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THE BEST TO LEAD

Some people may agree that our local Muslim community is in a state of confusion and chaos while others may disagree with this view. However, the fact remains that all is not well within the Muslim community as is indicated by the present struggle in the executive of the largest Muslim organisation in our country — Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jam'at Association (A.S.J.A.).

This article considers, among other things, the role and responsibilities of Islamic Leadership hoping, Insha Allah, that our leaders in particular, and Muslims in general, will sit back and consider where we went wrong and where we are going.

Islamic leadership can be examined under different headings:

QUALITIES OF LEADERS

The best qualification for leaders is that they should command the confidence of the largest number of people in respect of their knowledge and Taqwa (God consciousness). They should be:- good organisers; disciplined; versed in Islamic knowledge with a strong motivation to improve themselves; promoters of Islamic brotherhood, co-operation and contacts at personal level and familiar with modern methods of operation. They should also:- display a spirit of team-work, mutual respect and understanding as required by Islam; and serve in the roles of planners, supervisors, controllers, motivators, educators, communicators, problem-solvers, decision makers and evaluators.

Differences in race, colour, birth, wealth, position or power are of no consequence because status is to be determined by the degree of one's piety.

SELECTION OF LEADERS

Leaders are selected by the people. All adults (people above puberty), male

and female are entitled to vote. They cannot be indifferent to the selection of their leaders and when they vote, do so after careful investigations and pre-meditated choice. In this way the Muslim community can be guaranteed of responsible leadership. It is not allowed that candidates canvas or lobby for support. Anyone who seeks leadership should not be supported.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever entrusts a man to public office where in his society there is a better man than this trustee, has betrayed the trust of God, His Messenger and the Muslims."

RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERS

Leaders are mere functionaries entrusted with the duty to act according to the injunctions of God and the precepts of Muhammad (peace be upon him). They do not impose their own wills on the people but act as representatives administering the will of God. Because they have a dual responsibility, they must exercise the powers of office on behalf of and in the best interest of the people in accordance with God's Law. On the one hand, they are responsible to God for their conduct and on the other, they are responsible to the people who have put their trusts in them.

After considering the Law of God and the instructions of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the leaders are encouraged to refer to the scholars of Islam and then use their own judgement.

RULE BY CONSULTATION

This principle is fundamental in Islam. It is a moral duty enjoined upon rulers as well as the ruled to seek counsel or counsel one another to ensure that the Law of God is observed, and that the

rights of citizens are honoured and their obligations fulfilled.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever speaks - be it in a form of a counsel or any other form must say the right and good things; or else he had better keep silent."

Even Muhammad (peace be upon him) was advised to consult his followers, "It is by the mercy of God that you dealt gently with them (your people), were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you. So pass over their faults, and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust (in Him).

Qur'an 3:159.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PEOPLE

It is their responsibility to select their leaders according to the Islamic injunctions. It is a sacred duty for the people to support them whenever they are asked to do what is in accordance with the Law of God.

Failure to support and to cooperate with their leaders would be considered irresponsible action against them and against God Himself.

Likewise if the leaders swerve from the Path of God or fail to observe His Law, it is not only committing a similar offense but also have no right to the support and loyalty of the Muslims. Then they have no right in office and must be ousted and replaced by others. It is the peoples' responsibility to see to it that this is done in the interest of the Muslim community. The Qur'an says:

O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Prophet and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Prophet if you do believe in God and the Last Day.

Continued on page 2.

That is best, and most suitable for final determination. (4:59).

This ayah brings home the point to us that while God and His Prophet do not make mistakes, those in authority can.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:
a. "There is no obedience to a created thing in disobedience to God".

b. "When someone sees a Munkar (anything contrary to what God has commanded) taking place, he must correct it with his hand; should he be unable to do so he must correct it with his tongue by speaking out against it; should he be unable to do even this much, then he must resent it in his own heart."

When Abu Bakr became Khaleefah, he said, "O people, obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger. Should I disobey them correct me."

Omar once said, "O people, obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger." And then he asked, "What will you do if I were to do anything against what God and His Messenger have commanded?"

A person pulled out his sword and said, "We will correct you, O Omar, with this."

Now we may ask ourselves some questions concerning leadership in our Muslim community.

1. Do we have the best leaders?
2. Do the present leaders possess Islamic qualities and do they reflect them in their behaviour?
3. Were they selected in an Islamic manner?
4. Do they show responsibility to God and the people?
5. Do they rule according to the Law of God and Muhammad? (Peace be upon him)?
6. Are the Muslims fulfilling their role of obeying the leaders when they are right and correcting them when they are wrong?
7. If the leaders are not doing their duty, are they prepared to give way to others more capable?
8. What should the Muslims do if there is need for a change in leadership?

These are some of the questions we have to ponder over deeply and decide on a course of action. The future of Islam and Muslims in Trinidad is at stake. May God guide us to the Straight Path, Insha Allah.

references : 1. *Islam in Focus*
2. *A Manual of Da'wah*

It is the duty of Muslim parents to give a newborn child an Islamic name. This duty is not to be taken lightly for the choice of names is not arbitrary but is to follow certain rules laid down in the Sunnah.

We shall refer to a few Ahadith to illustrate the importance of good names. It is reported that the Prophet said, "To whomever a child is born he should be given a good name, a sound education and when he comes of age he should be married." The word 'good' in this Hadith is significant as another hadith tells us that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was often displeased over a name that was not good. Once a man was advised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to change his name from Hazn (sorrow) to Sahl (easy) but he refused claiming that he did not see the need for changing the name which was given to him by his father. It is related that subsequently grief always afflicted that family.

Abu Wahab al-Jushami reported that the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Name with the names of the prophets (peace be upon them); and the names most liked by Allah are 'Abdullah and Abdur-Rahman and the most true of them are Harith (collector of property) and Hammam (energetic) and the worst of them are Harb (war) and Murrah (bitter)". (Abu Dawud).

No one is to be called by Allah or any of his attributes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said that the word 'Abd (slave) must precede Allah or any of the attributes. Further advices are given in the following Ahadith.
a. Whomever is named after me (the Prophet, peace be upon him) with the hope of being blessed, will be blessed and be in peace until the day of Qiyamah (Judgement).

b. You will be called on the day of judgement by your names and names of your fathers, so keep good names

ARABIC NAMES

Professor R. Al-Faruqi in an article in *Al-Ittihad* (Vol. 13. No. 1, 1976) wrote:- "Being a Muslim, your name is in all likelihood an Arabic name, composed either of one of the names of Allah or of one of His divine attributes, or of one of the names of Muhammad, or of one of his epithets, or of the name of another prophet, or of a quality or attribute of that prophet, or of a Qur'anic term connoting an Islamic value. It is also possible that your name be that of a Sahabi, or of a great Muslim of the past who has distinguished himself in the

service of Islam, whether by his pen, sword, virtue, charity, statesmanship, justice, or any other Islamic value. Or, finally, it may be the very name of that value whether as a noun or adjective. When, in the first week of your life, you were given your name, your parents had

CHECK-OUT YOUR NAME

hoped that you would grow to fulfil the Islamic value to which your name refers, to emulate the great Muslim predecessor whose name you were given. Surely you want everybody to respect it, to call you by it, and to honour it by spelling it and pronouncing it correctly. Should your name be mutilated, disrespectfully bungled or violated, all that it represents is equally violated. Of course persons remain the same despite changes in their names. That is not the issue. But the names themselves are often expressive of a whole history, a whole culture, a whole religion, a whole spiritual realm; and it is these who suffer through misrepresentation and misnaming.

