

Democracy and Human Rights

An Essay in Three Parts

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لطفاً برای خواندن نسخه فارسی این نوشتار به فایل همراه مراجعه کنید.

Part I

Churchill said, “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.” This is what you call “good politics.”

Among our many problems over the past century, we’ve been dealing with the contrasting ways by which we interpret and implement two of our valuable gifts, namely, the Declaration of Human rights and Democracy. Sadly, these two precious elements of the last century have turned into some means of exploitation in the hands of the political and religious players of the world. The situation brings to mind the elders of the Grand Bazaar of Tehran. Whenever a problem rose between the Muslims and the Jews of the Bazaar, these elders would assume a self-righteous look and ask the offender (the hunter of the story) to “Shoot!”, even as they encouraged the victim (the deer of the story) to “Run!”

You shout at the deer to “Run!”

All the while spurring the hunter to chase her.

Thus, we may say, “O Democracy! O Declaration of Human Rights! What crimes have not been committed in your names!”

Meanwhile, many murderous criminals, especially in those countries which support democracy, continue to benefit the most from these two critical gifts, and from the duplicitous situation, to escape the consequences of their crimes.

For instance, on the one hand, the inciters commit countless murderous crimes in the democratic countries, while on the other hand, their supporters, or even the governments, hire

public defenders to defend these criminals according to the democratic laws and the human rights. And perchance, if entrapped, these very humanoids who see murder and pillage as “good deeds”, protest that “The human rights have been violated!” — and who pretends to be a fool, believes their words. In some cases, the so-called intellectual and democratic judges who adhere to the human rights vote in favor of the criminals, and to better implement the human rights, they even reward the perpetrators in damages! Such a misguided practice has further encouraged the criminals and made them fearless in their paths, since they know that these countries are governed by the rule of law; and even if they’re entrapped, they can still receive support and find ways to evade the law.

As Ousta Abbas would say, whose story will follow shortly, could we call “a human being” someone who doesn’t allow for the others even their right to live? Could we accord such a person his rights, and place the facilities of the humane laws at his disposal?

Furthermore, there’s a different class of inciters, whose job is to sue the people and to take advantage of the law. His honor the judge is well aware that the true culprit has sued tens of people for no reason but neglecting some obscure trivia in some remote law. The judge knows that the man’s true intention is to commit fraud and get away with it. Yet, by the rule of democracy, the judge examines his tens of cases, and at times, even pays the con man in rewards! What kind of democracy is this?

Hence, even as freedom and religion are critical to our survival akin to the air and the water, they can even become fatal if applied irrationally. Whenever the holy Declaration of Human Rights, the democratic concepts, or the more dangerous of all, religion, are placed in the hands of some corrupt implementers and criminals, who will use them to violate and evade the law, they can be lethal, and they’ll defeat the true intent of the lawmakers. As I read in the papers, today in three civilized countries in Europe, namely Belgium, France and the Great Britain, all supporters of the human rights, there are hundreds of streets and many districts in ruins, within their prosperous cities, areas so dangerous that even the police do not dare enter. As such, not only the Great Britain with a population of 66 million people, but Europe as a whole, they’ve become frustrated by the residence of several millions of unwanted guests, a complex problem that heralds a poor future for these countries. Because they want to continue and practice democracy

and the Declaration of Human Rights in the case of those who lack the necessary virtues and preparation to receive them, so far as they even continue to pay them in government benefits.

This major global problem emerged when the United Nations, together with the Western countries, adhered to the Declaration of Human Rights, and aiming to fulfill the rights of the refugees, the majority of whom deserved the aids, allocated annual refugee quotas to the advanced countries. But the consequences of the decision were not studied in full; and today, it has led to insecurities in Europe and the spread of the threat all across the planet.

