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Today when we are faced by the many and varied social, economic and political problems, we can see the crying need for change. On the street-corners, our young men and women, disillusioned by the false values and crushed by the frustrations of purposeless existence, unceasingly 'pop' pills and smoke dope. In the bars and rum shops all over the country, the old and the middle-aged, men and women, constantly try to drown their sorrows in waves of alcohol. In the betting shops and gambling dens, grossly underpaid citizens game away their hard-earned, meagre wages in the hope that some day they would win and female victims of broken homes turn to prostitution in order to support their families...

YES!

**IT'S TIME
FOR A CHANGE**

The young DAC canvasser on his rounds was saying, 'We stand for change.' He was speaking in the first instance of a change of government from the one which people have endured for twenty years and which has grown weary and insensitive or, according to some, corrupt and ineffective.

Certainly we do need a change. But would a mere change of government, a transfer of the reins of power, bring about the type of change that is necessary?

Let us realise from the very beginning that it is we, the people, who make up the society and for any meaningful change to take place then we, the very roots of the society, must first change.

Every community is erected around a certain philosophy and it is but a reflection of the views of life which its members hold. Therefore, if the society is rotten and the people do nothing to change it, then that people are degenerate; if the society is a humane one, it is because the people are morally upright—as you make your bed so must you lie on it.

So the first step towards meaningful change is self-change—the looking after our own morals and behaviour. Every one of us is an inherent part of the society and if we are not trying to solve its problems, then we are contributing to them. So us fun-loving, finger-pointing, scape-goat seeking, blame-throwing Trinians will have to point our fingers in a new direction if we really want to change our society — we must check out our contribution to the degradation of the nation. It is no use changing the government of a corrupt people, if the new government will be made up of the same minds gone astray and uphold the same corrupt views and values.

Since our society is but a reflection of our views of life, then we must examine the philosophy upon which each one of us bases his existence. What we need is an ideology that will define for us the terms 'Man' and 'human being', provide us with a stable set of values and criteria for judging human worth and explain to us our purpose of existence. It must naturally bring us into a full realisation of our position in the Universal Scheme so that we can acquire our identity on the face of the Earth, not as Trinidadians, Tobagonians, Africans, Indians or Europeans, but as human beings, a species of life far different from, and potentially far nobler than, the other creatures that abound on this planet. It must point out to us our relationship with the rest of Creation and with our Creator. It must show us the proper method of constructing a society which will effectively cater for the most essential needs of a human being. It must provide us with knowledge which we need in order to acquire the most benefit from the natural resources of the Earth. It must free us from the tyranny of man over man and the worship of false gods and present to us a permanent, logical, practical, integrated system of life which will develop the best aspects of human dignity.

Obviously, such a philosophy cannot be the brain-child of any finite being, people like Best, Richardson, Williams, Sampath-Mehta or any of these aspirants to political office. Only the Creator of man and the universe because of His perfect wisdom and knowledge could provide such guidance and this He has done through the medium of the Prophets.

Throughout the ages, the Prophets have brought this knowledge to humanity and we have the example of the establish-

ment of just such a society under the last of the Prophets through whom this knowledge and this system was perfected. It had its beginnings in the Arabian peninsula about 1,400 years ago and it took a period of just twenty three years to change the various oppressive, inhumane societies which then existed into one united, civilized community of enlightened, creative, dignified people who were renowned for justice and fair dealing.

In that system, the rulers and the ruled were equally accountable to the law and any individual could lay charges against any ruler who infringed his rights. Social maladies such as we are now faced with were almost totally eradicated and sex crimes and female abuse were not tolerated. The standard of morality was the same for young and old, rich and poor alike and the guardians of the law were themselves proper examples of moral rectitude and fair dealing. Racial origin, geographical boundaries and other false barriers to human unity were transcended and any member of the society could occupy the position for which he or she was best suited. History can bear out the truth of these statements for all of us interested in verifying them.

This exemplary society was not established by shouts of 'power' or sloganeering, nor the destructive, blind fury of guerilla warfare as an end in itself. Rather it was achieved through the injection of the mind-liberating philosophy of Islam which awakened the people to the knowledge of their true purpose of existence. It was brought

Let not anyone of you be an opportunist or characterless person who says, 'I am with the people. If the people do good I shall do good and if they commit evil then I shall commit evil.' Instead, make up your mind to do good if the people do good. And if they commit evil, then keep away from their evil deeds.

—Prophet Muhammad.

about by the willingness of human beings to worship the One True God and to submit themselves to His Will as communicated to them by Prophet Muhammad, the last of the Prophets, may the peace of God be upon them all. It was brought about by the desire of ordinary human beings to reject all man-made philosophies and cults, to bury their petty whims and fancies for the sake of the common good and to return to the natural and pure state in which their Creator had fashioned them. It was brought about by people willing to achieve their true purpose of life by discarding all falsehood and personal prejudices and accepting and implementing Truth and basing their lives on the values supplied by the Creator

THE MUSLIM STANDARD, JUNE 1976

through Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, people who were willing to lay down their very lives for the propagation of Truth and the establishment of God's laws on Earth. And all this owed its very existence to the willingness of one man—Muhammad—to convey the Divine instructions about Life to all mankind in the face of overwhelming odds and at the risk of personal injury.

Today when we are faced by the many and varied social, economic and political problems, we can see the crying need for change. On the street-corners, our young men and women, disillusioned by the false values and crushed by the frustrations of purposeless existence, unceasingly 'pop' pills and smoke dope. In the bars and rum shops all over the country, the old and the middle-aged, men and women, constantly try to drown their sorrows in waves of alcohol. In the betting shops and gambling dens, grossly underpaid citizens game away their hard-earned, meagre wages in the hope that some day they would win and female victims of broken homes turn to prostitution in order to support their families...

Yes, we need a change—of values and of life-styles; and then we can talk of really changing the government. We have the choice of either continuing along this purposeless, frustrating, destructive path, or of accepting the system of Islam—complete submission to God to which the Noble Qur'an beckons us ... "Surely God does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is within themselves!"