Consider to begin with the most obvious and gravest cases. Supposing your name was Hâfiz (successful memorizer of the Qur'an), or Hâmid (praiser of Allah), or Khaliq (creature). These can easily be misaccented as Hafiz, Hamid or Khâliq. Immediately, your name is transformed from meaning an Islamic virtue to blasphemy. For no man may be called by a divine name. If your name was a conjunction of 'Abd (servant) and one of the divine names, it would be equally blasphemous to mispronounce, or allow mispronunciation; e.g. 'Abd al Haqq (servant of Allah — the Truth) as Abd al Hakk (servant of scratching). It would be an equally grave misdeed to drop 'Abd from your name (a popular abbreviation technique used in the West as well as in the Muslim World) leaving

the divine name standing by itself. If on the other hand, and for the same reason of abbreviation, the divine name is dropped, then one is left with the abject Arabic name of 'Abd, i.e., servant or slave without specification of owner or master.

Muslims in the West are particularly prone to having their beautiful Islamic names mutilated, because of the general ignorance of Arabic or the difficulties of transliteration. Names which have a Western equivalent (Yusuf, Ya'qub, Ishaq, Yunus, Musa, Ibrahim, etc.) are hastily changed into their Biblical equivalents (Joseph, Jacob, Isaac, Jonah, Moses, Abraham, etc.), without awareness that these Biblical personalities represent entirely different meanings to the Christian and / or Jew than the Qur'anic names do to the Muslim."

LOCAL PRACTICES

In Trinidad, some people who are fortunate to have been given Islamic names are the worst offenders as they themselves mispronounce their names. This is due either to ignorance or to an inferiority complex. This deplorable habit spreads quite rapidly when they introduce themselves to others.

Every Muslim should be proud to be named after one of the prophets of Allah and should take great care to ensure that the names are correctly spelt and pronounced. But very often we find the opposite happening. For example, the name Ibrāhīm (correctly pronounced Ib-ra-him), is often mutilated to sound like I-brahim. Also, the name Muḥammad (the name of the final prophet of Allah) is mis-spelt and mis-pronounced. We see such things as Mahomet, Mohamet, Mohamed, Mohamad. One can only hope that the correct spelling will be adopted in the future. Similarly the other name of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Ahmad is usually mis-spelt Ahmed.

A common mistake occurs when the (Arabic) letter Kha forms part of a name and this is usually worse when it is the first letter of a name. Examples are, Khān and Khālīd mispronounced as Kan and Kalid.

Another example of mis-spelling is to ignore an "r" at the end of a name so that names like Zabar and Hydar are pronounced Zaba and Hyda respectively. The last offence is usually committed by the so-called intelligentsia.

These examples betray ignorance of the Prophet's instructions on names, of our history and of elementary Arabic. One wonders if any excuse can be offered for the first two examples since our community is well-known for its commemoration of the Prophet's

birthday, his Ascension and other incidents in his life and the lives of his companions. Perhaps, a first step for the improvement of these celebrations is to ensure that the names of the Prophet and those of the companions are properly pronounced. As for not knowing elementary Arabic no excuse can be put forward as Muslims must be able to pronounce Arabic to perform their obligatory prayers.

Every Muslim should be given Islamic names and should take great care to ensure that the names are correctly spelt and pronounced.

Another common practice is a compromising one in which children are given two first names (perhaps we could stop calling these names Christian names), one of which is Western (usually Christian) and the other Islamic. A typical example is a name like Imtiaz Winston Ali where very often the Islamic name, Imtiaz is chosen merely to appease one's relatives. To show the sham in such an arrangement, the child is always called Winston resulting in his Islamic name being gradually forgotten. As the child grows older he usually signs his name as I. Winston Ali or simply Winston Ali.

A further practice is to give children only Western first name(s) like Peter in Peter Hosein. Long ago this automatically meant that such a person renounced Islam (may Allah forbid) and changed his name to conform with his new religion.

Reasons for adopting practices like the above vary from family to family. Some simply assume that a Western name is better; others claim that they are easier to pronounce (does anyone know the correct pronunciation for Western names like Braithwaite, Thoebalds, Milne-Holme etc?), still others do it to conform with the "cosmopolitan society" in Trinidad.

Even stranger, is the case where a parent has lived abroad and has experienced no discrimination or disadvantage over his own Islamic name, promptly gives his children Western names to prevent them from being discriminated against.

Another cause for concern is the prevalent habit of anglicising or Westernising Islamic names. This habit should be discouraged at all costs as it reveals an un-Islamic attitude, whereas Muslims should be proud of Islamic

names. Examples of such distortions are Sally for Salima, Beida for Zubeida, Hishie for Hisham, Sofie for Safiyya, Sam for Abdus-Samad, Sid for Siddique and Frank for Faizool.

One of the most serious offences is to call some one by a nick-name. Qur'an clearly forbids this in "... nor call each other by offensive nicknames" (49:11).

Closer examination of situations in which some of the above 'offences' are committed, might reveal complete lack of understanding of Islam.

We conclude by again quoting from Professor al-Faruqi:-

If, in spite of these considerations, the Muslim in the West mutilates his own name when he writes it in Latin characters, suffers in silence his name being mutilated in writing or mispronounced by others, tolerates or encourages such mutilation, what does this tell about his personality?

1. Above all, it betrays his lax or disrespectful attitude to the names of Allah. These being Qur'anic, his laxity is a toleration of tampering with the Qur'anic text which is holy. It is a defiance of Allah since it is He who said: "It is We Who revealed the Qur'an; and it is We Who shall safeguard it".

(15:9).

2. Less grave but equally significant is the attitude of laxity or disrespect betrayed by tampering with the names of Muḥammad (peace be upon him), of his companions, of the great men and women of Islam, and of Islamic meanings and values.

3. Indirectly, there is another kind of attitude betrayed in the process. It is that of tolerating the corruptions of the language of the Qur'an by colloquial Arabic. For to pronounce or to transliterate a name in the manner it is pronounced colloquially is to tolerate colloquialism, the most dangerous and persistent threat to the language, and hence to the text, of the Qur'an. Colloquialism is the mirror of shu'ubiyyah and promoter of ethnocentrism. It is the beginning of resistance to the Qur'an itself. It is not by accident that every enemy of Islam has blessed, promoted, and encouraged the colloquial dialects of the Muslim peoples. Linguists do know that colloquialism is the end of unity and beginning of division; and those of them that know the continuing role the Qur'an has played in uniting us and determining our lives, do know that colloquialism cuts the umbilical cord which binds us to the Qur'an.