Currently, countless groups of people from various Middle Eastern and African countries are flooding Europe in search of better lives, further feeding the growing problem. If only people heeded that the refugees should first be morally and culturally vaccinated at home, before they would be given the aid. For example, I remember that during a major earthquake in Afghanistan, the Israeli government immediately deployed a plane carrying 15 tons of hygienic and medical products, accompanied by several physicians, expert nurses and search and rescue dogs, to the disaster area. Alas, a bunch of spiritually sick people, contaminated with religious hatred, sent back the cargo and the crew because it had come from the Jewish state — even as their wounded needed the aids. God knows how many lives were lost due to this baffling decision.

Nobody disagrees here with helping whom is qualified for the relief. However, as we may already see, the outcome of extending humane acts and the progressive laws to whom lacks the required understanding, experience and preparation to benefit from them, can be quite unexpected. If only the naïve optimists paid attention that, **“No effort can make the willow bear flowers on its branches. / No colored man will turn white by being washed.”**

For the seed to bear fruit, the soil has to be adequately prepared. Likewise, who exercises the law, they should be equipped with the necessary understanding and preparation for it, before they can exercise any law. Otherwise, centuries will pass until today’s refugees — having retraced the painful road that the Europeans once traveled, leaving behind such bitter periods as the age of the Inquisition and the Holocaust, and burning people on the way in the name of religion — will finally let go of the seditious religious beliefs, and the destructive traditions, habits and cultures, and adapt themselves to the modern civilization. Blessed be his memory, who said, “Our people aren’t quite ready for freedom!”

Once we had immigrated, we understood that even the followers of one religion are not all the same, that there are differences between the Iranian Jews and, say, the European, Russian, or Arab Jews. Because the culture in which people are raised, and the familial and tribal customs and traditions of those who practice the religious and legal commands, these will always be different. Could we even begin to compare the Ahurai culture of Iran, the first society to introduce a Declaration of Human Rights to the world, with many of the other cultures? Alas, in the hands of the inciters, the religion often acts against its own philosophy, and it leads to divisiveness, separations, social decadence, and global insecurity, so far as the laws and the people are overshadowed. **Einstein** said it right, and I paraphrase, “No law can be better than who implements it.” It’s said that during the ratification of the constitution in a certain country, a ranking political figure declared, “No law is necessary!” Then, raising his fist and pointing to his walking stick, he explained, “Here’s the law, and here’s the constitution!”, playing a pun in the original language.

**If the listener can’t understand the words,
Then don’t seek rhetoric from the speaker.**

I remember one summer night eighty years ago in the city of Kashan, when my family and I were sleeping on the roof. The roof had no railing, and to make sure that we wouldn’t sleep-walk off of the edge, my feet were tied to those of my brothers. We were awakened by a sudden hubbub in the alley. The entire neighborhood folk had poured into the alley. Ousta Abbas, the father of my childhood playmate Little Ali, had caught a thief!

Apparently, the dumb immigrant thief — he wouldn’t have become a thief had he not been stupid — had climbed and jumped off the wall into the courtyard of the house, but unfortunately for him, he had landed next to Ousta Abbas’s bed, and the Ousta had grabbed his ankle. (The thief was definitely not a Kashi; otherwise, being notoriously faint of heart, he might have died of a heart attack!)

I had never seen a thief before, and my childhood mind had so far filled the gap with some demonic images of fictional thieves. Curious, I elbowed my way through the dense crowd to the Ousta’s house. Little Ali, the Ousta’s son, told me, “Dad wanted to kill the thief, but mom didn’t let him do it!” (Oblivious to a world full of thieves!) Finally, for the first time in life, I was honored to set eyes on the countenance of a real thief! Ousta Abbas was tightly holding onto the

hand of the miserable and beaten man, and accompanied by the neighborhood elders, he took him to the police station.