Muhammad Sayyid

ISLAM - A NEW LIFE AHEAD



Guidelines for fruitful co-operation

The Seventh Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference was held in Istanbul on May 12 - 15. The framework of this Islamic Conference has been in existence for more than seven years now. It was formed with much encouragement from the late Faysal of Saudi Arabia and given initial direction by Tunku Abdur Rahman, former Prime Minister of Malaysia.

While many feel that with the present leadership of the Muslim world very little in the way of an Islamic awakening could be expected from the Islamic Conference, there are many in the Muslim world whose hopes have been raised by its very existence. The balance sheet at the end of the recent conference has been unable to convince the pessimists. The seventh conference, like the preceding ones, ended up by considering a number of items brought forward from the previous conferences and either reiterating its earlier position or deciding it to be carried over for further study.

Many of the problems that exist are of an 'elementary' nature. The Islamic Secretariat, based in Jeddah, which is supposed to be the lynchpin of the organisation has so far been unable to evolve into a well organised body which functions in continuous awareness of its own priorities. While the number of unfinished agenda items go on piling up, there is a weakness to take on matters of low priority or those which would need a deeper and detailed study by an institute or panel of experts. This gets further compounded when the foreign ministers are unable or unwilling to take decisions and pass on problems to the secretariat 'to study and report next year'. All these go to add to the catalogue of the organisation's non-performance and a retravelling of the grounds already traversed.

The organisation, however, is not without value or achievement. 'The current position' of the organisation was summed up in a single sentence by the Turkish FM, Mr. Caglayangil: 'The Islamic Conference may be said to have at least defined and promoted the main guidelines of possibly fruitful co-operation between Muslim countries.'

(Based on an 'Impact' feature).

TURKISH

REINTEGRATION

In terms of promoting the main objectives of the organisation the greatest contribution of this seventh conference was the re-integration of the 'official Turkey' with the universal fraternity of Islam. Although Turkey has been participating in the Islamic summit meetings and foreign ministers' conferences, and paying its subscriptions (as donation), the secularist constraints of the republic's constitution had prevented it from signing the Charter of the Islamic Conference and thus becoming a full member of the

organisation. As late as March 1974, the then Turkish foreign minister, Mr. Turan Guner maintained that as a secular state Turkey cannot be a member of the Islamic Secretariat or accept its Charter. It was all so sacrosanct that in order not to violate the spirit of the Turkish constitution, the foreign minister's report to the Turkish Senate on the Lahore Summit meeting had to be presented 'off the agenda'. (Turkish Inability, *Impact* 4:6). But in 1976, Turkey was announcing that it had decided to ratify the Charter and reminding itself as well as the delegates that 'it was a sunny day in May, similar to the one we are enjoying today' when 523 years ago Islam was introduced to this beautiful city by Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih and 'since that day, Istanbul has been an important centre of our culture'. Not that there was complete unanimity, but even those who were opposing or were hesitant in the beginning were later found complaining that the Government had not

associated them enough in the conference. In Turkey today, there is a clear trend towards re-interpreting Kemalism so as to bring it more and more in conformity with Islam.

CYPRUS

The second notable contribution of the conference was in respect of the understanding of the Turkish Cypriot case particularly by some non-aligned Muslim states. The conference 'listened with sympathy and great interest to the statement of His Excellency Mr Rauf Denktas', albeit as 'leader of the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus, who voiced the struggle of his oppressed people for their legitimate rights, justice and dignity', agreed to invite the Turkish Cypriot representative to its future meetings and recognised 'the equality of the rights of the two communities in an independent and non-aligned Republic of Cyprus' as well as 'their right to be heard in all international forums when the Cyprus problem comes up for discussion'. A favourable consensus on Cyprus was made possible because of a modification in the attitude of some non-aligned members particularly Egypt and the PLO, but this itself was helped very much by a cogent and convincing presentation of his case by Mr Denktas. The Turkish Cypriot leader took the delegates by surprise by simply stating his case and not pushing forward any demands.

ERITREA

However, such a consensus was to be denied in respect of Eritrea where the ELF is presently engaged in a bitter struggle to regain its independence extinguished uni-

laterally in 1962 by the Ethiopian regime. The Eritrean question which had been earlier included in the agenda was deleted from it, but unlike in Jeddah in 1975 when the main opposition had come from Egypt, those who opposed its discussion in Istanbul included Sudan and some

West African states. Having their own territorial claims and conflicts, these states felt that the Eritrean issue could better be raised at the OAU. Although ex-agenda, the conference eventually resolved to re-express its interest in the case and recommended 'the African member states of the conference to use their good offices, whether unilaterally or through the OAU in a bid to realise a just and satisfactory solution of this cause'. Tunisia however expressed reservations about the formulation of the resolution because in her view the problem was a fundamental one, that is of the self-determination of a people. The Istanbul resolution on Eritrea, which incidentally does not find mention in the joint communique, was a regress on the fourth foreign ministers' conference in Benghazi in 1973. The Benghazi resolution had declared full sympathy with the Eritrean people and supported their legitimate struggle for self-determination.

SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

On Southern Philippines, the conference expressed 'deep concern over the Filipino government's continued application of repressive and oppressive policies against the Muslim minority in the Philippines' and called for a halt to military operations, withdrawal of the Filipino forces and resumption of negotiation between the Filipino Government and the Moro National Liberation Front. It also asked the Government of the Philippines to honour 'its commitment to grant autonomy to Muslims in Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Palawan within the State of Philippines'. The conference renewed the mandate of the Committee of Four, requested 'the secretary general to take appropriate steps, for the im-

plementation of this resolution, and to submit a report' to the next conference. It is interesting to note that the Committee of Four did not hold a single meeting between the Jeddah conference in July 1975 and the May 1976 conference in Istanbul. Nor did they deal with the problem in any other way. The only activity on record is the receipt of a Filipino memorandum on March 8, 1976 calling 'for the setting up of two autonomous Regional Committees to en-

sure a wider participation for Muslims in governmental affairs' and inviting the secretary general and the Committee of Four 'to visit the Philippines to assess on the spot the progress achieved in the process of reconciliation with the Muslims of the south Philippines'. However it was not stated as to why it was not possible to avail of the invitation and present to the conference a first hand appreciation of the situation.