Haidar Ali

Within the scenic beauty of Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas, approximately 200 campers, men and women, boys and girls, lived Islam. What an experience it was indeed! Directed by world-renowned Camp Director Brother Hisham Badran, local Muslims, ages ranging from 2 to 72, were able to practise Islam as a way of life. It was eight solid days (December 24, 1977 - January 1, 1978) of interesting activities, which rekindled the flame of Islam in the hearts of the Muslim Youths.

Here is a report of the camp by one of the campers, Brother Hassan Mohammed.

A TIME FOR PRAYER AND A TIME FOR PLAY

Islam is the ideal way of life. It eclipses every aspect of human existence of a normal person, and has no discord or discrimination in whatever angle one looks at it. The symmetry of this complete way of life is shown in the words of our experienced Camp Director, Brother Hisham Badran, when he stated that: "In Islam, there is a time for prayer and a time for play."

Because of this flexibility of Islam, within the framework of the Qur'an and Hadith, every individual would enjoy practising and preaching Islam. No more would some of our youths be ashamed to say, "We are Muslims." No more would the little child be left out of Islam and no more would some of our teenagers be pushed to unislamic practices.

This is because, for eight days, they lived and understood the beauty of Islam. They promised to continue practising Islam and to teach others about the simplicity of this great religion.

JUMP!

"Assalaatu Khairum Minanawm" — "Prayer is better than sleep." TIME: 5.30 a.m. — Immediately the Adhan for Fajr is called, campers jump out of their beds. "Ya akhi, ya akhi (my brother), wake up! It is time for Fajr Salaah."

A normal day has begun in the camp and some of the youths, for the longest while, are getting up so early to perform their obligatory Salaah.

WE MUST PERFORM SALAAH

Salaah is one of the fundamental principles of Islam. It is part of a Muslim's daily life. In the camp, Salaah was not lectured to the campers; but in practice they learnt the correct timing of each of the five Salaah, the correct postures and how to perform each Rakaat in the prescribed manner.

A Muslim must be trained to be prepared for any situation. Campers were taught to recognise the importance of Salaah. So much so, that no matter how

busy we might be, we must make it our business to perform Salaah. If a Muslim is on a journey, then he should perform Salaatul Kasr (shortened prayer).

We were taught that the world is a Masjid and a Muslim can pray almost anywhere when the time for Salaah comes. For the first time in our lives, campers and even some visitors had the opportunity to perform Salaah on the bare, clean ground at Tucker Valley.

KEEP US PURE IN BODY AND MIND

A Muslim is one who has a well-balanced personality. Didn't Muhammad (peace be upon him) say, "Teach your children shooting, horse-riding and swimming." These are all games or sports. It is important, therefore, not only to perform Salaah, but also to keep the body mentally and physically active.

Every morning after Fajr, campers performed some form of physical training. While jogging or hiking among the calm and serenity of the valley hills and greenery, we listened to the sweet praises of the birds of Allah. Campers became attuned to Allah's creations. Our minds became calm and our souls appreciated and meditated on the sweetness of Allah's artistry. These sounds were intermingled with a singular cry from the campers: "Shout like a thunder — Allahu Akbar, Louder and louder — Allahu Akbar, God is the One — Allahu Akbar."

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

What about Islamic education during the camp? This was one of the major objectives. During the daily programmes, there were sessions, when basic Islamic principles, Islamic history, Tafsir (explanation of the Qur'an), and other religious topics and local problems were discussed and dealt with. Some of the topics and activities covered included:

1. Tafsir - Qur'anic pronunciation and meaning of short surahs - Al Fatiha, Four Quls, Wal-Asr.
2. Islamic history - Life of Muhammad, the Caliphs, Muslim Generals, and famous Muslim women.
3. Panel discussions on: (a) Marriage and related social/religious problems of Muslim men and women in Trinidad and Tobago, and (b) Islamic injunctions on birth control as against present practices.
4. Bid'ah - Innovations in Islam - some common misrepresentations.
5. Appreciation of Allah's creation, nature and love for Islam.
6. Many practical sessions - eg. Wudu, Salaah, etc.

WAL 'ASR! — BY TIME!

"Time is the most important commodity in the world. Do not waste it, because if you waste it you waste your life and when you waste your life, you

YOUTH CAMP

ISLAM in the FIELD

commit suicide." We were reminded again and again of this precious commodity by our leader Brother Badran. A Muslim should be a disciplined individual. In Allah's creation everything moves in a perfect manner, in a disciplined way. There is beauty and symmetry in everything created. In every ruggedness, could be found that particular discipline of being well-made and well-put. Since man is the best of Allah's creations shouldn't he possess this quality of discipline more than any other creature?

We were taught, through numerous experiences, to respect time and to discipline ourselves to be on time for Salaah, meals, training sessions, social hour or whatever activity we were involved in. Campers were disciplined to carry out orders, of both the director and their group leaders. They were disciplined to face certain situations within the camp and to apply this discipline in their lives in the society.

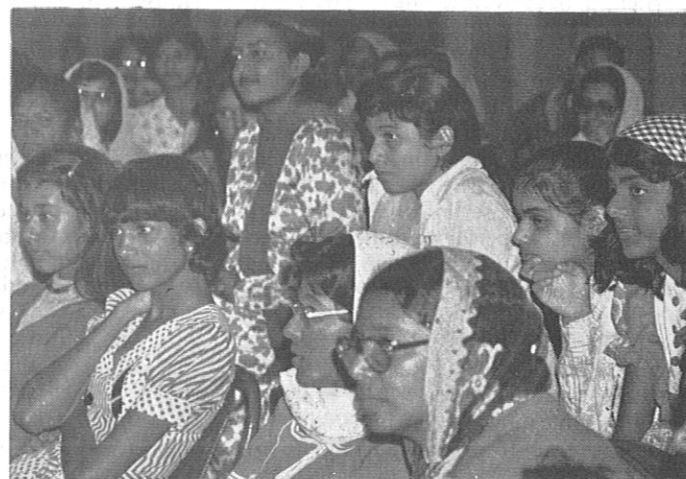
LEADERSHIP SKILLS

All campers were in training as potential leaders in Islam. Those persons who were chosen to lead groups, the counsellors, and the staff members were exposed to many Islamic situations which involved developing leadership skills and training according to the Qur'an and Hadith.

Our beloved leader, Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The leader of the people is their servant." All camp leaders had to observe this basic law. They were also exposed to such skills as planning of activities, demonstrating during practical sessions, co-ordinating group activities by division of labour, and other voluntary project work. These activities were constantly analysed and criticised and all campers learnt from the leaders' mistakes or from their good deeds.

GAMES AND COMPETITIONS

We were taught that praying five



Here some campers, males and females, and also some visitors, listen attentively to an item being put on during social hour by some of the campers.

times a day, fasting in Ramadan, paying Zakaah and performing Hajj are not all. We were also taught that Islam meant much more than that. Everything we do as Muslims should reflect Islam; not to be a Muslim one moment and a western or eastern cultured man or woman the next moment.

Again I refer to what Brother Badran repeatedly said, "There is a time for prayer and a time for play." A Muslim should be involved in athletics, creativity, and healthy competitions. In the camp our evening sessions were mixed with inter-group competitions - cricket, table-tennis, football and volleyball. This aspect of life helps to create a Muslim personality.

