

RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Abstract

Generally speaking, all religions promise to save only their own adherents. Christ is supposed to save those who believe in Him as the second person of the Trinity, whose blood will save them from the wrath of God the Father. Similarly Mohammed promises to save only those who believe in Allah (One God) and him as the last prophet. The approach of all religions is, in a manner of speaking, quite insular. No revealed religion promises to save all mankind.

The positive point in all revealed religions is that they enjoin peace and preach non-violence. It is their votaries who violate the injunctions of their religions and bring disaster upon mankind. If the believers could practice their several religions in their pristine spirit, there would be no need to spell out the basic human rights or to enforce them through declaration.

The real danger to man is from secular institutions, which take decisions on the basis of a majority vote. The majority naturally has to look after its own interests, not enlightened interest based on the good of all mankind. If the majority is enlightened and good, their decisions will be for the good of humanity. If the majority is unenlightened, their approach to human problems will be undignified.

Introduction

RELIGION, revealed or man-made, has often militated against the enjoyment of simple pleasures. It has more often sacrificed individual interests at the altar of the collective good of the people whom it promises to save. The question, is that of Civil or Social Liberty; that is, the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual. It would, perhaps, be quite far-fetched to look for elements of the protection of human rights in the Code of Hammurabi (c. 2130-2088 B.C), the most ancient code of law at present known. The sanctions which it provides in trying to protect worthy human-rights objectives (such as the administration of justice, marriage and the family) are so disproportionately cruel that it is preferable to disregard this legislator altogether in our context. It can, however, be said without any fear of contradiction that in days or yore "Might was Right", and man's plight can be described as

Monsters of the prime, That tear each other in their slime.

In India Hinduism flourished quite early. It is an amalgam of traditions and rituals of devotional and philosophical systems built up over the past 44,500 years arising from indigenous cults and successive invasions, notably among which was that by the Aryans (c.2000-1500 B.C). It is classified the people in four district categories: (a) Brahmans, Khashtria, Vesh, and Shudra ("Untouchables) or Dalits (oppressed or broken people), in common parlance known as "Scheduled Castes". The system aimed at the establishment of a religious order (Brahmanas) with the physical power of Kashutri (equivalent or European bellatoes), the Vesh being the traders and working classes and the Shudras being the menial part of the population. This system has continued in India, and is still persistent there. This caste system badly cuts across the Human Rights.

Yogesh Verhade, President of the Ambedkar Centre for Justice and Peace, speaking at the international Human Right Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM), has revealed what the cast system does to the lower caste and how these

“Untouchables” are openly persecuted and discriminated against by the largest democracy in the world and urged the commission to pass the following resolution to:

“Take appropriate steps to eradicate the practice of untouchability which is a crime against humanity and discrimination on the basis of caste, religion and other factors by the year 2000, failing which sanctions will be imposed, keeping in view that development projects financed by UNDP and IFIS of the poor are not affected:.

The speaker opens his statement by saying:

“I am Yogesh Verhade, one of the few fortunate ones among 250 million Dalits (Untouchables) of South Asia, who made it to the UN. Most of my brothers and sisters are surviving as sub-humans bearing suffering from racism and racial discrimination in the form of the caste system”.

Verhade paints a shocking picture of the conditions that the untouchables live in. He says that a Dalit cannot touch a water-well. A five year old Dalit girl, if she is thirsty and goes to a well for a drink, cannot fetch water. She has to keep her bucket 20 feet away from the well. Other high caste women may, after a while, throw some water into her bucket. A Dalit cannot get food or water from a hotel like others. He is served in a broken cup or plate and if he dares argue, he is beaten up, wounded or killed. The Dalits live outside of the village as outcasts: they mostly bonded labour or landless labour. Their children are told to sit at the end of the classroom on the floor and are constantly humiliated. The Operation Research Group based in India estimates that India has the highest percentage of child labour, close to 44 million, most of them from the Dalit group.

