ISLAMIC AWAKENING BETWEEN EXTREMISM AND REJECTION

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“ISLAM IS THE RELIGION OF RATIONAL AND CRITICAL MINDS. THIS IS WHY ONE OF ITS FUNDAMENTAL GOALS IS TO MAKE MAN AWARE OF THE PARAMOUNT SIGNIFICANCE OF GRADATION, FORTITUDE, AND MATURITY.

HASTE IS AN INHERENT CHARACTERISTIC OF MAN IN GENERAL, AND OF THE YOUNG IN PARTICULAR. INDEED, HASTE IS AN OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR OWN AGE.

IT HAS MADE OUR YOUTH EAGER TO SOW THE SEEDS TODAY AND TO HARVEST THE NEXT DAY. BUT ALLAH’S WILL IN HIS OWN CREATION DOES NOT ALLOW THAT: A TREE GOES THROUGH STAGES OF GROWTH, SHORT OR LONG, BEFORE IT BEARS FRUIT.”
INTRODUCTION CONT.

• “THESE DEVOUT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IGNORED THE FACT THAT IF THEY WANT TO STUDY SHARIAH, THEY MUST SEEK THE HELP OF RELIABLE MUSLIM SCHOLARS.

• THEY CANNOT VENTURE INTO THIS EXTENSIVE AND SOPHISTICATED DISCIPLINE WITHOUT THE GUIDANCE OF SUCH RELIABLE SCHOLARS WHO CAN INTERPRET AND EXPLAIN OBSCURITIES, DEFINE TERMS, AND POINT OUT SIMILARITIES AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PARTS AND THE WHOLE.

• THOSE WHO VENTURE INTO IT ALONE WILL MEET WITH THE SAME CATASTROPHIC RESULTS WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY BEFALL THE UNSKILLED SWIMMER WHO WENT INTO DEEP WATERS.”
“THERE MIGHT BE SOMEONE SOMEWHERE WHO OPPOSES (THE OPINIONS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED SEMI–KNOWLEDGE DIRECTLY FROM BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS WITHOUT ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR REVISION OR DISCUSSION) ON STRONGER AND MORE VALID FOUNDATIONS, BUT THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF THAT BECAUSE NOBODY HAS DRAWN THEIR ATTENTION TO SUCH A POSSIBILITY.”
(1) THE MUSLIM UMMAH (COMMUNITY) IS A NATION OF JUSTICE AND MODERATION

- WHY IS THIS SO?
  "BECAUSE IT WITNESSES EVERY DEVIATION FROM THE 'STRAIGHTFORWARD PATH' IN THIS LIFE AND IN THE HEREAFTER. ISLAMIC TEXTS CALL UPON MUSLIMS TO EXERCISE MODERATION AND TO REJECT AND OPPOSE ALL KINDS OF EXTREMISM: GHULUW (EXCESSIVENESS), TANATTU' (TRANSGRESSING; METICULOUS RELIGIOSITY) AND TAWHID (STRICTNESS; AUSTERITY)."

  HADITH:
  “BEWARE OF EXCESSIVENESS IN RELIGION. [PEOPLE] BEFORE YOU HAVE PERISHED AS A RESULT OF [SUCH] EXCESSIVENESS.”

- THE QUR’AN ADDRESSES THESE PEOPLE:
  {SAY: O PEOPLE OF THE BOOK! EXCEED NOT IN YOUR RELIGION THE BOUNDS [OF WHAT IS PROPER], TRESPASSING BEYOND THE TRUTH, NOR FOLLOW THE VAIN DESIRES OF PEOPLE WHO WENT WRONG IN TIMES GONE BY WHO MISLED MANY, AND STRAYED [THEMSELVES] FROM THE EVEN WAY.} QURAN 4:171

- MUSLIMS HAVE THEREFORE BEEN WARNED NOT TO FOLLOW IN THEIR STEPS: HE WHO LEARNS FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS INDEED LIVES A HAPPIER LIFE. EXTREMISM IS NOT PERMITTED IN ISLAM.
(2) FIRST INDICATIONS OF EXTREMISM

• THE FIRST INDICATIONS OF EXTREMISM INCLUDE BIGOTRY AND INTOLERANCE, WHICH MAKE A PERSON OBSTINATELY (STUBBORNLY) DEVOTED TO HIS OWN OPINIONS AND PREJUDICES, AS WELL AS RIGIDITY, WHICH DEPRIVES HIM OF CLARITY OF VISION REGARDING THE INTERESTS OF OTHER HUMAN BEINGS, THE PURPOSES OF SHARIAH, OR THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AGE.

• THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC OF EXTREMISM MANIFESTS ITSELF IN A PERPETUAL COMMITMENT TO EXCESSIVENESS, AND IN ATTEMPTS TO FORCE OTHERS TO DO LIKEWISE, DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF GOOD REASONS FOR FACILITATION AND THE FACT THAT ALLAH (SWT) HAS NOT ORDAINED IT.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(3) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR SEMI–KNOWLEDGE – ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM

- ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM IS A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF – AND INSIGHT INTO – THE PURPOSES, SPIRIT, AND ESSENCE OF DIN. HOWEVER, SUCH A LACK, WHICH DOES NOT IMPLY TOTAL IGNORANCE, DOES NOT LEAD TO EXTREMISM OR EXCESSIVENESS, BUT RATHER TO THEIR OPPOSITES, I.E. DEGENERATION (DECLINE OR DETERIORATION) AND LAXITY (LACK OF CARE). IT IMPLIES, HOWEVER, SEMI–KNOWLEDGE.


