

MATERIALISM: A CHALLENGE TO WORLD RELIGIONS

It is clearly evident that the world in general and religions in particular are confronted with an existential crisis in terms of upholding moral values. Truth, justice and beauty have become hollow terms considering the invasion of countries in the twentieth century by superpowers and occupiers (The settler colonisers like Zionist Israel of Palestine are a grim reminder).

Countries have also been exposed to atheistic ideologies like communism and have trampled on universal values that promote justice, equality and brotherhood. In communism materialism is the centrepiece of economic and social exploitation; the tragic consequences of tyranny and dictatorship are writings on the wall.

In Islam the universal concept of brotherhood is founded on the belief that mankind as an organic unity represents an honourable position. The Qur'ān says:

Verily, We (Allah) has honoured the children of Adam. (17: 70)

Dignity of the human being requires respect and honour. The real test of dignity is the promotion of goodness and eradicating the culture of jealousy, hatred and contempt for the others. This is stark contrast to communism where a godless society has the choice to do away with moral values. Likewise, religions should foster a culture of godliness rather than focusing on salvation as a counterresponse to the epidemic of capitalism. Materialism creates a consumer society where obsession for worldly desires is given priority.

In Islam a social order highlights the moral bond of unity among human beings. Universal values like justice, equality, honesty deepen one's respect for others. Therefore, there is no place for lip service religious identity politics which takes away mankind from establishing a real bond with the Creator of the universe. Therefore, there is genuine need to return to Allah and Muslims can take the lead to demonstrate the following qualities in

their lives:

- You cannot be godly if you are selfish.
- If you love Allah, love human beings.
- Practise the message of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.): All creation is Allah's family.
- Deal every human being firstly as a human being and not as a Muslim, Christian etc.
- Appreciate good wherever it is to be found even if it is your enemy. Hate the evil not the evildoer.

At the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) forgave his enemies who had persecuted him by echoing the words of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) to his cruel brothers:

There will be no punishment inflicted on you this day. May Allah forgive your sins for He is the Most Merciful. (12: 92)

Thus, the message is clear: *Return to Allah genuinely.*

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