Verhade quotes from the Manu Code of laws, the most important legal document followed by the Hindus, to illustrate the plight of Dalits:

- 1) Food gets polluted by the smell of a pig, by the look of a dog and the touch of a Shudra..(Ch 3,S.7)
- 2) A Brahmana (priest) can take work from a Shudra for wages or no wages. The Shudra has been created by Brahma (God) to serve the Brahmans..(C 8,S.143).
- 3) A Brahmana may give for the livelihood of Shudras, the remnants of his food, his torn clothes and tasteless grain..(Ch 10,S.122)

Verhade says this dehumanizing teaching of the Hindu religion has been instrumental in keeping this 2000 year old caste system intact, and since 15 per cent of the high caste Hindus control 85 per cent of the nation through bureaucracy, police, judiciary, media and money, it is impossible for the Dalit to get any justice and fairness in any walk of life.

Gautama (563 -483 B.C), who preached deep meditation, organized the order of mendicants, and believed in nirvana (freedom from the cycle of life). He was, like Pythagoras (c. 580-c. 500 B.C)., an apostle of non-violence. Having lived on the border of India and Nepal, he converted thousands of votaries in a very short time. But the Hindus forced Buddhism out of India, and now a few Buddhists if at all may be living in India.

With the passage of time things changed. The first religious lawgiver, strictly speaking, was Moses, one of the greatest figures in the Old Testament and the writer of the biblical Pentateuch, which describes how the Ten Commandments were promulgated through him, and the making of the criminal and liturgical laws of the Israelites. The Ten Commandments, (1491 B.C) except one, are negative. In Judaism, therefore, there is the maximum amount of freedom, and it is the easiest to practice; for not much obligation is placed on the individual on the positive side.

Holy Christ, the anointed king or Messaiah of Jewish prophecy, sometimes conceived of as a military leader who would conquer the Jews oppressors, added a definitely positive commandment:

“But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy god with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. One these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

The Christians thus accept the Decalogue, together with Chris’s teaching, as the basis of their morality. However, the classic doctrine had its full expression with St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74) and other scholastic philosophers. Here the emphasis was on law, obligations, and justice rather than on rights. But when St Thomas discussed natural law, for example, he acknowledged inclinations of man’s rational nature such as the preservation of one’s own life, mating, education of offspring, knowledge of truth about God, social living and the like. Thus he indicated man’s need, under the natural law, for powers that later came to be called personal rights; civil land political rights; and economic, social and cultural rights.

Mohammed (c. 570-632), the Prophet of Islam, who set up a theocratic state in Medina in AD 622, gave an exhaustive code of ethics as well as government. It deals with not only moral virtues but political virtues also. The basic human rights are recognized and enshrined in Al-Quran as well as in numerous

sayings (habits) of the Prophet of Islam, whose life was a perfect example of the precepts of his religion.

U.N. Declaration of Human Rights

The question of what constitutes human rights has been under consideration for a very long time. The United Nations, after mature deliberation, promulgated the latest thinking on human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was unanimously adopted in Paris on Dec 10, 1948. This include, *inter alia*,

- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attack upon his honour and reputation.
- Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family.

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

- Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression;..
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family,.

Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person

Both Christianity and Islam accept the Right to Life:

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”.

Islam, however, lays much more emphasis on it and has clearly identified its message as a “Call to Life”:

O ye who believe ; Obey Allah, and the messenger when He calleth you to that which quickeneth you (gives you life),., (Al-Quran, VIII:24)

As for Liberty and Security of Person, both the religions guarantee them. Islam is again much more emphatic on the subject. When Caliph “Umar Ibn al-Khattab (583-644) was informed that Abu Lulu , a slave of Mughira Ibn Shaba, had shown ill-intentions against his life, the latter did not order his arrest on the ground that he had done nothing against law. The same attitude was adopted by Caliph, Ali(599-661) when in Kufa he was told that Abdul Reman Ibn Muljam was planning to assassinate him and was advised to arrest him before he

perpetrated the fatal act (a kind of preventive detention). The Caliph said that as Ibn Muljam had done no wrong, how could he be arrested; and as for his life, it is was in the hands of Allah. The respect for liberty could hardly go higher.