PALESTINE

On Palestine, Middle East, Zionism and Jerusalem the conference re-affirmed its support for the restoration of the full national rights of the Palestinian people; called on the 'Zionist entity' to comply with the principles of the UN Charter; confirmed the Jeddah resolution on the expulsion of Israel from the UN and all other international organisations and called on all states to sever all ties with her; condemned Zionism as a racist and colonialist doctrine which threatened world peace and security; decided to establish a 'Jerusalem Fund' with the aim of countering the policy of Judaization and declared that all measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities to alter the status of the Arab territories and Muslim rights in Quds (Jerusalem) and Al-Khalil (Hebron) are 'null and void and illegitimate'.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Great concern was expressed on the danger of the introduction of nuclear weapons in the regions of Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and the Indian Ocean and the conference called for the early establishment of nuclear weapon free zones in these

regions. The conference also expressed deep concern at the impediments to the process of normalization in the South Asian subcontinent particularly the question of the equitable distribution of the 'international river Ganges' which flows through India and Bangladesh. The conference however had no opportunity to discuss the most outstanding South Asian problem, that of the right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Although the Pakistani prime minister Mr Z. A. Bhutto had in his message to the conference claimed that 'the security and legitimate rights of the people of Palestine, Cyprus and Jammu and Kashmir are threatened and usurped', the issue itself was not officially raised by the Pakistani delegation. The only voice in support of the Kashmiri cause was raised outside the conference and that was by the NSP leader and deputy premier of Turkey, Dr Erbakan. Another problem which could not merit the consideration of the conference was that of the Patani Malays who are struggling for their rights and freedom since early this century. A discussion on the Patani problem was opposed by both Malaysia and Indonesia.

MUSLIM MINORITIES

An issue brought forward every year since the Benghazi conference in 1973 is that of the Muslim minorities. This year the secretariat had submitted a hurriedly prepared report on Islamic minorities in the world. Six out of its 19 pages deal with Muslims in India. However among the Muslim minority countries listed in the report are Brunei (76% Muslim population), Benin (60%), Comoros (95%, and now a member state), Ivory Coast (55%), Ethiopia (65%), Guinea-Bissau (70%), Sierra Leone (65%), Tanzania (65%), Togo (55%) and Albania (75%). Appropriately the conference 'took note with appreciation of the report' but requested a new and extended survey to be presented to the next conference.

COLONIALISM

& RACISM IN AFRICA

With regard to other political issues the conference called on France to grant 'immediate, genuine and unconditional independence' to Somali Coast (Jibuti); condemned French occupation of Mayotte and called for an immediate withdrawal; reiterated the commitment of the Islamic countries to struggle against racism in Southern Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), occupied Palestine and decided to extend full aid to the liberation movements in these territories; demanded return of antiquities taken away during colonial occupation to the countries of their origin; held the colonial forces responsible for material and moral damage caused by leftover war material such as mines; and decided to convene a meeting of experts from Islamic countries on the Law of the Sea immediately prior to the next session of the Law of the Sea conference.

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH

In the cultural sphere the conference established a preparatory committee to draw up a detailed plan for the celebration of the beginning of the 15th century Hijra; agreed to the Turkish proposal to establish a research centre on history, art and Islamic culture in Istanbul; and asked the secretary general to take necessary measures for the early establishment of another centre for Economic and Social Research at a site to be determined and report to the next conference.

The conference also decided to expand the committee of experts to comprise 18 nations and to rename it as the 'Islamic Commission for Economic, Social and Cultural Affairs'. The commission would be responsible for the preparation, implementation and review of programmes of economic cooperation between the member countries. A multilateral draft agreement for economic, commercial and technical cooperation was referred to the commission for finalisation and presentation to the eighth conference.

The eighth conference will meet in Libya in March 1977

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

The Need for Guidance and Creativity

Text of feature address delivered at the Inaugural Convention of The Muslim Teachers Association by Abdul Wahid Hamid.

There is a figure in Middle Eastern folklore whose name is a household word and whose exploits are recounted in places like Egypt, Turkey, Afghanistan and even further East. Mulla Nasruddin or Nasruddin Khoja is the name.

Once, it is said, a lady brought her small son to the Mulla's school.

'He is very badly behaved,' she explained, 'and I want you to frighten him.'

The Mulla assumed a threatening posture, eyes flaming and face working. He jumped up and down and suddenly ran out of the building. The woman fainted. When she had come to, she waited for the Mulla who returned slowly and gravely.

'I asked you to frighten the boy, not me!'

'Dear Madam,' said the Mulla, 'did you not see how afraid I was of myself as well? When danger threatens, it threatens all alike.'

I recount this anecdote not to suggest that there is any marked similarity in the handling of discipline problems by both the Mulla and by teachers here. Of course, this may be so in some cases, but what I'd really like to suggest is that while we are meeting to discuss matters pertaining to education and the role of the teacher, we—as individuals, as a community and even as a wider society—are faced with innumerable threats and dangers to our sense of purpose and direction and to our sense of proportion and well-being. Indeed, many of these dangers and threats do not stop at our national boundaries but are of global dimensions. Here, one of the biggest dangers of all is that very often we are not aware that anything is wrong. We often feel that a lot of 'progress' has been made, that the (Muslim) community is 'intact' and that on the whole we are doing fine. It is this complacency, often deliberately induced by some of our leaders, which has produced the parlous state of education in Muslim schools, colleges, 'maktabs' and in the society as a whole and which has prevented the Muslims from taking the lead and showing the way out—as only Islam and Islamic ideals can—out of the crisis in the

state of education in the country and out of the 'mess' in which society as a whole finds itself.