SOCIAL HOUR

The social hour was an integral part of camp life. It was an experience for those who visited the camp to enjoy pure Islamic fun and to participate in educational social activities.

Our social hours were rich with Islamic items; historical replays through skits or short plays and pure Islamic fun in chants, songs and musical interlude. Both campers and nightly visitors learnt

Islam in a light brotherly atmosphere.

The campers artistic talents were tapped in displaying short plays dealing with the life of the Sahabah. Songs and chants performed had an Islamic flavour. For example, campers and visitors learnt about cleanliness in Islam through this chant:

'If I am a Muslim I always should be keen,
To keep my heart and tongue pure,
And keep my body clean.'

Such chants as 'Barakallahu bika' -May God bless you' or 'Ma-Shaa Allah-That which pleases God' not only teach us some Arabic in a beautiful way but also invoke the blessings of Allah on all those present. To climax the social evening, music played its part. Not the bedlam that people think is music, but melodious strains on the flute, on the accordeon accompanied with the guitar or the drums; which all helped to relax the tensions of a well-spent day.

IN THE PATH OF GOD

An Islamic youth camp is a positive step in training our brothers and sisters in Qur'an and Hadith, including the practices of Islam. It is recommended

that future camps be held twice per year and should be for a period of at least two weeks.

But does the camp end at its location and we pat ourselves and say Alhamdu-lillah, we learnt a lot! No! As Brother Badran constantly reminded: "Take the camp home with you." There should be some form of co-ordinated work programme, and follow-up activities by the organising camp committee, to ensure that graduated campers are constantly reminded of being Muslims and that the leaders participate in Islamic activities to uplift the education and social environments within their homes and villages.

From the above, one may conclude that the camp is an example of Islam in the field. As we walked through the routines of the camp, we saw Islam at work. Within the camp community, we saw the moulding of a complete Muslim personality. The success of this camp is best epitomised by the situation, where many campers, when they entered the camp on the first day, became home-sick and cried, and then they adjusted themselves to the situation; but by the end of the eight day, those who cried in the beginning, plus other campers, were crying again. They were not home-sick in this case; but they were sad to depart from new-found brothers and sisters. They were sad to depart from fellow Muslims who showed love and tolerance to one another; they were crying to remain in such a camp of Ikhwan (brotherhood), forever.

NOTE : During the next weekend (January 7 & 8) following the camp, an intensive leadership training course was held. Forty persons, males and females, participated. The eight-day camp was analysed and suggestions made to improve future camps. A 'Camp Committee' was selected and preparations are underway for the next camp, probably at the end of July, Insha Allah.



Members of the group of Khadeeja in front of their display area on the final day of the camp.

When a man feels a superiority over others and with this a sort of inward elation, this is called pride. It differs from vanity in as much as vanity means consciousness of one's elation while pride requires a subject, an object and a feeling of elation. Suppose a man is born solitary in the world, he may be vain but not proud, because in pride man considers himself superior to others for certain qualities of his self. He allots one position to his self and another to others, and then thinks that his position is higher and is therefore elated. This "puffed up" feeling which imparts a sense of "touch me not" is called pride. The Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, said: "O God, save me from the puffing up of pride".

A proud man will not tolerate any other to be on equal terms with himself. In private and in public he expects that all should assume a respectful attitude towards him and, acknowledging his superiority, treat him as a higher being. They should be grateful to him, seeing that he is so condescending. Such proud men are found especially among the learned men of religion. Sages are ruined by their pride. The Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, said: "He who has an atom of pride in his heart will fail to enter paradise". This saying requires explanation, and should be carefully considered. Virtues are the doors of Paradise, but pride and self-esteem lock them all. So long as man feels elated he will not like for others what he likes for himself. His self-esteem will deprive him of humility, which is the essence of righteousness. He will neither be able to discard enmity and envy, resentment and wrath, slander and scorn, nor will he be able to cultivate truth and sincerity, and calmly listen to advice. In short, there is no evil which a proud man will not inevitably do in order to preserve his elation and self-esteem. Vices are like a chain of rings linked together which entangle his heart. Therefore, an atom of pride is Satan's spark, which secretly consumes the nature of the sons of Adam.

Pride is of three kinds: (1) Against God; (2) Against prophets and saints; (3) Against fellow men.

1. Against God: It is due to mere foolishness when any creature considers himself as if Lord of the universe. Nimrood and Pharaoh were such types, who disdained to be called God's creatures on earth: "Verily, verily", says the Quran, "the Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His service and is proud He will gather them all together to

Himself." Qur'an 4:172

2. Against prophets and saints. It is due to unwarranted self-esteem when one considers obedience to any mortal being as lowering his own position. Such a person either fails to reflect on the nature of prophethood and thereby feels proud of himself and does not obey a prophet, or refuses to consider the claims of prophethood as being derogatory to his elated self and therefore pays no regard to a prophet. God says about such persons, "And they say: what is the matter with this Apostle that he eats food and goes about in the markets, why has not an angel been sent down to him so that he should have been a warner with him? Or (why is not) a treasure sent down to him or he be made to have a garden from which he should eat." And those who do not fear our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down to us, or (why) do we not see our Lord? Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted in great revolt." 25: 7-8, 21

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was an orphan and had scanty means of livelihood, so the Quraish chief Walid bin Mughera and Abu Mas'ood Safi used to speak contemptuously of him. And when people believed in him and accepted Islam, the proud Quraish used to say: Muhammad is surrounded by poor men, let him send them off and then we of the aristocracy of Mecca will listen to him. But God spoke to Muhammad, "And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, desiring His goodwill, and let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life, and do not follow him, whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires, and his case is one in which due bounds are exceeded."

Qur'an 18:28.

3. Against fellow men. A proud man considers himself a superior person and would like to see everybody humbled before him. He is therefore quarrelling with God, trying to share with Him His attribute of omnipotence. God is spoken of in the Hadith as saying: "Omnipotence is my mantle, he who quarrels with me for it, him will I crush." Surely men are all servants and no servant has a right to treat his fellow servants as their master treats them. But a proud man in the intoxication of his elation takes himself as God on earth. He is too haughty to listen to truth from the lips of any of his fellow men. Ibn Mas'ood says: "It is enough for sin if a person, who is advised to fear God answers his adviser: 'Look to your own self.'"

The consciousness of superiority which begets pride is due to certain attributes

or accomplishments which can be summed up as: (a) Spiritual, divided into (i) knowledge; (ii) devotion, (b) Worldly, of five kinds: (iii) ancestry; (iv) wealth; (v) beauty; (vi) strength; (vii) kith and kin. There are thus seven causes in all, and these need some description.