So far as the security of person is concerned, Islam has not only recognized it for Muslims but also for non-Muslims in an Islamic state. This will be covered more fully below when we discuss the rights of minorities in an Islamic state.

Slavery

When the Prophet of Islam started preaching in Mecca, slavery and the slave trade were rife in the Arabian peninsula. In fact, the institution of slavery goes back to antiquity, and such personages as Plato and Aristotle are said to have kept slaves and concubines. The slaves were, in fact, a commodity of trade. Al-Quran gave a number of injunctions to free them, e.g:

“It is not for a believer to kill a believer unless (it be) by mistake. He who hath killed a believer by mistake, must set free a believing slave, and pay the blood-money to the family of the slain, unless they remit it as a charity. If he (the victim) be of a people hostile unto you, and he is a believer, then (the penance is) to set free a believing slave. And if he cometh of a folk between whom and you there is a covenant, then the blood-money must be paid unto his folk and (also) a believing slave must be set free..(IV:92)

“The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hers are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors..(IX:60)

“..And such of you slaves as seek a writing (of emancipation), write it for them if ye are aware of aught of good in them, and bestow upon them of the wealth of Allah which He hath bestowed upon... (XXIV:33)

“Those who put away their wives (by saying they are as their mothers) and “afterward would go back on that which they have said, (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch one another.. (LVIII:3)

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

Islam is against all kinds of torture and oppression. Al-Quran says,

“And lo for those who (now) do wrong there is an evil day like unto the evil day (which came for) their likes (of old)l so let them not ask Me to hasten on (that day)” (LI:59)

When the assassin of Ali, Abdul Rahman Ibn Muljam, was brought before the Caliph, he did not order his punishment. Instead, he ordered that he should be given something to drink. Then he asked of him, “Was I not a good ruler?”

Equality before Law and Protection of Law

Every religion has its emphasis on some virtue. Christianity lays stress on Love:

“If I speak in the tongues of men and angles, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I give away all I have, and if I delivereth my body to be burned, but have not love, I give nothing.

Islam’s emphasis is on Justice, that is, insaf; in other words, equality. Al- Quran says that:

“O ye who belive be steadfast witnesses for All in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that he deal not justly. Deal justly,.. (V:8)

and

“And if two parties of believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them. And if one party of them doth wrong to the other, fight ye that which doth wrong till it return unto the ordinance of Allah; then, if it return, make peace between them justly, and act equitably. Lo Allah loveth the equitable” (XLIX:9)

In Christianity equality is not always given to Christians. For example, in the church seats are reserved for parishioners. In Islam, on the other hand, there is no such distinction. One who comes to the mosque can sit anywhere he likes, and a latecomer, whether king or clown, will be obliged to take an empty place; he may even be relegated to the last line. Allama Dr. Sheikh Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the poet of the East, has pointed to this practice in the following couplet:

Mahmood (king) and Ayaaz (slave) took their
places in the same row; There was no distinction
of slave or king.

Another instance is that of Caliph “Umar, at the time of his visit to Jerusalem (638). The Caliph had been traveling with his servant on a camel, and they were riding it one by one. When they reached the outskirts of the city, it was the servant turn to ride. He offered his turn to the Caliph, but he refused it and appeared before the citizens of Bayt al-Maqdis on foot holding the rein of the camel, while his servant was sitting on the camel.

There is complete equality in Islamic law. Al-Quran says,

“O mankind Lo We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is (he who is) the best in contact...” (XLIX:13)

This point was further clarified by the Prophet of Islam in his famous sermon delivered on the occasion of a farewell pilgrimage on Feb 23, 633, when he declared:

“O people beware: your God is One, No Arab has an superiority over a non-Arab, and no white man has any superiority over a black one, except on the basis of piety.”

