasm aside, let's analyse Tasleema's case and provide some remedy.

It is not difficult to understand whether Tasleema Nasreen made that remark out of love for her national language, Bengali, or out of her animosity for Islam.

Here I would also like to remove a misunderstanding. Angels will not speak Arabic with us in our graves. They will talk to us in our own language. And, believe me, if they ever opt to talk in Arabic, we will understand each and every word.

The fundamental message of Islam is unity and brotherhood amongst all the Muslims. This spirit of Islam has to have some embodiment. Facing towards Ka'aba for prayers, praying in Arabic and going to Makka for pilgrimage are the signs and basic elements of this unifying religion. Further, Islam provides for the individual, as well as the collective life of society. In a multicultural society like Canada, we have people from different ethnic backgrounds praying behind an Imam. If the Imam opts to pray in his own native language, it will be impossible for his followers to understand him when he is saying “الله اكبر” *Allāh-o-Akbar*” signaling them to move from one posture to another. We, therefore, need one common language for all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.

However, whilst reciting prescribed words and phrases in Arabic during the prayers, it is not forbidden to “*talk to Allāh*” in your own language during the five daily prayers. By reciting Arabic words, we not only follow the best example of the Holy Prophet^{sa} but also express ourselves as part of a global Muslim Ummah. That is the expression of our

unity and conformity to the collective cause of the global Ummah. Nonetheless, our individual requirements also need to be satiated. We need to communicate to God and express our personal desires and feelings before Him.

For that purpose, we are allowed to talk to Him and pray to Him in our own language. This coexistence of spirit and form is very essential for living Islam. Unfortunately, the Muslims have so strongly embraced the façade of Islam that it has strangled the spirit inside. On the other hand, some people stress on spirit only, neglecting the body of Islam. Both are extremists and that is what we are fighting against.

Now, the question arises that why Allāh chose Arabic for the divine revelation of the most perfect Book, the Holy Qur’ān? It is sufficient to say here that Arabic is the most concise language and has the innate ability to express lengthy subjects in few words. Compare the time between saying “Iyyāka na’budū wa iyyāka na’sa’een” and *Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help* and you’ll be convinced. The beauty, style, rhythm and conciseness of this language caused it to be selected as the bearer of ever-lasting divine revelation.

This topic requires volumes of research papers. The founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam,

the Promised Messiah Hadhrat Mirza Ghulām Ahmad^{as} of Qāḍian in his book “من الرحمان *Minan-ur-Rahmān*,” has presented this idea that Arabic is the mother of all languages. Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Mazhar, a great scholar of the Ahmadiyya Community has carried out extensive research on this topic and has written numerous books and articles about it.

ARE HOMOSEXUALS AND TERRORISTS BOTH EXCELLENT?

Another folly exhibited by this imprudent reformer, in fact an enemy in the guise of friend, is demanding Qur’ānic sanction for homosexuality. This is nothing but sheer provocation and incitement. God did not create homosexuals, as the saying goes, God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. He created human beings and they were given “Free Will” to choose whatever way they wished. So, some choose to become perverts, some murderers, some exploiters, some George Bush and some Osāma Bin Laden.

If God created everything “excellent” then by that standard, we have to declare all the fanatics, terrorists, pedophiles, oh I forgot to mention your “fellow Muslims” as excellent. If this were the case, then Manjī’s whole exercise would prove redundant and

unnecessary. Excellence doesn't need reformation, right? You have to accept us as we are. Bear with us!

WHO'S ISLAM – THE IMAMS' OR KINGS'?

Let me remind or educate Irshad Manji about a lesson from Islamic history. There has always been a clash and conflict between the great Imams (both of Sunni and Shia denominations) of Islam and the monarchs about whom the Holy Prophet^{sa} foretold that after the rightly guided Caliphs, tyrannical and unjust monarchy would prevail.

*“The Caliphate will remain in my nation after me for thirty years. Then, it will be a monarchy after that.”*¹⁸

The unjust rule varies between kings. This period started after Hadrat Hasan bin Alī^{ra} and includes the Umayyads, Abbāsids, and Mamlūks, continuing until the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the twentieth century.

Now, it is up to the fair judgment of my readers that they either associate Islamic conduct with the great Imams like Hadhrat Imam Abu Hanifa, Hadhrat Imam Mālik, Hadhrat Imam Shāfā'ī, Hadhrat Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and great Imams from the family of the Holy Prophet^{sa} *or* with the Ummayyads,

¹⁸ Ahmad, Tirmidhī and others, Sahīh Al-Jāmi' As-Saghīr no. 3341

Abbāsids and later tyrannical rulers, with some illumined exceptions of course. Surely, both of these groups cannot be simultaneously declared to be inspired and motivated by the teachings of the Holy Qur’ān?

PACT OF UMAR

Another deceptive and malignant effort on Manji’s part to impugn Islam is the distorted depiction of the “*Pact of Umar*”. The unscrupulous South Asian police officials are infamous about such tricks. Through some “insider” like Irshad Manji, they hide drugs in the place of a so-called suspect and then during the search of that place, find those drugs and arrest the innocent person.

Likewise, Irshad Manji attributed some discriminatory clauses to the *Pact of Umar* - and then after a “successful” intellectual and academic investigation, the culprit Muslims were apprehended and condemned. After mentioning a few of the clauses of this “discriminatory” document called “*Pact of Umar*” on page 70 of her book, she claimed that Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina admitted these discriminatory clauses to be part of the pact.

After reading the relevant portion of Dr. Sachedina’s book, “The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism” I was shocked to observe how criminally

she has distorted and misrepresented Dr. Sachedina's point of view about this pact and misused a great scholarly work for her own vested interest. I contacted Dr. Sachedina, who very graciously, in spite of being on his sabbatical, not only replied to my emails but also very kindly allowed me to quote the following paragraph in my book:

“For any one to claim that his/her exposition of Islamic Faith is "the" interpretation of the faith of millions of people around the world, puts the burden of proof on that person to provide evidence from the original sources of Islam. This prerequisite cannot be compromised, otherwise authentic from inauthentic claim would be unrecognizable.

Ms. Manji, because of her inability to use any primary sources in their languages like Arabic or Persian, depends on the secondary sources about Islam, and retrieves only those materials that she intends to polemicize or utilize to support her own personalized interpretation. This practice is unacceptable academically, especially when it implicates the entire Muslim community and projects its faith in unnecessarily polemical tone to score political points in the West. One can be quite critical of one's inherited tradition; and yet, to distort the faith of

millions is unfair, and lacks honest interaction with a well-documented and well-discussed faith of every seventh person on earth” (Sachedina, 2005)

It is quite obvious that Manji has not only committed a heinous crime of distortion of Islamic history, but also has inflicted great damage to the repute of a great scholar, Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina. She has done so by quoting him very selectively without reference to the context and attributing to him what he does not think, let alone present in his book.

Quite contrary to Irshad Manji’s portrayal, Dr. Sachedina, on pages 65 and 66 of his book, has questioned the authenticity of that document ascribed to Hadhrat Umar^{ra}, the second Caliph. He has declared the document doubtful on the basis of the tolerant and pluralistic principles mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān as well as the behavior and conduct of the Muslims in general of the early period and of Hadhrat Umar^{ra} in particular. On page 67, Dr. Sachedina has enumerated all those clauses, which are discriminatory in nature, devised by later jurists and falsely attributed to Hadhrat Umar^{ra}.

Now read the following excerpt from Dr. Sachedina’s book and decide for yourself if he has supported Irshad Manji’s views or has she maliciously

tried to make him her accomplice? Dr. Sachedina writes:

“The contents of this document suggest that its attribution to ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, who ruled from 634 to 644, is doubtful. The discriminatory stipulations—a non-Muslim’s word was not to be accepted against a Muslim in the qadi’s court, the murder of a non-Muslim was not to be treated as quite so heinous a crime as the murder of a Muslim—not only run completely counter to the spirit of justice in the Koran, but they also contravene the practice of the early community..... When Muslims took Jerusalem in 638, the caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, on his visit to that city from Damascus, sent the inhabitants of the city the following written message:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is written document from ‘Umar b. al-Khattab to the inhabitants of the Sacred House (bayt al maqdis). You are guaranteed (aminun) your life, your goods, and your churches, which will be neither occupied nor destroyed, as long as you do not initiate anything [to endanger] the general security.”

It is difficult to see how the same caliph could have instituted the discriminatory laws against

the protected people, as later sources report”
(Sachedina, 65)

Dr. Sachedina further observes:

“It is a historical fact that the Prophet condemned oppression of the ahl al-dhimma as a sinful deviation, declaring in no uncertain terms, “On the Day of Judgment I myself will act as the accuser of any person who oppresses a person under the protection (dhimmi) of Islam, and lays excessive [financial or other social] burdens on him”. In the most highly rated compilation of Hadith among the Sunni Muslims, the Sahi of al-Bukhari, there is a chapter-heading that reads, “One should fight for the protection of the ahl al-dhimma and they should not be enslaved.” Under this heading Bukhari narrates the following instructions on the authority of ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, when the latter was stabbed and died of the wound inflicted upon him by a Persian slave:

I strongly recommend him (the next caliph) to take care of those non-Muslims who are under God and His Prophet’s protection (dhimmat allah wa dhimmat rasulih) in that he should remain faithful to them according to the covenant with them, and fight on their behalf and

not burden them [by imposing high taxes] beyond their capacity.

After reading these instructions, left by the caliph as the head of Muslim state to honor the sacred covenant offered by God and his emissary to the people of the Book, it is hard to believe that the Pact of 'Umar ascribed to the second caliph could be authentic in its representation of the situation of the non-Muslims in the early days of Islam” (Sachedina, 66)

In addition to Dr. Sachedina’s comments, Professor Philip K. Hitti in his renowned book, “*History of The Arabs*” has also quoted the text of a pact made by Hadhrat Khalid bin al-Walīd^{ra}, the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army, on behalf of the Caliph of the time. This pact does not contain any discriminatory clause for the non-Muslims or regards them as being inferior to the Muslims. (Hitti, 150)

This reference reinforces our point that the non-Muslim subjects of the conquered land were granted full freedom to practice their religion and were allowed to continue their civic life without any coercion or oppression by their new rulers. Irshad Manji’s contention is, therefore, completely falsified in light of these historical evidences.

A MULTIFACETED FRAUD

Justin Podur, an activist and writer based in Toronto, in his article “A Multifaceted Fraud”¹⁹, has exposed another distortion of Irshad Manji. In this article he has mentioned how Irshad Manji misquoted or rather distorted and selectively used Edward Said’s article, “Israel-Palestine: A Third Way”, published in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Sept 1998.

