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Islamic Culture

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Prophets of Allah do not only call people to the religion of Islam by presenting tenets of the Islamic Faith and its codes of law; they also pioneer a new culture, a new civilization, and a new way of life. Such a culture can aptly be called "Ibrahimi Culture". This culture has certain fundamental principles and characteristics which distinguish it from other cultures based on ignorance. This distinction may be seen in its spirit and principles as well as in its outward manifestations and details.

The first distinctive characteristic of the Islamic culture is the authentic religious beliefs, social ethics, and moral values on which it is based. This factor is commonly shared by Muslims all over the world, irrespective of their nationality, language, and dressing style. Due to this common feature Muslims from different parts of the world look like members of a family, easily identifiable as representatives of the same culture. Thus, the Muslims of the world have a specific culture of their own which could be best called the "Ibrahimi Culture". ■

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Wisdom of Qur'an

"They say: 'If we were to follow this guidance with you, we should be snatched away from our land.' Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary to which fruits of all kinds are brought as a provision from Us? But most of them do not know."

(Al Qur'an – 28:57)

This is what the Qurayshite unbelievers used to say as an excuse for not accepting Islam. When we reflect on this, we realise that this was indeed the main reason for their denial. In order to appreciate it fully, we should bear in mind the position of Quraysh in those times, a position which they felt would be undermined if they were to accept Islam. "What initially lent eminence to the Quraysh in Arabia was their descent from Ishmael. When, thanks to the sagacity of Qusayy ibn Kilab, the Quraysh became the custodians of the Ka'bah and settled down in Makkah, their importance grew." "Here is God's first answer to the excuse the Quraysh offered. This response amounted to saying: "Is it not because of God's special favour that it is looked upon with respect and veneration by all, and every year thousands of people come to it as pilgrims? It is thanks to this favour that you have become the leaders of Arabia and the major beneficiaries of the flourishing international trade of your time. Do you think that by rebelling against God Who, in the first place, bestowed this favour on you, you will prosper, and that you will be instantly destroyed if you follow God's Religion?" ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

"Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: "A person who calls people towards doing good deeds will get the same reward as those who follow him and do good; and nothing will be diminished from the requital of the latter. Similarly, those who call the people towards vice will have the same punishment as those who follow him without any diminution in the punishment of the perpetrators."

(Muslim)

Our deeds are either good or bad as no deed can be both good and evil. And people, in given circumstances, are tempted to do either good or bad deed. This hadith gives good tidings to a person who not only does good deeds but invites others to do so. It also warns a person against inviting his/her fellow beings to vice. Calling people towards doing good deeds is in itself a virtuous act. It wins the pleasure of the Lord Almighty as well as provides an opportunity for the invitee for doing good deeds. Contrary to it, the act of inviting people to commit some evil is in itself a vicious act. It earns the Divine wrath as well as puts the invitee in a position that earns the Divine wrath. "God is All-Powerful. He can give reward and award punishment to whom He wills. He knows perfectly well the deeds done by His servants as well as the intention lurking behind the commission of the deed. Hence His judgement is based on human actions. He however can forgive whomsoever He wills. ■

Divorce

After about 30 years of Shah Bano Case in which Supreme Court had ordered that under section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code husband even after divorce is responsible for the maintenance of his divorced wife the matter has again cropped up as two Muslim divorced women have gone to court for relief under section 125 Cr P.C.

It may be recalled that in 1986 the Parliament enacted, The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act exempting Muslims from Sec 125 Cr P.C. and laid down the procedure as allowed in Sharia. It is unfortunate that a section of Muslim women, ignorant of Sharia Laws, have come out in support of those who are questioning the procedure formed according to Sharia. The matter of "Triple Talaq" adopted by husband to divorce his wife has assumed a disturbing situation. In this context we reproduce below a news item published in the Indian Express of June 5, 2016:

"AMID RAGING debate over verbal triple talaq, a top Muslim cleric claimed majority of the women were satisfied with Shariyat laws and any change in them "will not be tolerated". All India Muslim Personal Law Board member Maulana Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahali attributed the increasing confusion over Shariyat laws, especially those related to women, to the lack of adequate information and said Islamic Shariyat was not meant to change with time and situation."

"Any change in Shariyat will not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of female members of the Board to take Islamic Shariyat to women," he said.

He said the issue of triple talaq was being raked up because of lack of information among Muslim women about rights given to them in Islam. On certain issues, women have more rights than men and 99 per cent Muslim women are happy with the law. Shariyat does not do injustice to anyone. In Islam, marriage is an agreement, which is solemnised with the will of both the parties." Maulana said.

The cleric, however, said that giving triple talaq at one go was wrong and they condemn it.

After recent court orders a fresh debate has started on women's right in Shariyat. His statement assumes significance as All India Muslim Personal Law Board had said earlier that a Court has pronounced that Shariyat law would not work in India and it could only be followed in Islamic countries.

Under the aegis of AIMPLB, a conference was organised in Lucknow to address issues related to women's right in light of Muslim Personal Law.

A woman member Asma Zehra from Hyderabad said Muslim Personal Law is formulated in the light of Quran and Hadith (sayings and deeds of the Prophet). She said that Islam was first to give equal and in some cases more rights to woman than men, example being the consent to accept in nikah which is first given by the girl/bride. Similarly, just as a man can annul the marriage by saying talaq thrice, the woman also has the same right to exercise it through "Khulaa" or "Faskh e Nikah (right of a woman to seek a divorce from her husband)".

Citing verses from Quran, she said it was not legal or justified for a husband and wife to live together after a man has said talaq thrice.

Zehra said India is a secular, democratic country and all citizens have the right to religious freedom. Media was highlighting the issue of triple talaq to show that huge number of Muslim women were suffering because of this provision but the ground reality is that the divorce rate is least in the Muslim community, she said. Zehra said "letter head organisations" have presented false concocted data in their survey reports. "We strongly condemn such surveys. Muslim Personal Law is a Divine Law. There is no scope for any change or amendment."

The Muslim Personal Law is attacked for being gender biased and anti woman which is totally false and untrue. ■

S.A.

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The Message of Idul Fitr

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. [He wants that] you must complete the same number of days and that you must magnify Allah for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him. And when My slaves ask you [O Prophet] concerning Me, then [tell them] I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led alright.

(al-Baqarah 2:185-186)

This passage relates to the blessed month of Ramadan. The Qur'anic account of fasting marks the opening of this passage which states that fasting is prescribed as a religious duty for Muslims, as it was for the believers of an earlier date. It is prescribed so that they may become pious. It is further clarified that the Qur'an was sent down during this month and that the Qur'an is guidance for all mankind. Contained in it are signs as guidance and criterion.

In this passage Allah tells Muslims that He intends ease for them. He does not want to put them to any difficulty. Fasting for twenty-nine or thirty days during Ramadan is not an impossible task. Muslims are asked to fast for a limited number of days. This is followed by the directive that they

should celebrate Allah's praise in that He has guided them. They are obliged to praise Him for having blessed them with His guidance. They are also exhorted to thank Allah and express gratitude to Him.

Allah mentions implicitly 'Id in the above passage. Although the festival of 'Id is not specified, the passage states the objective, spirit and function of 'Id. As Allah enables a Muslim to fast during Ramadan and pray at night, he should celebrate Allah's glory. This should be by way of thanks for the bestowal of His guidance. A Muslim stands indebted to Him for blessing him with faith and Islam. Without His leave he could neither fast nor pray. For there are numerous communities besides Muslims in the world. They know well that Muslims celebrate Ramadan in a particular way. Yet it makes no difference to them. Ramadan does not carry any meaning and message for them.

We should be grateful to Allah for having guided us. We should be equally grateful for being blessed with Islam. Moreover, we should be thankful to Him for granting us health which enables us to fast. Above all, Allah grants us the ability and strength to fast. For one may possess everything yet not receive divine guidance to fast. One may be an

adult, with sound physique and other resources yet still not fast. It amounts to disobedience on his part.

That Allah alone grants the ability is the real thing. It is He Who inspires man to fast during Ramadan and to pray to Him. In sum, He guides us to fast. Yet there are those who possess the facilities and resources to fast but who do not do so. This is because Allah does not inspire such a person to fast. A believer is obliged to celebrate Allah's praise for having provided him with the requisite resources and ability to fast. Since there is nothing to prohibit one from fasting, it is imperative for one to fast. The directive to celebrate Allah's praise is on account of the same - the ability granted by Him to fast.

It is part of the *Sunnah* that on the day of *'Id al-Fitr* one should celebrate Allah's praise on one's way to the mosque. On *'Id al-Adha* one should chant such praise aloud: "Allah is great. Allah is great. There is no god besides Allah. Allah is great. All praise is for Allah." It is also part of the *Sunnah* that one should use two different routes for going to the mosque to offer prayer. This results in circulating Allah's praise throughout the whole town. The inhabitants of the town will hence receive this message. While waiting for the *'Id* Prayer to commence, one should keep on praising Him for His guidance and this out of gratitude. For Allah has granted one the ability to fast. One will

be pardoned for missing a fast on account of ill health.

It is common knowledge that festivals are an occasion for expressing joy. One is relieved of one's duties, enabling one to enjoy the festival. Islam is, however, the only faith that *obliges* its followers to perform extra duty on the day of festival. Nonetheless, this duty is not very burdensome. Rather, it accrues more blessings. It instructs the believers in 'Self-restraint and decency. On *'Id* day Muslims are obliged to offer two additional rak'ah of prayer. They are not exempted from discharging their religious duty on this day, as they have to offer extra prayer in between the compulsory *Fajr* and *Zuhr* Prayers. This is the Islamic way of expressing gratitude to Allah.

