

Muslim Ummah

Contemporary Issues and Challenges

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Shah Abdul Hannan

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Preface

This is a collection of my most important essays. I have selected these essays out of my two hundred essays. These are The Main Problem of Humanity; Building Up Strong Muslim Ummah; Education, Religion & Secularism; Women's Dignity, Rights and Empowerment, Inhumanity of Capitalism and Islamic Economy; Characteristics of Islamic Economy; Democracy and Islam: Clarification of Some Misgivings; Major Obstacles for Islamic Workers at the Present Time; Priorities of Muslim Organizations and Recommended Islamic Books for Preparing Advanced Persons/Scholars (Applicable to International Community).

In selecting these essays, I have kept in mind the need of international Islamic organizations and parties. I hope this will benefit all of them.

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Shah Abdul Hannan

The Main Problem of Humanity

Philosophically thinking, the biggest problem of the world is forgetting Allah—the creator to become indifferent of His existence. Allah subhana wa ta-a-la said, “O Man! what has seduced thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent?” (82: 6). At present day it is indeed a reality that mankind are negligent of their creator. Atheistic beliefs are predominant in Europe and America. Russia had been a self declared atheist nation for long. Even among the believers, many are skeptic. Skeptics don’t openly claim that there is no creator. But they are insensitive about the existence of a creator, and do not consider remembrance of Him as an important matter.

The Christians, even those who believe in God, are oblivious of Him in their practical life. In comparison, the Muslims are yet less affected by atheism and skepticism. They are more or less practicing believers. Even the Muslims, who consider themselves secular, observe the Islamic rituals to some extent. They too say their prayers, do fasting in the Ramadan, celebrate the Eids and care about the Halal and Haram.

Forgetfulness of God has basically created two problems, materialism and atheism. These two are the fundamental reason of the crisis of the world today. It can be mentioned that hard-core or extreme secularism produce same kind of behavior as the atheists and skeptics.

The forgetfulness of God has also affected the education system, which is entirely built upon secularism. Present day science is based on secular perception. European scholars and even the Muslim scholars today do not begin their books with “the name of creator or God. On the contrary when the Muslims were making development in science, learning from China and India, they contributed into many branches of sciences. At that time Muslim scientists used to start every books of science in the name of their Lord. They were sincere believers. But the European scientists, not being believers of God or considering expression of belief to be a humiliating fact, never mentioned the name of the creator. Muslim scientists of today can write it. Unfortunately they are also not doing it these days.

Earlier writing the name of God was the custom. Today avoiding it has become the custom.

In books of sciences there is no reference to the word Allah or God. The word ‘creator’ is not used at all. It is an amazing thing. In some cases the term ‘nature’ is used instead of creator, which is very confusing. What is ‘nature’ is not clear at all. They never think how these natural laws came into existence. How come laws could exist without a lawgiver (creator of the law)? They claim to be the most rational, but I am finding no rationality at all in this point.

The modern science has numerous benefits and uses, we agree to that. But it is driven by a mind that is skeptic on the question of God. A mind that does not recognize God, does not mention God, even considers mentioning God an uncivilized matter. These concepts behind modern scientific thinking are affecting our culture and promoting skepticism and atheism.

Some social sciences maintain similar view in this issue. Sociology assumes that religion is a man-made concept. But they could have promoted the concept that God has created us, and gives us a tendency to be social by giving a social mind. Inclination to communal life of human beings is the design and part of plan of God. That is why we become united and form society. The anthropologists are not admitting that God has created human beings. They completely reject this idea. Anthropology is trying to discover the origin of man by digging into the earth searching for fossil. From those they are saying that human being came into existence spontaneously; there is no Creator.

I would like to mention here that poverty is a big crisis of present day world. A large number of people cannot remain good and honest because of poverty. This crisis is also in the ultimate analysis a product of atheism, secularism and hedonism. Most of the people have become secularist today.

It appears that they do not feel the importance of working for the poor and eliminating poverty. Particularly the capitalists of the world

don't seem to want this at all. There is no mention any real concern in the literature of economics of capitalism. It mentions profit, open market; it talks about not imposing government interventions on financial issues. But it never mentions to take measures to eliminate market distortion. It never mentions elimination of poverty. Some capitalist nations do take action against poverty but they are doing that by going out of the framework of capitalism, not because this is the demand of capitalist philosophy.

Colonialism and Imperialism are also offshoots of materialism. The inspiration to seek more and more pleasure for oneself and his nation is the root of these concepts. Exploiting the people for one's own benefit is their purpose. The selfishness and capitalism are not unrelated. All these concepts together have made man irresponsible and have made him hedonist and self-seekers. The responsible people are actually those who fear Allah and do not exploit the world.

Thus, I must say the root of all problems is forgetfulness of the Creator. This is the reason for which our prophets came and told us to obey our creator.

Thus, the solution of the crisis of the world today is bringing the faith of God back among the people, both the Muslims and non-Muslim. I shall say that believing in any religion is better than atheism. Because every religion has some ethics. Atheism has no ethics. The atheist thinks himself to be independent and not responsible to any higher being.

He thinks his actions will never be judged, no one will even question about his actions. So, he can do anything in this world. People like this are dangerous for the society. For this reason faith in God should be reestablished among the people. We have to let people recognize God, as firmly as possible. We have to have moral basis in education. This is how we can eliminate selfishness from the humanity and can solve the root-cause of all problems of the world. Of course we have to do many other things for peace and progress of humanity.

Building Up Strong Muslim Ummah

[This talk was delivered as “Building up Strong Muslim Ummah” which was addressed on Tuesday, the 22nd September-1998 at Sheffield Islamic Centre and addressed to the Sheffield local community and International students.]

My topic today is “Building up Strong Muslim Ummah.” I would mention that I am a plain servant of Allah (SWT). I am a simple worker of Islam. I have studied Islam for 40 years now and worked for Islam from 1957 onward that is 41 years. But I have no pride. I know that there is no end to learning and I also know that Islam is a very vast subject, a way of life and you cannot cover all sides. Today, first of all, I would mention before I move to the subject itself, I would take this opportunity of meeting some Muslim brothers and Sisters from Sheffield area (and as I came to the UK three times including this time), I feel that I will bring a few things to the notice of the Muslim community in the UK in general and the community in Sheffield in particular on the basis of what I have learnt from my friends, brothers and sisters. I think, I will not focus on this topic, I will only mention casually a few points.

I think, the Muslim community in the various areas in the United Kingdom should attend to building a very strong community. First to build a strong community, the Muslims community should be built not on the basis of ethnicity but on the basis of Islamic identity. The community of the Muslims should be built not on the basis of ethnicity, not on the basis of geographical line only but on the basis of Islamic identity. There could be geographical community that will work for this country, that country, there will be organization for that, fine, no problem. But in addition, everywhere in the UK there should be another organization based on Islam. For example, I would say like this that Sheffield Islamic Organization or Sheffield Islamic Community, something like that, everywhere, not only in Sheffield. And if it is not really possible then what should be done, in every area a federation of Muslim organization, a federation

of Muslim community, a federation of the community should be formed where Islamic cause should be dominant. This federation will look after, the general purpose of Islam, general, social, economic even political and particularly ideological purposes of Islam. It is also needed and I have no doubt you are doing it, I have no doubt that whatever I am saying you are doing that, more or less. But I am trying to emphasize what I find to be more important. One thing would be to spread authentic knowledge of Islam on the basis of the writings of the prominent Islamic Scholars of the past and the present. It should be the Quran, it should be the Sunnah or the Hadith, books of Hadith, their commentry, of the Quran. In addition, it should be the best writings of the best scholars of Islam of the past and the present. Because, it may not be always possible for a person who does not read enough to derive all possible guidance from the Quranul Karim. It may help if he goes through authentic writings of the major scholars of Islam.

Lastly, on the subject of UK Muslim community, I see a very important task which I have suggested in the United States when I was there in connection with the official business of the Government. I advised there also to build Islamic Schools. By that I mean, in the United States what they have done apart from Friday school, apart from Saturday or Sunday School, they have started about 400 high schools where they are teaching, first of all, the curricula of that country plus Arabic plus Islamic studies and wherever possible they are separating education of boys and girls and taking separate classes wherever possible and asking the girls to observe Islamic norms of dress and also the boys. I believe that the survival and progress of the Muslim community here on the basis of Islam depends on your building schools on this line. And I understand and I believe that the future of the strong Islamic community in Europe and in Canada and in United states and in Australia depends on first of all building strong community on the basis of Islam and then building schools, establish schools. These are only for your consideration and if you think this is right you should start a movement not only in Sheffield, but in the UK.

