

TERRORISM - THE OUTCOME OF A CULTURE OF HATRED

One of the distinctive challenges of the period we live in is the significant presence of violence in our societies. These acts of violence stem from a doctrine of hatred and intolerance that fracture societies into constant turbulence and upheaval. For violent Islamist organizations like Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia, this ideology of hatred is based on an extreme interpretation of Islam that divides the world into the realm of Islam and the realm of war.

Essentially, the extremist fail to understand the peaceful message of Islam, leading them to believe that, at the core, the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims must be driven by enmity and hostility. Consequentially, it solicits revulsion of anyone or anything that they perceive as infidel. The perception is craftily tweaked to advocate and legitimize unrelenting war and aggression, and to kill, all of which stem from the overwhelming and uncontrolled feelings of hatred.

The Hate Psychology

Hate is often described as an emotion of intense enmity and hostility, generally attributed to a desire to avoid, restrict, remove, or destroy the hated object. It is also used to describe feelings of prejudice, bigotry and condemnation against a person, or group of people. It is among the most common emotions that human experience.

Hatred is a learned emotion; humans are not born with the inherent capacity to hate. Feelings of hatred, prejudice and bigotry are generated for those who deem to be different from us, be it racial, religious, economic or cultural. When hatred becomes a feeling that is so unbridled and fierce, it elicits a strong, uncontrollable desire to physically harm that group of people because of those perceived differences.

One major question that perhaps comes to our mind is why people feel such hatred that they would either advocate the use of such violence or engage in random violence to others in the form of acts of terrorism?

According to Erich Fromm, a German-born social psychologist, there are the two types of

hate inherent in human being. The first type is 'rational hate". This hate is expressed in reaction to a threat to one's own freedom, life or ideas. It has a biological self-protecting function. It comes as a reaction to a threat and dissipates when the threat is removed. It is not against life but for life. This type of hate is manifested in the cry of a baby who is hungry.

The second type of hate is 'irrational hate". Rather than a reaction to a specific threat, it is a character trait developed in some people. It is marked by a readiness to be hostile to others. This is a passion to cripple life, a strong impulse to cruelty or a pathological aggressiveness. People with this kind of hate seek a target to attack. They do not wait for an incident to occur, they create it. Such people are found among the leaders of racist mobs and organisations, and sometimes among the ideological 'theorists" of hate movements. Based on these two types of hatred, we can understand that the hatred of the extremists is more of an irrational hate.

Terrorism and Hatred

Terrorism is a crime committed out of hatred (hate crime). In addition, the terrorist acts that we are witnessing today are often the product of a long standing and often inter-generational culture of hate and extremism. Terrorists are human beings whose hearts and minds have been moulded into blind hatred, violence, and gross misperception of the realities today. This in turn, is the by-product of a culture of prohibitions. For extremists in certain parts of the Muslim world, their outlooks are shaped by the religious messages anchored in fears of plots against the Muslims, by publications which spread hatred and conspiracy theories. The youths are not spared as educational messages seek to alienate youths from the 'threats' of the modern era and the 'evil West'.

In an article titled "How to Make Our Young People Love Life" in the Kuwaiti daily Al-Siyassa, Dr. Abd Al-Hamid Al-Ansari, former dean of the Shariah and Law Faculty at Qatar University said "Terrorism is the fruit of hatred - hatred of life, hatred of civilization and the modern era, hatred of society and state, hatred of living people. The young people who have become tools of murder and human bombs are the sons of the culture of hatred, and the outcome of a fanatical culture and extremist ideology that sees life, its pleasures, and its beauty as unimportant. Ultimately the political, economic, social, and religious motives that push the young people to blow themselves up lie in a single main cause - and that is the culture of hatred".

As one of the many evil attributes of the heart, Muslims know that hatred must be eliminated for the heart to be pure. This elimination of hatred from the hearts of Muslims is one of the most important acts that Muslims are obligated to perform. Muslims are called upon to love and hate for the sake of God. Promoting divisiveness and hatred based on religious differences is absolutely against Islam. Thus, hate is a man-made crime and should not be blamed on any religion. Blame should be assigned only to those individuals who prescribe to hate, not to the religion or the followers of the religion.

Extremist Ideology and the Doctrine of Hatred

Extremist ideology is based on hate and hostility against general non-Muslims without exception. It is also hostile against Muslims who hold different opinions and disagree with them. It is also hate towards infidelity (kufr), polytheism (syirik) and heresy (bid'ah). They hate anything that comes from non-Muslims. They possess hatred towards anything that they perceived as un-Islamic. They also hate those who are not with them or belong to their organization.

Extremists use verses from the Quran to justify their feelings of hatred. According to them, as to what regard Muslims are to show for those who do not believe, the Quran says to be ruthless toward them, since they are going to hell anyway. O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them; and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination. (9: 73). O ye who believe! Take not My enemies and yours as friends (or protectors), offering them (your) love. (60:1). That is because Allah is the Protector of those who believe, but those who reject Allah have no protector (47: 11). O You who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies; they are but allies of one another and whoever of you allies themselves one another and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them; behold, God does not guide such evildoers". (5:51).

In actual fact, the word "auliya" has several meanings in Arabic including friend, helper, protector or ally. The meaning depends on the context of the particular verse in question. In the verse above, "auliya" refers to a moral alliance that is, forbidding Muslims to prefer the way of the life of the Christians and Jews to the Muslim way of life. However, we must be clear that a prohibition of moral alliance with non-Muslims does not constitute an

injunction against normal, friendly relations with those who treat Muslims well and with respect.

In the Quran, it has been mentioned that Muslims are not commanded to fight the non-Muslims or having sense of enmity towards them. "As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably"(60:8)

Islam commands that justice be upheld even towards one's enemies. Mercy is at the heart of the Islamic call – a totally different message to what the terrorists are sadly imparting to humanity. "O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do" (5:8)

The Way Forward

Islam is a religion of peace. The word "Islam" in itself means "peace". The Quran says, "And God calls to the home of peace". This is the message of Islam to mankind. It means to 'build a world of peace on earth so that you may be granted peace in your eternal life in the hereafter'. According to Islam, the three basic elements of building a peace culture are: compassion, forgiveness and respect for all.

In the troubled world that we facing today, there is an urgent need to promote the virtues of love and tolerance especially among the young. To promote peace and eliminate hatred, Muslims must revive the lost traditional Islamic sciences that emphasize love and spirituality. It is also important to delegitimize the terrorist agenda not only from the ethical perspective but from the political and strategic perspective. Muslims must realize that only through maintaining moral high ground can they succeed in the war on terror especially as they are sadly lacking in superior armaments and other strategic resources.