The Muslim community is thus consistently instructed in thanking Allah. No other religious community is particular about this. The Muslims alone try to perform this. They discharge their duty and thank Allah for enabling them to do so.

Other religious communities do not offer extra prayers or charity on their festival days. Rather, they enjoy life, engrossed in eating and drinking. In Islam, however, the focus is on giving - charity to the poor, gratitude to Allah and celebrating of Allah's praise. This is done in order to thank Allah for His guidance. It expresses Muslims' gratefulness to Him. ■

Hazrat Umar's Conversion To Islam

- Shibli Nomani

'Omar was in the twenty-seventh year of his age when the holy Prophet declared his mission and the echoes of Islam reverberated through Arabia. The "still small voice" of oneness of Allah had not been altogether unfamiliar to the ears of many a member of the house of 'Omar owing to Zaid, whose son Sa'id was among the first to be converted to Islam. Sa'id was married to Omar's sister Fatimah and his persuasions made her also embrace the new faith. Another respectable member of the same family, Nu'aim b. Abdullah, had likewise adopted Islam. 'Omar, however, was as yet stranger to the tenets preached by the Prophet. When the first notes range in his ears they sounded harsh and discordant and enraged him so much that he became the enemy of those of the tribe who had embraced Islam. Labinah, a slave girl in his house, incurred his wrath by turning Muslim, and he used to belabour her till he would stop from sheer exhaustion and then he was wont to exclaim, "Wait till I *recoup my breath* and then I'll beat thee again." Besides Labinah, he did not refrain from belabouring others whom he could lay his hands on. But for those, however, who had embraced it, Islam had a charm and no force on earth could divest them of the spiritual halo of glory which it cast round them. 'Omar, therefore, found it impossible to estrange even one single person from Islamic in spite of the hardship

he inflicted on them. As a last resort he finally made up his mind to do away with the life of the Founder of Islam himself. He buckled his sword and bent his steps in the direction of the Prophet. The wire-pullers behind the scene of the drama of Fate straightway exclaimed:

Our skill at last has brought

The friend whom long we sought.

On his way he happened to meet Nu'aim b. 'Abdullah who noticing the dark frowns on his face, asked him what was the matter. 'Omar replied that he was going to slay Muhammad Nu'aim rejoined: "You should look to your own house first; both your sister and brother-in-law have accepted Islam." On hearing this 'Omar got so much furious that he instantly turned back to his sister's house. She was reading the Qur'an but hearing him enter, she became silent and put the leaves of the Qur'an out of sight. He had, however heard her voice and asked her what it meant. She replied that it was nothing; on which he said: "Don't attempt to conceal anything from me. I know everything; I have heard that both of you have turned heretics" and saying this he took hold of his brother-in-law and laid severe hands on him. His sister tried to intervene but he smote her too till her body was steaming with blood in this plight she exclaimed: "Omar! Do as you will, Islam can never get out of our hearts." These words

produced a strange effect on his mind. He regarded his sister with an affectionate gaze, and seeing the blood, which was pouring cut from the wounds he had inflicted, was greatly moved. At last he said, "Put me in the way of what you were reading," Fatimah brought the fragmentary parchments of the Qur'an from where she had hidden them and placed them before him. He took them up and met the ayah, "All things that are in the heavens and on the earth sing the praises of Allah and He is Omnipotent and Omniscient." He read the passage with rapt attention and each word seemed to inspire his heart with awe till at last when came to the verse, "Believe in Allah and His Prophet," he instinctively cried out: "Verily, I believe that there is no Allah but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet."

This incident took place at the time when the prophet had taken shelter in the house of Arqam, which was situated at the foot of the Safa hills. 'Omar came up to this house and knocked at the door. As he had come with sword in hand, and no one knew of the scene that had just been enacted, the Companions of the Prophet felt some anxiety. But Amir Hamzah said: "Let him come in, if he comes with a friendly motive so much the better, if not, his head shall be struck off with his own sword." On Omar's entrance the Prophet himself went a few paces forward and catching hold of his robe asked: "Omar! To what motive shall we ascribe your visit?" The commanding and dignified tones of the Prophet's voice awed him and with the deepest humility he replied: "I

come to embrace Islam." This answer elicited from the Prophet and impulsive cry of "Allah-u-Akbar" (Allah is Great) and all his companions followed his example by ejaculating the same formula in a chorus so grand that hills of Makkah reverberated far and wide.

The conversion of 'Omar marks a new era in the annals of Islam. Hitherto although forty or fifty men had joined its ranks, and the redoubtable warrior of Arabia, Hamza, the Prince of martyrs, had also embraced the Islamic faith, still Muslims could not openly perform their religious functions, while praying in the Ka'bah was quite out of the question. With Omar's adoption of Islam this state of things suddenly changed. He openly declared his faith and although the idolators treated him with the utmost rigour at first, still he persevered with which he maintained the struggle against them at last overcame their vindictive opposition and he was so successful that accompanied by the small band of Muslims he went to the Ka'bah where they said their prayers together. Ibn Hisham describes this event, on the authority of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud in the following words:

"When 'Omar embraced Islam, he fought with the Quraish until he had the better of the struggle so far that he entered the Ka'bah where he said his prayers and we along with him."

The conversion of 'Omar to the Islamic faith took place in the year of Revelation. ■

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Biography (A Brief Overview)

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi

Sheikh Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali Hasani Nadwi was born on Friday, Muharram 6, 1332 Hijri (5 December 1913) in the village of Takiya Kalan (also known as Dairah Shah 'Alamullah). This village is located in Rae Bareli, which is a district in the state of Uttar Pradesh of India. His early education and upbringing took place in this village. This village was inhabited only by his family members who were generally educated and belonged to the middle class.

Sheikh Nadwi's father Sheikh Hakim Syed 'Abdul Hai Hasani (d. 1923) passed away when Sheikh Nadwi was only nine year old. He was a distinguished Islamic scholar, well known writer and physician. He earned his living by practicing medicine. He was also the rector of Nadwatul 'Ulama which is an Islamic institution of higher learning.

Sheikh Nadwi's mother (d. 1968) was a very pious woman of exemplary character. She was very learned and well versed in literature. She put Sheikh Nadwi on the path of religion and religious education instead of worldly pursuit and modern education.

Sheikh Nadwi was the youngest among his brothers and sisters. He had two older sisters who were very caring and affectionate to him. Influenced by

their father and other family members, both sisters were very inclined towards religion and learning. As a result, Sheikh Nadwi also developed a strong liking for books at a very early age, even before he was able to comprehend them.

Following the footsteps of his father, Sheikh Nadwi's elder brother Dr. Syed 'Abdul 'Ali Hasani (1893-1961), who was 20 years older than Sheikh Nadwi, completed religious education and then studied Yunani (Greek) medicine. Thereafter, he studied modern medicine (M.B.B.S.). But, before he could complete his education, his father passed away creating a huge void and the family was faced with great hardship. Nevertheless, he managed to complete the study of medicine. He then went into medical practice and became a very successful physician. He also filled the void that was created in the family by his father's death in an extraordinary manner and paid special attention to Sheikh Nadwi's education and upbringing.

Sheikh Nadwi completed his education under his brother's close supervision and then got appointed as a teacher at Nadwatul 'Ulama in 1934. As a student, Sheikh Nadwi had taken special interest in hadith (traditions of Prophet Muhammad), tafseer

(exegesis of Quran), and literature. Subsequently tafseer and literature became his main subjects of teaching. Since his interest in Arabic literature was very strong and he had very good command of it, his ability to understand and interpret Quranic verses was exceptional.

In Arabic Literature, Sheikh Nadwi had two main teachers. Sheikh Khalil bin Muhammad Arab taught him during his student days and developed in him keen interest and competency in Arabic literature. Later, when Sheikh Nadwi himself became a teacher, he benefitted from Sheikh Nadwi himself became a teacher, he benefitted from Sheikh Taqiuddin Hilali (of Morocco) who helped him master the fine points of Arabic literature. With respect to Urdu literature, he benefitted mainly from learned persons of his own family, especially Sheikh Abul Khair Barq.

In tafseer, he benefitted mainly from Sheikh Ahmad' Ali Lahori (d. 1962) who was a renowned authority of tafseer and an expert in the discipline of tazkiyah nafs (spiritual purification) and lil-laa-hiyat (doing everything for Allah). He made several trips to Lahore and attended Sheikh Lahori's tafseer classes on a regular basis. He also studied Hujjat-Allah-al-Balighah (a book in Arabic by Shah Waliyullah Dehlavi) under Sheikh Lahori's supervision and established spiritual allegiance with Sheikh Lahori for spiritual purification.

Sheikh Nadwi studied hadith at Nadwatul 'Ulama under Shaikhul Hadith Haider Hasan Khan Tonki (d. 1940) and at Darul 'Uloom, Deoband, India, under Shaikhul Hadith Syed Hussain Ahmad Madni (d. 1956).

At the age of twenty-three, Sheikh Nadwi wrote his first book Seerat Syed Ahmad Shaheed (Urdu) which is a biography of his ancestor Syed Ahmad Shaheed (d. 1831). Syed Ahmad Shaheed was a great reformer and had led a massive reform movement in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. The book was well received by the educated class and served as an introduction of Sheikh Nadwi to religious-minded educated people of the Indian subcontinent. He had started this book in 1936 and completed it in three years.

The book created a zeal in Sheikh Nadwi himself to do something concrete and inspired him to travel across the entire subcontinent to know about those who were engaged in various types of Islamic work. Based upon what he observed and experienced in those visits, he decided to dedicate his life to the effort of d'awah - reminding Muslims of their obligations towards Islam, Muslims and humanity.