Now I come to my topic. After these preliminary observations coming to the topic, first of all, I submit that the state of Ummah, the state of Muslim Ummah, the state of Islamic Ummah is not very healthy. And I would not discuss a lot because you know very much in this respect. But still I would say ideologically, there is much ignorance in the Muslim community about Islam. Ideologically speaking, Islamically speaking, from the Ummah stand point, there is much ignorance about Islam, there is considerable Bida (innovation unacceptable in Shariah) in the Muslim community, innovations which are not acceptable, which has been judged innovations (in the technical terms of Fiqh) and also much Shirk in the entire Muslim world or many parts of Muslim world. I cannot say what is the real state in the UK, but I would say that the Muslim Ummah as a whole is in much ignorance, much Bida and much Shirk.

Materially speaking, materially there is much illiteracy, much poverty, serious poverty and backwardness in most of the places. Our economy is in bad shape by in large except a few, we have bad defense. What should we do to build a strong Ummah in such circumstances when our ideology is this and when our material position is this, what should we do to build a strong Ummah? By the way I would mention after the conclusion of my speech, I will be ready to answer in all humility any question that you may give me. I do not say I have all the answers but I will give whatever I know and the rest Allah is our helper. So coming to the question what should we do to build a strong Ummah. Again, I need not mention that, of course, we have to build our education, we have to build our economy and we have to build our defense. These are the priority areas before I look into the ideological issues, I am mentioning the material aspect and I have to do this.

Our education, as you all know, in most of the countries, not in all countries are not fulfilling the needs of Islamic education. Let me say my case, from my school to my university post- graduation in Dhaka University, I was not taught 20 ayats of the Quran, In fact, I would

say I was not taught 10 ayats of the Quran. I was not taught the life of the Prophet (sm) who is a model for us. So does this education system or education fulfill our needs? It does not. The objective should be to build ultimately in the independent Muslim countries strong Islamic education system.

I know it will take time and there is “Sunnat Allah”- Allah’s ways and many things are there where time is needed but the objective should be clear that we have to achieve an education system which will meet all our material needs, all our needs to live as good human being. At the same time it must meet our Islamic needs, The education must meet, and presently in most of the countries the education system is not patterned in this line. But the objective should be clear to the Ummah that the education is very important, most important for our material progress and for our Dini (religious) progress, for our religious progress, for ideological progress, the most important thing is education. And as long as the education system is not fulfilling our needs, there is our duty to privately study and know Islam thoroughly and fully, there is no other way but private study. I would not take much time about economy. I mean, you can realize you have to do a lot. I will not discuss today this issue only indicating that all Muslim governments, all Muslim politicians, all Muslim intellectuals must work. All Muslim economists must work for strong Muslim economy. I will come back to this issue later.

We have to build our defense also. Allah has said to guard our borders. If you look into the last ayats of Suratul Imran you will find Allah has asked us to guard our borders and Allah has taught us to keep horses ready. By that Allah (SWT) means we should keep our defense ready, we cannot be careless about the defense of the Muslim Ummah, about the defense of the Muslim states and defense of the Islamic states. De-nuclearisation, very good, but it must be for all, not for only the Muslims. Disarmament of all. I mean we cannot be asked to disarm ourselves, others keeping arms. It will not be fair, it is not just. Now, I was talking about the building of Ummah and

about the material aspect I was indicating a little. But, today my thrust is not on the material aspect, we must take into account the fact that the Ummah itself is under attack, under threat. You know that there are major scholars talking about the conflict of civilization, An American major scholar Huntington has spoken on the conflict of civilization and it says that Islam is the next threat to the western civilization, as if the western civilization must be maintained, as if any threat against that must be eliminated, as if it is the pinnacle of civilization, as if it is the last word. We do not accept western civilization is the last word, I will come back to that. Not only Huntington, Fukuyama in his book “The end of history” says that history has reached its final stage, he means really that secular democracy and capitalism are the two things which are the final version of things that human being achieved, so nothing new will come, nothing better will come. This is the end of history, but we cannot accept that the secularism is the last word.

The greatest problem of human civilization is that they have forgotten the guidance of Allah (SWT). And this is the reason of all the immoralities you see in the world. And most of the fighting are on the basis of nation, I agree there are fighting on the basis of religion also but a time has come that we can contain that if we like. We cannot forsake morality and surrender to immorality in the name of secularism that is forgetting the guidance of Allah (SWT). Many of the evils of the world are due to really the forgetting the guidance of Allah (SWT).

The Challenge of the West

The challenge of the West to the Muslim Ummah is political, is cultural, is economic and mostly, and most fundamentally intellectual. I need not to discuss much about political challenge to the Ummah. What do the West want? The West wants the Muslim countries should obey the dictates of the West. It is not acceptable to us. When a Muslim country was about to blast a bomb it gets a few telephone calls several times from the head of the state of most

important power of the world that “You do not do that” So much interference in the affairs of the Muslim states. They want us to obey their dictates and if you obey their dictate they will never dictate us for the good of the Muslims and for the good of the Islam. I do not say that we will not listen to others on right matters, we should listen to on right matters to others, but we cannot accept the political dictates of the West. They want us to surrender to their culture which is mostly indecent, lot of indecencies, lot of exposure of human body, exploiting the women for money and lust of men. I do not know in Human history any worse social system like this. Their marriage has been eliminated more or less, their parents are neglected, their children are neglected. Neither children have security, nor in the real sense, the parents have security. In old days they have lots of problems. Their children are not getting care of both father and mother, probably they are getting care of only one in most cases but Allah has made it like that the children should get care of both father and mother. Allah has not made it like this that the children would get care of only the mother. They destroyed family for no purpose at all, for worthless purpose. The marriage is a historically sound institution. It has not harmed anybody; the family has not harmed anybody. That, they have come to a situation where they, in fact, are ruining their families. They are leading us to a chaos and condition. Coming to economic aspect, the goal is really economic imperialism. They want us to be second graders, 3rd graders, 4th graders. They want us to be their market ultimately. Their institutions are all geared to the interest of the major powers of the West. I know thoroughly, I have dealt with them. They serve mostly the purpose of the West and not the purpose of the humanity as a whole.

But I must say, the basic challenge is really intellectual. All the other challenges are there but the basic and most fundamental challenge that is coming from the West is really intellectual. They are charging, they are telling us that the concept of Islamic state is not possible. It is not good to have Islamic states. They are telling that Islam does not give human rights, they are telling that Islam does not give women

rights and I must say with great sorrow that some Muslims act in a manner it appears that as if Islam does not give human rights or women rights. There are some manifestations in some countries, some parts which also give this impression. Unfortunately, we must not do that. We must not give the backward, unnecessary backward image of Islam.

Coming to the points of human rights and women rights, I would explain that these are very much accepted in Islam. I will quote three basic documents in support of human rights and women rights in Islam. The constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran was drafted by Ulema, the constitution of Islamic republic of Pakistan was, though not drafted but accepted by Ulema of all groups. These two documents plus the writings of the political scientists of the Islam. I would not name them all, I can name only a few, like Muhammad Asad, like Abul ala Maududi, like Hasan Turabi and so on, a political thinker in Bangladesh, late Moulana Abdur Rahim in their writings. So I would say these documents which are drafted by the Ulema or accepted by the Ulema indicated clearly that Islam has given basic human rights. The Islamic constitution of Pakistan, has chapter on Fundamental Rights. As I am a teacher in a University of comparative political thought, I gave my students Iranian constitution, I gave my students the Pakistan constitution. I gave my students Bangladesh constitution. I gave my students American constitution. I explained them the difference between the Western democratic model and Islamic democratic model. So I would say that the writings of political scientists, not politicians, not ordinary Alims, but major Alims and major Islamic politicians and political scholars and the other two basic documents, which are drafted by Ulema or accepted by Ulema, clearly indicate that Human rights are respected and women rights are guaranteed in Islam. So, we should not hear some voices from here and there. We cannot lose the consensus, we cannot ignore the consensus on the basis of some voices from here and there (You can also look into OIC declaration of Human Rights which was approved by OIC Fiqh Academy).

