

**“THE NEED FOR PROPHETIC MORALITY IN THE MODERN ISLAMIC WORLD”.**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Currently, the whole world is in a state of moral decay. Despite the growth of cities with sky-scrappers and other physical development, we find that human beings are continually involved in destructive and unfruitful activities. Good ethics are being cast aside even among the majority of the Muslim elite. Honesty, fair dealing, truthfulness and justice in politics and business transactions are being trampled under the heel of unethical capitalism.<sup>1</sup> In social life, Muslim youth have embraced an extreme form of hedonistic culture, thus idolising film stars, singers, dancers, models and athletes, instead of following the noble Prophet s.a.w., ulama and so forth. Killing, moral corruption and depraving behaviour have been on the increase. Atheism and cases of *murtad* (apostasy) have been happening, too.

Tragically, a person who committed suicide as in the case of Mohamed Bouazizi of Tunisia due to poverty and humiliation that he had suffered as a result of injustices of the former regime of Zain al-‘Abidin Ben Ali had been hailed as a hero.<sup>2</sup> In reality, this act of self-destruction is haram in Islam and should not be the practice of any noble *mu’min* (believer), event though he might be exposed to extreme hardship. However, beyond this tragedy, there is the question of unequal distribution of wealth within the society thus giving rise to injustices and dispossession of the poor.

Here, there is a great contradiction indeed as Islam always stand for justice, equality, brotherhood and fair treatment for all Muslims and fellow citizens. Remember, Allah, the Almighty, Most Benevolent and Wise, has enjoined upon us to do justice and good deeds:

“Verily, Allâh enjoins Al-Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allâh Alone - Islâmîc Monotheism) and Al-Ihsân [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allâh” (An-Nahl: 90).

In fact, justice has been declared by Allah, the Almighty, as part of *taqwa* (God consciousness or piety): “Be just: that is nearer to piety” (Al-Maidah: 8).

Besides the problems we have just discussed, there is also the unpleasant issue of Islamic heterodoxy which we have to tackle in order to save the Muslim community (ummah) from total destruction and steer it towards true progress as ensured by Islam. For instance, in Malaysia, we have been troubled by the rise of Darul Arqam, a pseudo- Sufi group which promotes its own ideas of Imam Mahdi and occultation (mystical interpretation of Islam) and also Hindu-Javanese interpretation concerning human experience. Presently, under the leadership of Madame Khadijah ‘Amm (nicknamed Ummu Jah), the widow of the late Ustaz Hj. Asha‘ari Muhammad (also known as Shaykh al-Arqam or Abuya) has revived the organisation under the name of “Global Ikhwan Sdn. Bhd” (Global Ikhwan Pte. Ltd.). Under the guise of commercial transaction involving a network of business companies, restaurants and wealthy villas, they have set up their branches in some Muslim countries and even Europe, with

<sup>1</sup> In practice, capitalism thrives on *riba* (usury) and monopoly of trading activities only by the rich and powerful individuals. The poor and the needy are not really protected.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html>, pp. 1 – 2.

their main headquarters now base in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Umm Jah while in control of the movement has produced a DVD material and a pamphlet promoting the idea of the “Power of Ka‘abah”, that is, as a mystical concept of *tawassul* (intermediary to be used to acquire the pleasure of Allah), something which had never been taught by the Prophet s.a.w. Although, recently Umm Jah has been arrested together with some of her supporters by the Sa‘udi authorities, yet the group is far from being abolished. So we need to warn the Muslim community of this sinister danger lurking among them.

Behind all the problems we have described, there is the central issue of the dominance of Zionist-Christian Axis over the whole world. It is this dominance with its military might, financial power and cultural subversion (*ghazw al-fikriy*) that has thrown most Muslim countries throughout the world into a state of disarray, confused and submissive. We need to break this strangulation of the Muslim world, otherwise we cannot sincerely progress and develop along true Islamic line, let alone attaining salvation in this life and the Hereafter.

In view of all these problems which I have mentioned, we no doubt need to revive and implement Prophetic morality in this modern world in the face of internal threats such as injustices, despotic and arbitrary form of administration, moral decay and so forth plus the continued encroachment of the Zionist-Christian powers upon Islam and the Muslim community at large.