SYMPTOMS OF CHAOS

Lest I sound too alarmist, I would like to point out some of the symptoms of this chaos and this crisis. So far as the society is concerned, we find that the institution of the family is disintegrating. More than half of the population is illegitimate. Abortion, according to a recent report from a Ministry of Health official, is increasing alarmingly. Social relations are at a low ebb. One of the major problems in this regard is the cancerous one of racism. On the political scene we are posed between present corruption, nepotism as part of a so-called pragmatism on the one hand and lurking socialism/communism on the other. Economic disparities have threatened to tear the nation apart (1970 is not too far away, '1984' is yet to come) in as much as they give rise to feelings of injustice and oppression. Crime (and violent crime at that) is commonplace—see the latest figures from the Central Statistical Office. The nation, allegedly 'forged from the love of liberty in the fires of hope and prayer' is as enslaved as ever, bent on things material. Where mention is made of culture, it is little more than a mindless addiction to noise—endless noise—and grog and reducing everything to the lowest common denominator symbolised by Carnival and the Carnival mentality for which we are sometimes approvingly and sometimes contemptuously known abroad...

One can go on in this vein, but these are sufficient examples, I think, to illustrate the fact that many indeed are our people who have lost direction and a sense of proportion. And let not anyone of us think that we are immune from all this. 'When danger threatens, it threatens all alike.' We could all be overwhelmed, and in many respects we already are.

ONWARD MARCH OF SECULARISM

I believe that what is responsible for the chaos in society is the veritable crisis existing in education. It is not

simply a case of trying to find our own feet in the immediate post-colonial era. It is not simply a case of the evils of Westernization. It is not as a result of any transition period between a slave plantation economy and wanting to aspire to industrialised status. These are all contributory factors perhaps. But at the crux of the matter is the fact that if the education system is not set up (and it is not so set up) in a way which is acceptable to Islam—in its primary meaning of submission to God—then the result will be chaos. This is what is obtaining today, even in the 'Muslim institutions' which have been set up. Life has been divided into the religious and the secular and it is the secular, materialistic—even atheistic—ideals which have permeated and which dominate the system.

This is the real bane of Westernization which had its roots in the 16th-18th centuries' European conflict between revelation and reason—a conflict which is very alien to Islamic concepts and to Muslim historical tradition. The upshot of this has been that the influence of religion as such has been progressively and drastically reduced—even in Muslim institutions.

To talk about religion in schools is to talk about one or two periods in the school curriculum which often pose the most difficulty and embarrassment to curriculum programmers—even in Muslim schools. The aggressive onward march of secularism, which seems to be a hallmark of the Government's 'National Norm' in education, has almost submerged everything—even in Muslim schools which were, it is to be hoped, established for the purpose of imparting an integrated education based on Islamic principles and the evolving of a distinctly Muslim personality. In this connection, when the Government proudly and enthusiastically gave its consent recently to the teaching of Arabic in schools, it was not really making any concessions but instead, by stipulating that this Arabic was to be taught in the existing periods for religious education, it was in fact imposing limitations—that is, that Arabic cannot be taught as a separate subject on the curriculum in the same way as Spanish or

French or Latin is taught. This is even in Muslim institutions which have agreed to be 'assisted' by government. I dare say that the position may not cause much concern to those who would say, 'What's the use of it anyway? We cannot get an 'O' level in it, and it cannot help us in getting a job!'

* * 'SCRUNTING' * *

Yes! the present education set-up is one which seems to be at its best geared to achieving limited utilitarian objectives. In the brilliantly inter-locking system of 11-plus, 'O' and 'A' Levels and University, from which many fall out never to be retrieved again, consigned and condemned to remain 'scrunting' in the twilight zones of society, all relationships are conceived of in terms of survival or power struggles and measured in terms of the 'standard of living'. It is hardly a concern for the 'quality of life' as such and for building human relations on the foundations of love, sacrifice, trust, piety and service. These things may sometimes be talked about but they have their time and place—in a weekly assembly, a sermon or a Friday khutbah if people are able to understand it. At all other times it's like hell let loose—even in Muslim institutions. The Muslim response has been a virtual capitulation to governmental pressures and influence under which come such key areas as curriculum programming, the selection and placing of students, the training and control of staff, etc. In fact, many Muslim schools have only the sentimental satisfaction of being called 'Muslim' which is nurtured by the occasional 'qaseedah' and a few formulas recited mechanically. The situation has prompted the frequent remark from parents that it is better to send your child to a Christian school—at least he would know it is not Muslim—rather than to a Muslim one which purports to be Islamic but from which he gains a wrong, distorted, limited impression of Islam and is not at all inspired by his Muslim mentors and peers. I do not say this in any way to belittle the contribution, the amount of sweat and sincerity which some have put in to get some educational services going. It is merely to highlight the fact that not enough attention has been and is being paid to determining the direction in which we should be going and the concepts or the philosophy which should underpin and permeate our educational system and development. It is also with the hope of arresting the drift towards individual alienation and social chaos that we have highlighted, admittedly in a very generalised way, some of the problems raised in the foregoing.

* * THE BASIC ANSWERS * *

What remains for us to do now is to determine how this drift is to be halted, how the initiative can be regained (or more properly gained) and how some salvation—from present confusion and future loss—can be achieved. I would suggest that the basic answers for us as individuals, as teachers, as parents, as a community and as a society—and each is not separate from the other—lie in three words: in being 'guided', 'liberated' and 'creative'.

So far as being guided is concerned, Muslims—the word is used in its primary meaning as those who submit to God—should be the first to realise as others seem to have realised that proper education and proper educational planning 'requires some guiding philosophy that provides a consistent basis for all plans and executions. For in education, consistency and continuity are overwhelmingly important ingredients. They can determine the difference between order and chaos, a state of continuous flux and total paralysis leading to a breakdown of the social system or a more disciplined approach to change and the creation of an environment in which decision making is easier'.