Let us look back at the causes of Muslim decline. As you all know we have been at the fore-front of expansion of knowledge. It is the Muslims who have been the principal actor in the field of knowledge in the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th century. In the 11th, 12th, 13th century Muslim gave up the pursuit of knowledge. What happened? Why?. I have not the full answer but it appears to me that we neglected knowledge. It is clear from history that we neglected knowledge which led to our decline and among other things is Taqlid, the blind following. The Muslims started blindly following the old scholars and forgot their duties of pursuit of knowledge and Ijtihad by the senior scholars of Islam. If you want to know the level of Taqlid, I can refer to a book which I went through, there is book called Fatwah-e-Alamgiri which was prepared by 300 Alims at the time of the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. They have discussed about 5000 issues and you will be surprised that after each issue nowhere they quoted any ayat of the Quran, no where they quoted the Hadith of the Prophet (sm). They quote some old books. They refer Tatarhania, refer Shami, refer Baharurraik and refer Muhit, never to the book of Allah and never to the Hadith of Prophet (sm). After going through 12 volumes of Fatwai Alamgiri, I was dismayed, I was surprised, I got a shock. I want to mention that this taqlid was responsible for our decline.

In such situation, the challenge of the West, political, cultural, economic and intellectual, how do we meet them, and also that we know the basic reasons of our decline, what should we do? As I have said earlier we have to build economy and education etc. no doubt but above all we have to face the intellectual challenge of the West. If we want to build up an Islamic state, Islamic Ummah, Islamic societies, if we want to build up Islam based economy and economy based on Islamic values and politics based on Islamic values, there is no other way but face the western challenge. Explain the reasons behind Islamic injunction. As once upon a time Ilmul Kalam was developed that explained the roots of our faith, our Akaid (beliefs). Similarly, we have to build up new subjects, new responses to the

challenge of the West, the intellectual challenge of the West. I think the most important thing is to build up individuals.

If we have to build up strong Islamic Ummah we have to build up individuals. Why I say so, ultimately who runs the state—individuals, who runs the societies—individuals, who runs the economy—individuals, who runs banks—individuals, who runs the government—individuals. So my submission is that if we want to build strong Islamic Ummah and face the challenge of the West, we must build Islamically oriented individuals and great number of scholars and intellectuals in each field. For this I would suggest, if I can say that the prescription before us I would say is to build Islamic intellectuals. To build Islamic individuals, apart from Iman, apart from Akhlak (character), apart from practice, what is needed is I would prescribe read, read and read. Any person cannot be a Islamic scholar unless he has read about 1000 Islamic books in addition to another 500/ 600 books of general interest. A first class Islamic worker cannot be prepared unless he has studied 500 Islamic books in addition to another 200/ 300/ 400/ 500 books on general matters. I suggest that the building up Ummah ultimately would depend on the one hand on to building strong economy, strong defense, good education, good infrastructure and so on for all of us. Facing the challenge of the West, threat of the West we have to build individuals. Because, ultimately, the individuals run the society.

What should we read? I think we should read as many Tafsir of Quran as possible, we should read as many commentry of Hadith as possible, we should have a firm grounding on Usul al Fiqh. Who do not know Usul al Fiqh, they do not understand how to classify Hadith. They do not know how to infer, derive laws from the Quran and Sunnah. They have not heard about Ibartunnas, they have not heard about Isaratunnas, they have not heard about Dalatunnas. They have not heard about Iktedaannas. These are the methods of derivation of the rules from the Quran and Sunnah. They have not heard it. A firm foundation of Usul al Fiqh is needed for anybody who wants to be a scholar of Islam and fight for Islam and work for Islam seriously.

If you want to be a general worker, no problem but if you want to be a serious worker. I can recommend a book to all of you in this regard a good book which is basically based on Arabic work of Usul al Fiqh, is a book by Dr Hashim Kamali, Islamic Jurisprudence published by Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge. The book is based on all earlier works in Arabic by the Ulema of Usul. I am coming to the close of my speech, so that you can ask some questions. I will make two three points. One is, apart from studies, we should take prophetic character, we should adopt the prophetic character. People say it is not possible to follow the Prophet fully. I do not agree. If it was not possible to follow the Prophet (sm), then Allah would not have said the life of the Prophet is a model for you” or Prophet (sm) would not have said his conduct is a Sunnah for all of us, he is a model for all of us, is a guidance for all of us. I believe personally that the need of the Muslim is to emulate Prophet (sm) fully. We should behave with our wives as Prophet (sm) behaved with Ayesha (ra). It is possible. It is possible to behave with our assistants as Prophet (sm) behaved with Zaid (ra). It is not true that Prophet (sm) cannot be followed fully. So, I mean this is not properly understood.

Lastly, I would submit if we want to build strong Ummah, we must not ignore our women, we must not forget our women. They have the same potential for Islam, they have the same potential for Dawah, as man, because an ayat in the Quran which was revealed in the 9th of Hijra in the last part of the Prophet’s career says so. It is in Surattut Tawba. The Ayat is like this:

The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another; they uphold what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity and obey Allah and His messenger [Quran, 9:71].

This indicates that man and women are friend to each other, protector to each other, helper to each other. What do they do? The mumin man and women what do they do? The common duties are to enjoin

good and forbid evil, establish Salah, establish Zakah, follow Allah and His Prophet. These six duties are the common duties of the Muslim man and Muslim women. This ayat clearly proves that the potentials of Muslim man and women are alike. We must not forget that the soul of Muslim men and women are alike, same. I mean in the basic level man and women are alike. There are differences of course. The structure of men and women are not same. The responsibilities and duties sometimes are little different. The basic levels are all the same, one. The souls are of same type. Allah (SWT) has not said anywhere that the souls of man and women are different. So, at the soul level, which is the most basic level, ultimately what is a human being, nothing but the soul, and about it Allah (SWT) says we are of the same type. Number two, despite all physical differences, Allah says, the physical level of men and women are really most excellent. Allah says in the Quran in Sura Tin “Lakad Khalaknal Insana...” that is, men women have the most excellent structure. Any solitary Hadith cannot be quoted against this teaching of the Quran. No Majaji (allegorical) interpretation is possible here and thirdly we belong to the same family-the family of Adam and Hawa as has been stated in Suratun Nisa. As we are all Muslims we must give the opportunity to Muslim women to use and utilize their full potential.

So in conclusion I would say that we face major challenges in political field, in economic field, in social field, in cultural field and mostly in intellectual field. We have to prepare individual, these individuals will create Muslim society and Muslim state and Muslim economy and politics and society and schools and education and Madrasha and Masjid.

Education, Religion and Secularism

If we study world history, we will see that just like every cell that has a nucleus according to scientists, prior to the rise of secularism as an ideology, the nucleus or center of education was religion. The objective of education was to establish an ethical base and to mould human beings with moral or ethical ideology. This applies to Islam as well. During the initial phases of the Islamic era, the middle ages and even most recently before the colonial era, Muslim educational institutions had put emphasis upon the Qur'an, Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SA) and the Sirah (his life story) or Fiqh issues. That is, summarizing in one statement, in addition to putting emphasis upon all these, there were discussions and teachings about History, Geography, Duties of Statesmen, Policies of Government or rules of administration. A letter that was sent from Hazrat Ali (RA) to Malik Al Ashtar specified the duties and responsibilities of a governor or head of state. This shows that the basis of education was religion or Islam, which promotes good character and ethical values. Natural science or social science – whatever the teachings were – were based on this specific source.

The same is true in the history of Buddhism to some extent. The education that was disseminated through Nalanda University was based on fundamental teachings of character building and on the basic ethical values taken from the teachings of Buddhism. They had also incorporated other streams of knowledge prevalent in India at that time.

If we analyze the primary phases of the Hindu religion, it will be clear to us that the basis of acquiring knowledge was the Veda. Veda itself means Knowledge. The basis of their ancient philosophy was also Veda. In other words, Veda was at the center of their education culture. Alongside it, military science, diplomacy, financial studies/economics and other scriptures were added according to the need of the time.

Historically, the Christians' education system was also based on the Church. Every church was used as a college or an educational institution. Whatever was taught there, the basis was the Bible, i.e. the Old Testament and the New Testament. This only proves that prior to the end of the 18th century – when the Enlightenment Movement began and gave birth to Secularism – education was based on religion. The result of this education culture was that human life was more or less governed by certain ethical and moral standards. As a result, most of the people, whether they were Hindu or Buddhist, were charitable. As regards fundamental human values, they were better than people now. They were not inhuman.

