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VALUES EDUCATION FRAMEWORK BASED ON ISLAMIC CONCEPTS AND PRECEPTS

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The Aims Of Education

The First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977 laid down the aims of education thus:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education, should, therefore, cater for the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively, and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education is in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community, and humanity at large.

(Recommendations of the Five World Conferences on Islamic Education, 1983: 16)

Education, from the Islamic perspective, may be described as a life-long process of preparing an individual to actualize his role as a vicegerent (*Khalifah*) of Allah on earth and thereby to contribute fully to the reconstruction and development of his society in order to achieve well-being in this world and well-being in the hereafter (*hasanah fi'd-dunya* and *hasanah fi'l-akhirah* Q. 2:201, 7:156, 16:122).

The Qur'anic Weltanschauung as the Theoretical Framework

In order to appreciate the significance of values education from an Islamic perspective, it is important that one begins by examining the Islamic conception of man as expounded in the Qur'an. It will be obvious that the Qur'anic view of man differs from the secular humanistic or materialistic conceptions of man as envisaged by contemporary ideologies and isms. Therefore the differences in defining education and its goals according to different ideologies and religions are to be expected. Muslim intellectuals and

educationists, however, must assume the responsibility of promoting the understanding and facilitating the implementation of the Qur'anic world-view instead of serving as facilitators of secularistic or materialistic educational philosophies.

According to the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*, the universe in which man is placed is not created for idle sport; it has a divinely ordained purpose. It is teleological throughout and human beings are directly related to this universal teleology (Q. 15:85). Man is God's noblest creature; He created him in the best moulds (Q. 95:4) only to serve and obey the Almighty God completely. The purpose of human existence is clearly stated in the Qur'anic verse which is translated by Muhammad Asad as follows:

"And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me."
(Q. 51:56).

In explaining the meaning of "worship" Muhammad Asad says:

Thus, the innermost purpose of the creation of all rational beings in their cognition (*ma'rifah*) of the existence of God and, hence, their conscious willingness to conform their own existence to whatever they may perceive of His will and plan: and it is this twofold concept of cognition and willingness that gives the deepest meaning to what the Qur'an describes as "worship" (*'ibadah*).

(Muhammad Asad 1980:806)

Worship in Islam has an extensive and comprehensive connotation; man's worship of God is not confined to the physical observance of religious rituals but embraces all aspects of human activity including faith, thought, feeling, as well as, scientific, economic and political pursuits. Man is unique servant (*'abd*) of Allah in that he is endowed with free-will and intellect (Q. 33:72). Unlike other creatures he alone is entrusted with the proper management and custodianship of the affairs of the world and its resources (Q. 2:30, 38:26, 6:165, 10:14, 35:39). In discharging this responsibility as God's appointed vicegerent (*Khalifah*) on earth he is to follow the Straight Path (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*), call people to goodness, promote what is right and eschew evil (*Yad'una ila'l khayr, wa ya'muruna bi'l-ma'ruf wa yan hauna 'an al-munkar*), strive for peace (*salam*), justice (*'adl*), reform (*islah*), God consciousness (*taqwa*) and for the establishment of a social order described in the Qur'an as *baldatun tayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur* ("a land most goodly, and a Sustainer much-forgiving" Q. 34:15). While striving for all these moral virtues as part of his mission in life, he is to align and devote himself to the community (*ummah*) of believers (*mu'minin*), not of disbelievers (*kuffar*) or

the hypocrites (*munafiqun*). This *ummah*, through comprising of different ethnic groups, languages and geographical regions, is a single brotherhood and dedication to its cause overrides and transcends sectional, regional, communal or clannish interests. This universal brotherhood of believers is the "*khayra ummatin ukhrijat li'n-nas...*"

"You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for the [good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God." (Q. 3:110)

In order to attain the noble objectives mentioned above, man has to ensure the dominance of his divinely-inspired soul over his lower self (*nafs*), passion (*hawa*) and Satanic impulses. As Ali Shari'ati once said:

Man is composed, then, of two contradictory elements, mud and the spirit of God.... Every man is endowed with these two dimensions, and it is his will that enables him to decide either to descend toward the pole of sedimentary mud that exists in his being, or to ascend toward the pole of exaltation, of God and the spirit of God. This constant striving and struggle takes place in man's inner being, until finally he chooses one of the poles as the determinant for his destiny.

(Ali Shari'ati 1979: 74)

The process of self-purification (*tazkiyah al nafs*) is therefore a necessary concomitant of man's trusteeship and vicegerency on earth.

