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**CHALLENGES TO ISLAM,  
EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND  
*IJTIHAD* IN ISLAM**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Foreword : Chairman – INDSET</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>CHALLENGES TO ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MADRASA EDUCATION AND TERRORISM.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Does <i>Madrasa</i> Education Breed Extremism and Violence in Muslim Societies, particularly in Pakistan?.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b><i>Madrasa</i> Education and Radicalism in Pakistan.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES TO ISLAM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Current Educational Scenario in Muslim Countries.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>System of Education in Muslim Countries.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Integrated System of Modern and Islamic Education.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>CONCEPT OF <i>IJTIHAD</i> IN ISLAM.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>90</b>

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### **Challenges to Islam, Educational Reforms and *Ijtihad* in Islam**

The Challenges to Islam are so serious that they cannot be countered without improvement in the quality of education through radical educational reforms in the Muslim world. The application of the process of *ijtihad* is also crucially important to maintain the progressive character of Islam in the contemporary period.

The Western media and intellectuals proclaim loudly and repeatedly that the Muslims are backward because they follow a book which was revealed to guide the tribal Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. They refuse to accept the universal relevance of the Message of the Qur'an and state categorically that it cannot be used to guide in technology dominated 21<sup>st</sup>. century. This monograph argues cogently and convincingly that Muslims are backward because they have deviated from the fundamental principles of Islam and forcefully stresses the universal relevance of the Message of Islam.

Most of the intellectuals agree that the *Madrasa* System of education produces conservative, orthodox and dogmatic students who resist change but do not resort to violence. The Taliban and Deobandi *madrasas* got radicalised after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and has been intensified since the U.S.-NATO invasion of that country. This was fully supported by the United States of America at the time of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Most of the *jihadi* literature, inciting Muslims to *jihad* and violence against the Russians, was produced in the University of Nebraska in USA.

There is, however, a general consensus among the Muslim intellectuals that present education system should be radically reformed to meet the demands of the contemporary Muslim society. The educational institutions during the early phase of the rise of Islam promoted unity of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge. This unity was first weakened as a result of internal debate among Muslims *ulema* and was completely abandoned when Muslim ruled states succumbed to colonial powers of the Western Europe. Since then two parallel but unconnected systems of education the religious

This book presents an Integrated System of Modern and Islamic Education as illustrated in Figure 3 in the text. This model attempts to synthesise the modern and the Qur'anic streams of education and restores the unity of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge.

The book concludes with a discussion on the concept of *Ijtihad* which implies that anyone having reasonable knowledge of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* can resort to independent thinking to arrive at a reasonable and just solution, without violating the core principle of Islam. The concept was originated by Ma'az bin Jabal (a distinguished companion) and was approved by the Prophet himself with pleasure and satisfaction.

Author: Professor Shah Manzoor Alam, a distinguished social scientist

## CHALLENGES TO ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

- 1.0 Presently, Islam is passing through a critical period in its history. Its relevance in the contemporary world is being challenged. It is being identified with fanaticism, extremism and violence instead of tolerance, compassion, peace and justice which constitute its core values. It is proposed to analyze objectively and dispassionately as to what has led to such decadence in Islam and distortion in its image.
- 1.1 The reason for Islam being associated with fanaticism, extremism and violence is largely because of the violent activities of the *mujahideen* or crusaders, called jihadists by the Western media, who in the name of Islam kill innocent people. This has badly damaged the reputation of Islam. It is being perceived by non-Muslims as a destructive, intolerant, and regressive religion whose followers are socially, educationally, and politically the most backward. Muslim countries are marked for their acute deficit in democracy, literacy, freedom of expression and backwardness in science and technology.
- 1.2 Muslims are considered backward by the West because in their perception Muslims follow Al-Qur'an, a book, which was revealed in the seventh

century AD., which has lost its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- 1.3 The West further challenges that Islam has made little contribution in the post-colonial period since the Second World War, (1945) towards mitigating the problems of poverty, hunger, health hazards, illiteracy, etc. in the world. The West, therefore, suggests that the text of Al-Qur'an needs to be reformed on the lines of Torah (Old Testament) and the Four Gospels (New Testament), in order to make it compatible with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 1.4 They accuse *madrasas* (religious institutions), particularly in Pakistan, of focusing mainly on religious education, of being breeding grounds of extremism, terrorism and are centers of jihadist movements.
- 1.5 We shall systematically examine the validity of these assertions of the critiques of Islam.
- 2.0 Is Islam an intolerant, violence prone religion because it promotes *Jihad*, which implies perpetual fighting against non-Muslims?
- 2.1 Tolerance in Islam is proverbial. Prophet (SAWS<sup>1</sup>) allowed the Christians of Najran to pray in his

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<sup>1</sup> SAWS, stands for '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wo sallam*', meaning 'may blessings of Allah and peace be upon him'. This short supplication is said whenever the words 'the Prophet', 'Prophet Muhammad' or 'Muhammad' are spoken, heard

mosque along with the Cross. *Khalifah* (Caliph) Umar (RA<sup>2</sup>), the second *Khalifah* of Islam, after the conquest of Jerusalem was invited by Archbishop Polonius to say his evening prayer (*Salaat-ul Asr*) inside the Church of Sepulcher. He refused giving the rationale that if he offered his prayer inside the Church; Muslims would eventually convert it into a mosque. He did not want this to happen.

- 2.2 The Third Crusade was launched by the European Christians toward the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to recapture Palestine and Jerusalem. They were defeated by Salahuddin Ayyubi, the Governor of Egypt. The leaders of the Crusade hastily retreated to Europe but left behind a large number of ordinary crusaders who were taken prisoners by Salahuddin Ayyubi. These Christian prisoners were so generously treated by him that they voluntarily converted to Islam. Such examples of tolerance in Islam can abundantly be illustrated. Perhaps *mujahideen* leaders are not familiar with the history of Islam.

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or written. Hence-forth it will be assumed and will not be repeated in the text of this Monograph.

<sup>2</sup> RA, stands for '*Raziallahu 'anhu/'anha/'anhuma/'anhum*' meaning 'May Allah be pleased with him/her/both/them'. This is short supplication said whenever name of any of the Companions (*Sahabah*) is spoken, heard, or written. Hence-forth it will be assumed and will not be repeated in the text of this Monograph.

- 2.3 *Jihad* implies struggle against evil temptations in one's own life. It also implies helping the old, particularly parents, the handicapped, the poor, the needy and the destitute. It also involves armed struggle (*Qitaal*) to prevent aggression, oppression and tyranny and to defend belief, life and property.
- 2.4 The *mujahideen's* concept of *Jihad* is a total perversion of the basic object of *Jihad*. This misconception has been created by a number of misleading *fatwas* (decrees) issued by Osama Bin Laden and Al-Zawahri from time to time. In one of the *fatwas* they exhort that, 'every Muslim who believes in God wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to fight the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it'. This *fatwa* contravenes the fundamental principle of Islam. Struggle under *Jihad* is always in self-defence. All the battles fought by the Prophet were in self-defence. It cannot be used as an instrument to provoke conflict and open new fronts of war. This is what the *mujahideen* are doing by indulging in violent and destructive activities in America, Britain, Western Europe and elsewhere.
- 2.5 Fighting (*Qitaal*) in *Jihad* (Struggle) is allowed only if existence of Islam is threatened by an enemy and a Muslim country is invaded by a foreign power. However, fighting should be confined to the area of combat and with the combatants only (Chapter 2

- Al-Baqarah: Verse 190). Non-combatants even in the area of combat should not be harmed. It should not be extended outside the combat area unless there are compelling reasons.
- 2.6 The alleged bombings by *mujahideen* of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), Twin Towers of World Trade Centre, New York, USA (Sept.2001), Madrid Railway Station (March 2004), and London Subway bombing (July 2005) that killed thousands of innocent people clearly violated Qur'anic injunctions revealed in Chapter 5 - Al-Ma'edah: Verse 33. They were acts of arson and cannot be called *Jihad*.
- 2.7 Because of these irresponsible, un-Islamic, intolerant, and violent actions of some fanatic Muslims, the image of Islam has been severely tarnished.
- 3.0 The West calls Islam a regressive and anti-democratic religion because Muslims follow the Qur'an, which was revealed in the seventh century. They assert that it cannot meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are radically different from those of the tribal Arab society for whom the Qur'an was revealed. They thus refuse to accept the universality of the Message of the Qur'an.
- 3.1 Is Islam regressive and anti-democratic?