1. Knowledge is power. Consciousness of power easily elates a man, who considers himself superior to others and treats them in a supercilious manner. If he accepts the greetings or the invitation of his fellow men or received them in audience he thinks they should be thank-

PRIDE &

So long as Man feels elated likes for himself. His self-esteem which is the essence of righteousness be upon him, said, "He who has fail to ente

ful to him for his condescension. People should obey and serve him, for by virtue of his knowledge he thinks he has a right over them. Such a proud learned person is sorry for the sins of others but is unmindful of his own condition. While he freely distributes Heaven and Hell among his fellowmen, he claims salvation and Heaven for himself. The question is whether he is really justified in holding himself out to be a truly learned person. For such a person is one who, knowing himself knows God, who fears the Lord most, who holds himself more responsible for his actions for he knows good and evil and feels the awful presence of a mighty and just Being who looks to righteousness alone.

Let us consider why men of knowledge become proud. There are two main causes which should be noted. First there is a false conception about the nature of real knowledge. Devoted to certain sciences and arts such as mathematics, physics, literature, and dialectics, they think that proficiency in them makes a man perfect. But real knowledge means the lifting of the veil from before the eyes of the heart so as to see the mysterious relation between man and his Maker and to be filled with a sense of awe and reverence in the presence of an omniscient holy Being who pervades the universe. This attitude of mind, this enlightenment, is real knowledge. It produces humility and repels pride.

Secondly, there is an indifference to moral training during student life. Wicked habits thus produce bitter fruits of pride. Wahb has well illustrated this point, when he says: "Knowledge is like rain falling from above, so pure and sweet but the plants, when they absorb it, embitter or sweeten it, according to their tastes. Man in acquiring knowledge acquires power, which gives strength to the hidden qualities of his heart. If he was prone towards pride and paid no attention to the subjugation of it, he would prove more proud when he acquires knowledge".

VANITY

will not like for others what he will deprive him of humility, ss. Prophet Muhammad, peace a atom of pride in his heart will paradise."

"There will be men," says the Prophet, "who will have the Qur'an on their lips but it will not go down their throats.

They will claim knowledge of it, calling themselves learned. They will be from among you, my companions, but woe to them, for they will see the consequence of it in Hell."

Warned by their Prophet, his companions lived a life of humility and their example taught its lesson to their successors. A person came to Caliph Omar one day after morning prayer and said: "I should like to give public sermons". "My friend," said the Caliph, "I am afraid you would soon be puffed up with pride." Hudhaifa, the companion of the Prophet, was a leader of prayer. One day he said to his congregation, "Brethren, have another leader, or go and pray alone, for I begin to feel puffed up with your leadership."

Thus, the companions of the Prophet lived meekly, the humble servants of God on earth, keenly watching the changing phases of their hearts and promptly seeking the remedy. But we who call ourselves their followers not only do not try to purify our hearts but not even think it worthwhile to consider the means for their purification. How can we expect salvation? But we ought not to lose heart.

2. Devotion and religious service elicit admiration and praise for the devotee, who finding himself respected by the

people is elated. This elation quietly develops into pride and then the devotee considers himself a person superior and favoured of God. He despises his fellow men and calls them sinners. But he does not know that he himself will be doomed for despising his fellow men and thinking too much of himself. The Prophet says: "When you hear any person saying: 'Woe to the people they are doomed,' know that he himself will be doomed first."

3. People are usually proud of their lineage, and look down on men of low birth. They refuse to treat them on equal terms, and boastfully speak of their ancestors in the presence of others. This evil lurks even in the hearts of good and virtuous men, although their manners and actions throw a veil over it. But in an unguarded moment of excitement and anger this demon is let loose from the innermost corner of the heart.

The Prophet's companion Abu Dharr said: "I was quarrelling with someone in the presence of the Prophet when suddenly in a fit of rage I abused him saying, 'You son of a negress!' On this the Prophet coaxingly said to me: 'Abu Dharr, both the scales are equal. The white has no preference over the black.' Hearing this I fell and said to the person: Brother, come and trample on my face and then forgive me."

It is reported in the Hadith that two men were quarrelling before the Prophet. One said to the other: "I am the son of such and such illustrious man, tell me who your father is." The Prophet, addressing the boastful man said: "There were two men in the time of Musa who boastfully spoke of their ancestry. One said to the other: Look, how my nine ancestors all in one line were men of renown. And God said to Musa; 'Tell this man all your nine ancestors are in Hell and you are the tenth.'"

4. Women generally feel proud of their beauty. This leads to finding fault with others, and this gradually assumes the form of contempt and disdain. A'isha, the wife of the Prophet, says: "One day a woman came to the Prophet and I said to him: 'Look at this dwarf!' The Prophet turned towards me and said: 'A'isha repent of what you have said, for it is slander.'"

5,6,7. People feel a sort of elation at the sight of their possessions. A merchant is elated with his stores, a landowner with his fields and groves, and nobleman with his retinue and riches. In short, every person feels proud of his worldly possessions and looks down on those who are lacking in them. He believes in riches and worships wealth.

We may quote a parable from the Qur'an:

"And set forth to them a parable of two men. For one of them We made two gardens of grapevines, and We surrounded them both with palms, and in the midst of them tillage. Both gardens yielded their fruits and failed nothing. We caused a river to gush forth in their midst. The man possessed much fruit and he said to his companion while he disputed with him: I have greater wealth than you and am mightier in followers. While he entered his garden he was unjust to himself. He said: I do not think that this will ever perish. I do not think the hour will come, yet even if I return to my Lord I shall most certainly find a place better than this. His companion said to him, while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a small germ life, then he made you a perfect man? But as for me, Allah is my Lord and I do not ascribe any partner to my Lord. When you entered your garden, why did you not say: It is as Allah has willed. There is no power save Allah. If you consider me to be inferior to you in wealth and children, perhaps my Lord will give me something better than your garden, and send on it a reckoning from heaven, so that it shall become even ground with no living plant. Or the waters may sink into the ground so that you are unable to find them. His wealth was indeed destroyed, and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it. While it lay there (for it had fallen down from the roofs) he said: Ah me! would that I had none to help him besides Allah, nor could he defend himself. In Allah, alone is protection, the True One. In the bestowal of reward and in requital He is best.

Set forth to them also the parable of the life in this world. It is like the water which We send down from the clouds, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it. Then these become dry twigs which the winds scatter. Allah is able to do all things. Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world. The good works, which abide are better in thy Lord's Sight for reward and better in respect of hope." Qur'an 18:32-46

How fleeting are our wordly gains, and how foolish are we in feeling proud of them! Let us then live as meek and humble servants of God on earth.

Adapted from Muhammad
Al-Ghazzali's article -
Pride and Vanity
in
'The Muslim' - May 1970.

Stand out firmly for Justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kins, and whether it may be (against) rich or poor; for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your heart), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that you do.

Quran 4:135.

The object of this selection is to see whether our modern notions of just and unjust must continue to remain untrammelled, and receive our eternal reverence, or in the light of all past and present knowledge and experience, whether there is an urgent and indispensable need to evaluate our whole concept of justice, as much as other values in society today. A golden thread noticeable throughout the whole web of Islamic Shari'ah is that, in the first instance, there is an absolute duty personal to every believer towards God and his fellow-beings to uphold justice in all circumstances; and the rights of his fellow-beings to expect from every believer to fulfil that duty without fear or favour towards any one and irrespective of consequences.

The Qur'an calls us to do justice, and then refers to circumstances tending to drive us away from standing firm for real justice, such as our own self-interest, our parents, kith and kin and so on, and then says categorically, to stand firm against all such motivations.