Prior to the enlightenment movement (that supposedly advocated free thought) initiated at the end of the 18th century, there had been two more revolutions in Europe. The first was Renaissance. This occurred in areas of Art and Literature; it was not based on religion or politics. The second revolution was the Reformation Movement. A dispute arose from the Christian Church itself over whether the Pope was the sole interpreter of the Bible. Without going into too much detail on this issue, this resulted in the Church being divided in multiple sects. For example, the Lutheran Church under the leadership of Luther, the Calvinist Church under the leadership of Calvin, the Anglican Church led by the British Priests, the Baptist Church and others. This was called the Protestant Movement which was the result of the Reformation Movement.

There was a third revolution which had occurred in France. It had started in the name of 'Free-thought'. The influence cut through the end of the 18th century and before & after the French Revolution. Whatever the reason was, majority of the leaders of these revolutions were openly atheist or inclined to atheism or secularism. In the history of mankind, this was the first time that they came up with the philosophy that religion needed to be excluded from activities of the state and society. That is, religion will have no role to play in issues of the state or society. If religion exists, it has to exist only in the

hearts of the people – if anyone wants. Religion will be absent in areas like Economics, Culture, Politics, Legal system, and other mundane matters. The main argument of this movement was that logic, and not divine revelations, will be the basis of life; and there will be no establishment of religious or divine law.

The first bad consequence of this was that education was separated from religion. As a result, the schooling systems that developed made people selfish. They became commercial. Respect for religion decreased. The greatness or dominance of ethics/morals was reduced. Man became more accustomed to immorality and selfishness. This schooling gave rise to generals, politicians & scholars. In their inner self a predisposition was imprinted that for the greater society there was no need of religion – whether in parliament, markets, stock exchanges, or banks. This individual thought process that developed became the basis of their social attitude.

Consequently, this thought influenced all sectors of human life. Social Darwinism became a norm in economics and the theory ‘Survival of the Fittest’ was acquired as the theme. Only the capable will survive. Which meant: those who are not capable will one day be destroyed. Why would we obstruct the natural process? In this fashion, if any nation whether in this sub-continent, Africa or China does not prove itself as the fittest, it is bound to lose out. There is no need for morality or pity in such cases. It is only logical that ‘we are pushing the fittest forward’. This was Social Darwinism which was against Christianity and against Islam. Christianity asks you to love your neighbor, it asks you to give charity. And Islam talks about ‘Infaq Fi SabiliLlah’ or ‘Spending in the way of Allah’, Zakah. This is a serious matter. It puts especial emphasis on the duties towards near relatives. Secularism or the Free-thought movement initiated thinking about the Economy with the exclusion of God. Even capitalism that started 500 years ago was not so unethical in reality; Christian morals had moderated its activities. However, they had

started a completely competitive market system. Prior to the Free-thought movement the horrific face of capitalism had not shown itself.

But when capitalism combined itself with secularism, the laborers in Europe started facing oppression to such an extent that they were left only in the state of being alive – as resources for market production. Communism came in as a reaction to this very aspect; Socialism was given birth. The result of the imposition of Free-thought or secularist ideology on Economy was that inhumanity and immorality established itself and it was considered positive science; economy was a unique science; there will be no question of morals; no ethics. Just as we don’t give any thought of ethics in the flow of air or water, there will be no ethics on the flow of the economy. It will run by itself. Such notions resulted in many ills. Needless to say, such economic theories were the result of excessive greed and the urge for too much wealth. Interest operations made the situation worse. If interest was not there this may have never happened.

I have explained above the nature of the enlightenment movement (or the free-thought movement or Secular movement). The other result of these movements was that man at home spoke of independence, democracy, brotherhood while at the same time the children educated in the secular education system went out to conquer the world. People in France, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland and few other European countries conquered almost the whole of the world: the two Americas, Australia, New Zealand, almost 100 percent of Africa and almost 70 percent of Asia. In trying to do so, they became involved in wars with each other and with the natives of those countries.

The followers of the enlightenment movement or ‘Free-thought’ of the 18th century managed to conquer the whole world. Their sense of immorality was behind this great win. No moral society/state can attack or capture another state. But they looted the world. They looted iron ores and various minerals, gold, diamond – they looted

everything. The Spanish looted South America. The British looted our region, as they looted Africa. Looting was their main activity. That means: men educated in the secular education system started oppressing people severely. Then they announced that their objective was to civilize people. How can such uncivilized people civilize others?

At the time when they arrived as traders in the court of Mughal emperor Jahangir, the culture, the refinement, the etiquette that the Mughal possessed were much superior. What I'm saying is that colonizers' political attitude was based on immorality. They fought against each other. France and England tried to take the control of India. In the end, England occupied this region solely. Similarly France, Britain & Spain fought in America. In the end South America went to the hands of Spain. North America went to the hands of the British. The British, French, Italians, Germans and Portuguese fought in Africa. Portugal took over the region of Mozambique. The Dutch took some parts including South Africa. Maghreb or North Africa was taken over by Italy and France. This very incidence is portrayed in the film of *Omar Mokhtar*.

What we noticed that the Free-thought movement that abandoned religion produced very bad examples of humans. These men went on conquering the world. These men plundered foreign countries and then fought among themselves. The result was that they could not give any peace to this world. They fought the First World War and the Second World War. Four very harmful doctrines were given birth by the Western Civilization: Fascism, Communism, Capitalism & Secularism. Except for democracy, they seem to have given nothing good at all.

The ones who didn't want to give any room for God in their consciousness showed animal behavior in issues of family and gender. They thought that there was no need for family and that it was merely an institution to subjugate and enslave women. They preferred living like animals. Even if anyone grew a family, that

would be merely to produce children, which is another animal attitude. There was also an idea of 'Communes'. These communes would have 100 men and 100 women, and the identity of the fathers of the children was not known. Everyone would take the responsibility of child rearing. They also came up with the thought that an animal looks after (or rears) its young only until it can eat by itself. The tiger or the dog rears the young cubs until they are capable of standing on their legs. Man will also have to do the same. The attitude is: 'Why shall I strive for 30 years? Why shall I sacrifice so much? The child has been born as a natural phenomenon and he/she is grown up now. Let him/her do his/her duty. I have no more responsibility. Why shall I give up my self-interest? Why shall I give up my happiness & pleasure?' The deplorable state of families was largely due to the secular mindset. This could have become worse. However, the little influence of Christianity (wherever applies) that exists today has prevented it from going to that extent. Whatever good is there has been possible entirely due to people adhering to their religion of Christianity. And the moral degradation has happened largely due to this Free-thought movement; due to the secular ideology of separating life and ethics.

What's the solution to this problem? As far as my knowledge goes, this can be solved in two ways. One, as Muslims we take seriously the directions given by Allah (SW); in other words, we need to submit to Him completely. The root cause of all problems is the false display of Free-thought. Their statement is: Leave God! On the contrary we should keep Him near to us. We have to follow Him all the time. We have to lead our lives keeping faith and trust in Him. We are bound and indebted to Him in all aspects. We cannot do without Him. This is our duty as Muslims. People of other religions have to go to the Creator, go to moral values, and return to religion. So as a solution we're saying – whichever way possible – the education system based on morals/ethics needs to be brought back. For moral education there is no other basis other than religion.

In a Muslim State, Islam should be the basis for the Muslims, and other religions for their adherents. In non-Muslim states a moral education system needs to be established with their religion as the basis. We hope alternatives will be there for Muslims.

If the education system grows in this manner, then we can hope that the process of developing good human beings will start. If good human beings are created, wellbeing will spread in all sectors. Good people will be created everywhere, in politics, economy, family. We cannot do with just theories. And the change will not happen with only what I am saying. However, we do have to start to work for the revival of humanity. We know that such a revival is not impossible.

There are some other relevant issues that need some discussion. There is a claim that Christian Churches are opposed to Science. I don't know how much of it is true and how much is propaganda. This needs to be delved into. If anything of that sort has happened, then that is a mistake. Science has flourished in India and China. Here, scientists were never penalized.

Science has flourished in the hands of Muslims. We know of no incident of scientists being tortured or oppressed in Islamic history. Who can claim that in any movement, whether Communist or democratic, no mistakes were made? Removing Christianity completely is an over-reaction.

I would like to mention here a comment made in the book 'Tawhid' by Isma'il Al Razi. He said, 'God is not against Science, nor an enemy of science'. It's just because Allah exists that He has established an order. It's because of this existence of order that it has been possible to conceptualize scientific theories. If Allah didn't Exist, there would have been no order; neither would science have been created.

