

From X to Islam

Human Rights, the Unity of Humanity, and the Final Malcolm X

One of the most prominent speakers on Islam, in Britain, in the early 1960's, was delivering a lecture at the London School of Economics. When the lecture was over, a 'young man' approached the podium, and introduced himself as "the son of Elijah Mohammed!"

"You're not his son!" responded the speaker.

"Well, I'm the *spiritual* son of Elijah Muhammed!"

The speaker stared at the young man in a somewhat disconcerted manner, not knowing what to do with this seemingly cultish response. The 'young man' in this incident was Malcolm X, the sixties Afro-American rights activist, who was tragically assassinated in 1965. This brief incident, related above, illustrates the final episode of Malcolm X's life: he was beginning to know about the real Islam, for he was in a transitional phase, breaking away from the segregationistic organisation he had been the leading spokesman of. In fact, his very attendance at the noted lecture was an indication of his quest for the truth. He, no doubt, finally realized that what he had been brainwashed into believing in the U.S.A, was, in fact, the very antithesis of Islam, and that such groups as he had belonged to had been purposely fostered with the assistance of the "powers that be" to marginalize the African Americans into redundancy.

In his quest for the truth, he met many other Muslims from 1964 to 1965 who followed the precepts of the Quran. Above all, however, his journey to Mecca was a turning point in his life, for it was the centrepiece for the confluence of his ideas. His quest brought him to the realization of the brotherhood of humankind and the oneness of the Creator, from which that wholesome social idea of brotherhood issued, like a river flowing from its source. When he thereafter returned to America, he had this to say:

About twenty of us Muslims who had finished the Hajj [the pilgrimage] were sitting in a huge tent on Mount Arafat. As a Muslim from America, I was the center, of attention. They asked me what about the Hajj had impressed me the most ... I said, "The *brotherhood!* The people of all races, colors, from all over the world coming together as *one!* It has proved to me the power of the One God.¹

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to *re-arrange* much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to *toss aside* some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.²

With such global ideas, all of the irrational influences had been swept by the force of reason. Malcolm's thoughts converged to the universal concepts outlining what Islam actually was. *For there were no longer any priests, gurus, self-proclaimed Messiahs or cult leaders to be followed.* There was only the *singular* Creator of the entire Universe to whom all intentions, words and actions ought to be directed. He realized that humanity originated from a common source. This

source itself ultimately originated from the dust of the earth, in the evolution of the vast cosmos, in which the earth is like an exceedingly minuscule speck within a speck. This being the case, how could any one human being - male or female, black, white or of any other shade, young or old, rich or poor - be superior or inferior to any other? The Quran, which is claimed to be a revelation from the Originator of the cosmos expatiates on this issue profusely. Indeed, Malcolm X was only following the Islamic ideas which are clearly stated within the Quran itself:

O Mankind! Be duly conscious of your Sustainer who has created you from a single self and from it, its mate, and from them both has caused to issue a multitude of men and women. Therefore, be duly conscious of God by whom you demand your rights over one another. Certainly, God is a Watcher over you. (Quran 4:1)

O Mankind! Indeed, We have created you out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Assuredly, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most conscious of Him. Surely, God is all-knowing, all-aware. (Quran 49:13)

Verily, this community of yours is a single community, since I [God] am the Sustainer of you all; therefore, worship Me alone! (Quran 21:92)

With the crumbling mental and physical infrastructures of our societies worldwide, and the continuing plague of sophisticated racism in America - the so-called "land of the free" - a land that has not since dealt with human beings justly, a lot of people of various hues have begun to look at what Malcolm X was saying. Unfortunately, in the present climate, there is a great deal of biographical special pleading or selective distortion, as each group racist or anti-Islamic is not focussing on the Final Malcolm X - the one who had embraced Islam, by finally breaking away from a mischannelled movement. In consonance with the Quranic verses presented above, Malcolm X realized that the problem went beyond "black and white". Indeed, he realized that:

It is not a problem of civil rights but a problem of human rights!³

In so doing he had opened his mind towards a global framework:

I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity *as a whole*.⁴

Assuredly, the racist problem is a human problem; it cannot be solved if we think in terms of black or white. It is a much deeper problem, solvable only when we human beings, using our reason and the evidence, realize that there is indeed only one singular Intelligent Originator to this vast Universe. This Creator is neither a human-like, nor an incarnate God:

Say: He is Allah [God] the One; Allah: He is independent of all, yet all are dependent on Him; He has no offspring and neither is He the offspring of anyone; there is absolutely nothing like Him. (Quran 112:1-4)

This One God is the One who has created and loves all creatures who follow His natural laws (islam), no matter where they come from, in our present day dysfunctional, nationalistic and

tribalistic world. This is a Creator who is, above all, Beneficent and Merciful - who bases mercy upon justice. For the Final Malcolm X, all of this was deemed to be easily verifiable by any sincerely rational reflection into the true status of the Human Being on Earth. It is only with the natural realization of this outlook that can we - as true human beings - become truly conscious and knowledgeable:

Certainly, in the creation of the universe and the earth, and in the sequence of night and day, are evidences for those who utilize their mind ... (Quran 3:190)

Among His wonders is this: He creates you out of dust - and then, lo! you become human beings ranging far and wide!(Quran 30:20)

Among His wonders is the creation of the cosmos and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours: for In this, behold, evidences indeed abound for all those who possess knowledge. (Quran 30:22)

Have you not observed that God causes rainwater to fall from the sky, and We produce thereby fruit of various colours; and in the mountains are diversely coloured streaks of red, white and raven black. Human beings and the wild and domestic animals are also comprised of colourful variations. Thus, only those among His creatures, who, [having appreciated these diverse signs], humble themselves before God, are truly the people of knowledge. (Quran 35:27,28)

After having reflected on these concepts Malcolm X's outlook changed profoundly:

I believe in recognizing every human being as a human being, neither white, black, brown nor red. When you are dealing with humanity as one family, there's no question of integration or intermarriage. It's just one human being marrying and living around and with another human being.⁵

There may be directional signs in someone's life, from which we can gain true knowledge as it has been defined in the Quran. Consequently, it is indeed the height of injustice and ignobility to purposely project, as a working symbol, the Early Malcolm X's life as a representation of his final ideology or his total personality. This is because at the end of his life he had rejected that earlier misguided ideology and evolved to a higher consciousness of the actual place of Man in the cosmic scheme of this expansive Universe. Without the proper realization of the Final Malcolm X, then, we will not realize who calls the shots, both literally and figuratively speaking. Certainly, we will not realize how we are being manipulated and exploited in our societies - both in the east and the west, be it in the middle of Los Angeles, or in the outlands of Timbuktu!

Our human societies, have become experts at distorting personalities, of creating myths and fabrications; these fabrications are then often fostered by the media for various groups with vested interests, whose goal is something far removed from the truth. Not only have personalities been misrepresented but also belief systems, and in particular, Islam. It has been estimated that over the last 100 years at least 50,000 books have been written, in the West, against Islam. Their major defect is that they have been built on the 'Straw Man Fallacy'. They appear to be attacking not Islam but *Mislam* - a misrepresented version of what they call Islam. The great human tragedy is that the rampant suppression of such information, leads to ignorance instead of knowledge and darkness instead of light. For example, when Galileo proved that the Earth was

not at the centre of the Universe, he was forced to recant by the Priestly orders who thought that his astronomical disclosures would upset their ecclesiastical monopoly, consisting of a corrupt hierarchical structure.

