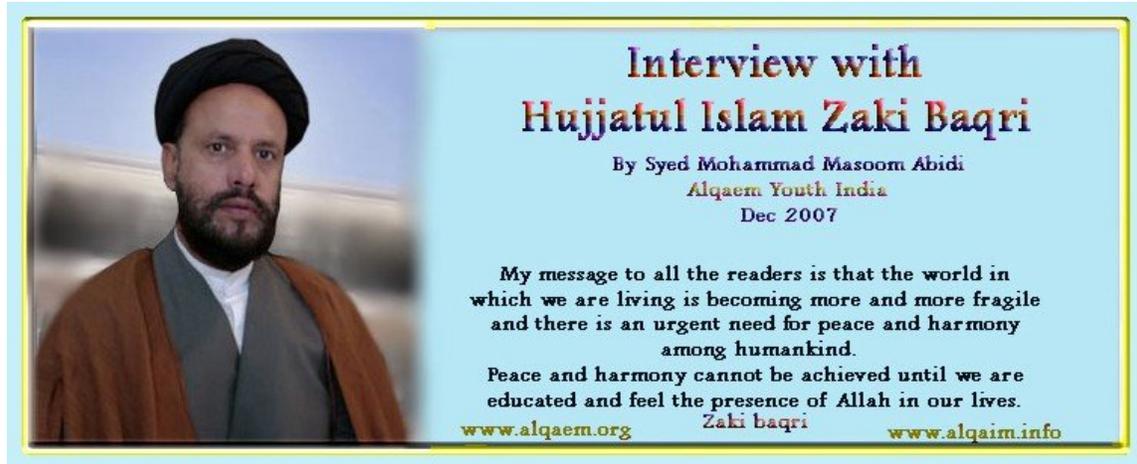


Interview with Hujjatul Islam Maulana Zaki Baqri

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By Syed Mohammad Masoom

Q 1) [AQYouth](#): Please say something about “The Role of Religion in World Affairs”.

A 1)ZB: First and fore mostly, it is vital to identify the perspective of religion in the minds of the readers. Religion in general means: “A specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects.” This definition does not leave room for an effect on world affairs. Islamic teachings relate that the religion of Islam is not simply a set of beliefs, but also a code of life. Islam is a complete socio, political and economical system which caters to the needs of all human kind regardless of color or ethnicity. According to the latter, Islam is a religion which actually does have an impact on the world. If all Muslim adhere to the teachings of Islam they can change the course of history of mankind and bring forth justice, equity and peace in the masses.

Q 2)[AQY](#)::- Some Muslims argue that America is anti-Islam or anti-Muslim, and see its invasion of Iraq, among other developments, as proof of this. What is your Opinion?

A 2) ZB: When a nation shows hostility towards a particular group of people or nations, it becomes very obvious. Why doesn't the outlook of the masses point fingers towards other nations like, Japan, China, or Taiwan etc. The hostility of America towards Muslims and Muslim nations is apparent and does not need disclosure, but is an open secret in the minds of not only Muslims but also non-Muslims.

Q 3) [AQY](#):: 'America is not a charitable organization - they came to steal from Iraq'... Is it true?

A 3) ZB The political and economic system of America is based on 'capitalism' which means it is an: "Economic system based on private ownership of the means of production, in which personal profit can be acquired through investment of capital and employment of labor. Capitalism is grounded in the concept of free enterprise, which argues that government intervention in the economy should be restricted and that a free market, based on supply and demand, will ultimately maximize consumer welfare." However: "The concept of capitalism has evolved over time, with later thinkers often building on the analyses of earlier thinkers. Moreover, the component concepts used in defining capitalism-such as private ownership, markets and investment-have evolved along with changes in theory, in law, and in practice."

Personal interest without any moral obligations may lead to irrational actions making weaker nations targets. The obvious point that arises in the minds of thinkers is that Iraq is a nation whose oil reserves can cater amply to themselves and to other nations. Unfortunately from the time Iraq has been invaded until now, its situation is grave. More than one million human beings have been killed and their infrastructure has been virtually wiped out. Instead of this great nation helping others, four million Iraqi refugees have fled their land to save their lives. The well known Geneva Convention states that 'the invading country has the responsibility of safe guarding the life, wealth and honor the subject nation'. In the case of Iraq, we see no respect for the lives, wealth or honor of the Iraqis. People are dying in this country while the invaders are at ease sucking the oil of a nation which is slowly bleeding to death.