No religion has interfered in the development that has occurred due to science. The one or two examples that are found in Christian Europe were mistake. But Christian leaders or the Pope are not against Science.

We understand that humans were basically religious (God-fearing). They need to be reverted to religion and God-consciousness. They need to be reverted to being Islamic. What's the difference between a person who is religious and a person who is secular? An Islamic person looks for a solution to any problem in the Qur'an and the Sunnah; and then to other areas. The same is applicable to other religious people. On the other hand, a secular mind doesn't think about what's there in Allah's Book. He/she thinks and looks for what secular scholars say; what political leaders are saying or what Russia, China, America, or Canada are doing. They have taken the world from religious thought process to secular thought process. That is why our duty is to bring back the whole world into the frame of morality/ethics, to bring it back to the religious thought process.

The use of the word 'secular' was started after the Free-thought movement in the 19th century. By accepting the ideology of enlightenment, educated society has become more or less secular. Unfortunately, we have numerous people who pray but claim to be secular. They don't look for solutions in Islam. These secular minds need to be reverted to Islam completely. For this, they need to be given some basic books to read. There is no other way. I hope, if we try our best, we will succeed insha Allah.

Women's Dignity, Rights and Empowerment

We hear a lot of things about women's position and rights in the society. Some of the words that are expressed about the realization of women's rights are acceptable. Again there is room for difference of opinion on some points. It is imperative to establish the rights of men and women fully, because the society is moving forward every day. So not only men or women but also the rights of every individual must be established.

The society has made significant progress during the last 50 years. The women like men have come forward though not equally. We have left far behind the society we had during Begum Rokeya's-time. She saw that the girls had no opportunity for education. You ladies perhaps could not have received education if Begum Rokeya was not born at that time & not taken bold initiative for female education. Of course, Almighty Allah would have sent some other woman to this earth who could do the job.

In the whole world especially in our country the oppression that is being unleashed on the people particularly on the women has a foundation. The oppression is not descending from the sky. The ideological foundation for the persecution on women by men and at times by women themselves is: generally the people believe, particularly the men believe that women are inferior to men having low quality & below standard. The belief also exists in the women. This belief originates from some erroneous ideas among the people. And on this belief is standing firmly the whole edifice of oppression, deprivation and disrespect towards women.

If we want to eliminate persecution on women from our country, it cannot be done excluding Islam. I want to make it very clear that in a country like ours where ninety percent people are Muslims, we would not be able to move without Islam. Those who have revolted against Islam could not last long and are not able to sustain. A woman revolted - I would not name her - her end was not good. She ended in a miserable condition. With all humility I would like to say that if we can move ahead remaining within the framework of Islam then it will be good in all respects. I firmly believe that there is such a framework in Islam, which can ensure the progress of women. I am

not in favour of distorting Islam nor I am inclined to giving temporary interpretation of Islam.

In true sense, Islam has empowered women and Islam has upheld respect for women. Islam has ensured rights for women. But before enlarging on this I would mention what could be the basis or "ideological foundation" on which the fundamental equality of men and women depends? God has not created all human beings with similar appearance. Two persons are never equal in every dot or in all respects. One person is different from another in terms of his weight, height, colour, education etc. But basically every human being is equal before Almighty Allah. I would like to present four arguments to prove this:

One, Allah has made this thing very clear that real human being is 'Ruh'. We call it soul or spirit. Real man is not body. The body will perish in the grave. Those of us who believe in Islam know that fundamental element of man is the 'Ruh'. Allah created all human beings and their 'Ruhs' (spirit) at the same time, created them the same way and asked them a single question. All men and women gave the same answer. I quote a verse (172) from Sura A'araf:

When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins - their descendants and made them testify concerning them (saying) "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)? They said: "Ye! We do testify!

It means all men and women reached an agreement on one point that is, "You are our Lord and we shall obey You". Here no separate agreements were made with men or with women. So, the first word about our ideological foundation is that the real human being is the Ruh (spirit) and all spirits are equal. Any other inequality or dissimilarity if any is insignificant or very small compared to the equality of human soul or spirit.

It means that the spiritual personalities of a human being are the same and so as 'human beings' all are equal. This is the fundamental foundation of equality among men and women.

Two, We, men, boast of our physical structure as superior to that of the women and think that perhaps God has created us better

comparatively. But God has made one thing very clear in the Holy Quran that there is, of course, some difference between all human beings but everyone is “the first class” and superb. Those of you who offer prayer regularly know a particular verse from ‘Sura Tin’ which says:

We have indeed created the human beings in the best of moulds [Quran, 95:4].

It did not say that the men only were created in the best of moulds. It means there is difference in our appearances and in our structures. But everyone is excellent and first class. So, to establish the fundamental equality of men and women or to launch a new movement for women or the humanity at large the men should not say that the structures of women are bad. Allah would not like that. Those who are believers must not say this. This is the second proof of basic equality among men and women.

I say “basic” because there would remain some minor differences between men and women.

Three, Allah clearly says that all people belong to one family - the family of Adam and Eve. In Sura Nisa, Allah says:

O mankind! Revere your guardian - Lord, who created you from a single person, created of like nature his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women (Quran, 4:1).

It proves that we belong to a single family. We are children of Adam. In the Holy Quran, Allah addressed the human beings as “children of Adam” many times. As the children and parents together make a family, similarly all human beings together make a family in the eyes of Islam.

The family of human beings is above of all other families. It means that our fundamental honour and dignity is the same. There may be some differences on minor issues but worldly dignity is not real dignity. As in legal terms, all human beings are equal in the eyes of the law, so all are equal in the eyes of Allah. The only foundation of respect to Allah is ‘Taqlwa’ (obedience to Him).

Allah has never said that men are more respectful to Him or women are less respectful to Him. He says, only who obeys Him is respectful to Him amongst you.

If this were the foundation of respect to Allah, then does the difference created by men matter at all? Allah says, He never differentiates between person to person except on Taqlwa or piety or obedient to Him. So we are children of one family and our fundamental dignity is the same. In Sura Huzurat, Allah says:

O mankind! We created You from a single (pair) of a male and a female, And made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (the person who is) the most righteous of you and Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (Quran, 49:13).

Allah says in a verse of Surah Al Nisa:

Fear Allah through whom ye demand your mutual (rights) and (revere) the wombs (that bore you); for Allah ever watches over you (Quran, 4:1).

Allah says clearly, “revere the wombs”. While commenting on this verse a famous religious scholar of Egypt, Syed Qutb writes: These words were never written in any other literature in the world prior to the holy Quran. He said in a detailed commentary of this verse that all human beings are essentially equal. But among them, women are superior in a sense. Because by revering the wombs Allah has in fact asked us to respect mothers and respect the women as a whole. So this proves the equality of our basic social status. This is the third proof of our new ideological foundation [Sura Nisa - Tafsir: Syed Qutb].

Four, At the time of creation Allah told the human beings that all of us are ‘Khalifa’ (Caliph - representatives). He said, “I will send into the world my representatives.” Allah did not say that He was sending women or men. He did not even say that He was sending human beings. He told that He was sending representatives.

He sent human beings but called them His representatives. He termed human beings as His Khalifa meaning representatives. The entire human race is His representatives irrespective of the sex. But it is true that if we commit sin, commit crime, commit murder, carry out oppression and lose our faith in Him then we will lose our status as Khalifa. But basically we all are the representatives of Allah [Quran, 2:30; 35:39].

All empowerment lies with this status as Khalifa. No one can perform one's responsibility without power or authority. To perform one's responsibility as Khalifa each man or woman must have some authority. The foundation of woman's empowerment lies with this Khilafat. Not only women, in Khilafat lies the foundation of empowerment of all women, men, poor, and weak. So this is the fourth proof of fundamental equality between a man and a woman. Islam wants that every man, every woman, every person should be empowered. But if the women are deprived now they should be empowered first. If the men are deprived any time they should be empowered. We must think first about anyone who is deprived; at present we must put in efforts for the empowerment of women.

Now the question is what should be real work of a woman and whether they should only stay at home? If any woman freely decides to stay at home, she has rights to do it. It is applicable to a man also. But Almighty Allah has never said anywhere that women will have to stay at home and will not be able to do anything outside. On the contrary, Allah has given the same basic responsibility to women as well as men. In Sura Tawba, Allah says, men and women have six responsibilities:

The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another; they uphold what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity and obey Allah and His messenger [Quran, 9:71].