For the next few hours, the neighbors stayed in the alley and admired and debated the bravery of the Kashi man who had caught a thief! Awhile later, the Ousta emerged from afar, an angry man, walking back from the police station, shouting a slogan, “The sheriff office is crazy! The sheriff office is crazy!” Then he explained in his heavy Kashi accent, “I took the thief to the sheriff. The officer put down two chairs, one for me, one for the thief! Who ever said they should place a chair for a thief? How different would it make me from the thief? So I made up my mind bitterly, I told them, ‘Forget the sheriff and the thief!’, and I left the place.” Clearly, we need first to teach the correct subjects to people and make sure that they are understood. We also need to remove the inciting texts from the books, even if they bear a stamp of holiness, books that keep repeating the command to “Kill!” We need to do these first if we expect the majority of people with fanatical mindsets to understand and implement the progressive human rights, these pillars of civilization. The religious laws are largely relative and conditional. Whereas they say outright, “Thou shall not murder!”, they command elsewhere to “Kill!” Thence, they leave little hope for justice.

The mention of the word “Kill!” in the scripture somewhat diminishes the baseness of this inhumane act. Even the savage scenes of beheading the animals in the public, as we could hear about most every day, make the bad into the worse.

As I read in an email, “If God had sent down to Abraham a scion to plant instead of an owl to kill, today we would have green forests in the Saudi Arabia instead of a sea of blood on the Qurban Festival; and instead killing, we’d have institutionalized planting.” Indeed, sometimes, a little change can destroy a world of ignorance.

As a scholar said, “Don’t fear who has a large library. Fear who has a single book and believes it to contain everything in the world.”¹

Millions of people rolled in their own blood, and trillions of dollars were spent — roughly, eight trillion dollars — in Iraq and Afghanistan, besides the unrest of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen; and yet, none of these nations began to pursue

¹ “I fear the man of a single book.” *Attributed to Thomas Aquinas.*

democracy, nay, they got even worse. Because their beliefs and the written commands which are accepted by them and their teachers remained intact; and as the world sleeps soundly, they are taught more and more on a daily basis. Those countries with a claim to democracy continue to ignore that without the bloodshed, and with such astronomical sums, they could and can change the world through such successful programs as the Marshall Plan and Truman's Point Four Program, which allowed to rebuild and help thrive an unsafe Europe in ruins, as well as many other parts of the world. Evidently, for this and for countless other reasons, including an untold number of scientific, economic and hygienic services, the world is indebted to the United States, despite those who remain ungrateful to her, even though the United States continues as before to offer its aids. **Learn love and forgiveness from the tree, / Who bestows its shade even to the lumberjack.**

The holy Declaration of Human Rights, this harbinger of humanity and justice, has observed the human rights to their full meaning, so far as no one can deny it without denying themselves. Then why the principles of the Declaration haven't succeeded yet generally, even in countries with a claim to democracy?

Part II

Because first, we can change our ways only when our viewpoints have changed; and second, for as they say, **"a two-headed eagle can't fly!"** The holy Declaration of Human Rights, all around the world, has a millennia old competitor with billions of dependents, namely "God and Religion," each of whom says, "My word is *the* word, my religion is *the* religion, my book is *the* book, even my God is *the* God — and everything else is null and void!" From the outset, they've been surprisingly in competition instead of friendship. For example, the first person to offer monotheism to humanity saw people working hard and nonstop till they fell dead. So he told them to "set aside one day a week for their own health, to stop working on that day, and to rest," and he called it the Sabbath or Saturday. Then came another one, who said, "Great idea, but let's close shop on Sundays, instead." The third to come said, "Neither Saturday, nor Sunday, but don't work on Fridays!" Thence, everyone is waiting for the fourth one to come and establish the friendship instead of competition.

The world is in dire need of a common understanding of the Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration of Human Rights and democracy, even as they don't oppose any religion, they don't agree with any religion, either — that is, either the religion will yield to the Declaration, or the Declaration will yield to the religion. Although, by the rule of Time, it's the religion that has to adapt itself to the times, alas, after we'll have been through much hardship, when we'll have understood, as **Gandhi** put it, that **“to be a true human is by itself the best religion, even if it doesn't have many followers.”**

Consider the following success story as an evident example of adapting the commands of the religion to the contemporary civilization by the rule of Time. None of the Abrahamic religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity or Islam, absolutely forbade slavery, this most abhorrent of inhumane acts, and they even put forward certain laws to regulate its practice. But oil and water will never mix. Religions are of a different substance than the laws of the Declaration of Human Rights and democracy.