In that trip (after the publication of Seerat Syed Ahmad Shaheed), Sheikh Nadwi met several scholars and leaders including the renowned poet and philosopher Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938). Though he had met Dr. Iqbal

several times in his previous visits to Lahore, this was the first meeting with him after the publication of Seerat Syed Ahmad Shaheed; it was also his last meeting with the poet.

Sheikh Nadwi was deeply impressed by Iqbal's poetic expressions of the grandeur of Islam and held in high esteem the poems in which Iqbal had presented Islamic ideology of pride and self-esteem (khud-daari). As a result, Sheikh Nadwi, in his writings, appreciated Iqbal's viewpoint that Islamic pride, leadership of the world, self-confidence, and lofty goals (in personal lives) should be considered Allah's special bounties and be actively pursued. These themes and Iqbal's concept of khudi (self-recognition) resonate prominently throughout Sheikh Nadwi's writings.

Sheikh Nadwi also met Sheikh Syed Abul A'ala Maududi (d. 1979). He liked Sheikh Maududi's style of addressing modern educated people and enthusiastically acknowledged its importance and effectiveness.

He established spiritual connection with Sheikh Ahmad 'Ali Lahori (d. 1962) and Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Raipuri (d. 1962), earned their affection and received their khilafah (permission to guide others on their behalf). He greatly benefitted from their guidance and advice.

He also closely observed the movement of d'awah and tabligh (known

as Jama'at Tabligh) of Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (d. 1944). He fully understood the importance of Sheikh Ilyas's work and wholeheartedly participated in it. It enabled him to earn special attention and close company of Sheikh Ilyas. He used to recount the days of his company with Sheikh Ilyas as the best moments of his life.

Sheikh Nadwi had come in contact with Shaikhul Hadith Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi (d. 1982) while he was still in his early youth and continued getting closer to him as the time passed by. Shaikhul Hadith, in his last days, felt closest to Sheikh Nadwi among his associates. Sheikh Nadwi considered Sheikh Zakariya Kandhlawi as his elder and mentor.

In order to remind educated Muslims about their responsibility of d'awah, Sheikh Nadwi wrote an extraordinary book (in Arabic) entitled Ma Dha Khasarul 'Alam ba Inhetatul Muslimeen (published in English as Islam and the World: The Rise and Decline of Muslims and Its Effect on Mankind). He wrote this book when he was only 32 or 33 years old. It was published in 1950 by a reputed publisher of Egypt. This book became extremely popular in the Arab world and far exceeded the popularity that his first book Seerat Syed Ahmad Shaheed had enjoyed in the subcontinent. Arabs recognized it as one of the best books of the twentieth century. It became so popular that there was hardly any

Islamic-oriented Arab student or teacher who had not read and appreciated it.

The book *Ma Dha Khasarul ...* was actually the outcome of Sheikh Nadwi's thorough study of the history of Muslims, their ascension to the position of world leadership, their downfall, and the emergence of Europe as the dominant world power. It provided an objective and critical analysis of the current situation of Muslims in the light of historical facts.

Sheikh Nadwi performed his first hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia) in 1947, the second in 1950 and the third in 1951. Between the second and third hajj, he visited several Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Jordan, and Palestine. He delivered lectures at various places and met many important personalities. People were impressed that he was able to present his ideas and thoughts directly in Arabic like a native speaker (without any translator). His fluency in Arabic was the result of the extraordinary effort that he had made in learning and mastering the language. He was equally effective and articulate in Urdu.

As the time passed by, he became so occupied and involved in the work of d'awah that it became difficult for him to continue teaching with full devotion. As a result, he finally resigned from the teaching position at Nadwatul 'Ulama in 1944 after ten years of service

and offered to teach only on a voluntary basis whenever he would have time.

Now he had become very well known in both the subcontinent and the Arab world. He was invited by Damascus University to deliver a series of lectures. He went to Damascus for a month in 1956 and delivered several lectures there. Those lectures became the first part of his book *Tarikhe Dawat wa Azimat* (published in English as *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*) which he later expanded into five volumes and covered the period from the early days of Islam to the twelfth century Hijri (eighteenth century). It has been published in Arabic as well.

His contributions in academics, research, and d'awah earned him high recognition among Muslims and he was chosen to head several educational, literary, and religious institutions. In December 1959, a conference on religious education was convened in Basti, Uttar Pradesh, India. An organization known as *Deeni T'alimi Council* (Religious Education Council) was formed there and he was chosen as its president. In the same year, on his initiative, the *Academy of Islamic Research and Publications* was established in *Natwatul 'Ulama* for the purpose of disseminating sound Islamic thought and ideology to modern educated Muslims and he was appointed as its head.

In 1961, while he was on an academic and d'awah tour of Kuwait,

he received an invitation to visit Hejaz.' In response to that invitation, he went to Hejaz in 1962 when Jami'ah Islamiyah (Islamic University) was founded in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, and he was appointed to its advisory council. In the same year, Rabita al-'Alam al-Islami (Muslim World League) was also founded and he was appointed as one of its founding members. Around the same time, an Islamic center was established in Geneva, Switzerland, by Dr. Sa'id Ramadan (d. 1995) who was a prominent Islamic scholar from Egypt and Sheikh Nadwi was appointed as one of its founding members.

A year later, when the Hindu-Muslim communal riots erupted in the eastern part of India in 1963, Muslims became very depressed and disheartened, and it was feared that if something was not done urgently to remedy the situation, Muslims would become a defeated and dejected lot in India. To ponder over and discuss this matter, Sheikh Nadwi convened a meeting of prominent Muslims from the entire country at Nadwatul'Ulama. On that occasion, an organization known as the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat was founded and he was appointed as one of its founding members.

In 1961, when the then rector of Nadwatul 'Ulama Dr. Syed 'Abdul'Ali Hasani (Sheikh Nadwi's elder brother) passed away, Sheikh Nadwi was appointed as the rector. Prior to that

appointment, he had served as the dean of education at Nadwatul 'Ulama for several years.

During the period from 1960 to 1977', the problem with his eyes was so severe that he could not read or write on his own. Despite that limitation, all of his scholarly work continued and many of his important writings came during that very period. It is hard to imagine how he accomplished so much without proper eyesight. His students used to read to him and he used to give dictation to them.

In 1974, he started the movement known as Payam-e-Insaniyat (The Message of Humanity) with the objective of widening the scope of islah (reform) and d'awah to the entire population (including non-Muslims) of the country. It had a very positive effect on the educated people of all religions and denominations.

From the very beginning of his career, Sheikh Nadwi had the vision that education should be tailored to fit the needs of the millat (Muslims) and 'aqidah (faith), and the millat should be prepared to fill the needs of the entire humanity - the theme that he heavily emphasized in his writings and speeches. He worked diligently on developing a suitable curriculum for that purpose. He himself prepared several books on Arabic language and literature which became highly popular all over the Muslim world, including the Arab countries. In addition, he also guided

and supervised his students in preparing books which gained recognition and became popular.

To emphasize and deliberate on the above-mentioned role of education, he convened an international conference at Nadwatul 'Ulama in 1975. It coincided with the completion of 85 years of Nadwatul 'Ulama and thus was named as the Eighty-fifth Educational Conference of Nadwatul 'Ulama. The conference was very successful and was attended by prominent figures from all over the Muslim world.

In 1975-76, the government of India started enforcing the policy of birth control with excessive force and brutality and declared the state of emergency in the country. Sheikh Nadwi boldly condemned it and said that it was grossly wrong and undemocratic. To convey his concern, he wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and met her personally. He also drew attention of the general public towards the deteriorating condition of the country. Due to such efforts and general discontent of the public, the Congress party failed to secure enough seats in the next election and was removed from power after ruling the country for almost 30 years.

In 1977, he traveled to USA to attend a conference that was organized by an organization known as the Muslim Students Association. In that trip, he also got surgery performed on his eyes and his eyesight was restored to a

satisfactory level. He stayed in USA for two months and visited several cities. He reminded Muslims living there about the importance of preserving their identity in a distant country.

In 1978, he visited Pakistan to attend an Islamic conference. During that trip, he delivered lectures at several major universities and religious institutions. Those lectures have been published in the form of a book entitled *Dawate Fikr wa Amal* (Urdu).

In the beginning of 1979, he visited United Arab Emirates (UAE) and met several prominent and influential persons there. He cautioned them against the increasing influence of wealth and modern culture, and reminded them about their moral and religious obligations.

In 1980, in recognition of his academic and religious services, Sheikh Nadwi was awarded the King Faisal Award which was instituted in Saudi Arabia in the memory of King Faisal (d. 1975). Sheikh Nadwi donated the monetary sum that came with the award to various educational and charitable institutions. In the same year, an international conference was held on *Seeratun Nabi* (life of Prophet Muhammad) in Qatar in which he delivered a very powerful speech which was widely acclaimed. The centennial anniversary of Darul 'Uloom, Deoband, India, was held in the same year and the speech that he delivered there was considered to be the most important

speech of the event.

In 1981, Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasmi of Sharjah came to Nadwatul 'Ulama, Lucknow, to meet Sheikh Nadwi. Sheikh Nadwi welcomed the Sultan and reminded him of his obligations towards Islam, Muslims and his own people. In the same year, an international seminar was held at Nadwatul 'Ulama under his supervision, the theme of which was "Islamic Content in Arabic Literature and Other Languages". Participants in the seminar came from all over the world and included prominent persons such as Syed 'Abdul'Aziz Rafai (former secretary of the Council of Ministers of Saudi Arabia), Dr. 'Abdur Rahm Rafatal-Basha, Dr. Zakaria Barri (Minister of Awqaaf of Egypt), and Sheikh 'Abdullah Ibrahim Al- Ansari (Nazim of Religious Affairs of Qatar). In the first week of September 1981 Sheikh Nadwi went to Hejaz to attend important meetings of the Islamic University of Madinah and the Muslim World League. On that occasion, he presented an important paper entitled "Daurul Hadith fi Takweenil Manakhil Islami wa Siyanah" (published in English as Hadith and the Promotion of Islamic Climate and Attitudes)

In October 1981, he was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by the University of Kashmir.

