

and in their mind. With these immensely valuable assets the Muslims should march ahead with the eloquent character of a Da'ee Ilah and share the common heritage of science and technology from the seats of learning of Europe and America.

The Muslims have to work in both directions - learning what they are missing and transferring what they possess, the Guidance from our common Creator, Allah, the Merciful, the Sustainer. Our forefathers failed to do this job. Let us do it with utmost devotion and dedication which this cause demands and present a true model of Islam to the scientific and highly industrialized world of Europe and America. This is the only way through which we can obtain the benefits of the Modern Age and get rid of its vices. this is the Only way to make the Islam acceptable to the West as an alternate way of life and encounter the anti Islam propaganda which is currently echoing in the Western media. If Muslims fail to take this giant step, then only Allah knows the quantum of ignominy still lying ahead for them.

\* \* \*

## قرآن مجید کو سمجھ کر پڑھنا چاہئے

سمجھ کر پڑھنے کی اتنی تاکید کے باوجود مسلمان صرف بے سمجھے پڑھنے کو کافی سمجھتے گئے ہیں۔ معلوم نہیں کس زمانہ میں مسلمانوں میں یہ خیال پیدا ہوا کہ قرآن کا مطلب سمجھے بغیر صرف ”شین قاف“ درست کر کے پڑھنے کا نام ترتیل ہے۔ خصوصاً لڑکیوں کی تعلیم تو اسی پر ختم ہو جاتی ہے کہ انہیں قرآن مجید ناظرہ پڑھا دیا جائے۔ باوجودیکہ ہر مسلمان کو قرآن حکیم سے اتنی محبت ہے کہ وہ اس پر جان تک دینے کو تیار ہے، مگر ہمارے غفلت ماب استادوں نے ہماری ذہنیت کو تباہ کر دیا۔ آج کلام الہی کو بے سمجھے پڑھنے کا مادہ جتنا مسلمانوں میں ہے کسی میں نہیں۔ افسوس ہے کہ یہ استعداد والی قوم برباد ہو رہی ہے۔ اس کا نتیجہ یہ ہے کہ اس میں انقلابی روح فنا ہو رہی ہے۔

مولانا عبید اللہ سندھی  
(بکریہ انکار معلم لاہور)

(b) Secondly, they must establish democratic institutions in their respective countries and end the confrontation with their own people.

If the Muslim Ummah acts upon these two proposals, it can easily spare and allocate the required funds for R & D and the education of the Muslim masses within a few years time. If we can achieve this, only then will the 21st century be the century of Islam. The Muslims will then be the leaders of the post modern and post Bosnian world. They themselves will then emerge as the supranation (Millah) with a consolidated force and the resources of more than 50 Muslim countries, a population of about 1.5 billion people (by the turn of this century) and a giant common market of their own.

### Conclusion:

In fact the Modern Age is a blessing in disguise and a challenge to our ingenuity. It is the Muslim's lost heritage. We have to take it back and share its bounties with love and affection for those who now hold it. The Muslims must appreciate the enormous contribution which Europe and America have made to our common heritage during the last 400 years. Simultaneously, it is our obligation to tell them where and how they deviated from the path of righteousness. This was through no fault of their own but due to the incompetence of the Church to inspire and encourage the scientists and appreciate their efforts, rather than condemn them as blasphemists. This caused them to run away from religion, revolt against Church, and opened the road to secularism.

Now what Christianity could not provide, the Muslims have to bring to Europe and America. The Muslims in general and particularly those living in the West have to meet this challenge of the modern age with the Qur'an in their right hand, the banner of love and affection in the left, the thirst of knowledge and the good of mankind at heart

and must undertake this onerous task as a mission of their life, if they are really sincere to serve the Muslim Ummah and take it out of its present quagmire.