Homogeneity is the first condition of harmony, for

How could things be done without likeness?

The caprice of disagreeing elements

Can yield but an unstable edifice.

But as we saw, without the religions receiving any additional privileges, the religions themselves abolished slavery and adapted themselves to modern civilization; and there were no protests against them. Even as today, although the scriptures are still deemed holy, by the command of modern civilization, no religion or sect practices or approves of slavery, even though the ancient laws remain legible within the books. It goes to show that in all certainty, the religions to survive will bring themselves gradually and in every case to agree with today's civilization, which is to say, to conform with the Declaration of Human Rights. For, the religion says, “All for me,” while the Declaration of Human Rights, this treasure chest of knowledge and wisdom, says, “I for all.”

The Declaration of Human Rights is a means to preserve the humankind's freedom. It's a treasure chest of our knowledge and wisdom, experiences and the ordeals, which says that no one can abuse his or her freedom to take away that of the others. It's no exaggeration to say that the Declaration of Human Rights is the common chapter between all progressive ideas and

schools of life. The Declaration gives you and me, as different as our thoughts, religions or ways of life can be, a chance to breathe freely in this world, to express our ideas freely, to be free. Unlike the religions, the human rights are unconditional, and they contain all moral guidance and messages for everyone. (To study the full text of the Declaration of Human Rights in English and Persian, please search the internet or visit the BabaNouri.com website.)

“Equal rights for everyone,” it means to give each person according to their potentials and merits. It does not mean that we should offer blindly everything and every freedom to everyone without considering their individual merits, intellectual state, and other qualifications. “Equal rights” does not mean that a sane and an insane mind are equals.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, and I paraphrase, “Freedom doesn’t mean to do everything you wish to do. Freedom means that you don’t have to do what you don’t want to do.”

By according freedoms in irrational ways to an ignorant bunch in the name of implementing the Declaration of Human Rights, and by placing scientific and technical knowledge and means at the disposal of the seditious individuals and governments, the scientific and academic centers of the developed countries, as well as their governments, have committed some of their most dangerous mistakes — so far as today, the terrorists are beating the civilized countries with their own metaphorical sticks. The advanced countries have gone so far as making even the formulae to building bombs and other means of homicide accessible to the public through the internet. Before hiring, the governments and universities run full background checks on their prospective employees, say, an accountant or even a basic laborer. Likewise, they would do best to run background checks on the prospective university students to see where and how they were raised, in order to deliver knowledgeable graduates with a love of humanity. It’s a plausible claim that presently, thousands of terrorists and their off-springs are studying at some of the best universities in the world, who shall tomorrow, pilfer the proverbial homes of their present teachers like thieves equipped with flashlights. We may already read and hear about examples of such a phenomenon today.

Pasteur said, “We are the products of what we’ve learned in the past.”

It would be naïve of us to think that some of the contemporary scientists in the rebellious countries such as the North Korea were not educated in the West.

Naturally, to say something is not the same as doing it. Yet, it's necessary to study things and exercise foresight before we commit the act. As **Saadi** put it, **“Who has discerning eyes, / He won't take a step ere seeing the foothold.”** The **Rumi** was right, when he said,

**To put a sword in the hand of a drunk servant,
Better than the knowledge to be gained by the wicked.
Knowledge, wealth, rank, pomp and victory
But incite in the hands of the evil man.**

Or to quote **Saadi**,

**Either loyalty was never there in the world,
Or they no more practiced it in our time.
Nobody learned archery from me, who
At the end, didn't aim his arrow at me.**

For years, civilized governments and universities have been teaching some seditious people, oblivious of their mistake, that they've been raising the proverbial snake in their sleeves.