In 1982, he visited Sri Lanka. In the same year, he presided over an

international seminar on "Islam and Orientalists" that was held at Darul Musannefin, Azamgarh, India.

In 1983, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies was established at University of Oxford, England, and Sheikh Nadwi was appointed as the founding chairman of the trustees. The establishment of such a center in a secular institution like University of Oxford was an extraordinary achievement.

In 1983, when the then president of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) Sheikh Qari Muhammad Taiyab Qasmi passed away Sheikh Nadwi was elected as the president of AIMPLB.

In the beginning of 1984, an international organization known as the World Forum of Islamic Literature was established for the purpose of promoting Islamic literature for which Sheikh Nadwi had been working for more than four decades. He was appointed as its founding president. In 1981, an international seminar was held at Nadwatul 'Ulama to further discuss the need of such an organization and was attended by prominent scholars and writers from all over the Islamic world.

In 1986, spearheading AIMPLB's efforts to protect the Islamic shari'ah (code of conduct), Sheikh Nadwi (as the president of AIMPLB) and Sheikh Syed Minnatullah Rahmani (as

the general secretary of AIMPLB) met the then prime minister of India several times and successfully persuaded him to get a bill passed in the parliament to preserve the Muslim Personal Law. It was considered a major achievement in the history of AIMPLB.

In 1986 as well, he went to Istanbul, Turkey, to attend a conference of the World Forum of Islamic Literature. On the return trip to India, he stopped in Pakistan and met President General Ziaul Haq who had come from Islamabad to Karachi to meet him. In his meeting with the president, Sheikh Nadwi reminded him that he should strive to improve relationship with India. The president promised to work for it. In the same year, he attended an Islamic seminar that was held in Algeria and presented a paper there. He also met several prominent persons of the Islamic world there and exchanged views with them.

In 1987, he visited Malaysia on the invitation of a prestigious educational institution and delivered lectures at various educational institutions and organizations. He also delivered a speech at the International Islamic University of Malaysia emphasizing the need and importance of d'awah. After returning from there, he developed ulcer in his stomach due to which he had to discontinue activities for several months.

In 1988, when Sheikh Nadwi traveled to Saudi Arabia to attend a

meeting of the Muslim World League, he also visited Abu Dhabi. It was his first trip to UAE for the sole purpose of d'awah. Engineer Muhammad 'Uthman of Hyderabad and I had accompanied him in that trip. Dr. Taqiuddin Nadwi who was already there was of great assistance to us during that trip. Sheikh Nadwi addressed a semi-governmental gathering and reminded the audience that the society ought to be based on Islamic teachings and should adopt a balanced path in order to become truly Islamic. That speech was well received by the audience and was later published as a booklet entitled Tarsheedus Sahwatil Islamiyah (Arabic).

In that trip, Sheikh Nadwi also addressed the female wing of a university. The brother of Dr. Muhammad Al Mubarak (with whom Sheikh Nadwi had very close relationship) was the dean at the university at that time and was very helpful in arranging programs. He reminded students and teachers of the university about their responsibilities, the need of shaping their lives according to Islamic values, and the importance of preserving their character and personality to face modern challenges. He also met several dignitaries including the vice- chancellor of the university and the special envoy to the president of the Emirates, Sheikh Zayed.

In 1990, during Sheikh Nadwi's visit to Saudi Arabia, a program was

arranged to introduce the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies to Saudi officials. He, along with a few other members of the center, met Arneer Sultan who was the defense minister as well as the head of the committee for Islamic da'wah, in that meeting, there was a detailed talk on the topic of Islamic d'awah.

Thereafter, Sheikh Nadwi and other members of the Oxford Centre delegation went to Riyadh where they met Ameer Suleman (the governor of Riyadh province), Ameer 'Abdullah (the crown prince who later became the king), and Ameer Ahmad (deputy interior minister). In this way, the effort of the Oxford Centre in creating awareness among people of Europe about Islam was introduced. He also used that opportunity to remind the Saudi officials that only a balanced and middle-of-the-road path of Islam could prove effective in combating the general tendency of masses of blindly following the Western culture.

In the meantime, the issue of Babri Masjid had become very inflamed and complicated in India. After returning from the trip, Sheikh Nadwi met the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi regarding this matter and asked him to find an immediate solution and not to allow the situation to deteriorate further. He also advised Gandhi that the correct solution to the problem was to restore the places of worship to their status at the time of Independence (i.e. 1947).

In addition to meeting the prime minister, Sheikh Nadwi also proposed to talk to the Shankaracharya (Hindu priest) of Chennai, India. This proposal had actually come jointly from Sheikh Nadwi and three others namely, Sheikh' Abdul Karim Parikh, Mr. Yunus Saleem and Mr. Krishan Kant. Mr. Saleem was the governor of the State of Bihar; Mr. Kant was the governor of the State of Andhra Pradesh and later became the vice-president of India. They all traveled to Chennai to meet the Shankaracharya.

The Shankaracharya agreed with the idea that the masjid should remain intact and promised to work for it. To achieve that, he suggested that (1) a committee should be formed and assigned as the caretaker of the masjid, (2) the Shankaracharya should head the committee, and (3) there should be included a few Hindus in the committee as it would help the Shankaracharya in handing over the masjid to Muslims. Sheikh Nadwi came to Delhi and presented this proposal to the Muslim committees which were handling this matter, but they did not accept it. Sheikh Nadwi then decided not to pursue this matter any further and the issue remained squarely in the hands of those committees which were less inclined to negotiate.

Unfortunately, the situation continued getting worse and the masjid was ultimately demolished in 1992

making the situation extremely explosive. The Muslim committees which were very vocal in this matter up to this point felt very demoralized by this incident and consequently handed over their responsibilities to AIMPLB. AIMPLB accepted the responsibility and formed a special committee which is currently pursuing the matter through legal and judicial means. In 1993, the centennial celebration of the Parliament of the World's Religions was held in Chicago, USA. One of the organizers of the event was Dr. Hamid' Abdul Hai who is the younger brother of Dr. Ahmad' Abdul Hai (a prominent surgeon of Patna, India) who was very close to Sheikh Nadwi. Dr. Hamid' Abdul Hai had sent an invitation to Sheikh Nadwi for the event saying that it would be a good opportunity to represent Islam. Since Sheikh Nadwi was already going to Oxford, England, he accepted the invitation. The other incentive for accepting the invitation was that he would be able to meet those whom he had met in his last visit to Chicago in 1977.

Since Sheikh Nadwi had decided to stay in Oxford until the end of the program there, he reached Chicago only a day before the end of the conference. The schedule was such that he would address on the last day of the conference and as such he went to the venue. When he reached the place, there was still some time left before the start of the program. The place was

packed, people of all different religions were arriving and some of them had started reciting bhajan (Hindu devotional song or hymn) and mantra (chant). Sheikh Nadwi was provided a place where he could wait. But he felt that the atmosphere was so full of darkness (spiritually) that he did not want to stay there for a moment and insisted on leaving the place.

I was present with Sheikh Nadwi on that occasion. The dilemma was that the entire trip was arranged and undertaken for the very purpose of participating in the conference and the expenses were borne by the conveners. Since Dr. Hai was like a middleman, he was put in a very awkward position. But seeing Sheikh Nadwi's uneasiness, Dr. Hai wholeheartedly agreed to his wish and said that he would not subject him (Sheikh Nadwi) to any discomfort even though it might look awkward. Later, Sheikh Nadwi apologized to Dr. Hai and thanked him for his patience and understanding. He stayed in Chicago for a couple of days to meet his acquaintances there. He then went to New York and stayed there for a day before returning to India.

In the same year (i.e. 1993), he got an opportunity to visit Tashkent, Samarqand, and Bukhara. The reason of that visit was that the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (of which he was the chairman) had persuaded the president of Uzbekistan to convene a seminar on

Imam Bukhari (a pioneer in the science of hadith) and establish a university in Imam Bukhari's name to conduct study and research on Imam Bukhari's life and work.

The city of Samarqand was proposed as the site of the university. There were madaris (religious schools) in that city in the past and their buildings are still present. The grave of Timur Lang (also known as Tamerlane) is in this city. Also, graves of those who had come there with Qutham bin 'Abbas (a companion of Prophet Muhammad) are there. The proposal for the university was accepted by the government and dates were set for the inauguration. Many scholars of Bukhari Sharif (the book of hadith compiled by Imam Bukhari) from all over the world were invited to this event. Since Sheikh Nadwi was the chairman of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and I am one of its trustees, we were also invited to this event. Sheikh Nasir' Ali, a teacher of Bukhari Sharif at Nadwatul 'Ulama was also invited.

We reached Samarqand via Tashkent. Muhadditheen (scholars and experts of hadith) from various parts of the world were already present there and a very good atmosphere had come into existence. Several good papers were presented in the seminar. The architectural model of the proposed university was presented and it was liked by all. Sheikh Abul Fattah Abu Ghodda was among the participants.

His presence made the environment more pleasant. With his assistance, a trip to Bukhara was arranged.