- HE WROTE: 'WHEN A PERSON UNDULY PRESUMES HIMSELF OR IS PRESUMED TO BE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS AND CAPABLE OF EXERCISING IJTIHAD, AND WHEN HE ACTS ACCORDINGLY, CLAIMING THAT HE HAS THE RIGHT TO PRESENT DIFFERENT OPINIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS, WHETHER THE VERDICTS AND OPINIONS PERTAIN TO MINOR ASPECT OR TO MAJOR ASPECT OF DIN, THUS HE CITES MAJOR ASPECTS, TO PULL DOWN MAJOR ONES; HE IS INDEED A MUBTADI'.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

- (4) THE NEED FOR FACILITATION: MAKING THINGS EASY FOR THE MUSLIMS, NOT DIFFICULT.

- IT IS ALSO STRICT, EXCESSIVE AND OVERBURDENING TO REQUIRE PEOPLE TO OBSERVE SUPERETOGATORIES IN THE SAME WAY AS THEY WOULD OBSERVE THE OBLIGATORIES, OR HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE MAKRUHAT AS IF THESE WERE MUHARRAMAT. IN FACT, WE SHOULD DEMAND THAT PEOPLE OBSERVE ONLY WHAT ALLAH (SWT) HAS CATEGORICALLY COMMANDED. THE EXTRA AND ADDITIONAL FORMS OF IBADAH ARE OPTIONAL.

- IF A MUSLIM IN THIS AGE OBSERVES THE WAJIBAT AND ESCHEWS (ABSTAIN FROM) THE MOST HEINOUS (WICKED) OF THE MUHARRAMAT (FORBIDDEN MATTERS SOME PEOPLE TAKE LIGHTLY), HE SHOULD BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE FOLD OF ISLAM AND REGARDED AS ONE OF ITS ADVOCATES SO LONG AS HIS LOYALTY IS TO ALLAH (SWT) AND HIS MESSENGER. EVEN IF HE COMMITS SOME MINOR MUHARRAMAT, THE MERITS GAINED BY HIS OBSERVANCE OF THE FIVE DAILY SALAWAT, SALAT AL JUMUAH (FRIDAY PRAYERS), SIYAM, ETC. WILL EXPIATE HIS SMALL FAULTS.

- IN QUR'AN 11:114 ALLAH (SWT) SAYS: {GOOD DEEDS REMOVE THOSE THAT ARE EVIL}, AND IN ANOTHER VERSE QURAN 4:31 ALLAH (SWT) SAYS: { IF YOU [BUT] ESCHEW THE MOST HEINOUS OF THE THINGS WHICH ARE FORBIDDEN, WE SHALL EXPEL OUT OF YOU ALL THE EVIL IN YOU AND ADMIT YOU TO A GATE OF GREAT HONOR.}

PROPHET’S (SAW) OPINION IS MAKING THINGS EASY FOR THE MUSLIMS, NOT DIFFICULT.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(5) UNCALLED FOR AUSTERITY – RELIGIOUS EXCESSIVENESS AND OVERBURDENING OF OTHERS

• THE THIRD CHARACTERISTIC OF EXTREMISM IS THE OUT-OF-TIME AND OUT-OF-PLACE RELIGIOUS EXCESSIVENESS AND OVERBURDENING OF OTHERS, I.E. WHEN APPLYING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES TO PEOPLE IN NON-MUSLIM COUNTRIES OR TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE ONLY RECENTLY CONVERTED TO ISLAM, AS WELL AS TO NEWLY COMMITTED MUSLIMS. WITH ALL THESE, EMPHASIS SHOULD NOT BE PUT ON EITHER MINOR OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, BUT ON FUNDAMENTALS.

• ENDEAVORS SHOULD BE MADE TO CORRECT THEIR CONCEPTS AND UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE. ONCE THE CORRECT BELIEFS ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, THEN ONE CAN BEGIN TO EXPLAIN THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM AND GRADUALLY TO EMPHASIZE THOSE ASPECTS WHICH MAKE A MUSLIM’S BELIEF AND PRACTICE COMPATIBLE, AND HIS ENTIRE LIFE AN EMBODIMENT OF WHAT IS PLEASING TO ALLAH (SWT).
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• (6) SEVERITY AND HARSHNESS – CALLING WITH WISDOM AND AMICABILITY

• (ANOTHER) CHARACTERISTIC OF EXTREMISM MANIFESTS ITSELF IN HARSHNESS IN THE TREATMENT OF PEOPLE, TOUGHNESS IN THE MANNER OF APPROACH, AND CRUDENESS IN CALLING PEOPLE TO ISLAM, ALL OF WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE QUR’AN AND SUNNAH. ALLAH (SWT) COMMANDS US TO CALL TO ISLAM AND TO HIS TEACHINGS WITH WISDOM, NOT WITH FOOLISHNESS, WITH AMICABILITY, NOT WITH HARSH WORDS:

• {INVITE [ALL] TO THE WAY OF YOUR LORD WITH WISDOM AND BEAUTIFUL PREACHING, AND ARGUE WITH THEM IN WAYS THAT ARE BEST AND MOST GRACIOUS.} QUR’AN 16:125

IT ALSO DESCRIBES THE PROPHET (SAW), THUS: {NOW HAS COME UNTO YOU A MESSENGER FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. IT GRIEVES HIM THAT YOU SHOULD PERISH, ARDENTLY ANXIOUS IS HE OVER YOU. TO THE BELIEVERS HE IS KIND AND MERCIFUL.} QUR’AN 9:128

• FIRMNESS AND HARSH–HEARTEDNESS ARE MENTIONED ONLY IN CONNECTION WITH TWO ISSUES IN THE QUR’AN. FIRST, IN CONNECTION WITH WAR, WHEN A SUCCESSFUL MILITARY STRATEGY NECESSITATES FORTITUDE AND THE SHELVING OF LENIENCY UNTIL THE WAR COMES TO AN END. {FIGHT THE UNBELIEVERS WHO GIRD YOU ABOUT AND LET THEM FIND FIRMNESS IN YOU.} QUR’AN 9:123.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• (6) SEVERITY AND HARSNESS – CALLING WITH WISDOM AND AMICABILITY CONT.

