

Abstract

Our world always seems to be in a great turmoil! Warfares against an external enemy in terms of diseases, natural disaster, politics, social, economic, religious, outer space and the list goes on. Spiritual gurus and major religion contradicts this point, the enemy is nowhere to be found except within all of us, just like they proclaim that God is within all of us. Warfare of good and evil is decided on human free will. Many religions encompass both the subtle and overt, spiritual and physical, esoteric and exoteric elements and interpretation of their faith.



"The true seeker of knowledge naturally strives for truth and is not content with common opinion, but soars with undimmed and unwearied passion until he grasps the essential nature of things..." 1

~ PLATO

An American epic space opera, "Star Wars" the Jedi, who uses the Force for good, and Sith, who uses the dark side for evil attempt to take over the galaxy.

One of the prominent elements in this saga is the "Force," it is described in the first produced film as "an omnipresent energy field created by all living things [that] surrounds us, penetrates us, [and] binds the galaxy together."

While the power of Force can be used for good, allows users to perform a variety of supernatural feats and also can amplify certain physical traits, the force also has a dark side for evil, if misused; it permeates into the user with hatred, aggression, and malevolence.

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The concept of revolution today is seen in the wizarding world of Harry Potter, where younger generations are trained to use the power of their magical wand to transform all that is evil in guise into granting themselves and others the goods of the world.

You cannot fight against the ego and win, just as you cannot fight against darkness. The light of consciousness is all that is necessary, states Eckhart Tolle in his book, "The Power of Now." Hinduism calls it, Maya, the veil of delusion, seeing this dysfunction as a form of collective mental illness. Ramana Maharshi states it bluntly: "The Mind is Maya."

Buddhism calls it "Dukkha", which can be translated as suffering, unsatisfactoriness, or just plain misery. In the Christian teaching, the normal collective state of humanity is one of "original sin."

Mahatma Gandhi, in his commentary on the Gita, interpreted the battle as "an allegory in which the battlefield is the soul and Arjuna, man's higher impulses struggling against evil."

Swami Vivekananda also said that the first discourse in the Gita related to Kurukshetra war is only an allegory. When we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil."

Islam emphasizes the importance of fighting "Nafs" (the lower self, the base instincts in its primitive stage incites us to commit evil), because Prophet Muhammad said after returning from a war, "We now return from the small struggle (Jihad Asghar) to the big struggle (Jihad Akbar)". His companions asked, "Oh prophet of God, what is the big struggle?" He replied, "The struggle against nafs."

Rumi warns of the nafs in its guise of religious hypocrisy, saying "the nafs has a rosary and a Koran in its right hand, and a scimitar and dagger in the sleeve."

There are three principal stages of nafs which are specifically mentioned in the Qur'an. They are stages in the process of development, refinement and mastery of the nafs.

In the eponymous Sura of the Qur'an, the prophet Joseph says "Yet I claim not that my nafs was innocent: verily the nafs of man incites to evil." [Qur'an 12:53] Here he is explaining the circumstances in which he came to be falsely imprisoned for the supposed seduction of Zuleika.

The Qur'an enjoins the faithful "to hinder the nafs from lust," [Qur'an 79:40] and another Hadith warns that "the worst enemy you have is [the nafs] between your sides."

In Sura al-Qiyama the Qur'an mentions "the self-accusing nafs," [Qur'an 75:2]. This is the stage where "the conscience is awakened and the self accuses one for listening to one's ego. One repents and asks for forgiveness." Here the nafs is inspired by your heart, sees the results of your actions, agrees with your brain, sees your weaknesses, and aspires to perfection.

In Sura al-Fajr the Qur'an mentions "the nafs at peace." [Qur'an 89:27] This is the ideal stage of ego for Sufis. On this level one is firm in one's faith and leaves bad manners behind. The soul becomes tranquil, at peace. At this stage Sufis have relieved themselves of all materialism and worldly problems and are satisfied with the will of God. 3

This is called Surrender. The meaning of surrender: to some people surrender may have some negative connotations, implying defeat, giving up, failing to rise to the challenges of life, becoming lethargic in life and so on. True surrender however is something entirely different.

Surrender is not weakness, there's great strength in it. Only surrendered person has spiritual power. Through surrender you will be free internally from the situation. You will then find that the situation changes without any effort on your part.

