

# ISLAM AND CRISIS OF OUR TIME

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Reference to be provided by Prof. Khurshid

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## ISLAM AND THE CRISIS OF OUR TIMES

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Man has conquered the seas and the skies; man has harnessed the forces of nature to his service; man has created vast and complex institutions and organizations to administer his affairs: man seems to have reached the pinnacle of material progress:

Man also claims to have deeply reflected upon his position in the universe. He has begun to interpret reality with the sole use of his reason and the knowledge yielded by his senses. With a new-found confidence in his own reasoning power and in the powers of science and technology, he has jettisoned his link with tradition, with revealed truth, indeed with every form of guidance from beyond himself.

From this elevated position he seeks to mould the world according to his whims and fancies. But the 'Brave New World' he has created drives an ordinary human being into profound disillusionment. In spite of unprecedented technological advancement and overall material development the condition of man remains highly unsettled. He sees the powerful subjugating the weak, the rich dominating the poor, the 'have-nots' arrayed against the 'haves'; he sees the injustice and exploitation at national and international levels; he sees disintegration of the family, alienation of individual from society and its institutions, even from himself; and he sees the abuse of trust and authority in all spheres. Although he has shown his ability to fly in the air like the birds, and to swim in the oceans like the fishes, he has failed to show his ability to live on the earth as a good human being. His failure here brings into doubt his capability to conduct his affairs in society without clear-cut guidelines for human action.

Man finds himself caught in a dilemma. He believes that he has reached the apex of civilization. But on reaching the apex he faces a new and greater void. He finds himself and the civilization he has built threatened with forces of his own creation. He frantically searches for remedies to rid his life of those portents of destruction which threaten to deprive him of his cherished dream of ultimate bliss. He finds that his world-view lacks definitive criteria to help him judge between right and wrong; he finds that his learning and expertise fail to give him universal criteria to distinguish between good and bad; he finds that change and the pace of change have swept him off his feet nothing tangible and lasting remains. Increasingly man becomes dubious about the direction he is heading for. Inability to conceive a way out of this dilemma leads him to despair and gloom. Man becomes increasingly selfish and unmindful of humanity's collective needs. Man becomes aware of a choice — either he relinquishes all pretences to be anything other than an animal and sadly pronounce himself as the 'naked ape' or strive further to regain and retain his sanity.

His search leads him to the awareness that the fruits of his reason are not in themselves sufficient for comprehending the reality around him. He turns to meditation, to mysticism, to occult practices, to pseudo-spiritualism for gaining further insight and inspiration. His thirst remains

unquenched; he fails to find a comprehensive doctrine based on reality and capable of universal application.

At this stage, man needs to discover the Word of God. It informs him of his Creator, informs him of the purpose of his creation, informs him of his place as the 'best of creation', provides him with guidance to lead a fulfilling and rewarding life, tells him of the hereafter, teaches him the value of his fellow beings, makes everything else subservient to the criterion of truth - in short, enables him to be at peace with himself, with the whole of creation and with the Creator.

The religion of Islam embodies the final and most complete Word? Of God. It is the embodiment of the code of life which God, the Creator and the Lord of the Universe, has revealed for the guidance of mankind. Islam integrates man with God and His Creation in such a way that man lives in co-operation with all that exists. Neglect of this dimension has impoverished human life and has made most of man's material conquests meaningless. Over-secularization has deprived human life of its spiritual significance. But spiritual greatness cannot be achieved by a simple swing of the pendulum to the other extreme. Harmony and equilibrium can be attained only by the integration of the material with the spiritual. This is the approach that Islam brings to bear: it makes the whole of the domain of existence spiritual and religious. It stands for the harmonization of the human will with the Divine Will - this is how peace is achieved in human life. It is through peace with God that man attains peace in the human order as also peace with nature, outside as well as within him.

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