• SECOND, IN CONNECTION WITH THE EXECUTION OF PUNISHMENT ON THE GUILTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SHARIAH, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR COMPASSION IN APPLYING ALLAH'S INJUNCTIONS:
{THE MAN AND WOMAN GUILTY OF ADULTERY OR FORNICATION, FLOG EACH OF THEM WITH A HUNDRED STRIPES: LET NOT COMPASSION MOVE YOU IN THEIR CASE, IN A MANNER PRESCRIBED BY ALLAH, IF YOU BELIEVE IN ALLAH AND THE LAST DAY.} QUR’AN 24:2

• BUT IN THE FIELD OF DAWAH, THERE IS NO PLACE FOR VIOLENCE AND HARSNESS. THIS IS EVIDENCED IN THE FOLLOWING AHADITH:
  "ALLAH LOVES KINDNESS IN ALL MATTERS" AND, "KINDNESS MAKES THINGS BEAUTIFUL, VIOLENCE MAKES THEM DEFECTIVE," AS WELL AS IN THE FOLLOWING WISDOM OF OUR FOREBEARS: "WHOEVER DESIRES TO COMMAND THE COMMON GOOD, LET HIM DO IT GENTLY."

• VIOLENCE CAN DO NOTHING MORE THAN DISTORT DAWAH TO THE PATH OF ALLAH (SWT). DAWAH SEeks TO PENETRATE THE INNERMOST RECESSES OF MAN TO TRANSFORM HIM INTO A GODLY PERSON IN HIS CONCEPTIONS, EMOTIONS, AND BEHAVIOR BY ALTERING HIS THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND WILL AS WELL AS THE WHOLE OF HIS BEING, THEREBY SHAPING HIM INTO A DIFFERENT PERSON. IT ALSO SHAKES UP THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY AND ALTERS ITS INHERITED BELIEFS, WELL ESTABLISHED TRADITIONS, MORAL CONVENTIONS, AND PREVAILING SYSTEMS.

• ALL THIS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT WISDOM AND AMICABILITY, AND WITHOUT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION HUMAN NATURE – MAN'S OBSTINANCY, RESISTANCE TO CHANGE, AND ARGUMENTATIVENESS. THESE CHARACTERISTICS NECESSITATE THE EXERCISE OF KINDNESS AND GENTLENESS WHEN ATTEMPTING TO REACH MAN'S HEART AND MIND SO THAT HIS HARDNESS CAN BE SOFTENED, HIS RIGIDITY ABATED AND HIS PRIDE CHECKED.
(7) SUSPICION AND THINKING ILL OF OTHERS

- Suspicion and distrust are also manifestations of extremism. An extremist readily accuses people and quickly passes judgement contrary to the generally accepted norm: "innocent until proven guilty." He considers a person guilty the moment he suspects him of something. He jumps to conclusions rather than looking for explanations. The slightest mistake is blown out of all proportions; a mistake becomes a sin, and a sin kufr. Such a reaction is a stark violation of the spirit and teachings of Islam which encourage Muslims to think well of other Muslims, to try to find an excuse for their misbehavior, and to help them improve their words and deeds.

- The religious sincerity and integrity of those who disagree with such an extremist are always called into question. An extremist would depict people as being guilty of transgression, innovation, or disrespect for the Prophet’s Sunnah even if their views are solidly based upon authentic Islamic texts.

- One could cite many examples: if you argue that carrying a stick or eating while sitting on the ground has nothing to do with the Sunnah, you would be accused of disrespect for the Prophet himself. Not even learned Muslim scholars and `ulama are spared such accusations. If a faqih gives a fatwa which facilitates matters for Muslims, he is considered lax on religious issues; if a Muslim daiyah tries to call to Islam in a manner suitable to the spirit and the taste of the age, he is accused of succumbing to and patronizing Western civilization.
(7) SUSPICION AND THINKING ILL OF OTHERS CONT.

• THE GRAVEST SHORTCOMING OF THE CONTEMPORARY EXTREMISTS IS SUSPICION. HAD THEY UNDERSTOOD AND COMPREHENDED THE QURAN AND SUNNAH, THEY WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED THAT BOTH SEEK TO FOSTER IN THE MIND OF EACH AND EVERY MUSLIM THE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST OF OTHER FELLOW MUSLIMS. A MUSLIM IS NOT EVEN ALLOWED TO PUBLICIZE THE MINOR MISTAKES AND FAULTS OF OTHERS OR BECOME BLIND TO THEIR MERITS; BUT SOME PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN CRITICIZING OTHERS AND IN PRAISING THEMSELVES:

• {THEREFORE, JUSTIFY NOT YOURSELVES: HE KNOWS BEST WHO IT IS THAT GUARDS AGAINST EVIL.} INDEED, ISLAM STRONGLY WARNS AGAINST TWO CHARACTERISTICS: DESPAIRING OF ALLAH’S MERCY AND SUSPECTING FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS. ALLAH (SWT) SAYS:

• {O YOU WHO BELIEVE! AVOID SUSPICION AS MUCH [AS POSSIBLE]: FOR SUSPICION IN SOME CASES IS A SIN.} QUR’AN 49:12
(8) FALLING INTO THE ABYSS OF TAKFÍR

TAKFIR IS THE NOTION THAT AN UNBELIEVER, EVEN A MUSLIM, MAY BE EXCOMMUNICATED THE MOMENT THAT INDIVIDUAL DOES NOT FOLLOW SHARIA, OR ISLAMIC LAW, IN ITS STRICTEST SENSE.