Q 4) [AQY](#):: what are your views about sectarian conflicts raging Iraq, between Shias and Sunnis?

A 4)ZB It is a well known fact that in pre-war Iraq, citizens were co-existing for centuries with harmony and peace. Many Iraqi's have mixed families; it was a common thing for a Shia to marry a Sunni without any religious or customary restrictions. After the invasion of Iraq suddenly we hear of sectarian feelings emerging and killings attributed to them. Reports suggest that those who are involved in the sectarian killings are not Iraqi's but in fact are non-Iraqi. The well known expression 'divide and rule' clearly applies here. The agenda of the invading forces, Zionist regime and their leaders clearly state that 'we are benefiting from this war.' The idea behind bringing hate amongst Muslims is to move the world's attention from one big problem to another so that they could freely occupy a nation.

Q 5) [AQY](#):: what role do you feel the Ulema could or should play in promoting inter-sectarian and inter-communal harmony in India?

A 5) ZB: It is the duty of all humankind in general and in particular the scholars to promote peace and harmony in the nations. None of the religions promote hate and discord; almost all religions promote love and affection among fellow humankind. As the leader of their followers Ulema, have a great responsibility on their shoulders to promote understanding and love and teach peace and respect among fellow humankind.

Q 6) [AQY](#):: There is much talk now of America allegedly planning to attack Iran. What do you think the Iranian, or general Shia, response would be if this happens?

A 6) ZB: First of all I believe America is not stupid to do some things which will bring the country to its knees. There could be chances of doing so, as this kind of stupidity has been done in the past in Vietnam, Cambodia and recently in Afghanistan and in Iraq where millions have been killed and more millions suffering. Let me say this to all the readers that if a person commits one crime and never regrets it, he will certainly commit a next bigger crime and eventually the time will come for such a person to commit the biggest crime. Likewise if a minor crime takes place in a society and the people react to that injustice, there is fewer chances of the second time such crime to occur; if the masses are careless then

bigger crimes will take place. If people would have reacted to the atrocities, carnage and injustice of the past it would have been difficult for criminals to commit a crime against humanity. In such case it is not only a responsibility of a Shia but it is the responsibility of all Muslims to denounce and condemn this violence. The famous tradition of our beloved Prophet (s) says: "If a Muslims starts his day without thinking about the welfare of other Muslims he is not a Muslim."

Q 7) [AQY](#):: In India today, a growing number of ulema are setting up 'modern' schools, which provide both 'modern' as well as Islamic education. How do you see this? And what role do you feel the ulema should play in the field of education?

A 7) ZB: Islam itself is modern, so there is no room for new terminology expressed as "modern Islam" Separation of 'modern' secular schools from Islam is not the right approach. Islam is a system of life, which means it adheres to all the needs of humankind; which could be jurisprudent or scientific subjects. Thus it is the duty of Ulema to cater to the needs of all aspects of the society and guide the new generation towards the success of this world and the world to come in the Akhirat. I'm please to know such Ulema and trying to follow their footsteps. In order to eradicate poverty, hate and injustice it is vital to ensure that no human is illiterate. The Ulema have a greater role to play in this regard. It is pleasure to know that Ulema are leading in this aspect of life too. Alhamdulillah.

Q-8 [AQY](#):: It is often argued that in their teaching of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) madrasas generally focus on issues that are of little contemporary relevance. What do you have to say about this?

Q-8 ZB: Islamic science of jurisprudence is one of the sciences of the world. For each and every science there is a need of expertise and specialization. If a person is specializing in Medical science it is difficult for such person to do be an expert in IT. Those who take the subject of Islamic jurisprudence they cannot take other subjects. Islamic jurisprudence demands all time and energy to spend to learn and guide. Alhamdulillah after the Islamic revolution the contemporary issues have been adapted in the curriculum with the science of Islamic jurisprudence. Like social science, political science, oriental languages etc.

Q 9) [AQY](#):: Do you agree? Clerics had been fighting among themselves but asking the community to unite? Is it not a absurd situation?