So the six responsibilities are:

1. They uphold what is just.
2. They forbid what is evil.

3. They observe regular prayers.
4. They practice regular charity.
5. They obey Allah.
6. They obey His messenger.

This verse says, men and women are protectors ('Wali' or guardians) of one another. Some people say that women cannot be guardians but Allah says that the women can be guardians. Through these instructions Allah has recognized the participation of women in all good activities. Allah has declared that He will shower blessings on those who will perform these responsibilities. After studying several Tafsirs (commentaries) of the holy Quran and as a person having full faith in the holy Book and the Sunnah of Rasul (the way the prophet lived his life), I express my firm belief that all men and women are equal so far as these six responsibilities are concerned. All activities including politics and social work fall within its purview. I feel that we have made ourselves busy with petty things leaving aside the essence of Islam. We are depending on many books written by men. It seems to me that we are not paying that much importance to the original Book of Allah in comparison to other books.

Lastly, I would like to say that if you learn Islam through others you would not learn the true spirit of Islam. You will have to study a few commentaries of the Quran yourself. Some try to insert their own opinions in the translations. So if you study five or six translations of the Quran, you will be able to understand where people's opinions have found their place in the Quran and what are the words of Allah. Study of several commentaries will help you understand which interpretations are correct. We do not have well known women commentators of the holy Book. It is their failure. There would not have been gender bias if they could play their part effectively. However, there are some commentaries of the holy Quran, which are free from gender bias. For example "The Message of Quran" by Mohammad Asad. I would like to conclude here.

Inhumanity of Capitalism and Islamic Economy

Capitalism is the ruling economic ideology of the world in various forms. It developed primarily in the hand of European enlightenment thinkers of Europe. They were anti-religious, so Capitalism developed on secular basis ignoring morality. Its' evidence are the principal concepts developed by capitalist liberal thinkers and have been made sacrosanct.

First of them is the concept that economic laws are like natural laws which is overstatement. It wants to justify non intervention in the market to secure justice.

Second concept is that man is rational being. So man does not work unless there is financial benefit. This is not entirely true. We do many things without money such as serving parents, serving Allah through prayers. This concept makes us inhuman and only self seekers.

The third concept is social Darwinism that only fittest will survive. This concept justified elimination of small firms, weak economies and led to concentration of wealth in few countries and in about a hundred corporations, mostly in US, Europe and Japan. Interest system has helped in this process as interest helps in concentration of wealth further.

Fourthly, Capitalist thinkers say that Economics is a positive science, it cannot have values. So there is no scope for justice, fair distribution and poverty elimination in Capitalism. All these four theories/concepts together make Capitalism a horrible economic ideology. Capitalism aided by colonialism have looted Africa and Asia, most of these African nations still live in deep poverty.

In US itself all wealth are in the hands of one percent rich and general people live hand to mouth and with credit card. There is none to challenge Capitalism as most of the governments are controlled by capitalist corporations. None can stand against Capitalism.

In the last fifty years, Islamic thinkers, scholars, Bankers have come up with a world class literature on Islamic economics and they

claim that Islam can build economy on a fair and moral basis. They have established Islami Banks, Islamic Insurance companies, Islam based stock exchanges and Mudarab (profit sharing) companies. Islamic thinkers have maintained that basis of Islamic economy is faith in Allah, morality, Justice and supervised market system.

In Islamic economy market is not absolute. State can and will intervene in the market to secure justice by breaking monopoly, if needed by nationalization, profit control and price control. This is called Hisba or accountability or supervision by Islamic scholars. Islam will ban production of Haram and harmful products and services.

There will be change in fiscal policy that is in taxation policy and Expenditure policy. Revenues will be diverted to the maximum extent to different types of welfare program and poor insurances. Government will cut luxurious programs.

New instruments will be used in monetary policy in addition to CRR, SLR, central bank direction to commercial banks. Notes printed by Central Bank with no expenditure will be given to government on interest free basis for welfare projects. Central Bank will give part of this fiat money to commercial banks on Mudaraba (profit sharing) basis for financing less profitable areas... If there is less profit or no profit there will be no problem as the money had no cost. Similarly money created by commercial bank will be considered as people's money and the part profit earned by commercial banks, say sixty percent, will be deposited to central Bank or Treasury, being profit due to people. In fact there will be change in all sectors in the in the interest of justice, poverty elimination, economic growth, reduce inequality.

Economic security will be achieved for all citizens by Zakat, other revenues. I feel only Islam can remove inhumanity of Capitalism. At least Muslim world should take steps in these regards.

I ask you all to read the books of Dr Umar Chapra, Prof Khurshid Ahmad, Nazatullah Siddiqi, Monzer Kahf, Tariqullah Khan and others.

Characteristics of Islamic Economy

The characteristics of Islamic economy can be explained in various ways. I find the following as representative characteristics of a truly functioning Islamic economy or what ought to be in such an economy.

Basic Characteristics of Islamic Economy are-

1. Freedom of work and enterprise: Islam has allowed freedom of work and enterprise. This is evident from the Madinitic model of Islamic economy. A reading of the chapter of any Hadith collection in respect of agriculture, gardening, business etc. will establish this. The Quran also clearly states that "Allah has made business lawful for you (Sura Baqara, Ayat - 275)".

Islam essentially allows economy to operate freely according to the market forces subject to Islamic restrictions and guidelines on production, distribution, marketing, investment trade, exchange, wages etc. The state can also further interfere in this free economy to restore equilibrium and establish justice and other Islamic objectives. In an Islamic economy, there is an "allowability constraint" (a term introduced by Dr. S.N.H Naqvi in his book. (S.N.H. Naqvi: Ethics and Economics. An Islamic Synthesis, First edition, Chapter-5, published by Islamic Foundation, U.K).

An entrepreneur can produce only permitted things. Profit should be normal in such an economy after giving proper wages to the labourers in accordance with Islamic principles. Some forms of trade practices, exchange, investment, and land tenancy in agriculture are prohibited in Islam. It also disallows monopoly and hoarding as social evils. The aforesaid restrictions make "free economy" in Islam qualitatively different from capitalism. Islam can not be said to be capitalistic only because it allows forces of demand and supply to operate in the economy. Forces of demand and supply are fundamental economic forces, which were operational even before capitalism.

2. A special concept of ownership: In Islam God is the true owner of all things. The Quran says: "To Allah belongs whatever is in the earth" (Al- Imran). However, Allah in His mercy allows human beings to inherit wealth, own it and use it subject to His laws as evident from the following verses:
 - i. The land belongs to Allah. He allows it, to be inherited by whomso ever he pleases (Sura Araf, Ayat: 128).
 - ii. Do they not see that we have created for them... among the things fashioned by us... cattle of which they become owners? (Sura Yasin, Ayat: 29). Islam, therefore, allows man as Vice-gerant, to inherit from Allah (that is to own) wealth. This is indeed a trust for proper use. We may call it Trust ownership.
3. Kinds of Ownership: In early Islam there were three kinds of ownership: private, communal and state ownership. The books' of Hadith are full of accounts of individual ownership. This was the standard ownership. Some important things like water, canals pastures and graveyards were communal properties. The state owned the mines, rivers and large tracts of land. After the conquest of Syria and Iraq, these lands were made state lands and were not allowed to go into private ownership (Tafhimul Quran, Sura Hashr, Syed Abul Ala Maududi).
4. State Ownership: There is no bar on state ownership of enterprise in Islam. The basic economic institutions may be brought under state control, if this is required to establish social justice or protect the interests of the community. Islam protects lawful property and is in favour of confiscation of unlawful property. There are some instances of takeover of unlawful property during the period of Hazrat Omar and Hazrat Omar bin-Abdul Aziz. Lawful property can be taken over by the state only for valid social reasons after due compensation. During the last Hajj the Prophet (SM) announced the principle of

protection of lawful property. The Quran says, "don't eat each other's property wrongfully" (Sura Nisa, Ayat- 29).