- 3.1.1 Islam was the most progressive of all the existing religions in the 7<sup>th</sup> century including Judaism and Christianity.
- 3.1.2 It was the first religion to grant property rights to women by inheritance.
- 3.1.3 Islam abolished all discriminatory and cruel tribal customs against women; granted women the freedom of speech. *Surah* Mujadalah (Chapter 58) testifies to this fact.
- 3.1.4 Women and slaves were granted equal rights with free men and tribal elite to offer protection and asylum to persons of their choice. Prophet's daughter, Zaynab, offered protection to her husband, Abul 'Aas, a non-believer, without the knowledge of her father, and announced this in the mosque early, next morning, after *Salaat-ul Fajr* (Morning Prayer).
- 3.1.5 Islam reformed the tribal system of ransom (*Qisaas*), which was highly discriminatory. It favoured the rich and the mighty against the poor and the weak. It established parity in ransom - a free man of the aggressor to be punished for a free man of the aggrieved party, a slave for a slave, a woman for a woman etc. (Chapter 2 - *Surah* Al-Baqarah: Verse 178)
- 3.1.6 Islam eliminated inequality and treated all human beings equal irrespective of their status, wealth and power.

- 3.1.7 Islam abolished the dynastic rule prevalent in the conquered territories of the Roman and Persian empires and initiated the appointment of *Khalifah* on merit and by consensus.
- 3.1.8 Islam abolished the oppressive system of usurious loans that allowed the rich to harass and exploit the poor.
- 4.0 Islam is a realistic and pragmatic religion; the realism of Islam is evident from the discussion of the Prophet with Ma'az bin Jabal when the latter was appointed chief Judge and Governor of Yemen. The Prophet was conscious of the fact that the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Traditions) may not offer solution to the evolving complex problems of the society with the passage of time. Muslim leaders and scholars will have to think of *Ijtihad* (independent thinking) to resolve the emerging problems of societies but within the fundamental principles of Islam and parameters of Islamic values regarding equality, justice, compassion, honesty, sincerity, integrity, truth, transparency, accountability, impartiality, chastity and modesty as enjoined in the Qur'an.
- 5.0 Thus, the accusation that Muslims are backward because they follow Al- Qur'an, which is a seventh century revelation, and that it has lost its relevance in the contemporary period is not borne out by facts.

- 5.1 The Qur'an, besides being a religious and spiritual guide, is also a book of knowledge – one fourth of the Qur'anic text deals with natural phenomena and scientific aspects. There are some remarkable scientific revelations in the Qur'an.
- 5.2 Al Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad encouraged acquisitions and advancement of knowledge. The Qur'an asked Muslims to pray to Allah (SWT<sup>3</sup>) "O Allah enhance my knowledge." The Prophet encouraged Muslims to acquire knowledge and stated that education was the best gift that parents could give to their children.
- 5.3 Inspired by Qur'anic vision, Muslim scientists made phenomenal contribution to the advancement of knowledge, particularly science and technology from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. They:
- 5.3.1 established unique institutions: hospitals, astronomical observatories, scientific laboratories etc;
- 5.3.2 introduced new technologies such as paper, gunpowder (borrowed from China), and glass manufacture, weight driven clock etc;

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<sup>3</sup> SWT, stands for 'Subhanuhu wo Ta'ala', meaning 'Pure and Exalted'. This praise or simply 'Ta'la' (Exalted) is said whenever Allah's name is spoken, heard or written. Henceforth it will be understood and will not be repeated in the text of this Monograph.

- 5.3.3 made path breaking scientific discoveries in the fields of optics, blood circulation, and human embryology;
  - 5.3.4 transferred these technologies, institutions, and scientific discoveries to the West and laid the foundation for scientific and technological revolution in Western Europe.
- 6.0 The question being asked is - if Al- Qur'an inspired scientific revolution during 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, then why has its inspirational character disappeared in the modern period since the beginning of European renaissance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century? The reasons are manifold but primarily because of the rise of Sufism and parochialism in Islam, also because of the dominance of western colonialism, which led to a drastic change in the system of education and lack of patronage by ruling elite in Muslim countries to promote acquisition and advancement of knowledge.
- 6.1 Islamic system of education, as it originally evolved, was based on unity of revealed and rational sources of knowledge (based on logic and reasoning) that inspired scientific revolution in the Muslim world. It was an integrated system of secular scientific and Qur'anic education.
  - 6.2 Islamic educational system that developed during the Abbasid rule in the Islamic Realm (9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) was rudely shaken with the rise of

*Sufism* in Islam. The *Sufis* insisted on the primacy of knowledge based on Qur'anic revelation, being divine in origin. They looked down with contempt on knowledge acquired through rational sources, even though it may have been inspired by Qur'anic revelations. The *Sufi* movement gained sufficient strength and momentum when it was supported by *Imam* Ghazali, a distinguished Muslim Jurist in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Ghazali was very critical of Greek philosophy and of Muslim scholars and philosophers like Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi and Ibn-Sina (Avicenna), who were greatly influenced by the works of Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. Ghazali called these Muslim scholars apostates. This led to violent public agitation against the works of these scholars most of which, particularly those of Ibn Sina, were burnt. Ghazali thus closed the door on *Ijtihad* or independent thinking in Islam. Islamic societies were literally 'frozen in time'. This was, however, a temporary setback because it did not affect the continuance of scientific research in the educational institutions (*Dar-ul-Hikmah*) functioning during the period. In fact, it peaked with the scholarly achievements of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Ibn Rushd was keen to harmonize revealed and rational sources of knowledge. He also wrote a strong rebuttal to Ghazali's criticism of the rational approach to acquire knowledge in his book "Incoherence of the Incoherence".

- 6.3 The greatest setback to acquisition of knowledge by rational approach occurred in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century when it was vehemently opposed by Ibn Timiyah, a prominent and influential Muslim Jurist. The Qur'an and *Sunnah* were the only two sources of knowledge that mattered to Ibn Timiyah. It is amazing that both Ghazali and Ibn Timiyah failed to appreciate that the Qur'an, besides being a revealed book is an extremely rational revelation and invites its readers to understand the signs of God by logic and reasoning. In his blind and dogmatic opposition to rational sources of knowledge, Ibn Timiyah campaigned against the continuation of scientific research in the *madrasas* (educational institutions) within the Islamic realm. Consequently, scientific research was literally banished from the Muslim world from 14<sup>th</sup> Century onward. This marked the end of original and critical thinking and scientific research among Muslim scholars. Since scientific studies failed to receive any support and encouragement from the state, they withered away from the Islamic realm. The last nail in the coffin of scientific research, in the Islamic realm, was driven when some Muslim bigots demolished an astronomical observatory established by astronomer Taqiuddin in Istanbul, in early 16<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of these violent extremist activities against scientific research none of the great Muslim empires of the period such as Moghul Empire in India, Safavi in Iran and

Ottoman in West Asia could develop any centre for scientific research. Thus, *madrasas* in the Muslim world lost their cosmopolitan character and status as major centers for scientific research. They, however, continued exclusively as institutes for religious education. It was a most regressive development, which precluded progress in the Islamic realm, and shut the door on *Ijtihad* or independent and critical thinking, which alone could ensure continuation of the progressive character of Islam.

- 6.4 Even the great Renaissance Movement that ushered in intellectual revolution in Europe and transformed it into a dynamic and progressive civilization could not produce any impact on the neighbouring Islamic countries because of the adamant, inflexible and short sighted attitude of the orthodox dogmatic Muslim Jurists. They unequivocally declared "human knowledge based on the senses and mind is lower than religious knowledge which rests on divine inspiration". Thus the Renaissance Movement was irrelevant and of little value to them. They closed their mind and heart against the currents of reforms spreading across Europe and put the clock of progress back, in the Islamic realm, by more than 300 years. Consequently, the role of Muslim countries in the dynamics of rapidly advancing science and technology in the western world from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward became insignificant. Scientific

knowledge was thus relegated from the vanguard of the frontiers of knowledge to the backwater leading to decadence of civilization in the Islamic world. It will be a Herculean task to recover the lost ground and missed opportunities in time and space but it has to be regained with grit and determination.

- 6.5 Another landmark development in the history of Muslim countries was the defeat of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in World War I (1914-18). This marked the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the dominance of Muslim countries by colonial powers such as Britain, France and Holland. The political control of Muslim countries by these European powers was helpful as well as harmful in the field of education. The colonial powers revived modern scientific education in Muslim countries but kept it secular. Revival of modern scientific education benefited the students of these countries immensely. They also learnt the language of the colonial powers i.e. English, French and Dutch, which made scientific literature accessible to them on a continuing basis. It also facilitated their communication with scientists internationally. But for this accessibility to modern science and technology Pakistan could not have emerged as a nuclear power. The colonial rule was harmful in the sense that it created in Muslim countries two parallel but diametrically different and mutually exclusive educational

streams, one secular and the other religious, thereby delinking completely the revealed from the rational sources of knowledge.

