Risalah

for

BUILDING A SINGAPORE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE

Risalah

for

BUILDING A SINGAPORE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE

2nd Edition

Prepared by

Office of the Mufti
Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

CONTENT

FOREWORD FOR THE 2ND EDITION

*T*he 2nd edition of the *Risalah for Building A Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence* is a follow-up to the first edition which was launched during the Muis Workplan Seminar on 4 February 2006. This document is an outcome of the compilation of feedback attained from the series of consultations conducted on the content and approach of the Risalah. The consultations involved three focus group discussions, presentations made to mosque management boards and activists, as well as to some Asatizahs and youth groups.

Part of the feedback gathered suggest the simplication of the language used in the Risalah and the inclusion of contemporary examples and applications for each desired attribute. This 2nd edition of the Risalah took into account such suggestions.

Nevertheless, this is a base document which will be updated and improved upon whenever necessary, as our community continues to make strategic strides towards excellence. Such improvements to the document are only possible with the support and contributions of members of our community. I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all who have offered constructive criticisms, comments and suggestions. May our efforts to become an exemplary community that brings blessings to all, gain the blessings of Allah SWT and His Messenger pbuh.

Mohd Murat Md Aris
Director for Religious Affairs
Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

BACKGROUND

*T*he journey towards excellence in our socio-religious life is a continuous one. In striving to be the best, we must achieve excellence in all areas of life. In particular, how do we define excellence in the socio-religious sphere?

From the religious perspective, 'excellence' means the ability to perform the rituals of Islam while appreciating their significance and internalising the values embedded within them. By doing so, we are able to manifest the beauty of this religion. This beauty, when shared with humanity, will bring goodness to everyone. In other words, a Muslim community of excellence is one that is religiously profound.

In the social sense, 'excellence' refers to our ability to fully partake in nation-building and to position ourselves as full members of the Singaporean society. In other words, a Muslim community of excellence is one that is also socially progressive.

How do we then detail out what is meant by being religiously profound and socially progressive in the context of Singapore?

This Risalah details out the specifics. It discusses the 10 Desired Attributes of the Singaporean Muslim Community of Excellence. In this document, we provide explanations to the desired attributes, coupled with illustrations and examples from the Islamic tradition and civilisation, and suggested manifestations of the attributes in our contemporary life.

Islamic history has shown the dynamism of Islam, insofar as Muslims have been able to practise Islam with relative ease under varying circumstances. Our past scholars (ulama') have provided many examples of how they have reconciled Islamic teachings with the unique challenges of their days.

Our current situation in Singapore is certainly unique to ourselves. We live in a multi-religious society, secular state and globalised world. Therefore, we have to chart our own path in living Islam today. With such uniqueness, we may not have a Muslim community, whether in the past or at present, that we can model after in entirety.

Therefore, guided by the successes of past Muslim communities and the principles and values enshrined in the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Traditions (*Sunnah*), we need to identify the relevant attributes that characterise a successful Muslim community in our modern world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

*I*slam comprises of four main elements; principles, moral values, laws and traditions. These are the essential elements that form the religious life of any Muslim community. The principles, values and laws of Islam are derived from the divine revelations in the form of the Holy Quran and the Prophetic *Sunnah*.

The history and traditions of Muslim communities illustrate the versatility of Islam, in that it is able to adapt to changing needs and contexts. They show how such Muslim communities had sought to harmonise religious teachings with their unique circumstances.

Their experiences show how Muslims practised Islam successfully, despite having lived in different environments. They managed to do so without having to forsake Islamic principles and its fundamental teachings.

In the early days of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh*, the Prophet changed his approach in imparting the teachings of Islam, according to the varying circumstances within which his society lived. For example, he drew up the Charter of Medina and embraced people of other religious beliefs (such as the people of the Book *[ahli Kitab]* and the polytheists) as part of the *ummah* (community) in the city of Medina. In this Charter, non-Muslim citizens were guaranteed security and freedom to practise their religion.

One cannot imagine this being the case in the early days of Islam in Mecca. This later inclusiveness - one that was based on peace, mutual understanding and cooperation amongst people of the different faiths - could not possibly be used to describe the early period of Islam in Mecca, where persecution of Muslims was rampant.

Similarly, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs adapted the teachings of Islam to the changing conditions of Muslims at various points in their history. The experiences of Sayyidina 'Umar al-Khattab *r.a.* and his legal pronouncements, for example, proved that Islamic practices were contextualised, in order to uphold justice in a society whose norms had changed.

Subsequently, many scholars have again demonstrated, through their views in many instances, that Islam remains compatible with any condition, as long as the practice of the religion remains guided by its fundamental principles. Thus, whilst the principles remain the same, the way we understand and apply them need to be renewed and adapted, in light of the circumstances of the day.

One can draw lessons from the approaches adopted by Imam al-Syafi'e *r.a.* He changed his substantive views after immigrating from the Iraqi city of Kufah to Cairo. This was due to the different societal conditions and norms he observed in the two cities. However, he remained firm on the foundational principles and laws of Islam.

External factors, such as the geopolitical situation and social realities, may strongly influence and shape the way we understand and practice Islam. For instance, some immigrant Muslim communities in Europe face problems in adapting their religious lifestyles to the realities of living in secular and plural societies. [1]   Thus, unless Muslims take it upon themselves to define and shape their religious life, such factors may result in outcomes that could have been problematic and better avoided. Examples of these include the evolution of the "*English-Syariah*" [2] in the legal system and the emergence of many *micro-ijtihads* by individual Muslims.[3]

Therefore, excellence cannot be achieved if we allow change to take its natural course. Instead, we must accept the challenges and chart our own path, by harmonising Islamic principles with the new realities of life. In our own context, we therefore have to be cognisant of the realities of modern Singapore, when we want to define our socio-religious life.

For example, how do we understand our duties as citizens, from an Islamic point of view? The concept of citizenship in a nation-state is itself fairly new in Islamic discourse. Nonetheless, we have to address this. We have to ask ourselves: what are the responsibilities of a citizen towards his country and his fellow countrymen?

Another reality is our minority status in a secular state, plural society and an open and globalised world. What are our roles and responsibilities?

We need to ask ourselves what are the attributes of a Singaporean Muslim Community of Excellence, if we want to realise the vision to be *"the ideal community evolved for mankind"*[4], and to be a blessing and inspiration to others [5]. The attributes offered in the Risalah are the outcomes of our attempt to harmonise the different elements of Islam, namely principles, values, law and tradition with Singapore's context.

We are confident that the Singapore Muslim community is able to surmount the challenges of today and tomorrow, and can be a good example for others. The Islamic heritage and experience of previous Muslim communities help build our confidence that the way Islam is being understood and practised varies according to situation. Viewed as such, Islam will remain relevant across time and space.

THE 10 DESIRED ATTRIBUTES – A SUMMARY

*T*here are ten desired attributes focusing on knowledge, principle-centredness, progressiveness and inclusiveness, which describe the identity of Singaporean Muslims today.

By appreciating the history of Islamic civilisation – marked by its universality and inclusiveness - Muslims should have the confidence to interact and learn from others. With a profound appreciation of this Islamic spirit, Muslim communities, both past and present, have been able to internalise the dynamism of Islamic teachings. They are able to grasp and overcome the challenges of their days in objective and rational ways.

Islam is not about rituals only, nor is its belief system based on unquestioning adherence. Islam places great importance on knowledge and creative and critical thinking. The *Syari'ah* of Islam is dynamic and characterised by two unique features – principles that do not change, and the flexibility in their application, in the process of adapting to changing circumstances.

The *Syari'ah* is built on knowledge, critical inquiry, openness, and public welfare. With these principles forming its bedrock, the *Syari'ah* accepts and welcomes all means that benefit mankind and the environment.

Islam embraces other civilisations and cultures, and welcomes new scientific developments that will contribute to the betterment of human life on earth. In the past, Muslims contributed greatly to the development of the modern sciences. Inspired by this tradition, Muslim scholars readily rode the modernisation wave and played a major role in the development of the sciences.

Interacting with other civilisations is not new, but has always been part of the Islamic way of life. The Holy Quran itself discusses inter-faith and inter-communal relations and dialogues. The societies in which Muslims lived in the past were indeed multi-racial and multi-religious. For example, the Charter of Medina outlined the relationship between the various religious communities who lived there.

Indeed, it was this openness that paved the way for Muslims to contribute at the global level. Furthermore, this has been made possible through dynamic religious principles, further strengthened by moral virtues, all of which made Muslims a model and inspiration to other communities.

"ولكن وطنوا أنفسكم، إن أحسن الناس أحسنوا
وإن أساءوا فأحسنوا"

"...But you have to stay true to yourself.
    If other people are good, be good.
And should they not be, so make them good."

(Prophetic tradition reported by At-Tirmizi)

1

Holds strongly to Islamic principles while adapting itself to changing context

Introduction

The Muslim community which is well-equipped with strong values and base its religious life on profound principles will be able to thrive in all circumstances. Such adaptation to contextual needs does not necessarily mean that each Muslim will forsake his values and principles. Instead, adaptation means that a Muslim is able to live according to his/her religion, and in harmony with society, because everyone is guided by a set of shared principles and values. This concurs with the Prophetic saying:

"لا يكن أحدكم إمعة، يقول أنا مع الناس إن أحسنوا أحسنت وإن أساؤوا أسأت، ولكن وطنوا أنفسكم، إن أحسن الناس أحسنوا وإن أساءوا فأحسنوا"

which means: "*And let none of you be those who follow the crowd, saying, "(My opinion or stand) depends on what the masses say. If everyone is good, I shall be good. If everyone acts otherwise, I too shall follow them." But you have to stay true to yourself. If other people are good, you will be good. And should they not be, so make them good.*" [6]

Can the Muslim community hold strongly to Islamic principles while adapting itself to changing context?

[1] Knowledge – A Core Islamic Principle

Knowledge is the cornerstone of faith and values. If each individual Muslim continuously deepens his understanding of the religion, it is indeed possible for him to exercise sufficient flexibility to adapt to his surroundings without compromising his faith. To this end, a profound and correct understanding of the religion is key. This can be seen in the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad pbuh, which links the process of learning (encapsulated by the phrase 'Iqra' meaning 'Read') to the beginning of life. A Muslim who truly understands the significance and import of this message will spend his life seeking to further examine and study the creations of Allah SWT, while at the same time, sharing his insights with the rest of humanity.

The first revelation crystallizes the importance for a Muslim society to produce, discover, and apply knowledge. Only with wisdom, understanding and knowledge, can mankind acquaint himself with Allah SWT. Knowledge leads to the truth, and consequently, leads to the right path towards Allah SWT.

Allah says:

{سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الآفَاق وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ }

"We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses everything?" [7]

Allah SWT also raised the status of the learned in this verse:

"يرفع الله الذين آمنوا منكم والذين أوتوا العلم درجات"

"God will raise up, by many degrees, those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge." [8]

In the Holy Quran, there are many verses that call on mankind to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills, some of which are surfaced by Dr Solah Sultan, as shown in the table below. [9]

Theme/Content	No of times repeated in the Quran
Knowledge (العلم)	865
Reminders (التذكر)	284
Questions (السؤال)	129
The Mind (العقل)	49
Reflection (التدبر)	44

Knowledge can be obtained from observation (النظر), reflection (الفكر), questioning (السؤال), the process of which are based on the following Quranic precepts:

• Freedom of thought

• Elimination of prejudices and unfounded assumptions when faced with convincing counterarguments

• Use of reason and rejection of emotions and sentiments

• Dependence on rational evidence

The following are some verses from the Holy Quran that explains the above:

Freedom of thought

Allah says:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ قَالُواْ بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ﴾

"But when it is said to them, 'Follow the message that God has sent down', they answer, 'We follow the ways of our fathers'. What! Even though their fathers understood nothing and were not guided?" [10]

Elimination of assumptions

Allah says:

﴿وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلاَّ ظَنًّا إَنَّ الظَّنَّ لاَ يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ﴾.

"Most of them follow nothing but assumptions, but assumptions can be of no value at all against the Truth. God is well aware of what they do." [11]

Rejection of sentiments

Allah says:

﴿إِنْ هِيَ إِلاَّ أَسْمَاء سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُم مَّا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَانٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الأَنفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُم مِّن رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدَى﴾

"These are nothing but names you have invented yourselves, you and your forefathers. God has sent no authority for them. These people merely follow guesswork and the whims of their souls, even though guidance has come to them from their Lord." [12]

Dependence on rational evidence

Allah says:

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاء كُلَّ

شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفلا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

"Are the disbelievers unaware that the heavens and the earth used to be joined together and that We ripped them apart, that We made every living thing from water? Will they not believe?" [13]

The above briefly describes the concept of knowledge in Islam. It is a duty for us to pursue knowledge as such, and if we do, it will keep us rooted in Islamic principles.

How should we value knowledge?

