

Editorial

During the last couple of decades, people have been arguing about the modules for mutual recognition and positive engagement among world civilisations and religions. Consequently, scholars have invented such labels as the “clash of civilizations,” the “dialogue of civilizations,” and the “alliance of civilizations.” Most of the Muslims have not taken serious note of such attempts at reconciliation. However, some scholars did take note of and participated in these attempts. Concerned Muslim scholars, however, advised these Muslims to participate in such an endeavour by using *ḥikmah* (wisdom) in engaging with secular sciences and communicating Islamic values to the people of other faiths.

The word *ḥikmah* appears in 19 verses of the Qur’ān for a total of 20 times. It may be defined as the ability to foresee consequences, making the best use of available knowledge, and making correct judgments and decisions to maximise beneficial results. It means to employ beautiful preaching, exhorting towards the truth and warning against the falsehood. It involves debating in a way that is better, with exemplary moral characters, soft speech, and by providing authentic evidence and logic and refuting the falsehood in a suitable and reasonable manner. The aim of such an endeavour is to lead the people towards the true path especially to those who show staunch enmity and hatred. Literally, *ḥikmah* means wisdom which must be applied to every aspect of human lives. Indeed Allah is *Al-Hakīm* (Wise) Lord who revealed His Book of Guidance for all mankind, which is full of *ḥikmah*. Thus, *ḥikmah* is for individuals to strive to use their faculties of intelligence and power of reasoning, and recognise and choose the right way. According to a *ḥadīth* (9.255) in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, the Prophet (SAW) said: “Do not wish to be like anyone, except in two cases: (1) A man whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously and, (2) a man whom Allah has given wisdom (knowledge of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.”

In this regard, it is pertinent to mention the book *fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by Muhiyyi'd-din Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240), the most prolific and influential of Sufi theorists. This book describes Ibn Arabi's understanding of the essence of the different seals of wisdom represented by twenty-seven prophets from Adam (A.S.) through Moses, Jesus and others to Muhammad (SAW). He shows how each of these prophets exemplified a particular wisdom available to mankind. It is a harmonious vision of reality which integrates differences without destroying them.

Muslim scholars also advise those in promoting cooperation to use *'ibrah*, meaning lesson or admonition. Though the term *'ibrah* is used in many ways, generally it was used in relation to history in the Qur'ān and in the tradition of the Prophet (SAW). The Qur'ān narrates several historical accounts of the messages and messengers of God, of the believing and non-believing communities, and of the heroes and tyrants. It then urges people to take *'ibrah* from the account provided (Qur'ān, 12: 111) so that one may enjoin virtue and forbid vice. *'Ibrah* signifies historical reasoning that motivates one to investigate the postulates of other cultures and civilizations, to learn from their mistakes, to carry out research and to transcend their horizons. The word connotes the existence of barriers between cultures but it also suggests the bridging or crossing of that barrier and the possibility of communication between the rivals.

'Ibrah could then form the bedrock of relations among civilizations. *'Ibrah* was used by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), a socio-political thinker and a philosopher of history. His most famous work is called *Kitāb al-'Ibar* (The Book of Admonitions). He wrote about the history of the Arabs and Berbers drawing lessons from his predecessors. He hoped that subsequent generations would draw lessons from his own accounts and conclusions. *'Ibrah* is then the bridge between the external and internal aspects of history, but could also be the bridge between civilizations.

'Ibrah is then a bridging concept that could be employed to reach out to others and connect with various cultures and civilizations. This requires, as a first step, to analyse the condition of Muslims living either as a minority or as a majority.

As is known, China is currently engaged in expanding its influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and thus would like the Muslim support. This necessitates, on the part of Muslims, to use *ḥikmah* and *'ibrah* and to draw lessons from their dealings with Muslims in their own country. Anthony Roy Rogers analyses the plight of the Muslim minorities, Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China. Specifically, he analyses the human rights condition in Xinjiang and found that the human rights conditions in Xinjiang have experienced a "turbulent" journey since 1949 and have gone through many changes under the different Chinese leadership (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao). The Uyghurs have suffered many hardships and discriminations, yet have never given up their Turkic cultural and Islamic identity. For the Uyghurs, the Chinese have always been considered as a threat to their culture and identity. The Chinese government made repeated attempts to separate the Uyghurs from their Islamic identity violating international human rights norms. He concludes that with the

passage of time and the influx of more Hans, Xinjiang would surely resemble a typical Chinese province with Uyghurs losing their identity.

Asma M. Uthman El-Muhamady explores the *ḥikmah* and *‘ibrah* used by an eminent Sunnī scholar of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Sayyid Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī in promoting inter-cultural and religious harmony between Muslims and people of other faiths in the Hindu majority India. She found Nadwī to have adopted an approach which can be termed “moderate” but it was a strategic and unique approach in promoting and propagating *da’wah* in a difficult environment he lived in. To Nadwī, living side by side with adherents of other religions is not only a challenge for Muslim minority as in India, but it also gives Muslims an opportunity to call others to the message of Islam. Nadwī called upon Muslims to live Islam by practising Islam at all levels of society regardless of the circumstances and environments in which they live in. He also suggested that living religion (*iqāmat al-dīn*) in individual life is definitely a precondition to improve their status in the society and help promote inter-cultural harmony in India.

Husna Fauzi analyses the fate of persons with disabilities who generally suffer from social exclusion and denied the basic rights and freedoms enjoyed by everyone else. This is against the human rights model of disability approved by the United Nations. Islam also emphasises the dignity of every human being. Human dignity is the natural right of every individual to be enjoyed in an absolute and unqualified sense. In Malaysia, persons with disabilities have been identified as one of the target groups in the National Welfare Policy 1990. The policy provides equal opportunities to the disabled persons. Since 1990, the governmental and non-governmental organisations continue to provide various programmes and services to cater for the special needs and interests of the disabled persons. However, persons with disabilities still remain as one of the marginalised groups in Malaysia unable to contribute fully to the development of the society. Steps need be taken to increase public awareness through mass education campaigns to empower the disabled so that their voice can be heard in ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

The fourth article by Md. Thowhidul Islam is concerned with social justice which requires the expansion of development facilities in urban and rural areas. However, the rural areas in Bangladesh are lagging behind in every field of development. He found that Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) has been playing an important role in developing social justice by creating economic opportunities for the rural population. He examines the role played by the

Shari'ah-based Microfinance programme named Rural Development Scheme (RDS) established in 1995 to alleviate rural poverty by providing micro-investment to the agricultural and rural sectors. He found IBBL to be one of the fastest-growing and best-performing banks in Bangladesh based on Islamic *shari'ah* and the Islamic microcredit programme RDS it established to be a very successful contributing to reducing rural poverty. The concept of Islamic microfinance, he suggests, should be introduced to the development agencies in Muslim world countries.

This issue of the journal also contains a research note by, Shah Abdul Hannan, an eminent Muslim thinker and a prolific writer. He examines the *hikmah* behind using such traditional concepts as *Dār al Islām*, *Dār al Ḥarb*, *Dār al Amān*, and the like to divide the world into the abode of peace and the abode of war. These concepts might have been relevant during the early phase of Islam when it had to confront the surrounding mighty empires. However, the rise of the United Nations (UN) system and the development of international law which accord equality to all states, these concepts are not relevant. Accepting this reality would help Muslims to move forward and live in peace with all.

Islam seeks peace and harmony within a community as well as between countries. Peace is central to Islam and consequently, it enjoins the believers to promote peace, to build a society in peace, collaboration, justice, and virtue. A peaceful solution to any situation must be sought with the use of *hikmah* and *'ibrah*. The articles in this issue of the journal promote this message of peace.

Abdul Rashid Moten