(v) This gigantic task requires a tremendous amount of manpower and financial resources. As regards, the manpower, the Muslim world has it even today. It is scattered all over the Muslim and non-Muslim world of Europe and America. That will never be a problem. The only thing we need are financial resources. Mr. Clinton has earmarked \$70 billions dollars for research and Development for the next five years in the government sector alone. This shows the importance which the West is giving to R & D. The Muslims must give the equal emphasis, if not more. The Muslims must allocate at least 20 to 25 percent of their national income for Research and Development and the spread of education on mass level, if they are to secure the position as the "Best of the Nations" which Allah has assigned to them. It may appear to be too much but compared to the back-log, it is nothing if we can make it.

(vi) Securing such a huge fund will be a problem for Muslims countries in the present context of the world, when they are divided and not seeing eye to eye with each other. The position of securing foreign loans is equally tight and conditional. It would be available only with many disgusting and humiliating strings attached to it. As such it would be no good for the Muslim Ummah. Therefore, the only way through which such huge funds can be arranged or raised would be by cutting their defense budgets to the bare minimum i.e. only one percent or less of the G.N.P This would be possible only:

(a) If the Muslim world solemnly declares that they will resolve their inter-state issues and problems through arbitration among themselves.

people may try whole of their life and get nothing from their efforts. It was the blessing of Allah that some scientists, some discoverers, some explorers achieved what they were trying whereas there were many who did not succeed despite their best efforts. It should be made clear that Allah reveals the secrets that fit in the overall planning and control of this cosmos and reveals only what He wants to reveal.

"\_\_\_\_\_ While they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will \_\_\_\_\_"

(The Qur'an, 2 : 255)

The Muslims must understand clearly that the campaign of learning science and technology and removing the fallacies of the thinking process of the West must go together. There is every possibility that Islam may turn many contemporary scientists to the fold of Allah, if they are convinced of their shortcomings, which are based on arrogance and ignorance of man's position on earth. This could have been accomplished by Christianity but it failed to deliver a perfect code of life to the European societies when they were transforming themselves into nation states and developing a secular attitude of life which has nothing to offer. Now the Muslims should do this job. Winning over the scientists from the secular world will be a great boon to the Muslim Ummah.

(iv) To achieve the desired objective, the Muslims have to inspire their youth, especially those who are living and studying in Europe and America, to undertake this as the paramount mission of their life. They will have to become prominent in the societies where they are living as effective Da'ees and brilliant students on their campuses, in their respective fields. Only then will they command respect wherever they will go and be able to do the aforesaid jobs with ease and with blessings from Allah whose favour will always be with them. The Muslim leadership and the political activists in the West, especially in America, should

(i) Muslims have neglected the pursuit of knowledge and scientific investigation for the last 500 years. They should do it now without further delay in right earnest. They should add the outcome of their own research to the edifice of Europe and America as these civilizations did on the foundation laid down by Muslims. Islam permits, rather exhorts, the Muslims to do this as an obligation from Allah. Whatever the West has added in these fields is an asset for mankind and the Muslims must inherit it by all means.

(ii) For this, we have to view the universe as the Creation of Allah and start thinking over its chemistry with trust in Him. If the Muslims start probing nature and its manifestation, Allah may pave the way for discoveries which even the West could not dream of so far. This is Allah's world. He may reward the Muslims in a way He likes best for us. Allah (SWT) loves the Allah conscious Muslims (*Muttaqeen*). Only then will Muslims excel in the art of science and technology. The Muslims have to create their own post-Modern age with stunning discoveries and inventions and it will be very easy for Allah to let us accomplish it.

(iii) The Muslims must, simultaneously, launch upon a campaign to pinpoint the fallacies of the thinking process of Europe and America, that what they have discovered so far as the laws of nature are the Taqdeer (design) of the objects, along which they were created by Allah. That they can only discover those laws but not make them. The entire credit must go to the Supreme authority of Allah who created the objects and destined them to do or follow what they are meticulously doing to the service of human beings.

"(Moses) Said (to Pharaoh): Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright."