**The prince raised a wolf pup, only
To tear him apart, once it had grown.
You raise the enemy with such sweetness,
Unaware that you shall receive his wound.**

The need to control the unfitting people entering the academia and to teach them the scientific subjects is no less than the need to control such people at the airports. To offer human rights to a misguided person is akin to “placing the sword in the hand of the drunken servant”, for the first step in implementing the Declaration is to have the necessary intellect and knowledge. The true adherent of a religion can't be an inciter, for he is wise. Who understands the humane aim of the religion through her own mind, she is no blind imitator. As they say,

**Without the screen of the intellect, the eyes can't see well.
Without the old wise sage, no path can be found into the tradition.
The intellect is the lone traveler of the road of goodness.
Who is deprived of the intellect, he has no religion.**

The Declaration of Human Rights does not agree with any religion; and neither the Declaration nor the religion can endure obeying one another, so far as a Persian proverb comes to mind: “Several dervishes could sleep on a single rug, but two kings cannot fit together in the vastness of the land.”

A fly complained to God from the cruelties of the wind. God summoned the wind. The fly escaped the scene as it explained to God, “What I can’t endure is the gust! It’s best if I won’t be here while you balance the wind.” The general implementation of the Declaration of Human Rights will be possible when the religions have adapted their laws to the Declaration. Otherwise, the two can’t cooperate together or tolerate one another. To conclude, the correct exercise of these rights requires that the good people receive the correct information.

Human beings deserve freedom when they believe that their individual freedom depends on the freedom of everyone else who deserves theirs. In this regard, today we need to garner experience by studying history the more, especially that of the religions, so that we’ll be prepared to benefit from the vivifying laws of the civilized world. The Jewish religion regards history with such import that it considers the book of Jewish history, namely *Divrey ha-Yamim or The Chronicles*, to be holy. For, “history” is a prophet that speaks of a documented past, whereas “prophets” are the sources who speak of an unknown future. A nation that doesn’t learn from its history deserves to suffer recurring hardships. Those who become the blind followers and slaves of another person once they’ve set eyes on their idol, they’ve been deprived of a knowledge of history and past experience.

The world continues to suffer recurring hardships because their root causes have remained. For instance, 166 people so far have ascended to the powerful position of Papacy. Yet, only after centuries of repeated suffering and heavy financial and spiritual damages paid for the sexual violations of the priests, they’ve come to realize that prohibiting the priests from marriage had been wrong from the get go, and the very cause of such corruption.

The tragedy was revealed so far as the Vatican admitted, in April 2014, that 848 priests had committed “holy” (!) violations against children; and these priests were defrocked. But was the wrong removed by just defrocking the guilty individuals; or to the contrary, the cause of the wrong is still there to be removed? We’d better not wait in hopes of some superstitious punishment, and we’d better stop repeating this illusory poem, which also implies the endless

recurrence of a wrong: **“Jesus saw a corpse on the road. [...] He whispered, “Whom did you kill that you were killed so miserably? / How long will it take for your killer to be killed in return?”** Nay! The very word “to kill” should be eliminated from all books, so that the perpetrators of the crimes will have no source to depend on and kill millions of people.

People are bound to make mistakes. All books are written by us, and so they can't be without mistakes. According to the holy *Torah*, even the prophets were not without mistakes. As such, who learns from his mistakes will succeed, because a person is healthy so far as he makes mistakes, understands that he's committed a wrong, attempts to rectify the mistake, and makes certain that he would not repeat it.

As I wrote elsewhere, this author believes that one proud moment in the holy *Torah* takes place at *Deuteronomy*, Chapter 17, which I paraphrase: “In the case of a dispute, seek the advice of the panel of the judges of the day. And you'll be obligated to carry out their advice.”