- 6.6 The irony is that rulers in Muslim countries and India, even after gaining independence, in the post-colonial period (1945 onward), continued with this dichotomy of religious and secular institutions and made no effort to harmonize and unify them.
- 7.0 This de-linkage of Modern Scientific Education from the Qur'anic Education proved disastrous for the educational development in Muslim countries. It shattered the unity of the sources of knowledge separating the revealed from the rational, which led to the rise of two separate competitive and antagonistic systems of education with hardly any interaction between them. Consequent upon this compartmentalization, modern education in Muslim countries was deprived of its spiritual and inspirational source i.e. knowledge of the Qur'an. Religious institutions lost touch with latest developments in science and technology and were totally devoid of liberal and moderating influence of current social and political thoughts.
- 7.1 Scholars graduating from religious institutions treat the Qur'an purely as a source of *Shar'iah* laws, little realizing that one fourth of the Qur'an deals with scientific aspects. They completely overlook the fact that the Qur'an is a book of knowledge as

well, which they cannot adequately understand and appreciate without a knowledge of secular sciences.

- 7.2 In order to assert the primacy of religious education, religious institutions tend to move towards conservatism, dogmatism and fanaticism. Scholars from modern educational institutions cannot intervene to counter this trend towards conservatism in religious institutions because they have no knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'anic injunctions and *Sunnah* are definitely against dogmatism and fanaticism.
- 7.3 Experts in modern education and scholars graduating from these modern secular institutions ignore the Qur'an, which, in their view, has only religious significance and therefore, cannot play any meaningful role in promoting modern education. They are totally ignorant of the fact that from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries the Qur'an had inspired scholars to usher in scientific and technological revolution.
- 7.4 Thus, stagnation and decadence of knowledge in general, and science and technology in particular, in Muslim countries and India have been primarily caused, by delinking the revealed from the rational sources of knowledge.
- 7.5 Further, backwardness among Muslim countries has persisted because the ruling elite in these

countries have singularly failed to invest adequately towards promotion of knowledge and advancement of science and technology.

- 8.0 On account of this delinking of the revealed from the rational in the educational system of Muslim countries and India, the ruling elite in these countries deviated considerably from the Qur'anic norms, which is evident from the investment pattern of their enormous oil wealth that they earlier accumulated for nearly two decades from early 1970s, and then again from the beginning of this millennium.
- 8.1 Instead of using their enormous oil wealth to build human capital by investing in education, promoting science and technology and diversifying their economies, oil producing countries indulged in luxuries, spent enormously on importing luxury goods. Furthermore, they invest heavily in developing pleasure resorts, high-rise luxury hotels, and appear to be more interested in breeding horses for races than in establishing research institutes in science and technology. They are thus pursuing an investment policy exactly opposite to what Arab rulers and nobles had done from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 8.2 The ruling elite in Muslim countries are, presumably deliberately not spreading modern scientific education, and are not restoring unity of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge

because they feel threatened of their own survival. They suspect that their own survival will be imperiled as the emerging educated and enlightened middle class in the Arab world will demand its rights as per the Qur'anic norms, which are against concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few. This is clearly demonstrated by the destabilized political scenarios, which have developed in Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia and Yemen etc.

- 8.3 Further, rampant corruption in Muslim countries clearly testifies to their total deviation from Islamic values.
- 8.4 It is wrong to assume that Islam and democracy are incompatible. The Qur'anic injunctions and *Sunnah* support consultation and consensus building. Malaysia, Turkey and Indonesia clearly demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with democracy. Further, it may be noted that the Qur'an and the Prophet do not prescribe any particular system of government. They do, however, outline the norms of good governance that are applicable to all forms of government whether monarchical or *Khilafat*, dictatorship or democracy. This clearly demonstrates the universality of Islamic values.
- 9.0 The Islamic world will have to reinvent its historic past where it was in the forefront in advancing the frontiers of knowledge, particularly in the fields of

science and technology. This can be accomplished only if unity of revealed and rational sources of knowledge is restored i.e. Qur'anic education is fully integrated with modern scientific education, religious institutions are re-oriented to assimilate modern secular education and are fully conversant with latest trends in the fields of sciences and social sciences.

- 9.1 The Arab countries must radically alter their investment strategy. They ought to invest meaningfully their enormous wealth of oil to develop into a powerful knowledge based society. They should raise their educational and technological skill to a high level of excellence in order to stand with honour and dignity among the developed nations of the world.
- 10.0 Stagnation and decadence in Muslim countries are due to flawed policies of the ruling and religious elite. They do not, however, substantiate the point that Islamic values in the contemporary world have lost their relevance and that the text of the Qur'an needs to be reformed in order to make it compatible with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a grossly wrong assumption and needs to be corrected.
- 10.1 Al - Qur'an is the book of Allah for the guidance of mankind for all time and not a word from this divine message can be changed and modified. The universality of its message and its relevance in the

contemporary world stand unchallenged as will be substantiated shortly.

- 10.2 The cardinal principles of good governance such as consultation, honesty and sincerity, impartiality and incorruptibility, accountability and transparency, justice for all without bias and prejudice, and human welfare for all and particularly for the poor and the needy, the deprived and the destitute was enshrined in the Qur'an long before the people of the world had even conceived of them.
- 10.3 Accountability is one of the key components of Islamic values and is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an and Traditions (Ahadith). Human beings are accountable both in this world and in the hereafter for all their deeds in this world. They are warned by Allah in the Qur'an that they will be produced before Him to account for their earthly deeds (Chapter 23 - Al-Mu'minun: verse 115), both good and evil, (Chapter 99 - Al-Zalzalah: verses 6-8). Even the rulers are not exempt. Abu Bakr, the first *Khalifah* of Islam after the death of the Prophet, in his inaugural *khuutbah* (sermon) stressed on accountability and categorically stated "follow me if I am right and correct me when I am wrong".
- 10.4 The concept of justice in Islam is unique. It is the only system of justice where the king and the commoner, the ruler and the ruled, the master and the servant, the black and the white, the rich and

the poor, the native and the alien stand on equal footing. The Qur'an commands that "when you judge between men, act impartially and with justice" (Chapter 4 - An-Nisa: verse 58). It further warns that "let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve and depart from justice" (Chapter 5 - AL-Ma'edah; verse 8). Even rulers, such as presidents and kings, are not exempt from criminal proceedings if complaints are lodged against them. *Khalifah* Umar and *Khalifah* Ali were summoned by judges (*qazis*) when cases were filed against them. Immunity from criminal proceedings of the President of Pakistan contravenes a fundamental principle of Islamic justice i.e. equality before law. Further, the Islamic *Shar'iah* does not grant the right to rulers to pardon criminals.

- 10.5 The principle of equality in Islam is unique as demonstrated during congregational prayers at mosques and other places. All worshippers line up strictly on first come first serve basis irrespective of their background, rich and poor, master and servant, black and white. It is best demonstrated annually during the Hajj pilgrimage when all the male pilgrims are dressed alike in two simple unstitched white sheets of cloth intermingling spontaneously.
- 10.6 Scientific research guided by Islamic values will not encourage research to create instruments of terror to aggravate global insecurity and annihilate human civilization. It would rather stress on

optimum utilization and sustainable development of natural resources in order to derive maximum benefit for the comfort, convenience and fulfillment of human life.

- 10.7 Muslim countries symbolize poor governance because they do not implement the Islamic principles of governance in order to protect their dynastic or dictatorial regime or under pressure from Western powers who are keen to protect their economic and strategic interests in those countries such as Egypt and Algeria.
- 10.8 It must be stressed in conclusion that Muslim rulers and scholars, besides restoring unity of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge should also revive the powerful Islamic instrument of *Ijtihad* (Contemplation) without transgressing fundamental Islamic principles as outlined above. Application of *Ijtihad* will reinforce the relevance and compatibility of Islamic principles in the contemporary period. It will also forcefully reaffirm the universality of Qur'anic Message and will restore the progressive character of Islam.

## **MADRASA EDUCATION AND TERRORISM**

It appears from the preceding Part 1 that according to Western perspectives, Islam tends to encourage violence and that *madrasa* system of education promotes jihadist tendencies among Muslims. The *madrasas* are thus breeding grounds for terrorism. These assumptions are historically wrong and are not substantiated by facts.

History testifies to the peaceful spread of Islam in both the eastern and western extremes of the Islamic realm. Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia in the Far East and Nigeria and Mauritania in the west eloquently testify to the fact that political annexation had no role in their acceptance of Islam. That Muslim rulers never forced conversion on non-Muslims is clearly borne out by the fact that despite more than 1000 years of rule over India by Muslim monarchs the country remained a non-Muslim majority area. In fact, the non-Muslim subjects contributed to the stability of Muslim rule in India.