Now each philosophy has a view of the world and man's place in it which it infuses into its concept of knowledge. This is true of secular, materialistic philosophies like capitalism and socialism/communism. It is true of Christianity. And it is true of Islam. When there is no clear philosophy, or a mix-up of two or more philosophies, the principles of balance and control in human affairs are lost and the element of consistency in education becomes warped. Moreover, these principles are also lost when the guiding philosophy is other than Islam—submission to God—which stands for the validity of absolute values wherein man's ultimate loyalty is not to institutions like the State, nor even to the society but man's individual contract between himself and God which goes in to make up society's collective contract between itself and God.

As far as Islam is concerned, consistency and continuity in education can only be achieved by education planners, teachers, parents etc when they believe firmly in 'There is no god but Allah (the one True God) and Muhammad is His messenger' and all the implications of this creed—deriving patterns of thought and conduct solely from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (note the saying of the Prophet, 'I am leaving behind me two things which if you hold fast to them, you would never go astray—the Book of God (the Qur'an)

and my Example (Sunnah'); enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and doing things primarily and essentially because of the belief in the knowledge, wisdom and reward of the Authority—Allah—Who issued them.

Such an approach can be seen to have profound ramifications in a variety, indeed all of the areas of educational activity and problems. It would have its effects both on the content and the methodology of education because Islam has rightly been described as both a Message and a Method. It would have its effects for example on the motivation of teachers, prompting them to give off of their best at all times regardless of whether an inspector or a principal is overseeing; it would have a salutary effect on the growing problems of discipline in schools, etc.

One fundamental outcome of this approach which has already been mentioned is the integrated or 'wholistic' view of life and education for life it demands. In this the accent of education is obviously not on helping people to gain paper qualifications. Nor is it merely on producing a good citizen—a good and patriotic citizen may be a tyrant—or on placing citizens in the right kind of job and so on. The aim is to produce the good man, the complete man (al-Insan al-Kamil) who would achieve the right balance between the material and the spiritual and the satisfied soul, what the Qur'an calls 'An-Nafs al-Mutma'innah'. Such a soul would eventually be addressed by God, Glorified and Exalted be He, thus:

'O satisfied soul, return to your Lord, well pleased and He well pleased with you. Enter thou among my servants, enter my Paradise.' (The Qur'an, 89:27-30)

This is the reward which God has promised to those who follow His guidance. This is the goal to which our education system should be oriented and without going into details, we could immediately see how such an orientation would produce a liberated system, free from all the shackles of alien ideas and habits, from diseases like racial intolerance and various forms of cultural nationalisms which plague our society, and from fears, fears of domination by other men, fears of the loss of patronage, of victimization, of loss of promotion and so on which many of us know infest and is even ingrained in the present system.

* * CREATIVITY * *

To sustain the guidance and the liberation which we would thus have attained, we need to display a zeal and a creativity which would bring to bear Islamic solutions to problems and provide

Islamic alternatives. The possibilities here are as vast as they are virtually untouched and the willingness and determination to explore them may be the touchstone of our worth and dignity.

In a general way, this creative challenge so far as education is concerned lies in three areas:

1. defining and elaborating the concept of Islamic education;
2. recommending ways and means of making Islam the guiding principles in teaching all branches of knowledge and
3. using education as the process to preserve and uphold those fundamental values of Islam which make man the noblest of all creatures.

While attempts are being made in various parts of the world to come to grips with these challenges, by universities in Muslim countries and by organisations and institutions in places like Britain and the USA and I believe that we here in Trinidad ought to learn and benefit from these attempts, there is a need for us here to make similar responses because of the maxim that 'Only that knowledge is useful which is lived. We have got to do our own research, articulate our findings, test and practise the knowledge which we have gained. Let us take the three areas of the creative challenge mentioned above.

In defining and elaborating the concept of Islamic education we would need to go to the original sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For this we would need to equip ourselves with some basic tools. And when we realise that there is no one in this community who has a competent knowledge of Arabic and therefore of the Qur'an and the Shari'ah, you would see how long is the road ahead. Other individuals and communities in the past once started on this road from the scratch and excelled. But however long is the road, a start has got to be made. The last Teachers' Seminar, called for teachers' training seminars during vacation periods that should explore some of the existing problems and aim at creating better people. Even a modest start in this direction has to be made. Al hamdu lillah, there can be found in many institutions, individual Muslims who are committed to Islam. These people should be encouraged by education boards, principals and others and not fettered and frowned upon as is sometimes the case.

The last seminar also recommended the need for developing and maintaining contact with other countries and institutions in order to benefit from current research on education. Some institutions and organisations which

could be useful in this respect are the Muslim Social Scientists group in the USA & Canada, the Muslim Institute of London, the Islamic Foundation of the UK, Kenya and Nigeria, King Abdul Aziz University in Jedda which is hosting an educational Conference in April 1977 and several others. But while all these contacts may be helpful, we need a more solid base. A start can be provided by the setting up of an Institute or a Muslim Teachers Training College which could offer full degree courses, diplomas or finishing courses to prospective Muslim teachers to give them an Islamic orientation and help them become steeped in the ethic of Qur'anic attitudes,

values, and concepts. The Qur'an is the most important, the indispensable book for every Muslim teacher, student and others whatever the branch of knowledge they may be engaged in. Yet we treat it, according to the Qur'an itself, so 'lightly'. If the Qur'an does not play the dominating role in our education system, then frankly we are wasting our time! Teachers will therefore have to put in a lot of arduous study and faithful application in order to reverse the present trend.