To keep step with the viewpoint of the judges of the day — such as the Supreme Court of the United States — it is to keep step with the times and to welcome change; and this particular point I yet have to find in the holy books of any other religion. We in turn can be proud of this moment when we put it to practice. **The straight path is laid ahead of us, and yet, we walk astray. / The blame is on the thinker, not the thought.** The blame isn't on the Declaration of Human Rights and democracy. The blame is on the ignorance of the acting agents and the ingratitude of the ossified minds.

A wrong and cruelty, such as the shameful chronic ill of the hatred of minorities all around the globe, and its consequences such as the contemporary terrorist operations, can perpetuate due to normalization by frequent occurrence. That is, the current situation somehow removes the shame of these despicable acts, for hearing the daily news of the murders motivated by inhumane guidance anywhere in the world somehow makes these tragedies into “the norm.” We may further state that our world has become indifferent by hearing such news on a regular basis.

In the meantime, some major powers have opted to remain silent, while some of the others wrongly remain oblivious to the roots, and instead, they seek to kill those who carry out the commands. The latter group don't seem to heed that “the windshield wiper can't stop the snowfall, but it merely wipes away the snow briefly before the driver's eyes.” We first need to be prepared for the complications of the snowfall. Thence, we may say that as long as such inciting

words as “Kill!” as they appear repeatedly in the scriptures are deemed “holy”, their dire consequences shall persist. Just a few centuries ago, in the guise of the Inquisition, the ancestors of today’s Europe burned people in the name of the religion. And in the 20th century, as the Church remained silent, they started a world war in the name of religion and made more than 100 million people roll in their own blood. Six million of them were Jewish, the innocent victims of a hell named the Holocaust; close to 94% of the dead were of their own; and for the time being they are committing fratricide!

We spoke of habit and the possible normalization of any act, good or bad, for humans and animals. This takes me back to a very interesting incident that took place in the 1950’s in the Hajji Hassan Chamber of the Grand Bazaar of Tehran.

That year, the general warehouse of the Chamber known as the *bAr-andAz* or “port”, where the merchants stored all kinds of goods and dried food, suffered a mice infestation, so far as the merchants grew seriously concerned. The food wouldn’t allow the use of poison, and neither the traps nor the appetite of the cats seemed to be working!

A village man who worked as the manager of the place said, “Give me a few vases, and I’ll take out the whole generation of the mice from this Chamber!” — And he did.

To that end, he placed a few mice in every vase but without food; and the starving mice began to eat the weaker mice. Gradually, he raised a few strong Mouse-Eater Mice, and he set them loose in the warehouse. These mouse-eater mice followed their gained habit from their time in the vase, started eating the other mice and their pups, and once the other mice followed the new fad, the entire generation of the mice vanished from the warehouse! This same method was employed in the history of the promoters of terror to train and spread terrorists, for as history tells us, some kings or other men of power had their own teams of cannibals! Clearly, people’s good and bad deeds stem from their mindset. Thence, the Declaration of the Human Rights, aiming at the root cause, puts it unequivocally that no one has the right to brainwash another.

Part III

When it rains, all birds reach for shelter, except for the eagle, who instead flies above the clouds to avoid the rain. Throughout history, science has been the Jewish people’s shelter, and

their flights of culture were their secret to survive the storms. The Jew, having crossed the boundaries of annihilation, relying on their culture, has risen once more to survive the chronic ill of the hatred of minorities in every land around the world. We hope that soon enough the world will come to realize that there can be no individual security without the collective security. And the Declaration of Human rights is the priceless prescription to bring about that dream, and democracy is the means to implement it.