A 9) ZB: Human psychology states that professional jealousies are part of human behavior. It is a well known fact that doctors with the doctors, engineers with the engineers, and politician with the politicians usually brawl. Clerics too are among human species and they might act according to their behavioral pattern; although they should not be like other professions, they should be God fearing, peaceful, kind and compassionate. They should be ideals for humankind to follow. One of the traditions of Masoom (a) says: "Likeness of Ulema is like of the Prophets'. In such case all those who are in this category should never fight but they should become a symbol of unity. A great cleric of our modern era Imam Khomeini has said: "Think of a scenario all the Prophets are in one place at one time, are they going to fight?" May Allah give us Heavenly inspirations to follow the command of Islam Ameen!

Q 10) [AQY](#): If the woman wants to marry she has to give up her right over her own body? A woman has no right to say "no" to sex should her husband desire it. In other words, the law aids men in securing usufruct over women's sex by making a legal condition of marriage. What you say?

A 10) ZB: A law is abused when it is not understood. The biggest problem we Muslims are facing is that we are unaware of our own religion. Majority of us are uninformed in many important Islamic subjects. The subject of marriage in Islam is a very important and has thorough guidelines for its followers. Marriage in Islamic is part and parcel of humankinds needs. It is not like other religions which preach celibacy and fail to preserve it. Islam is the religion which caters to all the needs of a human being. Marriage in Islam is the decision of two matured people, not a force. Before getting married both the parties should know what their rights and responsibilities are. It is the right of husband to have sex at the time of his need but it is also the responsibility of a husband to consider the health and mode of his partner. Before getting married one should know Islamic guidelines in this regard. Islam has guided humanity towards this subject with minute detail. It is the very reason I have developed the 'pre-marriage' course for the people who would like to get married. Those who are interested in this regard the

link is www.cig.ca under 'Family life in Islam'. In Urdu one can watch it at www.shiatv.net by searching 'pre-marriage course'.

Q 11) [AQY](#):: What Islam says on "Relationships of Muslims with Other Muslims"?

A 11) ZB: As the Holy Quran states: "You shall hold fast to the rope of Allah, all of you, and do not be divided. Recall Allah's blessings upon you – you used to be enemies and He reconciled your hearts. By His grace, you became brethren. You were at the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you there from. Allah thus explains His revelations for you, that you may be guided." (3:103)

The Muslim Ummah today has a duty to promote peace; there is no room for hate and revulsion. I have a basic question for all those who are the people of reflection. As per the aforementioned verse of the Holy Quran it was the ignorant and arrogance of the Arabs which make them fight each other for centuries. It is Islam which has the capacity to unite all the tribes and nations under one banner. What a pity, the religion which caused the unity of humanity in the early golden days, is now the same religion that becomes the source of discord? We can easily conclude it is not Islam which is causing discord among Muslims but it is ignorant Muslim who are promoting dispute among each other. Such people have forgotten the decree of the Holy Quran and the tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah upon him and his progeny). The Holy Quran again stresses the point that: "The believers are members of one family; you shall keep the peace within your family and reverence Allah, that you may attain mercy." (49:10) With careful examination we can see that the majority of our beliefs are shared and our actions similar to other Muslims. Understanding the ideology which benefits by dividing us is very important. We Muslims should get united because our aim is common and our enemy is common.

Q 12) [AQY](#): The majority of Muslims confuse between what is religion and what is [culture](#)? What is the solution?

A 12) ZB :The definition of culture according to the literal meaning is: “A particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period”. According to this, Islam is a culture which introduced a system of life which can easily adapt and which is universal; meaning Islam has introduced mankind to a cultural system which is socio, economical and political. A glance at the world cultures shows that they are slowly dissolving into one pop culture. To be given an example the Indian culture which is slowly vanishing from its society has been replaced with foreign culture. Islam introduces unchangeable, adoptable, easy culture for all ages and all societies. There are many aspects in our day to day lives which have been copied from the non-Islamic culture. To be given an example the marriage [ceremonies](#) we don't see any thing which Islam wanted it followers to do but the culture in which we exist has influenced us severely to the extent that the Islamic culture has been forgotten. If Islamic culture is established in our society there shall not be any girl left without marriage. Dowry is not Islamic culture Mehr, or Sidaq 'marriage gift' should be given to the bride from the groom is Islamic culture, which has long been put aside..

Q 13) [AQY](#): Are women allowed to work, leaving their children at home in Islam?