Thus Islam recognizes no distinction of race or colour, black or white, language or nationality, etc. Human beings are all equal, not only in theory, but also in practice. Bilal, a negro slave was appointed first *Muazzin* of Islam; Usama, the son of a freed slave, was appointed commander of the Muslim army against the Romans, and some great companions of the Prophet like Abu Bakr and Umar were placed under his command.

Another important feature of the Islamic idea of equality is that it does not make any discrimination between man and man in the matters of law. The same Islamic law applies to all citizens and people irrespective of their social or political status and all are equal before the law. Kings or emperors, heads of state or presidents, governors or senior officials enjoy no immunity or special privileges from the application of Islamic law. Even the Prophet of Islam did not consider himself or the members of his family above law. When Usama son Xayd, who was very close to the Prophet, tried to intercede in some matter of punishment for stealing, the Prophet of Islam not only rejected the intercession but also warned his followers saying:

“It was usual practice in the past that if ordinary persons committed a crime they were punished, but if an important person was found guilty he was let off. If Fatimah (Prophet’s daughter) is found guilty of stealing, her hand would also be cut.”

Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Exile

Islam does not allow arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Two famous examples of Caliph ‘Umar and Caliph Ali have been cited above. They did not arrest their would be assassins at the peril of their lives.

Arbitrary interference in Privacy

The concept of arbitrary interference in one’s privacy is not unknown in Islam. Once Caliph “Umar was on his nocturnal round. He heard the voice of some female person singing in her house. He trespassed, captured the inmates, and indicted them before a judge. The judge dismissed the suit on the ground that Islam did not allow any person, even the Caliph, to enter into the private premises of a person in order to arraign him.

Marriage (and Divorce)

Islam considers marriage to be one of the sacred institutions and duties of a Muslim. A general impression has been created that Muslim woman has no say in matrimonial affairs. This is not true. In Islam marriage is a contract, and not a sacrament, and in deliberating this contract consent of both the man and woman is essential:

“..place not difficulties in the way of their marrying their husbands if it is agreed between them in kindness.” (Al-Quran, II:232)

No other institution in Islam has been so vehemently criticized by non-Muslims as polygamy. Al-Quran has laid down:

“And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only)... IV:3)

This is a clear indication that doing justice to more than one wife is an extremely hard task, and many commentators of the verse have concluded that by using the term justice, the

Quran is indirectly dissuading the Muslims from establishing polygamous homes.

Another reason why a Muslim may marry more than one wife is due to the possibility of a decrease in men's population for some reason or another-war, epidemic, famine, etc and since Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims, there is a danger of illegal mating if they are deprived or marriage. No discussion of marriage would be complete without reference to divorce, but the permission has been granted with great reluctance:

“If a woman feareth ill-treatment from her husband, or desertion, it is no sin for them twain if they make terms of peace between themselves. Peace is better...(IV:128)

The Prophet of Islam, in connection with divorce, once remarked that

“With Allah the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce..”

In Islam a husband has been given the right to divorce, but a woman is also granted to stipulate her right to divorce in the marriage contract.

Property Rights and Inheritance

Islam has been very liberal in giving women their property and inheritance rights. Other religion of the world are mostly silent about this vital aspect of women's life. Islamic law, on the other hand, gives the woman an independent legal personality so far as material pros sessions are concerned. The law permits her to make use of her property in any way she likes. She can give its mandate to any person, with out without the consultation of her husband. Al-Quran says:

“Unto the men (of a family) belongeth a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto the women a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much – a legal share.” (IV:7)

In Chapter IV (The Women) Al-Quran has described in most elaborate terms the property and inheritance rights of women:

“Allah chargeth you concerning (the provision for) your children: to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females,..(IV:11).

In the opinion of certain critics this is against the basic rules of justice. They do not realize that a woman gets her part of property from three different sources, i.e. (1) her father, (2) her husband, and (3) her son (s); and this makes her share almost equal to man.

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

Al-Quran has stated at a number of places of think over again and again in order to gain true knowledge, e.g.

