

Haroon siddiqui



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The pages human history daubed in bloodshed of violence in the name of religion, territorial gains etc. are asking the crying question. How to make this Planet Earth heaven-like? The answer is simple and direct. Eyes full of understanding, heart full of love and the life that refuses conflicts—enough! These alone are enough! In the recorded history of humanity in the last five thousand years, politicians, kings, military generals, religious leaders have miserably failed to solve the important question of achieving peace for mankind. Most of them have acted like proverbial Tom.

The teacher asked, “ Tom, why are you answering every question with another question? ” “ Why not? ” was Tom’s reply—again a question! If the purpose of the book is to tender some facts related to the Muslim population of the world in the light of the post 9/11 calamity, it has achieved some success. In terms of contribution to cementing understanding between other communities and the Muslims, it has failed. On issues related to Faith, arguments and counter-arguments have not solved and will never solve the differences. The root cause of deep misunderstanding lies elsewhere.

Haroon begins the book with a complaint. He writes, “ The approximately 27 million Muslims living in Western Nations have been targeted in other ways. They have been victims of social profiling and frequent identity mix-ups at air-ports and border crossing, where they may be harassed and sometimes detained. Monitored by both the secret services, and the media, they must be careful about what they say in e-mails, phone conversations in public. ”(Siddiqui, 2006, p, 11) This complaint doesn’t carry much weight. These are normal procedures in cases of emergency, in war-like situations, and even during normal times.

The 9/11 attack was an extraordinary, war-like act. There is no doubt, the perpetrators of this dastardly act are Muslims—to which terrorist outfit they belonged, is altogether a different issue. In such situations this has happened with all the communities in the world and any student of history can quote examples in abundance in support. Statistics convenient to his view point are presented by Haroon and his language is grudging and full of malice. His opinions are sometimes comparable to that of a fanatic Muslim Preacher sermonizing during the Friday prayers at the mosque but Haroon is talented and educated.

The first 2 chapters contain anti-American and anti-Jew propaganda. It is pure political stuff, no literature. Haroon should have no complaints about his childhood. (Most of the Muslim children have). He hailed from an affluent family. He was born in Hyderabad, India, where Muslims very well know the meaning of living in peace and brotherhood. He enjoyed the career in journalism, in an environment of totally free press in a democratic country. He migrated to Canada in 1967, and the authentic start to his international journalistic career began when he joined the Toronto Star, as the foreign affairs analyst.

Soon, he was one of Canada's most honored journalists. He is a human rights specialist, has covered important events like hostage crisis in Iran, Iran-Iraq War, and has traveled to 35 countries. He has interviewed top political leaders of the world. To draw the readers to his point of view, Haroon provides in the book the listing of historical events that angered Muslims and continue to anger them. He reminds the readers that Muslims

are 1/5th of the population of the world. He harps on the demerits of the Iraq War, and the psychological and physical tortures of Muslims in USA.

To substantiate his claims, he cites serious cases of individual injustice. He writes, “ The administration also fingerprinted and questioned 50, 000 Muslims from or associated with Syria, Libya, Iran, Iraq and Sudan...Among those arrested was James Lee, a 1990 West Point Military Academy graduate and a Muslim who was appointed the Muslim Chaplain at Gyantnama Bay. He was hounded because he had warned against mishandling of Muslim prisoners there. In September 2003, he was thrown into solitary confinement and charged with mutiny, sedition, espionage and aiding the enemy. ” (Siddiqui, 2006, p. 16)

From the academic perspective, this is a good book for the debate class, as it has the potentialities for endless and hot discussions. The contents of the book, like Politics, European Muslims, The Faith, Women, Jihad and terrorism, and the Future provide an array of topics for arguments and counter-arguments. To be fair to Haroon, he condemns with equal vehemence the Islamic fundamentalists, for fanning flames of Islamophobia. He defends the tenets of Islam—and that is what is expected of a good Muslim. He blames the local cultural traditions for the poor conditions and backwardness of the Muslim women, not the Islamic teachings.

He advocates for rapid economic reformations of the Muslims and advocates their rehabilitation, the need to protect their essential dignity and honor. He pleads to go into the root causes of Muslim-misery. He describes with objectivity and depth, what it is to live in post 9/11 America if one is a Muslim. Haroon’s interpretation and comments on Jihad will startle any

Realized Soul. Such is his deep understanding of the Jihad concept. Jihad is a struggle, a crusade, he says. From the pure perspective of Muslim religion, it is to strive on the path of God by observing the five essentials of Islam.

It is striving to live as a goodhuman being. Haroon talks about the jihad against oneself, ipso facto, the Self-Realization mentioned in the Hindu Scriptures. Jihad is understood in terms of war by most of the Westerners. The common Muslim also understands the concept of Jihad as per this connotation. Actually it is something different says, Haroon. According to him, the jihad is the struggle against the ego, the devil, the jihad of the tongue (propagating the religious tenets of Islam) to spread the word of Islam, of charity, of the pen to spread of knowledge. Viewed from this angle, Jihad seems to be the most benevolent word.

When the Westerner thinks about the word jihad, he mostly thinks about as the blood-dripping sword for the cause of spreading Islam and for the destruction of other faiths. But Haroon convinces one that it is the fragrant rose spreading peace on all counts. So bi it! But Muslims as well as non-Muslims need proper counseling about the correct connotation of the word Jihad in the light of explanations given by Haroon. So, Jihad against cleanliness, Jihad for literacy, Jihad against corruption, Jihad against drugs, Jihad against atrocities against women, Jihad against child-labor—why not!

Muslims praying five times a day seems an unnecessary exercise for many. But the actual significance of namaz is highlighted by Haroon thus: “ Prayers are designed to raise God-consciousness five times a day, throughout one’s life. Prayers also provide regular exercise – like yoga or Tai Chi or Qigong built into the day – and serve as a calming retreat from the daily demands of

life. Muslims thus learn to balance deeni wa dunyavi (the spiritual and the worldly). They can't abandon one for the other; that's the essence of their faith. "(Siddiqui, 2006, p. 121) Conclusion:

Haroon Siddiqui is a mind-level intellectual and any literary work by such individuals stop at the mind-barrier. But the Truth they are desperately trying to reach is available not for knowing, but for experiencing once one transcends the mind. All the fights, misunderstandings between the Politicians, Preachers of different faiths, Scholars are related to the level of reason. The thought processes of an individual change not by the repetition of scriptural revelations, not by reading or studying more and more books. Experiencing is the ultimate spirituality.

It is the lesson beyond all lessons, when the thought processes of an individual change. When the thought processes change, the action process will also change. Misunderstanding of all types will vanish. Such changed action processes will change the society whether it is the Muslim society or the Western Society. Haroon, on many issues elucidated in the book, knocks desperately at the last barrier of the mind, but he is unable to cross it.

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Works Cited: Siddiqui, Haroon: Book: Being Muslim
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