On the way to Bukhara, we stopped at the village where Khawaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi used to live and was buried. After briefly stopping there, we went to the city of Bukhara. We went to the Jama Masjid of Bukhara where Imam Bukhari used to teach. We also visited the adjacent madrasah (religious school) which is still there, but is in poor condition. We met students there and found that some of Sheikh Nadwi's books were in the curriculum. After staying in madrasah overnight we came back to Samarqand. The people who went on this journey benefited immensely from the conversations between Sheikh Nadwi and Sheikh Abu Ghodda. After returning to Samarqand, we went to visit archeological sites. Sheikh Salman Nadwi, who was close to Sheikh Abu Ghodda, was also with us in that trip.

In his 1996 visit to the holy city of Makkah, Sheikh Nadwi was presented the key of K'aba (cube-shaped structure in Makkah which is known as the House of Allah) and was privileged to open its door. Although he was blessed to have entered K'aba in earlier visits also, this was the first time he had the opportunity to open its door.

In 1997, Sheikh Nadwi went to Lahore, Pakistan, to participate in an international seminar of World Forum of Islamic Literature. He met Pakistani

President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari there. President Leghari expressed his love and respect for Sheikh Nadwi. A few months later, he met in Jordan Ameer Hasan who was officiating for the King of Jordan at that time. He treated Sheikh Nadwi with utmost love and respect.

In 1998, Sheikh Nadwi was awarded the Islamic Personality of the Year Award in Dubai. A few months later, he received the Sultan Hassanah International Award from the Sultan of Brunei; this award is given jointly by Brunei and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. He donated the monetary sum that came with these awards to educational and religious institutions and to some individuals who were engaged in the service of religion and education.

He departed from this temporary abode on Ramadan 22, 1420 Hijri (31 December 1999), a little before the Friday prayer, while he was at his ancestral home in Dairah Shah' Alamullah, Takiya Kalan, Rae Bareilly. The burial took place in the night of Ramadan 23 in the ancestral graveyard where his ancestor Shah' Alamullah (d. 1685) and his father, mother, brother, sisters, and nephews are buried. The village of Takiya Kalan was founded by Shah' Alamullah Hasani who was a very prominent Islamic personality of his time and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (d. 1707) was one of his close patrons.

Sheikh Nadwi had been suffering from ill health and weakness for several years. About ten months before he passed away, he had a stroke, the effect of which had gradually subsided, but the weakness remained. The death was apparently caused by heart failure. At the time of his death, his tongue was busy with the recitation of the beginning verses of the Quranic chapter of Yaseen.

His death generated a lot of grief and sorrow all over the Islamic world. Funeral prayers, in absentia, were held in many parts of the world. In the Grand Mosque of Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque of Madinah, funeral prayers were performed by huge gatherings on the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan. Later on, seminars and meetings were held at numerous places in his memory and they are still continuing. Several institutions and academies have been established in his memory. Several magazines published special issues to commemorate his life and work. Several national and international awards such as the Shah Waliyullah Award.' and the ISESCO Award.' were conferred on him posthumously which his students and relatives collected on his behalf.

May Allah have mercy on him, grant forgiveness to him, and enter him into paradise in the company of the prophets, the trustful, the martyrs, and the upright! ■

From Edge of Despair to Glory in Islam

- Aesha Lorenz Al-Saeed

One day when I was six years old, my parents gave me a shiny quarter, as they did every Sunday morning and told me to put it in the collection plate for church 'to give it to Jesus for his work.'

When I returned, however, the quarter was still in my purse. I was frank in explaining that I hadn't given my money for Jesus because 'he was absent.'

My parents were more amused than concerned, probably thinking that my genes would prevail, having descended from a family with three Christian ministers as my grandparents.

I attended an Episcopal private school where we studied world religions during my last year of elementary school. I was intrigued with my father's Swedenborgian faith for a time, as it injected an element of mysticism into his essays on faith, however, the trinity was a point of contention for me, as I felt it wasn't logical. How could one father (The Great Spirit), plus what was called 'His Son' (Jesus), and one Holy Ghost (who I now understand to be Angel Gabriel) all be together as one, inside one being?

It was logically impossible, and I had been raised to use rational thought to make decisions in my life, I knew I couldn't accept the creed of three equaling one.

I continued reading the Bible every Sunday with my father after dinner, looking for answers and enjoying stories of historical prophets, at the same time not feeling totally satisfied. I was told I should

not question but simply believe in good faith. However I never was one for blind following, and I needed to feel the proof on my own.

In high school, I met some students from the Middle East who were Muslims. Noticing my inner dissatisfaction, one asked if I had ever read about Islam, and suggested that I make use of our school library to discover more information about it. I was elated to discover that there was even a copy of Qur'an which I checked out to borrow.

When I brought some books home, my grandfather encouraged me to learn, and reassured my family that Islam contained a good moral code of living.

He himself had immigrated to in 1913 when he was a boy from a Russian province next to Turkey on the Black Sea, and remembered hearing the call to prayer, and that some of our relatives had Arabic-Muslim names, such as Maryam and Sophia.

The more I read, the more my understanding and excitement grew. I found the answers to all my questions, and more! Everyday I looked forward to reading more, and my discoveries enlightened me. Islam was clear, logical, with explanations and guidance for every aspect of worship and human relations.

At the age of 17, I began regular salah (prayer) and completed my first Ramadan fast. If I went to the park, or out with friends, I would stash a bag of dates

(if I had them), a bottle of water, and maybe a sandwich or can of food, and break my fast wherever I was at that moments. My non-Muslim friends would good naturedly remind me of the sun's setting so I could break my fast.

That summer I took the train for two days to Bloomington, Indiana to attend the Muslim Students Association's lectures and seminars to learn more about my new faith.

I stayed on campus with other Muslims for a week, and my faith blossomed. I returned home with a prayer rug, prayer beads, books, and several scarves, although unfortunately I did not have the courage to continue wearing the scarves once I left.

I attended Portland State University, with a major in teaching English as a second language, and a minor in Middle Eastern studies. I hoped to go to Saudi Arabia to work, visit Makkah and Madina and perform Hajj.

In my last year of study, I began to push myself too hard, too fast. I began to doubt I would realize my goals, and became depressed. Trying to compete with my friends in graduating early, I did myself a disservice by overloading myself with extra classes which resulted in my having a nervous breakdown.

As I stood one evening overlooking beautiful lights of the city from a high rise building, I thought how easy it would be to just step off into the air and end it all.

However, suicide in Islam was a big sin (I didn't know that at the time), but I knew how it would deeply hurt my close relatives and friends if I 'took the easy way

out.' Besides, I reasoned with myself, there's still that tiny chance that Merciful Allah might let me get to Makkah after all, so why not wait to find out?

Indeed, Allah works on His own timetable, and everything has a plan if it is good for us.

Advised to make a fresh start, I moved to Houston, Texas to seek employment, instead of study. I thought if I could start out on my own in a strange city, I could certainly later get the courage to go to the Middle East. I hoped that my three years of Arabic studies would help me find a job in ARAMCO or one of the other major companies in Texas.

After arriving in Houston now wearing hijab, I searched for the mosque in the telephone directory and asked there if I could find a Muslim girl to be my roommate. Allah was generous, and one welcomed me into the community as a sister. I soon after found work and my confidence grew.

One evening, at an International costume party, I met a polite gentleman who I later found to be an intelligent Saudi student. We married shortly thereafter, and through him God has let my dreams come true. We have three lovely children, and he has taken me on Hajj.

I am content and satisfied and greatly thankful to the Almighty God, who certainly answers earnest Dua'a (supplications) if it is good for us. If we are patient, and have Iman (faith), Allah does help us even in ways we don't expect. ■

(Courtesy: YMD)

The Potential For Muslim Women's Role, Participation and Contribution to development*

- Khalijah Mohd Salleh

Introduction

Countries within the South East Asian-Pacific regions, I must extend it to most other Muslim countries, are known as developing countries as opposed to the already developed countries of Europe and the United States of America. For most of us, at the very mention of development we have in mind step or stage in growth or advancement towards a better society in phase with the scientific and technological advancement that is taking place today. For some development is synonymous with westernisation essentially the building of an industrial based urbanised society. Development in this sense is highly materialistic in nature and devoid of Islamic spiritual values. The end result is not the heaven that they seek for but the decadence of human civilization.

From the Islamic point of view development can be defined as a step or stage in growth or advancement towards the realisation of Allah's purpose of creating man on this earth: man as an 'abd or servant of Allah s.w.t.

and man as a *khalifatullah* or vicegerant. The manifestations of these will be (i) the evolvement of a good man with iman (faith) (religions conviction) and who in his life time will perform amal *salih* or good deeds that is expected of him as a *khalifatullah* and (ii) the evolvement of human society starting with the family as the smallest unit to the community, and nation who has authority over the entire creation; controlling and utilizing it for the felicity and prosperity of mankind without upsetting the equilibrium that exists in nature. Thus development in Islam includes both the spiritual and the material dimensions of human civilization whose end result is the upliftment of the human civilization itself. It is generative not destructive.

Having given the definition of development thus implicating the goal of Islamic development, we can now briefly review the current general state of muslim countries and the muslims themselves. Thereby we can identify the women's role, participation and contribution to development. Then the strategies to realise these commitments and the constraints that are present and to be overcome will be discussed.