ISLAM IN ALL BRANCHES OF KNOWLEDGE

We come next to dealing with ways and means of making Islam the guiding principle in teaching in all branches of knowledge. If we were to take a cursory look at the content of individual courses and the texts which are used, we would find much that is repugnant to Islam whether in the field of the arts or in the field of the sciences. In history textbooks, for example, apart from the common anti-Islamic statements, such important themes and facets as the interpretation of events, the determining of cause and effect, the making of value judgements are all done from the standpoints of either economics (the Marxian legacy), colonial pretensions (the white man's burden etc) or nationalistic pride. In Literature, we need to know whether such forms as the novel or aspects of drama etc. do not fall into the category of what the Qur'an calls 'lahwa-l hadith' —distracting tales to mislead men from the path of God. Besides there is so much that is bawdy or downright pornographic in the content of some of the literature texts. In Biology, we need to see for example the implications of theories of evolution for man's place in the world as set out by the Qur'an. The question must be posed, 'Can we study man without knowing who he really is?' In the 'new' subject of Environmental Studies or

Ecology we need to determine whether man's use of technology is in keeping with his God-given trust and his relation to nature or whether through abuse and various forms of pollution he is creating a disequilibrium that would be fatal to his environment and himself. In Physics, the question needs to be asked whether the purely material and quantitative science of nature as it has 'progressed' in the West is at odds with the Qur'anic ayah or verse,

'Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the day and night, there are signs for men of understanding, who remember God standing, sitting and on their sides...and who say, "Our Lord, surely You have not created all this in vain."

Or even in the new-fangled and increasingly popular notions of Moral Education, whether the emphasis on a God-less humanism and a frail empiricism ('doing your own thing') is not definitely against the absolute transcendent, eternal values of Islam. And so on.

I hope these brief examples would bring home to you the impossibility and the ridiculousness of wishing to restrict the teaching of Islam to one or two periods in the week's curriculum earmarked for 'R.K.' But how are we to deal with these mammoth problems? Again, there is no substitute for independent enquiry, research and articulation of Islamic concepts and ideals. The last teachers' meeting recommended that periodic meetings of subject teachers to identify problems in the teaching of particular subjects, the aim being to bring the teaching of all subjects within the framework of Islamic knowledge.

We would have to embark on a creative rather than an imitative approach to teaching, writing and publishing in order to build up, however gradually, a body of literature that could provide a viable and convincing alternative. While a start has to be made, we cannot hope for too quick results. It is a long range thing. It Won't come about overnight. After all, it is a battle against centuries of secularism beginning at least from the Cartesian revolution in Europe.

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Finally we come to the question, which I shall only touch upon briefly, of using education as a process to preserve and uphold those fundamental values of Islam which make man the noblest of all creatures. This again was adumbrated in the last conference when it was stressed that at all times, teachers should mirror the very highest standards of Islamic

conduct in their individual lives. Sadly, for whatever reasons, this is not so in the majority of cases when even the 'fara'id'—essentials—of Islam are openly flouted not only by teachers but by principals too. Some radical change is needed in this area.

I think also to achieve the desired results we need to have a marked change in attitudes and policies regarding the functioning of education boards. As a mark of a more serious approach, I would suggest that the work involved in educational planning and management is so important, that it needs the attention of full-time administrators and not merely a few minutes fitted in by one or two people who otherwise pursue a variety of callings some of which are of doubtful Islamic value.

Further we need to see education,

not as something to be imparted by teachers in a classroom situation alone, but as using all the available institutions—of family, mosque, playing field, the media etc.—each area nourishing and buttressing the other. We need to develop and stress the idea of permanent or continuous education—education for living and for living Islam, from childhood to death. Also, we cannot afford to be introverted (Islam, after all, is meant for all), limiting our efforts to the existing Muslim community. We need to see that Islamic values and ideals permeate the entire society, if only because of the fact that danger does not discriminate but more importantly, because if we feel and we know we have something good—the best—we need to share it and spread it around.

In any case, the way to deal with

the dangers that threaten is not to run away, as the Mulla did, or drift into a swoon. The situation requires striving and effort, planned and systematic effort, for the Islamic society is not created without human effort and sacrifice. It also needs the cooperation of all believers and such other qualities as are so beautifully summed up in the short chapter of the Qur'an, the chapter on 'Time':

By Time (through the ages),
Verily Man is in Loss,
Except those who believe
And do righteous deeds,
And who encourage and strengthen
Each other in the pursuit of Truth,
And who encourage and strengthen
Each other in the pursuit of
Patience, Perseverance and
Endurance.

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INTRODUCING ISLAM

It is stated in the Qur'an in Chapter 3 verse 19 that "the (true) religion in the sight of God is Islam"—that is the religion perfected by the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be with him.

Muhammad himself was born in Mecca in Arabia around the year 570 C.E. He was illiterate and therefore could not read the books of the earlier Prophets. The Prophet Muhammad started receiving revelations from God at the age of forty. He preached for twenty-three years, and died at the age of sixty-three.

The message of Islam, embodied in the Qur'an and Hadith, had an amazing impact on the world. It united the warring tribes of Arabia for the first time in their history. It spread with surprising speed. Old empires and civilizations gave way before it and, by accepting the message of Islam, were renewed and became part of the brilliant unified civilization of Islam, which led the world for many centuries. Under the guidance of the Qur'an, Muslims explored all branches of knowledge, science and arts. Even today, in a period of decline of Muslim political power in the world, the Message of the Qur'an continues to spread and inspire people all over the world.

When a person becomes a Muslim he finds himself part of a universal brotherhood. All over the world he will find Muslims worshipping in the same way, and following basically the same Islamic teachings with regard to family life, social customs and standards of behaviour. He feels at home with them because whatever their race, language or colour, he and they are united by Islam—its belief and practice, its way of life.

What is this belief and practice of Islam which has held people together throughout the centuries and throughout the world? What is the Message sent by God through the Prophet Muhammad nearly fourteen hundred years ago, to which people turn every day for guidance and enlightenment.

It is hoped in the coming issues of The Muslim Standard to put some basic questions and answers which will explain briefly the most important beliefs and practices of Islam, and the behaviour expected of a Muslim. This is only a beginning and should encourage the reader to widen his knowledge by further reading and enquiry.

May God give us the intelligence and wisdom to understand His religion, and the strength and patience to practise it.

What is the aim of man's life?

The aim of man's life should be to attain peace of mind and happiness, which can only be found through belief in God and in worshipping Him.