It may also be noted that terrorism, suicidal bombings and other terrorist activities did not originate from Muslim countries. The Irish Republican Army (IRA)

and Tamil resistance movement in Sri Lanka were the pioneers in initiating terrorist movements in the world. It may be pertinent to add that resistance movements, peaceful *satyagrahas* or armed struggles are always in response to policy decisions of a dominant political power which adversely affect the aggrieved parties. Typical British reprisals against the Irish Independence movement such as burning of houses and Irish businesses and executing Irish prisoners gave birth to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the 1920s for armed resistance to British rule in Ireland. Similarly, the Sinhalese leaders would habitually renege on the compromise agreements they would sign with minority Tamil leaders. This led to the rise of a group of Tamil leaders who vowed on August 12, 1962, to fight for a Tamil homeland. Subsequently, both the Irish Republican Army and Tamil Resistance movements turned extremely violent.

The story of Palestine is the story of a grossly unjust political settlement by the colonial government, the British, through Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, when the decision to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine was politically forced on the Palestinians. According to Balfour Declaration, the Jews would settle in Palestine but “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish population”. The Jews violated this Declaration flagrantly even before the UN declaration of November 24, 1947 regarding the formation of the State of Israel. “The fact was that from November, 1947 to May 1948 the Zionists were already pursuing a policy of aggressive ethnic

cleansing and acts of terrorism. They had already driven out 300,000 Arabs from their homeland and had occupied lands far beyond the borders demarcated in the UN Partition Plan of 1947. Moreover, the partition itself was grossly unjust. The 67 percent of Arab population was given only 40% of land and 33 percent of Jewish population was given 57% of Palestinian land. Moreover, in order to maintain the contiguity and continuity of Israel the Palestinian territory was split. The Gaza strip on the east was separated from the West Bank Palestinian land. The Western media and political elite totally ignore the fact that Israel was guilty of ethnic cleansing in the Israeli demarcated territory; of driving the Arabs out of their homeland and of aggressively occupying their land beyond the borders demarcated by UN by using terrorist tactics. The armed struggle of Palestine was initiated in response to this aggressive designs and action of the Israelis.

Afghanistan since the inception of its history was always a troubled spot but was not known for acts of terrorism. The terrorists' activities started in Afghanistan with the invasion of Russian forces of Afghanistan in December 1979. The Russian forces arrived in Afghanistan at the invitation of its communist Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin. He wanted to do away with the Islamic traditions and modernize Afghanistan on the lines Kernel Ata Turk did in Turkey. This was fiercely resisted by the people of Afghanistan. Hafizullah Amin called in the Russians to crush the resistance movement launched by the people of Afghanistan. More than 80,000

Russian forces were airlifted to quell the rebellion against Amin's reforms. The Russians called this resistance by Afghans as 'acts of terrorism by some *jihadi* groups' in Afghanistan. They never acknowledged that it was in fact, a people's resistance movement against the anti-Islamic policies of Amin and his successor Babrak Karmal as well as against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

The Americans visualized this Russian invasion of Afghanistan from a different perspective. They thought that the Russian invasion was in pursuance of its 'warm water policy' seeking access to the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan as its ultimate objective. In the cold war period, this rang the alarm bell in the US foreign office, which decided to go all out to support the *jihadi* movement launched against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. The US administration sanctioned a grant of \$ 600 million for the financial support of the *jihadi* liberation movement against the Russian forces. In addition, the US paramilitary forces established training camps to train the Afghans in guerilla war tactics, which included car bombings. The *jihadis* were fully equipped and were liberally supplied with Stinger missiles by the Americans. Besides supplying massive quantities of sophisticated arms and ammunitions to Afghans to fight the Russian forces, the American - Afghan scholars produced a series of books advocating radical Islam and inspiring *mujahideen* to carry out *Jihad* against Russian forces. This message of *Jihad* was targeted against communism, which subscribed to atheistic ideology.

According to International Crises Group Asia Report 2002:

“Special text books were published in Dari and Pashtu, designed by the Centre for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha under a USAID grant in the early 1980s. Written by American-Afghanistan experts and anti-Soviet Afghan educators, they aimed at promoting *jihadi* values and militant training among Afghans. USAID paid the University of Nebraska US \$51 million from 1984 to 1994 to develop and design these textbooks, which were mostly printed in Pakistan. Over 13 million were distributed at Afghan refugee camps and Pakistani *madrasas* “where students learnt basic math by counting dead Russians and Kalashnikov rifles”.

After the war ended, these textbooks were still being used in Afghan schools as even the Taliban found them suitable. According to Tom Gouttierre, director of the Center for Afghan Studies in Omaha, “It really opened up the door to a monopoly of education by extremist elements functioning inside Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Persian Gulf that undermined the capability of more-moderate elements to create a credible education system... I’ve heard Afghans say to me that education in a *madrasa* is worse than no education at all.”

Traditionally, *jihadi* texts are not a part of the normal curricula of *madrasas*. Print material, in general, has always had a sectarian bias, signified by attacks on other Muslim sects and promotion of one’s own. Until the

1980s, verbal and written attacks on other religions were comparatively rare. Because of the orthodox clergy's aversion to communism, the *jihadi* message contained in the U.S. and Pakistani-sponsored literature was immediately accepted, and the concept of *jihad* dominated the curricula of some *madrasas*. Mosques, too, advocated *Jihad*, and the call for holy war became a permanent feature of sermons." Like the rest of the *Jihad* enterprise, this propaganda component has developed dynamism independent of its original patrons. *Jihadi* publications have gained a large readership in Pakistan, and can even be considered an alternative print media. Every major *madrasa* has its own publication, as do *jihadi* political parties.

The Markaz-ud Da'wa al-Irshad, the parent body of Lashkar-e Tayba, claims that its monthly publication of the Majallah al-Da'wa [has a circulation of 400,000, and the weekly print order of its *jihad* Times is 200,000. Zarb-e Mu'min of al-Rasheed Trust reportedly sells 250,000 copies a week. A new daily, 'Islam', was launched from Karachi and Islamabad on 18 September 2001, a week after the attacks in New York and Washington. It sold 60,000 copies daily across the country during the first weeks.

It is a twist of destiny/irony of fate that this *jihadi* American literature, which was prepared to enthuse and inspire the Afghans to launch *jihad* against the Russian forces, has inspired the Afghans and Pakistanis to fight against the American who are considered as invaders and enemies of Islam. Further, this *jihadi* literature not only became a part of curriculum in Afghanistan, but also in

the Deobandi schools in Pakistan. Consequently the turbaned Taliban extremist who symbolise the most conservative Islam, are being re-molded in a presentable package even among the upper classes of Pakistanis. It is thus worth noting that extremist ideology was exported from America to Afghanistan and Pakistan and in both these countries it has permeated even among the upper strata of the society particularly through the Deobandi school of thought which is not only anti-American but also incites sectarian violence, encouraging Sunni Muslims to attack the Shi'a Muslims which is most reprehensible.

After the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Americans also decided to exit from Afghanistan leaving a huge corpus of *jihadi* literature and a legacy of Kalashnikov culture, which had infiltrated even in the citadels of learning such as Punjab University, Lahore and Karachi University. Further the *jihadi* training camps which the Americans had started had multiplied and spread extensively along the Afghan-Pak border particularly during the 1980s when General Zia-ul Haq was the President of Pakistan. The Americans withdrew quietly from Afghanistan and ceased to take any interest in the Afghan-Pak affairs. This led to internecine wars between the Taliban and other *jihadi* Groups and warlords. The Taliban supported by Pakistan extended their political control over 80 percent of Afghanistan and established their government by 1996. The Taliban government was an extremely conservative hard line Islamic government. It introduced in the curriculum of its schools some of the *jihadi* literature prepared by the

American – Afghan experts in the University of Nebraska, USA.

**Does *Madrasa* Education Breed Extremism and Violence in Muslim Societies, particularly in Pakistan?**

The type of *Madrasa* Education that has been established in the sub-continent of India – Pakistan and Bangladesh does not exist in any other Muslim country. Since the traumatic event of September 11, 2001 when the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York were brought down and burnt to ashes, the political leaders in the West and Western media have been proclaiming vociferously that *madrasas*, particularly in Pakistan, are the breeding grounds of Islamic extremism. They want their activities to be rigidly controlled and strictly monitored in order to minimize violent jihadist activities. Their protest against the *madrasas* has increased all the more because of their failure to break the Taliban resistance in Afghanistan and claim victory. In the subsequent paragraphs, it is proposed to analyse objectively these allegations of the West against *madrasa* education.