5. Prohibition of Interest: Islam prohibits interest. This requires a total reorganization of the economy, banking, investment, exchange, business and international trade. Already in the last 30 years hundreds of Islamic banks and financial institutions have been set up and this has become an alternative mode in most Muslim countries and some non- Muslim countries. Its viability and practicability has been accepted by economists and bankers and many consider this system superior in some respects. A body of literature has already come up on this subject.
6. Zakat: Islam has made Zakat compulsory on the wealth of rich Muslims. This is spent for the weaker and distressed sections of the society. Zakat not only distributes wealth between the rich and the poor of the society, it also influences investment, savings and allocation of income and resources. A detailed study has been made in this regard by Dr. Monzer Kahf in his book "Islamic Economy" American Trust Publications, USA, A rich body of literature has come up in recent times on Zakat. The Zakat and Ushr ordinance of Pakistan can be particularly referred to in this connection.
7. Concern for Poor: This is a special feature of Islam. Zakat is one institution which testifies to this. In this connection we may refer to ayat 5-6 of Sura Qasas.) We desired to show favour into those who were depressed in the earth, and to make them leaders and to make them inheritors and to establish them on earth (Sura Qasas, Ayat: 5-6). In these verses Allah, the Almighty has expressed His desire to show favour on the depressed people. Islamic economy shall establish all possible institutions to carry out this desire of the Almighty.
8. Distribution of inheritance: Islam has not left the distribution of inheritance on the whims of a person, In Islam a person cannot favour one over the other of his relations for temporary or

subjective reasons as is the rule in the West. Islam distributes inheritable property among several groups of people as mentioned below -

- i. Children
- ii. Husband/ Wife
- iii. Parents
- iv. Brothers and sisters in certain situations.

This distribution has taken care of different groups keeping in view their social role, requirements and proximity of kinship relationships. For those who remain outside the list of inheritors. Islam has provided for wasiat (will) for all such relations if they are in a distressed condition. A person can will upto one 3rd of his/her property for distressed relations or others outside the inheritors.

Democracy and Islam: Clarification of Some Misgivings

Democracy is a commonly known word all over the world. Most of the political movements in the world have made it their goal to establish this system in their respective countries. Democracy is the most popular and accepted political system in the modern world. Yet, there exists some difference of opinion among the Islamic groups on democracy. Democracy and human rights have occupied very important position in the political agenda of many of the Islamic parties. However, some of the parties and people do not accept it, since democracy speaks of sovereignty of the people. In this context, we need a careful and deep analysis of this issue. We need to understand the issue avoiding the minor technicalities. As we see, Islamic parties and Islamic scholars of the modern world think of a political system wherein government will run the country through parliament. They also want freedom of expression, voting right of the people, rule of law, independent and free judiciary, free press, fundamental human rights etc. These are also the pre-requisites of the democratic system. It is therefore, apparent on a deeper analysis that the concept of state and government of Islamic parties are in conformity with the principles of democracy. Theoretically speaking, Islam speaks of sovereignty of Allah, while western democracy advocates that sovereignty belongs to people. However, all political thinkers do not share the same view of sovereignty. Some political scientists even argue that there is no need of the concept sovereignty at all. Even the concept of sovereignty is not highlighted in the books which discuss democracy, though sovereignty is discussed in great detail as a political concept in the books of political science. In this connection, position taken in the constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran is very relevant. Heading of chapter 5 of the constitution is "Sovereignty of the Nation and the Powers emanating there from". Article 56 reads as follows: The absolute sovereignty over the universe and man belongs to God who

has bestowed upon man sovereignty over his social destiny. None can deprive man of this sovereignty, nor can he place it in the interest of certain other person or group of persons. The nation shall exercise this divine sovereignty through the ways referred to in the following articles of law. It is apparent that sovereignty has been divided between "absolute sovereignty" and "bestowed sovereignty" (like concepts of legal sovereignty and political sovereignty in the western concepts). It is clear from above that all of us need not to take same view on the concept and nature of sovereignty. In this context, we feel it necessary to quote from the writings of Allama Yousuf Al Qardawi, an eminent Islamic scholar of the present time. He wrote on political freedom and democracy as follows: The fear of some people here that democracy makes the people a source of power and even legislation (although legislation is Allah's alone) should not be heeded here, because we are supposed to be speaking of a people that in its majority has accepted Allah as its Lord, Mohammad as its prophet and Islam as its religion. Such a people would not be expected to pass a legislation that contradicts Islam and its incontestable principles and conclusive rules. Anyway, these fears can be overcome by one article stipulating that any legislation contradicting the incontestable provisions of Islam shall be null and void because Islam is the religion of the state and the source of legitimacy of all its institutions and therefore may not be contradicted, as a branch may not run against the main stream. It should be known that the acceptance of the principle that legislation or rule belong to Allah does not rob the nation of its right to seek for itself the codes necessary to regulate its ever-changing life and earthly affairs. What we seek is that legislations and codes be within the limits of the flawless texts and the overall objectives of Shariah and the Islamic message. The binding texts are very few, while the area of "permissibility" or legislative free space is quite wide and the texts themselves are so flexible and capacious as to accommodate more than one understanding and accept more than one interpretation, which leads

to the existence of several schools and philosophies within the expansive framework of Islam. [Quoted from 'Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase', Chapter: The Movement and Political Freedom and Democracy] We find many Islamic scholars accepted the idea of democracy in Islam though under certain conditions. Dr. Abu Said Nuruddin has written in his book 'Mohakabi Iqbal' (Iqbal the Great Poet) that Allama Iqbal, was not happy with the democratic system because of its secularist stance but he suggested in his writings that there was no alternative to democracy. In his speech on 'Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam', Allama Iqbal stated that Islamic state is established on the principles of freedom, equality and the absolute principles of stability. Therefore the principles of democratic rule are not only similar with the fundamental aspects of Islam rather the executing powers are enhanced in the Muslim world [Mohakabi Iqbal (Iqbal, the Great Poet) by Dr. Abu Said Nuruddin] Iqbal observed, should the foundation of democracy rest upon spiritual and moral values, it would be the best political system. He wrote in The New Era on its 28th July 1917 issue: That democracy was born in Europe from economic renaissance that took place in most of it's societies. ... But Islamic democracy is not developed from the idea of economic advancement rather it is a spiritual principle that comes from the principle that everybody is a source of power whose possibilities can be developed through virtue and character [Mohakabi Iqbal (Iqbal the Great Poet) by Dr. Abu Said Nuruddin, page -239]. That means according to Iqbal Islam prescribes democracy under the law of Allah. We see Moulana Maududi, fifty years ago from now, in his book "Political Theory of Islam" used the term 'Theo-democracy' for Islamic state. He didn't deny the term 'democracy'. Rather he accepted democracy while this system will work under the sovereignty of Allah. There is a misconception about Moulana Maududi's true position about democracy. Moulana Maududi initially criticized western democracy because of its secularism and popular sovereignty (in the sense that parliament can make any law

even if it violates the Law of Allah). However, his later writings and political conduct proved that he believed in democracy (rule of the people) subject to the Law of Allah (sovereignty of Allah). In an interview with Akhbar-e-Jahan, Karachi which was published on 2 April 1969, Sayyid Maududi said: Islam and democracy are not opposed to each other. Democracy is a system where government is formed, run and changed on the basis of public opinion. Islamic political order also is of the same type. However, our democratic values are different from western values. Western democracy has no limits... On the other hand, Islamic democracy is controlled by the Quran and the Sunnah..." [Interviews of Moulana Maududi, (Bangla translation) published by Adhunik Prokashani, Bangla Bazar, Dhaka, 1st Edition, 1999. page 263.] In an interview with Mujallatun Guraba, an Arabic paper from London (published in February 1969), he said: To make people understand now it is essential to use modern terminology. But care should be taken in their use. Some terms should be avoided such as socialism. Some terms are permitted with the condition that their Islamic and Western connotation should be clearly spelled out. Democracy, constitutional system and parliamentary system are such terms... [ibid, page 255] In an interview published in The Daily Mashriq of Lahore, Pakistan (1st February 1970), in reply to a question he said that those are 19 12.01.12 36 My Essays My Essays 37 good people in his view who want to establish democracy in the country. He also said that all our constitutional problems should be solved by the representative of the people. [ibid, pages 339-345]. In another interview in *The Daily Hurriat* in 1969 (published on 10th November), he again said that all constitutional amendments should be made in a democratic way by the representatives of the people [ibid, P-313]. His party always supported democracy. Pakistan constitution in 1956 and in 1973 was modeled structurally on democracy and his party Jamaat-e-Islami supported these. His party fought against martial laws in Pakistan. He supported Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan in presidential election in 1965 because she promised to restore democracy. His