Embrace lifelong learning

Learning is an act of worship (*ibadah*) and is meritorious in the sight of Allah. Therefore, each Muslim must expand the breadth and depth of his knowledge. A way to ensure that is to embark on a journey of continuous learning, and not feel satisfied with the level of understanding that one has already attained. For instance, once we have mastered *fardhu 'ain* (knowledge of obligations of the individual), we should branch out to understand other fields such as *tafsir* (exegesis of the Holy Quran), *hadith* (sayings and the life of the Prophet) and the history of Islam. If we have mastered the techniques of reciting the Holy Quran, we should seek to understand its message, values and meanings.

The unceasing quest for knowledge should not be confined to the area of religion. Muslim professionals should not be content with the qualifications they possess, as new knowledge is being accumulated at an astonishing speed. To truly be a community of excellence, we need to upgrade our skills and specialise in new fields. It is our responsibility

to ensure that there are Muslim professionals in every field so that the benefits accruing to their knowledge will diffuse to the society at large. Indeed, if we truly hold to Islamic principles, we should be at the forefront of initiatives and efforts towards lifelong learning.

☞ **Develop Muslim expertise in various contemporary fields**

The Muslim community needs to invest in producing the next generation that will thrive in a knowledge-based society, and is capable of contributing effectively to the Singaporean society. This investment includes moral and financial support for those seeking to pursue specialist knowledge, especially in fields where there is a discernible lack of Muslim representation.

Singapore has identified life sciences and financial services as areas of growth in the new economy. Likewise, the Muslim community needs to ride on the wave of these new developments and produce experts in these fields. At same time, we still need more specialists in the field of medicine, science, mathematics, business, social work and administration. A community of excellence should seek to move beyond its comfort zone and involve itself in pioneering efforts to establish itself in a fast developing economic era.

☞ **Cultivate passion for learning**

The Muslim community needs to cultivate a culture of excellence that involves passion and commitment to learning, reading and discovering. The pursuit of knowledge should be part of our daily activities and not merely confined to formal classes or religious institutions such as *madrasahs* and mosques. We can start with our own families, by inculcating practices such as reading together as a family on a daily/weekly basis.

Can the Muslim community hold strongly to Islamic principles while adapting itself to changing context?

[2] Strong Faith - A Core Islamic Principle

Knowledge is the key to a strong faith. Faith itself will protect us from doing wrong and from falling into despair over the vicissitudes of life. It also gives us the confidence to pursue challenges as well as scale new heights.

*I*n the Quran, Allah SWT tells us of the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) *pbuh* who faced many challenges in the course of his life. For instance, he and his followers were pursued by Pharoah and the latter's army to the coast of the Red Sea, with no means of escape. At that point, his men felt certain that they were trapped. Yet, he did not lose faith and held on to the belief that Allah SWT will not forsake him.

إفلما تراءا الجمعان قال أصحاب موسى إنا لمدركون.

قال كلا إن معي ربي سيهديني﴾

"And as soon as the two sides came within sight of one another, Moses' followers said, 'We shall definitely be caught'. Moses said, 'No, my Lord is with me: He will guide me'." [14]

A person with a strong faith genuinely believes that Allah SWT will protect him and show him the path to righteousness. Strong faith and a profound understanding of Islam will enable each individual to seek Allah's help and guidance to deal with any challenges in life. It is also faith that will give us the confidence to live in a secular state, plural society, and global world, as we know that our faith will protect our values and way of life, even as we interact with society at large.

How can we create an Islamic community that is strong in faith and able to adapt to a changing world?

To do this, we need to truly understand the Islamic faith and creed, as explained in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Faith enlightens a man's soul, opens the mind to new ideas, and touches the heart with compassion to serve others. In the Holy Quran, Allah SWT has mentioned the role of faith. Faith becomes

- a guiding beacon for humanity giving them purpose in life
- a catalyst for building integrity and an excellent work ethic
- a fortress against evil
- a source of peace

The following Quranic verses highlight the above.

A guiding beacon for humanity

Allah says:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." [15]

Building integrity and an excellent work ethic

Allah says:

﴿بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لله وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

"In fact, any who direct themselves wholly to God and do good will have their reward with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve." [16]

☞ **A fortress against evil**

Allah says:

﴿وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

"And she said, 'Come to me,' and he replied, 'God forbid! My master has been good to me; wrongdoers never prosper." [17]

☞ **A source of peace**

Allah says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَّعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ﴾

"It is He Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the Believers, that they may add faith to their faith." [18]

How can one cultivate a strong faith?

A contemporary Muslim scholar, Dr Yusuf Qaradhawi, is of the opinion that the most efficacious approach to cultivating a strong faith is through the acquisition of knowledge of matters of faith (*'aqidah*) in a manner that emphasises the spirit of inquiry instead of mere rote learning. To him, an Islamic education should drive a student to inquire further and reflect on the greatness of Allah SWT, while continuing to do good. This approach includes: [19]

- Teaching '*aqidah* using the Quranic approach

- Combining both textual and observational evidences to cultivate faith

- Using techniques in rationalising from the Holy Quran

- Using modern scientific findings to reinforce faith

- Rooting faith in established facts, not superstition

- Reflecting and thinking critically

- Using faith to enjoin good and cooperation, and reject fragmentation

This approach is certainly relevant to the present context. Such an approach has to be translated into the curriculum for teaching the Islamic faith. Moreover, science and technology is developing at an astonishing rate. Current research findings do not contradict the Holy Quran, but instead, support and expand on the Quranic arguments.

{سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ }

"We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses everything?" [20]

Faith is not to be inherited. It is up to each individual to gradually strengthen it through learning. Therefore, the approach to religious education should also be updated, so that we can strengthen the faith of our community through a more profound understanding of the religion that does not rely on merely rituals or literal rote learning.

*I*n the Holy Quran, Allah tells of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) pbuh who spent his life searching for truth through reflection, observation, critical thinking and inquiry until he found the truth he sought.

﴿وكذلك نري ابراهيم ملكوت السماوات والأرض وليكون من الموقنين. فلما جن عليه الليل رأى كوكبا قال هذا ربي فلما أفل قال لا أحب الافلين.   فلما رأى القمر بازغا قال هذا ربي فلما أفل قال لئن لم يهدني ربي لأكونن من القوم الضالين.   فلما رأى الشمس بازغة قال هذا ربي هذا أكبر فلما أفلت قال ياقوم إني برئ مما تشركون.   إني وجهت وجهي للذي فطر السماوات والأرض حنيفا وما أنا من المشركين﴾

"Remember when Abraham said to his father, Azar, 'How can you take idols as gods? I see that you and your people have clearly gone astray'. In this way We showed Abraham (God's) mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer. When the night grew dark over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord', but when it set, he said, 'I do not like things that set'. And when he saw the moon rising he said, 'This is my Lord', but when it too set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be one of those who go astray'. Then he saw the sun rising and cried, 'This is my Lord! This is greater.' But when the sun set, he said, 'My people, I disown all that you worship beside God.' I have turned my face as a true believer towards Him who created the heavens and the earth. I am not one of the polytheists.'" [21]

And Allah says in another verse:

> وإذ قال إبراهيم رب أرني كيف تحي الموتى. قال أولم تؤمن قال بلى ولكن ليطمئن قلبي. قال فخذ أربعة من الطير فصرهن إليك ثم اجعل على كل جبل منهن جزء ثم ادعهن يأتينك سعيا واعلم أن الله عزيز حكيم}
>
> *"And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead', He said, 'Do you not believe, then?' 'Yes', said Abraham, 'But just to put my heart at rest'. So God said, 'Take four birds and train them to come back to you. Then place them on separate hilltops, call them back, and they will come flying to you: know that God is all powerful and wise.'"* [22]

Personality: Ibn al-Nafis and His Contributions to the Field of Medicine

One of the great Muslim intellectuals who contributed significantly to the development of his society, based on their contextual needs, was Ala' al-Din 'Ali bin 'Abi al-Hazm bin al-Nafis al-Qarasyi (1210-1288), or better known as Ibn al-Nafis. His expertise was in the field of medicine.

Although he was accepted by his community in *al-Qarasyiyah* as an expert on religious matters upon his graduation in *fiqh, hadith* and Arabic language studies in Hims, Syria, he decided to continue his quest for knowledge by pursuing a course in medicine. This surprised his father who initially opposed his decision. In response to this, he said "There are many who are well-versed in *fiqh* and Arabic, but there very few doctors and medical experts in the Muslim community.

I have interest in exploring medicine to discover the secrets and greatness of Allah SWT within the human body. With knowledge and my passion in this field, I can help others who are in ill-health." [23]

After having secured his father's blessings for his decision, he not only succeeded in his medical studies in Al-Nuri Hospital in Damascus, but also became one of the leading prodigies in the field.

On the advice of his mentor, Professor al-Dikhwar, who was the director of the Al-Nuri Hospital, he did not confine himself to the treatment of his patients, but also engaged in writing research papers. He researched and critiqued Greek medicine that was pioneered by Gallinus and Epicurus. He also studied and expounded further Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun*. He specialised in anatomy and wrote his masterpiece, *Syarh Tasyrih Ibnu Sina* (Explanation of the anatomical findings of Ibnu Sina) in which he described the workings of the human body in such details that some of his peers believed he had conducted autopsy [24] – a procedure that was controversial at the time. As an expert in *fiqh*, he was confident enough to voice his belief in the permissibility of such procedure in Islam.

Through his research in anatomy, Ibn al-Nafis revolutionised the medical world with his findings on the respiratory system and the circulation of blood, which are still of use today [25]. His findings preceded William Harvey's by more than four centuries.

Application

On the contemporary approach to learning *fiqh*

The study of *fiqh* should not merely be confined to the classification of actions and rituals into the five main categories – compulsory (*wajib*) , permissible (*mubah*), prohibited (*haram*), encouraged (sunnah) and discouraged (*makruh*) – as had often been done traditionally. Rather, it should also give due emphasis to the role of *fiqh* in developing the intellect of the community, and thus play a part in helping individuals make decisions for themselves. Such is the essence of *fiqh*. The purpose of the study of fiqh should be:

- To help each Muslim individual become closer to Allah (*Hablun minAllah*)

- To allow each Muslim to make choices in daily life

- To help each Muslim build closer ties with his family

- To help each Muslim build closer ties with the community (*Hablun minannas*)

- To strengthen the ties between different communities

- To provide guidelines for the conduct of relationships between the individual/community and the country

- To cultivate understanding among nations

Fiqh is not an abstract field studied in a vacuum. The process of deriving rules should be given equal consideration as the conclusions, because it is an understanding of the process which led to the current classification system that will allow each individual to apply similar analysis in making decisions. A grasp of the process of analysis and evaluation will have far-reaching impact on the community and the individual, as they will possess the skill to make judgments that considers both the pros and cons of an issue, and whether a decision may lead to public welfare (*maslahah*) or harm (*mafsadah*).

☞ **Example of an often misunderstood issue in *fiqh***

Without understanding the principles of *fiqh*, it is likely that the Muslim community will not succeed in grappling with the dynamics of current problems, especially when sentiment and emotions overwhelm them, and Islamic principles are not relied upon. For instance, some Muslims may not offer greetings to people of other cultures during the latter's festive occasion, with the argument that such an act is not permissible in Islam.

Contemporary Muslim scholars are of the opinion that well-wishes to non-Muslims during their celebrations are not only allowed, but encouraged in the context of a multi-ethnic society. Such good wishes is only a cultural act that does not give credence to non-Islamic beliefs, or indicate a lack of faith on the part of the Muslim. Moreover, such openness will project the true nature of Islam as a tolerant faith that brings blessings to all.

Among the scholars who hold such a view are Sheikh Faisal al-Mawlawi [26] and Sheikh Mustafa al-Zarqa' [27]. According to them, wishing non-Muslims well during their festivals does not imply that Muslims are accepting the latter's beliefs, and is permissible on the grounds that

• Such an act surfaces the beauty, compassion and tolerance of Islam

• It allows Muslims to reciprocate the good wishes offered to them by other communities on Islamic festivals

This is supported by a Quranic verse that enjoins Muslims to treat non-Muslims well:

" لا ينهاكم الله عن الذين لم يقاتلوكم في الدين ولم يخرجوكم من دياركم أن تبروهم وتقسطوا إليهم إن الله يحب المقسطين "

"And He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just." [28]

It is also supported by another verse that enjoins Muslims to reciprocate good wishes with even warmer ones:

" وإذا حييتم بتحية فحيوا بأحسن منها أو ردوها إن الله كان على كل شيء حسيبا "

"When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account of all things." [29]

The general import of both verses encompasses various facets of Muslim/non-Muslim interaction. Quranic exegetes such as *Imam Ibn Kathir* [30], *Imam al-Tabari* [31], *Imam Ibn al-Arabi* [32], *Imam Nasafi* [33] and *Imam al-Qurtubi* [34] support this view citing the following reasons:

• Verse 8 in the Chapter *al-Mumtahanah* (quoted above) is still relevant and was not abrogated by verses relating to war (*qital*).