*Madrasa* education originated in India, in the town of Deoband, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. After the failure of the 1857 mutiny against the British authority, British rule over India was firmly established and India became a part of the British Empire. This also marked the funeral of the Moghul Empire in India. With their collapse, some of the distinguished Muslim scholars such as *Maulana* Qasim

Naunatawi, *Maulana* Syed Abid Deobandi and others thought that the religious education of Muslims would be adversely affected and would harm the interests of the community. They further assumed that the British would impose their system of secular education in schools and colleges. As a result, the Muslims would be morally corrupted. In order to protect them from falling into this British net of moral corruption the aforesaid scholars established Dar-ul Uloom Deoband in 1866. From humble beginnings it has grown into an internationally renowned Temple of Islamic education with branches all over the sub-continent of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Politically it played a proactive role but educationally it adopted a very conservative curriculum overstressing religious education such as *Fiqh*, (Islamic Jurisprudence) Scholastic Theology, *Tafseer* (explanation of Qur'an) and *Hadith* (sayings of the companions of the Prophet). It completely ignored modern scientific disciplines. The education of science was confined to a scientific study of minerals and geography of the Arab Peninsula and other Muslim countries. The history of Muslim countries is taught in isolation to the history of the other countries of the world. Mathematical, Astronomical and Medical sciences in which the Muslims excelled from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries do not find a place in the curriculum of Dar-ul Uloom, Deoband. The acquisition of religious education was totally delinked from secular scientific education, which is quite against the spirit of the Qur'an.

There are numerous religious educational institutions in India managed and maintained by different

Islamic schools of thought such as Deobandi, Bareilvi, Jama'at Islami but none of these institutions has led to radicalization of Islam. It can be safely stated without fear of contradiction, that none of the Muslim religious institutions in India has produced *jihadi* Muslims. It is really surprising that similar type of religious institutions established in Pakistan by the same organizations such as Deobandi and Jama'at Islami have promoted a culture of violence and extremism in Pakistan. It is estimated that there are 8000 to 40,000 *madrasas*. Presumably the larger figure includes the *maktabs* (schools) also, which are attached to mosques. These conduct classes for reading and recitation and memorizing of Qur'anic verses. In addition, they conduct classes to teach elementary Urdu. *Maktabs* hold classes early in the morning, which enables the students to attend government schools in order to carry on their studies in secular subjects as well. The students leave *maktabs* once they have completed the reading and recitation of the entire Qur'anic text. It may thus be concluded that neither the Islamic *madrasas* in India nor small *maktabs* teach or preach radical Islam, which tends to promote violence. It may however be noted, that radicalism in Islamic institutions has always emerged in response to certain misconceived and misdirected anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic policies by dominant political powers. This will be closely examined in subsequent paragraphs.

### ***Madrasa* Education and Radicalism in Pakistan:**

*Madrasas* all over the world, and particularly in Pakistan, came into focus after the traumatic and tragic

event of September 11, 2001 when terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, New York, and killed thousands of innocent people including a large number of Muslims. In an article published in the reputed *Foreign Affairs Journal* (Jan-Feb, 2006) Alexander Evans states “*Madrasas*... have been blamed for all sorts of ills. Critics have denounced them as dens of terror, hatcheries for suicide bombers, and repositories of medievalism. These criticisms have focused on the few dozen Pakistani *madrasas* that served as training grounds for jihadists fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Many of these jihadists went on to become foot soldiers in later campaigns, including those against Indian rule over Kashmir and against Shiite Muslims within Pakistan. They also helped forge the Taliban and gave succour and support to Osama bin Laden. From this record, critics have put together a seemingly convincing charge sheet against *madrasas* in Pakistan and conclude that *madrasas* breed fanatics.” The accusation in Evan’s article that *madrasas* breed fanatics is quite serious and needs to be thoroughly analysed. The principle objective of the *madrasas* is to introduce Muslim children to Qur’anic teachings and inculcate in them Islamic values as outlined in the Qur’an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Islamic values stress on peace, compassion, justice, equality and honesty. The approach of the *madrasas* is conservative in nature. They are dogmatic in character and do not encourage creativity and originality. Since the *madrasas* are established by different schools of thought, they bear the stamp and philosophical approach of the respective schools of thought such as Deobandi, Bareilvi, Ahl-e

Hadith and Jama'at Islami. However, none of these schools of thought has military orientation and they do not impart any military training to their scholars. It is interesting to note that *Jihad*, i.e., struggle in the cause of Allah and *Ijtihad*, which implies critical and original thinking are not stressed in these *madrasas*. Barelvi and the Jama'at Islami *madrasas* are more progressive: that they do include in their curriculum secular scientific and social science courses. However, all these schools of thought subscribe to the view that revealed knowledge has precedence over rational knowledge and none of them acknowledges that the revealed and rational domains of knowledge are closely interlinked.

The preceding paragraph highlights that the curricula of none of the Muslim religious factions preach violence. All of them are however dogmatic and highly doctrinal. They are inflexible as regards their religious doctrines and rigidly adhere to them. Of the four types of *madrasas* established by the four religious factions, the Deobandis predominate, and are more geographically spread. It is also noteworthy that Deobandi schools in India are not associated with *jihadi* movement while those in Pakistan are deeply involved. This indeed needs to be closely examined.

At the time of the foundation of Pakistan there were only 137 *madrasas* imparting religious education. The growth of *madrasas* has been phenomenal since the 1980s, as can be observed from the following table, which shows number of *madrasas* in Pakistan and enrolment in them over a period: 1947 - 2001.

Year	Number of <i>Madrasas</i>	Number of students
1947	137	not available
1960	472	40,219
1984	1953	-
1986	2261	316,380
2001	4346	604,421
2010	28,982 (4000 Ghost School)	3,000,000 +

(Source: Mumtaz Ahmad, *Madrasas Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh*)

The enrollment figures in *madrasas* were greatly exaggerated by the International Crisis group, which placed it at one third of the total student enrollment in Pakistan. The World Bank Report of 2005, however, found it to be 1 percent of the total student enrolment in Pakistan. The Ministry of Education in Pakistan, in its report of 2007, raised the *madrasa* enrolment figure to 1.7 percent of total student enrollment.

The number of *madrasas* jumped to nearly 25,000 by 2010 and the enrollment increased to over 3 million students. Despite this phenomenal increase, both in the number of *madrasas* and enrollment of students, the proportion of enrollment stayed around 2 percent of the total number of students in Pakistani schools. Nearly 11,000 or 44% are Deobandi *madrasas*. President Zia-ul

Haq was most supportive of Deobandi *madrasas* and therefore their numbers increased substantially during his regime. Deobandis and *Ahl-e Hadith* are known for their opposition to the Shi'a sect. They support and promote sectarian violence against the Shi'as who are concentrated in Southern Punjab. This is not surprising as the Deobandi *madrasas* are also concentrated there. Of the 2512 *madrasas* in Punjab, nearly 900 of them are located in Bahawalpur District. They have been instrumental in inciting sectarian violence in this district. These *madrasas* are focused on religious teaching. Their curricula are based on Dars-e Nizami, which was drafted by *Mullah* Nizamuddin Siharvi in 1747 AD. There has been hardly any change in their syllabus since it was first drafted. Generation after generation has been taught the same course over and over again. Thus, the course is repetitive and lacks creativity. Their syllabi include *Naqliya* or Transmitted science, which deals exclusively with religious knowledge as communicated in the Qur'an, *Sunnah* of the Prophet, *Shar'iah* laws as expounded by *Imam* Abu Hanifah, *Imam* Shafa'ee, *Imam* Hanbal, and *Imam* Maliki; and *Aqliya* or Rational Sciences, which include medicine, astronomy. The textbooks used for teaching rational sciences are archaic and obsolete. For instance, they use a book written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to teach human anatomy. Books written in 15<sup>th</sup> century are considered authentic to deal with courses on astronomy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They adhere to such obsolete textbooks dogmatically and are not prepared to revise or change. Because of their focus on religious teachings, these *madrasas* do not equip their scholars with other skills.

Hence the employability of students graduating out of these *madrasas* is extremely limited. Consequently, there is growing demand for the introduction of science and social science courses in these *madrasas* based on current textbooks in order to widen the horizon of scholars and improve their employment opportunities.

It is a fact that *madrasa* education largely attracts children from lower income groups from both rural and urban areas. Besides imparting religious education, free boarding and lodging are a major attraction of these *madrasas*. *Madrasa* education, despite all its limitations, according to Mumtaz Ahmad “has been and remains one of the surest paths of social mobility for the lower level occupational castes and artisans of the rural areas” (Mumtaz Ahmad: *Madrasa* Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh – Source Internet).