DHIMMITUDE

The hostility towards Islam has colored Manji’s eyes or rather blinded her and bereft her of any positive objectivity in her endeavor of a so-called wake-up call. Recklessly following the non-Muslim “fault-finders” of Islam, she has twisted the term “dhimmitude” by presenting it as a stigma on the face of Islam. She has portrayed dhimmitude as the systematic repression of Jews and Christians and gross discrimination against them in Muslim lands.

As a matter of fact, dhimmitude provides protection and safety not only for the non-Muslims but also for the Muslim population. In modern ages, governments levy taxes on its citizens, guaranteeing protection and safety for their lives, wealth and honor.

¹⁹ <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=4624>

The whole population is, therefore, *dhimmi* of any government, irrespective of their religion.

Pat Johnson, a native Vancouverite journalist and commentator, in an introductory article about Irshad Manji titled, “A Muslim friend of Israel” in “*The Western Jewish Bulletin*” wrote:

*“The author [Irshad Manji], who is also host of TV Ontario’s program Big Ideas, returned repeatedly to Israel’s position as the region’s only state where women, gays and lesbians, opponents of the government and free thinkers are guaranteed **protection** under the law.”*²⁰

Poor Pat Johnson never knew that for Irshad Manji, the protection guaranteed to the population of any country is synonymous to systematic repression and discrimination and that she strongly abhors this freaky protection.

In Islamic terminology, the tax levied on the Muslim population is called *zakat*, whereas the tax for non-Muslims is called *jizya*. *Zakat*, being one of the five basic pillars of Islam, cannot be levied on the non-Muslims lest they complain that they are being tactfully coerced to become Muslims. Non-Muslims, therefore, are not required to pay *zakat* being non-obligatory upon them.

²⁰ <http://www.jewishbulletin.ca/archives/Mar04/archives04Mar12-01.html>

As an alternative, therefore, as recompense for the protection and other civic facilities provided by the Islamic government, the “*jizya*” was levied upon non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state at an unfixed and lesser rate than *Zakat*.

Irshad Manji has tried to convey the idea that Muslim scholars, including Khalid Duran, do not accept the fact that dhimmitude ever existed as a norm in Islam and that Dr. Sachedina is the only Muslim scholar who accepts this fact. How naïve, rather misleading, are her academic investigations about Islam. The Holy Qur’ān, the books of Hadīths and the books of Islamic jurisprudence and history have enough mention of dhimmitude. No Muslim scholar has ever denied the existence of this concept in Islam. What we deny is the distorted interpretation and incorrect portrayal of dhimmitude by Bat Ye’or or anyone else. Similarly, this is what Dr. Sachedina did in his book, “*The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*” where he argued against the distortion of the facts, yet was misquoted by Irshad Manji.

MUSLIMS ARE ALSO DHIMMIES

In Islamic Sharī’ā the term “dhimmī” is used for non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state. As the Islamic state is responsible for the protection and care of these non-Muslims, therefore they are called “dhimmī” or

“*ahl al-dhimma*”. The frequent use of this legal term for the non-Muslims has restricted its sole use for them, excluding Muslims. However, we can find the use of this term for Muslims as well. Islam guarantees the protection of life, wealth and honor of every Muslim. The dhimmitude is, therefore, not a derogatory term or a discriminatory title, but a right of citizenship and a social agreement between the government and the people. In the Holy Qur’ān, the word “*DHIMMA*” has also been used as “covenant” or “agreement” (9: 8, 10). In a number of ahādīth (pl. of Hadīth—traditions), quoted by Imam Muslim, the Muslims are also called *ahl al-dhimma*, meaning, being under the protection of Allah and His Messenger.

It is reported on the authority of Abū Hurairā that the Messenger of Allāh said: I have been commanded to fight against people so long as they do not declare that there is no god but Allah, and he who professed it was guaranteed the protection of his property and life on my behalf except for the right affairs rest with Allah.

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We find incidences in Islamic history where Muslim governments refunded protection money to their non-Muslim citizens when the government realized that it

²¹ Sahih Muslim, Book 001, Number 0030

could not protect them anymore. Therefore, it is a complete distortion and twisting of Islamic teachings to call *dhimmī* a degraded citizen of an Islamic state. A very important and pertinent point that should be kept in mind is that the Jews of Medina were never required to pay *jizya* or called *dhimmies*.

BANŪ QURAYZĀ MASSACRE

As obvious from every page of Irshad Manji's book, she is extremely concerned and sympathetic to the Jews and continuously frowns upon the Muslims for the crimes that they did commit as well as those that they did not commit. She miraculously grew this Jew-affinity since her madressa days - the magic of one's first love. In her Muslim-bashing, enraged over Jew-bashing, she "questioned" the massacre of the Jews in Medina and demanded the proof of Jewish conspiracy against the nascent Islamic state of Medina. Don't ask me why she didn't demand the proof of the Jewish conspiracy against the Romans and censured the demolition of Temple by Titus, the Roman general!

Now, a brief look at the Banū Qurayzā incident. The critical study by Muslim and non-Muslim historians has substantially proved that this incident has been depicted with exaggeration in order to malign Islam. Dr. Barakāt Ahmad has carried out thorough and extensive research on this subject. In his

book, “*Muhammad and the Jews*”, Dr. Barakāt Ahmad, on the authority of certain eminent historians, writes,

“It might perhaps be safe to say that generally speaking Ibn Ishaq does not give isnads [isnad: plural of sanad means chain of reliable and authentic narrators of the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa}] on crucial matters concerning the B. Qurayzah or the Jews of Khaybar.” (Ahmad, 13)

Dr. Barakāt Ahmad further observes:

“Ibn Ishaq had no direct knowledge of the events and in view of the self-contradictory nature of the accounts one would have expected that he would either qualify his statement or absolve himself of the responsibility of reporting something of which he either had no direct knowledge or which he thought was of a doubtful nature. In all other doubtful cases he normally uses the phrases such as “in what has reached me” or “it was mentioned to me” or he would simply finish a story by adding that God knows best what happened. Ibn Ishaq does not show this caution and scrupulousness in his account of the B. Qurayzah” (Ahmad, 16)

In a detailed article that questions the accuracy of this story, scholar W. N. Arafāt explains why it was probably a ‘later invention’. He says, among other

things, killing the whole tribe for the crime of a few is against the Qur'ānic principle that “*no soul shall bear the burden of the other*” as well as the Islamic injunction concerning the treatment of prisoners of war. The aforementioned incident also runs counter to the later treatment by the Holy Prophet^{sa} of other Jewish tribes.

Arafāt further substantiates his contention by asserting that no visible mark, trace or any reference in Islamic history is found about the trenches where those massacred Jews were buried. He further argues that had this massacre ever happened, the later jurists would have made it a precedent while suppressing the revolt of Christian or Jewish tribes of their times.

According to W.N. Arafāt, Ibn-e-Hajar; an Islamic authority, denounced the massacre and other related stories as "odd tales." A contemporary of Ibn Ishāq, Mālik the jurist, denounced Ibn Ishāq outright as “a liar” and “an impostor” just for telling such fables.

Finally, W.N. Arafāt traces the origin of this story in the early history of the Jews during the time of Flavius Josephus, a great Jewish historian. Arafāt claims that this was the theory preferred by the late Professor Guillaume.

I would also like to add that, for the sake of argument, if we concede that this incident ever happened, it was done according to the choice of the

Jews who chose Sa'ad Ibn Mu'āz as their arbitrator. According to the story, he decided their fate according to the tenets of the Bible, not according to the Holy Qur'ān. Therefore, supposedly accepting the genuineness of this incidence, it is the Bible which should be censured, not the Holy Qur'ān.

In light of the above, Irshad Manji is advised to *scholarly* pursue the religion and its history if she ever wishes to reform Islam. We are always ready to accept and incorporate benevolent and beneficial views in Islam and to reform ourselves. Irshad Manji should try this as well!

THE JEWS

The enormous and indiscriminate praise of the Jews and Israel spilled everywhere in Manji's book has not served her purpose but rather proved detrimental to her so-called "reform project". Her allegations of anti-Semitism are also vehemently and frenziedly inflicted on Islam. I'll discuss this later. Her undue and exaggerated Jew-flattering has raised suspicion about her amongst the Muslims, especially when she alienates herself from the Muslim Ummah and considers the Jews her family while praying with them at the Wailing Wall. Even the title adopted by her as "Muslim-Refusenik" is taken from Soviet-Jews.

In this backdrop, her book doesn't seem to outline “*a global campaign to promote innovative approaches to Islam*”, but a campaign to promote Israel. Irshad Manji, you are not reforming Muslims, you are enraging and demeaning them. Taunting an individual does not mend his behavior. It aggravates him. You are unaware of this rudimentary lesson of psychology, and still you call yourself a reformer? Understand the difference between reformation and destruction! You are placing a hatchet on the very foundations of Islam, trying to detonate the basis of Islam and are still expecting the Muslims to applaud you?

Ironically, Manji has allowed herself to be “*held hostage by what's happening between the Palestinians and the Israelis*” supporting the Israeli cause. Yet, she is advising the Muslims to alienate themselves from the Palestinian cause. Instead, she should first remove the beam from her eyes and then she will be able to discern and remove the speck from her *fellow Muslims'* eyes. Message received Irshad Manji?

A famous Urdu poet, Mirza Ghālib in one of his couplets says;

نکالا چاہتا ہے کام کیا طعنوں سے تو غالب
تیرے بے مہر کہنے سے وہ تجھ پہ مہرباں کیوں ہو

*Nikala Chahta Hai Kam Kia Ta'non Sai Tu
Ghalib?*

*Terai Be-Mehr Kehnai Sai Who Tujh Par
Mehrbaan Kion Ho?*

*'What do you wish to achieve, O Ghalib, by
taunting?*

*How can one be kind to you if you keep calling
him unkind?"*

Furthermore, I do not find anything accomplished by Manji with choosing to title her book as “*a wake-up call for honesty and change*”. She claims that she is following “*moral clarity, common decency and civilization*” (Manji, 1). On the contrary, it is very obvious how little these sublime principles have been followed in her writing.

Manji admits herself that the French writer was inciting hate when he called Islam “the most stupid religion”. Isn't she walking on his footsteps calling the Holy Qur'ān to be a “bundle of contradictions, inconsistent, ambiguous, imperfect” and much more? These pricking, insulting and humiliating writings cannot do any good but infuriate and enrage the already devastated and doomed people.

But wait! Can you believe your eyes? Oh my God! What a great transformation of soul! Manji is criticizing Israel for not condemning the genocide of

Armenians. But who was the culprit? Ahh! It's that old Muslim demon, Turkey, who got away with the dire punishment it deserved. Don't blame Manji if she only knows two massacres in history; *Banū Qurayzā* and *Armenia*. It's not her fault—she was only taught two!