#### THE EFFORTS OF THE ULAMA TO IMPLEMENT PROPHETIC MORALITY IN THE MODERN WORLD:

At the outset, we should remember that Allah, the real Creator and Master of the whole universe, has proclaimed Rasulullah s.a.w. as *rahmat-al lil ‘alamin* ( a blessing to the whole universe) and hence an appropriate example to be followed by all mankind. In this connection, Allah has said:

“And We have sent you (O Muhammad SAW) not but as a mercy for the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).” (Surah Al-Anbiya’: 107)

Allah has also declared Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. as *uswatun hasanah* (that is, an excellent example) to be emulated by those who truly believe in Him and the Last Day. Concerning this, Allah had stated:

“Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” (Surah Al-Ahzab: 21).

Hence, we should always seek the examples of the Prophet s.a.w. who graciously had forewarned us:

“You will never go astray as long as you hold on to *Kitabullah* (al-Qur’an) and my Sunnah”. (Abu Dawud).

Besides this, we have to follow also the guidance of the ulama who like Ustaz (Hoja) Badi ‘uzzaman Sa‘id Nursi of Turkey and others have steadily struggled in the path of the noble Prophet s.a.w. to bring the Muslim community towards progress and salvation. In his efforts to save and develop the Muslims of his time, Ustaz Sa‘id Nursi had fallen back on the guidance of al-Qur’an and sunnah of the Prophet s.a.w. The evidences of his actions could be found in his speeches and writings, including that of his *magnum opus* (greatest work), *Risale-i Nur*. In his lecture entitled, The Damascus Sermon (*Hutbe Shamiye*) which had been compiled as part of the *Risale-i Nur*, he had discussed the problems of the weaknesses befallen upon the Muslim world as opposed to the development of the West. In this connection, he mentioned six dire sickness suffered by the Muslims, that is, the rise of despair and hopelessness among the Muslims in their social life, death (absent) of truthfulness in their social and political life, love of emnity, not knowing the luminous bonds of unity that bind them as believers to one another, despotism and

restricting endeavours to what is personally beneficial.<sup>3</sup> Yes, he has been right in his analysis of the Muslim community of his time.

Meanwhile, with the intention to overcome the problems of the Muslims of his time, Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi stressed upon unity and cooperation of all groups and peoples who made up the Islamic world.<sup>4</sup> What he was saying here about the importance of unity and cooperation reminds us about the program of Rasulullah s.a.w. in Madinah. The Prophet s.a.w. had established unity and cooperation based on Islamic Brotherhood between the *Muhajirin* (Emigrants) and *Ansar* (Helpers) of Madinah in the year 622 H.<sup>5</sup> Following this, the nascent Muslim society began to grow magnificently despite the threats from the Quraish and the Jews at Madinah. In fact, it managed to spread Islam and gained control of the Arabian Peninsula by the time of the Prophet s.a.w. death.

While touching on the issue of Muslim unity within the Ottoman Empire and later during the Young Turks’ administration, Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi also warned the Muslims about the danger of nationalism, that is, racial chauvinism springing out of the struggle of the Christian minorities in the Balkan Peninsula and some Arab territories with the support of the Western powers. At the same time, he called upon the Arabs and the Turks to be united as fellow Muslims and safeguard their sovereignty and not to succumb to the lure of nationalism which would weaken the position of the Muslims within the empire as a whole.<sup>6</sup> What he had done here is most appropriate. Rasulullah s.a.w. himself had warned us the Muslims against upholding the banner of nationalism which he likened to *asabiyyah* of the pre-Islamic Arabia. Concerning the issue, Rasulullah s.a.w. had commented:<sup>7</sup>

“He who calls others to group chauvinism (*‘asabiyyah*) does not belong to us, he who fights for the sake of group chauvinism (*asabiyyah*) does not belong to us and he who dies upholding group chauvinism (*‘asabiyyah*) does not belong to us”. (Abu Dawud). And, “You are all children of Adam and Adam was created from dust”. (Ahmad).

Apart from Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi, Ustaz Prof. Dr. Yusof al-Qardhawi, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877 – 1938) and Maulana Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi (1903 – 1979) also have spoken about the same subject of nationalism and its threat to Islamic unity. However, both Iqbal and Maulana Maududi dealt with the question of nationalism in detail, especially concerning the nature and danger of nationalism in the contemporary world.<sup>8</sup> As such, we need to consult their writings, too.

Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi also reminded the Muslims that truthfulness has all along been the basis and foundation of Islam. During the era of the Prophet which he called, “the Era of Bliss”, he pointed out that truthfulness and lying were far apart from one another as belief and unbelief.<sup>9</sup> Salvation he said was to be found in honesty.<sup>10</sup> In the

<sup>3</sup> See *The Damascus Sermon* (Turkish, *Hutbe Shamiye*), translated by Sukran Vahide, 1994, pp. 16 – 17 and also Sukran Vahide, *Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*, The author of Risale I Nur, Sozler Nesriyat San, Istanbul, 2004, pp. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Sukran Vahide, *Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*, pp. 104.