party was a component of DAC (Political combination of parties), where “D” stands for democracy. So it is evident from his later writings and political conduct that he stood for democracy. We also see that in the first Islamic constitution of the present world, the term democracy was accepted with the consent of Islamic scholars (ulema). In the preamble, the term democracy was accepted in the following manner: Wherein the principles of democracy freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, should be fully observed [from the preamble of the constitution of Pakistan of 1956]. In the 1973 constitution of Pakistan the same position was maintained: Wherein the principles of democracy freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed [from the preamble of the constitution of Pakistan of 1973]. This means that democracy has been accepted within the limits of Islam so that in the name of democracy Islamic principles cannot be violated. Islamic scholars and Islamic politicians have come to accept the word democracy and what it means within these limits. Allama Yousuf Al Qardawi in his book “Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase” has titled one of its chapters as “The Movement and Political Freedom and Democracy”. In this book he has shown that Islam does not allow any kind of autocracy or monarchy. He also showed that Islam spreads through political freedom. He stated that Islam unlike democracy is a complete code of life, which encompasses many more vital issues of human needs. Above all, he thinks democracy is consistent with Islam and the fundamental rights of mankind prescribed in Islam can be ensured through democracy. He has advocated in favor of democratic system and political freedom. But he suggested to introduce a clause in the constitution to the effect that no law will be passed contrary to the injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah. This clause will act as guarantee against the fear of some people that anti Islamic law may be passed under the cover of democracy. Dr. Qardawi writes: It is the duty of the (Islamic) movement in the coming phase to stand firm against totalitarian and dictatorial rule, political despotism and

usurpation of people’s rights. The movement should always stand by political freedom, as represented by true, not false, democracy. It should flatly declare its refusal of tyrants and steer clear of all dictators, even if some tyrant appears to have good intentions towards it for some gain and for a time that is usually short, as has been shown by experience. The prophet (SAWS) said, “When you see my nation fall victim to fear and does not say to wrong-doer, ‘You are wrong’, then you may lose hope in them. So how about a regime that forces people to say to a conceited wrongdoer, “How just, how great you are. O our hero, our savior and our liberator!” The Quran denounces tyrants such as Nimrudh, Pharaoh, Haman and others, but it also dispraises those who follow tyrants and obey their orders. This is why Allah dispraises the people of Noah by saying: But they follow (men) whose wealth and children give them no increase but only loss [Sura Nuh: 21]. Allah also says of Aad, people of Hud: And followed the command of every powerful, obstinate transgressor [Sura Hud: 59]. See also what the Quran says about the people of Pharaoh: But they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not rightly guided [Sura Hud: 97]. Thus he made fools of his people, and they obeyed him: truly they were a people rebellious (against Allah) [Sura Az-Zukhruf: 54]. A closer look at the history of the Muslim nation and the Islamic movement in modern times should show clearly that the Islamic idea, the Islamic movement and the Islamic awakening have never flourished or borne fruit unless in an atmosphere of democracy and freedom, and have withered and become barren only at the times of oppression and tyranny that trod over the will of the people by force which clung to Islam. Such oppressive regimes imposed their secularism, socialism, or communism on their people by force and coercion, using covert torture and public executions, and employing those devilish tools that tore flesh, shed blood, crushed bone and destroyed the soul. On the other hand, we saw the Islamic movement and the Islamic awakening bear fruit and flourish at the times of freedom and democracy, and in the wake of the collapse of imperial

regimes that ruled peoples with fear and oppression. Therefore, I would not imagine that the Islamic movement could support anything other than political freedom and democracy. However, the tools and guarantees created by democracy are as close as can ever be to the realization of the political principles brought to this earth by Islam to put a leash on the ambitions and whims of rulers. These principles are: shura (consultation), good advice enjoining what is proper and forbidding what is evil, disobeying illegal orders, resisting unbelief and changing wrong by force whenever possible. It is only in democracy and political freedom that the power of parliament is evident and that people's deputies can withdraw confidence from any government that breaches the constitution, and it is only in such an environment that the strength of free press, free parliament, opposition and the masses is most felt [Quoted from 'Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase', Chapter: The Movement and Political Freedom and Democracy]. It is evident from the above discussion that Islamic thinkers and Muslim people want their right to vote, rule of law, and a government that is to be elected by the people. The term democracy means all these things. Taking everything into consideration, we can say that there is no problem to accept democracy as a political structure and as a concept of freedom (except its concept of sovereignty). We find that different constitutions and Islamic scholars conditionally accepted the term 'democracy'. Muslim community can accept this term. This will help to remove misunderstanding about Islam that it is for violence and dictatorship.

Major Obstacles for Islamic Workers at the Present Time

1. The First problem is insufficiency of competent people/ leaders/scholars. By competent person, I mean a person who is well read in Islam and general subjects, also very balanced in thinking and conduct.

A competent person must know internet technology well, also know English or any other international knowledge, some of them must know Arabic well so that they can learn Islam from original sources.

Serious efforts should be made to prepare competent people.

2. The international situation and in many countries national situation is adverse for Islam's Dawah/political work. Some Big powers/ Kings/dictators/think tanks are working against Islam/ Islamic organizations.

It will take long time to address this condition. Best possible planning will be needed for this.

3. These organizations lack fund and media. They must try to improve situation.
4. Their leaders must have good strategic understanding, what to do, when to do, how much to do in respect of their policy implementation, response to national and international changes.
5. Many workers think in a one sided manner, no understanding of need for Ijtihad in many areas, no proper understanding of women issues, minority issues etc.

They have to be given more training on current issues in addition to other issues.

Priorities of Muslim Organizations

The activities that Muslim Organizations around the world should give priority:

1. To be wise, practical and moderate (should be Wasitiya) as al-Quran states- Kazalika Zayalnakum Ummatan Wasatan;
2. To take stand against all types of terrorism and extremism;
3. To introduce ourselves as Muslim, not as Sunni or Shia;Remove sectarianism.
4. To take steps to create more competent people, scholars, leaders and writers for Islam;
5. To distribute al-Quran in local language among mass people to remove the ignorance regarding Islam; ultimately to reach all in the community/country.
6. To continue to distribute standard & well-written books on Islam among people
7. To distribute CD of al-Quran and Islamic songs for creating emotions of Islam among people so that their minds always turned towards Allah;
8. To work for ensuring free & fair election and for following democratic system in all countries;
9. Ensuring the rights and dignity of women as al-Quran states in 3: 195, 9: 71, 35: 36 about over all equality of men and women, about same duties in most areas (9: 71). Men and both are Khalifa of Allah and both genders are essential for continuation of humanity. Without man or woman humanity will disappear as there will be no more children;
10. If women feel assured regarding their dignified position in Islam then they would work more than men for Islam. In this matter, anyone can consult the book of Abdul Hamid Abu Sukkah- *Freedom of Women at the time of Prophet (sm)*;
11. To establish more Islamic schools, colleges, research institutes, universities and like. Alongside ,we have to upgrade the traditional curriculum of Madarasha;
12. To popularize the Islamic Banking system and interest free Micro Finance.

Recommended Books for Preparing Islamic Scholars (Preferably for International Community)

1. One Tafsir of the Quran, preferably of Sayed Qutb or Maulana Maududi (Fi Zilalil Quran/Tafhimul Quran) 2/3 times. Translation of whole Quran in local language/English -2/3 times;
 2. A book on *Usul Al Fiqh* by Dr Hasim Kamali/Shah Abdul Hannan/ any other scholars in English/local language- 3/4 times;
 3. A biography of the Prophet (SAAS) in English/Arabic/local language- 3/4 times;
 4. A book on Akida, preferably Akidatul Islam by Muhammad al Gazali in Arabic/English / local language- 2/3 times;
 5. At Tawhid by Ismail Raji Al Faruqi in English/ local language- 1/2 times;
 6. Sahih Bukhari/ Muslim in English/ Arabic/ local language at least once with commentary if available in your language;
 7. *Freedom of Women during the Time of Prophet* by Abdul Halim Abu Shukkah, Vol-1 and 2 in English/Arabic/ local language- 2/3 times;
 8. *Approaching the Sunnah* by Yusuf Al Qaradawi in Arabic/English/ local language- 2/3 times;
 9. *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam* by Yusuf Al Qaradawi in English/local language- 2/3 times;
- Note 1- In addition, as many books as possible of major Islamic writers should be read.
 - Note 2- The target should be to prepare at least fifty scholars in each Muslim country/in each sizable Muslim community in non-Muslim countries.