A 13) ZB: Islam is a social system which guides humanity towards the best path with which one can be prosperous in the worldly life as well the life of Hereafter. Women are consisting of half or more than half the population of humankind. Islam has never neglected women in guidance towards the best path of salvation. The challenging aspect of women is to cater to the needs of the future generation. It is the natural duty of women to bring up peaceful and good offspring. That is the reason the burden of finances of a family is on the shoulder of the men. There are times stages in a woman's life where she is free and has time to work, during such a period she is free to work; provided her modesty and dignity is safe guarded.

Q 14) [AQY](#): What is azadari and who is the purpose of azadari?

A 14) ZB The literal meaning of Azadari is to mourn for a departed soul; but it is greatly used for the mourning of Imam Hussain (a) the grandson of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (s). After the tragedy of Karbala it became an engine to motivate the masses. Azadari motivates the mourners towards truth, justice and equity and compels them to reject and fight against tyranny, injustice and inequity. As the great leader of the modern times Imam Khomeini once expressed it by saying: “Ma Her Chizi Ki Dareem As Hussain (a) Dareem”, meaning whatever we have today in Iran it is because of Imam Hussain (a)”.

Q 15) [AQY](#): Still there is mass poverty and illiteracy among the Muslims? What is the reason? And what is the solution?

A 15) ZB It is very important for us to know world statistics and exclusively the statistics of our own nations. It is a fact that the majority of the world population is illiterate and poor. Muslims also proportionately are illiterate. Although the very first revelation to our beloved Prophet (s) starts with the command by saying: “Read, in the name of your Lord, who created.” (96:1). The religion whose first revealed verse commanded its followers to read and now those very followers are away from knowledge? There are many tangible and non tangible reasons which is out of the scope of this interview. Knowledge is wealth, knowledge is power and knowledge is love, compassion and kindness. Our beloved Prophet (s) introduced four very famous traditions inviting his followers to reflect. The First one says: “Acquiring knowledge is incumbent upon all Muslim (men or women).” That means there is no gender restriction in acquiring knowledge. The Second Hadith says: “Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave”. This means there is no time limit for seeking knowledge. The Third tradition compels us to believe that there is no space limit in seeking knowledge says: “Knowledge and wisdom is of the Muslims get it back even from a non believer”. **The fourth Hadis says: “Knowledge and wisdom loosen by the believers, seek it from whomsoever you can, that may be non-believers.”**

I believe our scholars have given less importance to this very important subject. Scholars, preachers and orators have a greater responsibility in changing the course of thinking of the masses; likewise each and every believer has a responsibility and duty to adhere to the teachings of their religion. I had a glance at a statistic of India where it says that there are

more religious institutions than educational ones; which gives us a clear understanding of the results. If our religious institutions could become the centre of education a new dawn will appear and the future will be bright.

Q 16) [AQY](#): There is mass poverty among the Muslims and at the same time Islam have beautiful system of giving charity, khums, Zakat, Sadaqah. Where all it goes?

A 16) ZB Poverty is a part of human society it is not only among Muslims, but the largest portion of the world is poor. This shows that the distribution of wealth among human society is inadequate and requires a drastic change in this ugly scenario. There are many reasons why the vast majority of Muslims are deprived of their basic needs. 1) Those who take out the religious dues are very small portion of the Muslim population. If Zakat and Sadaqat is given as it is been prescribed by Islam by our Sunni brothers, Khums is given by our Shia brothers there shall not be a single Muslim who is needy. 2) Centralization of funds is very important in order to organize the distribution of Islamic charity Zakat, Khums and Sadaqat. 3) The centralize distribution has to be done under very committed and God fearing people of the Muslims society whose hearts burns for the poor. 4) Accountability and yearly account presentation has to be done very thoroughly. 5) These distribution organization should be monitored by God fearing inspectors of the centralized organization. 6) The major portion of these charity funds should used for the education of the Muslim Ummah.

Q) 17) [AQY](#): As per my knowledge and experience says (if I am not wrong), because of self respect poor sadaat e Fatima do not approach any body to ask help from khums. How to find and help true sadaat?