Analogously, Malcolm X, and people like him throughout the centuries, have tried to show the Black Man, the White Man or the any other Coloured-Man is not at the centre of the Universe, but that, on the contrary, concern for all human beings and nature ought to be at the centre of the universal agenda, in the entire spectrum of life in this temporal cosmic abode. However, due to humanity's own detriment, many individuals who have tried to educate people with this universal vision have been suppressed or indeed even killed. Whereas Galileo had been talking about planetary revolutions, Malcolm X had been talking about a revolution in thought on a planetary scale. For expressing this sentiment he met a more drastic fate than Galileo. In the light of these facts then, is it not high time that we, both individually and collectively, reflect on the final message behind the man - the message that he had finally come to discern? Like any other real Muslim, the Final Malcolm X saw things in black and white, not in the sense of racism or naive simplicity, but rather, in the ability to distinguish between the truth and the falsehoods with penetrating clarity.

In our societies worldwide, both individuals and belief systems have been grossly misrepresented. Take the example of Christopher Columbus: it has taken European society 500 years to start to openly recognize and admit what Columbus was actually up to in the 'New World'. Will it take another 500 years for our societies to realize what Islam is actually all about - in this case, with respect to its ultimate rational and workable structure? In fact, come to think of it, will we even be able to coexist for another 500 years? Will we survive as true human beings in a collapsing socioenvironmental structure, if we choose to neglect the interconnected approach of Islam - the natural system of the Creator to which all else in the universe submits, through natural laws? We will never achieve the state of felicity, balance and peace as is inculcated and engendered by the magnanimous and egalitarian approach of Islam as it really is - the source of which is the Quran and the signs in the Universe. These two - the Universe and the Quran - are in perfect concordance with each one other. The congruence, in fact, can easily be verified by subjecting the Quran to the tests revealing any possible contradictions with known facts of this universe, or by the coherency within the book itself.

The reason why the Final Malcolm X has continued to be so relevant for us to this very day is because he was demanding justice based on truth - the only type of justice which is wholly logical and which conforms to the natural laws - the very way nature functions. Justice demands inherent equal rights for all human beings based on the equilibrium of nature. It is only with this vision of reality that can whole of humanity be led toward peace - toward the basis of a system infused with all-encompassing human rights. This was the conclusion of the Final Malcolm X - Malik EI-Shabazz, and any truly rational person:

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. ...⁶

He further commented on his experiences with respect to those adhering to Islam:

I have never seen *sincere* and *true* brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.⁷

I said to Harlem street audiences that only when mankind would submit to the One God who created all - only then would mankind even approach the "peace" of which so much talk could be heard ... but toward which so little action was seen.⁸

We must do justice to our well-designed faculties of hearing, seeing and thinking and become fully cognizant and aware. The *Final* Malcolm X had indeed developed this level of cognizance nearing the end of his life by the proper use of his mind. Like him, and others before and after him, we must strive to attain the realization of a completely non-contradictory belief system - the only one that could, logically, be the truth. Let X represent the unknown, alienation, inconsistency and confusion and a state of injustice both within and without. If the human species is to survive, individually and collectively, it must find the global solution for X. We cannot solve for X if we do not employ reason and seek the evidence, even if it be against our own selves or close ones, and we cannot employ reason if we are not honest with ourselves. Certainly, the salvation of the world begins within each human being, and then extends outwards, embracing the whole of mankind and the rest of nature.

The central point to remember in this discourse is that the distinguishing property of truth is that it can only be covered but never destroyed. Those who think questioningly are not fooled by the coverings. For at the very least they would see the coverings and try to dis-cover. They can only discover because they have not covered their minds. It is high time that the coverings were removed and things seen - seen for what they actually are, and what they actually ought to be. Let the discovery then begin, and if it has already begun, then let it continue, towards an ever-comprehensive understanding of our place within the diversified realm of this vast universe - towards that global and innately natural system which Malcolm X had finally re-discovered.

References

1. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, as told to Alex Haley, p. 338, First Ballantine Books Edition: June 1973, Twenty-third Printing 1989, New York.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
3. Malcolm X, July 17, 1964.
4. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 366.
5. Malcolm X, January 19, 1965. The last television interview with host, Pierre Berton in Canada.
6. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 340.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 375.