<sup>5</sup> See Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Muhammad Rasulullah: The life of the Prophet Muhammad*, (translated by Mohiuddin Ahmad), Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow, India, 1979, pp. 184.

<sup>6</sup> Sarwat Saulat, *Said Nursi*, International Islamic Publishers, Karachi, 1981, pp. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Yusof al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (translated from, *Al-Halal wa al-Haram fil Islam*), American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, U.S.A., n.d., pp. 247 – 251.

<sup>8</sup> Concerning Iqbal’s comment on nationalism, please see Syed Riazul Hasan, *The Reconstruction of Legal Thought in Islam*, Law Publishing Company, Lahore, 1974 (?), pp. 142 – 144 and 158 – 160. See also Sayyid Abu A’la Maududi, *West versus Islam*, (translated by S. Waqar Ahmad Gardezi and Abdul Waheed Khan), Markazi Maktaba Islami, New Delhi, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Sukran Vahide, *Ibid.*, pp. 102.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

discussion, he also argued that the Prophet had upheld truthfulness above everything else in his dealing with human beings that he was respected and trusted by both the Muslims and the Quraish, although the latter did not agree with him concerning Islam. Unfortunately, such kind of honesty is hard to find nowadays. More often than not, we find Muslim leaders resorting to corruptions, both materially and morally, without caring for the well-being of the poor and the needy.<sup>11</sup>

Further, the great Turkish reformer while talking in Damascus also stressed upon love and brotherhood among the Muslims as a mean to protect their interests. In this instance, he called upon the Arabs and the Turks to stand together in protecting the sacred citadel of Islamic nationhood. In this connection, he stated that based on the bond of brotherhood all Muslims should help one another morally and if necessary materially.<sup>12</sup> Such proposal is relevant to us as we are able to see how Muslims are being victimised, killed indiscriminately and oppressed in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and the Patani Muslims in Southern Thailand among others. We have to respond positively and actively in helping to lessen or even remove their sufferings as they are being oppressed and subjugated by non-Muslim local powers with the open or covert support of the Zionist-American Axis in the West. Remember the reminder of the Prophet s.a.w. in term of responsibility to help fellow Muslims when they are in trouble:

“Whoever among you (Muslims) do not care for the welfare of other Muslims, then he is not from among them!”. The above statement is very serious indeed. It means that Allah does not accept a person to be a Muslim unless he cares for other Muslims, that is, providing help to them and even defend their rights whenever necessary.

Another important issue that Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi talked about was the need to implement *Shura* (consultation) as enjoined by Shari ‘ah and practised by the Prophet s.a.w. He had emphasized on this issue while talking in Damascus and again during the Constitutional era when Sultan Abdul Hamid II was in power and later still while addressing the regime of Adnan Menderes. In all these instances, he called for freedom and consultation to be implemented as opposed to despotism.<sup>13</sup> Now, consultation is indeed important and very relevant to our situation in the modern world. Look at what has happened to the Middle East and North Africa when we see the revolt of the people against despotic rule of their leaders, hence bringing about the “Arab Spring”. Good governance really works when there is peace, unity and cooperation among the citizen of a country. On the contrary, violence upheaval usually takes place when people are oppressed and denied of all their rights.

While talking about the need to implement *Shura* in running the affairs of the state, Ustaz Sa ‘id Nursi also touched on the question of democracy. This he did while referring to the the situation in the Ottoman Empire during the era of the Constitutional movement of the Young Turks. He again discussed about democracy while advising the government of Adnan Menderes of the Democratic Party. Besides him, Maududi too discussed about democracy in preference to despotism when he was addressing the situation in Pakistan during the administration of the Muslim League and later military dictatorship of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. In fact, Maududi had written some books concerning the issue of Islamic state, *shura* and democracy for the guidance of the Muslim community.<sup>14</sup> Maududi was not only a writer and a political analyst as well as activist, but his greatest work was

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<sup>11</sup> We have a very glaring example of this behaviour in the case of Zain al-Abin Ben ‘Ali of Tunisia and to a certain degree in the practice of President Col. Mu ‘ammar Ghadafi of Libya.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. Cit.*, pp. 103.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105.