- 1) Nothing to do with what you are doing and where you are going but HOW?
- 2) Thought which means unconscious.
- 3) You take a journey into the unmanifested every night when you enter the phase of deep dream of asleep, you merge with the source, you draw from it the vital energy that sustains you for a while when you return to the manifested of the world of separate forms. This energy is much more vital than the food. Man does not live by bread alone. You don't go into it consciously. You no longer exist in that state.
- 4) The unmanifested does not liberate you until you enter into it consciously.
- 5) Truth: "you will know the truth and the Truth will make you free." This is not a conceptual truth. It is the truth of Eternal life beyond form, which is known directly or not at all. 4

Think, why has God created you?
After death, what answer will you give in the hereafter?

“O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women.” (Holy Qur’an 4:1).

The Christian faith, the Judaic faith and the Islamic faith are all described as Ahl al-Kitab, People of the Book. That Book is the totality of Allah’s revelation to mankind and therefore you are talking about the one monotheistic society which is the monotheistic society essentially of the United States and of course, Canada, etc. The point I wish to make to you is that the fundamental principle of faith, that is monotheism, is the same – whether you are Muslim, Christian or Jew.

Hazrat Ali the fourth Caliph and the first Imam, cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad has stated, “To know yourself; is to know God.” Before you can understand the status of God, you must first understand the status of man. If a man develops relationship with God, he would become an angel. It is your duty to keep your hearts clean. The man who becomes faithless is sick. If the sickness is not treated from the beginning, it will eat him and do him great harm.

In Muslim societies, culture matters a great deal, for it is intimately intertwined with matters of faith, since Islam does not deal in dichotomies but in all encompassing unity. Spirit and body are one, man and nature are one. What is more, man is answerable to God for what man has created. Since all that we see and do resonates on the faith, the aesthetics of the environments we build and the quality of the interactions that take place within them reverberate on our spiritual lives.

There are two principle divisions in Islam: exoteric and esoteric. This can be identified completely with the Sunni and Shia Islam. The difference in simple terms is the exoteric has the participation all believers through a certain manner, where certain religious duties are performed by all believers and the personal individual spiritual search for spiritual happiness, for spiritual enlightenment is not part of the teaching of that Tariqah (path). The Shia Ismaili Tariqah, is an esoteric path, with deeper inner meaning, the meaning to which an individual accede through guidance, through direction, that is, the Imam shows to those who seek a way to participate individually, in the search for enlightenment and for spiritual happiness.

You Must Devote Sufficient Time to Your Spiritual Understanding and Enlightenment. Even though, it is difficult to receive the education in terms of the humanistic background of Islam, which some of you might wish to receive, but I want to remind you that our

Tariqah of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims is not only exoteric, it is also esoteric.

- Aga Khan IV.

In Islam, the fundamental of every good Muslim is not only the number of times that he says his prayers, but that he should be conscious of Allah, that his thoughts should tend towards Allah at times when he/she does not have to be in prayer. This is sometimes what other Muslims do, they go to the mosque, say their prayers and that is all. And the presence of Allah, the thought of Allah, the fact that Allah exists, the spiritual identification with him is inexistent.

The Ismaili history incorporates its teachings by encompassing all the great religions of the world even before Islam. From six major Prophets such as Adam, Noah(Nuh), Abraham(Ibrahim), Moses(Musa), Jesus(Isa) and Prophet Muhammad to 124,000 Minor Prophets or messengers, including Buddha, Wiseman of China, Socrates, Enoch (Idris), Eber (Hud), Lot in Bible(Lut), Ishmael (Isma'il), Isaac (Is'haq), Jacob (Yaqub), Job(Ayyub), Shoaib, Aaron(Har'un), David (Dawud), Solomon (Sulayman), John (Yahiya), Jonah (Yunus), Saleh, Zakariyya, to name just a few.

Ismaili history also links their religious ancestry as far back to Hinduism, the ten best known avatars of Vishnu are collectively known as the Dasavatara (a dvigucompound meaning "ten avatars").

Vishnu's avatars typically descend for a very specific purpose. An oft-quoted passage from the Bhagavad Gita describes the typical role of an avatar of Vishnu—to bring dharma, or righteousness, back to the social and cosmic order:

"Whenever righteousness wanes and unrighteousness increases I send myself forth.

For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil, and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being age after age." 4

(Gita: 4.7-8)

1. Machh (Fish),
2. Korabh (tortoise),
3. Vaaraah (Boar)
4. Narsang (half man-half lion),
5. Vaayamann (Dwarf)
6. Farsiraam (sage with axe who killed the thousand-armed king)

7. Shri Raam Chandhrji (the hero of the Hindu epic Ramayana)
8. Shri Kirshanji (the reciter of Bhagavad Gita)
9. Shri Budh (reincarnation of Krishna - survived only 9 hours).