“Ironically enough, however, Israel doesn't acknowledge the Armenian genocide in its social studies textbooks, for fear of upsetting its strongest regional ally, Turkey. Here's one Israeli policy that I have absolutely no problem criticizing. It's morally and historically wrong.”

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²² "<http://www.muslim-refusenik.com/sources/chapter5.html> - The Trouble with Islam: Notes and Sources - Chapter 5: Who is Betraying Whom"

CHAPTER 3 THE MUSLIMS

THE TROUBLE WITH THE MUSLIMS

Many Muslims have reacted to the title of the book by saying that they themselves are responsible for their political, economical, moral, scientific, religious and social downfall and decline. Some of these Muslims suggest that the title should be “Trouble with Muslims”. Even a non-Muslim journalist, Patrick Lejtenyi, news editor of “*The Mirror*” from Montreal, while interviewing Manji, observed this fact and said;

*“When I was reading your book, it seemed that one of your biggest problems was not so much with Islam as a religion in general, but with the [ultra-conservative Saudi Arabian] Wahhabist sect, desert tribalism and Arab chauvinism”*²³

The Muslim viewpoint is justified to some extent, but Miss Manji offers another justification (note difference between justification and justified) for the title of her book by quoting an apocryphal saying attributed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. Her justification is that:

²³ www.montrealmirror.com/ARCHIVES/2003/100903/news2.html

“Prophet Muhammad himself said that religion is the way we conduct ourselves toward others. By that standard, how Muslims actually behave is Islam.” (Manji, 3)

Notwithstanding this false premise upon which this whole story has been concocted and keeping in view the fact that Muslims themselves insist on calling their political, social, religious and cultural behavior strictly Islamic, the norms of justice and fairness require giving the devil his (or her?) due. Therefore, we cannot hold Manji and many other orientalisists responsible for considering Muslim behavior as Islam. Interestingly, she has to admit some time that the problem is with Muslims and not with Islam and that the *“Muslims manufacture consent in Allah’s name”*. (Manji, 39)

While talking about slavery in Islam, Manji confessed that the Holy Qur’ān devised a system of gradual emancipation for the slaves and ultimate elimination of slavery. It is the under-developed Muslim nations where slavery is still practiced on the pretext of Islam and this brutality cannot be laid *“at God’s feet.”* (Manji, 41)

WHAT IS ISLAM — A SOCIAL JUSTICE SYSTEM OR A CRIMINAL LAW?

The trouble with many Muslims is that they are obsessed with the idea that a Muslim is a born ruler and if presently being ruled, eventually has to be a ruler. They are not ready to offer to their non-Muslim minorities what they themselves demand as citizens from Western nations. Whenever these Muslims talk about the implementation of Islamic values and ideologies, often the only vision that emerges in their minds is of a punitive and retributive system that is all out to oppress the minorities and punish the criminals. These Muslims have freedom of religion in Western countries and in India, and demand more of it. Yet they deny this basic human right to the minorities living in Pakistan, S. Arabia, Iran and many other Islamic countries. They wish to create a society, not on the basis of absolute social justice, benevolence and equality for everyone, but on the horrific background of penal laws. But, of course, Islam has nothing to do with this terrible state.

Looking at this vindictive scenario of *their* Islam, which depicts a medieval society steeped in theocracy, aristocracy and monarchy, the modern individual will obviously abhor this version of Islam and wish to stay away from it. Unfortunately, the Muslims living in North America and Europe (in reality, living in their majestic past), also keep this

self-created version of Islam very dear to them and wish to spread it to the whole of the world. Their goal is not to present the true teachings of Islam before the West and to establish peace and brotherhood between their fellow human beings. Instead, it is to extend their rule over the whole world and to hold sway over the power centers of the world.

Regrettably, the Muslims have so over-emphasized the political aspect of Islam, that this all-embracing religion covering all the aspects of human life has become synonymous with politics and power. Unfortunately, the sole purpose of Islam is now to establish “Islamic” governments, or we can justifiably say, Muslim rule in the name of Islam. The Muslim clerics are completely oblivious of the state of affairs of common Muslims. The immorality, corruption and the ever-increasing degradation of the Muslim masses never draw their attention towards these ailments. The frenzied obsession of restoring the lost glory of the Muslim empire, not the true Islamic character, has intoxicated the Muslim Clergy and they are using the Muslim youth as fuel to keep this fire of lust and desire burning. The Muslim Clergies’ eyes are focused on only one goal: more lands, more power and a strong hold over the masses. Nobody asks them what they are doing to improve the lot of the laity already living under their influence in more than fifty so-called Islamic countries. In Persian they say,

تو درون در چه کردی که برون خانه آئی
*“Tu Daroon-e- dar che kardi kai Baroon-e-Khana
 Aiee”*

*What have you accomplished inside that now you
 have come outside?*

The Muslim clergy have completely forgotten the divine task of “*Amr bil Ma’rūf Wa Nahī a’nil-Munkar*”, (enjoin goodness and virtue and forbid evil) assigned to them. Allāh admonishes such scholars in these words:

*“Why do not the divines and those learned in Law prohibit them from uttering sin and eating things forbidden? Evil indeed is that which they do.”*²⁴

Had the Muslim Clergy concentrated on the moral, social, economical and political uplifting and development of their people, other nations might have opted to annex their lands with them in order to share their booty. The influx of immigrants from Third World countries to Europe and North America would have been in the opposite direction.

This despicable portrayal of Islam, presented by the Muslims themselves before the West added by the orientalist’s contempt and envy for Islam, has constrained Muslims to think of Islam and later depict

²⁴ The Holy Qur’ān 5:64

it as a religion not concerned with the spiritual, moral and social development of humans, but a religion seeking power to satiate the carnal desires of the Muslims.

Ironically, when the Western media criticizes Islam and imputes all the flaws and shortcomings of the Muslims to the religion, the enraged Muslims castigate the Western media of partiality, bias and prejudice against Islam. Nevertheless, these Muslims keep continuing those deplorable activities in the name of Islam that earned them this inauspicious reputation.

All Western scholars who judge Islam through the actions and conduct of Muslims can be vindicated as they have seen only what is being presented to them. The onus, therefore, now lies upon the Muslims to prove by their character what they claim. Their rhetoric has to be supported by their actions. If Islam claims to be a religion of peace, then peace has to be established in the Muslim countries.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

MANJI'S BIGGEST OBSTACLE

The opponents of Islam are most irritated and disturbed by the irrefutable fact that the text of the Holy Qur'ān has been completely preserved since it was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} more than 1400 years ago. Furthermore, the reverence attached to the Holy Qur'ān by Muslims, making it the most read book ever, further aggravates Islam's critics who cannot claim this perfection and integrity for their own scriptures. The only available recourse left for them is to prove the Holy Qur'ān to be imperfect, erroneous, historically wrong, contradictory, teaching terrorism and discriminatory amongst sexes and different segments of society. The venture undertaken by Irshad Manji is of this same category. She has spewed her venom against the Holy Qur'ān in a very sarcastic, vilified and blasphemed manner. Her undertaking is not very different from the metaphor of that silly person who was chopping a tree's branch while being seated on it.

In the same manner, promoting the agenda of Islam's critics, Manji is devoting her efforts to make Muslims forsake their Holy Scripture by calling it

contradictory, ambiguous, enigmatic, and blatantly inconsistent, and saying that it is riddled with human biases without offering any evidence from the Holy Qur'ān. According to her, reformation cannot take place without questioning the Holy Qur'ān.

I challenge her to prove any contradiction, inconsistency or ambiguity from the Holy Qur'ān and by the Grace of Allāh; I shall prove to her otherwise. The Holy Qur'ān's amazing scientific facts, incredible fulfilled prophecies and countless other treasures are sufficient to prove that it is the literal word of God.

DOES THE HOLY QUR'ĀN FORBID INDEPENDENT THINKING?

In her book, Manji further alleges that the Holy Qur'ān forbids Muslims to think and ponder independently, but rather imitate the instructions contained therein. If you have gone through anti-Islamic literature, including web sites, and then by your ill fate you happen to read Irshad Manji's book, you will instantly realize (just like instant coffee without milk and sugar has a bitter taste) that she has done nothing but imitate the opponents of Islam without doing any subjective analysis of their rancor against Islam. Quite contrary to her own or borrowed "observation" and inferences, the Holy Qur'ān explicitly stipulates Muslims to contemplate over its

verses. In fact, the Holy Quran states that a sign of true believers are those who study the verses of the Holy Qur'ān using their intellect and mind.

*And those who, when they are reminded of the Signs of their Lord, fall not down thereat deaf and blind”*²⁵

In the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān, and many more like it, the believers in particular and humanity at large are advised to ponder and use the faculty of understanding;

*“Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allāh sends down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth - are indeed Signs for the people who use their understanding.”*²⁶

Abiding by these instructions of the Holy Qur'ān, Muslim theologians, intellectuals, Sufis and scientists discovered the great secrets of this world and evolved a highly praised, social, economical and legal system,

²⁵ The Holy Qur'ān 25:74

²⁶ The Holy Qur'ān 2:165

which was later incorporated by other nations into their own cultural systems. A large number of exegesis and commentaries of the Holy Qur'ān were written centuries ago and are still being written in light of prevalent knowledge. However, with the progress and development of human intellect and expansion of knowledge, many interpretations of the Holy Qur'ān are being reevaluated and either modified, updated or discarded altogether as personal ideas and thoughts of medieval commentators are no longer consistent with modern theories.

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth, the fourth successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, in his astounding book, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* has quoted Dr. Abdul Salam, a Noble Laureate as saying:

“According to Dr. Mohammad Aijazaul Khatib of Damascus University, nothing could emphasize the importance of sciences more than the remark that “in contrast to 250 verses which are legislative, some 750 verses of the Holy Qur'ān --- almost one-eighth of it ----- exhorts the believers to study Nature ----- to reflect, to make the best use of reason and to make the scientific enterprise an integral part of the community's life”. The Holy Prophet of Islam --- - Peace be upon him -----said that it was the

“bounden duty of every Muslim ---- man and woman ---- to acquire knowledge” (Salam, quoted in Ahmad’s Book, 256, 257)

As I have already mentioned, Manji’s arguments, knowledge, and reasoning are very illogical and irrational. The premise and its consequence are self-contradictory, poles apart and have no connection whatsoever with each other. She claims that the Holy Qur’ān requires its followers to blindly imitate its verdicts, and then, completely forgetting what she has written earlier, states,

“[w]ithin a few generations, Baghdad oversaw the closing of something else—the gates of ijtehad and therefore, the tradition of independent thought.” (Manji, 65)

Her statement proves that before this despicable act of Baghdād’s government, the tradition of independent thinking was prevalent amongst the Muslims and the gates of “*ijtehad*” were wide open in those days.

IJTEHĀD

Irshad Manji has raised questions in her book such as *“[w]ho made ijtehad a tradition? Where was it practiced and what did that society look like?”* (Manji, 56)

The answers to these questions, we are educated, can be found in her portrayal of the society of Muslim

Spain (*between 750 and 1250 C.E.*) where the Christians and the Jews were working hand-in-hand with the Muslims. Manji, in her book, tries to make her readers believe that the institution of *ijtehad* was devised, flourished and practiced in Muslim Spain thanks to the Jews and the Christians. Baghdād, the capital of Abbāsīd caliphate and another centre of learning, in spite of having a “*so-called house of learning*”, was no comparison to Cordoba.

To do *ijtehad*, she claims, “*we don't have to be prize-winning intellectuals*”. (Manji, 56) Instead, she feels that *ijtehad* is about openly expressing questions about Islam.

What an understanding! In order to be a politician, financial advisor or any important office-holder affecting the lives of millions, you have to have a certain degree of knowledge, expertise and commitment. But, for Ms. Manji's standards, to do *ijtehad*, all you have to do is to be able to distort and misrepresent. That's it.

So far, we had thought that *ijtehad* means to study, research and find answers about an innovative problem in jurisprudence hitherto not confronted by anyone. But now, according to Ms. Manji, *ijtehad* means openly expressing your questions about Islam. Read between the lines: it's “questioning” Islam, not simply asking questions about Islam.

She has also educated us, by attributing this golden piece of knowledge to one of her agitated and irritated Muslim correspondents, that *ijtehād* is an “*independent*” reasoning and that any Muslim, male or female, straight or gay, young or old can do *ijtehād*. May we ask, independent of what; the Holy Qur’ān, the Sunnah, and the Hadīths? If Manji’s reply is “yes” to all these questions, then this is not *ijtehād*, but the creation of another religion sanctioning unrestricted, promiscuous relationships, which is really what she is up to.

After describing her perception of *ijtehād*, let me define this term according to the Islamic perspective.

The literal meaning of this term is to struggle to find the solution of a new problem never come across by earlier jurists. We find an incidence during the life of the Holy Prophet^{sa} when he dispatched one of his companions, Hadhrat Mu’āz bin Jabal^{ra}, to Yemen as “*Qādhi*” (judge). When he was ready to leave, the Holy Prophet^{sa} asked his opinion on how he would adjudicate as the *Qādhi*. Hadhrat Mu’āz bin Jabal^{ra} replied that he would decide their matters according to the Book of Allāh. The Holy Prophet^{sa} enquired again that what would he do if he did not find any solution therein, upon which he replied that he would find a solution in the Sunnah (Prophetic precedence) of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. The Holy Prophet^{sa} enquired again

what if he did not find anything therein as well, upon which Hadhrat Mu'āz bin Jabal^{ra} replied that he would use his own intellect to decide the matter. This reply gladdened the Holy Prophet^{sa} very much and he thanked God who granted this acumen and insight to the “messenger” of the Messenger of Allāh. (Tirmidhi Kitab al-Ahkam)

Now, it is important to determine which aspects of Islamic faith need *ijtehād* and who is capable of doing it. The main segments of the Islamic creed are:

1. Belief in the basic tenets of Islam, i.e.,

Existence and Unity of God

His Angels

His Revealed Scriptures

His Prophets

His Decree

Day of Resurrection

2. Worship and Prayers

3. Dealings, relationships and interaction with fellow human beings

The first part is the foundation of Islam and is unalterable. There is no dispute or difference of opinion in the Muslim Ummah about these basic tenets of Islamic faith. Every Muslim, to whatever

sect or group he / she belongs, has unconditional and unambiguous belief in this basic tenet.

The second part of the Islamic creed, as mentioned above, concerns worship and prayers. Although slight differences in practice occurs between the various schools of thought, the mode and content of worship and prayers are being practiced without any need of changes.

It is the third part only which is open for and requires *ijtehād*; that is the social, political and economic relationships and interactions of people and nations. With the ever-changing horizons of human interaction, the development of sciences, spread of knowledge and progress in human intellect, the Wise God suggested two basic principles and left humans free to explore the solutions of such innovative problems that earlier people may have never heard about. These two principles are justice and benevolence. These warn people and prohibit them from exploiting their fellow human beings. The two basic values of justice and benevolence have been suggested as the foundation stone of an exploitation-free human society, whatever the political, cultural, social and economic system may be. As the usury tantamount to exploitation and a process of strangulation for any economic society where the poor become poorer and the rich keep becoming richer, this

is strictly prohibited and declared as a war against Allah and His Prophet. For details, see “*Islam’s Response to Contemporary Issues*” by the fourth Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth.

In the political field, democracy dominates the Western world and is being imposed on Third World countries. Islam has no problem with democracy provided it contains the two basic principles of justice and benevolence. The main problem is that a food, which may be quite digestible for a healthy person, is being poked into the stomach of a sick person. Such is the situation in the Third World countries, where dictators are ruling with the façade of democracy and the champions of Western democracy are supporting, encouraging and helping them.

With this brief introduction and background to *ijteḥād*, it is obvious that only an expert in political, social and economic fields, having vast knowledge about these social sciences can come up with an adequate solution to a novel enigma. Although I agree with Manji that the doors of *ijteḥād* should be opened and this lifeline of the Islamic society needs to be revitalized, *ijteḥād* cannot be left at the mercy of immature so-called reformers and quacks to alter or rather destroy the foundations of Islam in the name of *ijteḥād*.

HUMANITY OF THE PROPHET — A MINOR PROBLEM?

In her sarcastic and ridiculed narrative about the Hadīths and the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, Manji has tried to portray, as if it is a heresy in Islam, to believe the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} as being “*eminently human and vulnerable to honest errors of judgment*”. (Manji, 34) As a matter of fact, the humanity of the Holy Prophet^{sa} is a cardinal belief of Islam. The Holy Qur’ān categorically states that the Holy Prophet^{sa} is a human being and not a part of divinity. In fact, his human errors and mistakes are mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān. Moreover, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} mentioned himself as being “*eminently human and vulnerable to honest errors of judgment*” in a Hadith quoted by Imam Bukhari:

“Narrated Umm-e-Salma^{ra}: The Holy Prophet^{sa} said, “I am only a human being, and you people have disputes. Maybe someone amongst you can present his case in a more eloquent and convincing manner than the other, and I give my judgment in his favor according to what I hear. Beware! If ever I give (by error) somebody something of his brother’s right, he should not take it as I have only given him a piece of (Hell) Fire”.

I would also like to point out the inconsistency in Manji's narratives. While accusing the Qur'ān of teaching the Muslims to have blind faith in it, she mentions another source of Islamic faith, Hadīth.

*“It's the same deal with a second source of Islamic theology, the hadiths. These are the “authoritative” reports of what Prophet Muhammad said and did throughout his life. Whatever question the Koran doesn't readily answer — **note the word, “readily”** — the hadiths supposedly do. Over the centuries, they have been gathered and catalogued by **scholars of the highest repute** for our consumption. All we have to do is submit to them (or, more accurately, to the ones that our imams select for us).” (Manji, 34)*

In order to justify her accusation, she has laid emphasis to the word “readily”, by saying, *“note the word, “readily””*. The question arises here that if a Muslim is not analyzing, interpreting and questioning (seeking knowledge, not challenging) the Qur'ān, how on earth will he find out that his “question” has not been **“readily”** answered and as a result, has to resort to another source, namely Hadīth. By resorting to Hadīth proves that the Muslims have explored the verses of the Holy Qur'ān and in order to find

supportive evidence of their interpretation, they turn towards the collections of Ahadīth.

Manji should also add to her meager, distorted and perilously flawed knowledge that the books of Ahadīth are not the haphazard collections of the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Many learned scholars, as she admits by calling them “*scholars of the highest repute*”, spent their lives evaluating the authenticity of each and every Hadith they received.

COMPARISON OF THE HOLY QUR’ĀN WITH THE TALMUD

While praising the Jews for making their debates public (like washing dirty linen in public) and then incorporating them in the Tālmūd, the Muslims are being advised by Manji to also incorporate their debates and commentaries in the Holy Qur’ān. This malicious advice has the hidden motive to eliminate the single and unique distinction of the Holy Qur’ān as being pure and free of any human intervention. Ms. Manji, while presenting this message between the lines, forgot that the Holy Qur’ān is a divinely protected book that no one can meddle with. Secondly, her comparison of the Holy Qur’ān with the Tālmūd is totally inappropriate. The Holy Qur’ān can be compared with the Torah or the Bible, but not with the Tālmūd. This is because both the Holy Qur’ān and

the Torah are claimed to have divine source of origination whereas the Tālmūd is admittedly a human creation. Manji states that the Jews incorporate their debates and commentaries in the Tālmūd. Fine, but they do not add these debates and commentaries in the Tanakh (Jewish Bible containing Torah, Prophets and Writings).

As far as having the belief in the Holy Qur'ān as the final manifesto of God's will, it is important to mention that the Jews and Christians also hold this same view about the Torah and the Bible. The Jews reject the Christian Bible and believe that the Torah is the final manifesto of God's will. Similarly, the Christians also have the same belief about the Bible while rejecting the Qur'ān.

ANTI-SEMITISM — THE HOLY QUR'ĀN OR THE BIBLE?

The conduct of the Holy Qur'ān towards the Jews and the Christians has been criticized by the critics of Islam in the West. A large and influential part of the world including human rights activists, have been provoked into thinking that Islam, out of its jealousy, criticizes and deprecates the Jews and the Christians. The reason why Islam is jealous of these people, whom it calls “the People of the Book”, the critics say, is because the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} had initially thought that these “People of the Book” would soon

accept him as a true Prophet of God and with their help, he could overcome and empower the rest of Arabia. But later, they claim, his dreams were shattered as the Jews and the Christians rejected him. They further argue, that out of his frustration and disappointment, he started castigating them and the moment he assumed full power in Medina, he massacred a Jewish tribe and threw other Jewish tribes out of Medina and then from Arabia.

This scathing argument and allegation against Islam of “anti-Semitism” has not been innovatively articulated by Ms. Manji, but incorporated in her book from earlier sources written against Islam. This further proves our point that Manji’s book, *The Trouble with Islam*, is unoriginal, and has not been written to reform Islam and the Muslims. It is not “*A Wake-Up Call For Honesty And Change*” at all but a malicious attempt to prove Islam unworthy of being adopted as a religion.

After this brief background of the allegations put forward by Manji, whereby the Holy Qur’ān is supposedly spreading hatred towards the Jews and Christians, the truth behind these allegations are discussed below.

At the very inception of the first Islamic state in Medina, a written charter was formulated, keeping in view the diverse and pluralistic society of Medina.

The text of this charter is still available in the annals of history, according to which the Muslims and the Jews of Medina were declared equal citizens of this nascent state, with equal rights and responsibilities, and were called part of one “*Ummah*”. The Islamic *Sharī'ā* (Law) was not arbitrarily imposed on the Jews. Their disputes were settled according to their own religious laws. The Holy Qur'ān respects the Jews, and condemns only those groups who are not observing Judaism. These following verses mention the exalted status of the Jews, in fact, telling them that they are entitled to the kingdom of heaven.

*“Among the People of the Book there is he who, if thou trust him with a treasure, will return it to thee; and among them is he who, if thou trust him with a dinār, will not return it to thee, unless thou keep standing over him. That is because they say, 'We are not liable to be called to account in the matter of the Unlearned people;' and they utter a lie against Allah knowingly.”*²⁷

The Holy Qur'ān refers to the Torah as a book of light, guidance and mercy.

*“Surely, We sent down the Torah wherein was guidance and light.”*²⁸

²⁷ The Holy Qur'ān 3:76

²⁸ The Holy Qur'an 5:45

*“Moreover, We gave Moses the Book - completing the favor upon him who did good, and an explanation of all necessary things, and a guidance and a mercy - that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord.”*²⁹

The accusation that the Holy Qur’ān is “picking” on certain groups of Jews is not something peculiar to the religion of Islam—every new religion establishes its “justification” by pointing out the perceived problems of older established religions. Judaism, according to the Torah, talks of the older religions and other people in horrible terms. We have the story of the Moabites, as a single example. Christianity does the same with Jesus comparing his own people to swine and dogs (Matthew 7:6, 2; Peter 2:22). In fact, the Qur’ānic verses often reflect disputes between Jewish groups. Further, the Qur’ānic warning is not for ALL Jews. It should also be kept in mind that the Holy Qur’ān is not saying something that the Jews did not say about themselves. The Holy Qur’ān was quite familiar with the charges made by Jewish groups against each other.

*“How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.”*³⁰

²⁹ The Holy Qur’an 6:155

³⁰ Jeremiah 8:8

“For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.”³¹

“Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee; yea, I and my father's house have sinned.

We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou didst command, Thy servant Moses.”³²

“Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become as one unclean; all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness; she herself also sigheth, and turneth backward.

Her filthiness was in her skirts, she was not mindful of her end; therefore is she come down wonderfully, she hath no comforter. 'Behold, O

³¹ Deuteronomy 31:29

³² Nehemiah 1:6-7

the Lord, my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself.”³³

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly; they have forsaken the Lord, they have contemned the Holy One of Israel, they are turned away backward.

On what part will ye yet be stricken, seeing ye stray away more and more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;”³⁴

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”³⁵

“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”³⁶

³³ Lamentations 1:8-9

³⁴ Isaiah 1:3-5

³⁵ Matthew 3:7

³⁶ Matthew 11:21

By reading the above verses, how can one be fair and say that admonition by the Holy Qur'ān is anti-Semitic and the Biblical reproach is not, notwithstanding the fact that the Holy Prophet^{sa} of Islam is himself a Semitic?

The Holy Qur'ān, besides fulfilling its role of a well-wisher and sincere guide, extends its hands of cooperation towards “the People of the Book” to create a pluralistic, diverse and tolerant society where the followers of different religions can live peacefully with each other sharing, enjoying and benefiting from the commonalities between their faiths.

*“Say, 'O people of the Book! Come to a word equal between us and you - that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allāh.' But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God' ”*³⁷

³⁷ The Holy Qur'ān 3:65

CHAPTER 5

THE ARABS

ANTI-SEMITIC, NO—ANTI ARAB, YES?

Every person has an intrinsic right to like and dislike anything and Islam confers this right on every individual. Ironically, Ms. Manji claims this right only for herself, for the West and for the Jews, but denies it to the Muslims. If the Holy Qur'ān reprimands the Jews in a similar way as the Prophets of the Bible rebuke and censure the Israelites (mentioned later) for their deviation from the divine laws and for indulging in sinful, temporal activities, Ms. Manji declares the Holy Qur'ān and the Muslims as “anti-Semitic”. On the other hand, she deems herself absolutely free to criticize and condemn the Arabs, who also happen to be Semitics. Can I call you anti-Semitic, Ms. Manji?

ARABS — WARRIORS, NOT ADMINISTRATORS

As mentioned earlier, Manji has such a deeply rooted prejudice and bias against the Arabs that she is not willing to give any due credit to them. Any tolerant and civilized approach towards the Jews by Muslims, such as bestowing them with high positions within Muslim governments--in acknowledgment of their talents, is labeled as the direct consequence of either the Arabs' inability to do the task themselves, or due to their vested interests. The “*ground rule that you*

can't force conversion on fellow people of the Book— Jews and Christians” adopted by “*most Muslim conquerors*”, she claimed, was a “strategic advantage” of “Imperialist Islam” over “Imperialist Christianity” and not in compliance of Islamic teachings of tolerance and pluralism.

It is stated on the authority of “one culture critic” that the Arabs were “warriors, not administrators”. This argument by Irshad Manji and her “culture critic” has no foundations whatsoever. In earlier periods, Arabs had administered and tamed not only their own desert-dweller, self-ruled and fiercely independent brethren, but also the Romans and Persians; the super-powers of that time. Hadhrat Abu Bakr, Hadhrat Umar, Hadhrat Uthman (May Allah be pleased with all of them) and later Muawiyah administered and controlled their vast empires on their own without any help from the people of the Book. So, the bottom line according to Manji is that if there is tolerance, harmony and friendship with non-Muslims, it has to be wicked and malicious, and if there is religious vandalism, it is because of Islam’s ruthless teachings. As they say in Urdu:

چت بھی میری پٹ بھی میری
Chit bhi meri pat bhi meri
Heads I win, Tails you lose

ARAB ARCHITECTURE

While expressing her anger and frustration at the Islamic faith and the Arabs, Manji completely ignores the historical facts and uses only false, distorted and biased pieces of evidence in her support. An example of this is when, by quoting Fareed Zakaria of *NEWSWEEK*, she claims that the influence of Arab architecture in Muslim countries is a sign of Arab imperialism. Keeping in view her distortion and misrepresentation in the case of Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina, we cannot rely on Manji's quotations of other scholars. Once someone is proved a fraud, they no longer have credibility.

I wonder where this Arab architecture has come from. The desert dwellers and even the urban Arabs at the time of the inception of Islam had no knowledge of architecture, let alone having a peculiar Arabian architectural style. According to Dr Linda Komaroff, Associate Curator of Islamic Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Arab art evolved after the conquest of the Byzantium and Sassanid Empires of Rome and Iran respectively, during the Umayyad and Abbasid rules.

They learned architectural design from other nations and used it in their own buildings later. One cannot say that the Alhamra Palace, the Sophia Mosque, the Taj Mahal and other Spanish, Turkish

and Indian buildings have been influenced by Arabian architecture. The mosques in South Asia have visible Indo-Chinese character in them.

If at all, the people of South East Asia and other far-eastern countries ever opted to influence their architecture with Arabian style, what is Manji's problem? We are awake anyway!

What about the modern European architectural fashion visible in the Gulf States? Are these signs of European imperialism?

CHAPTER 6

THE WOMEN

THE WOMEN OUTSIDE ISLAM

A hot topic available to the opponents of Islam to provoke the modern enlightened world against Islam is the status of women in Islam and the behavior of Muslim men with women. Irshad Manji has also used this issue as a human rights problem and collaborated it with the maltreatment of minorities, slaves and of course, the Jews by the Muslims.

The global situation, whether we like it or not, is that men have always assumed some superiority over women, have sought to dominate the world and relegate women to the background. Cultures and civilizations have sought to confer legitimacy to this male superiority and have accordingly developed myths and conventions that tend to perpetuate this notion. Through time, women have consistently, if grudgingly, borne the brunt of this male domination. Such inequities have been a feature of all human societies, from antiquity to our contemporary times.

Religions, especially revealed ones, often intervene to redress such intrinsic imbalances in human relations. Christianity, at least in the form we know it today, did not help matters by blaming a woman (Eve) as the source of the downfall of man.

Instead, it compounded this inequity, and inadvertently gave men a new impetus to relegate women to the background. It, accordingly, denied women even their independent identity, having to dissolve in to that of their husbands' on marriage. Islam, however, dealt with the issue decisively, but ignorance and enduring male arrogance has always connived to deny women what Islam has given them.

The plight of women in the Middle Ages, when Europe was in the full grips of Christianity, is fairly explicable. The Bible seems to have placed the entire blame for the descent of man at the door of the woman. In the popular literature of the Middle Ages, the woman was likened to Satan who worked day and night for the destruction of man. The Church in Europe remained stuck with its misogyny up through the 18th Century when it presided over the famous debate in France on whether a woman had a soul or not. What appeared inexplicable was the continuation of these prejudices well after the renaissance and the weakening of the grip of the Church and the liberalization of thoughts and ideas. It was even more surprising that a whole century after the French revolution of 1789, with its promise for people's rights and democracy, women in the West remained suppressed.

Writing in 1866, George Eliot observed, “A woman can hardly ever choose ... she is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach.” One can feel the sense of frustration in this remark. What is news, however, is not the remark, but the fact that George Eliot is the pen name of an English novelist who was a woman. Mary Ann Evans (1819-80) dared not to use her real name in a society so dominated by men because her works would only be taken seriously if they were to come from a man. She had six years earlier written that, “the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history” in her book, *The Mill on the Floss*, where she “portrayed rural Victorian society, particularly its intellectual hypocrisy”.

The status of women in Judaism can be easily ascertained by this Talmudic prayer which Jewish men recite every morning:

"Blessed Art Thou, O Lord Our G-D, King Of The Universe, Who Has Not Made Me A Woman."

Another description of women in the Talmud sheds more light on the status of women in Judaism:

*A woman is “a pitcher full of filth with its mouth full of blood, yet all run after her.”*³⁸

It is well known that until the 1960s, even Western societies - despite their secularism - had not accorded equal rights to women; in fact, gender equality is still not meticulously practiced in Western societies. The right to inheritance and property was given to women in Western countries in the 1930s. Similarly, in some countries, women got the right to vote only during the 1930s. Women had to struggle a lot in the West for acquiring the rights which Islam had given to them centuries before.

In Western countries, ‘women’s’ issues are heavily debated and many ‘women’s’ organizations are not fully satisfied with ‘women’s’ rights. “Man’s” domination continues in most spheres including the domestic sphere. Men certainly enjoy more privileges, if not rights, in Western countries. Men are still able to resist performing domestic chores and instances of domestic violence are not unknown. Naomi Graetz (Ben Gurion University of the Negev) writes under the title, “Jewish Women Battered”³⁹

JEWISH WOMEN BATTERED

Naomi Graetz writes:

³⁸ Talmud, b Shabbath 152a

³⁹ Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal 1(1982) 2

“The myth of the kind gentle, Jewish husband has been broken down. The evidence that Jewish wife beating exists is strong. Statistics and headlines assail us with facts. ‘One out of six’ or ‘one out of seven’ Israeli women is regularly beaten at home. The estimated minimum figure is 100,000 battered women in Israel (of whom 40,000 end up hospitalized); the maximum number is 200,000 (which includes the Arab population). (Sasha Sadan, “Day of Protest Decries Violence against Women,” Jerusalem Post, November 26, 1993.) It is incontrovertible today, something which was not the case in the mid 70’s, that Jewish awareness of the problem is on the rise - though not enough. The Jewish feminist, who may be alert to the existence of the problem in Israel, may not be aware that a similar problem exists on her own turf. Pick up the Denver newspaper, the Boston Jewish Advocate, The New York Times and you will hear about rabbis’ wives who are beaten by their husbands, surgeon’s wives who stay in abusive marriages for 12-16 years, Kosher shelters and kitchens for Jewish victims of domestic violence in New York City and Boston. The numbers being bandied about in the media vary from 19-25%. The conspiracy of silence is breaking, but

not fast enough...Those sages, past and present, who choose to ignore the distress of battered women, rate the community's interest in family stability and obedience to rabbinic law as being more important than the suffering of the private individual."

The fact is that the patriarchal structure of society is still going strong and one does not know whether it will disappear in the foreseeable future. It is for this reason, excluding a few exceptions, political power rests with men in most countries. Again, in most of the Western countries, the representation of women in legislative bodies hardly exceeds 10 per cent though their population is close to fifty per cent in all societies. Hence, feminists are struggling for equal rights in Western countries too. All one can say is that the condition of women is somewhat better compared to Third World countries or Islamic countries. Although in Western countries, equality of sexes has been established theoretically, it is far from having been achieved in practice.

WHAT ISLAM HAS TO OFFER?

It must first be appreciated that Islam is a religion of balance; balance between the mundane and the spiritual; balance between work and worship; balance between self-preservation and selflessness. This

balance, or *‘Adl* as the Qur’ān calls it, is the very essence of human creation in which the body and spirit are united and balanced. On these shoulders lies the responsibility of the maintenance of the balance in nature, both societal balance as well as the eco-system. Islam, as a religion, seeks first to maintain that balance in man and then guides man to maintain that balance in society and the eco-system, which plays host to human society. The disruption of this balance is what Islam calls injustice, “*dhulm*”. A man who violates the balance between his spirit and his body is called unjust according to the Qur’ān. Similarly, the violation of the balance in human society or the eco-system is seen as an injustice. This explains the Qur’ān’s choice of *‘Adl* to describe that balance because *‘Adl* also means justice, harmony and complementarity. Similarly, in the relations between the two opposite sexes, Islam seeks to ensure *‘Adl*, balance, justice, harmony, and above all, love and mercy. How exactly did Islam go about ensuring this?

At the time of Islam’s advent in the seventh century, human society then (as indeed today) was replete with a variety of societal injustices, claims of superiority of one group over the other and discriminations on the basis of sex, lineage, tribe, race, etc. One of the first things Islam did was to demolish all these artificial barriers in the famous verse:

*“O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; And We have made you tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”*⁴⁰

It is significant that the verse started by rectifying gender discrimination. The message is unmistakably clear, that men and women are equal in the sight of their Creator. The only way one can be better than the other is by being more righteous. But even here, one cannot show off about his *iman* and boast, because luckily, only God, Himself, knows who really is more righteous. As if to pre-empt men’s narrow-mindedness, Allah continued to reinforce this position in several verses of the Holy Qur’ān stressing this equality and balance.

Another Islamic teaching, which was as quick as it was sharp, was in the arrival of the female child. The female sex in seventh century Arabia was a sort of abomination. The mere announcement that a wife had begotten a female child used to evoke anger and disappointment in the husband, and the female child ended up, many a time, being buried alive in the Arabian sand without any remorse, in a society that

⁴⁰ The Holy Qur’ān 49:14

had completely lost its balance and sense of justice. The Holy Qur'ān strongly forbade not only those committing these killings but even those who expressed their displeasure at the birth of a female child. Describing graphically the attitude, the Holy Qur'ān states, “

*“And when to one of them is conveyed the tidings of the birth of a female, his face darkens with inward suppressed grief”*⁴¹

This Qur'ānic description is not limited to the seventh century nomadic and ignorant Arabian Desert, but is present in this age as well, and that too, in the developed nations. This apparent difference felt at the birth of a male and female baby in a Jewish household is described next.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A JEWISH MALE AND FEMALE

In Judaism, the difference between males and females can be seen from as early as the actual birth of the child. When a boy is born a feast is given in his honor on the first Friday after his birth as well as a feast and celebration given on the eighth day (to mark his circumcision) with further celebrations when the child is one month old.

⁴¹ The Holy Qur'ān 16:59

No comparable rituals and feasts are given when a female child is born, apart from her name being announced in the Synagogue the week after her birth with a light *Kiddush* meal given for family and close friends.

A statement that is often quoted from the Talmud is one which highlights the strong desire Jewish people have for sons, with a marked distinction between the joy felt at the birth of a boy from that felt at the birth of a girl:

It's impossible for they're to be a world without males and females. Nevertheless, happy is the man whose children are males, and woe to the man whose children are females.”⁴²

The Holy Qur’ān unequivocally abolished the practice of female infanticide not only by promising a severe penalty on the Day of Judgment but also by instituting the ‘life for life’ injunction in the *Shari’a*. The Holy Prophet^{sa} added a reward to the birth of a female child when he announced to his companions that anybody who was **blessed** with two female children and brought them up very well, with love and kindness, Allah will on that account grant him/her paradise. Of the people listening, some had only one female child and they kept asking the Holy Prophet^{sa} what about one? The Holy Prophet^{sa}, in his characteristic

⁴² <http://piglet.ex.ac.uk/archive/itp3002/gosh.ex.ac.uk/%257Eth96cwr/Women.htm>

condescension, granted that even one daughter could earn them paradise. In another Hadith, the Holy Prophet^{sa} said,

"Whoever has a female child and does not bury her alive, nor holds her in contempt, nor prefers his male child above her, God will make him enter into paradise." ⁴³

The Holy Prophet^{sa} not only said that the search for knowledge was compulsory on every Muslim male but also female. Women alone harbor the womb and carry the heaviest responsibility in child bearing as well as represent the pedestal on which the future of mankind as a whole revolves. To this extent they symbolize the human race, being the custodian of human values, and the conscience of society. If they are left ignorant and backward, so too will remain their off-springs, and if they are educated and advanced, so will the nation. This point has been amply demonstrated by the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio and is today being re-enacted in the Republic of the Sudan, which saw a tremendous transformation only after educating and incorporating the Sudanese women in its struggle for a just society.

We may wish to recall the eagerness with which the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} tried to excel each other in doing good and were always asking the

⁴³ Abu Daud

Holy Prophet^{sa} how they could increase their deeds and become more righteous. In one of these inquiries, the Holy Prophet^{sa}, as if to summarize the situation, informed them that the best among them is actually the one who is best to his family⁴⁴. This is a very profound position not only in seventh century Arabia where wives were no more than chattels, but even today when they appear to be the least of men's worries. By making the state of wives the very measure of the quality of men, Islam, more than any other religion or ideology, has placed women in a pedestal, which guarantees their happiness and welfare. **If wives of Muslim men are not the happiest of wives, it is not because of Islam, it is in spite of it.**

We are all too aware of the companion who came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} telling him that he was rich and in a position to help and be kind to people and he wanted the Holy Prophet^{sa} to tell him, of the people on earth, who deserved his benevolence the most. The Holy Prophet^{sa} in this well known Hadith replied to the man, "your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Holy Prophet^{sa} repeated, "Your mother." The man continued to ask, "Then who?" The Holy Prophet^{sa} repeated for the third time, "your mother" before saying "your father", in the fourth instance.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibn -e-Maja Kitab al-Nikah Chapter: Good Treatment with Women

⁴⁵ Bukhari Kitab al-Adab

This special position of the mother had been preceded by verses of the Holy Qur'ān and supplemented by other statements of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. In the words of the Holy Qur'ān,

*“And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents - his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years - and said, 'Give thanks to Me and thy parents. Unto Me is the final return.’”*⁴⁶

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand why the Holy Prophet^{sa} said, *"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers"*⁴⁷

So, as a child, as a wife and as a mother, Islam has given a woman such a special and distinguished position that no other culture or civilization has given her.

The truth is, that demands of equal rights hurt male ego. Male domination is not at all Islamic, though it is justified in its name. Uninformed men use some selective verses from the Holy Qur'ān, ignoring their social context and using them to perpetuate their domination. They conveniently ignore the verses that empower women or those that lay down equality of both the sexes. In fact, in verses like 2:229 and 33:36, there are clear injunctions concerning the equality of

⁴⁶ The Holy Qur'ān 31:15

⁴⁷ Muslim

the sexes. Yet, at times, these verses are totally ignored by these men and instead they quote verses like 4:35 to establish their domination. They even distort the meaning of words like *qawwam* used in the above verse to retain their hegemony.

It is not Islam, but the attitude of men that denies women their rights. In various Islamic countries, the name of Islam is invoked to stem the tide of women's movements for better rights calling them Western feminism.

Some Muslim countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh had or have women as prime ministers and some Muslim countries like Kuwait do not even accord women the right to vote. Such gross contradictions are really difficult to gloss over in the name of Islam. It all depends either on the social condition of that country or even on political exigencies.

The Taliban, who were essentially following tribal norms, justified their female repression in the name of Islam. They did not even allow women to go to schools and the madrassas, totally ignoring the famous Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{sa} that seeking knowledge is obligatory for both Muslim men and Muslim women (*muslimah*). The Holy Prophet^{sa} separately mentioned *Muslimah* keeping in mind that soon after him, Muslim men would restrict women

from acquiring knowledge. The Holy Prophet^{sa} used the word علم *ilm*”, which includes both religious as well as secular knowledge.

WOMEN ARE YOUR FIELDS

“In the light of the raped woman in Nigeria, one more passage from the Koran bowled me over. “Women are your fields,” it says, “Go, then, into your fields when you please. Do good works and fear God.” Huh? Go into women when you please, yet do good? Are women partners or property?” (Manji, 38)

“What about the words, “when you please”? Doesn’t that qualifier give men undue power? The question remains: Which paradigm does Allah advocate – Adam and Eve as equals, or women as land to be plowed (excuse me, stroked) on a whim?” (Manji ,39)

First of all, “when you please” is not an unbridled and unrestricted qualifier. Besides certain other social and domestic restrictions and observances, men are prohibited to go unto their wives during their menstruation periods. It should be noted that in contrast to Judaism and Christianity, the Holy Qur’ān doesn’t declare women “impure” or “unclean” during menstruation periods but terms that period as of pain and prohibits men not to further increase their pain by

requiring them to have sex with them. Quite contrary to Islam's benign and caring teaching regarding women, Judaism and Christianity regards women in menstruation as a loathsome creature.

Jewish laws and regulations concerning menstruating women are extremely restrictive. The Old Testament considers any menstruating woman as unclean and impure. Moreover, her impurity "infects" others as well. Anyone or anything she touches becomes unclean for a day:

"When a woman has her regular flow of blood the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening" ⁴⁸

Due to her "contaminating" nature, a menstruating woman was sometimes "banished" in order to avoid any possibility of contact with her. She was sent to a

⁴⁸ Lev. 15:19-23

special house called "*the house of uncleanness*" for the whole period of her impurity.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the husband of a menstruating woman was forbidden to enter the synagogue if he had been made unclean by even the dust under her feet. A priest whose wife, daughter, or mother was menstruating could not recite priestly blessing in the synagogue. (Ibid., p-138) No wonder many Jewish women still refer to menstruation as "the curse."⁵⁰

As mentioned above, Islam does not consider a menstruating woman to possess any kind of "contagious uncleanness". She is neither "untouchable" nor "cursed." She practices her normal life with only one restriction: a married couple is not allowed to have sexual intercourse during the period of menstruation. Any other physical contact between them is permissible. A menstruating woman is exempted from some rituals such as daily prayers and fasting during her period.

Secondly, sexual desire is like appetite for food. It is fulfilled when someone feels that desire to be fulfilled. When a man comes back from work and he is hungry, if he asks his wife to give him food, according to Ms. Manji, she should refuse to give him

⁴⁹ Women in Judaism: the Status of Women in Formative Judaism by Leonard J. Swidler Metuchen, N.J. Scarecrow Press, 1976 – P-137

⁵⁰ Judaism and the New Woman by Sally Priesand – New York: Behrman House Inc., 1975 P-24

food on the pretext of male superiority. He should be reminded that food shall be served to him only when she feels hungry, not him; otherwise, it will be a breach of equality between men and women.

This scenario can be expanded to all walks of life wherever cooperation between two individuals is required for the smooth running of society. If every one adopts this Irshad Manji attitude, agitating against “*when you please*” provision, society will come to a stagnant halt.

The other side of this scenario is if a woman has a desire of sleeping with her husband, should her husband refuse on the mere pretext of female superiority or male subjugation by women? The ultimate solution of this problem is to create understanding between spouses. One has the responsibility to take care of the emotions and sentiments of the other partner. The Holy Qur’ān expresses this relationship with a very beautiful and comprehensive analogy. Allah says:

*“They are a sort of garment for you and you are a sort of garment for them.”*⁵¹

Thus, man and woman both complement each other. They need to understand and honor each other’s status. This is what Islam teaches.

⁵¹ The Holy Qur’ān 2:188

SEGREGATION OF SEXES IN MOSQUES

It is ironic that Irshad Manji is furious over the segregation of sexes in mosques, despite the fact that she is an out of the closet lesbian denying a “relationship” with men. She has virtually segregated herself from the opposite sex.

It is important to mention here that the segregation of sexes in mosques is a preventive measure both for men and women. If women stand beside men during the prayer, both cannot maintain their concentration on prayer. Arousing of carnal desires and sensual feelings is nothing but natural and unavoidable in such situations. It should be kept in mind that during prayer our body and spirit has to be in unison and in complete harmony with each other, spirit being the leader in this situation. It is a strong mean of fostering relationship with God. However, a mere touch or glance towards a female during prayer can easily disrupt this concentration.

During the times of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, men and women used to worship in the same place with women in the back rows. However, separating or segregating does not necessarily mean putting women in an inferior position, as making separate wash rooms for men and women in public places make neither of them inferior to the other. The only purpose of this

Islamic teaching is to keep the sentiments and intentions clean and pure of any carnal desire and to fully concentrate on prayer.

Invariably, Manji proves herself contradictory by mentioning in her book the environment of Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock where women were praying beside the men in the same hall without any “*physical wall*” between men and women. (Manji, 88)

Another testimony that women and men can pray in the same hall at the same time is as under:

“Babar Yasin, one of the Berkeley mosque leaders, said that the reason to segregate the sexes was that mostly the women are not comfortable praying with the men. But he said that some of the younger Muslim women had said they wanted to be allowed to pray in the main hall, behind the men. He said the mosque leadership would permit that.

In the late 1990's, Mr. Amanullah and his wife, Hina Azam, traveled to two of the world's most famous mosques: the Azhar Mosque in Cairo's old city, and the Qayrawiyin in Fez, Morocco. Ms. Azam, a doctoral student studying classical Islamic law at Duke University, said that in these mosques women and men prayed in a single unbroken space. In Fez, she said, "We prayed

within two feet of each other. There was a woman in front of us and a man behind us. I thought, O.K., that's odd. Then the imam walked by and I thought, 'We're busted.' But all he said was 'Welcome, I haven't seen you here before. Let me show you around the mosque.'”⁵²

MEN ARE GUARDIANS OVER WOMEN

In the Islamic system, marriage is a covenant of a civil nature involving a whole set of mutual obligations. For its validity, it requires the public announcement of the free consent of the parties, the consent of the guardian of the bride, whose duty it is to ensure and safeguard the rights of the bride, and a settlement by the husband on the wife, proportionate to his means, which is called dower. Husbands and wives have reciprocal obligations towards each other, but on account of physical weakness and the delicacy of women and their vulnerability living in a patriarchal society, men are appointed guardians over women. The Holy Qur’ān states:

“Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because men spend on them of their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient, and guard the

⁵² By Laurie Goodstein, New York Times, July 22, 2004
<http://www.masnet.org/articleinterest.asp?id=1446>

*secrets of their husbands with Allah's protection. And as for those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and keep away from them in their beds and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is High and Great.”*⁵³

The apparent meaning of “guardian over women” is that men are physically stronger than women and they are responsible for their care. Secondly, being guardian means to bear the expenses of women. Those who live on their wives’ income are certainly not their guardians. In the last part of this verse it has been stated that if you assume the position of guardian and still your wife shows rebelliousness, even then you are not allowed to punish her physically. If the wife is persistently recalcitrant so that the peace and harmony of the household are put in jeopardy, the husband should admonish her. Should that prove unavailing, he may temporarily withdraw from the marital bed. This second step is a punishment for the husband rather than his wife as he has failed to convince her through dialogue. In the last resort he may have to resort to light chastisement without leaving a mark. Many ignorant Muslims take disadvantage of this verse and beat their wives. As a matter of fact, if they fulfill the first two conditions, it may happen that they wouldn’t

⁵³ The Holy Qur’ān 4:35

have to resort to the third step. However, the life of Holy Prophet^{sa} is the best example for us and we know that sometimes his wives enraged him and presented inappropriate demands, but he never laid a hand on them. The Arabic word “*Zauj*” does not necessarily mean husband or wife, but rather means partner.

See Irshad Manji! Women are our partners, not properties.

HALF TESTIMONY OF WOMEN

Male superiority and chauvinism is responsible for the wrong and mistaken interpretation of the verse of the Holy Qur’ān where it has been advised that if you do not find two men as witnesses, get a man and two women as witnesses. A little more attentive study of the verse will reveal the true nature of this matter. First of all, this verse deals with and is restricted to financial matters only. Still, the witness of one woman shall suffice until and unless she forgets something. If one woman doesn’t forget and states the transaction correctly, there shall be no need to call the other woman as witness.

WHO WAS FIRST — ADAM OR EVE?

Besides criticizing Islam on social and political aspects, Irshad Manji has also churned in the scientific

field. While mentioning the Biblical theory of Genesis in her book, she has slanderously termed the Holy Qur'ān as being “dead silent” on this issue. (Manji, 37) I would like to assure her that the Holy Qur'ān is a living book. It is not “dead silent”, and instead, provides life to the dead.

Regarding the most mysterious and complex matter of origin of life on this planet, which has perplexed the scientists for a long time, the Holy Qur'ān provides an astounding view that is verified by modern science. It is now common knowledge that the Biblical theory of the origins of life on this earth has been totally rejected as being unscientific. According to the Bible, the earth was created seven thousand years ago whereas scientific evidence has proved beyond any doubt that the earth was created billions of years ago.

The Holy Qur'ān supports the modern scientific discoveries about the creation of the universe and beginning of life on earth. Furthermore, the Holy Qur'ān describes different stages of evolution of life and the life cycle on earth.

DIFFERENT STAGES OF CREATION

The process of creation, as mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān, started with the divine utterance of a single word كن i.e. “be”. That is why, probably, we call it

“universe”. This procedure described by the Holy Qur’ān has been authenticated by different scientists without knowing that the origin of their theories are in the Holy Qur’ān.

The Holy Qur’ān describes this creative process as beginning with blasts of fire which created germs (jinn). When these collected in the ocean, a primordial soup resulted. When the ocean slapped against rocks, silica and clay added to the solution which, when it dried, resulted in dry ring clay containing amino acids. This clay underwent various cycles of development and, as supported by modern scientific theory, resulted in creation of life through sperm.

“O people, if you are in doubt concerning the Resurrection, then consider that We have indeed created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from clotted blood, then from a lump of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We make Our power manifest to you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term; then We bring you forth as babes; then We rear you that you may attain to your age of full strength. And there are some of you who are caused to die in the normal course, and there are others among you are kept back till the worst part of life with the result that they know nothing after having had knowledge.

*And thou sees the earth lifeless, but when We send down water thereon it stirs and swells and grows every kind of beauteous vegetation.”*⁵⁴

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth, the fourth successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, in his marvelous book, *Revelation, Rationality Knowledge and Truth*, within the chapter, “The Origin of Life,” has elaborated on this subject in detail presenting the Qur’ānic theory about the beginning of life on earth. The Islamic viewpoint about the origin of life is a beautiful and logical blend of evolutionist and creationist theories.

STONING

Irshad Manji, in her sinister campaign against Islam and in the name of reformation, has criticized the punishment of stoning allegedly prescribed by Islam for adultery. As you are aware that fake allegations have no sound footings, similarly, Irshad Manji’s demeaning portrayal of Islam is hanging without resting on solid ground.