"To a happy state shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity, and truly lost is he who buries it [in darkness]." (Q. 91:9-10)

It is obvious that the path to happiness and salvation in the hereafter lies in the struggle to actualize the higher spiritual faculties in his self through constant communion with Allah (*dhikru'Llah*) and commitment to sacred values (Q. 33:21, 26:227, 3:191).

"And as for those who strive hard in Our cause, surely We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us: for, behold, God is indeed with the doers of good." (Q. 29:69)

It is therefore necessary for man to purge himself of evil traits in his character which are at variance with the "good example" (*uswah hasanah*) set by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and those before him. Like the Prophet, the believer has to adorn his soul with all forms of ethical and moral virtues (*husn al-khuluq*). Numerous *hadiths* may be cited to

underscore the importance of attaining high moral standards in human endeavours which are in fact within the reach of ordinary mortals by virtue of his good inherent nature (*firah*). Suffice it to mention that in a well-known hadith, the Prophet said that he "was raised in order to perfect high moral virtues [of men]." Man's highest perfection lies, as it were, in being "dyed in divine colours" (*Sibghata Allah*).

"[Say: Our life takes its] hue from God! And who could give a better hue [to life] than God, if we but truly worship Him?" (Q. 2:138)

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is also known to have instructed the believers to assimilate divine attributes or ways of God in their personality ("*Takhallaqu bi akhlaqi'Llah*").

The inculcation of High Moral Values

Since God is all-good He is the Ideal and true Source of goodness, His attributes are in fact the highest values that man should aspire to emulate. These ultimate values are connoted by the ninety-nine different Beautiful Names (*al-Asma' al-Husna*) of Allah.

"His [alone] are the attributes of perfection. All that is in the heavens and on earth extols His limitless glory: for He alone is almighty, truly wise!" (Q. 59:24)

They can be summarised under the following essential values - Life, Unity, Power, Knowledge, Beauty, Munificence, Justice, Love and Mercy (M.M. Sharif 1964: 24).

1. Life

By living in this world and the next, man realises one of God's attributes. Life is God's gift and trust to man. Therefore the unlawful taking of life, either of one's own or another's, is a great evil. Respect for human life, Muslim or non-Muslim, is to be ingrained in the minds of believers from the time of childhood. Human life is to be filled with true faith (*iman*) and virtuous acts (*amal salih*) and not a single moment of this divine gift is to be wasted away in laziness, vain talk, indulgence in aimless and meaningless pursuits. Surah al-Asr and the first ten verses of Surah al-Mu'minun are extremely relevant. One of the qualities of the believer is that he "turns away from all that is frivolous (*laghw*)" (Q. 23:3).

2. Unity

"Nothing is more emphasized by Islam than unity as an attribute of God" (M.M. Sharif, 24). It implies both internal and external unity, the former meaning unity of thought and action, profession and practice and integration of the personality as a whole on the basis of uncompromising faith in Allah and complete submission to His will and sovereignty; the latter implying social integration, fraternity, national harmony and international solidarity based on Truth and Justice. The Muslim practice of this ideal today leaves much to be desired simply because he fails to transcend the barriers of ethnicity, language, culture and geography. We have yet to acquire the secret of spiritual unity which galvanised the early Muslim generation into a single civilizing force. Therefore our educational institutions are expected to play a more effective role in operationalising the value of unity among the Muslims.

3. Power

"A strong Muslim is better and more liked by Allah than a weak Muslim," so runs a famous hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Allah enjoins the Muslim *ummah* to be powerful and strong in every way.

"Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of God, who are your enemies as well, and others beside them of whom you may be unaware; and whatever you may expend in God's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged."
(Q. 8:60)

Internally, power signifies

Perseverance, fearlessness, courage, and physical strength; initiative, interest, and zest; drive, resolution and control over passions and temptations; and subordination of personal to the common good, thought, creation, and personality building (M.M. Sharif: 26).

Externally the value of power implies all forms of creative activity such as schemes of social or national construction, determination to fight against evil or oppression, defence of freedom and fundamental human rights as well as efforts to promote economic well-being and self-reliance. Power, like free-will and intellect, is also a trust (*amanah*) from Allah. Therefore it has to be obtained, utilized and distributed in a just manner without forgetting that absolute power belongs to Allah alone (Q. 18:39, 44) and those possessing power are accountable to Allah. This was the example set by the Prophets and

the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. They were always conscious that "might and glory" (*al-'izzah*) belong to Allah, the Messenger and the true believers (Q: 63:8, 35:10).