A 17) ZB: Islam has guided us in all aspect of our lives, nothing is unclear, and we as Muslims are unaware of our own religion. Regarding this subject of Khums also the guidance is clear in Islam. How to take

out Khums? How to disperse it? To whom it should be given? Etc. The portion of Sadaat should be distributed in accordance with the condition which has been laid down in Islam. Those who seek Sadaat portion meaning those who ask for the Khums money are not the eligible (Mustahaq) Sayyids, they in fact are the beggars they should never be let down according to the Holy Quran: "Nor shall you reprimand the beggar." (93:10) Those who are Mustahaq we need to search for them, they are very honorable people who are struggling for their livelihood yet still could not reach to their basic needs of their lives. Thus there should be a secret movement consists of the pious and God fearing who desire to serve the Mustahiqeen to seek the pleasures of Allah. Such group should have a representation in each and every street and area of the town and search for the Mustahiqeen (eligible momineen). There must be a list of such people and distribution should be done in secret such that their honor and respect should be protected. The best form of payment is for the education of their children. If we can educate our future generations we will never face economical, political, and social problems.

Q) 18) [AQY](#): Please tell us in short about theme and format of Khutba e juma?

A 18)ZB: Juma prayer is a very important tool for the resolving problems in . As per the Holy Quran it is a command to the Muslims: "O you who believe, when the Congregational Prayer (Salat Al-Jumu`ah) is announced on Friday, you shall hasten to the commemoration of Allah, and drop all business. This is better for you, if you only knew." (62:9). There are numerous Ahadith which encourage followers to attend the Juma prayers. One of which says: "Juma prayers are Hajj of the needy". Juma is the weekly spiritual, gathering which we should adhere to resolve the problems of the masses. Juma prayer has two Sermons (Khutbas) the first one is to discuss Taqwa pioussness and purity. The Islamic belief is that without piety, peace cannot be achieved in society. Purification of souls is the goal of Islam and it can be attained by good advice from each other, and Juma is the best place to talk about it. The second sermon (Khutba) should be regarding the problems faced by the Muslim Ummah during the past week. The leader of the Juma prayer should be so bright and well informed that he should be analyzing the situation of Muslims of that area and as well the Muslims of the world.

Q 19) [AQY](#): It's a regret that some scholars indulge themselves in criticizing other scholars and other Muslim sects in public, in such a way as if the owner of one Product would boasts about his company and criticizes his competitor's products so that people get attracted towards his product and look down to his competitors. What is your opinion?

A 19) ZB :Islam never teaches such a thing; a scholar is the one who pleases only Allah not the masses. May Allah guide us all Ameen! All these kinds of activities show insecurity in the person. A scholar always counters with scholarly work rather than using the pulpit to prove his point of view.

Q 20) [AQY](#):The capacity to acquire knowledge makes human beings the most superior of creations. But what is knowledge? Who is entitled to be called a knowledgeable person (ulema)? What do you feel should be the role of the 'ulama in Muslim society? What are your own feelings about how the 'ulama functioning today?

A 20) ZB Superiority in the eyes of Allah is taqwa with knowledge. Every field of knowledge is respectable as long as that knowledge becomes a source to serve humanity. There is famous verse of the Persian poet Saadi Shirazi which says: 'As long as a person is not spoken his/her ability is unknown, one should never think a shadow as it is, and there could be lion laying in front of them'. Hadith says: "A person is hidden behind his speech". The Holy Quran says: "Thus, Allah does not change the condition of any people unless they themselves make the decision to change." (13:11). Every member of the community has the duty to work for the betterment of the future, Ulema are also part of the society; and in fact have a greater role to play. Ulema have the ability to change the fate of the society at large; they have the power to inject the spirit of life in the people. Each and every Alim is working for the progress of the community and can improve in their efforts if they realize their power of influence on the public and strive to change the course of the Ummah.

Q 21) [AQY](#): Although the Quran stresses Muslim unity, Muslims are divided into numerous sects, and some of them see the other sects as

enemies. How do you account for this phenomenon of intense sectarianism and the fact that, unlike in the Christian case, there is really no Muslim ecumenical movement to bring the ulema of the different sects on a common platform for serious dialogue?

A 21) ZB: Self and personal interest could over shadow the interest of the masses. The Holy Quran has given all kinds of examples of this in past history. "They have set up their religious leaders and scholars as lords, instead of Allah. Others deified the Messiah, son of Mary. They were all commanded to worship only one god. There is no god except He. Be He glorified, high above having any partners." (9:31). All Heavenly religions are faced with the same problems, Jews, Christians and Muslims are faced with sectarian divisions. Our goal is to establish the domain of God; but the method of reaching to these goals is different. If we Muslims educate ourselves that our goal is similar and our obstacle and enemy is common. Those who are self conceited, arrogant, and love to govern on the globe are the ones who are dividing us. It is the duty of each and every Muslims to understand this clearly. If there is problem in understanding Sunni and Shia then why is there a problem within Palestinians between Hamas and Fatah? The answer is clear that it is due to the colonial inhuman method of 'divide and rule'; which has been practiced for centuries and is still alive today. It is up to us to wake up from our deep sleep and understand the there is no room for us to be divided within ourselves while the worldly hungry powers are enjoying the liberty of affluent lifestyles.