Religious freedom is one of the most important aspects of Islam. Al-Quran says,

“There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error..”(II:256).

The right to religion and conscience provides every citizen with liberty of belief and worship. He is free to perform the rites connected with his religious belief, and the state would neither interfere nor prevent him from doing so.

Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

Islam gives complete freedom of opinion and expression. On one occasion the Prophet of Islam said:

“Verily, the greatest jihad (holy war) is the expression truth before an oppressive ruler”.

Once Caliph ‘Umar was speaking to a Friday congregation from the pulpit. A commoner stopped him by saying that he would not listen to him until he told him how did he get a second piece of cloth to make an apparel, because being of greater bulk one piece of cloth (which had been given to each of the citizens) could not cover the whole of his large body. The Caliph’s son “Abdullah stood up and said that he had given his share of the cloth to his father for making his garment.

On another occasion Caliph ‘Umar thought of fixing the upper limit of the amount of dower as he had been receiving complaints from young men who were being asked to pay huge amounts of dower to the women for marriage. He was stopped to do so by a woman for Quraish, who remarked:

“O ‘Umar who are you to put restrictions on our right which Allah has granted to us? Have you not read verse 20 of Chapter IV of Al-Quran?”

Instead of getting annoyed, the Caliph thanked God were such people in Ummah who would correct him if he went wrong. Such was the freedom of opinion and expression exercised by the common men that they could question the Caliph in public.

Standard of Living

No other religion except Islam has been given a complete economic system by way of *Ushr* (tithe), *Khums*, and *Zakat* (one-fortieth part of one’s savings in a year). The last one is meant to better the lot of the poor people. The Prophet of Islam has clearly clarified it in his saying.

“Allah has made *zakat* obligatory upon the Muslims. It is to be collected from the wealthy among you and distributed among the needy ones.

In order to ensure that it is actually spent on the welfare of the poor, its use for making buildings-schools, colleges, hospitals-has been prohibited, but it can be spent on the purchase of books, medicines clothes, etc., for the poor. In short, it is not utilized to meet the budget deficits in the capital expenditure of a Muslim state, but on the day-to-day needs of the poor people.

Another right which has been greatly stressed in Islam is that of provision of basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter to every citizen. After Egypt came into the fold of Islam (640 A.D)., and the question of amputating the hand of a thief came under question, Hazrat ‘Umar, the second Caliph, enquired whether the theft of an eatable was committed because of hunger; and when it was affirmed to him, he suspended the sentence until food was provided to each citizen. At that time he asserted that if a dog died on the bank of the Nile because of hunger, the ruler would not be spared by God.” As regards shelter, Caliph ‘Umar did not allow the construction of pucca houses because every Muslim had not been provided, at that time, with a kutchra house.

So far as the right to education is concerned, Islam as laid the greatest emphasis on it. Its importance can be gauged from the fact that the very first injunction which was given to the Prophet of Islam was about reading:

“Read: In the name of the Lord who createth.
Created man from a clot
Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
Who teacheth by the pen,
Teacheth man that which he know not.” (XCVI: 1-5)

This was followed by various pronouncements here and then. In II:15 the Prophet is instructed to pray, “My Lord Increase my knowledge (II:115). Then in XXXIX:9 the same subject is prepared in the form of a rhetorical question,” Are know equal with those who know not, implying an answer in the

negative. A number of sayings are also traceable to the Prophet himself, e.g., the acquisition of knowledge is a duty for all Muslim men and women; Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave; Acquire knowledge even if you have to go to China. The high esteem in which the Prophet held the learned and knowledge is evident from the fact that he released without ransom some of the prisoners who had been captured in the battle of Badr (624 A.D) on the condition that each one of them should teach at least ten Muslim children how to reads and write.