The current state of Muslim countries and the *ummah*

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Generally speaking the Muslims in countries in the Asean and Pacific regions have a long way to go to become developed in the Islamic sense. As individuals we fall short of the good qualities that can be ascribed to a good Muslim: knowledgeable, dynamic, progressive, productive. working hard as though we are going to live for ever and performing good deeds as though we are going to die tomorrow. Majority of the Muslims live in poverty. The health and the nutrition standard need improvement. Illiteracy, ignorance is still high. The countries are generally not scientifically and technologically advanced. We have educated people, yes, but those with religious education are only well equipped with *ilm naqliah* (knowledge of the shariah) while those with secular western education are well equipped with *ilm aqliah* (knowledge of the intellectual). We hardly have those with sound background in both *ilm naqliah* and the *aqliah*. Thus the former cannot handle much of the socio-economic political and cultural problems of the country while the latter though successful materially cannot handle the ethical problems such as corruption, dishonesty, injustice, crimes and vices. In Malaysia for example, the government is faced with difficulties or failures when it tries to implement policies or carry out projects that lead to physical development of the country.

Some of the Muslim countries like Malaysia are rich with natural resources such as minerals and oil. The

soil is fertile, and the climate favourable for the growth of timber, rubber, spices, padi, cocoa etc. Yet we do not appear to enjoy the benefits of having these natural wealth. Instead countries with hardly any natural our resources like Britain and Japan manage to secure resources and use them to their greatest advantage. They develop products which we, the supplier of the raw materials buy at such an exorbitant prices. With that brief description of the current state of the muslim societies it is clear that we have a long way to go, and a lot more to do before we can consider ourselves developed in the Islamic sense. However events of the past have shown that the muslims within one generation can successfully develop themselves. Given the example it is then a question of how.

Role participation and Contribution of the Muslimat

Do we have a role, can we participate and even more can we contribute? What is our capacity? These questions ate raised bearing in mind that our counterpart, the men, are carrying out their tasks and responsibilities in the Islamic manner as well. In fact i must say that it is relevent for our men to discuss amongst themselves the potentials of their role, participation and contribution to development. As I have said we are not yet developed in the Islamic sense. We already know that Allah s.w. t. does not distinguish the man from the woman

spiritually. We differ biologically hence physiologically. Our psychological and emotional make up are also different from them. Man has been endowed with one extra quality (*An-Nisaa4 :34*) but before Allah s.w.t. this does not make him any superior over the woman. The degree of superiority is independent of the sex. Instead it depends on one's taqwa and righteousness. In Islam a good muslim is knowledgeable and excercises patience. It is in the manifestation of these qualittes that: we can identify the spectrum of areas in which a Muslimat (Muslim woman) can perform her role, participate and contribute either as an individual, the 'abd of Allah s.w.t., as member of the family, a wife, a mother and finally as a member of the community and the society like being a social worker or a career woman.

It is stated in the al Qur'an

- (i) that the *insan* be it man or woman is endowed with the ability to name things implying that he (this applies to both ,man and woman) has the intellectual capacity and ability to acquire knowledge,
- (ii) that he can have authority over Allah's creation implying that he can acquire and develop skills and abilities to study and to use things around him for his own good,
- (iti) that he is endowed with desires, the spiritual element which together with the intellect mould up his

behaviour and attitude essentially his character.

Thus it means that with the right upbringing, proper education and training the first role of the Muslimat is to develop herself to be a knowledgeable, useful and good person. Such a person is self generating, well disciplined and can be trusted to carry out her tasks and responsibilities aptly, amicably and thus satisfactorily. We can even expect such a Muslimat as one who actuates the saying:

my salat, my deeds, my life and my death is for the sake of Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

The al Qur'an also states that Allah s.w.t. created individuals with different capacities, abilities and inclinations with good reasons. Each individual should be developed to the optimum that he/she can reach. The potentials within him/her must be harnessed so that a variety of individuals can get together as a group and move in harmony towards making the society a perfect one. Just like the car, each part be it the main part of the engine or the minor part like the handle for winding the screen up or down, has its own role. Only when each functions well that the car is said to be in perfect condition. In this light, a Muslim must see himself/herself not just as an individual but a member of a bigger group with which he/she must co-operate and work

with for the sake of the group's survival, development and progress.

The role, participation and contribution of a Muslimat for development is played either through the family, community, social or economic activities. However I would like to discuss a bit more on women and profession as this is related to the women's intellectual abilities and capacities which some people have doubt with.

I would like to add here that the concept of a working woman is not new. What's new is the entry of women into the professional field, political field. Such women usually differ in character from the women that the society has been used to. They are more vocal. They express their ideas freely and they are more enterprising. The traditional woman is quiet often enough a yes man and is not involved with the high level intellectual activities. It is the presentation of this new image, new character that is not well taken by the traditionists - men and women alike.

However I would say that if we have a good understanding of the al Qur'an, we realise that Allah does not in any way discriminate the intellectual capacity of a man from that of a woman. If that is the case then both parties especially the man should be more open and ready to accept the new image of women presented by these women professionals. This would also

encourage other women to work towards upgrading their intellect.

To become a professional the woman has to "acquire specialised knowledge in skills and methods, historical or scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods, maintaining by force of organization or concerted opinions, high standard of achievement and conduct and be committed to a continued study and a kind of work which has for its prime purpose rendering of public service".

Now, this can be done by the women since for a given profession the emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge; general and technical and a set of code of ethics. This demands a good and high intellectual ability, and skills which are present in some women. Thus given the right education and training and opportunity a woman can accept and face an intellectual challenge.

Professional training can also help develop the woman's ability to understand and carry out her tasks well. She can also develop the attitude and the flexibility of mind required of her before she can successfully carry out a given project. With her mental skills, abilities and talents she can give ideas and solve problems. She can even communicate her ideas effectively to the different levels of personnel that she has to work with from the technical division to the management and the executive side. Thus with proper education and

training women's intellectual abilities and potentials can be realised. We are another "think-tank" source.

Several areas of profession that suit the women's nature are:

- (i) training like becoming teachers or professors, educators
- (ii) services and welfare like law, medicine and nursing
- (iii) research and development in various fields: economics, education, sciences and many others.
- (iv) policy, decision making and implementation like in politics and administration.
- (v) business.

Discussion

The role, participation and contribution of women to development can be looked at from two different angles:

- (i) to the family and community; highlighting the concept and practice of family life, responsible parenthood and health problems
- (ii) to the economic and social development of the society.

These are indeed tremendous tasks that an ambitious Muslimat has to undertake. The potential is unlimited and the expectation high but is it from an individual Muslimat i.e. one Muslimat or a group? With twenty four hours a day

unchanged, the extent of physical strength and stamina limited by the biological make up of the person, can the individual Muslimat become a perfect, efficient good wife, mother and simultaneously a social worker or a career woman. Or would it be possible to look at the Muslimat as a group with different capacities, abilities and inclinations such that the potentials of the Muslimat as a whole is limitless, inexhaustible? If such is the case, then the Muslimat can venture into all possible kinds of activities. Of course for some of these activities we just have to do them ourselves like giving births, taking care of the young, becoming teachers, doctors, traders, etc. If this concept of collective venture is accepted then more avenues are opened for the Muslimat.

It actually poses a dilemma for a Muslimat who at one instant is reminded to be a good, dedicated mother and a wife while at the same instant she is expected to do her out of house job well. Such a dual role of the Muslimat in a highly rigid present frame work of job condition cannot be carried out satisfactorily. If the Muslimat insists on doing both well and satisfactorily she must be prepared to enjoy the better side of life for a shorter period of her life time as her physique will just succumb to all kinds of stress that she is being subjected to. The family and society will finally share the consequences.

I have to add here that there are some women who work not just for economic reasons but because they would like to express *shukur* (gratitude) to Allah s.w.t. for endowing them with the extra intellectual abilities, and skills. The form of expressing the *shukur* is by using what Allah has given them. Under present working conditions set by the employers these women just have to go out of their houses. Even when they are at home they would like to spend some of their working hours doing intellectual tasks or anything related to it.

It will be to the nation's loss if women are being prevented from functioning, participating and contributing to development. The men just cannot do it alone. We constitute, under normal circumstances, half of the population. If the society is to be developed then it is necessary to see that each unit, be it man or woman put in their fair share in terms of giving ideas, giving solutions to problems, making decisions, policies and to do the work so that more can be achieved within a shorter period of time. After all Allah created man and woman to complement one another not for competition nor to impose burden for one or the other. Let not the potentials and the energy especially that of the intellect that the women have, be wasted. Let us use them in the proper way within the frame work of Islam.

What has to be done then is to identify

- (1) the basic activities that all muslimats have to do themselves and the extent to which they should be committed to and
- (i1) the activities that suit the individual's talent, inclination, ability and capacity.

Next, it has to be ensured that the basic physical, emotional and mental requirements of the individuals, the family, community, and the society are being fulfilled. Thus it will be a question of what and how.

All kinds of jobs, tasks, responsibilities and all other activities for development must be looked at in perspective. They can be done either individually or collectively depending on their nature. A display of routine or time schedules though important and necessary should not be over emphasised. Instead what should be looked into is the kind of achievement in terms of productivity for example, that can be attained within a certain period of time by the individual or the group. This would allow flexibility in working conditions.

At the same time there should not be compartmentalization of human activities such that one is completely dissociated from the other. Like one's office job is one thing and tending to the family welfare is another and that during office hour all ties with the family must

be shelved aside. Instead these activities should be seen as a net work interrelated to one another and thus must be integrated in the best harmonious way. Only under such circumstances can a person be regarded as not only a worker which belongs to a particular institution, organization or establishment but as a human being, a unit of the human society.