10. Nakalanki avatar ("Eternity", or "time", or "The Destroyer of foulness"), who is expected to appear at the end of Kal Yuga. It is believed that it will be in the form of a horseman who will appear when the world is near its end and save it from extinction. (4-5-6). For Ismailis, the tenth Avataar has already arrived in Islam from Brahma, Prophet Muhammad to Vishnu Hazrat Ali cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad who was born inside the 'Kaaba, in Mecca, Arabia. Al-Buraq was the name of Prophet Muhammad's horse and 'Dul Dul' was the name of Hazrat Ali's horse, today the legacy and expertise in horsemanship remains with Aga Khan IV.

In the article written by an author Dr. Ezra Chwat from Hebrew University of Jerusalem states in her article titled, "Great Rabbis of the Muslim Empire,"

"In 657, when Ali ibn Abu Talib — the fourth Caliph to rule after the death of Mohammed — extended the Muslim conquest into Iraq, he was greeted wholeheartedly by the Jews there, then the most important of the world's Jewish communities. Ali saw the Jews of Iraq as a natural ally and granted them stability, prosperity and religious autonomy. This was the dawn of a new era of Jewish cultural creativity, one that lasted almost 600 years and was central in the development of Judaism.

The cultural cross-pollination benefitted both sides with arts, sciences and trade.

In these fields the Jews were welcome participants as opposed to the oppressive atmosphere in Northern Europe, a secluded ghetto-culture as was the case in Christian Europe. Because of the dialogue with Islam, the Jews became more aware of their philosophic and linguistic heritage. The new methods that developed in the vast Muslim Empire for the communication of knowledge and the codification of law were employed by the Rabbis in order to keep in contact with the ever-expanding Jewish Diaspora."

Buddha was considered an enlightened or awakened one, he knew what was in the hearts of children and human kind, and he taught everyone how to live a happy and peaceful life. It is about looking at and thinking about our own lives. He shows us how to understand ourselves and how to cope with our daily problems. (7)

Eckhart Tolle is a contemporary spiritual teacher who is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition. In his writing and seminars, he conveys a simple yet profound message with the timeless and uncomplicated clarity of the ancient spiritual masters. There is a way out of suffering and into peace. In his book, 'A New Earth,' he explains that pain suffered by countless humans throughout the history of humanity, which is a history of

continuous tribal warfare, of enslavement, pillage, rape, torture and other forms of violence. This pain still lives in the collective psyche of humanity and is being added to on a daily basis, as you can verify when you watch the news tonight or look at the drama in people's relationships. The collective pain-body is probably encoded within every human's DNA, although we haven't discovered it there yet.

Some people carry dense pain-bodies that are never completely dormant. They may be smiling and making polite conversation, but you do not need to be psychic to sense that seething ball of unhappy emotion in them just underneath the surface, waiting for the next event to react to, the next person to blame or confront, the next thing to be unhappy about. Their pain-bodies can never get enough, are always hungry. They magnify the ego's need for enemies.

Through their reactivity, relatively insignificant matters are blown up out of all proportion as they try to pull other people into their drama by getting them to react. Some get involved in protracted and ultimately pointless battles or court cases with organizations or individuals. Others are consumed by obsessive hatred toward an ex-spouse or partner, a reality completely distorted by fear, hostility, anger and a desire to inflict and receive more pain.

Dr. Wayne Dyer, in his CD 'Staying on the Path' refers to Carl Jung, who talked about man's search for his own spiritual awareness in many of his writings and he devoted his entire life to studying matters of higher consciousness.

During our lifetime and the future generations, we would be facing a certain revolution which is somewhat like the industrial revolution in Britain, but it will be a far greater consequence. This is a revolution throughout the technical world today. Those in astronomy, geology, mechanics, radio-television, printing, this is such a thorough revolution that if you want to be able to handle it, to be able to keep your children the values which you have in life, you have to have a source for these values which they can live to. For example, when you think that you will be able to leave this world, go and spend the weekend, say...to the moon or Venus or something like this, this is the fact which may be very far from you today, but this is not a thought which will be far from your children.

Therefore, you must give them something upon which they can base their ideals in life. What is going to be this basis? There is only one source from which you can take these ideals, these principles, and that is your religion.