• Allah SWT does not forbid compassionate acts towards non-Muslims, especially the weak and the downtrodden, and those who did not actively fight against the presence of Muslims in their midst.

- Answering a good wish or greeting in the best way possible is permissible in Islam. *Imam Ibn Kathir* has once quoted an incident between a non-Muslim Persian and the companion *Ibn 'Abbas*. The Persian gave a greeting of peace "Assalamu 'alaikum" to which Ibn '*Abbas* replied "Wa 'alaikumussalam warahmatullah" meaning may the peace and grace of Allah be upon you. His response to those who protested his reply the Persian man's greeting was simple – that every individual continues to live by the grace of Allah. [35]

For the Muslim community in Singapore, this more flexible opinion should be adopted, since we are living in a plural society. In fact, this opinion is well-grounded in the Islamic principles derived from the Holy Quran, as explained earlier. It also enables Muslims to interact well with non-Muslims, and to live in harmony, while upholding universal values shared among them. As we wish each other joy on cultural and religious festivals, we portray a good image of Islam and forge cordial relations between different religious and racial groups, whether as families, friends, colleagues, neighbours or fellow citizens.

Summary:

• Grounded in faith that is based on knowledge, revelation and observation, each Muslim will be able to comfortably adapt to changes.

• With a greater appreciation of the dynamic process in Islamic reasoning, each Muslim will be able to make informed decisions and adapt to his environment without forsaking Islamic principles.

• Faith and knowledge collectively produce Islamic principles for a Muslim to apply in daily living.

ILMU	+	IMAN	=	PRINSIP
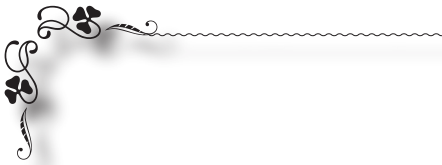
"In the advance of civilization, it is
new knowledge which paves the way."

(W.R. Whitney)

2

Appreciates Islamic civilisation and history, and has good understanding of contemporary issues

Introduction

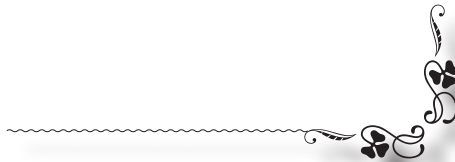An Islamic community of excellence profoundly understands Islamic history. To develop ourselves into such a community, we must comprehend and learn from the history of our Prophet Muhammad *pbuh*, his companions, the *auliya'* (saints) and past scholars.

How should we study Islamic civilisation?

Reflective approach

We have to reexamine and relook the way we learn Islamic history. History encompasses more than just political or social facts, and events. It is a holistic study of an era, the predominant way of thinking then and the philosophies that underlie actions and events. The past is also not an artifact that is to be viewed from behind a glass case; it has links with the present, it shapes current events, and potentially sets the course of the future. History is the sum of the human experience. This experience can lead to progress and peace, but only if lessons are learnt from it.

There is a lesson to be learnt from every moment in history. These events provide invaluable insights, and show pathways that can be followed or should be avoided. Mistakes of the past should be avoided. Likewise, wise decisions in the past that had brought about justice should be emulated.

☞ **Creative and critical thinking as part of the Islamic heritage**

In the specialised field of the *Shari'ah*, scholars and jurists not only need to consider the making of laws alone - if something is permissible (*halal*) or prohibited (*haram*). Scholars and jurists also need to ensure that the community is able to understand and appreciate the methodologies and principles that are involved in deriving laws.

The corpus of traditional Islamic studies, known in Arabic as *al-Turath al-Islami*, has to be studied holistically, factoring in the context and intellectual background of the scholars, similar to the academic scrutiny which their ideas are normally subjected to. This should be done, so that any given law or opinion can be deliberated upon with the consideration of its suitability to the current context, instead of blindly following precedence, which would lead to rulings that are irrelevant or may cause difficulties to the present Muslim community. Such a situation arises when rulings are presented as rulings alone, with no consideration of the objectives and spirit of the *Syari'ah*.

Critical thinking will only strengthen the Muslim community, as it enables Muslims to search for alternative and revolutionary solutions to the increasingly complex challenges we face. In our current context, the following considerations are critical in ensuring that religious solutions remain relevant. They include *Fiqh al-Munawazanat* (balancing priorities and needs), Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat (prioritisation), *Fiqh al-Waqi'* (recognition of context and realities), *Fiqh al-Sunan* (understanding nature), *Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf* (dealing with differences in opinions), *Fiqh al-Nass* (understanding the Text) and *Fiqh al-Maqasid* (understanding the objectives of the Syari'ah).

☞ **Finding solutions as a legacy of past scholars**

The Muslim community also needs to appreciate Islamic civilisation and the high intellectual standards that have been achieved by the previous generations of Muslims. Muslim scholars of the past have managed to solve the problems that beset them at the time. It is time for present-

day Muslims to achieve an understanding of their problems and to solve them, and consequently, provide an example for future generations to follow.

Armed with an understanding and appreciation of Islamic civilisation and its intellectual traditions, the Muslim community needs to work to provide similar contributions, not just for the betterment of its own society, but also to leave a legacy for future generations.

In addition, the Muslim community needs to have a good understanding of contemporary issues, be able to appreciate their links with Islamic history and civilisations, and draw lessons from them. The rich Islamic history exemplifies the powerful will of past scholars to find new solutions to contemporary problems. It is this willingness to explore innovative and new alternatives suitable to the time that had enabled the Muslim community to reach the pinnacle of civilisation, and to become the acknowledged leader in the sciences. As Allah says:

"يرفع الله الذين آمنوا منكم والذين أوتوا العلم درجات"

"God will raise up, by many degrees, those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge." [36]

A critical analysis of the history of human civilisations shows us the reasons Allah SWT created mankind. As Dr. Taha Jabir al-'Ulwani in his book *Introduction to Fiqh for Minorities* [37] explains, the three reasons include:

• *Al-Tawhid* – strengthening faith in Allah SWT

• *Al-Tazkiah* – purification of the human mind, spiritual and physical self

• *Al-'Umran* – achieving progress and development

ON SPOILS OF WAR

$\mathcal{T}$he Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* would divide the spoils of war in the form of land of the enemies, amongst the Muslim soldiers. This continued during the rule of the Caliph Abu Bakar al-Siddiq *r.a.*

During the rule of Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab *r.a*, he changed the rules regarding the distribution of such land. Instead of seizing land, he decided that the land remains the property of the original owners. However, the owner has to pay *al-Kharaj*, a form of land tax to the Islamic government. This tax is then distributed to the soldiers as spoils of war. This change in rule was made as a result of the following factors:

- Changing circumstances: The spread of Islam and its lands as compared to Islam at its nascence during the Prophet's time

- To avoid disputes about seized lands that could have resulted in bloodshed among the soldiers

- Leaving the lands in the hands of the owners was more beneficial to the cultivation and development of the land than to change ownership, which may result in the land being uncared for.

The changing times and circumstances necessitated such a change in rulings. Nonetheless, the changes were still based on the principles of justice and public welfare, as set out by the Prophet Muhammad pbuh. The above shows the innovativeness of the Caliph 'Umar r.a, who held fast to the principles and legacy of the Prophet pbuh and Caliph Abu Bakar r.a and yet, made the necessary changes for the good of his people. [38]

Personality: Syeikh Yusuf al-Qaradhawi & Islamic Economics

One of the contemporary intellectuals whose contributions to Islam are acknowledged internationally is Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi [39]. His important contributions include an innovative way in interpreting the religion, by means of understanding *fiqh al-Sunan, fiqh al-Maqasid, and fiqh al-Awlawiyyat.* He had also proposed the demarcation of elements of Islamic law which are fixed and unchanging from that which are flexible. He espouses the clinging on to Islamic tradition, while being adaptive and appreciative of the realities of modern life.

Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi pays special attention to the field of Islamic economics. He emphasizes in a speech:

"إن اهتمامي بالاقتصاد الإسلامي جزء من اهتمامي بالشريعة الإسلامية، والدعوة إلى تحكيمها في جميع مجالات الحياة، وإحلال أحكامها محل القوانين الوضعية والأنظمة المستوردة"

"My concern for Islamic economics is part of my concern for the Syari'ah in general, that it should be applied in all areas, thus replacing other forms of laws and imported systems." [40]

In his works on Islamic economics, he adopts a pragmatic approach, going beyond theory to practical applications. He advances a way of applying the concepts within a modern context. His ideas and concepts are clearly explained in his works such as *Fiqh al-Zakat, The Problem of Poverty and How Islam Overcomes It, Murabahah Transactions* and others.

Application

☞ **'Exploring Our Intellectual Heritage' Programme**

A glance at history proves how vast Islamic contributions to human civilisation and culture has been. Inspiring these intellectual contributions are Islamic principles and philosophy, one of the most important of which is the human right to live without fear of anything or anyone but God. This creed forms the basis for humanity to work sincerely and honestly. Islam's universal message and its dynamic and unique body of laws has led to its acceptance by many around the world. This has certainly helped the religion and its civilisation to be spread to all corners of the world.

Yet, such contributions have passed and are almost forgotten today. Thus, MUIS, together with several mosques in Singapore, is working towards uplifting the quality of Islamic education through lectures conducted in mosques. One such program of an interactive nature is "Exploring our Intellectual Heritage" held by Alkaff Kampong Melayu Mosque. This programme seeks to encourage learning about Islamic civilisation and relating it to contemporary life.

In the programme, the following books were discussed.

• The Quranic Vision (Prof. Quraisy Shihab)

• Duty of the Scholar to Master the Six Types of Fiqh in the New Millennium (Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi)

• Duty to Explain Islam to Non-Muslims (Dr. Wahbah Al-Zuhaili)

• Moderation in Islam (PERGAS)

The programme aims to enlighten the community on the latest debates by contemporary scholars, and to promote critical thinking and reliance on reasonable explanations and solutions to challenges of the day. At the same time, the programme aims to develop a thinking community that also knows the various methodologies and Islamic principles that can uplift the community's understanding of contemporary issues. More of such programmes are needed at our mosques.

☞ **Postgraduate scholarships**

MUIS has offered various post-graduate scholarships since 1 February 2005, in order to increase the number of experts within the community.

Since its inception, MUIS has granted scholarships to 4 Malay Muslim scholars as follows:

- PhD in Sociology at the University of Bielefeld (Germany)
- PhD in Biomedical Ethics at Otago University (New Zealand)
- Masters in Islamic Economics and Finance at Durham University (UK)
- Masters in Law (Corporate and Securities Law) at Columbia University (USA)

The Muslim community must continue to support such efforts to uplift the expertise and intellectual capacities of the community.

Summary

- The Muslim community should carry on the distinctive civilisational legacies and philosophies of past scholars, if it wants to influence changes and contribute to development in both the present and the future.

- Following the footsteps of the previous generations of Muslims in bequething a rich heritage and body of knowledge for the world, this generation of Muslims needs to, at least, match, if not exceed, the achievements of the past Muslims.

- The Muslim community should be well-anchored to the rich Islamic tradition, and at the same time, well-poised to be the shapers of the future.
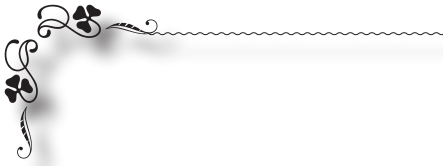
"Civilization is a movement and not a condition,
a voyage and not a harbor."

(Arnold Joseph Toynbee)

3
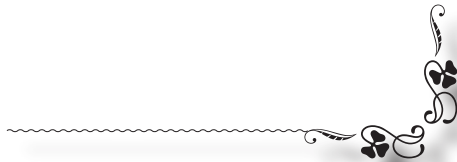
Appreciates other civilisations and is self-confident to interact and learn from other communities

Introduction

The diversity amongst humanity is part of the divine will and plan. It is only with diversity that different faiths, race, languages and civilisations may exist. Allah SWT states this clearly in the Holy Quran:

{ولو شاء ربك لجعل الناس أمة واحدة ولا يزالون مختلفين إلا من رحم ربك ولذلك خلقهم}

"If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences – except those on whom your Lord has mercy – for He created them to be this way." [41]

Islam views this diversity amongst humankind as something positive; it is a way for humans to learn about each other and themselves. On this, Allah SWT says:

"يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا"

"People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another." [42]

Accordingly, the effort to understand and appreciate different civilisations is integral to Islamic teachings. This is because Islam views a civilisation as representative of progress, culture and high moral values. Thus, interaction with and the study of other civilisations and cultures will only develop Muslim communities further. Much benefit can be garnered by each member of the community through interactions that develop co-operation and understanding with others. On top of that, such interactions will only forge close and strong ties that are built on fairness and shared values.

History shows that Islamic civilisations in the past, especially during the golden age of Islam, have had warm relations with other cultures and communities.