What has Islamic teachings to offer? Plenty. The al Qur'an and the *sunnah* (the saying of Prophet Muhammad [peace be up on him]) provide us with principles, guide lines to solve all kinds of our daily problems. These are the best sources for reference. For example the al Qur'an mentions that the baby should be breastfed by the mother for two years and at another occasion mentions that the baby can be breastfed by another woman. There is also the *sunnah* which asks man/woman to seek for knowledge from the cradle to the graveyard. Such information imply that what is important is that the baby be in the hands of a kind, loving, responsible person who can provide the nutritional, physical, emotional and the intellectual needs of the baby. Even at the time the Prophet p.b.u.h was small it was a practice amongst some of his people that babies be sent to foster mothers for want of better, healthier and stimulating living conditions. The Prophet p. b. u.h himself was suckled by his foster mother

Halimatul Saadiah. Now there has been no suggestion to the effect of eradicating such method of child caring. Thus it can be said that Islam does not in any way disapprove the setting up of communal base child care centres although there is the *sunnah* which states that the best job Allah s.w.t. has created for mankind is parenthood. It will be this *sunnah* then that provides the attraction for man and woman to want to get married, have children for want of this wonderful experience, *nikmat* (blessings) that Allah has in store for us. Take note how Allah in a very gentle way draw the insan (human being) to actually volunteer to do things that are really good for themselves and the well being of others. Thus for those who know, on their own can decide the preference that should be made towards all kinds of activities that they would like to do in life.

Even within the agro-base unindustrialised society of the recent past we have the extended family system whereby within a family there are members from three generations living together. Each member performs his/her task to the best of his/her ability, capacity, strength and endurance. The mother may work in the farm while the nanny attended to the young ones at home. What is interesting to note is that the mother can attend to the baby or child whenever she is really needed. It is this flexibility of working condition that is absent for the working mothers of today.

It is a situation similar to this that should exist within our society whereby we have a safe and reliable place to put the young children but within reach of the working mother. I would like to say something more about day care centre. This is a better alternative for mothers who just have to work outside their homes than to have children alone with servants who are generally uneducated, inexperienced and often enough not religious. Imagine the kind of habits, language, interests that the children can acquire and develop under such circumstances. An Islamic day care if set up is something worthwhile. If we just remember this - seek for knowledge from the cradle to the graveyard then we should get trained people to help. see that babies are being helped to seek for knowledge. Just what kind of knowledge? Well in terms of getting sweet wonderful experiences by using their sensory organs .. developing all kinds of motor skills, motor sensory coordinations, learning to interact with other human beings, with the environment, the world around so that it would later on in life be easier for the child who will then be adult, to understand what is meant by "in all the phenomenon around him, these are signs of Allah". Not all mothers can really provide this sense of good upbringing. Most mothers can provide the closeness, the love i.e. the emotional needs but unless the mother is knowledgeable and educated it is not easy for her alone to provide all the

needs and stimulations that young children need for early satisfactory growth and development. You do not add fertiliser to a plant when it is already big. You start doing it at the time it is still a seedling.

Building day care centres can be done at places where the mother works or near where she works. It only needs the presence of concerned members within the authority who do not see people as workers but as human beings, who do not focus their attention to just a particular period of a man's life i.e. when he is at the height of his vigour and productivity but instead scan at the various stages of the human life as a baby, toddler, child, teenager, adult and finally old age. We need people in the authority who do not think just in terms of dollars and cents but the welfare of the subordinates involved as well. Now such members will definitely see life in the proper context and hence work towards making life for the subordinates meaningful, fruitful and worthwhile. This is happiness and felicity that the people want. There are also other advantages. In this way the young ones who are the vanguards of the future are ensured of getting good upbringing with stimulating environment for growth and development. The old ones on the other hand will also be assured that they will not be neglected or forgotten. Such a situation is ideal but not impossible to set up. Its the al Qur'an which says that the human beings as a whole have the capacity, the

potentials to do it and to do it well. The deciding factor is the will power and the kind of development that we all look for in life. Is it just the economic, the social, the people seperately or all at once?

Conclusion

It is therefore clear that there is tremendous potential in the women that can be tapped and harnessed for development. We constitute half of the human energy resource and there can be no better resource then the human one for we can be self generating. At present, I say at present the Japanese and the Korean have shown this to be true. "Virtousity and modesty of women in Islam should by no means be misinterpreted as passivity. It is perhaps through these attributes that they effectively function, participate and contribute to development directly or indirectly".

To allow women to participate and contribute effectively either for the family or community development or for the social or economic development, they must first be educated and trained whether it is for a vocational or professional task, whether menial or prestigious. Every level of tasks and activities is important if we are to work towards developing a good, perfect society.

The people as a whole has got to aim and actually carry out a more organized and planned set of activities be it for the individual, family, community or the society. It is the structure, order

and discipline that we have to adhere to. The Qur'an suggests that we begin by performing our salat punctually, in the state of cleanliness, and *khusu'* (concentration) with full understanding of what we do.

The people as a whole must continuously be educated, be informed of problems to be overcome, be informed of the changes that are necessary to make way for development.

Infact this has been suggested by one of the *sunnah* when it states that man should always read the al Qur'an for the meaning can never be drained away. There is always more and more to see from it hence more and more to learn from it.

The concept of mass education hence dessimination of knowledge and information through the mass media or whatever form of communication for the people is something to be considered seriously and to be implemented. This is to allow everyone to be intune with one another so that the ummah can develop smoothly.

These recommendations may not be easy to be realised but they are not impossible. With the proper spirit of Islam each individual could be well equipped with the knowledge, training and the conviction that we can always change for the better, getting closer and closer to Allah s.w.t. and the Prophet as from Allah do we come and unto Him shall we return. ■

The Message of Humanity

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Having been impressed with diabolical juncture of the "Country and deprivation of human qualities and norms Late Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's restless soul felt an urgent need to launch a movement in the name of "Payam-e-Insaniyat (Message of Humanity) to foster love and amity between different sections of the society. The idea of Payam-e-Insaniyat originated at Siwan (Bihar), where Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi had gone to address a large congregation, subsequent to a holocaust which took heavy toll of Muslims lives. An abominable image of Muslims aggravated by media had been formed in the minds of the majority. Maulana's speech elicited following comments from a Hindu senior citizen in the audience: "Maulana, I have listened only to two speeches, one by CR Das (Deshbandhu) and the other is yours. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have a right over you. I urge you to visit this city once again."

The initiation of this auspicious and noble mission was set in Allahabad. The reason of which in Maulana's own

words: "We have started this humble work from Allahabad because the city is associated with" Allah".

The main purpose of "Payam-e-Insaniyat" Forum is to create mutual good-will, an atmosphere of affection and kindness and to put an end to violence, lawlessness, anarchy, moral degradation and create fellow feelings towards each other. To achieve our aim public Meetings and seminars for promoting and spreading the sense of sharing sorrows and sufferings of human-beings be organised.

Syed Abul Hasan' Ali Nadwi (RAH) says, "Sharing others suffering are man's highest virtue. If man loses the ability of sharing other's sufferings, he will become bankrupt. Even if a nation is blessed with the wealth of America, administration of Russia, and petrol wells of Saudi Arabia, even if rivers of gold and silver flow in it, and even if wealth showers over its land like rain, it will still pauper if its stream of love is dried. The blessings of Allah will not descend on it. It is a matter of satisfaction that man's eyes can still shed tears and that his heart can still

suffer with the pain of others. The heart which loses this quality is not a heart. It is just a piece of stone. Such a heart has no value in the sight of Allah, no matter whether it is the heart of a Muslim or a Hindu or a Christian. The value of the human heart, in fact, lies in its quality to long, shiver, cry, and love. The human heart should be greener than the land, broader than universe, more affluent than the waterfall, and more bountiful than the heavy clouds ready to stream down. The eye which does not become wet is not a human eye: It is the eye of a dafodil. The heart which does not feel pain of others is not a human heart it is a heart of lion. The forehead which does not become wet with the perspiration of penitence is not a human forehead; it is a piece of rock. The hand which does not move forward to serve humanity is virtually paralysed and lifeless. The claw of a lion is better than that hand of a person which cuts the throat of another human-being."

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee condoling the demise of Ali Mian had said. "Ali Mian, as he was respectfully known, was also a great humanitarian. In his last message he strongly condemned the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Plane, stating,

"Nobody, having respect and love for human beings can ever approve of such action."

Needless to add that for the fulfilment of his mission, Maulana did not dither from speaking the truth on the face; be it Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Narsimha Rao or Atal Bihari Vajpaee. His sole purpose was to convey what, in his opinion, was good for all classes is good for the country as a whole.

Maulana is no more today with us but his message and teachings are here to guide us. We should do our best to spread it in every comer of the country so that an atmosphere of brotherhood, fraternity and love may perpetuate amongst us.

Keeping in view the present unrest prevailing around us we must strive hard to restore confidence and help in rejuvenating the society. By holding seminars and gatherings of people of different faiths, misgivings and hatred against each other be removed. As envisaged by Ali Mian (RAH) his mission of "Payam-e-Insaniyat" can play a constructive role in this direction. ■

The Qur'an: A Healing For All

- K.K. Usman

This Quran is a Scripture which We revealed to you (Muhammad) that you may bring men out of the darkness of ignorance to the light of certain knowledge. (14: 1) This is the Book... Confirming the already given revelation (2:2,97)

And if there is any doubt regarding what We have revealed to Our servant (Muhammad), try to bring about the like of one of its chapters... (2: 23)

The Quran is universally known as the Sacred book of Islam, the religion of submission to the Will of God. The name Qur'an is an Arabic word which means 'the Recital' or 'the Reading'. It is the Word of God and is the collection of the essence of all the Scriptures of the past, containing a universal message and guidance to mankind for all time.

The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad during some twenty three years of his Prophetic mission. It has been preserved in original Arabic language both in memory throughout the fourteen hundred years. The Quran contains 114 chapters (surahs). It is considered as the undisputed authority wherefrom springs law, ethics and all other Islamic concepts. Faith in One God, with conviction, and performance of virtuous and righteous deeds are the spring board of the Quran. The Quran categorically lays down that all human beings are born innocent and are accountable for their deeds. The Quran prohibits the root causes of evils such as: intoxicants, gambling, adultery, oppression, corruption, murder female infanticide and many more. The Quran commands that the followers of other faiths must be respected and treated with kindness.