For a believer, the idea of justice is not something confined to courts, nor does he wait until the interposition of state and legal machinery to do justice to his fellowmen. For him the concept of justice is not something for mere intellectual exercise and comparative study, or to be placed at rest in the statute book; it is not something to be kept dressed up only for presentation on formal occasions in public life. For him it is a living entity with meaningful content, making him ever conscious that his omissions and commissions should cause no harm or injustice to any of God's creatures.

All this may sound very unreal when we look at ourselves at the present time. Yet it is a matter that needs to be considered seriously, irrespective of what are or are not our conditioned contemporary notions of justice and injustice. Our concept of justice is based on our present system of values, the result of conditioned end products of diverging thoughts and ideas of justice developed outside the Islamic world at different

periods of time.

When we look at the fundamental basis of Islamic Justice, we find first of all that in its origin of source, it has no parallel in history, nor is its nature and content in common with any other. It is not a system of natural law without a material content or an ecclesiastical law embedded in mysticism or a system of positive man-made law decisive of human beings in terms of social categories of the past or the present. It is neither based on speculation nor on rationalisation. It is not built on the infallibility of a pontifical class or of any individuals or groups, or on an artificial class structure, or on the institution of property or on the supremacy of the state.

Before we look at what it is, we may usefully remind ourselves to appreciate the meanings of terminologies in their proper Islamic context. For example, words such as God and priests, sovereign and subject, state and class and so on through the usages in the Western and Eastern societies have acquired certain mystical, inexplicable and often notorious meanings, which have no relation to Islamic concept.

The original source for the basis of Islamic Justice is the Shari'ah which enshrines the minimum content, by any standard that are essential for a justifiable society. Then it makes it a binding obligation on all the believers to be perfectly knowledgeable of its contents and then to ensure that at least this basic minimum requirement is established in society and it forms the primary basis for all decisions as shown by the following rule of Shari'ah.

"Whoso does not establish and decide by that which Allah has revealed such are disbelievers" Quran, 5:47.

Then, as we saw at the beginning, Islam considers that a real and substantial basis for justice in society is in the first instance on the individual's motivation and inspiration being only one and only one, and that is, to seek the pleasure of God. It is inconceivable for a believer to be fair and just only because he is legally obliged, or it is socially desirable, economically advantageous, politically prudent or anything of that kind. For example, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told the believers, "Deeds are to be

judged only by intentions and a man will have only what he intended. When one's emigration is to God and His messenger, his emigration is to God and His messenger. But when his emigration is to a worldly end at which he aims, or to a woman whom he marries, his emigration is to that which he emigrates".

Further, as illustrated below from the rules of the Shariah, for the believer the human race is of one race and its origin is from one stock, and that it is the work of unscrupulous men that divides human society in terms of caste, creed, class and so on, for selfish desires. The Qur'an says:

"O men! Revere your Lord Who created you from a single soul and made out of it a pair and thereupon brought forth the multitude of men and women."

Quran 4:1.

The concepts of sovereignty and subject, rulers and the ruled, superiors and inferiors and masters and servants that existed in society as instruments of atrocious oppression and exploitation of man by man, are, for a believer, non-existent in his system of values. Indeed it is his duty to ensure that there are no conditioning circumstances for individuals or groups to exercise unwarranted authority by one over another, and also to eliminate the climate that provides sunshine for the survival of power mongers, the untrustworthy and the unscrupulous demagogues. All this is aptly illustrated by the following rules of the Shari'ah.

The Quran first goes to tell the believer "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey His Messenger and those from among yourselves who hold authority: then, if there is any dispute between you concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and His Apostle. If you do believe in Allah, and the Last Day. This is the best course (in itself) and better as regards the result."

Quran 4:59.

And the Quran reminds him: "And obey not persons whose hearts we have permitted to become unmindful of our remembrance, one who is following the dictates of his own desires and his case is that in which due limits are transgressed."

Quran 18:28

The Prophet, Peace be upon him, explains and clarifies to the believers who are their leaders and what are their attributes, as for example, in the following manner:

STAND FIRMLY FOR JUSTICE

"Your best leaders are those whom you love and who love you and for whom you pray and who pray for you (while) your worst leaders are those whom you hate and who hate you and whom you curse and who curse." (Muslim)

"We consider the seeker after a post (of trust and responsibility) as the untrustworthy." (Abu Dawud)

Then, there are a series of rules of Shari'ah relating to the economic and social life of the believers all directed towards establishing a viable system based on economics and social justice without giving rise to conflicts of interests. The system does not provide any facility, and indeed it is the obligation of every believer to ensure by positive measures that no facility exists, for the survival of a privileged or exploiting sector within the society. It is the duty of every believer to God and to the society to work and earn his living, as illustrated by the following verses of the Quran: "And say unto them (O Muhammad) work: And God will see your work: and so will His Apostle and all believers"

Qur'an 9:104.

Having emphasised the duty on every believer to work, it goes on saying further to promote a close and affectionate relationship and goodwill among the believers and by various regulatory measures to smooth out pockets of excesses in society. The following representative selections show the spirit in which a believer is required to perform his obligations:

"They entertain no desire in their hearts for that which has been given them but gave preference to others over themselves though poverty became their lot."

Qur'an 59:9.

"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love; and whatever you give of a truth God knows it all."

Quran 3:92

"And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities nor use it as bait for the judges with intention that you may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of other people's property."

Quran 2:188

A believer is further made aware of what has gone before and what will be the consequences in the future if he fails to conform to the standard required of him, as for instance, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, says:

"Beware of oppression for oppression

Advice To A Friend

Imam Hassan al-Banna, was the founder of the celebrated Iqwanul Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood) movement of the Middle East, which was initiated in Egypt in 1928. He was convinced that only an Islamic revolution could bring freedom, dignity, and honour to the masses. Armed with firmness of faith, strength of determination, and sincerity of mission, he worked actively to build a well-organized, disciplined movement.

The greatness of Imam Hassan al-Banna as a leader and inspirational figure in the Islamic movement did not come to an end when he was tragically assassinated on a Cairo street on February 12, 1949 after an official wave of suppression and persecution against the Muslim Brotherhood. His perceptive insight into the true mission of Islam and the practical steps necessary for realizing its fulfillment have been preserved in his numerous writings, which have been proven in the field of action.

Stated below, are some of the advices he gave to the followers of Iqwanul Muslimoon, which, although given over thirty years ago, are considered relevant to us today. They are extracted from the booklet - 'Message of the Teachings'.

1. Devote a daily period for reading the Qur'an. Carefully recite it, listen to it, and ponder over its meaning. Also study the practices of Muhammad, Peace be upon him, and memorise at least forty Ahadith.

2. Hasten to have a thorough medical checkup, and get treated for any ailments

will produce excessive darkness on the day of resurrection; and beware of niggardliness, for niggardliness destroyed your predecessors, inducing them to shed one another's blood and to treat things forbidden to them as lawful."

Muslim.