• EXTREMISM REACHES ITS UTMOST LIMIT WHEN A SINGLE GROUP DEPRIVES ALL PEOPLE OF THE RIGHT TO SAFETY AND PROTECTION, AND INSTEAD SANCTIONS THEIR KILLING AND THE CONFISCATION OF THEIR LIVES AND PROPERTY. THIS, OF COURSE, OCCURS WHEN AN EXTREMIST HOLDS ALL PEOPLE – EXCEPT THOSE IN HIS GROUP – TO BE KUFFAR. THIS KIND OF EXTREMISM SEVERS ANY BOND BETWEEN SUCH A PERSON AND THE REST OF THE UMMAH.

• THE PROPHET (SAW) DESCRIBED THE DEVOTION OF SUCH PEOPLE BY SAYING: "ONE OF YOU WOULD HOLD INSIGNIFICANT HIS OWN SALAH COMPARED WITH THEIR [THE KHAWARIJ] SALAH, AND HIS QIYAM COMPARED WITH THEIR QIYAM, HIS RECITATION [OF THE QUR'AN] COMPARED WITH THEIR RECITATION." NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID OF THEM: "THEY WOULD RECITE THE QUR’AN, BUT IT WOULD NOT GO BEYOND THEIR THROAT, AND THEY PASS THROUGH RELIGION WITHOUT A MARK." THIS MEANS THAT THEY WOULD SLIP OUT OF RELIGION AS AN ARROW WOULD SLIP OUT OF ITS BOW. THE PROPHET (SAW) ALSO SAID OF THEM THAT THEY REGARD IT AS THEIR DUTY TO "DESTROY ADHERENTS OF ISLAM AND SAVE THE IDOL-WORSHIPPERS."
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• (8) FALLING INTO THE ABYSS OF TAKFÍR CONT.

• THIS IS THE TRAP INTO WHICH THE KHAWARIJ FELL DURING THE DAWN OF ISLAM, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR STRICT OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES SUCH AS SALAH, SIYAM, AND RECITATION OF THE QURAN. HOWEVER THEIR THINKING RATHER THAN THEIR CONSCIENCE WAS DISTORTED AND CORRUPT. HENCE THEY WERE SO INFATUATED WITH THEIR BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR THAT THEY, UNINTENTIONALLY, DEVIATED FROM THE RIGHT PATH.
CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• (8) FALLING INTO THE ABYSS OF TAKFİR CONT.

• THIS IS WHY WHEN A MUSLIM FELL INTO THEIR HANDS AND WAS ASKED ABOUT HIS IDENTITY, HE REPLIED THAT HE WAS A MUSHRIK CURIOUS TO FIND OUT ABOUT ALLAH’S MESSAGE AND BOOK. ON HEARING THIS THE KHAWARIJ TOLD THE MAN THAT THEY WOULD PROTECT HIM AND GRANT HIM SAFE PASSAGE. IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DECISION, THEY RECITED THE FOLLOWING VERSE FROM THE QUR‘AN: {IF ONE AMONGST THE PAGANS ASKS YOU FOR ASYLUM, GRANT IT TO HIM, SO THAT HE MAY HEAR THE WORD OF ALLAH; AND THEN ESCORT HIM TO WHERE HE MAY BE SECURE. THAT IS BECAUSE THEY ARE MEN WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE.} QUR‘AN 9:6

• THE IRONY IS THAT IF THE MAN HAD ADMITTED THAT HE WAS A MUSLIM THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME MUSLIMS HAVE NOT YET LEARNED THIS LESSON. THE JAMAAT AL TAKFİR WA AL HIJRAH GROUP SEEMS TO BE FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE KHAWARIJ. THEY READILY BRAND AS KAFIR ANYBODY WHO COMMITS A SIN AND DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY REPENT. MORE CONDEMNED IN THEIR VIEW ARE THE RULERS WHO DO NOT APPLY SHARIAH, AS WELL AS THE PEOPLE WHO SUBMIT TO SUCH RULERS.
(8) FALLING INTO THE ABYSS OF TAKFĪR CONT.

Still more sinful in their view are the `ulama who do not openly condemned both as kuffar, as well as those who reject the group’s beliefs and submit to the laws elaborated by the four great jurists of Islam on the basis of ijma: qiyas, maslahah mursalah, or istihsan. Moreover anyone who first pledges support for their cause and joins their group, then decides to leave it – for one reason or another – is considered a murtadd and must be put to death.