<sup>14</sup> See Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, (translated and edited by khurshid Ahmad), Islamic Publications, Ltd., Lahore, 1983.

the tafsir, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (Understanding of the al-Qur'an) which also deals among other things with the problems of Islam in the modern world.<sup>15</sup> In recent years, Ustaz Prof. Yusof al-Qardhawi, now a resident of Qatar, and Shaykh Rashid Ghanoushi of Tunisia have discussed the same matter also when they evaluated the political situation in the world and their respective countries.<sup>16</sup> They have given us some useful discussions on the subject.

On a number of occasions, Ustaz Sa 'id Nursi also defended the rights of the Muslim women to wear Islamic dress and to lead a life in accordance with the Shari 'ah. He called on them to observe the requirement of Islam pertaining to *awrah* and not to expose their bodies as often the custom of the Western women.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, because of his position as a prisoner, being detained for most part of his life and isolated from others, he was not able to write in detail concerning the rights of women in Islam. Moreover, his main concern then was the issue of faith, that was to save the faith of Muslim community of Turkey which was under the strong attack of atheism and secularism. However, this lacking on his part, has been fulfilled by the works of Ustaz Prof. Yusof al-Qardhawi and also Maududi. Both of these ulama have written widely on the issue of the status of women in Islam and other related problems such as family planning, women working outside their home and so forth to fulfill the need of modern Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the question of social justice (*al-'adalah al-ijtima 'iyyah*) which is a fundamental aspect of Islam, al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb (1905 – 1966), the prolific writer, an 'alim and a great Islamic worker of Egypt had written a very fascinating work, entitled, *Al-'Adalah al-Ijtima 'iyyah fil Islam*, which has been hailed even by Western writers as the greatest work ever written on the subject. It means that he has contributed so much to the issue of social justice in the Muslim world. Meanwhile, justice itself has been recognised by Allah as a part of *taqwa*. Concerning this, Allah has stated: “Be just: that is nearer to piety”. (Surah al-Maidah:8).

Hence, we have no other choice, but to uphold justice all the time in our dealing with human affairs. Only then, will Allah s.w.t. accept our position as a true *mu'min* and award us a place in the blissful Jannah (Heaven), insya Allah.

**CONCLUSION:** In view of all that we have discussed, I firmly believe that we need seriously to revive and implement Prophetic morality in all its forms in this modern world. Remember Allah had told us firmly:

“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.” (Al-Radd, 11).

Therefore, we have to work hard and cooperate with one another, especially among the NGOs of respective Islamic states. As such, we have to enlist the service of committed ulama and Muslim thinkers as well as professionals with the right expertise in order to make our programme successful. In this matter, we cannot depend on official bodies like the Arab League, Rabitah al-'Alam al-Islami or even the Organisation of Islamic Conference (renamed since June, 2011 as Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) to carry out our programme

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<sup>15</sup> Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi had written 6 volumes of his tafsir, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* which he completed in 1972. See Sarwat Saulat, *Maulana Maududi*, International Islamic Publishers, Karachi, 1984, pp. 151. Altogether, Maududi had written about 64 books on all subject relating to religion, history and biography, sociology, politics, economic, law and society, as well miscellaneous issues. In addition, he had also given speeches on similar subjects almost all over the Islamic world.

<sup>16</sup> Ustaz Prof. Yusof al-Qardhawi is a prolific writer who has written more than 30 books on all subjects ranging from Islam as a way of life, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) pertaining to politics, economy and social affairs and contemporary issues, including the present upheaval in Egypt.

<sup>17</sup> Sukran Vahide, *Op. Cit.*, , pp337 – 338.

<sup>18</sup> Yusof al-Qardhawi, *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 3, pp. 147 – 236 and Dr. Yusof Qardhawi, *Fatwa Masa Kini*, (originally, *Fatawa Mu 'asirah*), vol. 6 & 7, Pustaka Salam Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1995, pp. 11- 143. While Maududi had written the work entitled, *Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam*, (translated by Al-Asha 'ari), Markazi Maktaba Islami, Delhi, 1974.

**concerning Muslim unity and other reform activities as they have failed to attain the proper standard determined by Islamic Shari 'ah in their endeavours. Besides, they all have to submit to the charter of the United Nations Organisation under the firm control the United States of America. There is also the problem of diplomacy and good relationship that they have to maintain with the West and others in the world. So, it will not help our need at all. We have also to find our own financial resources and to move gradually and carefully in order to ensure that we do not fail. As for the detail, it would have to be worked out among us in a special forum of our own. Last of all, we need to make lot of *du'a* to Allah, the Almighty and seek his protection and guidance so that all our efforts and sacrifices will be successful, Insya Allah! May Allah gives us the strength to work for Islam!**