God has shown us how to worship Him in the Qur'an and Hadith. We should carry out God's commands, and avoid the things he forbids. We should remain conscious of God and remember Him in all we

do, so that we draw closer to Him and are not led astray.

What is the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the last of God's Revelations to mankind. Previous revelations were given to Prophets Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others but these were limited to particular peoples. The Qur'an is for all peoples. It is a universal message. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over the period of the Prophet's life between the ages of forty and sixty three, when he died.

The earlier chapters of the Qur'an, revealed at Mecca, urge people to believe in One God and leave idol-worshipping and bad customs, and to prepare for the Day of Judgement when they will be questioned about what they did on earth.

The later chapters, revealed at Madina, describe further how Muslims should behave, both individually and as a community or society. These revelations concern marriage and the family inheritance, business ethics, economics, law and the conduct of state affairs, relations with non-Muslims, and every aspect of human life. Moral teachings are often supported by references to the histories of earlier Prophets and their people. The Qur'an urges us to study the heavens and the earth, and find out for ourselves God's power and bounty as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe.

The Prophet himself memorised these revelations which the Angel Jibril taught him, and then recited them to his companions who also memorized them and wrote them down.

After the Prophet's death, the parchment, leather and other material on which the sections of the Qur'an had been written were collected in one place. Then a group of Companions who knew the Qur'an by heart, led by Zaid ibn Thabit, Muhammad's secretary and scribe, assembled the revelations into book form in the order taught by the Prophet. This became the standard book from which all other copies of the Qur'an were made.

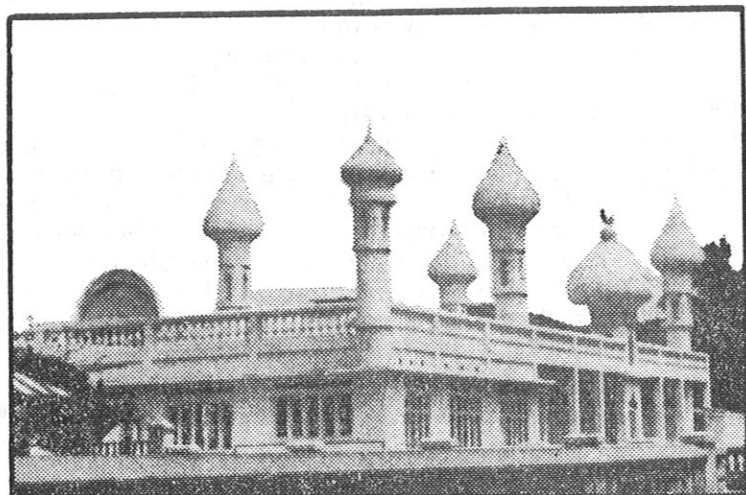
What is Hadith?

Hadith is what has been reported as having been said or done or approved or disapproved of by the Prophet. The words of Hadith are not the words of God, as the Qur'an is, but the Prophet's own actions and words of guidance to Muslims. These were remembered by his companions, passed on to others, and later written down and made into collections. 'Sunnah' is another term for the 'example' set by the Prophet.

The Qur'an is more important than the Hadith since it is the word of God. For direction on any question, one must first look in the Qur'an. If there is nothing there about it, or if what is there needs further explanation, one should then read the collections of Hadith to find out if the Prophet gave any instructions about it. Hadith is the explanation of the Qur'an and as such it does not go against it.

The above questions and answers are based on the book, 'A Student's Introduction to Islam' by Aisha Lemu.

A VITAL ROLE FOR JAMA MASJID



Jama Masjid, at 2 Queen Street, Port of Spain, lies in the heart of the capital's 'East End'—a twilight area where signs of overcrowding and poverty cannot go unnoticed and which is infected with rum shops, drug trafficking and other symptoms of urban decay.

Jama Masjid is also the Headquarters of ASJA, the largest Muslim organisation in the country. Because of ASJA's influence and authority, one would think that its Headquarters is ideally situated to play an important role in a radical improvement of the area. This is of course provided that the administration is conscious of the problems and are keen to put forward the best solutions—Islamic solutions.

This is precisely what some brothers who attend the 'Jama' feel is not happening. Not only does the 'admin' not show any positive signs of life and initiative, but it is keen to display 'a negative attitude, bordering on repression'.

These feelings were aired in a circular sent to the mosque administration and to top ASJA officials following a ban on any activities—discussions,

classes, lectures etc— in the mosque imposed by Brother Rauf Ali, President of the Jamaat, before the Friday prayer in the beginning of May. Many in the congregation were taken aback by the announcement and were upset especially since the policy of banning is 'unfortunately imposed in other areas of the country and has been going on for a long time'.

The circular sent to ASJA officials was an attempt to get some constructive dialogue and cooperation going. It pointed out that Jama Masjid in particular was 'a vital one as it lies in the heart of the city. A large cross section of people from different parts of the community offer Salaah here as well as many others come to enquire about Islam'.

The circular goes on:

'This Jama'ah is thereby duty-bound to be an enlightened and active one by fulfilling the needs of the community. What one finds is the opposite ... a very negative attitude on behalf of the administration bordering on repression. People are crying out for knowledge and it is not given. People are thirsting for Islam and are being fed

a mirage. When others attempt to do something constructive—bans are imposed.'

The circular points out that there is 'a great deal of misconception pertaining to the ownership, final authority and functioning of a Mosque'. Mosques should not be run 'following our own whims and fancies' but according to the dictates of the Qur'an which says, "And who could be more unjust and wrong than the one who prevents and forbids the mention of the name of God in places of worship belonging to God and strives in their ruin." (2: 114)

Returning to the special position of Jama Masjid, the circular emphasises that it 'has the capacity to be a live-wire in the community and if the brothers responsible for administration are really concerned they should strive to understand the conditions and problems which this Jama'ah (congregation) and this community are confronted with and apply the solutions laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah'. It goes on to highlight some of the 'true needs and problems that brothers and sisters are now facing and some of the activities that are being conducted. It says:

1. Brothers and Sisters from Muslim as well as non-Muslim backgrounds are confronted on returning to Islam with a vacuum of Islamic knowledge whether from literature or from other Muslims, so that having come to Islam, knowing it is a system and complete way of life they are hampered in transforming their lives on the model of the Prophet (peace be upon him). As a result, some Muslims have come together to study and learn Islam and which better place can there be than in the Mosque. These Muslim brothers over the past two years have transformed a virtually moribund mosque into one vibrating with Islamic activity.