(*The Qur'an*, 20 : 50)

Furthermore, whatever the West has discovered so far, was through the infinite mercy of Allah, without which

Europe within a few months time. The Ottoman Empire refused to build big ships for the safety of its Gulf coast. As a result, the Britishers came and captured Iraq, Yemen and other areas of the region in the South. European navy dominated the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, thereby surrounding the Caliphate from all sea approaches. No one could forestall the downfall of the ottoman Empire. It was inevitable. The ultimate fall came in 1924.

Muslims did little or nothing to obtain the knowledge of science and technology from Europe as the lost wisdom of their ancestors and add glorious chapters to it by dint of their labor, struggle, researches, discoveries as Europe did in the four centuries following the Renaissance. Muslims simply became camp-followers of Europe and lost everything they once had land, honor, prestige, resources and the future too.

## **(B) WHAT MUSLIMS SHOULD DO NOW**

The Muslims of today have a great responsibility on their shoulders. The World is not going to wait for them. progress, scientific inventions and far reaching discoveries will ever continue to stun the world. In the midst of strong competition and ever-increasing interference in the internal affairs of the Muslim world by the Euro-American Powers, we have to carve a way out of this difficult and tense situation. We have to take some strong and firm steps and change our thinking process with open mindedness. The Modern Age is neither all bad nor all good. So we have to pick what is good and discard what is bad. We must be very selective. The Modern Age is a reality. Let us have a realistic approach in accepting what it offers to us. Muslims in fact are going to face a Post-Modern-Age era by the end of this or early next century. We must take the following steps to rejuvenate the fate of the Muslim Ummah in the shortest possible time.

## Contribution of Muslims to Knowledge:

This repeated invitation by Allah in the Qur'an exhorted Muslims to make nature and its manifestation topics of their study and contemplation. It is the blessing of Allah that He made this cosmos for us and invited mankind to discover the secrets of each and every object that it contains. Muslims undertook this onerous task and made very important contributions to human civilization from the seventh to the fifteenth century A.D. in different fields of life through scientific probes and experiments. Muslims provided the edifice on which Europe made its glorious scientific inventions and discoveries later on.

## The Failure of Muslims:

Muslim kings, rulers, scholars and men of literature should have continued the pursuit of knowledge and discoveries but they neglected this task altogether. As a result they lost ground to the rising European powers. At the very best, Muslims could have studied the reasons and the secrets of European progress and their conquest after conquest of the Muslim world but they did nothing. The cause of Europe's dominance in Asia and Africa was nothing but the educational, scientific, technical and military superiority which Muslims failed to realize and achieve in their best interest. Muslim leadership everywhere in the world failed to grasp the two root causes of their downfall.

- (i) The neglect of scientific research, educational and industrial development on a continuous basis;
- (ii) The neglect of Islam as a way of life in the body politic throughout the Muslim world.

Imam Shamil in Russia was still fighting with swords and spears. When Peter learned the technique of automatic weapons from Europe, established armament factories in his country and totally defeated and annihilated the movement of Imam Shamil in Central Asia, Caucasia and Eastern

"See ye not how Allah had made serviceable (harnessed) unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth and had loaded you with his favors both without and within? Yet of mankind is he disputes concerning Allah, without knowledge or guidance or a Scripture giving light."

(The Qur'an. 31 : 20)

Similarly the Verses 190 and 191 of Al-Imran invite everyone of us to ponder over the skies and earth and the change of night and day.

"Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the difference of night and day are tokens (of His sovereignty) for men of understanding."

"Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say): Our Lord! Thou created not this in vain. Glory be to Thee! Preserve us from the doom of fire."

(The Qur'an. 3 : 190-191)

In Surah Al-Ghashia, Allah (SWT) is inviting the attention of humans to think over the chemistry of the objects created by Him, giving a few instances to ponder upon.

"Will they not regard the camels how they are created?  
And the heaven, how it is raised?  
And the hills how they are set up?  
And the earth how it is spread?"

(The Qur'an. 88 : 17/20)

Whoever responds to this call from the Creator and contemplates, will conclude that Allah has not created this universe in vain. This is an open invitation to men and women to think over the objects of nature and find out their contents, analyze the build up of their nature and discover the regulatory rules which control each of them.