Quite interestingly, a prominent Pakistani figure, **Dr. Abdul Sattar Edhi** said in an interview, “I am Muslim, and my book is the Declaration of Human Rights.” Will the day come when the world will sing this song along with him? Alas, the fanatic adherents of the religions don’t realize that such words rather raise the scriptures in worth, than diminish their worth or confront them outright. Let’s fear not to express our thoughts. After all, criticizing a wise man strengthens the friendship, while criticizing an ignorant leads to enmity. As **Saadi** put it, **If you must, then confide your sorrows / To whose love and grace calms you now. / Don’t take your need to a bitter man / Whose ill nature will wear you out.**

Avicenna said that the adherents of any religion think that God guided just them and no other! They all share in one thing: they’re all waiting for a savior to drop from the sky. Even though no such promise was given in the Jewish holy book, there are Jews who continue to wait with expectant eyes (!) for someone to arrive and guide everybody to Paradise! **Sa’eb** was right, when he wrote,

**The pious man spent his life yearning for heaven,
If only he knew that heaven was in the abandonment.
What does it mean to say that heaven’s high up in the world?
Where you’re happy, there’s the heaven.
Hell’s a product of the darkness of our minds and souls.
When the heart isn’t dark, then the world is heaven.**

My Friends, life and Time have expiration dates, too, when their final moment arrives. Certainly, tomorrow we won’t have one precious thing from today, namely, Time. Let’s benefit from the present day blessing of the freedom of expression, this lasting dream of our own ancestors which has been realized in our time. Let’s not hold back from expressing our thoughts

unequivocally. Let's actively eliminate our weaknesses and welcome any step that leads to cleansing our beliefs. For, ungrounded fear only helps expand and perpetuate the nonsense.

Widespread discrimination forced our ancestors to live in the cocoon of oblivion. As I read in the papers, centuries ago, they referred to the tourists and other foreign travelers as "the divine messengers", since they spoke of unheard things; and they hoped that a "divine messenger" would someday come to save them. Today, we know better, that the "divine messenger" is "knowledge and science", and only our resolve and understanding will come to our aid. Let's not be afraid of speaking out the realities. **F. D. Roosevelt** famously said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Let's avoid baseless fear. Who scare us of God and the religion, they want us to fear themselves; otherwise, the philosophy of God and religion consists of love and humanity.

Recently, we read the tragic news of the rape and murder of a 7-year old girl by a beast of a man in Iran. The police had arrested the culprit, and a crowd stoned the residence of the murderer's family. On the other hand, however, another group defended criminal's family on the grounds that we can't blame the parents for the sins of their son. I asked myself, what if the murderer belonged to a religious minority of Iran, or of Myanmar (Burma), Saudi Arabia, Northern Ireland, Thailand, etc.? Would the people, i.e. the majority of the society still defend the innocent family of the culprit, or to the contrary, they would kill Muslims in Burma, or Protestants in Ireland, or elsewhere, destroy the Baha'is, Shiites or Sunnis? This brings to mind a tragic event that happened to the successful and useful community of the Jews of Tabriz, in the northwest of Iran, the details of which were told by **Dr. Habib Levy** in his *Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran* (p. 427 of the English translation by G. W. Maschke).

Early in the reign of Agha Muhammad-Khan the King of Qajar (the 1830's C.E.), there lived in the city of Tabriz a successful Jewish merchant (possibly named Baruch). By the treason of one of his gentile clerks, he was wrongly accused of the murder of a missing Muslim child; and by the false witness of the conspirators, the Jewish merchant was quickly condemned.

Suddenly, the people of Tabriz attacked the Jewish ghetto of the city and slaughtered its entire Jewish population, at the time reportedly at least 7000 in number. Since this horrible crime was rooted in religious hatred, the religious authorities kept silent. For their "guidance" too, past and present, were composed of some writings that bore the stamp of holiness, and which handed

down the acting authority to their followers and told them to “Kill! Kill!” — yesterday, the stranger, but today, the friend, here or there, this sect or that religion. This highlights the words of **Václav Havel**, the Czech philosopher, author, and former president of the Czech Republic, who said, and I paraphrase, “You can measure a civilization by the way they treat the minority among them.” As the poet said, **Those to be born, they won’t choose to come, / Should they hear what we suffered in life.**

On the 3rd of February 1950 C.E., the 14th of Bahman 1328 of the Persian calendar, **Dr. Sulayman Berjis**, a Baha’i physician from Kashan, was brutally murdered in that Iranian city. His son **Dr. Nasser Berjis** later reported that, “When they released our father’s corpse to us, there were 82 knife-stab wounds on his body. Following the investigation, they told us that the neighborhood people had each stabbed him in turn to ‘receive the blessing!’” Religious hatred has always been there, everywhere and at all times.