Finally we have a responsibility to God and we must try and ensure that the concept of Justice and its outward manifestations in ourselves and our society is realised. This is emphasised by God when He says:

"Thus we have appointed you a nation of the middle, so that you may bear witness before all people."

Quran 2:43.

—Adapted from Fi Zilal Al Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb.

you find in yourself. Attach importance to physical fitness and self-defence, and stand aloof from all causes of bodily weakness.

3. Don't drink too much coffee, tea, or other stimulating beverages. Drink them only when necessary. Also, abstain completely from smoking.

4. Show interest in the cleanliness and tidiness of your home and place of work. Be concerned with cleanliness of your dress, diet, and person, for Islam was founded on cleanliness.

5. Fulfil your promises and agreements. Never breach a covenant, regardless of the circumstances.

6. Be courageous and enduring. The highest degrees of courage are telling the truth in your own disfavour, keeping secrets, admitting mistakes, and controlling yourself when angry.

7. Always be serious and dignified. However, this should not prevent you from smiling or engaging in truthful jesting.

8. Always have bashful, delicate feelings. Be sensitive to beauty and ugliness; the first pleases you, and the second pains you. Also, be modest without humiliation, servility or adulation. If you demand less than what you deserve, you will receive what you deserve.

9. Always be equitable and of sound judgement in all situations. Never allow anger to make you forget merits, nor let affection and pleasure blind you to defects. Don't allow disputes to make you ungrateful. Always speak the truth, no matter how painful it is, even if it is against yourself or against the people dearest to you.

10. Be active, energetic, and skilled in public services. You should feel happy when you offer a service to another person. You should feel compelled to visit the sick, assist the needy, support the weak, and give relief to the ill-fated, even if it is only a kind word of sympathy. Always rush to do good deeds.

11. Be compassionate, graciously excusing and forgiving others. Be tender, forbearing, and clement to people and animals, and observe good manners with everyone. Observe Islamic social injunctions. Be merciful to the young and respectful to the old. Make room for your brothers in meetings and gatherings. Don't spy or backbite. Don't be noisy.

Continued on page 10

IS RACE THE CRITERION?

Always seek permission before entering non-public places, and make a courteous exit.

12. Perform your job in the best manner you can, and stand aloof from dishonesty and cheating. Observe your appointments, and never be late for work.

13. Be amicable in claiming your due, and hasten to give others their due in full, without procrastination.

14. Keep away from all forms of gambling, no matter what the incentive may be. Avoid unlawful means of livelihood, regardless of what quick profit lies therein.

15. Avoid the practice of charging interest (riba) in all your transactions. Purify yourself from its putrid touch.

16. Foster Islamic wealth in general by encouraging and helping Islamic economic institutions. Be careful about your money. Don't let it fall in Un-Islamic hands, regardless of the circumstances. Eat and wear products of Islamic enterprises.

17. Set aside a portion of your income to defray unforeseen expenses, no matter how small your income is, and never indulge in extravagance.

18. Struggle for the revival of forgotten Islamic practices and the elimination of practices alien to Islam in all areas of life.

19. Always be conscious of Allah (may He be exalted); seek His pleasure with determination and resoluteness. Bring yourself closer to Allah (may He be exalted) by performing extra night prayers (tahajjud), fasting at least three days every month, contemplating Allah and mentioning His name, and reciting the respected supplications of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

20. Perfect your prayers, and strive to perform them within their proper time periods. Also, try to pray in congregation in the mosque as frequently as possible.

21. Repeatedly repent of what you have wrongly committed, seeking Allah's forgiveness. Try to avoid committing pardonable offences as well as major sins. Devote an hour every night before going to bed for self-criticism, reflecting upon the good or bad things you have done throughout the day.

22. Strive hard against your own soul until it is under your full control. Lower your glance, control your emotions, and direct your sexual urge to decent and lawful outlets, absolutely deterring it from despised and unlawful outlets.

23. Completely avoid intoxicating drinks and everything that causes impairment of the body or delay of the mind.

24. Avoid corrupt friends and evil companions. Keep away from places of immorality and sin.

The division of mankind into different races is a sign from Allah. It is a reality that we must live with. But, is the question of race so fundamental as to become the very pivot of our existence? Or is it our ignorance that makes us think so?

It is not right to say that we are ignorant, because we live in an age which is marked by 'intellectualism' and 'enlightenment'. Even the average child born today is said to possess a higher I.Q. than the average child a few decades ago. Even though man has succeeded in breaking the sound barrier and travelled all the way to the moon, the earth is yet full of living evidence of racial prejudice and discrimination.

In Africa, certain non-native regimes have imposed themselves, through group force and repression, upon the native population which has resulted in the branding of entire sections of people as sub-human, and treating them more as animals than as human beings. In the Middle East, a cunning and greedy representative of "outside powers" has been artificially thrust upon the native Arab population forcing millions of the "sons of the soil" to flee from hearths and homes, and to seek refuge on the burning deserts, under open skies.

Besides these, we find race being exploited on a smaller scale in almost every place in the globe. For example, in the U.S.A. we find that the so-called 'blacks' are still struggling for recognition of their fundamental human rights, in spite of the martyrdom of men like Al Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, (Malcolm X). In India there are tens of millions who are regarded as having lowly birth and as such proclaimed to be 'untouchables' unworthy of moving in decent human societies. The Caribbean has its own peculiar brand of racial prejudice and perversity. In Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad, human beings who differ from one another only in very insignificant aspects, look upon one another with suspicion, if not fear and hatred. Even the so-called Muslims of Indian and African extractions, who live in Trinidad and other parts of the West Indies, seem to be more preoccupied with Indianism and Africanism than with Islam itself.

How! Is race so insurmountable that there is no solution to this racial awareness? I say yes, there is a solution

and that solution is true and unreserved submission to Allah.

Those of us who call ourselves Muslims and yet are more responsive to negative racial slogans, than to the teachings of Universal Islamic Brotherhood which are contained in the Qur'an, all we say is that we are muslims only in name. Those of us who previously had found race more appealing to us favouring somebody or discriminating against somebody, or banding and grouping ourselves along racial lines, than sincere submission to Allah, now we become painfully aware of the tremendous need that we have to re-learn our Islam from the beginning. Muhammad (U.W.B.P) says that "Love of one's race and love of Allah cannot co-exist in the same bosom". We are reminded of that very blunt and straight-forward verse of the Qur'an which says:-

'The Bedouins say that they believe; tell them that they are not believers, rather they should say we have entered the fold of Islam; and real belief had not yet taken roots in their hearts.'

Qur'an 49:14.

The tight rope-walking between Islam and racism, which many of the so-called Muslims in our society seem to be doing today, can only lead to one conclusion — that Islam is yet to strike roots in their hearts.

How can we allow our energies to be taken up in our racial pre-occupations when Allah so emphatically declares:

"O mankind surely We have created you of male and female and We have divided you into nations and tribes that you may know each other, surely the most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is he who fears Him most, surely Allah is Knowing, Aware."

Qur'an 49:13.

Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, was an Arab, a direct descendant from Prophet Ibraheem, and yet, it was he who declared that neither an Arab nor a non-Arab is superior over one another except through piety and virtue. Did he not tell us in clear-cut terms that a man who invites people on racial considerations or fights over racial issues is not one of his followers? So, what conclusion can we arrive at except to say even though our tongues continue to profess the Shahadah, our hearts

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WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

An European conference on 'Women in Islam' will be held on 25 & 26 February 1978. Topics to be discussed include : woman and family - an Islamic view; the Muslim woman in western society; spirituality of woman in Islam; status of woman in Islam - general legal aspects; woman in Islam and polygamy and Islam. The venue will be : International Conference Centre, RAI - AMSTERDAM.

Women interested in attending are asked to contact : Conference Secretary, Women's Islamic Society of the Netherlands, Fleelede - 905, Amsterdam ZO. Phone : 020-986928.

IS RACE THE CRITERION?

remain empty of the true understanding of Islam and sincere commitment to its principles.

From the verse quoted above it can be seen that existence of race (not racial prejudice) serves a particular purpose. Allah, in His infinite wisdom, has divided us into different races so that we may know and love one another. As variety is the spice of life, there are myriads of colours and different species of flowers, trees and animals,, Therefore, a complete uniformity in the shapes and the appearances of the human species would not have been quite consistent with nature.

Also, we know from the verse quoted, that race is immaterial to Allah, who is the Maker and Ruler of mankind. Whether we are red, blue or green means nothing to Him. One of the criteria of His recognising our closeness to Him is our consciousness of Him. This is the criterion of honour in the sight of Allah. Hence, a Muslim so to speak, has no race, no colour or other similar traits or loyalties.

Thus, if only the world could grasp this fine point expounded in this verse of the Qur'an, racial prejudices would disappear and racial harmony achieved in its entirety.

Is it not time that we forget our Indian, African, Chinese, European and other origins and turn to our Common Creator in a spirit of true submission and common worship?

Hassan Mohammed

Saudi Scholarships

Dear brothers in Islam,

It is my pleasure to inform you that the University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, is starting an ambitious programme of taking Teaching Assistants from different parts of the Muslim world who are graduates of recognised universities, with Grade Distinction in all the fields of science and engineering. I think it will be a good idea if you give this matter some importance in order to choose some outstanding Muslim boys who fulfil these requirements.

I hope that this will be a good help for our Muslim boys in your country. The university is willing to take two boys from each country.

*Your brother in Islam,
Dr. Ahmed Totonji
Assistant Secretary
General,
World Assembly of
Muslim Youth.*

NOTE : Interested persons are requested to contact the Islamic Trust for further information.

Haji Figures

The number of non-Saudis who performed Hajj last year registered an increase of 20,279 over the 1976 figure of 719,040. There were twice as many pilgrims coming by air than by ship. The largest number of pilgrims, 104,577 came from Nigeria (66,873 in 1976) followed by Turkey 91,417 (137,291 in 1976).

In general, the Hajjis reported a marked improvement in facilities, amenities and arrangement as compared to previous years.

Israeli Compensation?

The UN general assembly passed overwhelmingly a resolution demanding full Israeli compensation for the losses and damages sustained by the Arabs in the occupied territories. The resolution adopted 109:3, with 26 abstentions,

declared that all measures by Israel 'to exploit the human, natural and all other resources' are illegal and calls upon Israel to desist forthwith from all such practices. Australia, US and Israel voted against, and most West and some South American nations abstained.

The Editorial Committee of the Muslim Standard would like to see more persons writing and making use themselves of the columns of the paper. A person may choose to send a letter for publication or an item of news, he or she may deal with aspects of Trinidad and West Indian life or anything of interest and importance to Muslims in particular and the wider society and the Islamization process in general. That should give ample scope!

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CONDOM PROLIFERATION!

More Problems For Our Nation

It was reported in one of the daily newspapers on January 13th that the Family Planning Association intends setting up condom dispensing machines at 'strategic points' in Port of Spain and San Fernando during Carnival days.

If this report is true, it provides yet more evidence of the shortsightedness and bankruptcy of the Government's (and certain of its agencies) policies and actions that affect the moral and social life of the society.

During Carnival days, the free flowing alcohol, the intoxicating beat of 'pan' and the sight of near naked men, women and teenagers in the streets, serve to remove the sense of responsibility and decency and arouse the carnal passions. In short, the 'scene' is built to remove men and women from the sphere of the human to that of the animal. And, as if that is not enough, the FPA aims to remove the last 'straw' of restraint by offering condoms on a platter (the vending machines).

The result of this action is more adultery and fornication, thus pushing further down the gutter the already fast declining moral standards of our society.

It is even more distressing when we consider that a significant number of the people making use of the condoms will be teenagers, most likely school children. There will be serious consequences resulting from school children getting involved in sexual relationships. These illicit relationships can easily lead to the attendant vices such as excessive alcohol, prostitution, drug-abuse and violence.

The children's studies can be adversely affected if not abandoned. What comes out of this situation is more 'problem' citizens.

Consider the chain reaction from adultery. The adulterer or adulteress more often than not, is found out by his/her marital partner and there are quarrels resulting in tension in the home. This tension affects their performance in their jobs. Result! Less production for the nation. Also the tension at home will adversely affect the children, leading to poorer performances at school.

Of course, the other possible outcome from adultery is divorce. This leads to broken homes and the possibility the children becoming delinquent or emotionally weak. And, a problem child so often becomes a problem adult. Result! More problems for the society.

Isn't it ironic that some married men would so easily commit adultery, but if the wife were to do likewise, she would be in for a severe beating or immediate action for divorce?

So far as fornication is concerned, it leads to feelings of guilt. For the woman, there are very serious implications when she wants to get married (if she is not marrying the same man with whom she committed fornication). It is a fact that the overwhelming majority of men like to know that the woman he marries is a virgin. Isn't it ironic, that the same man might think nothing of robbing many other girls of their virginity?

The Government, by its encouragement of Carnival (Carnival Development Committee) and its support of the FPA betrays contradictory policies. Carnival creates the conditions for looser sexual relationships which inevitably result in increased population growth rate whereas the FPA seeks to reduce this growth rate.

The solution to the problem of the bumper crop of babies resulting from the Carnival period is not 'condom proliferation' but the abandonment of the root cause — Carnival. This need

not be done abruptly, but can be phased out by a gradual de-emphasising of Carnival.

Almost all the activities that go to make up Carnival and the activities of the FPA go against the teachings of all the major religions in this country. Yet the Government persists in promoting these two things and therefore is guilty of contravening God's Laws.

We call on the religious leaders in this country whose responsibility is to struggle tirelessly for adherence to God's Laws; to make serious sustained representation to the Government to de-emphasise Carnival (and to ban it eventually) and to abandon the family planning programme. At the same time the religious leaders should discourage their congregations from taking part in these activities.

More immediately, we call on the FPA to abandon this condom machines project. We call also on all responsible and right-thinking citizens and especially the religious bodies to register their protest to the Government in no uncertain terms.

The lowering of the moral fibre of the society will affect not only us but our children and future generations. Citizens of this country cannot be indifferent and watch a few misguided individuals push the morals of this society further down the gutter.

No nation ever became great while being morally degenerate, and no great nation ever remained great when it became morally degenerate.

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