Dignity of Labour and their Rights

The rights of labour were guaranteed for the first time in Islam, which regards all kinds of labour, physical or mental, as honourable and respectable. There is no concept of any menial or undignified work in Islam. Dignity was practically conferred on labour in the Battle of the Trench in 627 A.D. It was the third battle which was fought by the Prophet after the establishment of the first Islamic state in Medina. On the advice of one of his companions, Salman Farisi, a trench was dug around the city to ward off an attack from the Mecans. The Prophet himself dug it, along with his companions, when all of them were hungry. The Prophet also called a worker, a labourer, as “the beloved of Allah.” His injunction to the hirer of labourers is to pay their wages before the sweat of their brow got dried.

Rights of Minorities in Islam

Vitriolic criticism is sometimes made that Islam does not treat minorities on an equal footing. In an Islamic state the people are divided into (i) Muslims (who believe in the ideology of the state) and (ii) non-Muslims (who do not believe in that ideology). The responsibility to run the state rests primarily on Muslims. The non-Muslims, if they cooperate, are neither called upon to undertake nor can be entrusted with the responsibility of policy-making. The state, however, guarantees them certain rights conferred upon them by the Islamic Shariah, which divided non-Muslims into three categories, viz:

- (1) Those who become the subjects of an Islamic state under some treaty or agreement (who are treated according to the terms of the agreement). The Prophet of Islam said about them: “Beware whosoever is cruel and hard on such people (contractees) or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can endure, or realizes anything from them against their free will, I shall myself be a complaint against him on the Day of Judgment” (Related by Abu Dawud, The Book of *Jihad*).
- (2) Those who become its subjects after being defeated by the Muslims in a war. As soon as the state accepts *jizyah* from them, it is obliged to protect their lands and properties, their life and honour. The amount of *jizyah*, which is levied only on those who have actually fought against Muslims and conquered and are able-bodied, not to clergymen, monks and servants of monasteries, etc., is fixed according to their financial position and those who belong to the middle class pay less, and the least amount is charged from the poor class; and those who are destitute and do not have any fixed source of income or depend on others are completely exempted. The conquered who accept *jizyah* are, in turn, exempt from such obligations as fighting in wars, etc.
- (3) Those who are there in the state in any other way. They also come under the definition of *zimmi* (the “guaranteed”), and their basic human rights are guaranteed in Islam. They have the same human rights as Muslims have; they are free to worship in their own way; their places of workshop are inviolable; and they

are governed by the same criminal law as governs the Muslims.

In Pakistan, which has openly and avowedly declared itself an Islamic state, religious minorities have been declared free to profess their religions. Non-Muslims of various denominations in Pakistan number about 3.25 per cent of the total population. It is the moral, religious, political and constitutional obligation of the Government of Pakistan that the rights and privileges of its religious minorities are properly safeguarded and they have full opportunity for self-development and advancement. The minorities in Pakistan have never been subjected to any kind of discrimination, be it economic, social religious or political.

Muslim Minorities in other Countries

Where there are hardly any complaints from non-Muslim minorities living in Muslim states, there are a plethora of complaints from Muslims living in non-Muslim countries about their maltreatment at the hands of the majority. Out of an estimated population of 950 million Muslims, some 325 million live, as minorities, in non-Muslim countries. For example, Muslims are the largest minority in India, which has a secular constitution and claims to be the largest democracy in the world. For the last 47 years it has been defying all the UN resolutions on Kashmir. Its occupation forces are indulging with impunity in the killing of innocent Muslims looting, arson and collective rape of Muslim women in the occupied part of Kashmir. Implementation of UN Resolutions of Kashmir have been continuously vetoed by the former USSR because of an Indo-Soviet collusion to have control over the region. Now, then the Soviet Union has disintegrated. American priorities have changed overnight. Now the US appears to be in no hurry to settle this long sanding issue, as it is harbouring the false delusion that it is not Pakistan but India which can safeguard American interest as a counter force to the Chinese influence in South Asia.

Within the border of India itself Hindu extremists have killed thousands of Muslims and demolished hundreds of mosques. On Sunday, December 6, 1992, Hindu extremists desecrated and destroyed Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, in spite of the assurance of the provincial government to the Supreme Court not to do so.