It may also be noted that not only the poor but even the middle and higher income group Muslim families send their children to *madrasas*. Alexander Evans writes in Harvard International Review “From Dhaka to Peshawar middle class parents choose to send – more often one child to *madrasas* because they offer a respectable religious education”. (Dec.20, 2008) Mohammad Yousuf observes in his study that *madrasa* “education is respected in its own right. As much as 11.7 percent of the *madrasa* enrollment is made up by children from the richest Pakistani households.” (Prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan – Implications of U.S. Policy – Brookings – 2008, P.17) Further, a general feeling is that “Islam is a good religion, and we want our children to benefit from all it offers. It is

only certain interpretations that give it a bad meaning.” (Rebecca Winthrop and Corinne Graff: June, 2010 – Beyond *Madrassa*, Center for Universal Education at Brookings, P: 17).

The ascendancy of *madrassa* education is largely because modern education in schools run by the government is in total disarray. The government lacks resources to increase the number of public schools and provide quality education in them. A World Bank study highlights that the parents’ choice of school depends on the quality of education and parents “are critical of poor quality of public schools and expect especially more in terms of large classes sizes, poor quality facilities and unmotivated teachers” ( Beyond *Madrassas* op. cit., p:11). It has been observed that public schools are in short supply particularly in relation to their demand. The government of Pakistan lacks resources to establish new schools. Consequently, the establishment of new government schools is sharply declining. It is interesting to note that this decline is being compensated by the rise in the number of private schools, offering modern educations, which cater to the middle class, and not by *madrassas*, which are dwindling in number. Parents in general thus favour secular schools, private or public, provided the quality of education is good. The inadequacies of *madrassa* education are obvious. They cannot supply the skills personnel such as doctors, engineers, architects, management experts, information technologists, scientists and social scientists, which the employment market demands. Even government schools fail to adequately meet these demands. This leads to great discontentment

particularly among the unemployed youth. This may be one of the major reasons for the youth to work as jihadists where they are paid well, would have an honoured death as martyrs, if killed. Besides, they would be amply rewarded in Heaven. However, this may not be the only reason, there may be other factors operating as well.

On account of the prevalence of *jihadi* movement, Pakistan is emerging as an extremely conservative, orthodox hard line, intolerant and violence prone society. This became evident when the Sri Lankan Cricket Team was attacked. The State and the Central governments could do nothing about it. Nor could civil society could do anything against the perpetrators of this act of terrorism.

It may be stated without any fear of contradiction that *madrassa* education by itself is not instrumental in inciting terrorism. This system of education was first started in India where the students have always been orthodox, dogmatic, narrow minded but certainly not terrorist. Their vision is very narrow and they are resistant to change. They do not produce creative scholars or original thinkers although Prophet Muhammad had always encouraged creativity. This is evident from his conversation with Ma'az bin Jabal; His appreciation for original thinking is apparent from the incident in which on the suggestion of Salman Farsi a trench was dug to defend Madinah. The Polytheist confederate forces could not counter this unique defense strategy.

The administrators of the leading *madrasas* do realize the need for reform but they resist imposition. Firstly, they question the government on the reason for reform and categorically state "What is wrong with us?" There is tremendous demand in the Muslim society the world over for religious education. Because of this popular support, the government is unable to initiate any reform in the *madrasa* system of education.

Hence Masooda Bano in her study "Contesting Ideologies and Struggle for Authority: State - *Madrassa* Engagement in Pakistan" concludes that, "given the strong *madrasa* leadership in Pakistan as represented by the five *wifaqs*, the only way to bring reform in *madrasas* is by the willing collaboration of the top *ulema* and developing a common understanding of what is worthy knowledge. Currently, the reform programme assumes it can impose a secularist agenda rather than with the agenda of supporting the *madrasas* in their original vision of improving Islamic scholarship or of bringing modern interpretation to the text. This has resulted in resistance. The outcome is that the two sides are contesting over ideologies or visions of an ideal *madrasa*. The need is for government officials and donor agencies that want to reform *madrasas* to develop a better understanding of the basis of the demand for religious education in society. Only then can they propose reforms which meet these demands and at the same time better integrate *madrasa* students into the modern economy". (Working paper 14, Oxford University)

Mumtaz Ahmad emphatically states that “*Madradas* have been in existence for the last 150 years with no trace of militancy” and adds further that “an overwhelming majority of *madradas* in Pakistan, as in India and Bangladesh, are engaged in traditional Islamic studies and are not involved in any militant activities or even sectarian strife” (op. cit. Internet). Similarly, the authors of “*Beyond Madrasa*” conclude in their study “*madradas* account for a tiny fraction of student enrollment, and they can hardly be cast as the main obstacle to high-quality education and stability in Pakistan. In light of these findings, the almost exclusive focus on *madradas* as a security challenge which is especially prevalent in the West, needs to be corrected”.

It is important to initiate informed education programming, especially with an eye to reforms that will help mitigate militancy. Recent empirical data on Pakistan’s educational landscape and the back grounds of Pakistani militants do not support the notion that *madradas* are the central factor in Pakistani militancy. At the same time, cross-country data on education and conflict increasingly show a correlation between school attainment and conflict. On both grounds, a reassessment of the role of Pakistan’s education system as a whole is warranted and timely.

Thus *madradas* promote orthodoxy and conservatism and according to Mohammad. Yousuf, “America is not threatened by Muslim conservatism. However, it must be admitted that certain *madrada*

institutions do promote radicalism and encourage jihadists". (op-cit.p:19)

It seems that extraneous factors might be contributing to extremism in certain *madrasas*. There may be political, religious and geopolitical factors. It may be noted that extremism is directed against specific countries. In the North of Pakistan low level of insurgency has been going on since the accession of Kashmir to India. This is political in nature because Pakistan feels that Kashmir, being a Muslim majority state, ought to have acceded to Pakistan – and thus it has been consistently supporting terrorist activities there. These have intensified since the withdrawal of Russian forces from Afghanistan. This politically motivated terrorism will persist till the Kashmir problem is amicably resolved between India and Pakistan.

There is sectarian oriented violence by Ahl-e Hadith and Deobandis largely against the Shi'as who are concentrated in Southern Punjab. They have acute doctrinal differences but this is no justification to commit acts of violence by the two Sunni sects against the minority Shi'as. These meaningless acts of violence are against the fundamental Islamic values. They are un-Islamic, sheer madness, and fanatic demonstration of intolerance, which should stop.

The last category defined by the West as acts of terrorism have actually been a resistance movement launched by the people of a Muslim country against the invading forces, as is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. Afghanistan has had a long history of internecine wars

and political instability but it has never been marked for terrorism. The culture of terrorism emerged in Afghanistan when the Russians invaded the country in December 1979 to support a communist government installed in Kabul. The Afghans are traditionally devout Muslims and were not prepared to accept the control of an atheistic government over Afghanistan. Moreover, the Afghans are freedom-loving people and hate to be ruled by foreigners. On account of both these factors, they launched a stiff resistance movement against the Russian occupation of their land. Since this happened during the cold war period, when rivalry between USA and Russia was at its peak, the Americans lent full support to the Afghan resistance movement. The Americans established training camps to train the Afghans in guerilla warfare. They provided them with massive financial aid and a vast arsenal of lethal weapons including Stringer missiles. Training camps were set up in Pakistan with the specific object of training Afghans/youth/soldiers in suicide bombing and in laying bombs on the roads.

Most of the *madrasas* in Pakistan located close to Pak-Afghan border got deeply involved in these acts of terrorism. These *madrasas* were set up by hard line Deobandi faction. They started inspiring their scholars to act as *jihadis*, and protect Islam from communism, which advocated the atheistic ideology.

The teachers and students in these *madrasas* were also greatly influenced and inspired by the fiery and fanatical text books produced by the University of Nebraska, USA advocating radical Islam and stimulating

forcefully the spirit of martyrdom among the Afghan and non-Afghan students studying in Deobandi *madrasas*. Inspired by firebrand American books on Islam the *mujahideen* fought heroically against the Russians who eventually were forced to withdraw. The Russians withdrew but the training camps remained and the huge consignment of lethal arsenal of explosives left behind by the Americans fell into the hands of the Taliban. The United States, after the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan, ceased to take any interest in Afghan - Pakistan affairs which allowed the Taliban to assume full political control over Afghanistan who imposed on the people their hard line and inflexible model of Islamic government.

The American invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 was initially welcomed because it marked the end of the orthodox, dogmatic hard line Islamic regime of the Taliban. When the people of Afghanistan realized that American and NATO force had come to occupy and politically control Afghanistan, they turned against the invading forces and a massive resistance movement instantly cropped up. The training camps, which were used to train *mujahideen* against Russian forces, were now being used to train in guerrilla warfare against the American - NATO forces. The massive amount of arsenal left by the Americans was now being used against them and the same radical Islamic literature, which was used by the Taliban and Deobandi scholars to inspire *mujahideen* against Russians, was now being used to inspire them to fight against the American and NATO forces. The

Americans never visualised that they themselves would be the targets of the lethal weapons supplied by them. They are meeting their nemeses in Afghanistan and like the Russian; they are also designating this resistance movement as act of terrorism. One does not deny the fact that Pakistan is a hot bed of terrorism and sectarianism, but this guerrilla war against the American and NATO forces in Afghanistan and cannot be termed as acts of terrorism.