However, this does not mean that Islam simply accepts or rejects everything foreign. As with any contact situation, Muslim communities are compelled to forward and expand its ideals. Nonetheless, this is done with the view of achieving harmony between various cultures, thinking critically as to the compatibility of the cultures, and working towards progress and development. To a large extent, these efforts have led to today's modern civilisation.

An open Muslim society will not only gain a sense of assurance of its own identity, but also will not feel awkward in its interactions with other communities. Such openness will pave the way for learning and discovering new solutions to modern challenges.

*I*n the year 615H, fleeing persecution by the Quraisy in Mecca, some Muslims sought refuge at Ethiopia. There, the Muslims were granted sanctuary and full protection by the Christian kingdom. King Najasyi was well-known for his fair-mindedness and governance based on justice and equality. It was he who refused to allow the Quraisy representatives to extradite the Muslims back to Mecca, for he knew that the Muslims would be tortured upon their return.

The fair system of governance at Ethiopia was embraced fully by the Muslims. Within the system, they worked and contributed to the development and progress of Ethiopia [43]. Consequently, Ethiopia always had an honoured place in Islam. History also shows the long-standing peace between the country and Muslims, even at the height of Muslim expansionism in the region, when King Najasyi continued to rule freely in Ethiopia.

Interactivity with other civilisations
– An Islamic perspective

Openness in seeking knowledge

Islam strongly encourages openness in seeking knowledge. Thus, the Muslim community should be open to all sources of knowledge, without dismissing any potentially useful knowledge, merely because it does not originate from Muslims, or is taught by a non-Muslim. There are no distinctions when it comes to knowledge; in a narration, the Muslim community is told to "seek knowledge even from China". As shown in Islamic history, Muslims learnt new technologies from civilisations as far away as China in the 8th century. Knowledge and technical expertise, such as printing technology, helped the Muslim community to disseminate important works by Muslim writers.

*T*he Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab r.a imported the Persian system of governance (*dawawin*), and adapted it to the needs of his Caliphate. He divided the administration into various ministries (*diwan*) such as *Bait al-Mal* (Treasury) [44], Defence, etc. In that way, he had creatively introduced a new system of administration. The *Bait al-Mal* exemplifies this synthesis; adapting the need to disburse communal funds Islamically to an efficient system of disbursement. In doing so, he created a system of governance that was more efficient and relevant to the needs of the people at the time. In being open to new ideas and new ways to govern, the Caliph succeeded in meeting the needs of his people.

Self-confidence and active interaction

It is imperative that Muslims study the rich heritage of Islam, and, at the same time, study other civilisations. To achieve an understanding of both, Muslims needs to be confident of their religious identities, as such confidence will enable them to interact and work at ease with other communities. With a positive attitude towards knowledge and learning, we can develop our community while building bridges with others.

Proficiency in languages

Linguistic proficiency is an important skill needed in developing an open attitude towards knowledge. Language is the gateway to knowledge, especially of a community and its culture. Such is the importance of learning other languages that Muslim scholars had learnt Greek in order to access their philosophy, sciences and the humanities. The drive to learn other languages in order to learn from other cultures have brought the Muslims to its golden age. This generation needs to adopt the same spirit to build a community of excellence. In addition, having a varied linguistic repertoire would enable a Muslim community to meet modern day challenges, especially when interacting with people of other backgrounds.

Personality: Ibn Batutah and His Voyages

Ibn Batutah was a well-known voyager. He had spent his life exploring other lands, including Egypt, Syria, the Arabian Peninsular, Persia, Iraq, Central Asia, India, China, East Europe, Andalusia and others.

His first voyage was in 1325, when he travelled to Mecca in order to perform the *hajj*. At the time, he was still in his early twenties. His first voyage lasted more than 24 years. In that time, he traversed the whole of Northern Africa and Asia, especially India and China. He also served as a judge in India and the Maldives.

His second voyage began in 1351, where he travelled throughout Andalusia and reached several cities in Spain. This voyage took a year.

His next voyage began the following year. He travelled to Sudan and several African countries. On this trip, he had aimed to solidify political and business ties with those countries. [45]

His experiences in interacting with other cultures while on his journeys had enriched his understanding of culture, civilisation and human societies in general. He acknowledged how he had benefitted from such interactions, in his travelogue "*Rehlah ibn Batutah*" (The Voyages of Ibn Batutah), where he recorded his interactions with people of different cultures and religions.

His records are invaluable to the world's repository of knowledge and research on cross-cultural and inter-faith studies.

Rumusan

- The Muslim community needs to have the self-confidence to interact and learn from other cultures. It is only through interaction and learning that they can be more mature and far-sighted in analysing and addressing modern challenges.

- Appreciating other cultures will allow the Muslim community to forge better mutual understanding and co-operation, and broaden the basis for respect and tolerance with other communities. Most importantly, building bridges between Muslim and non-Muslim communities will only help the community and nation to progress.

- Appreciating other cultures and civilisations will also encourage critical and creative thinking within the Muslim community. With a critical and creative mind, the community will be better prepared to become active contributors, rather than remaining as onlookers to world events.

Application

☞ **Cross-Cultural and Inter-faith Dialogue**

Amongst the platforms aimed towards building close ties between communities today are cross-cultural programmes and inter-cultural dialogues. Such programmes have been successful in promoting understanding of the different faiths and cultures in Singapore. Experts in the field believe that that best way for dialogue is to discuss the universal values shared among the different cultures and religious traditions, and not theology, which often is the point of difference between the religions. Understanding and mutual respect should start from points of commonalities, not from points of differences. As such, issues of concern to all, such as civil society, religious harmony, social justice and universal values are ideal themes and areas for discussion by the various communities.
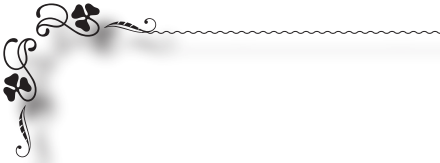
" الإنسان مدني بالطبع"

"Humans are social beings."

(Ibnu Khaldun)

4

**Morally and spiritually strong to be
on top of the challenges of modern society**

Introduction

In facing the changes and the challenges of the modern world, the Muslim community needs to be morally and spiritually strong. Fortitude and confidence will help build a strong Muslim community whose religious life is built upon sound 'aqidah (faith), morals, knowledge, principles, work ethics, acceptance of diversity and pluralism, passion for contributing continuously to the society and nation.

Allah explains:

" ألم تر كيف ضرب الله مثلا كلمة طيبة كشجرة طيبة أصلها ثابت وفرعها في السماء.
تؤتي أكلها كل حين بإذن ربها ويضرب الله الأمثال للناس لعلهم يتذكرون"

"[Prophet], do you not see how God makes comparisons? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky. Yielding constant fruit by its Lords leave – God makes such comparisons for people so that they may reflect." [46]

In this parable, principles, values, spirituality and moral character, form the roots of the Muslim community's religious life. The confidence to surmount challenges is like the bark of the tree that raises the community and allow it to branch out. Every challenge that the community overcomes and every positive influence that leads to a change in the society are like the leaves, flowers and fruits.

*I*n the Holy Quran, Allah SWT tells the story of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *pbuh* and how he had guarded himself from negative human impulses and desires. Ultimately, he was saved from the temptations of the flesh, for which he was renowned.

﴿قال رب السجن احب الي مما يدعونني اليه والا تصرف عني كيدهن اصب اليهن واكن من الجاهلين. فاستجاب له ربه فصرف عنه كيدهن انه هو السميع العليم﴾

"Joseph said, 'My Lord! I would prefer prison to what these women are calling me to do. If you do not protect me from their treachery, I shall yield to them and do wrong.' And his Lord answered his prayer and protected him from their treachery – He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing." [47]

When it was evident that he was innocent and was offered compensation, the Prophet asked to be made '*Aziz* (the Honourable) of Egypt', for he was certain that he had the capability to lead the people in difficult times.

How do faith and spirituality help us achieve progress in this world?

To be spiritually strong does not in any way impede our progress in this world. Instead, spiritual strength will inspire and shape progress. Such spirituality, as explained by some scholars, is built on the following five principles:

- Consciousness (taqwa) of Allah at all times

- Following the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh (Sunnah) in all actions

- Refraining from all that is not beneficial

- Showing gratitude for the bounties of God

- Surrendering to God in all matters

How do we build strength of character and enhance spirituality?

At present, the main Islamic education strategy is to develop a Singaporean Muslim community which is morally and spiritually strong. This is congruent with the Prophetic saying:

" إنما بعثت لأتمم مكارم الأخلاق "

"Indeed, I have been sent to perfect moral character." [48]

Developing moral and spiritual profoundness is part of the comprehensive development of the human self. In this development, the mind, the spiritual, and the physical, must be trained and shaped to discharge duties of man as vicegerent of God on earth.

Without developing moral and spiritual strength, true worship cannot be achieved. Likewise, responsibilities cannot be best discharged, and development of the human society will not be fully accomplished. As such, there are many Quranic verses which link progress and prosperity on this earth with strong morality and spirituality.

{ولا تعثوا في الأرض مفسدين}

"Do not commit evil and spread corruption in the land." [49]

Allah says in another verse:

{إن الأرض يرثها عبادي الصالحون}

"My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth." [50]

Some scholars define moral virtues as explicated by the following Prophetic saying:

" أمرني ربي بتسع: الإخلاص في السر والعلانية، والعدل في الرضا والغضب، والقصد في الغنى والفقر، وأن أعفو عمن ظلمني، وأصل من قطعني، وأعطي من حرمني، وأن يكون نطقي ذكراً، وصمتي فكراً، ونظري عبرة"

"My Lord has ordained that I observe nine things: sincere in the open and in secret, fair and just in calmness and in anger, thrift in abundance and in shortage, forgive those who have wronged me, relate to those who have severed ties with me, give to those who do not give me, remember God in all my utterances, think when I am not speaking, and learn from all that I see." [51]

Ibn al-Qayyim states four values that will shape excellent moral character:

• Patience

• Safeguarding of dignity (*'iffah*)

• Courage

• Justice

Patience teaches mankind to be disciplined, to have compassion and to repel evil in the wisest manner. Safeguarding of one's dignity will prevent one from doing the despicable and harmful. Courage brings about confidence to face challenges. Justice guarantees moderation and balance in behaviour and actions.

Personality: The Prophet Muhammad pbuh Sent as a Blessing For All

The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* is known as the Prophet of Mercy, who brings blessings to the entire universe. In the earlier part of his life in the city of Mecca, he was known amongst the Quraisy as the honest (*al-Sadiq*), and the trustworthy (*al-Amin*). These attributes of his are known not only to Muslims; the appellations were well-known to, and used by Western scholars, both in the past and present, as shown below.

George Bernard Shaw in *The Genuine Islam* says "I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving the problems in a way that would bring the much needed peace and happiness."

The Encyclopedia Britannica states that "(Prophet) Muhammad (*pbuh*) is the most successful of all Prophets and religious personalities."

Karen Armstrong put forth her opinions: "I think he's an example of huge courage and commitment, an example of what one person can do with the help of the sacred, with the help of the divine, but with your own human inspiration too. Above all that he remained kind, human, warm, loving. He did not allow himself to become a daunting human being of daunting achievements. He must be one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever known, both spiritually and politically, yet he was also a genius at humanity. I think of his kindness to his wives, his kindness to children, his loving care of animals, his devotion to his companions, and the fact that he was constantly moved to tears when he saw suffering. Never in any moment of his life did he cease to be less than a human being."

Alphonse de Lamartine, one of France's universally known poets and statesmen, states that "This is (Prophet) Muhammad (*pbuh*), the philosopher, the orator, the Prophet, the law-giver, the warrior, the enchanter of human thoughts, the maker of new principles of belief, the great man who established twenty gigantic world empires and one great Islamic empire and civilization."

In *Histoire de la Turquie*, he states "As regards all the standards by which Human Greatness may be measured, we may well ask, Is there any man greater than he?" (Alfonso de Lamartine, *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854, Vol.II, pp 276-277)

Application

Singapore discussed the issue of having casinos a few years ago. On this issue, the Muslim community had stated its position and the reasons for opposing casinos. To Muslims, gambling is prohibited and that such activities will have adverse impact on the Singaporean society.

After stating our position, what should be our next step? Do we continue to express our opposition on the issue and seek to curtail Muslims from entering the casinos, or should we focus on the inculcation of values and strengthening the moral fibre of the Muslim community? It would be more beneficial for Muslims to expand its educational efforts for the community, to imbibe them with strong Islamic values and teachings, which will guard them from taking up harmful activities such as gambling.

In reality, the efforts to curtail Muslims from entering casinos, as proposed by some members of the community, does not seem to be the best option. If a Muslim is bent upon going to the casinos and gamble, no prohibition from entering casinos will change his wishes to go against the prohibitions of the religion. He would find other avenues to gamble. What is more important is to change attitudes and the character of Muslims, to inculcate good values. To this end, education would be a better approach.

