

[TRANSLATION FROM PERSIAN]

[Translator's notes appear in square brackets [.].]

<http://www.amasumi.net/154-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D9%87%D9%85-%D9%86%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1>

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

The Iranian people—unlike their neighbouring nations—have not in their historical background shown animosity, brutality, or disregard for the human rights of their own people. We witness how on many occasions in the past they have demonstrated that their oneness and unity have, through the power of hope, hard exertion and resolute faith, saved them from man-made calamities of corruption and oppression. Time was when different religions and denominations, with manifold beliefs and practices, enjoyed social interaction and tolerant coexistence, each walking its own path of growth and endeavour, benefiting and vitalizing one another. This indeed is the way in which one's humanity can, within one's own society, flourish and be manifested.

What happened then, that today that ancient culture has been abandoned, that tradition of love and fellow-feeling has been extinguished from the hearts, and the right to life and possessions, to human dignity and honour become so devalued? This to such an extent that not only do we see laws based on ignorance violate fundamental human values but also that humanitarian and altruistic traditions have fallen into such an abject state that some queue for hours for the dawn in order that, like in primitive times, they may watch the condemned being executed, while in another case a citizen takes a fellow citizen hostage, hangs him by the neck, and a family brings tragedy to its own members in the midst of festivities. Who are the ones that have effaced human values and the right to be human, and have in their place engraved anti-human verses of enmity?

In creating humanity, God, the All-Wise, magnified the human being and gave it the right to life, not because of the outer form of that being, but by virtue of the sanctity of its spirit and the human qualities which God had breathed into him. This right to life that every free human being must enjoy in his homeland, so that he may benefit from social possibilities, can never be violated or restricted through ideas, beliefs or laws that undermine the fundamental assumption regarding human dignity, let alone that in the modern age religious apartheid be perpetuated, and lies and deceit, treachery and hatred, smears and abuse be permitted to destroy human honour and pit brother against brother.

Iranian society today, especially its youth, suffers from a ruinous depression and anxiety. The values of fraternity and friendship, truthfulness and honesty, trustworthiness and modesty, purity of mind and altruism, compassion and reciprocity, kindness and consideration, sacrifice and selflessness, care and assistance for others, and humility and uprightness have been eroded among us and turned into empty slogans and posturing. In their place there is division and contention, lies and deceit, betrayal and aggression, duplicity and deception, pretension and dishonesty, cruelty and discourtesy, and the destruction of the weak and their exploitation. The truth is that the traditions and morals of the people of our land were brought low when some among the learned and those who are charged with the promotion of morality have in fact sullied the values of humanity, of honour and of religion with the dust of deceit, lies, tyranny, and immoral acts, fruitless talk, and empty promises—all in the pursuit of their own worldly gain.

This lowly one has learned from the Old Testament: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”ⁱ. From the New Testament, I have also learned: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”ⁱⁱ and “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them”ⁱⁱⁱ. From the holy Qur’an I have learned: “God doth not forbid you to deal with kindness and fairness towards those who have not made war upon you on account of your religion”^{iv}, and, “Truly, the most worthy of honour in the sight of God is he who feareth Him most.”^v And from the rich and ancient culture of Iran, I have learned:

“Adam’s sons are body limbs, to say;
For they’re created of the same clay....
Thou, careless of people’s suffering;
Deserve not the name, human being.”^{vi}

Therefore, feeling the need for another practical and symbolic action to serve as a reminder of the importance of valuing human beings, of peaceful coexistence, of cooperation and mutual support, and of avoidance of hatred, enmity and blind religious prejudice, I have made an illuminated calligraphy of a verse from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas of the Bahá’ís. I have made this as an enduring symbol of respect for the innate dignity of human beings, for fellow-feeling and peaceful coexistence regardless of religious affiliation, denomination or belief. And now at the start of this new year 1393 (2014) I present this precious symbol—an expression of sympathy and care from me and on behalf of all my open-minded fellow citizens who respect others for their humanity and not for their religion or way of worship—to all the Bahá’ís of the world, particularly to the Bahá’ís of Iran who have suffered in manifold ways as a result of blind religious prejudice. Although it was my heart’s wish to make an illuminated copy of the whole Kitáb-Aqdas, like the holy Qur’an, the Torah, the Psalms, the New Testament, and the Book of Ezra, yet regrettably my physical and financial resources did not allow it. My hope is that this humble but spiritually significant rendering which will be kept by the Universal House of Justice will serve as a reminder of the rich and ancient Iranian tradition of friendship and its culture of coexistence and that the numerous artistic shortcomings of the work will be overlooked with the eye of kindness.

With utmost brotherly kindness, this feeble one calls upon all my dear fellow citizens from every religion, belief and walk of life who may hear my words, to evince love and affection, friendship and kindness, mercy and compassion, forgiveness and empathy, care and solidarity, helpfulness and support, and to respect the life, possessions and dignity of others. Now that we are at the start of a new spring season, it behoves us to contemplate our patterns of thoughts, wash away the dross that is the tendency to think in stereotypes about one another, and to extend the hand of love and assistance towards that which is human in each one of us, so that we and our future generations may reap, within the framework of thought as citizens, the bounties that accrue from solidarity and coexistence and the blessings and life-force that they bestow. Let us reject, then, those who through their wealth, power, and deceit aim to make us, in various forms, as enemies towards one another and to induce us to violate each other’s possessions, life and dignity.

This lowly one is content to believe that extensive and practical initiatives can eliminate the culture of conflict from our society and foster instead love and fellowship, solidarity and altruism which are increasingly needed in our society which has sunk now into division and hatred.

Salutations be upon those who follow divine guidance.

Tehran

The imploring one, Abdol-Hamid Masoumi-Tehrani

ⁱ Leviticus, 19:18

ⁱⁱ Matthew, 22:39

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 5:44

^{iv} Qur'an, 60:8

^v Qur'an, 49:13

^{vi} Persian poet Sa'di