The Sum total effect of these events and discoveries generated the Renaissance in Europe. It augmented the pursuit of knowledge, scientific discoveries and inventions in Europe based on the accumulated knowledge, the scientific method of experiments and the contributions which Muslims made in different fields—math, physics, chemistry, astrology, geography, medicine, etc., in their prime in Spain and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Europe got the ready-made base, the method of scientific investigation and the team of scholars from the Muslim world and launched upon its campaign towards the pursuit of knowledge and scientific experiments and stunned the world with its inventions and discoveries in subsequent centuries. The western countries reaped the harvest of their scientific efforts in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries as pointed out earlier.

Historically, it was the Muslims who were the pioneers in these fields and should, therefore, have continued development in each field of knowledge. By virtue of that they should have been the bonafide recipients to reap this crop, since they have been the ones who did the basic work of very fundamental nature in the field of knowledge and science through constant experiments and research.

### **Contribution of Islam to the Modern Age:**

Before the advent of Islam, the inanimate objects of nature, the sun, the moon, the wind, the river, the mountains, the rain, the trees and so on were worshipped by man and hence he could not dare to look towards them from a probing perspective and think about their chemistry. Islam declares that the entire universe and what it contains is the creation of God and He has harnessed them for man to explore and utilize. He invites every individual human being to think over every object of nature. They are not the objects of worship but the manifestation of Allah's bounties that have been harnessed for the service of man. Allah declares:

modern man, selfish, irresponsible and reckless. As such, they filled the earth, the abode of man, with disorder, exploitation, bloodshed, chaos and confusion. They feel that they are accountable to none and hence both individuals and nations very often found behave in a reckless and irresponsible manner.

## **THE ROLE OF MUSLIMS BEFORE AND AFTER THE MODERN AGE**

### **(A) BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE MODERN AGE**

The Modern Age started with the Renaissance in Europe. Certain important events took place between the year 1450 and 1500 A.D. which changed the course of history. They were as follows:

- i) The fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453;
- ii) The fall of Muslims in Spain in 1492 and migration of scholars to Europe;
- iii) The discovery of America by Columbus by the end of the 15th century which brought an immense amount of prosperity to the west;
- iv) The discovery of a new trade route to India in 1499 via the Cape of Good Hope;
- v) The invention of printing press in 1455 by Gutenberg;
- vi) The publication of 'The Prince' by Machiavelli in 1493. [It promoted the concept of Nation States and nationalism in its most brutal form. Nationalism became the greatest curse for human society. It is the mother of many vices and tyrannies which are attributed as the evils of the modern age. Its effects are ever-increasing. The process of fragmentation of human society on the basis of race, color, culture and language is causing untold damage to the unity of mankind one god, one nation and one system of life].

## 6. The Theory of Evolution:

The materialistic and secular attitude of life was further strengthened by Darwin (1842 - 1882) and his theory of evolution. He explored the biological world and its natural laws and concluded that man came to his present shape and form through an evolutionary process. He was the descendent of an ape and as such he was not the creation of God. He introduced the concept of the survival of the fittest which he observed in the biological world and placed an instrument of oppression in the hands of the Western colonial powers to subjugate the poor countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America one after the other. This produced the worst type of human exploitation. The era of colonialism might have come to an end but the game of exploitation is still going on unabated one form or the other in various guises.

### The Result:

These scientific researches, discoveries and conclusions changed the very genesis of power of the Western nations. The criteria of power and stability were now scientific inventions. pursuit of knowledge, continuing research and development, industrial large scale production, control over sea routes through shipping power, automatic and long range weapons on land, sea and air with accurate shooting along with developed market based economy, democratic framework, human rights security and political stability at home.