4. Knowledge

The sources of knowledge, according to the Islamic concept, fall into two categories:

- a. Divine revelation where Allah teaches that man cannot, himself, be rightly guided to the Divine truth and that life cannot be regulated in the proper manner in the absence of stable unchangeable injunctions inspired by Allah, the Wise and the All-Knowing Whose knowledge encompasses all.
- b. The human intellect and its tools which are in constant interaction with physical universe on the levels of observation, contemplation, experimentation and application. Man is free to do as he pleases subject to the condition that he remains fully committed to the Quran and the Sunnah.

*(Recommendations of the Five World
Conferences on Islamic Education, p.15)*

The knowledge of God obtained religious instruction and the knowledge of the "ways of God" or laws operating in the physical universe through science education are complementary in the Islamic world-view. The first kind of knowledge is classified as obligatory for every Muslim (*fard ayn*) while the second kind is obligatory for some members of the Muslim community (*fard kifayah*). The glory of Islamic civilization in the past was achieved when both categories of knowledge were integrated and pursued by highly creative and inquisitive minds. The sage, the scientist and the saint were often found in a single person. Today our task is to restore this integrated system of education in a dynamic and progressive environment where the religious scholars and secular educated intellectuals recognize their respective shortcomings and willingly step forward to complement each other. The religious scholars who are trained in the traditional ways need to be exposed to scientific knowledge of the contemporary world while the secular-educated intellectuals need to have a strong grounding in religious knowledge and spiritual discipline. M.M. Sharif puts it in the following way:

The exact quantitative determination of facts by observation and experiment and the discovery of the laws of their relations is scientific knowledge - the content of physical and biological sciences; the exact quantitative determination of events and also the evaluation or qualitative appraisal of these events and trends is the content of social sciences like history, economics, sociology, etc., and the apprehension of values as means and ends

is the knowledge of humanities, i.e. the knowledge yielded by such studies as literature, fine arts, ethics, philosophy, and religion. To discover truth in all the three fields, communicate it through spoken and written word, and accumulate it in traditional heritage of ideas and public opinion, libraries and archives, is the function of the seeker after truth. The ideal of human knowledge is the completion of truth in all its grandeur.

(M.M. Sharif: 28)

The challenge to Muslim educators and educational planners lies not only in evolving an effective curriculum but also in creating an environment conducive to the pursuit of learning and the quest for academic excellence from a cultural milieu where literacy is low and motivation for excellence is sadly lacking.

5. Beauty

Beauty as a value refers to man's striving to achieve good moral conduct - inner beauty - as well as a clean and delightful physical environment. To live in a locality where people possess praiseworthy character and interact with each other in a caring and considerate manner while taking great pains to make the cultural and physical environment beautiful should be instilled in the minds of young Muslims. "God is Beautiful and likes beauty". This calls for creative thinking, artistic imagination and integrated environmental planning.

Beauty arouses in us tender and noble emotions. It enhances our whole physical life in a harmonious, integrated way and as a vital stimulant stirs us to great actions. It reflects ever-new aspects of delight and bliss. It widens our horizons, gratifies our senses, chastens our taste, elates our emotions, enlightens our cognition, informs our lives, and helps in the better integration of our being. But apart from all that it does, it is a value-in-itself, a divine attribute, an ultimate goal, to be enjoyed in our religious experience, contemplated when found in Nature, and progressively realised in our bodies and minds, in our surroundings and society (M.M. Sharif: 29-30).

6. Justice

The Qur'an reminds man that just as God is absolutely just and loves fairness, man is duty-bound to act justly and fairly:

"O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do." (Q. 5:8)

In another verse Allah commands man to

"Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not then follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice..." (Q. 4:135)

Justice demands that all agreements and treaties must be honoured and all promises must be fulfilled. It also means that all men are to be treated equally before the law. This was the practice of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. It would suffice to mention only two *hadiths* in this regard. In his oration delivered at Mina during the Farewell Pilgrimage in C.E. 631, the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) mentioned, among other things: "There is no superiority for an Arab over a black-coloured and for a black-skinned over a red-skinned except in piety. The noblest is he who is the most pious." "Even if a manacled Abyssinian slave becomes your chief hearken to him. "Justice in all its forms is undoubtedly one of the highest socio-spiritual values to be forged into the Islamic personality, leadership and community such that it becomes part and parcel of the moral fibre of the Muslims. To attain this objective education of justice must be planned and implemented in all levels of society. The concept, understanding and institutionalizing of the *Shariah* should be included in the educational planning for it not only defines the full meaning and scope of justice but also ensures the implementation of justice individually and collectively.