Although Pakistan is an ally of America and a collaborator in the fight against terrorism, yet it will not go the whole hog because of the poor American image among the people of Pakistan and because of the India factor. The United States, because of its recent aggression against Muslim countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and its unreserved support to Israel, is considered an enemy of Islam despite President Obama's endeavour to project a friendly image towards Muslim societies. The American invasion of Afghanistan is being treated on par with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Consequently a powerful resistance movement has emerged which has the full support of people of Pakistan. The Pakistan army will be committing "*harakiri*" if it attempts to crush the Taliban struggle for independence against American - NATO occupation of Afghanistan. The Pakistan army will not attempt to close training camps in the FATA area of Pakistan to train *mujahideen* to conduct guerilla war in Afghanistan.

The India factor looms large in determining Pakistan's strategy towards the Taliban vis. a vis. the

Americans. Pakistan is determined to minimize Indian role in Afghanistan's economy and politics, which of late has been rising under Karzai's regime. Pakistan visualizes that a rising Indian role in the affairs of Afghanistan will constitute a serious security and existential threat to Pakistan. It will be sandwiched between two antagonistic forces - India on the East and Afghanistan on the West. It is being assumed by the Pakistan strategists that the Taliban alone can either minimize or completely eliminate India's role in Afghanistan. Pakistan is thus trying its best to install a Taliban regime in Kabul.

America has done a great disservice to Islam because its military adventures have strengthened the followers of hard line, ultra conservative and radical Islamists. It has glorified the role of the ultra-conservative Deobandi *madrasas* as the defenders of Islam against antagonistic inimical forces trying to destroy Islam. The role of the moderate Islamists in this entire struggle can be significantly enhanced by bringing about some revolutionary changes in the system of education in the Muslim countries. This will minimize the role of the radicals and will lead to the emergence of a powerful moderate class of Muslims in Muslim countries.

## **EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES TO ISLAM IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

The decadence in Muslim societies is largely because of the outmoded and antiquated system of education, which depends more on borrowed knowledge and does not promote or encourage original and critical thinking as we observed in the previous chapter on *madrassa* education. *Madrassa* education favours conservatism and traditionalism. It stresses on religious education focusing on exegeses of the Qur'an and Traditions of the Prophet. It has hardly developed any link with modern scientific education. On account of this decadent system of education, Muslim countries have not developed any meaningful policies, based on Islamic principles to end poverty, prevent exploitation of labour, or reduce gross inequality in income distribution as was done by Marxism and Socialism. There is no contribution of Islam or Muslim scientists in Muslim countries in the technological revolution of the twentieth century that has radically changed the face of the world and made globalization a reality. The only area where Muslim economists have made some impact is in Islamic banking, which is still in its nascent stage. This acute absence of Islamic contributions to the challenges confronting the

contemporary world community raises the fundamental question of relevance of Islam in the contemporary world. Before we proceed further, we should first look into the system of education in the Islamic countries during their early phase of development that led to an explosion of knowledge and scientific development in the Islamic realm from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The first Islamic school was established by Prophet Muhammad himself and *Ahl-e Suffah*, who lived within the precincts of the Prophet's Mosque, were its students. Under the direct guidance of the Prophet, they emerged among the best teachers of the Qur'an itself. Later, *Khalifah* Umar also established a large number of schools for the teaching and learning of the Qur'an. With the subsequent expansion of the Islamic realm, rulers, nobles and scholars came to know/learn about the scientific achievements of the Greek and Chinese scholars. This contact excited the curiosity of the Muslim scholars and developed a keenness for scientific know how along with the knowledge of the Qur'an. This combination of the revealed and rational sources led to the rise of a unique system of Islamic education and was well developed by the Abbasid rulers in the eastern Islamic realm, centered at Baghdad and the Umayyad rulers in Andalusia (southern Spain). It is pointed out by Hans Kung that "al-Mamun, universally accepted and also interested in medicine and the natural sciences, felt no religious scruples: it was confirmed to him in a dream that there was no conflict between Aristotle (and Greek culture generally) and revelation. There could be synthesis." This belief in

synthesis of the revealed and rational fields of knowledge promoted the concept of unity in the system of education in Islamic countries against dichotomy in educational system developed in the West.

Muslim scholars from the 8th to the 13th centuries, inspired by the Qur'anic vision, dominated the fields of science and technology. They established unique institutions such as hospitals, astronomical observatories, Royal Botanical Gardens, and scientific laboratories. They not only developed new technology such as paper and glass manufacture, gunpowder and wind power, the mariner's compass and weight-driven clocks, but also transferred these technologies to European countries. In fact, these Muslim scientists laid the foundation for the scientific and industrial revolution in Europe from the 16th century onward. This phenomenal progress of Muslim societies during the period 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries was largely due to the educational system that established the unity of knowledge, i.e., integrated the revealed with the rational knowledge, as was done by Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd); and also because of the generous patronage of the ruling elite. Consequently, scientific education received top priority. The level of literacy and standards of education were very high. Higher education was research oriented. Besides the rulers, even the nobles lent full support to the development of science and technology because it is enjoined in the Qur'an and the Prophet made acquisition of knowledge obligatory for Muslim men and women.

Islamic approach to education is most comprehensive and pervades every aspect of human life. It addresses itself to the development of human personality in its totality bringing out perfect harmony in material and spiritual facets of life. Islamic values, inspired by the Qur'anic vision, allow full scope for the growth of intellectual faculties of individuals and encourage social cohesiveness among different groups and individuals.

It has been generally observed that the growth of religion gags the voice of reason and curbs the freedom of speech. History is witness to the fact that with the rise of religion in Europe scientific progress experienced a serious setback. The Catholic Church of Europe enjoyed immense temporal authority and came down heavily against scientific views whenever it conflicted with the Biblical text on the subject. Under the papal decree on Inquisition, scientists were humiliated, forced to retract their views, and were even burnt at the stakes if they refused to retract. Galileo was put under house arrest for stating the scientific truth of the solar system being heliocentric. The dogmatism of the Church in Europe and its antagonistic attitude towards science created a hiatus between science and religion and a feeling of mutual suspicion and mistrust. The European scientists thus carried the impression that religion was anti-science: a view that has not only persisted but has strengthened with the passage of time, particularly among the western scientists across the globe. This separation of science from religion allowed the growth of science and technology but

was totally devoid of ethical values and consequently without any social goals.

In contradistinction, there is no such conflict between science and religion in Islam. The Qur'an encourages scientific methods for the acquisition of knowledge. It has been the unique distinction of Islamic civilization and culture that with the rise of Islam and its political power science also recorded phenomenal growth. The period 800-1300 A.D., when Islamic political power was at its peak scientific progress was phenomenal. The Muslim scientists meticulously applied scientific methods of observation and experimentation to carry out their scientific investigations. They had attained such a high level of scientific achievement that they could rectify the theoretical and conceptual errors in Greek science, which was then in vogue. Historians of science admit that modern science has developed on the firm scientific foundation laid down by Muslim scientists during the medieval period. The Muslim scientists were thoroughly conversant with the Qur'anic values and were always inspired by the Qur'anic idealism in both acquisition of scientific knowledge and its application for the benefit of mankind. They were, therefore, capable of performing religious duties and simultaneously conducting scientific experiments. Al-Beruni functioned as a *Qazi* (judicial officer) and would carry on astronomical observations as well. Similarly, Ibn Rushd was a famous physician as well as a *Qazi* in a court of law. Thus, there was no conflict between the secular and religious roles of scholars during

the Abbasid and the Umayyad periods in the Eastern and Western parts of the Islamic realm.

The separation of the revealed from the rational sources of knowledge as we have observed earlier was originally raised by Imam Ghazali, a distinguished Islamic scholar (1058-1111). He insisted on the supremacy of the revealed source of knowledge which was of divine origin. He insisted that it should not be mixed up with rational sources of knowledge which he believed to be inferior in origin. It would exercise a corrupting influence on the revealed knowledge. However, Ghazali was not against the rational sources of knowledge and did not object to their being pursued under the same roof but segregated from each other. Subsequently, a 13th century scholar, *Imam Ibn Timiyah* (1261-1326), was totally opposed to the development of rational sources of knowledge. He had access to the court of the *Khalifah* of his time and influenced him to ban the continuance of the development of rational sources of knowledge. Consequently, the *madrasas* in the Islamic realm abandoned teaching and research on scientific themes. *Imam Timiyah* supported a conservative Islamic ideology that is now being followed by the *Wahabi* and *Salafi* schools. *Imam Tamiya's* influence on the *Khalifah* in Baghdad blocked the road to progress in Muslim societies and isolated them from the influence of scientific and technological progress in Western Europe. This was a most retrogressive step, which blocked the progress of Muslim countries for centuries.