The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* prioritised developing the religious life of Muslims and focused heavily on building and strengthening the morals of the community. Even though the *Shari'ah* have laid out laws and punishments, it is secondary when compared to the need for education and the building of character. That is not to say that the law is not important, but if there was a good education system in place and put to good use, there would not be much need for laws, for people would govern themselves according to good principles and values and would realise that they are truly accountable to God the Al-Mighty.

For example, when a man called *al-Ma'iz* and a woman named *al-Ghamidiyyah* [52] went to the Prophet and admitted to unlawful sex, thus seeking punishment for it, the Prophet averted his face four times. He asked the man several questions: "Are you mentally sound?", "Are you married?", "Perhaps you have not committed such an act to the extent which necessitates such punishment?"

After hearing the man's confession, the Prophet *pbuh* finally asked his companions to carry out the punishment.

With regards to the woman, the Prophet *pbuh* called upon her guardian and said: "Please take good care of this woman in her pregnancy. Bring her to me for punishment, only after she has delivered." The woman's guardian had carried out the Prophet's instructions. However, had the guardian not referred her to the Prophet, it was very likely, in the opinion of scholars, that the Prophet would not have had pursued the matter.

Is punishment of little importance such that the Prophet pbuh sought possible explanations to not carry them out?

Certainly not. However, as numerous scholars have pointed out, what is important is a good education system that produces individuals who can judge for themselves so that they would realise their mistakes and repent, without being forced to do so by the law. In such a community, laws do not become the main obsession and focus, as people would be governed by their conscience and morals, not by force of law.

As such, the Singapore Muslim community needs to work together in facing the challenging situations that confront us in this increasingly open world. If we want to succeed in surmounting such challenges, and prepare our future generations for their own set of challenges, we have to focus on developing a profound and well-balanced Islamic identity for ourselves and our community.

Summary

- Challenges and changes are constants in our lives. With it comes the need to rethink the way we understand and practise our religion.

- A deep-rooted spirituality and morality empower Muslims to be active contributors, agenda setters and able to influence and shape challenges.
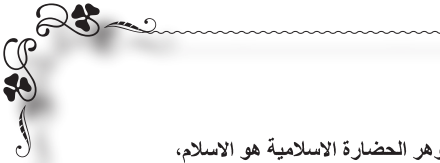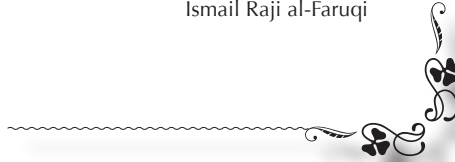
'' لا شك أن جوهر الحضارة الاسلامية هو الاسلام،

ولا شك أن جوهر الاسلام هو التوحيد''

"There is no doubt that the essence of Islamic civilisation
is Islam, and there is no doubt that the essence of Islam
is al-Tawhid"

Ismail Raji al-Faruqi

5

Progressive, practices Islam beyond rituals, and rides on the modernisation wave

Introduction

A Muslim community of excellence is one that continually strives to improve themselves. The community would also not be content to allow Islamic teachings to remain superficial, or to be understood and practised only in its rituals and forms. Instead, Islam has to be understood and practised holistically; both in its rituals and the essence or spirit of those rituals. Both essence and rituals are symbiotic; an emphasis on the essence of Islam is necessary and vital to highlight the comprehensiveness of Islamic teachings, and thus, is critical in our efforts to live as Muslims in the modern age.

With an emphasis on the essence and spirit, the Muslim community will be better prepared to face the ever-present challenges of modern life. Each negative influence would be easily counteracted and dealt with in accordance to Islamic principles while positive influences would be recognized as a force for change.

What is meant by 'progressiveness' in this context?

Having a progressive outlook means to understand the universality of Islamic teachings and the concept of Islam as "a way of life". It also means to understand how Islam can be applied in everyday life and how it is part of modern life, not apart from it.

Often, religion is seen as a matter of ritual practices; a Muslim becomes defined as someone who prays, pays *zakat* (alms), performs the *hajj*, and has a Muslim name. In actuality, a Muslim is, beyond observing these rituals, also someone who is morally guided, disciplined, sincere, diligent, and known for his good deeds. Exhibiting these virtues in one's life is considered as an act of worship ('*ibadah*). Every good we do on this earth is counted as 'ibadah that is valued by Allah; it encompasses more than ritual practices.

A Muslim community of excellence needs to understand the spirit of every ritual and the essence of Islam that is imbued in every religious practice. The following table shows the essence, values and spirit of our everyday religious practices:

Form (Ritual)	Essence and Spirit
Prayers (*Solat*)	i. Humility ii. Focus and discipline iii. Commitment to do good iv. Repelling evil
Fast (*Sawm*)	i. Patience ii. Kindness (Ihsan) iii. Gratitude iv. God consciousness (Taqwa) v. Blessings to others (Rahmah)
Alms-giving (*Zakat*)	i. Spiritual and wealth cleansing ii. Concern for others iii. Sense of responsibility
Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)	i. Brotherhood and unity ii. Sacrifice iii. Diligence iv. Inclusiveness

*A*llah SWT tells of Prophet Daud (David) *pbuh* and Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *pbuh* who discharged their duties, both in the ritualistic sense, and in the administering of justice for their people. Allah SWT states in the Holy Quran:

﴿وداود وسليمان إذ يحكمان في الحرث إذ نفشت فيه غنم القوم وكنا لحكمهم شاهدين. ففهمناها سليمان وكلا آتينا حكما وعلما وسخرنا مع داود الجبال يسبحن والطير وكنا فاعلين﴾

"And remember David and Solomon, when they gave judgment regarding the field into which sheep strayed by night and grazed. We witnessed their judgment, and made Solomon understand the case [better], though we gave sound judgment and knowledge to both of them. We made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises with David – We did all these things." [53]

*T*he Quranic scholar *Ibn Kathir narrates* from *Ibn Ishaq* and *al-'Aufi*, in relation to the verse above, that a thriving vineyard owned by a particular tribe, was destroyed by a flock of sheep belonging to another tribe. Prophet David was asked to arbitrate. He was of the opinion that the flock of sheep should be handed over to the owners of the destroyed vineyard, as compensation for the loss they had suffered. However, Prophet Solomon decided that the vineyard be given to the owners of the sheep, so that they could redevelop it and hand it over to its original owners upon completion. At the same time, the owners of the vineyard was to be temporarily given the flock of sheep as compensation. Both tribes will then receive what they had originally owned, after the exchange and the repairs have been completed. [54]

Personality: Ibn Sina, The Father of Modern Medicine

Ibn Sina is amongst the finest of Muslim scholars. He is known not only amongst Muslims, but his contributions to humanity are acknowledged by all. His most important contribution is in the field of medicine through his great work *al-Qanun fi al-Tib* (The Canon of Medicine). Such is the importance of his work that he is known until this day as 'The father of modern medicine'. He is also known for his works in geology; he had studied mining methods and means of extracting ore and other natural minerals.

Application

The holistic concept of '*ibadah* (worship)

'*Ibadah* is one of the fundamentals of Islam. It includes the practices that have been laid out in the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah*. Within each practice is the essence and spirit or reason, for which the practice was instituted. The essence of ritual practices are normally in the form of universal moral virtues and values. These values will in turn shape good character. The failure to distinguish essence from form can contribute to our inability to prioritise efforts to overcome contemporary challenges.

For example, many Muslims are willing to spend large amounts of money every year to perform the '*umrah* (smaller *hajj*), a ritual for which Allah SWT has promised bountiful rewards. Meanwhile, responses and support for calls for donations from madrasahs and other charitable organisations pale in comparison, even though contributing to such organisations is also an '*ibadah* that Allah would duly reward. In addition, the benefits of donating to such institutions go beyond the individual, and will serve the community's strategic needs. In comparison to the benefits accruing to the individual that is garnered from performing

an '*umrah*, the benefits that the community would enjoy from the individual's contribution to charitable organisations and religious institutions are more extensive and long-term, continually accruing, as long as those institutions continue to exist.

☞ **The use of technology in *dakwah***

Technological advancements such as the Internet, blogging, podcasting and webcasting should not be seen in the first instance as negative and a threat, nor should they be used for immoral purposes. Such advances in technology can be used for Islamic education, especially to the younger generations who are comfortable with such mediums.

Islam teaches Muslims to adopt and benefit from that which is good and beneficial, and to refrain from all that is harmful. The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* encourages Muslims to continually seek knowledge, but also seeks Allah's protection from being given knowledge that may lead to harm and destruction. For example, the Prophet *pbuh* says in one of his supplications to Allah SWT:

"اللهم إني أعوذ بك من علم لا ينفع، ومن قلب لا يخشع، ومن نفس لا تشبع، ومن دعوة لا يستجاب لها"

"Oh Allah, I seek Your protection from knowledge that is not beneficial, from a mind that is not conscious of You, from never feeling satisfied, and from prayers that are not accepted." [55]

Summary

- The Muslim community should embark on a path of continuous improvement.

- It needs to appreciate both the essence and rituals of Islam, and should not stress upon one aspect, and neglecting the other.

- The Muslim community should also be able to prioritise and evaluate their needs in order to successfully navigate the challenges of modern life.
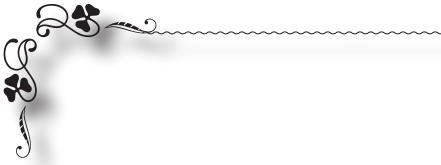
" خير الناس أنفعهم للناس "

"The best among you are those who bring the greatest
benefit to others."

(al-Hadith)

6

**Well-adjusted as contributing members
of a multi-religious society and secular state** [56]

Introduction

Islam develops Muslims to be pious and calls upon them to do good and contribute to the general well-being of mankind and the world. Allah SWT states in the Holy Quran through the words of Prophet Syu'aib *pbuh*:

"إن أريد إلا الإصلاح ما استطعت"

"I only desire betterment to the best of my capabilities." [57]

An individual who consciously seeks to do good will be attentive and responsive to changes occurring around him/her, especially that which would have an impact on the individual, family, community, and country. S/he will always strive to improve on all fronts, to contribute his or her expertise to the community, and play an active role in nation building. When we understand our role to do good and be blessings to all, we will be able to adapt ourselves to any situation, and practise inclusiveness.

The principles of justice and respect for others teach us to appreciate others and to cooperate with them to contribute towards the well-being of the society at large. The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* has said:

" خير الناس أنفعهم للناس"

"The best of mankind are those who benefit others the most." [58]

What we understand from this *hadith* is that Muslims have to contribute to the well-being of all humanity. To do this, every effort has to be done in the spirit of striving, competing to do good and self-improvement, as Allah SWT says:

{فاستبقوا الخيرات}

"Race to do good deeds." [59]

Allah SWT also mentions in another verse:

{وفي ذلك فليتنافس المتنافسون}

"Let those who strive, strive for this." [60]

{وابتغ فيما آتاك الله الدار الآخرة ولاتنس نصيبك من الدنيا وأحسن كما أحسن الله إليك
ولا تبغ الفساد في الأرض إن الله لا يحب المفسدين}

"Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for God does not love those who do this." [61]

$\mathcal{T}$he Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *pbuh* was at the same time, a king, who had governed his kingdom with justice and equality. When he ruled, every creature on earth acknowledged his sovereignty. In the Holy Quran, Allah SWT explains the story of Prophet Solomon and his awareness that his contributions were God's gifts to test if he was grateful:

{قال هذا من فضل ربي ليبلوني ءاشكر ام اكفر ومن شكر فإنما يشكر لنفسه ومن كفر فإن ربي غني كريم}

"Solomon said, 'This is a favour from my Lord, to test whether I am grateful or not: if anyone is grateful, it is for his own good, if anyone is ungrateful, then my Lord is self-sufficient and most generous.'" [62]

Application

☞ Contributing to Humanitarian Aid

The world was hit by several natural disasters in the last few years. The great tsunami off Sumatra wrecked many Asian nations. This was followed closely by earthquakes in Turkey, China and Indonesia. Singapore had quickly responded to the crisis by offering help in the form of donations and logistical aid. The Muslim community worked together with other Singaporeans to offer all assistance possible. They had donated money, clothes, food and medical expertise.

Such contributions were much appreciated by those in need. In doing this, the Muslim community had practiced what had been taught in Islam – to show kindness and be blessings to others. Good work like this needs to be sustained, and the Muslim community has to continue helping others in this manner.

Currently, the *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* Fund has been established to collect donations in order to help victims of disasters. Such charities represent the kindness and good that Islam provides for all. Muslims must support and increase such efforts.

In addition, Mercy Relief has also been at the forefront of alleviating the sufferings of those whose lives have been destroyed by calamities. By offering humanitarian aid to all, regardless of religion, country or race, Mercy Relief represents the spirit of brotherhood of mankind, and exudes the spirit of empathy and volunteerism. We are all proud of such efforts. The Muslim community should participate in such efforts at the global level and live the ideals inculcated by Islam – kindness and humanitarianism.