7. Love and Mercy

In the Qur'an, in particular the first surah, al-Fatihah, the attributes of Allah which are given prominence are *al-Rahman* (the Compassionate) and *al-Rahim* (the Most Merciful). Allah manifests His compassionate love and mercy to His creatures "in creating, sustaining, nourishing, sheltering, helping, and guiding His creatures; in attending to their needs, in showing them grace, kindness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, when, having done some wrong, they turn to Him for that; and in extending the benefits of His unlimited bounty to the sinners no less than the virtuous among them" (M.M. Sharif: 32). In the "Kitab al-Adab" (The Book of Manners) of *Sahih* of al-Bukhari (Cairo 1926, vol. 8, p. 9), the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described in a very moving and dramatic way how the love of Allah for His creatures is immensely greater than the mother for her child.

It is essential for Muslims to develop the attributes of love and mercy in their lives so that real peace (*salam*) can be experienced in intra-ethnic and extra-religious relationships. This moral value is emphasized at least five times a day in the Muslim's prayer which ends with *salam* to the right and to the left - an act symbolizing the Muslim desire to create harmonious relationship with everyone around him. Unfortunately for most Muslims this act has become part of a mechanical and meaningless ritual having no impact on the quality of inter-personal communication even at the family level, let alone across the villages. M.M. Sharif describes the importance of love in human life thus:

It is the golden thread that runs through the warp and woof of life and lends it such strength, richness, and lustre as no other sentiment can. While ignoble sentiments cut as asunder, love unites. It is the motive force that can bring real unity among individuals and nations. In man it expresses itself in devotion, friendship, kinship, neighbourliness, helpfulness, kindness, benevolence, mercy, and self-sacrifice, in both the personal and international fields. Expediency, the principle which is generally followed now-a-days in international relations (though not professedly), can at best establish a weak and fragile bond which is easily broken at moments of tension. Real brotherhood of mankind is impossible to achieve without maximising the socio-political values of justice and love.

(M.M. Sharif: 32-33)

Once again the question we have to ask is how to promote and inculcate those love-related values in our educational system so that the Muslim *ummah* will be able to appreciate the divine attributes of al-Rahman and al-Rahim and itself become "*Rahmatan li'l Alamin*" (a mercy for all mankind). In many parts of the world where Muslims are the underprivileged minority groups, they are crying for other people to extend mercy to them in many forms because of their disunity, lack of education, poverty, disease and oppression at the hands of their enemies.

Secondary Values

In trying to promote the above-mentioned, ultimate spiritual values, we have to bear in mind that man is also a physical organism with basic needs relating to his survival and dignity as God's vicegerent. This means that man's economic values, although secondary in the hierarchy of values, are of a necessary order and should be fulfilled as a means for the realization of values of the higher order. Since they relate to the necessities of life, the seeker of ultimate values cannot dispense with them. In other words, "satisfaction of man's economic needs is an indispensable condition for his mental and

spiritual growth" (M.M. Sharif: 36). Islam encourages trade, business and commerce as means of livelihood and detests indolence and begging for survival. This implies the need to incorporate living skills, basic commercial principles and vocational training in the integrated Islamic educational system. This aspect of Muslim education falls, in fact, into the area of comprehensive community development.

For the purpose of this paper, a working definition of Islamic community development may be formulated as follows:

"Islamic community development is an institutionalized movement of the process of fulfilling and continuously improving the political, economic, social, cultural, moral and spiritual needs of the people who are living in a particular country, area or locality with the ultimate aim of making them play their role efficiently as the *Khayru ummatin ukhrijat li'n-nas* ("the best of communities brought forth for mankind") in terms of representing all that is good for human welfare, *yad una ila'l-khayr, wa ya'muruna bi'l-ma ruf wa yanhawna an al-munkar* ("they invite people to what is good, enjoin the virtuous acts and prohibit the evil deeds")."

Insofar as community development aims at promoting the proper development in such areas as economics (business, trade, marketing, cooperatives, credits, banking, labour, industry, self-reliance, etc.), agricultural (land, irrigation, drainage, land settlement, water and water power, fishing, game and birds, conservation of natural resources, subsoil wealth, forestry, etc., animal husbandry, poultry, etc.), social (health standards, public safety, drug addicts rehabilitation, prison inmate rehabilitation, welfare (care for the needy, aged, orphans, travellers, child care, refugee rehabilitation, etc.) and religious education (Qur'an classes, Sundayschools, mosque activities, Islamic centres, lectures, training of du'ah, youth camps, etc.), the Muslim communities would have to depend on the products of the formal as well as non-formal education to supply the expertise and the teachers. This once again demonstrates the importance of pertinent education to produce the right knowledge, skills and attitudes in both the Muslim majority as well as the Muslim minority countries (M.K. Hassan 1988: 73-74).