Indeed, they hold all the Islamic periods succeeding the fourth century A.H. as periods of ignorance and kufur, worshipping the idol of tradition rather than Allah (SWT). In this way, the group became so excessive in accusing people of kufr that they spared neither the dead nor the living. The group thus have run into deep trouble, because accusing a Muslim of kufr is a very serious matter which entails very serious consequences – his killing and the confiscation of his property become lawful. As a kafir, he must be separated from his wife and children; there can be no bond between him and other Muslims; he must be deprived of his inheritance and cannot be inherited from; he must be denied the Islamic burial and the salah for the dead person; and he must not be buried in a Muslim graveyard.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM

EXTREMISM DOES NOT ORIGINATE HAPHAZARDLY. IT MUST INDEED HAVE CAUSES AND MOTIVATION. WE ENDEAVOR TO EXAMINE THE CAUSES AND THE MOTIVES WHICH HAVE GENERATED EXTREMISM, A TERM WHICH HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH GHULUW, I.E. EXCESSIVENESS IN RELIGION.
(1) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- UNDOUBTEDLY, ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM IS A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF – AND INSIGHT INTO – THE PURPOSES, SPIRIT, AND ESSENCE OF DIN. HOWEVER, SUCH A LACK... DOES NOT LEAD TO EXTREMISM OR EXCESSIVENESS, BUT RATHER TO THEIR OPPOSITES, I.E. DEGENERATION AND LAXITY. IT IMPLIES, HOWEVER, SEMI–KNOWLEDGE. A PERSON MAY PRESUME – AND SOMETIMES GENUINELY BELIEVE – THAT HE KNOWS ALL THERE IS TO KNOW; THAT HE IS A SCHOLAR, A FAQIH. BUT ACTUALLY HE HAS NO MORE THAN A HODGEPODGE OF UNDIGESTED AND UNASSIMILATED "KNOWLEDGE", WHICH NEITHER ENHANCES INSIGHT NOR CLARIFIES VISION. A PERSON POSSESSING SUCH "KNOWLEDGE" CONCENTRATES ON MARGINAL AND TRIVIAL ISSUES ONLY, AND THEREBY FAILS TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTS WHICH FORM THE WHOLE ... OR BETWEEN THE CATEGORICAL AND FUNDAMENTAL TEXTS VIS–A–VIS THE ALLEGORICAL ONES. ...
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(1) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE CONT.

• AWARE OF THE DANGER OF SUCH SEMI-KNOWLEDGE … [IT IS] THAT SELF-PRESUMPTION AND CONCEIT ARE THE ROOT CAUSES OF BID'AH AS WELL AS THE DISUNITY OF THE UMMA, AND COULD LEAD TO INTERNAL DIVISION AND GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION. …IN THE FOLLOWING HADITH, THE PROPHET (SA`AS) WARNED AGAINST A PERSON [WHO UNDULY PRESUMES HIMSELF OR IS PRESUMED TO BE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS AND CAPABLE OF EXERCISING IJTIHAD (INDEPENDENT REASONING)]:

  • {ALLAH DOES NOT TAKE AWAY THE KNOWLEDGE BY TAKING IT AWAY FROM (THE HEARTS OF) THE PEOPLE, BUT TAKES IT AWAY WHEN NONE OF THE `ULAMA REMAIN, AND PEOPLE WILL TAKE AS THEIR LEADERS IGNORANT PERSONS WHO WHEN CONSULTED WILL GIVE THEIR VERDICT WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE. SO THEY WILL GO ASTRAY AND WILL LEAD THE PEOPLE ASTRAY.}
(1) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE CONT.

• SOME OF THE LEARNED INFERENCE FROM THE ABOVE HADITH THAT PEOPLE ARE NEVER LED ASTRAY BY GENUINE 'ULAMA: BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF THE LATTER PEOPLE TURN TO SEMI `ULAMA WHO LEAD THEM ASTRAY BY GIVING INCORRECT ADVICE. THUS IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT A TRUSTWORTHY PERSON NEVER BETRAYS A TRUST, BUT THE TRAITOROUS ONE DOES.

• WE ADD TO THIS: A GENUINE 'ALIM NEVER INNOVATES, BUT A SEMI’ALIM DOES. ANAS IBN MALIK (RA`A) NARRATED: "RABIAH WAS ONCE SEEN WEEPING BITTERLY. WHEN HE WAS ASKED WHETHER A CALAMITY HAD BEFALLEN HIM, HE REPLIED, 'NO, BUT PEOPLE ARE SEEKING FATWA FROM PERSONS WHO POSSESS NO KNOWLEDGE."

• THE FACT IS THAT SEMI–KNOWLEDGE, COUPLED WITH VANITY AND PRIDE, IS MORE DANGEROUS AND SUBVERSIVE THAN AN ADMITTED TOTAL IGNORANCE, BECAUSE THE FORMER IS THE IGNORANCE OF A PERSON WHO IS NOT AWARE OF HIS LIMITATIONS.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• 1) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE CONT.

• OPINION OF ULAMA WHO HAVE STUDIED THE MATTER DEEPLY, IS THAT 'IBADAH IS THE CAUSE AND PURPOSE OF THE OBLIGATORY DUTIES WHICH ARE NOT, AND CAN NEVER BE, AN OBJECT OF AN ASSESSMENT, (I.E. TO ANALYSE THEIR BASES AND PURPOSES.)

• HOWEVER, THE TEACHINGS WHICH ARE AIMED TO REGULATE OUR LIVES CAN BE, AND MUST BE, ANALYZED. ...

IT IS [FOR EXAMPLE] INCONCEIVABLE TO SAY THAT MODERN TAXES CAN REPLACE ZAKAH, THE THIRD PILLAR OF ISLAM AND ONE WHICH IS ON A PAR WITH SALAH.