I am convinced that if you follow the way of some other countries and you discard your religion, you will treat it as something which is of the past, then you will surely come up and run into major failures all along your life. Because, though this is not something

which is actually what you will perceive, it is something which your children will feel as they grow up. If you have faith, you will feel it and often you cannot teach a child his religion by drumming it in his head. He learns just as much by feeling, by interpretation, as by listening to lectures.

A novel written by Dan Brown, "The Da Vinci Code," has provoked a popular interest concerning the Holy Grail legend and Magdalene's role in the history of Christianity. The book has been extensively denounced by many Christian denominations as an attack on the Roman Catholic Church. The novel nonetheless became a worldwide bestseller that sold 80 million copies as of 2009 and has been translated into 44 languages. (8) A very critical point was raised of the bloodline of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, even if it were a female heir alive today, would the Christians follow an ordinary theologians? If Moses and Safura had a living offspring, would the Jewish people not turned to them for guidance?

As Shia Muslims, the Ismailis are united by their recognition of the Prophet Muhammad's appointment of his cousin and son-in-law, Hazrat Ali, as the first Imam and his declaration entrusting his Authority to his progeny through Hazrat Ali and his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter.

The speech given at the Tutzing Evangelical Academy in Germany upon receiving the Tolerance Award on May 20, 2006, Aga Khan stated, I cite Hazrat Ali's words so that you may understand the spirit in which I have attempted to fulfill the mandate left to me as the 49th hereditary (Ismaili) Imam after the death of my grandfather. I quote, "No Honor is like Knowledge, No Belief is like Modesty & Patience, No Attainment is like Humility, No Power is like Forbearance, No Support is more Reliable than Consultation."

Hazrat Ali's regard for knowledge reinforces the compatibility of faith and the world. And his respect for consultation is, in my view, a commitment to tolerant and open-hearted democratic processes.

A Christian denomination is an identifiable religious body under a common name, structure, and doctrine within Christianity. In the Orthodox tradition, Churches are divided often along ethnic and linguistic lines, into separate churches and traditions. Technically, divisions between one group and another are defined by doctrine and church authority. Issues such as the nature of Jesus, the authority of apostolic succession, and papal primacy separate one denomination from another.

In the context of the English language gnosis generally refers to the word's meaning within the spheres of Christian mysticism, Mystery religions and Gnosticism where it signifies 'spiritual knowledge' in the sense of mystical enlightenment. (9-10)

Jews can be categorized in means of belief, practices, and racial origin. Although one way to distinguish a Jew is by their origin, the main divisions are based on beliefs and practices. Orthodox Jews are those who follow and practice teachings very closely. ultra Orthodox Jews, also known as Haredi, obey the Jewish religion laws very strictly. They live in separate communities and somewhat separate themselves from the rest of the world. They are the fastest growing group of Jews.

Kabbalists have long deemed that the Torah contains esoteric information meant to explain the relationship between an eternal and mysterious Creator and the mortal and finite universe (His creation). Kabbalah teaches doctrines that are accepted by some Jews as the true meaning of Judaism while other Jews have rejected these doctrines as heretical and antithetical to Judaism.

Kabbalah seeks to define the nature of the universe and the human being, the nature and purpose of existence, and various other ontological questions. It also presents methods to aid understanding of these concepts and to thereby attain spiritual realization. Kabbalah originally developed entirely within the realm of Jewish thought and constantly uses classical Jewish sources to explain and demonstrate its esoteric teachings. These teachings are thus held by kabbalists to define the inner meaning of both the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and traditional rabbinic literature, their formerly concealed transmitted dimension, as well as to explain the significance of Jewish religious observances. (11-12)

Today in the industrialized world there is without any doubt, an image which is being given to the faith of Islam, to the people who practice it and that is not a correct image; so let me start by clarifying that yes, the Islamic World has got problems - there are areas of the Islamic World which are at war, there are people who are poor, there are problems with government, but that does not represent the faith of Islam and just to give you an example, it would be easy for a Muslim to turn around and say, "Does the Irish Republican Army and its behavior represent correctly the Catholic Church?" Now you know the answer, you know the answer that you would be given, which you know very well that is the sort of question which is being asked of our faith in the industrialized world today. -Aga Khan IV.

You have to make the difference between the faith and emanations of political or social or economic activity which are occurring around the world.

Islam means Peace - As Salaam ALakum!
Peace Be Upon You.

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