Q 22) [AQY](#): In several madrasas students are taught to despise and counter other Muslim sects, based on the assumption that their own sect alone is true. How do you see this problem?

A 22) ZB: Islam never teaches us to be divided but on the contrary it teaches us to be united. The Holy Quran says: "The believers are members of one family; you shall keep the peace within your family and reverence Allah, that you may attain mercy. O you who believe, no people shall ridicule other people, for they may be better than they. Nor shall any women ridicule other women, for they may be better than they. Nor shall you mock one another, or make fun of your names. Evil indeed is the reversion to wickedness after attaining faith. Anyone who does not repent after this, these are the transgressors." (49:10-11). In this command Allah (s.w.t) orders us not to ridicule others. The traditions of

the Prophet (s) is also a clear guide that he never indulged in such divisions. Madrassas should be centers of education which should promote love, harmony not only with the Muslims but also with the non-Muslims too. There should be open dialogue which promotes understanding, peace and harmony among humankind.

Q 23) [AQY](#): How you see “Multiculturalism” term in muslims?

A 23) ZB: We have mentioned before that Islam is a universal and adoptable culture. As long as Muslims adhere to their own culture while interacting with other communities there is no harm in it. When the other culture is added to it in the name of Islam such multiculturalism and pluralism will lead to the failure of the other culture.

Q 24) [AQY](#): What you say on the need to rely on scientific astronomical calculations instead of human sightings of the moon to decide on when to celebrate Eid.

A 24) ZB: Islam is the most practical and scientific religion which has given us a clear understanding in each and every aspect of life. We can adopt scientific knowledge as long as there are no clashes; and there should never be any clashes of thoughts when it comes to the understanding of the first day of the month. According to majority of the Maraje (meaning highly qualified scalars) ‘one can rely upon the scientific calculations regarding the moon sighting if he/she reaches to the certainty.’

Q 25) [AQY](#): Muslims want to shape society according to the Quran But when they will shape?

A 25) ZB: Where there is a will there is way. According to the Holy Quran the life of our beloved Prophet is the perfect example to follow. “In the life of the messenger of Allah there is good example to follow; for those among you who seek Allah and the Last Day, and constantly think about

Allah.” (33:21) He changed the course of the Muslim Ummah by education, purification of souls and peace and harmony. If we concentrate on these tools within no time we will be successful in this world and the world to come.

Q 26) [AQY](#): Your message to the Muslim world and Islamic unity....

A 26) ZB: My message to all the readers is that the world in which we are living is becoming more and more fragile and there is an urgent need for peace and harmony among humankind. Peace and harmony cannot be achieved until we are educated and feel the presence of Allah in our lives. The world is compelling us to become individualistic beings while by nature we are social. Thus Islam is the only system with which one can attain success in both the worlds. Take out anger, hatred, and revulsion and bring knowledge, love and harmony among all humankind. Learn total Islam and follow it totally Insha Allah the success is under your feet.

O’ Allah give us strength to fight tyranny, oppression, injustice and indecency.

O’ Allah hasten the appearance of the maker of Justice to the mankind.

O’ Allah give us Tawfeeq (Heavenly inspiration) to follow the best religion Islam.

O’ Allah keep us united and make us pious.

Ameen! iLahi Ameen

Zaki Baqri

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Note: -[Maulana Syed Zaki Baqri](#) is an interpreter of Islam, representing the true Islam of prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.W) and the twelve Imam’s

(A.S) after him (S.A.W.W) and in line with the school of Wali e Faqih-A rare combination indeed these days to be found in West . He combines his thorough religious knowledge of Islam and uses it as a guide to show everyone how to lead a balanced life. His approach is very practical and realistic.

Maulana Baqri has written several books and course curriculum ranging from learning Quran to questions about pre-destiny and free will. He combines his acute sensitivity to human nature, in order to understand and explain the complexities of human experiences and explains them all in simple terms which everyone can follow.

Syed Mohammad Masoom Abidi