The Declaration of Human Rights is a vaccine against religious hatred, this chronic global ill. We’ll be justified to call the human society “a civilized” entity only when this Declaration has been generally implemented; otherwise, catastrophes will persist to happen one after another, whether in Tabriz or Mash-had, or in Burma, Bosnia, Egypt, Poland, Afghanistan’s Kabul, etc., whether to the Jews or to the Christians or Muslims, to the black or the white. In such a world, it’s further painful when large and small figures, such as Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of the Palestinians, goes to kiss the hand of that most damned beast of history to receive his blessing. The form of the act won’t matter as much; a stab is a stab. One “seeks the blessing” by the tip of the knife, another with “a pen, or a step, or a few coins;” even if some of them won’t be aware of the painful consequences of their actions.



**The fire that wore a crown of the flames at night,
It was depressed in the morning, seated inside its ashes.**

**I asked, “O hidden fire! What is that which covers you?”
He answered, “It’s the dust of grief,
which I poured on me by my own hands.”**

Conclusion: Certainly, people all over the world agree that *happiness* is the foundation of life; yet, they disagree on *how* to achieve happiness. Thus, a variety of the laws, traditions and religions come into play. As we study history, we realize that no other law has been accepted by the followers of all religions as widely as the Declaration of Human Rights, which contains the essence of all of the civilized progressive laws of the world.

For this law to be implemented, the grounds should be laid, even as for the seed to grow, the soil needs to be prepared. The soil is prepared for planting the seeds and irrigation, by first removing the weeds, rubbish and harmful insects, and by spreading the fertilizers specific to the seed. Likewise, it’s necessary to omit destructive ideas, beliefs and traditions, by the help of the religious and academic authorities, parliaments, and above all, the families, in order to prepare people’s minds and to do so not only in one country, but all around this global village. Especially in today’s world, where the geographical borders have been practically crossed by electromagnetic waves, this dream seems to be the more possible than ever before. To be realized, such a collective dream requires the collective participation and cooperation of the people across the globe. Should that happen, we may hope that this law can finally be implemented.

We ought to promote the holy law of the Declaration of the Human Rights and have it practiced by everyone. Only then we may put an end to the destructive suffering and repeated catastrophes that have hurt the world from the ancient times to date. As the first fundamental step, we must control the religious books, and other textbooks, at our schools; correct the laws of the land everywhere, and remove what contradicts the content of the Declaration and are at conflict with our happiness and security; and we need to teach the Declaration at all schools, traditional *maktabs*, and religious seminaries around the world. Otherwise, if the writings that stand in contradiction to the Declaration continue to be taught daily, things won’t change and the content of this law won’t be implemented.

Let's hope that the able and unrivaled power of Time will make this seemingly impossible dream a possibility; otherwise, as science makes progress, the wicked men too will continue to incite everyday, somewhere else in a new form, according to their fanatical teachings.

We must act. The mouth won't taste sweet by merely saying "sugar".

There's more to this story, but

The chest closed, and it no more flows.

The rest of the story will flow without the words,

In the heart of whose soul is alight.

Norman "Nourollah" Gabay

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To receive copies of this essay, the text of the Declaration of Human Rights, and other essays and writings of Norman Gabay in English and Persian, including his book *An Invitation to Reason*, his *Glossary of the Millennia-old Dialect of the Jews of Kashan*, and soon, a digital book that will contain his more recent essays, please visit our website at BabaNouri.com.