• IN FACT, SALAH IS RARELY EVER MENTIONED IN THE QURAN WITHOUT ZAKAH FOLLOWING IMMEDIATELY, OR IN THE VERSE THAT FOLLOWS AFTER. NOR, OF COURSE, SHOULD RAMADAN BE REPLACED BY ANOTHER MONTH FOR SIYAM, NOR FRIDAY BY ANOTHER DAY FOR SALAT AL JUMAH, WHICH IS OBLIGATORY FOR MUSLIMS. BUT IN MATTERS OTHER THAN THE PURELY DEVOTIONAL ONES, WE CAN EXAMINE THE REASONS AND TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE UNDERLYING MEANINGS AND PURPOSES. ONCE WE GRASP THOSE WE CAN BASE VERDICTS UPON THEM AND EITHER ACCEPT OR REJECT THEM.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM

(2) PREOCCUPATION WITH SIDE ISSUES

• INTELLECTUAL SHALLOWNESS AND LACK OF RELIGIOUS INSIGHT ALSO MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN AN INTENSE INTEREST IN MARGINAL ISSUES AT THE EXPENSE OF MAJOR ONES – THOSE WHICH COULD AFFECT THE EXISTENCE, IDENTITY, AND DESTINY OF THE WHOLE UMMAH.

• THERE IS EXCESSIVE AND UNNECESSARY TALK ABOUT GROWING A BEARD, WEARING CLOTHES BELOW THE ANKLE, MOVING OF THE FINGER DURING READING THE TASAAHHUD IN PRAYER, ACQUISITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND SO ON. UNFORTUNATELY, SUCH TIME-WASTING ARGUMENTS PERSIST AND OCCUPY OUR THINKING AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE BEING CONFRONTED BY THE UNRELENTING HOSTILITY – AND INFILTRATION – OF SECULARISM, COMMUNISM, ZIONISM, AND CHRISTIANITY, AS WELL AS DEVIATIONIST GROUPS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD. CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES ARE WAGING A NEW CRUSADE AGAINST THE UMMAH WITH THE INTENT OF UNDERMINING ITS HISTORICAL AND ISLAMIC CHARACTER. MUSLIMS ARE BEING MERCILESSLY SLAUGHTERED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD;
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM

(3) EXCESSIVE PROHIBITIONS

• ONE OF THE INDICATIONS OF THIS SHALLOWNESS, OF THE LACK OF A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE AND OF SHARIAH, IS MAKING THINGS DIFFICULT THROUGH AN INVALID EXTENSION OF PROHIBITIONS DESPITE THE VERY CLEAR WARNINGS AGAINST THIS IN THE QUR’AN AND SUNNAH:

• {BUT SAY NOT FOR ANY FALSE THING THAT YOUR TONGUES MAY PUT FORTH: "THIS IS LAWFUL AND THIS IS FORBIDDEN," SO AS TO ASCRIBE FALSE THINGS TO ALLAH. FOR THOSE WHO ASCRIBE FALSE THINGS TO ALLAH WILL NEVER PROSPER.}

• THE PROPHET'S COMPANIONS AS WELL AS THE EARLY RIGHTEOUS FOREBEARS NEVER PROHIBITED ANYTHING UNLESS THEY WERE SURE THAT IT WAS CATEGORICALLY SO. OTHERWISE, THEY USED TO RECOMMEND AGAINST IT, OR EXPRESS THEIR ABHORRENCE OF IT, ETC, BUT NEVER CATEGORICALLY DECLARED IT HARAM.

• EXTREMISTS, HOWEVER, HASTILY PROHIBIT WITHOUT RESERVATION.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM

• (3) EXCESSIVE PROHIBITIONS CONT.

• IF THERE ARE TWO OPINIONS IN ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE ABOUT A CERTAIN ISSUE, ONE DECLARING IT MUBAH (NEITHER FORBIDDEN NOR RECOMMENDED, AND SO RELIGIOUSLY NEUTRAL) AND THE OTHER MAKRUH (DISLIKE OR OFFENSIVE ACT), THE EXTREMISTS ABIDE BY THE LATTER; IF IT IS DECLARED MAKRUH BY ONE AND HARAM BY ANOTHER, THEY ALSO FAVOR THE LATTER.

• IF THERE ARE TWO OPINIONS, ONE WHICH FACILITATES WHILE THE OTHER MAKES THINGS DIFFICULT, THEY ALSO FOLLOW THE LATTER. THEY PERSISTENTLY ADHERE TO IBN ‘UMAR’S HARD-LINE OPINIONS, BUT NEVER ACCEPT IBN ‘ABBAS’ FACILITATIONS. THIS TENDENCY IS LARGELY DUE TO THEIR IGNORANCE OF THE POINT OF VIEW WHICH AVAILS FACILITATION. A.–

• B. SIMILARLY, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY ENGAGE IN SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE PROPER ISLAMIC DRESS. SUCH SPECULATIONS ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING SOUND HADITH: "THE PART (OF THE GARMENT WHICH HANGS) BELOW THE ANKLES IS IN THE FIRE." IN THEIR DESIRE TO ADHERE TO THIS HADITH, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WEAR ABOVE-THE-ANKLE GARMENTS AND ALSO SEEK TO IMPOSE A SIMILAR STYLE ON PEOPLE AROUND THEM. SUCH PRESSURE ON OTHERS ENGENDERS ILL-WILL ON BOTH SIDES, AND CHARGES OF EXTREMISM OR NONADHERENCE TO ISLAMIC NORMS WILL CERTAINLY BE LEVERED BY BOTH PARTIES AGAINST EACH OTHER. THE AHADITH WHICH WARN MUSLIMS AGAINST WEARING GARMENTS BELOW THE ANKLE, ARE QUALIFIED BY OTHER AHADITH WHICH, UPON A DEEPER READING, REVEAL THE REASON FOR THIS PROHIBITION. B.–
(4) MISCONCEPTIONS

• Confused thinking and blurred vision of the fundamentals of Islam, its Shari'ah and the aims of its message have led to many misconceptions in the minds of Muslim youth. Such misconceptions need to be fully explained and carefully defined as the form the basis of relating to others judging and reforming them. Some of the most important misconceptions include concepts like Islam, Iman, Kufr, Nifaq, and Jahiliyah etc. Linguistic complexities or a lack of mastery of the Arabic language by some people have led to confusion and misunderstanding.

