

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

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*"Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A Paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven"*

[JOHN KEATS (1795-1821):
"The Fall of Hyperion"]

The Medically Trained (from Guy's Hospital Medical School, London, English Romantic poet was referring to the Puritan (English Protestant Christians) religious sects that arose before, during and after the English Revolution of 1668, but the words could apply just as well to all religious terrorists.

John Bagot Glubb wrote in his seminal—"The Great Arab Conquests" (Prentice Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963): "They relied on their military spirit and on individual personal courage rather than on the science of war. The tradition has survived to this day, and often cost the Muslims dear in contests with more businesslike killers who fight to win. Every Muslim child is brought up on the accounts of the Prophet's life and the Arab conquests, and thus the tradition of personal bravery to the neglect of skill has been perpetuated until now...Islam is essentially a soldier's religion". Today one finds the shadow of that spectre in the Islamic suicide bombers.

They are not revolutionaries fighting for a cause. Revolutionary wars for national liberation/independence are different. Revolutionaries do not massacre innocent people. During the Korean War (1950-1953) where Britain and the USA were involved, and during the Vietnam War (1946-1975) where France initially till 1954 and then the USA were involved, not a pin was dropped on the soil of any of these countries and ultimately the American people in general, and both Republican and Democratic Parties in particular, demanded American withdrawal from Vietnam. No suicide bomber was needed on American soil to achieve their goal, and innocent people in the aggressor countries were never harmed at their own hearth and home. To attack innocent people is the worst form of cowardice.

Fanatics do have their dream; they do weave a net of fantasy inside their brain-washed head.

The cancer is deep-seated and needs radical surgery. They lose their self; external power controls them. Irshad Manji (author of "The Trouble With Islam: A Wake-Up Call for Honesty and Change, Mainstream Publishing, London/Edinburgh, 2004) prescribes a remedy for this in her essay-"When Denial Can Kill: We Muslims must admit that our religion might be motivating the bombers" (Time, July, 25, 2005, Vol.166, No. 4, p. 68):

"For too long, we Muslims have been sticking fingers in our ears and chanting "Islam means peace" to drown out the negative noise from our holy book. Far better to own up to it. Not erase or revise, just recognize it and thereby join moderate Jews and Christians in confessing "sins of Scripture", as an American bishop says about the Bible. In doing so, Muslims would show a thoughtful side that builds trust with the wider communities of the West."

It is now up to the Islamic scholars, theologians, imams/preachers to take up the challenge and to do urgently what is needed to make Islam acceptable in the contemporary world. It is overdue. It is time for change and change for better. At one time, George Bernhard Shaw (1856 - 1950), Nobel Laureate in Literature, 1925 rightly commented:

"Islam is the best religion and Muslims are the worst followers."

The Christian West-USA, Britain and other Western countries were primarily responsible to provoke, and then sustain fanatic Islamic terrorism during the last two decades or so-first in Afghanistan in the name of opposing Communism-then, in the Indian state of Kashmir and so on. The world is round. Now, they are being paid back in their own coins-first in New York (9/11 in 2001)-then in London (7/7, 2005) and so on. Panic is always in the air. When there was an Islamic terrorist carnage in Murnbai (Bombay) in 1993, the West was conspicuous in its silence. Double standard does not work. What is morally wrong cannot be otherwise right. It is expected that the West will learn from its past mistakes. Convergence and not clash of civilizations is the need of the hour. □□□