You remember she taunted the Muslims that Islam is a gift from the Jews to us. So all the merits, if any, and all the demerits, abundantly – believe her, of Islam should have been the gifts of Jews. But ironically, she attributes the beauties of Islam to Judaism and the so-called vices of Islam to the Arabs.

⁵⁴ The Holy Qur’ān 22:6

I would like to remind her that medieval tribal customs, savage warfare, the beheading of enemies, slavery, and the secondary position of women were all the characteristics of our scriptural ancestors who happened to be the Jews. Blaming the Muslims for all the dark-aged, ruthless characteristics reminds me of an interesting anecdote from the collection of Aesop's fables;

Once upon a time a wolf was lapping at a spring on a hillside when, looking up, what should he see but a lamb just beginning to drink a little further down. "There's my supper," thought he, "if only I can find some excuse to seize it." Then he called out to the Lamb, "How dare you muddle the water from which I am drinking?" — "Nay, master, nay," said the Lamb, "if the water be muddy up there, I cannot be the cause of it, for it runs down from you to me." "Well, then," said the Wolf, "why did you call me bad names this time last year?" "That cannot be," said the Lamb; "I am only six months old." "I don't care," snarled the Wolf; "if it was not you it was your father;" and with that he rushed upon the poor little Lamb and ate her all up. But before she died, she gasped out loud, "Any excuse will serve a tyrant."

So, the water is coming down to us from the upstream. We are nothing but the inheritors of all those traditions and precedents set before us by our Jewish and Christian predecessors.

As far as Manji's criticism of stoning in Islam is concerned, it is as baseless as the rest of her accusations. It is proved beyond any doubt that this punishment was an integral part of Jewish law, which was also practiced by the Christian clergy. Though practiced by the Muslims in their early period for some time, stoning was later abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān and replaced with the punishment of lashes with certain reductions. Before quoting Islamic teachings and elucidating the punishment suggested by the Holy Qur'ān, let's see some proofs of stoning in Judaism and Christianity.

*“If a man commits adultery with another man's wife - with the wife of his neighbor - both adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”*⁵⁵

*“In the Old Testament of the Bible, stoning is specifically prescribed as the method of execution for a whole range of crimes.”*⁵⁶

“If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the

⁵⁵ Leviticus 20:10

⁵⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoning>

*woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of the town AND STONE THEM TO DEATH – the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you.”*⁵⁷

Catholic Encyclopedia: Stoning in Scripture

“Palestine being a very rocky country, the abundance of stones made it natural to use them as missiles. Stone throwing might be merely a mark of hatred and contempt (II Kings 16:6-13), or the means of carrying out murderous intentions against which provision had to be made in the Law (Exodus 21:18, Numbers 35:17). Stoning to death, which was at first an expression of popular fury analogous to "lynching", later came to be a natural and legally recognized method of execution. It was thus regulated by law as an appointed means of capital punishment (Deuteronomy 17:5-7; Acts 7:58). Death by stoning is prescribed in the Pentateuch as the penalty for eighteen different

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 22:22-24

crimes including Sabbath-breaking, but for one crime only -- murder -- is it the penalty prescribed in all the codes. The execution of the criminal usually took place outside the city walls, and according to Deuteronomy 17:7, the witnesses in the case were to cast the first stone: "Thou shalt bring forth the man or the woman, who have committed that most wicked thing, to the gates of thy city, and they shall be stoned. By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die who is to be slain.... The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to kill him, and afterwards the hands of the rest of the people". (Deuteronomy 17:5-7). Stoning is also mentioned in Acts 7:57-58, as the means by which Stephen the first Christian martyr was put to death: "And casting him forth without the city, they stoned him." ⁵⁸

I have taken the following excerpt, which sheds light on this issue, from the five-volume commentary of the Holy Qur'ān, originally written by Hadhrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad^{fa}, the second successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and later translated under the auspices of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. It is stated:

⁵⁸ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14308a.htm>

‘The punishment prescribed for adultery is a hundred stripes, no distinctions having been made whether the guilty persons are married or unmarried or one of the parties is married and the other unmarried. Thus, flogging and not stoning to death is the punishment prescribed by Islam for adultery or fornication. Nowhere in the Holy Qur’ān has stoning to death been laid down as punishment for adultery and for that matter for any other crime, however serious. Elsewhere in the Holy Qur’ān where punishment for adultery for a married slave-girl is mentioned (4:26), it is clearly stated that she will get half the punishment prescribed for that of a free, married woman; and evidently the punishment of stoning to death cannot be halved.’

In spite of the fact that the Holy Qur’ān has quite clearly and unequivocally laid down flogging as the punishment for adultery, it has made no discrimination between a married or an unmarried culprit in the matter of awarding punishment. Further-more, it is interesting to note that the relevant verses were revealed in connection with slander-mongering about Ai’sha, the Holy Prophet^{sa}’s noble consort, who herself was a married lady. Despite these facts, it is curious that the misconception has persisted without any justification or linguistic authority among certain

schools of Muslim religious thought that the verse of Chapter (*Sura*) *Al-Noor* deals with punishment for the unmarried only and that punishment for a married adulterer and adulteress is stoning to death. This misconception seems to be due to a few cases recorded in the Hadith when those who were married and were guilty of adultery were stoned to death by the orders of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. One of these few cases was that of a Jew and Jewess who were stoned to death in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Bukhāri). It was invariably the Holy Prophet^{sa}'s practice that he abided by the Law of the Torah in deciding cases till a new commandment was revealed to him. In one or two cases on record in which the punishment accorded was stoning to death, it has not been established whether the crime was committed before or after the verse of Chapter *Al-Noor* was revealed.

*Narrated Ash-Shaibani: I asked Abdullah bin Abi Aufa about the Rajm (stoning somebody to death for committing adultery). He replied, "The Prophet carried out the penalty of Rajm." I asked, "Was that before or after the revelation of Surat-an-Noor?" He replied, "I do not know."*⁵⁹

It seems that in cases, in which the guilty person was stoned to death, the crime was committed before the

⁵⁹ Sahīh Al-Bukhāri

revelation of the relevant verses but by some miscalculation on the part of some chronicler, it was believed to have taken place after. There is no shortage of such historical anachronisms in the books of Hadith. Or there might have been some other aggravating circumstances, besides the crime of adultery, why the Holy Prophet^{sa} gave the guilty person or persons the extreme punishment of death, which the chronicler of the incident failed to take into account. Otherwise, it is simply inconceivable that the Holy Prophet^{sa} should have contravened the quite clear and unequivocal Divine commandment in this respect.

Another possible cause for misunderstanding about the form of punishment for adultery may be a saying attributed to Caliph Umar. He is reported to have said: “There was a verse in the Book of God about *Rajm*. We read it, we understood it and we remembered it. The Holy Prophet^{sa} stoned adulterers to death and we also stoned after him. Were it not that people might say that Umar had added in the Book of God what was not in it, I would have written it down.” (Kashf al-Ghumma vol-2 p-111) The whole Hadith seems to be a pure fabrication or at best, the result of misunderstanding or distorting what Umar might actually have said. How, by writing down in the Holy Qur’ān what was a part of it, could it be called an addition to it and how, of all men, could Umar have

been afraid of anybody for doing the right thing, least of all for restoring to the Holy Qur'ān a lost text? It is impossible to attribute such confused thinking and irresponsible talk to a man of Umar's intellectual and moral caliber and stature. If the saying were to be taken at its face value, the whole claim of the Holy Qur'ān that it enjoys perpetual Divine protection and therefore is quite free from human interference falls to the ground.

Hadhrat Alī^{ra} seems to hold quite a different view from that of Hadhrat Umar^{ra} regarding this very important religious question. After flogging a woman who had committed adultery and then stoning her to death, it is reported,

*Narrated As-Sha'bi from Alī when the latter stoned a lady to death on a Friday, Alī said, "I have lashed her according to the Book of God and stoned her according to the tradition of Allāh's Apostle."*⁶⁰

From this Hadīth, two inferences clearly emerge:

In the matter of punishing an adulterer or adulteress, the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} was at variance with the commandment of God as laid down in the Holy Qur'ān, which is impossible. Whereas according to Hadhrat Umar^{ra} there was a

⁶⁰ Sahih Al- Bukhārī

commandment in the Book of God about stoning to death of an adulterer, according to Ali there was no such commandment, it was only the practice of the Holy Prophet^{sa} according to which he stoned to death persons guilty of adultery. It is impossible to reconcile the views of these two great leaders of Islam and equally impossible to believe that they held diametrically opposed views regarding an important issue in religion. It is indeed very surprising that in the face of quite clear, unambiguous and unequivocal Divine commandments, the view should have been held, by Umar and Ali, or by any Islamic school of thought, that Islam has prescribed stoning to death as a punishment for an adulterer. The Qur'ān rejected this view as wholly untenable. Somewhere, some misunderstanding must have occurred on the part of a chronicler or narrator of the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, which has caused all this confusion.

EPILOGUE—THE CHALLENGE

The biggest challenge staring us, the Muslims, in the face in this modern world is to root out the causes that help the thorny bushes grow and inflict scars on the otherwise pure and spotless face of Islam. A major part of this task starts from within the community, which is the reformation of the Muslims. The message of Islam is perfectly suitable to all the times and situations. It has intrinsic characteristics of adaptation to any situation and circumstances.

However, we, the bearers of this lofty religion are so rigid and stubborn that we do not allow even our own fellow Muslims to explore the possibilities within, to prove that Islam can very well cope with the modern requirements. We are being dragged back into history and medieval thoughts are being imposed upon us in the name of Islam.

But, we should not be disappointed. Those stalwarts who started using their intellect independently in the first few centuries of the Islamic era had to make their way through such rugged and sharp-edged, scholastic terrains and had to suffer the same kind of persecution and resistance. Hadhrat Imam Abu Hanīfath freed himself from the intellectual bondage of his predecessors and was labeled by his

contemporaries as the “follower of his own opinion”. He uttered a golden statement comparing himself with his predecessors that

هم رجالٌ و نحن رجال
“Hum Rijalun—wa Nahno Rijal”
(they were men and we are men).

Following this golden principle of Hadhrat Imam Abu Hanīfath, our task is to liberate our fellow Muslims from this intellectual servitude and scholastic bondage and to unite them under the banner of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

This apparently insurmountable goal cannot be achieved unless all of us join hands on the hands of a divine *Imam* and *Khalīfa* appointed by Allāh in this age for our salvation. Only a united effort can effectively fight back the attacks on Islam and prove the supremacy of Islam over all other creeds and philosophies.

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