Steady progress in these fields brought prosperity to the people of the West and stability to their governments through industrial development at home and economic exploitation of their colonies abroad. But it was at the cost of discarding their Creator, God, and making worldly life the end of all things. They advocate that there is no life Hereafter. It has rendered the people of the west, the

with mathematical accuracy. When, through ages, the regulatory laws of nature explained the physical phenomena that affect the world in terms of mathematical calculations and formulae, modern man replaced God by natural laws or the so-called mother nature.

This approach gradually fractured the world of beliefs and conviction and shattered the myth of Christianity as religion of God. Christainty failed to meet the challenges of the Industrial Era and the growing demands of nation states. It had only some doctrines and dogmas to offer and not a perfect code of life which could guide their destiny in every walk of life. In the wake of the failure of Christianity to meet the genuine needs and challenges to humans and societies and understanding the scientific reasoning of the age, the modern man started thinking and believing that events occur due to natural causes and material setbacks and not due to supernatural causes. Hence there was no need of God or any metaphysical world.

## 5. Material and Secular Approach:

The scientific interpretation of the physical laws of nature makes man secular and materialistic in his approach to life and its problems. This turns religion into a personal affairs between God and an individual, which very often leads to no religion at all. This secularism became the order and fashion of the day. Every thing was interpreted and judged in terms of material gains and worldly interest alone. The entire pattern of life of modern man in Western society changed. He became the symbol of self-centered epicurism, striving only to maximize his personal pleasure, gains and comfort. Nations, constituted of such individuals, started the game of exploitation all around the world for the benefit of their people in order to raise their standard of living on a continuous basis. As a result, they filled the earth with bloodshed, oppression and tyranny.

## 1. Knowledge and Technical Know-how:

Accumulated knowledge of the universe and of man himself through constant investigation, research, experiments, discoveries and understanding of the laws, the principles and the trajectories on which this cosmos, including our little earth, is thriving and humans are pulsating. Through constant endeavours man has been able to discover many underlying secrets of nature. [However, there are still innumerable objects lying unseen and unknown high above the sky, deep under the sea and within the fragile human frame, challenging the dauntless ingenuity of man to come forward and explore them].

## 2. Discoveries:

The west achieved this feat of performance through scientific research/experiments, studies and developments in every field of knowledge—space, astronomy, physics, chemistry, botany, cultural, educational, industrial, economic, politics, human/international relations and geographical phenomena, etc.. Constant discoveries in different fields are the backbone of the Modern Age.

## 3. Industrial Revolution:

Constant developments in the field of technology, means of industrial production, transportation and communication have brought the world from the stage of home manufacturing to the stage of large scale factory production, from the age of camel-ride to supersonic and space-shuttle era, squeezing the world practically into an 186+ nations' apartment building.

## 4. Scientific Analysis of Physical Laws and Their Effect:

Discovering and establishing, since the time of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the laws which regulate the universe

# MUSLIMS AND THE MODERN AGE

*Shamim A Siddiqi*  
(New York)

The age through which the Muslims are passing is the climax of the modern age. It has reached its zenith. It is fast heading towards an era of mega-nations or supranations, with an abundance of economic resources, political power and military might in each group of nations and in the name of developing common markets. It will generate some very far-reaching effects on the underdeveloped nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It may open an era of neo-colonialism early in the 21st century. It does not augur well for the Muslims who predominantly inhabit these areas and have sustained the onslaughts of the developed nations of Europe and America for the last 200 years.

In fact, Muslims are facing a great civilization which is based on a solid edifice and values different from their own. Its upholders are fostering it as their cherished goal and trying to engulf this earth, every country and every people, with the so-called "blessings of modernism". Let us examine the edifice, the characteristics and the structure of the modern age or the western civilization. This will enable us to grasp the gravity of the situation, understand the depth of the enormous challenges which Muslims are facing and envision the way to confront, counter-act, overcome and defeat nefarious designs. This exercise will also enable us to understand the good and bad of it, to pinpoint what to take as a gift of the modern age, what to reject and what its predominant inherent vices are. We have to make a judicious examination of what this age contains for mankind in both directions.

The following constitute the edifice of the Modern Age: