

## Editorial

The Qur'an, literally the words of Allah (SWT), promises *hayatan tayyibah* (a pure and prosperous life) to those who adhere to values enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). Muslims, through the ages, have been trying to understand and adhere to these values. There are forces, both internal and external, that militate against their struggle to live a value-laden life. Internally, they succumb to customs and traditions not in tune with Islamic values and externally, they are forced to deal with foreign forces trying to impose their values on Muslims.

Muslims have also been guilty of neglecting the divine teachings brought to mankind by prophets. These prophets and messengers came to remind people of the forgotten teachings and/or to correct the adulterated divine teachings followed by their respective nations. This was accomplished by Prophets Musa, Ibrahim, Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayb and Muhammad (SAW). They all preached one and the same message, each message, however, was tailored to suit the socio-historical need of their intended audience. With the end of the Prophethood, this responsibility dawned upon the ummah as a whole. The idea is, in the Qur'anic language (al-Qur'an, 57: 16), not to let the heart becomes indurate, mainly due to a long time-lapse of no messenger.

For centuries Muslim revivalists and reformers have been doing the preaching to keep Muslims on the straight path. They were also fighting foreign forces bent upon imposing their values upon Muslims. They worked hard to bring about *islah* (reform), *ihya'* (revival), *tajdid* (renewal), or *sahwah* (awakening). Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), among others, are the prominent early Muslim reformers. They were succeeded in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries by Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (d. 1762), Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837), Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) and others. These individuals or movements they led differed in their approaches but their primary concern was with the socio-moral reform and reconstruction of religious thought on the basis of values enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Some of the principles emphasized in the Qur'an are those of *tawhid* meaning the indivisible, inalienable divinity of Allah (SWT). This principle denies anyone the right to order others in his/her own right to do or not to do certain things. For, as the Qur'an declares, "The command rests with none but Allah" (al-Qur'an, 6: 57) Who is the "Lord of the universe" (al-Qur'an, 1: 1) and grants guidance (al-Qur'an, 87: 3). The next principle is *risalah*, the prophethood. It

refers to the ideal conduct of the last Prophet (SAW). According to a well-known *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet, SAW), Allah (SWT) asked the Prophet (SAW): “to remain conscious of God, whether in private or in public; to speak justly, whether angry or pleased; to show moderation both when poor and when rich; to reunite friendship with those who have broken off with me; to give to him who refuses me; that my silence should be occupied with thought; that my looking should be an admonition; and that I should command what is right.” The Prophet (SAW) is the role model for mankind and is the source of Islamic law, values and traditions. One important value emphasized in the Qur’an and in the *hadith* of the Prophet (SAW) is ‘*adalah*, justice. It is incumbent upon believers to establish justice for all “even as against yourselves, or your parents or your kins, whether it is against the rich or poor” (al-Qur’an, 4: 55; 4: 135). The believers are commanded to be just for “justice is next to piety” (al-Qur’an, 5: 8). The Prophets came with “the Book and the Balance (of Rights and Wrong) that men may stand forth in justice” (al-Qur’an, 57: 25). The Qur’an uses multiple words like *Sunnat Allah* (the way or tradition of Allah, SWT), *mizan* (scale), *qist* (balance) and ‘*adl* (justice) to impress the significance of justice. The Qur’an demands of an individual a high moral standard so that he may stand as a witness even against himself. ‘*Adalah* postulates two fundamental principles of freedom and equality. It is an essential condition and consequence of the establishment of justice that the people should be in possession of freedom to act in accordance with one’s own moral convictions and to take decisions affecting their lives on the basis of these convictions and choices.

These values have gradually been forgotten but, most importantly, they are being attacked by forces emanating from outside. These attacks are made by imputing differing meanings to Islamic concepts, by rewriting history to dupe the masses, and by reinterpreting the values supposedly to be in conformity with the advances in life. This issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Thoughts* addresses the conceptual and practical issues Muslims face in the intellectual and political arena. Jamil Farooqui argues, contrary to the contention of Western scholars, that knowledge need not be indigenous and relative. It is possible to attain authentic and beneficial knowledge of the social world. It requires the identification of the Absolutely Reality, the linkage between truth and goodness and the balance between human aspiration and societal needs. Islamization of Knowledge identifies these three factors and provides a framework for authentic and altruistic knowledge. It is based on revealed knowledge which enables humans to identify the goals of life and the ways to achieve it. Abdullahil Ahsan discusses the importance of history and elucidates the role of history in human civilization. He explains the distinctions between history and pseudo-history and the purpose for which history is often written. History, he admits, is the storehouse of information and knowledge about everything that has happened in the past.

There is a lot to be learnt from history but one has to be careful about what one is reading. Historians do not simply record what has happened in the past, they sift events, select knowledge according to their preconceived notions, then write and present it as history. Thus, history is not what has happened in the past, but rather “history is what is recorded by historians.” Historians write to emphasize different aspects of the same event or the same personality. The life of the Prophet (SAW) has been written umpteen times by historians, some to highlight his kindness, others to identify his statesmanship and still others to propagate negative ideas about the Prophet (SAW). Abdullah warns Muslims to read history with care.

The third article by Mumtaz Ali deals with the empowerment of women. He argues that the status of women in the Muslim world has been monitored by organizations such as the United Nations and is presented in the Western feminist literature and in the UN Platform for Action. Muslim women, he admits, are passive, somewhat secluded and denied their rights. Their empowerment will not come, as suggested by the feminist literature, by liberating them from God. Liberating women from the divine de-humanizes women, make them materialistic, and devoid of higher meaning in life as is the case in the societies of the West and East. Women, if empowered by following the guidance of the Creator, would find satisfaction, peace and happiness in their life. This requires ethical and moral education for both men and women to really understand and respect the high status women are accorded in Islam. Education based upon ethical, spiritual and moral principles, not simply the resolutions and action plans, is the surest way to empower women.

The fourth article by Maszlee Malik deals with “political salafis” which emerged in the Middle East with the Arab Spring. *Salafi* “quietist” approach to politics and their negative attitude toward democracy has been used by the regimes in the Middle East to crush their opponents. In Malaysia, political *salafis*, despite adhering to the *Salafi* doctrine of quietism, joined the ruling party UMNO (United Malays National Organization) and supported their policies. They gave self-serving interpretation to the *salafi* doctrine, supported the ruling party, and benefitted themselves politically and otherwise. Salafis gained power while UMNO succeeded in winning the support of Muslims who otherwise might have supported the opposition party, PAS. Salafi political activism perhaps acted as an antidote to extremism and terrorism in the country.

This issue of the journal contains one research note and a review article. The note by Aliyu Olugbenga Yusuf and Basri Hassan show the problems faced by the librarians in handling Islamic collections in Malaysian academic libraries. They show the shortcomings of the librarians in skills, knowledge and abilities and emphasize the need for training of the librarians so that they could perform their task of managing Islamic collections effectively. Elfatih AbdelSalam reviews

six books dealing with tradition and modernity and found the two trends in operation in Muslim societies. Some contemporary Islamic movements abhor Western ideas and fear that Muslims may lose their identity because of aggressive modernization. To these elements, the survival of modes of tradition in contemporary Muslim society proves the vitality of Islam. However, there are those who challenge traditionalism and advocate democracy and pluralism. They conceive of democracy not as an ideology but a tool for effective governance. The tussle between tradition and modernity is likely to continue.

What emerges from these articles and reviews is that Muslims, to remain relevant in contemporary times, must find suitable and effective means to express Islamic values and its religious tradition without being antagonistic, coercive or submissive. Muslims need to understand and practise Islam and make use of scientific and technological means to promote peace and development in Muslim societies. They must learn from proper history, understand and practice the ethical and moral principles of Islam, empower women along Islamic lines and develop an educational system that will help revive the glorious past of the universal Islamic civilization.

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