



Abdul Munir Mul Khan's Contribution to "Muslims Speak Out"

Waging Jihad against Violence



The word jihad does not signify “war” (*qital*) alone, but can also mean to strive mightily to defeat one’s own ego, so as to become humble and at peace with oneself, with God, and His varied creation. As many others have stated, the Prophet himself explicitly made this point, upon returning from the “lesser jihad” at the battle of Badr to the “greater jihad,” through which he exhorted his Muslim followers to overcome their egotistical nature and desires. Violence is generally born of egotism and arrogance, even when veiled in the sanctity of religious justification. The wave of suicide bombings we have witnessed in recent years is no exception. *True* jihad consists of opposing such violence, in the name of God and His religion. For only God Himself has any right or claim to absolute possession of the Truth.

The question confronting us – whose answer will be pivotal in determining the future of humanity – is whether the Muslim *ummah* (community) in the 21st century is willing to reinterpret the Qur’an, rather than remain stuck with an outmoded understanding of the sacred text inherited from Muslim clerics who lived and wrote their Qur’anic interpretations a thousand years ago, at a time of great wars and chaos.

Only if Muslims and adherents of other faiths are willing to reinterpret their respective scriptures – and thereby renew their religious doctrines – will we witness a new era, dominated by a more humane and truly spiritual religiosity. Given the current crisis facing humanity, leaders of the world’s various faiths must work together to ensure full respect for the rights and dignity of all

human beings, regardless of their religion or lack thereof. This is the sacred duty of those who adhere to all religious faiths, and the true jihad that the world still awaits.

Social Destiny

All human beings have an equal and inalienable right to freely embrace any religion, or even to become atheists. In essence, Islam teaches one to be gentle towards those who believe in its Truth, and also those who refuse to accept it. For in the Holy Qur'an, God states that humans have the right to believe or not believe, as they freely choose.

The choice to be a Muslim or "infidel" should never be based on compulsion, but rather on a pure and genuine awareness and embrace of the Truth, as best understood by each individual. The choice thus freely made represents an accurate measurement of one's devotion and proximity to God, which compulsion can neither produce nor reflect. Formalistic declarations of faith or a purely legalistic practice of ritual, as such, can neither accurately measure one's inner state of devotion, nor lead to true spiritual attainment.

People often become Muslim or Christian, infidels or heretics, merely because of the social environment in which they are born and raised, rather than arriving at such a decision through conscious choice. To be a Muslim, Christian, Jew or infidel is thus generally the result of social destiny. The vast majority of those born and raised in America grow up to become Christians; those in Israel, Jews; and those in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or Indonesia, Muslims.

In the words of the great Persian Sufi mystic, Shabistari, "By counting beads, repeating prayers and reading the Qur'an, the infidel does not become a Muslim. The man to whom true infidelity is revealed becomes disgusted with pretended faith."

The Relation of Men and Women in Society

The Qur'an is not a "dead text" which may only be read and interpreted literally. It is vital for the future of humanity that we recognize and embrace the moral and spiritual messages which it conveys.

For example, the relative social positions of men and women should not be based on gender. The Qur'anic reference to *rijal* as the "leader" of *nisa* is often interpreted as men being the leaders of women. However, a well-known hadith states that a *rajul* (singular form of *rijal*) appeared to the Prophet Muhammad saw. In this case, the word *rajul* does not refer to a man at all, but rather to the Archangel Gabriel, who is devoid of gender. This hadith reveals that gender does not bestow upon men an inherent monopoly on leadership positions in society, but rather, that leadership is a function of one's intelligence and native ability, put to wise use.