• The complexities of language escape the non-experts. Consequently, they become unable to differentiate between the figurative or metaphorical and the literal meanings, thereby confusing matters. They are unable to realize, for instance, the difference between absolute (or perfect) Iman and limited (or nominal) Iman; between perfect Islam and limited (or nominal) Islam; between major Kufr leading to non-Islam and the Kufr of disobedience; between major Shirk and minor Shirk; between hypocrisy of belief and hypocrisy of action.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(5) EMPHASIS ON ALLEGORICAL TEXTS AT THE EXPENSE OF DEFINITIVE ONES

- It is important to point out here that a root cause of extremism and of misunderstanding of religious matters, in the past as well as in the present, is emphasis on allegorical texts and disregard of the categorical ones: The allegorical ones are those with implicated and unclear meanings; the categorical are those whose meanings are clear, manifest and defined. Laying emphasis on allegorical texts cannot be the attitude of those with knowledge and insight, but of those who cherish deviation in their hearts. The Qur'an states:

> {He it is Who has sent down to you (Muhammad) the Book: in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the book; others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for hidden meanings, but no one knows its true meanings except Allah.} Qur'an 3:7

- Extremists and innovators of old used such allegorical texts as their final evidence, neglecting and overlooking the fundamental categorical ones. Extremists today do exactly the same: using the allegorical to define and determine important concepts which result in serious and grave consequences when used as bases for judging individuals or groups, for assessing their behavior, and for classifying them as either friends or enemies, believers or kuffar who must be fought.
(6) BEWARE OF GETTING YOUR FACTS FROM THE UNQUALIFIED

• ONE OF THE CAUSES OF THE EXTREMISTS' SHALLOWNESS AND LACK OF INSIGHT IS THAT THEY NEVER LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS, NEVER ACCEPT ANY DIALOGUE WITH THEM, AND NEVER IMAGINE THAT THEIR OWN VIEWS COULD BE TESTED IN THE LIGHT OF OTHERS AND BE EITHER CONTRADICTED OR REFUTED. MANY OF THEM HAVE NOT BEEN TAUGHT BY RELIABLE MUSLIM 'ULAMA SPECIALIZED IN THE FIELD. RATHER, THEY HAVE RECEIVED SEMI-KNOWLEDGE DIRECTLY FROM BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS WITHOUT ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR REVISION OR DISCUSSION WHICH COULD TEST THE LEARNER'S UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZE THE DEPTH OF HIS KNOWLEDGE. THEY SIMPLY READ, "UNDERSTAND," AND THEN DEDUCE WHAT THEY WISH. HOWEVER THEIR READING, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEDUCTION MAY WELL BE WRONG OR DEFICIENT.

• THERE MIGHT BE SOMEONE SOMEWHERE WHO OPPOSES THEIR OPINIONS ON STRONGER AND MORE VALID FOUNDATIONS, BUT THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF THAT BECAUSE NOBODY HAS DRAWN THEIR ATTENTION TO SUCH A POSSIBILITY.
(7) WHY MUSLIM YOUTH HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM SCHOLARS

- SEEKING KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAM ALONE AND ONLY THROUGH BOOKS REFLECTS THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMPLETE LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL ULAMA AND LEARNED SCHOLARS, ESPECIALLY THOSE PATRONIZED BY THE AUTHORITIES, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT SUCH PEOPLE HAVE LOST THE COURAGE TO DISAGREE WITH RULERS WHO GO ASTRAY. NOT ONLY ARE THE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS SILENT ABOUT RULERS, ATROCITIES AND THEIR NEGLIGENCE OF SHARI'AH, BUT THEY TOO OFTEN – AND QUITE HYPOCRITICALLY – GLORIFY AND COMMEND THEM FOR SUCH DEPLORABLE ACTIONS. IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR SUCH ULAMA TO AT LEAST KEEP SILENT RATHER THAN TO SUPPORT BATIL (FALSEHOOD).

- IT IS NOT SURPRISING THEREFORE, THAT YOUNG MUSLIMS HAVE DECIDED THAT THEY CAN ONLY TRUST PAST RATHER THAN PRESENT-DAY ULAMA AND CONSEQUENTLY HAVE SOUGHT THE FORMER'S BOOKS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND GUIDANCE.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(8) LACK OF INSIGHT INTO HISTORY AND GOD’S WAYS IN THE UNIVERSE

• In addition to the lack of insight into the true teachings of Islam, we could add the lack of insight into reality, life, and history as well as into Allah's Sunan in His creation. In the absence of such insight, some people will continue to seek or demand the impossible and unavailable.
(9) TWO IMPORTANT DIVINE SUNAN

- HASTY ENTHUSIASTIC MUSLIMS USUALLY OVERLOOK TWO IMPORTANT SUNAN (DIVINE LAWS), I.E. GRADATION AND THAT ACHIEVING GOALS REQUIRES THE ALLOWANCE OF DUE TIME (EVERYTHING IN ITS TIME).