Non-Formal Channels of Education

It would be unrealistic to expect only the formal educational institutions to play their role in values education although much of the reform admittedly will have to take place in those institutions. Today the non-formal educational channels such as the family, peer-groups, neighbourhood, the mosque, radio and TV, clubs and guilds, social and youth centres, recreational activities,

professional organizations and places of work do have considerable impact on the development or underdevelopment of values in a society. To overcome the disvalues or evils in society such as disunity, injustice, conflict, vice, corruption, disease, poverty, misery and all forms of moral degradation and decadence, the authorities in civil administration should work hand in hand with the educational planners and managers. As stated in the Recommendations of the Five World Conferences on Islamic Education:

If the school is teaching important values which are effectively neglected by the social institutions such as the family, neighbourhood, radio and TV, the development of the student will only be chaotic. The behaviour and performance of these social institutions should therefore be corrected in a well-planned manner so that the environment they provide is geared to the objectives and functions of the educational institutions. (p. 37).

Needless to say, the Muslim family has to be educated to play its dominant role in the proper physical, intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual and moral development of a child. In this regard, the religious authorities together with cultural and educational organizations should provide short courses on marriage, parenting and child rearing in addition to counselling facilities for couples with marital problems. Everywhere in the Muslim world, it appears that many people enter into marriage without clear notion of what a Muslim family is supposed to be or what its goals are in the light of Islamic teachings. Once again Muslim community leaders have to play a more effective role in Islamic education.

A cursory Glance at the Malaysian Experience

Realizing the importance of Islamic moral values in particular and universal values in general in the Malaysian formal educational system, schools and universities have in recent years given a higher dosage of Islamic subjects in the curricula.

Since 1980 all universities in Malaysia introduced the subject of Islamic civilization as a necessary component of university education for Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The rate of success and the nature of the implementation vary from institution to institution. Islamic education subjects also constitute an important part of professional and technical training in the M.A.R.A. Institute of Technology and the University of Technology, Malaysia. Muslim students' organizations in the universities and technical institutes have also contributed a great share to the promotion of Islamic cultural and social values among Malaysian students. The *da'wah* movement among the youth has been instrumental in infusing university campuses with strong Islamic consciousness

and this has served to check the growth of moral laxity and permissive tendencies among the younger generation. The pop culture and the drug culture are also being held at bay by the tide of Islamic moral consciousness in the universities.

In the schools, Islamic religious instruction forms part of the curriculum which is compulsory for Muslim students. The non-Muslim students are given Moral Education lessons when their Muslim colleagues attend the classes on Islamic religious instruction. Extra-curricular religious activities are also encouraged and during school hours regular attendance at the *musalla* is supervised by the religious teacher.

In 1987, the Ministry of Education formulated Malaysia's first explicitly stated National Education Philosophy which translates as follows:

"Education in Malaysia is a continuous process towards further enhancing the potentials of the individual in a comprehensive and integrated manner in order to bring about a balanced and harmonious personality from the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects based on the belief and obedience to God. This effort is aimed at developing Malaysian citizens who are endowed with knowledge, of good character, responsible and capable of achieving personal well-being as well as contributing towards harmony, prosperity for the society and the nation."

This philosophy is now being actively translated into the newly designed Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools. Teachers are being trained to handle the new curriculum and text books are being written to cater to it. The school management and environment are being improved to create a conducive and positive learning environment.

The Committee on Moral Education for non-Muslims comprising of experts on Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity has identified sixteen values to be taught in schools, namely: Kindness, Self-Reliance, Noble Aims, Mutual Respect, Mutual Love, Justice, Freedom, Courage, Physical and Mental Health, Honesty, Industriousness, Cooperation, Moderation, Gratefulness, Rationality and Spirit of Social Solidarity. In the new Integrated Curriculum which became operative in 1989, these values are being taught to all students and teachers of all subjects have been urged to infuse these values indirectly or directly during their teaching of their respective subjects. The school is now regarded as a "value-realizing institution". It is premature to assess the success of this new vision of the Malaysian educational planners but there is no doubt that the success of Malaysia's development plans depends to a considerable degree on the products of the new educational system who are expected to be adequately knowledgeable, possessing the requisite skills to

meet the needs of a rapidly industrializing nation, and endowed with high moral values so that they would be able to withstand the growing temptations of wealth, position, desire, status and power associated with the development process; thereby ensuring their own integrity as well as the true prosperity of the nation no longer bedeviled - hopefully - by embarrassing scandals from the "unprofessional" professionals of government and business.

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