Personality: Moulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddique and Religious Harmony in Singapore

Moulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddique was born on 3 April 1892. His father, Moulana Shah Muhammad Abdul Hakim, and his mother, taught him Islam at a very early age. At the age of four, he had memorised the whole of the Holy Quran. In 1908, he received his bachelor's degree with honours in Islamic theology. Subsequently, he studied modern sciences for four years. He had also specialised in various religious sciences, including Quranic studies, the study of *Hadith*, Islamic mysticism and others.

In 1930, he left for Singapore to preach Islam and spread the message of peace, as he would, wherever he set his foot. He set up the 'All Malaya Muslim Missionary Society' in 1932, which later became the Jamiyah Association.

In 1949, Moulana, with a few religious leaders, met with Mr Malcolm MacDonald, the British governor in Singapore, on forging inter-faith understanding. This meeting led to establishment of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO) in March 1949, with the aim of building trust, understanding, and harmonious co-existence amongst the various religious groups in Singapore.

He had also contributed in various ways to the building of mosques, schools, hospitals, libraries, and orphanages.
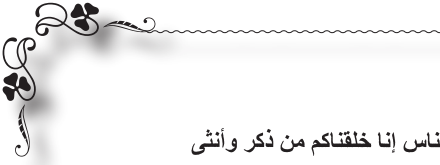
In appreciation of his outstanding work, the Abdul Aleem Siddiq Mosque was built in Singapore in 1954.

Summary

- The Muslim community that stays true to its religious teachings will always do good and contribute to the well-being of the nation and society.

- A Muslim should give only the best and aim to spread good to everyone.

" يأيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى
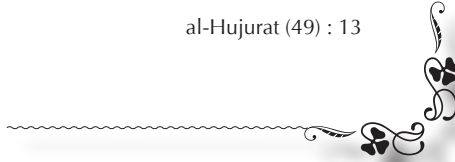
وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا "

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a
male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes,
that ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise
each other)."

al-Hujurat (49) : 13

7

**Inclusive and practises pluralism [63],
without contradicting Islam**

Introduction

Muslims can practice Islam and maintain their Muslim identities in a non-Muslim country. They can do this by understanding and practising pluralism. This is not unprecedented in Islamic history; Islam had, at its inception, been a minority religion, co-existing with other religions in a plural society. Consequently, the principles of respect and acknowledgement of the diversity of mankind are not foreign to Islam. In fact, the Holy Quran emphasises these principles, when it openly discusses other religious traditions, such as that of the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Sabians, idol worshippers, atheists, and agnostics. Islam adopts an inclusive approach in dealing with such differences.

> {إن الذين ءامنوا والذين هادوا والنصارى والصابئين من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر وعمل صالحا فلهم أجرهم عند ربهم ولا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون}
>
> *"The (Muslim) believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians – all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good – will have their rewards with their Lord. No fear for them, nor will they grieve."* [64]

The Muslim community celebrates diversity and accepts differences of opinions, so long as such differences are discussed in rational, objective and scientific ways. As such, the Muslim community accepts pluralism as a fact of life. They do not see Islam at odds with those who are not Muslims. Islam had existed in a plural Meccan society. When the community moved to Medina, it had, likewise, existed peacefully in a plural society, as reflected by the Constitution of Medina [65]. The Holy Quran espouses two main principles as a foundation for harmonious co-existence: *al-Birr* (doing good) and *al-Qist* (upholding justice):

"لا ينهاكم الله عن الذين لم يقاتلوكم في الدين ولم يخرجوكم من دياركم أن تبروهم
وتقسطوا إليهم إن الله يحب المقسطين"

"And He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just." [66]

How can the concepts of al-birr and al-qist be applied in a plural society such as Singapore?

Appreciating the bonds of humanity

The most important message that Islam propagates, in this regard, is the inherent kinship and bond between all humans (الأخوة الإنسانية), no matter their differences. This is the message brought forth by Sheikh Tantawi during his visit to Singapore. The visit was part of the Distinguished Visitors Programme that MUIS had organised. This concept of kinship between mankind is not at odds with the concept of brotherhood in Islam (الأخوة الإسلامية). In fact, it is an extension of that idea, and is an important progression in the effort to exemplify the true teachings of Islam.

Furthermore, this concept is not a novel one. The basis for this is clearly stated in the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah. In the Holy Quran, Allah SWT states:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً﴾

"People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you." [67]

While the Prophet pbuh has said:

إن ربكم واحد، وإن أباكم واحد، كلكم لآدم وآدم من تراب

"Your Lord is one, and your father is one. All of you come from (Prophet) Adam, and (Prophet) Adam was created from clay." [68]

Thus, these texts call upon Muslims to view non-Muslims as brothers in humanity. Differences in beliefs do not prevent the Muslim community from interacting with non-Muslims honestly and sincerely. In this regard, Islam provides the following principles:

• Human dignity as a God-given right

• Accepting diversity and differences

• Interacting with, and knowing one another

• Avoiding enmity

Thus, human dignity has to be safeguarded and protected with justice. On this, Allah SWT explains:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا﴾

"We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those we have created." [69]

It is natural that people differ in what they believe, and only Allah SWT knows the reason for such. It is only God's prerogative to pass judgment in the hereafter; we as humans should not judge. As Allah plainly states:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ﴾

"If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences." [70]

The differences in creed, race, and language are not an encumbrance; it is an impetus for Muslims to build bridges of understanding between communities and to learn from each other. Allah SWT says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوباً وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا﴾

"People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another." [71]

Such efforts should be done with sincerity and honesty. As Muslims, we need to fully understand and apply these Islamic principles.

{وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ}

"Fight in God's cause against those who fight you, but do not overstep the limits: God does not love those who overstep the limits." [72]

The Concept of Ummah al-Da'wah for Muslims and Non-Muslims

An extension of the concept of kinship amongst humans is the concept of *Ummah al-Da'wah*. This concept means that everyone has the right to know and understand Islam. Thus, we should not be referring to non-Muslims as *kafirun/kuffar* (which may have the connotation of offensive unbelievers), especially when the non-Muslims respect our faith. We have a responsibility to extend our friendship and explain to them what Islam truly means through our own good deeds and invaluable contributions towards the general well-being of mankind. Thus, it is imperative that we view and understand the position of others correctly. The concept of kinship amongst humans makes us aware that we also have responsibilities to non-Muslims, as we do towards Muslims.

Ultimately, the Muslim community can thrive in a plural society by being cognisant of its diverse responsibilities – responsibilities to the community, the society, and humanity at large. These responsibilities include safeguarding peace and contributing to the growth and stability of the country.

Personality: The Prophet pbuh and the Creation of a Medinan Plural Society

The social system in Islam was first shaped when the Prophet pbuh migrated to Medina. There, minority non-Muslim populations, such as the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) and the idol worshippers, lived together with Muslims under the leadership of the Prophet. The Prophet pbuh governed the plural society by first establishing the Sahifah Medina (The Constitution of Medina). In part, the constitution addressed the following:

• Building a society

• Human rights

• The responsibilities of Muslims to the nation

• The responsibilities of all citizens to the nation

• Minority rights

• Leadership

• Peace and stability

Application

From the beginning, Islam has outlined ways of living in a plural society with three concepts:

• Knowing one other (*Ta'aruf*)
• Co-existence (*Ta'ayusy*)
• Co-operation (*Ta'awun*)

On ta'aruf, the Holy Quran explains:

"يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا"

"People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another." [73]

The next step, *ta'ayusy*, is a development of the concept of *ta'aruf*. [74] Allah SWT states:

"لا ينهاكم الله عن الذين لم يقاتلوكم في الدين ولم يخرجوكم من دياركم أن تبروهم وتقسطوا إليهم إن الله يحب المقسطين"

"And He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just." [75]

The final step, following the establishment of a peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect and fairness, is *ta'awun*, which means working together for the common good. Allah SWT explains:

"وتعاونوا على البر والتقوى ولا تعاونوا على الإثم والعدوان"

"Help one another to do what is right and good; do not help one another towards sin and hostility." [76]

The above Quranic verses show that the Muslim community which thrives in a plural society is always ready to interact, quick to adapt to changes, and strives to contribute to the building of the society and the progress of the nation.

Summary

- Islam has shown, from the very beginning, that a Muslim can thrive in a plural society.

- By understanding and appreciating pluralism, Muslims will be able to be inclusive and not isolate from the mainstream.
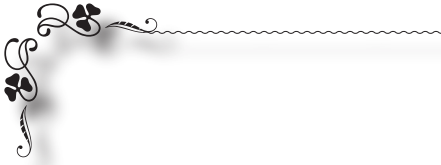
" حب الوطن من الإيمان "

"Love for the homeland is part of one's faith."

(Words of wisdom)

8

Believes that good Muslims are also good citizens

Introduction

Part of the fundamental teachings of Islam is striving to contribute towards good. A Muslim should be remembered for his contributions regardless of where he is. As such, it is our duty to do good in the best possible manner whilst living in a secular state.

Islam seeks to instill in Muslims the love for their homeland. The emotional ties a person has to his/her country is natural. In fact, Muslim scholars have said that to love one's country is part of the Islamic creed. In the words of a scholar: "Loving one's country is part of *iman* (faith)." [77]

How does a Muslim become a good citizen?

Love the country and contribute to its prosperity

Dr Salah al-Sultan [78] has explained several guidelines derived from Islamic principles, for Muslim communities who live in plural societies and secular states. These guidelines include:

• Being patriotic

• Committed to contribute towards the progress and prosperity of the country

According to him, Muslims have a responsibility to do the following, regardless of where they reside:

i)   observe the fundamental religious teachings
ii) exude the true teachings of the religion
iii) call others to do good

This is explained in the verse:

"كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس"

"[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people." [79]

And the Holy Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* has said:

إنما بعثت لأتمم مكارم الأخلاق

"I have been sent to perfect moral virtues." [80]

☞ Contribute continuously

A citizen who loves his/her country will always try to contribute to its growth and prosperity. Such contributions arise from a commitment by the state and citizens to universal principles such as justice, peace and prosperity.

Every country has a constitutional framework within which these values are realised. In Singapore, there are various ministries and agencies that uphold justice and defend the rights of the individual and society. Everyone plays a part in upholding these principles, from the policeman on the streets to the highest authorities in the judicial system.

To ensure continuous prosperity for the nation and its citizens, it is the responsibility of everyone, including Muslims, to improve his quality of life. Thus far, the Muslim community has contributed significantly to the progress of Singapore in the educational and economical spheres. Nearly 75% of Malay students have gone beyond secondary education. This is a vast improvement from 1994, when the figure was only 42.5% [81]. The number of Malay students in local polytechnics has also increased from 1.9% in 1990 to 4% in 2000. The number of Malay graduates has tripled from 0.6% in 1990 to 2% in 2000. Economically, we have also improved: 23.4% of our workers hold executive or managerial positions, as compared to 11.7% in 1990. Average monthly earnings have also increased from $1099 in 1990 to $2040 in 2000 [82].

The Muslim community needs to realise that in achieving what they have had, they have fulfilled both *fardhu* 'ain and *fardhu kifayah*. *Fardhu* 'ain is the obligation to learn or work to sustain the self and one's family, while *fardhu kifayah* is the work that is done for the common good and the prosperity of the nation. It is important for us to continually improve and accomplish more. This spirit is part of the Singaporean Muslim identity.

☞ **Commitment to the state's constitution**

A citizen who is loyal to his/her country will contribute to its political, social or economic stability. Every citizen should uphold the values the country stands for. Muslims, like any other citizen, also have the responsibility of ensuring that these values and principles, which Islam also espouses, are upheld. Thus, we should forge racial harmony, respect differences and work with others. We should also contribute to the country's economic growth, especially as competition grows, as a result of globalisation. Most importantly, we must be committed to defend this development and progress from any form of external threat.

Good citizens are the most important assets for any country. To be good citizens, the Muslim community needs to actively contribute to the well-being of the nation. While doing so, it is also important to develop a strong identity. This issue of identity often arises when the government calls for integration and equality.

To a good Muslim, there is no conflict between being a good Muslim and a good citizen. Our identities as Muslims are not centred only on Islamic laws and individual rights. A Muslim's identity includes becoming a good citizen, observing the country's constitution, and upholding justice, harmony, and respect for religious freedom. As Muslims, it is incumbent upon us to honour the pledge that we have made.

Personality: The Prophet pbuh and Hilf al-Fudhul (The Honorable Pact)

As explained above, loyalty to one's country has to be based on Islamic principles such as justice. This principle is shared by all humanity, across the different religions and races. This was also shown in early Islam, in an incident known as *Hilf al-Fudhul* (the Honorable Pact).