- FIRST: GRADATION IS CLEARLY MANIFEST IN THE PROCESS OF CREATION AS WELL AS IN LEGISLATION. ALLAH (SWT) IS ABLE TO CREATE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH IN LESS THAN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE: "BE, AND IT IS". YET HE CREATED THEM IN SIX OF HIS DAYS, I.E. IN STAGES, KNOWN ONLY TO HIM BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFERENT FROM OUR CONCEPT OF "DAY." GRADATION IS ALSO APPARENT IN THE CREATION OF ALL LIVING ORGANISMS WHICH GROW IN STAGES UNTIL THEY REACH MATURITY.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• (9) TWO IMPORTANT DIVINE SUNAN

• SECOND: THE SECOND OF THESE SUNAN IS COMPLEMENTARY TO THE FIRST, NAMELY THAT EVERYTHING HAS AN APPOINTED TERM DURING WHICH IT REACHES RIPENESS AND MATURITY. THIS APPLIES TO THE MATERIAL REALM AS WELL AS THE MORAL.

• NOTHING SHOULD BE HARVESTED BEFORE ITS APPOINTED TIME; CROPS CANNOT BE HARVESTED BEFORE THEY HAVE RIPENED. RATHER THAN BEING USEFUL, UNRIPE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES CAN CAUSE HARM. AND JUST AS CROPS NEED TIME – SOMETIMES A LONG TIME – TO MATURE, THE TRUE MEANINGS AND VALUES OF GREAT ACTIONS BECOME APPARENT ONLY AFTER MANY YEARS. THE LONGER ACTIONS TAKE TO MATURE, THE GREATER THEY ARE. THE ENDEAVORS OF ONE GENERATION OFTEN MATERIALIZE IN THE FOLLOWING ONE, OR EVEN MUCH LATER. THERE IS INDEED NO HARM IN THIS IF EVERYTHING TAKES ITS PLANNED NATURAL COURSE. ...2A.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(10) ISLAM: A STRANGER IN ITS OWN LAND

• PERHAPS THE MOST ALARMING AND UNBEARABLE FACTOR FOR ANY ARDENT, COMMITTED MUSLIM, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG, IS THE LACK OF ADHERENCE TO THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES WHERE PERVERSION, CORRUPTION, AND FALSEHOOD ARE RAMPANT.

• MARXISM AND SECULARISM ARE BEING PROPAGATED OPENLY AND PUBLICLY. THE CONTEMPORARY "CRUSADERS" PLAN AND ACT TO INFILTRATE EVERYWHERE WITHOUT FEAR. THE MEDIA, IN ADDITION TO CLUBS AND THEATERS, SPREADS OBSCENITIES AND MISCONDUCT. HALF-NAKED, DRUNKEN WOMEN ROAM THE STREETS TEMPTING AND PROVOKING; DRINKING ALCOHOL IS LEGALLY AVAILABLE AND COMMON. EVERY ASPECT OF DISTRACTION OR SENSUAL ENTERTAINMENT IN THE FORM OF OBSCENE LITERATURE, SONGS, PLAYS, FILMS, AND PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL IS BEING DESIGNED TO CORRUPT AND TO DEEPEN IGNORANCE OF ISLAM AND TO HAMPER FAITH.
(11) THE IMPEDIMENTS IMPOSED ON DA’WAH AND DU’AH

• ANOTHER CAUSE OF EXTREMISM PERTAINS TO THE FREEDOM – INDEED DUTY – TO CALL PEOPLE TO ISLAM. IT IS A TRUISM THAT ISLAM TEACHES A PERSON NOT ONLY TO BE PIOUS AND RIGHTEOUS BUT ALSO TO ENDEAVOR TO REFORM OTHERS. THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE OBLIGATION TO CALL PEOPLE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, TO COMMAND THE COMMON GOOD AND FORBID THAT WHICH IS EVIL AND UNDESIRABLE, TO JOIN TOGETHER IN MUTUAL TEACHING OF TRUTH AND OF PATIENCE.

• FROM THE ISLAMIC POINT OF VIEW, EVERY MUSLIM IS REQUIRED TO CALL TO ISLAM TO THE BEST OF HIS OR HER ABILITY. THE FOLLOWING VERSE IS ADDRESSED TO EVERY MUSLIM:

{INVITE (ALL) TO THE WAY OF YOUR LORD.}

• FURTHERMORE, EVERY FOLLOWER OF THE PROPHET (SA`AS) IS A DA’YAH, AS THE FOLLOWING VERSE MAKES CLEAR:

{ SAY: THIS IS MY WAY. I INVITE UNTO ALLAH – WITH EVIDENCE AS CLEAR AS THE SEEING WITH ONE’S EYES – I AND WHOEVER FollowS ME.}

• HENCEFORTH, THE MOTTO OF THE REFORMERS:

{MAKE YOURSELF RIGHTEOUS, AND CALL OTHERS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.} THE QUR’AN SAYS: {WHO IS BETTER IN SPEECH THAN ONE WHO CALLS (MEN) TO ALLAH, WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SAYS, ‘I AM OF THOSE WHO BOW IN ISLAM.’}
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

(12) RESORTING TO VIOLENCE AND TORTURE DOES NOT ELIMINATE EXTREMISM – IT CREATES IT

• THE GRAVEST MISTAKE OF THE AUTHORITIES IS RESORTING TO VIOLENCE, PHYSICAL AS WELL AS PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE IN PRISONS AND DETENTION CAMPS, WHERE HUMANS ARE TREATED AS ANIMALS.
MAIN CAUSES OF EXTREMISM CONT.

• Extremism may also be initiated by the corruption of regimes, i.e. the despotism of rulers, their egotistic pursuits, their adherence to the views of corrupt counsellors and advisers as well as various foreign enemies of the ummah, and their total disregard for the rights of their peoples. These practices have severed the bond between religion and the state.