The ultimate that the Quran proclaims is the concept of the Unity of God: there is no

god but God ; and He is the Only One to be worshiped. It is this concept of Oneness of God (Tawhid) that breaks the shackles of particularism, ethnocentrism and racism and opens up the horizon of universalism and brotherhood of man.

One aspect of Islam that is appealing to the secular mind is the harmonious interplay of faith and reason. The Quran does not demand unreasoned belief. Rather, it invites intelligent faith, growing from observation, reflection and contemplation, beginning with nature and everything around us. Accordingly, antagonism between religion and science is foreign to Islam.

The Quran is a mingling of the spiritual and the material, the divine and the mundane; it covers everything from the sun to the moth. It explains a moral in a verse, which might ordinarily take a whole book, it enunciates a principle from several angles and attacks a wrong from a multitude of directions. And yet its main values are put forth not only unambiguously but in a forceful manner. The problems of philosophy and metaphysics are dealt with a firm and uncommon angles as are historical events and God's Signs in the universe.

The first chapter of the Quran consists seven verses and is called Fathiha, meaning, the opening chapter. These seven verses are compulsorily recited in daily prayers by Muslims.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, Lord of the universe,

The Gracious, the Merciful;
Master of the Day of Judgment.

You alone we worship; You alone we
implore for help.

Guide us unto the straight path,
The path of those whom You have
blessed,

Those who have not incurred Your
displeasure, those who have not gone astray.
(1:1-7)

The Quran is not only a spiritual guide,
a code of ethics and a handbook of morals,
but it also contains rules and regulations for
the day-to-day affairs of the world, covering
diverse fields such as: individual and social,
political and economical, marriage, divorce,
inheritance, usury, theft, adultery and many
more. In fact, the Quran gives advice on every
matter of daily life, such as how a believer
should enter a house, how he should greet
someone, how he should dress or talk, walk,
eat, worship, handle his wealth etc.

Its verses, at once stirring and
soothing, forceful and gentle, tender and
terrifying, breathtaking and awe-inspiring, the
Quran have moved millions of Muslims through
the ages. They continue to do so today,
Muhammad was, indeed, the medium of the
divine Will as expressed in the Quran. As for
Muslims, the Quran is the Word of God and
therefore, immutable and unchangeable, not
metaphorically or symbolically but, literally.
There is no human participation in the creation
of the Quran; it is all of God and what is of
God, cannot be changed by man.

The more the Quran is studied with an
unprejudiced mind, the more this truth
emerges, that the Quran is nothing but a
confirmation of all the earlier Scriptures and
messages sent by God through His
messengers who lived among one people after
another.

In the introduction to his book 'The
Essential Koran' Thomas Cleary writes:

"The name Quran means the Recital
or the Reading. According to its own word, the
Quran is a revealed Book in the spiritual
tradition of the Torah and Gospel transmitted
by Moses and Jesus. Connecting itself and
these distinguished predecessors to even
earlier dispensations of original religion, the
Quran represents its teaching as confirming
and clarifying the truth of what was in those
messages.

The Quran is undeniably unique in this
tradition, and indeed unique in the entire context
of classical sacred tradition throughout the
world, in having been revealed in the full light of
history, through the offices of a Prophet who
was well known.

As the last link in a chain of revelation
going back to time immemorial, even to the
very origin of humankind, the Quran has the
special function of recollecting the essential
message of all revealed Books and
distinguishing this from the opinions and
reactions later interpolated into ancient texts
whose original dispensation had taken place
in remote and even unknown times.

Therefore the Quran is not only called
the Reading or the Recital but also the Criterion;
it is called a Reminder and also a Clarification.
A modern descendant of the Prophet
Muhammad wrote of this comprehensive scope
and function of the Book in these terms:

The Quran is nothing but the old Books
refine of human alloy, and contains
transcendent truths embodied in all sacred
scriptures with complete additions, necessary
for the development of all human faculties. It
repeats truths given in the Holy Vedas, in the
Bible, in the words of the Gita, in the sayings
of Buddha and all other Prophets, and adds
what was not in them, and gives new laws to
meet the contingencies of the present time
when different members of God's family who

lived apart from each other in the days of old revelations had come close one to the other.

Because the Quran synthesizes and perfects earlier revelations, its function as a Criterion to distinguish between truth and falsehood is not carried out in the form of dogmatic assertion or condemnation of one religion or another, but in the form of distinction between human artifice and the essential meaning of religion, between hypocrisy and true faith.

The Quran speaks to humanity as whole, to nations, communities, families and individuals; complete with both an inner teaching and an outer teaching, it speaks both to persons and to souls, individually and collectively." (The Essential Koran, Thomas Cleary)

The Islamic imperative is two fold: personal and social and it consists of duties to God and duties to man and to the rest of God's creations including the physical environment. Every duty the Quran has enjoined aims at the self as well as at the other selves and it is aimed concomitantly at the service of God as well as of man. None may be exclusively the one or the other. A frequently repeated theme of the Quran is: the people who attain salvation are those who have implicit faith in God and do virtuous acts. The examples in which this expression occurs in the Quran are so many as to obviate any listing of them.

The Quran reiterates the eternal truth about the Unity of God and calls upon His creatures to have unshakable and absolute faith in Him; do good deeds and lead a pious and virtuous life. These are the cardinal principles which it enjoins upon people for salvation and form the bedrock of Islam.

One of the shortest chapters (surah 112), Al-Ikhlās, deals exclusively with the doctrine of Unity of God (Tawhid) and described

by the Prophet as equivalent to one-third of the Quran.

Equality and justice are two sides of the same coin and the Quran is champion of both. All human beings are equal in the sight of God, whether male or female, black or white, poor or rich, the ruler or the ruled, the noble or the plebeian... It is the piety, virtue and good deeds which grant excellence to one person over the other. As for differences in race, colour, language and nationality, the Quran maintains, these are merely for distinguishing and not for division, discrimination and superiority. The ideal vision of brotherhood of man and sense of justice is expressed in the Quran most eloquent terms:

"O mankind! We have created you from a single pair of male and female, constituted into diverse people and nations that you may know and cooperate with one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most pious, the most virtuous." (49:13)

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witness to God, even if it be against yourselves, your parents or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor." (4:135)

The Quran makes a fervent appeal to the people, loud and clear, to organise themselves in order to invite humanity to all that is good; to enjoin what is right; and to forbid what is wrong:

"O you who believe! Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity." (3:104)

The Quran emphasizes the paramount importance of life Here after for mankind. It creates in a person the awareness of his/her duty to God and fellow creatures in the temporary worldly life; and unfolds the realities of the eternal life, the Hereafter which includes the Day of resurrection, the Day of judgment,

Paradise and Hill. It inculcates the concept of accountability both in the private and public life of a person.

"What is this life on this earth, but a play and an amusement? It is the Hereafter that is the best for all who are righteous." (6:32)

To give, even in outline, various aspects of human life dealt which in the Quran be impossible here. The Quran even instructs Muhammad how to debate and discuss the issues of religion with the people of other faiths and these injunctions stand out as guideline to be copied by his followers.

"Call men unto the path of your Lord through wise argument and fair preaching; and argue with nonbelievers with arguments yet more sound." (16:125)

"Reville not those whom they call upon besides God, lest in their ignorance, out of spite, they revile God (Allah)." (6:125)

One must keep in mind that the Quran does not treat its subject matters systematically. Fulfilling a requisite of the aesthetic sublime in letters, the Quran is a book in which principles and precepts are strewn like a string of pearls that has become unfurled.

At the very centre of the Quran's edifice of ideas stands God, the Absolute, the One, the Transcendent, the Creator, the Cause and Judge of all. Surrounding this centre of Quranic ideas about the divine being and its relevance to creations is a body of methodological principles governing man's response to divinity. In their sum, these principles establish a worldview constitutes by the following:

1. Rationalism or the subjection of all knowledge, including religious knowledge, to the dictates of reason and common sense the repudiation of myth, of paradox, of ultimately contradictory positions, acquiescence to proof and evidence, and openness to further evidence and readiness to alter one's knowledge and

attitude according to the demands of new evidence.

2. Humanism, or the doctrine, first, that all humans are born innocent, there being neither original sin or guilt; second, that they are free to determine their individual destinies in accordance with the best dictates of their own consciences; third, that they are equal before God and the law since no discriminations is legitimate that bases itself upon race, colour, language, inherited culture, religion or inherited social position; fourth, that they are all by nature capable of making judgements of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, of desirableness and its opposite; fifth, that they are all responsible, certain to be accountable and will receive from their Creator, whether in this world or the next, exactly what their deeds have earned for them.

3. World - and life affirmation, or the doctrine that God created life to be lived and not denied or destroyed, and the world to be enjoyed; that Creation is subservient to man, malleable and transformable by him according to his wishes and design; that both life and the world are to be promoted and developed, culture and civilization to be nurtured and to issue in human self realization in knowledge, in taqwa and ishan (piety and righteousness), and in beauty.

4. Societism, or the doctrine that man's cosmic value lies in his membership in and contribution to human society, that his individual self is certainly an end-in-itself, yet more ennobled, and hence conditioned, by its subjection to humanity as an end-in-itself.

Finally, beyond these methodological principles, the Quranic essence includes the institutions of Islam. These cover all fields of human activity: the religious and the ethical, the political and the economic, the cultural and the educational, the judicial and the administrative. ■

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