In Burma the Muslim population is estimated to be about 10 per cent, i.e. about 3 million. Since the takeover of the government of Gen. Ne Win, Muslims have not been permitted to go for Hajj. The Muslims of the province of North Arakan (which adjoins Bangla Desh), who are known as Rohingyas, have been subjected to great difficulties specially of a discriminatory nature. Consequently more than 200,000 Muslims fled to Bangla Desh.

As regards the Republic of Philippines, there are about five million Muslims there. They are suffering severely in the south. A large number of mosques have been desecrated, thousands of persons have been killed, and tremendous losses inflicted on priority.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina Serbian troops, armed with sophisticated Soviet supplied Yugoslav weapons, are busy with "ethnic cleansing." Thousands of Muslims have been killed, their property destroyed or looted, and gangrape adopted for the first time as an instrument of policy. The United Nations has been paying only lip service, not allowing the Bosnians to import arms to defend themselves. Hundred of them have come as refugees to Pakistan, and thousands of them have fled to European countries.

Summing up the discussion of human rights in Islam, A.K. Brohi, an eminent Pakistani jurist, in his article entitled "Islam and Human Rights," differentiated between the Islamic approach and the Western approach to Human Rights in the following terms:

“Both Islam and the West attach highest importance to the preservation of the human rights and the fundamental freedom of the individual in society. Yet despite their common aim, their approach differs widely. In the West concern for an individual springs from an ethnocentric view of the world in which man is the measure of all things. In Islam the view is ethnocentric; God is supreme and man exists solely to serve Him. It may appear from this that man has no rights, only duties. Since within the totality of Islam man’s duty to God embraces both his duty to society and to every other individual. Paradoxically the rights of each are protected by the obligation of all under Divine Law. As the state itself is equally subject to this same law, it too is compelled to protect the rights of the individual. By stressing the equality of all men before God, by emphasizing his dignity and freedom from submission of all save God and thus protecting the individual from oppression at its hand, Islam sets a high standards in human rights to which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 can be seen as a basic corollary or extension of the programme laid down in the Quran.”

Conclusion

To conclude, it may be said, without any fear of contradiction, that all religions promise to save only their own adherents. Christ is supposed to save those who believe in Him as the second person of the Trinity, whose blood will save them from the wrath of God the Father. Similarly Mohammed promises to save only those who believe in Allah (One God) and him as the last Prophet. The approach of all religions is, in a manner of speaking, quite insular. No revealed religion promises to save all mankind.

The positive point in all revealed religions is that they enjoin peace and preach non-violence. It is their votaries who violate the injunctions of their religions and bring disaster upon mankind. If the believers could practice their several religion in their pristine spirit, there would no need to spell out the basic human rights or to enforce them though declarations at various levels.

The real danger to man is from secular institutions, which take decisions on the basis of a majority vote. The majority naturally has to look after its own interests, not enlightened interest based on the good of all mankind. If the majority is enlightened and good, their decisions will be for the good of humanity. If the majority is unenlightened, their approach to human problems will be undignified.

The United Nations is supposed to look after the interests of all its members. In practice it is not doing so. It has become a convenient handle in the hands of its permanent members, who enjoy the right of veto. They successfully decide those issues in which their own interests lie, and hang fire on others. The League of Nations had earlier adopted the same attitude.

The United Nations has certainly done a lot to avert bloody crises. It has also done a good deal to relevant human distress and suffering in various fields, such as food, health, education, science and technology, environment, etc., and has successfully avoided a third world war so far. But it has failed to resolve some international disputes, e.g, the Kashmir dispute, the Bosnian bloodshed, etc. But where it likes it strikes, e.g. Iraq, Haiti, etc. Unless the United Nations acts in a more independent way, it might fail totally in the objectives.

The UN charter of Human Rights is quite comprehensive. The only fly in the ointment is its implementation. Unless a more independent- and powerful – character is vested in the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Security Council will come a cropper in many issues which vitally concern the Third World but which are of little or no interest to its permanent members.