A merchant from a city known as Zabid arrived at Mecca with his wares. One of the Quraisy tribal leaders, *al-'As ibn Wa'il*, had made some purchases from this merchant, but absconded on the payment. The merchant sought the help of other Quraisy leaders but none were willing, for *al-'As ibn Wa'il* was a powerful and influential man. Consequently, the merchant had to seek help from other Meccans.

The young men of Mecca felt the need to redress the matter. They met at *Abdullah ibn Jud'an's* house and made a pact in the name of Allah, that they would strive to uphold justice, and ensure the merchant was paid duly. The Arabs named the incident *Hilf al-Fudhul* (the Honorable Pact). The young men then met *al-'As ibn Wa'il*, claimed payment for the merchant and subsequently, handed over to the merchant his due payment.

This had happened before the Holy Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* was appointed as the Messenger of God. He had been proud of the actions taken by the young men of Mecca and that the injustice had been redressed. The Prophet *pbuh* then said:

" لقد شهدت في دار عبد الله بن جدعان حلفا، ما أحب أن لي به حمر النعم ولو أدعي به إلى الإسلام لأجبت "

"I witnessed a pact in the house of Abdullah ibn Jud'an that I truly want to be part of. If I am called to have such a pact again now, I will have it." [83]

In other words, justice and rights of everyone, whether of the same or different race (such as the merchant who was not from the Quraisy tribe), have to be defended.

*I*n the Holy Quran, Allah SWT tells of the contributions the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) pbuh had made to Egypt, even though the Pharaoh and his people had not accepted faith in Allah.

Allah says:

﴿وقال الملك اني ارى سبع بقرات سمان ياكلهن سبع عجاف وسبع سنبلات خضر واخر يابسات ياايها الملا افتوني في رؤياي ان كنتم للرؤيا تعبرون. قالوا اضغاث احلام ومانحن بتاويل الاحلام بعالمين. وقال الذي نجا منهما وادكر بعد امة انا انبئكم بتاويله فارسلون. يوسف ايها الصديق افتنا في سبع بقرات سمان ياكلهن سبع عجاف وسبع سنبلات خضر واخر يابسات لعلي ارجع الى الناس لعلهم يعلمون. قال تزرعون سبع سنين دأبا فما حصدتم فذروه في سنبله الا قليلا مما تاكلون. ثم ياتي من بعد ذلك سبع شداد ياكلن ماقدمتم لهن الا قليلا مما تحصنون. ثم ياتي من بعد ذلك عام فيه يغاث الناس وفيه يعصرون﴾

"The king said, 'I dreamed about seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones; seven green ears of corn and [seven] others withered. Counsellors if you can interpret dreams, tell me the meaning of my dream.' They said, 'These are confusing dreams and we are not skilled at dream-interpretation, but the prisoner who had been freed at last remembered (Joseph) and said, 'I shall tell you what this means. Give me leave to go.'

Truthful Joseph! Tell us the meaning of seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered, then I can return to the people to inform them.' Joseph said, 'You will sow for seven consecutive years as usual. Store all that you reap, left in the ear, apart from the little you eat. After that will come seven years of hardship which will consume all but a little of what you stored for them; after that will come a year when the people will have abundant rain and will press grapes." [84]

Rumusan

- A good Muslim believes that love for one's homeland is part of the human nature, so long as the homeland uphold fundamental principles which are not at odds with Islam.

- A good Muslim is responsible for upholding justice, maintaining the peace and improving the quality of life in his/her country.

- A good Muslim also understands that love for one's homeland is a part of the Muslim identity.
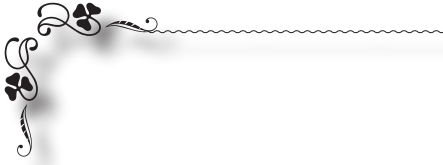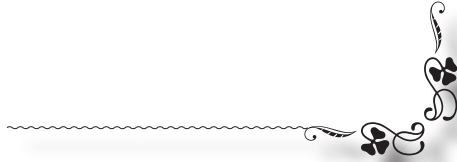
" وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين "

It was only as a mercy that
We sent you [Prophet] to all people.

(Al-Quran)

9

Be a blessing to all and promotes universal principles and values

Introduction

From its inception, Islam seeks to bring blessings to all. God's blessings should be felt by all, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, and by all other creations of God. It is the duty of Muslims to live a life which will spread these blessings to all around them.

To realise this gift that Allah SWT has bestowed upon us all, especially in a plural society, the Muslim community has to interact with other communities with wisdom. Allah SWT shows the appropriate ways in inviting people to his path:

"ادع إلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن"

"[Prophet], call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Engage them in the most courteous way." [85]

Thus, the beautiful teachings of Islam have to be shared with others in a wise and gracious manner. Such an approach would pave the way for acceptance and bring forth blessings to humanity. Allah SWT says:

"وما أرسلناك إلا رحمة للعالمين"

"It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all people." [86]

In addition to the mercy brought by the Prophet, the Prophet was also deeply affected by the difficulties that others suffered ('aziz), very concerned for the well-being of mankind (haris), kind (ra'uf) and full of mercy (rahim). Allah SWT records this in the Quran:

{لقد جاءكم رسول من أنفسكم عزيز عليه ما عنتم حريص عليكم بالمؤمنين رءوف رحيم}

"A messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers." [87]

An understanding of the Prophet's characteristics such as *Rahmah, 'Aziz, Haris, Ra'uf* and *Rahim* will guide the Muslim community on the approaches in dealing and interacting with others. The Muslim community should bring *rahmah* to other communities, just as Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* had brought *rahmah* to the world. Thus, the Muslim community needs to also realise that they should seek a clear understanding of any new situation they find themselves in, and should deal with an issue with wisdom and kindness, so as to achieve the objective which is congruent with the principles of Islam.

In the Prophet, we find an exemplar for all humanity. The Prophet has been sent to bring *rahmah* and to spread Allah's blessings on earth.

Personality: The Prophet pbuh with the People of Taif

The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* is known for his kindness and gentleness. His kindness extends to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He was so kind and forgiving that he often repaid insults and injury to his self with kindness.

The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* is an embodiment of grace, blessings, compassion and mercy of Allah. He was described by his companions as follows:

The Prophet was never uncouth, ill-mannered nor did he ever raise his voice in the presence of others. He would never requite evil with evil, rather, he would prefer to forgive and forget [88]. When given a choice between two matters, he would choose the easier route so long as it does not transgress God's boundaries. If there were to be such elements, the Prophet would be farthest away from them. He would never bear a grudge (against those who hurt him) so long as those actions did not trespass the limits set by Allah. If those limits were trespassed, the Prophet would admonish the act [89]. The Prophet was always in constant remembrance of Allah. Whenever he had to attend an event, he would sit at the side or at the back, for he shunned the limelight. Whenever someone sat with the Prophet, he was always patient and would give the person his fullest attention until the person left. Whenever someone sought his help, he would give the seeker what he or she needs. He was always willing to listen and impart advice. Many were attracted to his gentle nature and good morals such that many looked up to him. His presence brought a sense of tranquility, respect, patience and sincerity. He would be the most helpful, most firm, most truthful in his speech and most trusted to discharge his responsibilities. He dealt with everyone courteously [90]. Anyone who met him for the first time would be attracted to his personality and anyone who stayed close to him would be captivated. [91]"

The most noteworthy example of his kind and forgiving nature was the incident at Taif. The Prophet had gone to Taif to preach to the tribe of Thaqif. There, he was rejected by the residents with curses and abuse by children and adults. Despite such grave insults and his own personal injury, the Prophet *pbuh* prayed for the people:

" بل أرجو أن يخرج الله عز وجل من أصلابهم من يعبد الله وحده لا يشرك به شيئا "

"I hope that their descendents will accept this message and worship only Allah." [92]

In another instance, when the Muslims regained the city of Mecca, the Prophet again displayed his kind nature. Despite now having the power to do what he wished to the leaders of the Quraisy tribe who had had heaped insults and had hurt the Prophet, the Prophet did not seek revenge or retribution. Instead, he set them free without any conditions:

" اذهبوا فأنتم الطلقاء "

"You all are free to go." [93]

It is clear from the Prophet's actions that Islam teaches us to do good to others, in the spirit of 'rahmatan lil'alamin'. This concept can only be fully appreciated if we interact with others.

How can the spirit of *rahmah* be internalised in today's context?

Observing *rahmah* in Islamic education for the young

The approach in presenting Islamic education needs to be imbued with the spirit of *rahmah*. The youth today live in very different circumstances from previous generations and, as such, their religious education needs to be reevaluated. Today's teachers need to appreciate that fact and understand the changing milieu that the youth, their students and the society face. The mere transmission of rules and regulations that was acceptable before is not enough in this new environment. The new generation needs to be encouraged to do good, rather than being presented with a set of prohibitions, merely handed down from the previous generation. We must therefore, be able to accept their shortcomings, and not to harp on their wrongdoings and be blinded from the good that they have. The teachers need optimism – hope and belief that good exists in the new generation, even if it has not manifested itself yet.

Observing *rahmah* in Daily Interactions in a Plural Society

Living in a plural society and interacting with people from a multitude of backgrounds, religions and races, require *rahmah*. We should not assume that anyone who does not practice Islam does not receive Allah's blessings, for there may come a time when guidance comes to mankind. Likewise, we should treat non-Muslims also with *rahmah*. Notions that non-Muslims are *najs* and unredeemable are based on prejudices; Allah will show those He wishes the right path, when He wishes. We are not in a position to judge them. Our task is to set a good example, give encouragement, guidance and to pray to Allah SWT that He accepts our noble acts.

☞ Upholding Universal Values

A Muslim community is one that continually does good in all areas of life. All good deeds is a form of worship. The Muslim community also needs to uphold universal values, such that they are known as the defenders of those values. Justice, compassion to defeat poverty and ignorance, and care for the environment are some of these values. This can be done in collaboration with non-profit organisations and charities, such that volunteerism becomes a culture for the Muslims.

Summary

- The Muslim community believes that Islam brings blessings to all.

- Islam safeguards religious rights, human dignity, the human mind, property and lineage.

- Muslims should adopt a gracious and wise approach in promoting shared values and principles when interacting with others.
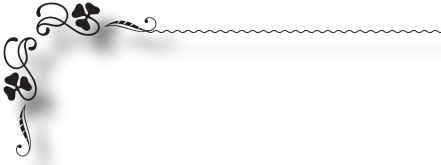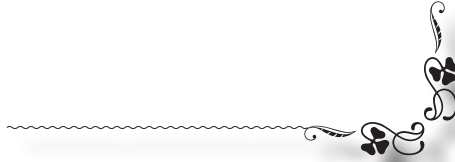
" كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس "

"[Believers], you are the best
community singled out for people."

(Al-Quran)

10

Be a model and inspiration to all

Introduction

A Muslim community of excellence will also be an exemplary community. Every value and principle upheld by the community reflect the diligence and industry in fulfilling their duties towards themselves and others.

A Muslim community of excellence does not compromise on the quality of work s/he does. The Muslim community is not satisfied with anything but the best. As an exemplary community, the Muslim community needs to set the standards for others to emulate. To be the benchmark, one has to achieve the best possible results.

At the same time, an exemplary Muslim community does not hesitate to charter new grounds and open new avenues that may benefit humanity at large. As such, the Muslim community is always ready to delve into the various fields of studies and venture into fresh pastures never explored before.

This is the ideal Muslim community. They bring blessings to all, and illuminates the path of goodness and prosperity that will bring good to humanity and all life on Earth.

How do we become an exemplary community?

Repelling evil with exemplary and most gracious ways

In Islam, the good and the bad has been clearly defined. As an exemplary community, Allah exhorts us to repel evil with the best and most gracious way. Allah says:

{ولا تستوي الحسنة ولا السيئة ادفع بالتي هي أحسن فإذا الذي بينك وبينه عداوة كأنه ولي حميم}

"Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend. But only those who are steadfast in patience, only those who are blessed with great righteousness, will attain to such goodness." [94]

Some scholars have explained this verse in connection to Abu Jahal, who had often hurt the Prophet *pbuh*. In this instance, the Prophet was told to forgive him [95].