2. Having also understood that Muslims have the responsibility of enjoining right, forbidding wrong, and inviting to Allah every available opportunity is made to propagate the Truth—over all other ideologies. To this end, brothers have established 'rap' sessions on various 'blocks' in the area, sold newspapers, and distributed tracts on the message of Islam. Now, there is a great deal of awakening and a great deal of interest especially from the non-Muslim community. There is now a need for a centre where these people can come, enquire and be enlightened on the Islamic Way of Life. The wives of the brothers and other Muslim sisters need to be taught their respective role and mission as Muslims in addition to the

brothers in order that potential Muslim women and Muslim children can be catered for in the move towards Islam.

3. There are numerous other problems and challenges — for example, those posed by groups, claiming to be Muslim (the Nubians, Nation of Islam), Muslims falling away from Islam (e.g. Muslim girls marrying non-Muslims strictly prohibited according to the Shari'ah) etc. These are problems on which the administration has not made any pronouncement or taken any stand on. We suggest that if our priorities are right, such problems should be tackled first, instead of attempting to curtail properly Islamically-motivated activities.

4. Finally, pressing problems such as drug addiction, promiscuity and loose moral standards, poverty and general frustration with the present system can only be solved with understanding and humane treatment by the Muslim community as shown and exemplified by the character of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Change can never come by adopting a superior and complacent

attitude to the reality encroaching our every action. For example, a brother accepts Islam, takes the Shahadah, but due to weakness of conviction and knowledge combined with lack of facilities to help his condition returns continuously to the taking of drugs. Who is to blame? One might easily say the brother will have to account to Allah, but does that absolve the Muslim community—you and me from the responsibility to him."

The circular ends with a moving call:

"Let us work together to improve the community, to better our knowledge to give the Da'wah and impart knowledge to those who are yearning for it. Please put an end to this negative attitude. The Muslim community has been asleep for too long. Let the houses of Allah be open to those who seek to revive its message. Come and share with us...come and correct us in upholding this sublime path...come and share with us the joys and sorrows we will transcend in this brotherhood into a solid wall..."

So far the Mosque administration has responded in some little measure to this call. Brothers were told that the ban did not really apply to them but to 'unorthodox' groups. Also there has been an announcement that Arabic and Qur'anic sessions would commence at the mosque on Tuesdays and Fridays after 'Isha. There is still, however, a lot of room for improvement in consultation and cooperation if Jama Masjid is to fulfil its proper role.

Inaugural Convention of MUSLIM TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

With an overcast sky and the very first rainy season downpours, the inaugural convention of the Muslim Teachers' Association was held on Friday 4 June at the Montrose Mosque Hall, Chaguanas. Approximately one hundred and fifty teachers both from Muslim and non-Muslim institutions attended.

The Convention was officially opened by Haji Tiab Rahman, senior inspector of schools. In a very moving speech, he described the audience as the Muslim Intelligentsia and as such, the best material for the evolution of an Islamic community.

In the feature address, Abdul Wahid Hamid focussed the attention of the teachers on our 'loss of direction and sense of proportion'. The existing crisis in education was described as being responsible for the chaos in society. In an effort to improve our 'standard of living' little or no attention is paid to the 'quality of life'.

To prevent further loss and to build a stable society, it was suggested, the answer lies in three words: in being guided, liberated and creative. 'This can be achieved by education planners, teachers, parents, etc. when they believe firmly in 'There is no god but Allah (the One True God) and Muhammad is His messenger' and all the implications of this creed—deriving patterns of thought and conduct solely from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (example of the Prophet).

He ended by stating, 'The situation requires striving and effort, planned and systematic effort for the Islamic society is not created without human effort and sacrifice.' The teachers realised that the paper presented contained valuable ideas and suggestions and it was decided that there should be follow-up discussions on it.

In the afternoon session, the Steering Committee appointed by the previous preparatory convention presented a report which contained elements of a draft constitution. The aims of the MTA as formulated by the committee were accepted. They are:

1. To foster Islamic brotherhood.
2. To cater for the interests and needs of its members in all spheres of activity.
3. To propagate Islam particularly through all institutes of learning.

4. To help teachers develop a knowledge of Islam and a commitment to the Islamic way of life so that all learning can be done within the

framework of Islamic concepts.

5. To cooperate with other bodies pursuing similar objectives.

A suggested programme of activities included the following:

Training camps for teachers, provision of suitable teaching aids, assisting in setting up libraries with adequate Islamic literature in schools and colleges, educational tours for teachers and students, annual religious knowledge examination for pupils and the giving of incentives for meritorious achievements and inter-school sports both for teachers and students.

Election of officers ensued and the following persons were selected:

President	Towheed Ali
Vice President	Raphic Ali
Secretary	Sheik Majeed Ali
Ass't Secretary	Nazir Khan
Elected Members:	Ramjohn Chote
	Hydar Ali
	Omar Mohammed
	Sadik R. Ali
	Shafirkul Khan.

The four officers, five elected members and at least one member from each Muslim school will comprise the Working Committee. The committee was given the responsibility to draw up a draft constitution to be later presented to the teachers for ratification.

A special feature at the seminar was a display of books on Islam by the Islamic Trust. The display generated much interest and teachers indicated their intention to purchase some when the books go publicly on sale.

The hopes and aspirations of evolving an Islamic community depend on the attitude and willingness of those selected and on other teachers as well, as was summarised by Haji Tiab Rahman when he advised:

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PRACTISE WHAT YOU KNOW,
TEACH WHAT YOU KNOW.**

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