Our Prophet was taught and nurtured by Allah SWT to be kind and forgiving. Allah SWT says:

{فبما رحمة من الله لنت لهم ولو كنت فظاً غليظ القلب لانفضوا من حولك فاعف عنهم واستغفر لهم وشاورهم في الأمر فإذا عزمت فتوكل على الله إن الله يحب المتوكلين}

"By an act of mercy from God, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them – had you been harsh, or hard-hearted, they would have dispersed and left you – so pardon them and ask forgiveness for them. Consult with them about matters, then, when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in God: God loves those who put their trust in Him." [96]

☞ **Adopting the best approaches in dealing with challenges**

Contemporary scholars have proposed several principles for Muslims of today to observe, in leading their religious life. These principles are mainly derived from the approaches of the first generation of Muslims, but still remain relevant in the current context:

• Have a profound understanding of the Quran and Prophetic Sunnah

• Facilitate and not complicate

• Bring glad tidings – and do not instill fear

• Be kind

• Interact and know others

• Be open – do not be dogmatic

• Prioritise on the quality of actions – not on forms

• Strive and put in effort

• Contribute – do not only proclaim

• Think creatively and critically – avoid unquestioning adherence

• Be reformatory – do not stagnate

• Be consistent

• Be moderate and balanced – do not follow the extremes

Application

☞ **Surmounting challenges with wisdom and strategic thinking**

In light of the complexity of today's challenges, we have to plan with wisdom and plan strategically. We should not allow emotions to overwhelm us in reacting to any issue. For example, the issue of the caricatures on the Holy Prophet Muhammad *pbuh*, published in the Danish papers, posed a huge problem for the Muslim community. Such acts are certainly reprehensible and should never be condoned. Yet, how do express our position on the issue? Do we follow our sentiments and adopt a hard-line approach, which will only exacerbate the situation? Or do let wisdom rule before reacting, and evaluate how best to approach the situation and deal with it wisely and with grace? An exemplary community will choose only the best path.

Traversing civilizations the world over in its Golden Age, Muslims have been the focal point of knowledge, especially that of science. At that time, Christians and Jews do not only study in Islamic institutions of learning, but the Muslim government had also employed them in fields like medicine and accountancy. Some were also employed as government administrators.

☞ The Prophet builds an exemplary community

The Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* and his Companions have built a good image of Islam. They also have set a good example of how to build a strong community through self-management (faith, worship and morality) and the management of systems (humanities and social sciences). In other words, the Prophet and his Companions have succeeded in building an exemplary community, a community that sets good examples in leading religious life and governance. Reflecting on the accomplishments of this exemplary community, a Muslim intellectual has stated:

الأدب أدبان: أدب شريعة، وأدب سياسة، فأدب الشريعة ما أدى الفرض، وأدب السياسة

ما عمر الأرض، وكلاهما يرجع إلى العدل الذي به سلامة السلطان وعمارة البلدان، لأن

من ترك الفرض فقد ظلم نفسه، ومن خرب الأرض فقد ظلم غيره"

"There are two types of ethics: Syari'ah and political. The ethics of Syari'ah concern the fulfilling of religious duties, while political ethics deal with developing this world. Both these ethics are founded upon justice as a virtue which will secure proper leadership and prosperity. For whomever neglects religious duties will do injustice to him/herself, and whomever causes harm and distruction to this world will do injustice to others." [97]

✍ Summary

• A community of excellence is measured by the strength of its faith, the breadth and depth of its knowledge, the strength of its character and the readiness to contribute.

• A community of excellence actively participates in the setting the agenda for the future.

• The exemplary community is one that is aware and sensitive to the needs of not just humanity, but also of the world in general.

Endnotes

[1] Roger Ballard. 1994. Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain. London C. Hurst and Co.

[2] Werner Menski. 2001. Muslim Law in Britain. Journal of Asian and African Studies. No. 62: 127-163

[3] Ihsan Yilmaz. 2005. Muslim Laws, Politics and Society in Modern Nation States. Hants, England: Ashgate

[4] [Ali 'Imran (3) : 110]

[5] [Al-Anbiya' (21) ; 107]

[6] Hadith reported by al-Tirmizi (no. 2007), although the chain of narration is said to be weak. Nonetheless, the text of the hadith is authentic in the narration which stops at Ibn Mas'ud r.a. This hadith is also reported by ibn al-Bar in his book Jamie Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadlihi (1874: 145).

[7] [Fussilat (41) : 53]

[8] [Al-Mujadalah (58) : 11]

[9] Please refer to Solah Sultan: "Ilmu Asas Tamadun Islam" Online version at http://www.salahsoltan.com/main/_0cf.phtml

[10] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 170]

[11] [Yunus (10) : 36]

[12] [Al-Najm (530 : 23]

[13] [Al-Anbiya' (21) : 30]

[14] [Al-Syu'ara (26) : 61-62]

[15] [Al-An'am (6) : 79]

[16] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 112]

[17] [Yusuf (12) : 23]

[18] [Al-Fath (48) : 4]

[19] Please refer to al-Qaradhawi: "Manhaj al-Qaradhawi dalam (mengajar) akidah" Online version at : http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article. asp?cu_no=2&item_no=3728&version=1&template_id=187&parent_id=18

[20] [Fussilat (41) : 53]

[21] [Al-An'am (6): 74-79] Imam Ibn Kathir explains that tafsir scholars have differing opinions on the state Prophet Abraham was in during this incident. The first opinion is that the Prophet Abraham was seeking the truth and revelation from Allah. The second opinion is that the Prophet was debating with his people on God. Imam Ibn Kathir leant toward the latter, preferring to explain this verse in the context of a debate, where the Prophet Abraham was challenging polytheists with their views. (Imam Ibn Kathir. Tafsir Quran al-'Azim. Vol. 2. Cairo: Maktabah Dar Al-Turath.)

[22] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 260]

[23] Sulaiman Fayyadh, Ibn al-Nafis: "Penemu Pusingan Darah Kecil", Siri Ulama' al-Arab (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahram li al-Tarjamah wa al-Nasyr, al-Jala' Road, 1406H/1985M) pg 4

[24] This is because in many of his critiques on Ibnu Sina's theory, he often states: "practical autopsy proves this mistake..." Ibid, p.31

[25] That is the circulation of blood between the heart and the lung.

[26] Please refer to Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi: "Giving salam to the People of the Book". Online version: <http://www.mawlawi.net/books/salam/index_all.html>

[27] Please refer to Sheikh Mustafa Az-Zarqa': "Wishing Happy New Year". Online version: http://www.islamonline.net/fatwaapplication/arabic/display.asp?hFatwaID=17894

[28] [Al-Mumtahanah (60) : 8]

[29] [Al-Nisa' (4) : 86]

[30] Imam Ibn Kathir. Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim. Vols. 1 & 4. Cairo: Maktabah Dar At-Turath.

[31] Imam al-Tabari. Jami' al-Bayan 'An Ta'wil Ayil Quran. Vol. 5. Cairo: Maktabah wa Matba'ah Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi.

[32] Imam ibn al-'Arabi. Ahkam al-Quran. Vol. 4. Darul Kutub Al-Alamiah.

[33] Imam al-Nafasi. Tafsir An-Nafasi. Vol. 4. Dar Ihya Al-Kutub Al-Arabiah.

[34] Imam al-Qurtubi. Al-Jami Li Ahkam al-Quran. Darul kutub Al-Arabi Lil-Tiba'ah Wa al-Nasyr.

[35] Imam Ibn Kathir. Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Azim. Vols. 1 & 4. Darut At-Turath.

[36] [Al-Mujadalah (58) : 11]

[37] Please refer to Dr Taha Jabir al-Ulwani: "Madkhal fi Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat". Online version: <http://www.alrashad.org/issues/12/12-Alwani.htm>

[38] Imam al-Jauzy. Tarikh Umar al-Khattab. Taif: Maktabah al-Muayyid, p.113-114.

[39] Please refer to al-Qaradhawi: "Secebis kehidupan al-Qaradhawi" Online version: <http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=1213&version=1&template_id=217&parent_id=189>

[40] Please refer to al-Qaradhawi: "Secebis kehidupan al-Qaradawi" Online version: <http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=1213&version=1&template_id=217&parent_id=189>

[41] [Hud (11) : 118-119]

[42] [Al-Hujurat (49) : 13]

[43] The book Sirah al-Nabawiah explains that the King Najasyi considered the Muhajirin as the best of neighbours.

[44] Ibn al Jauzi. Tarikh Umar ibn al-Khattab. Taif: Maktabah al-Mu'ayyad, p. 121-123.
Mahayudin Hj. Yahaya. Tamadun Islam. Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Berhad.

[45] Please refer to the website:
http://www.habous.gov.ma/ar/detail.aspx?id=1383&z=386&s=345

[46] [Ibrahim (14) : 24-25]

[47] [Yusuf (12) : 33-34]

[48] Hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari.

[49] [Al-'Ankabut (29) : 36]

[50] [Al-Anbiya' (21) : 105]

[51] Reported by Imam al-Tabrizi in Misykat al-Masabih

[52] Reported by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim (in Imam al-San'ani, Subul al-Salam Syarh Bulugh al- Maram, vol. 4, p. 1207-1219).

[53] [Al-Anbiya' (21) : 78-79]

[54] Imam ibn Kathir. Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim. Vol.3. Cairo: Maktabah Nazzaz Mustafa al-Baz, p. 186.

[55] Hadith reported by Imam Muslim.

[56] Secular state: Secularism in the Singaporean context refers to the neutrality of the government with respect to all the religions, in order to forge racial harmony.

[57] [Hud (11) : 88]

[58] Hadith reported by Imam al-Baihaqi, al-Qudha'ie and al-'Askari from Jabir, the status of the hadith is marfu'.

[59] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 148]

[60] [Al-Muthaffifin (83) : 26]

[61] [Al-Qashash (28) : 77]

[62] [Al-Naml (27) : 40]

[63] Pluralism in Islam encompasses diversity in cultures, religions and differences of opinions.

[64] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 62]

[65] The Constitution of Medina is a treaty between the Prophet Muhammad pbuh and various communities, including the Jews and the different Arab tribes that have not embraced Islam, after his flight from Mecca. Refer to Ibn Katsir, Al-Bidayah Wa An-Nihayah, vol. 3 (1984, Beirut: Maktabah Al-Ma'arif), p. 224-226.

[66] [Al-Mumtahanah (60) : 8]

[67] [Al-Nisa' (4) : 1]

[68] Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad

[69] [Al-Isra' (17) : 70]

[70] [Hud (11) : 118]

[71] [Al-Hujurat (49) : 13]

[72] [Al-Baqarah (2) : 190]

[73] [Al-Hujurat (49) : 13]

[74] The concepts Ta'aruf and Ta'ayusy in Islam have their points of departure from a true understanding of 'aqidah. Islamic 'aqidah stresses that humans are Allah's creations and that all humans are the descendents of Prophet Adam. Diversity amongst humans is the will of Allah. Just as Allah has created many races and languages, He has created the people who follow other religions and creeds. These differences were created not so that humans may live in enmity and hatred, but for humans to learn from each other and live together in harmony. Humans are linked by two strong links, namely: as God's creations and as the children of Adam. Also refer to Dr Abdul Aziz bin Othman al-Tuwaijiri, Al-Islam wa al- Ta'ayusy baina al-Adyan fi Ufuq al-Qarn al-Hadi wa al-Isyrin (Islamic Education, Science and Cultural Organization, ISESCO, 1998).

[75] [Al-Mumtahanah (60) : 8]

76 [Al-Ma'idah (5) : 2]

77 Past and contemporary scholars like Imam al-Sakhawi, Imam Ibn Al-Hajar, Imam al-Qari and Sheikh Albani explain that the saying "Hubbul Watan Minal Iman" is not a hadith. Nonetheless, the meaning has been deemed accurate by Imam al-Sakhawi. Some scholars like Imam Sayyid Mu'in al-Safawi explained that the quote might have originated from some the first generation Muslims.

78 Dr Salah al-Sultan, Dhawabit al-Manhajiyyah li fiqh al-Aqalliyyah al-Muslimah, online version: http://www.salahsoltan.com/main/download.php?id=101888,69,2

79 [Ali 'Imran (3) : 110]

80 Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad

81 Berita Harian, 13 June 3005.

82 http://www.singstat.gov.sg/keystats/c2000/indicators.pdf

83 Ibn Hisyam. Al Sirah Al-Nabawiah. Vol. 1. Dar al-Manar, p.137-140.

84 [Yusuf (12) : 43-49]

85 [Al-Nahl (16) : 125]

86 [Al-Anbiya' (21) : 107]

87 [Al-Taubah (9) : 128]

88 A description of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh by Abdullah bin 'Umar and Abdullah bin al-Salam. Hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam al-Baihaqi

89 A description of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh by 'Aisyah r.a.. Hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim.

90 A description the Prophet Muhammad pbuh by Ali bin Abu Talib r.a. Please refer to the following website:
http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/In_Depth/mohamed/1424/Preview/article01.shtml#28

91 A description the Prophet Muhammad pbuh by Hind bin Abu Halah. Please refer to the following website:
http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/In_Depth/mohamed/1424/Preview/article01.shtml#28

92 Narrated by Imam Bukhari in Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziyyah. Zad al-Ma'ad, vol.3. (Dar al-Fikr), p. 24-25.

93 Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani. Fathul Bari Syahu Sahih Bukhari.Vol. 8. Cairo: Dar Al-hadith.

94 [Fussilat (41) : 34-35]

95 Imam Ibn al-Arabi. Ahkam al-Quran. Vol. 4. Beruit, Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiah, p.23-24.

96 [Ali 'Imran (3) : 159]

97 Ibn al- Manzur. Lisan al-Arab. Vol. 4. p.3112.