Unfortunately, both the distinguished scholars overlooked the fact that this divine text, al- Qur'an, is a

most rational document and nearly one third of its text deals with environmental and scientific aspects. It encourages its readers to look for the resources that Allah has created for the benefit of mankind (Chapter 45 - Al-Jathia; verses 12 and 13; Chapter 31 - Luqman; verses 24-32). The greatest damage, that these two scholars did, was to split the unity of knowledge, delinking the rational from the revealed source of knowledge. They treated the Qur'an as a religious book for spiritual guidance only. They thus, gave rise to a system of education, which focused only on religious education. This was contrary to the concept of unity or synthesis of revealed and rational sources of knowledge as evolved by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd.

The Qur'an is of course a revealed book but it is distinctly a book of knowledge, which has multiple dimensions as can be observed from the diagram in **Figure - 1** (Dimension of Qur'anic Revelations). It may be observed that revelations on scientific themes constitute one of its important dimensions. It may also be noticed that the Qur'an repeatedly stresses on observation and research on the bounties, which Allah has created for the benefit of mankind. (see also Monograph 18, Qur'anic Encouragement to Scientific Research) Thus, the Qur'an itself stresses the unity of rational and revealed knowledge. *Imam* Ghazali and *Imam* Ibn Timiyah were not right in delinking the revealed from the rational sources. Consequent upon this separation of the two sources of knowledge there were not any notable scientific discoveries and technological inventions in the Muslim

ruled empires: the Ottomans and the Moghuls from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and with the defeat of the Ottoman Turks in the First World War (1914-1918) the Ottoman Empire was completely dismantled and most of the territories under the control of Ottoman and Moghul rulers turned into colonies of the European powers, mainly French and British.

The colonial powers, which, since 1918, controlled most of the Islamic realm, imposed their own system of secular education delinking it completely from religious education. Thus, during the colonial period two distinctly different streams of education emerged among the Muslim countries, one predominantly religious and the other exclusively secular.

Thus the two factors that had earlier induced phenomenal development of science and technology, i.e., unity of knowledge and patronage of ruling elite and nobles, ceased during the colonial period. The unity of knowledge was torn apart with the introduction of secular values of the West, which insisted on a dichotomy of knowledge segregating the rational from the revealed.

On gaining independence, in the post-colonial period no effort was made by the ruling elites in Muslim countries to restore unity of knowledge in the educational system of their respective countries. They were pre-occupied in consolidating their own political hegemony rather than in promoting advancement of knowledge. For instance, the feudal ruling elite in Pakistan that dominates

the defence services, administration, judiciary, and politics spends all its energy and uses all means to perpetuate its dominance, under the garb of democracy instead of promoting the welfare of the common man and advancement of knowledge. Similarly, ruling monarchs from Bahrain to Morocco (Marrakesh) concentrated in evolving policies to stabilize their dynastic rule. The development of education was put on the back burner and receded to low priority.

The separation of Qur'anic studies from modern scientific studies was most tragic because it disturbed the unity of knowledge, introduced a dichotomy in the system of education and produced two distinct groups of educational elites who failed to meaningfully interact with each other. The religious elite treated the Qur'an only as the source of *Shar'iah* laws. They overlooked the fact that one fourth of the Qur'an deals with environmental and other sciences and has made remarkable revelations about certain scientific truths, which were discovered only in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Similarly, modern scholars ignored the Qur'an, which in their view provides only religious laws and therefore could not play any meaningful role in promoting modern scientific education. Consequently, the knowledge base in Muslim countries was compartmentalized into two distinct segments delinked one from the other. As a result of this unfortunate development, two different types of mutually exclusive educational institutions developed in Muslim countries, i.e., religious and secular. The educational system in Muslim countries was hence totally disoriented.

The combined effect of these negative factors was that scholars in Muslim countries failed to make any worthwhile contribution toward social and economic progress of Muslim societies and their advancement in science and technology in the modern period.

In light of the previous discussion, the Islamic system of education, inspired by the Qur'anic vision that integrates the rational with the revealed, ought to be revived. It will create an insatiable urge to acquire and enhance knowledge, dispel darkness, and spread enlightenment. Scientific research will be encouraged and technology will be updated not to control or dominate nature, but to optimize its utilization for the benefit of mankind. The Islamic system of education will allow the fullest expression of human intellectual ingenuity, initiative, and originality, plus compassion and concern for all mankind. This will naturally imply the emergence of a knowledge - based society in Muslim countries.

The ruling elite in Muslim countries are least interested in such a revival because they fear that a knowledge-based society may threaten their own survival. It will awaken and enlighten the people. They will demand their rights and agitate for democracy, which will adversely affect the powers and privileges of the ruling class. Moreover, unlike the rulers in the early period, the present generation of Muslim elite has developed a lust for luxurious living which they cannot give up. The United Arab Emirates epitomizes this craving for luxury. The elite, particularly in the Arab world, would rather invest in building luxury resorts than in establishing

modern scientific research institutes. They would prefer breeding racehorses than supporting scholastic achievements. These are those people about whom the Qur'an states that they "love the life of this world more than the hereafter, which hinder (men) from the Path of Allah and seek therein something crooked" (Chapter 14 - Ibrahim [Abraham] 14: verse 3).

### **Current Educational Scenario in Muslim Countries:**

One of the critical areas of deficit in the Muslim countries is the lack of education and poverty of knowledge. This again demonstrates the degree to which the Muslim societies have deviated from the path laid down in the Qur'an and the Traditions (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet.

People constitute the real wealth of any society and knowledge is their most powerful weapon and significant asset. Acquisition of knowledge opens up avenues of developmental opportunities. It is the responsibility of the governments of the respective countries to make knowledge accessible to all the citizens of the country through the latest tools available for its acquisition. The governments of these countries have purposely failed to raise the capabilities of their human resource to their full potential. This negligence has adversely affected the political, social and economic development of the Muslim countries. It is really shocking that it should happen in these countries.

The Holy Qur'an exhorts the Muslims to advance the frontiers of knowledge and the Prophet encouraged

them to go even to China to seek knowledge. In one of his Traditions, the Prophet stated that ‘no gift among all gifts of a father to his child is better than education’ and that “seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim men and women” (Bukhari). Further, it is obligatory on the Muslims to read and understand the meaning and significance of the Holy Qur’an. In the light of this Divine command and sayings of the Prophet, no Muslim should ever remain illiterate and uneducated. It is obvious that the governments of the Muslim countries did not following the Qur’anic injunctions and Traditions of the Prophet in their letter and spirit. Because of the flagrant violation of the Qur’anic directions, 65 million adult Arabs are illiterate. No Muslim country has 100 percent literacy; Bangladesh and Pakistan are among the countries with the highest rates of illiteracy: 61 and 56 per cent respectively. Even in India – home of the second largest number of Muslims – literacy among Muslims, according to official figures, is significantly lower than others casts and communities. (Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee Report) Thus, one of the basic tasks of the Muslim world ought to be “to overcome the under supply of knowledge to people and the under supply of knowledgeable people”. (Arab Human Development Report, 2002 – United Nations)

This knowledge gap becomes all the more glaring when the level of literacy and the quality of education in the Muslim countries are compared with the developed economies. The developed countries have already attained 100 per cent level of literacy and their quality of education is very high because of the tools they use to teach at the

school level. This differential level in educational development between the developed countries and the Muslim countries is largely due to their difference in investment in education, which has been widening over a period of time. During the period 1980-1995, the developed countries nearly doubled their per capita expenditure on education from \$500 to \$900, whereas in the Arab countries it has been static at \$ 100 per capita and in the developing countries, which include the other Muslim countries investment in education has increased only marginally during 1990-1995 and is approximately only US \$ 50 per capita. On account of this ever-increasing gap in expenditure on education between the developed and the developing Muslim countries the former are progressing at a phenomenal pace in acquisition and application of advanced scientific and technological knowledge, leaving the Muslim countries far behind. Consequently, the Muslim countries are woefully backward in acquisition of knowledge and teaching aids and teaching methodology.

Besides investment pattern in educational development, the other factors that account for this deplorable backwardness are the language barrier, the system of education and the quality of education.

English has become internationally the main language of education. Most of the Muslim countries, barring a few exceptions, are inadequately equipped to conduct teaching in this language. The application of latest teaching aids requires adequate knowledge and communication skills in English. Naturally, therefore, the

standard is very low and based on obsolete books, which have been discarded in the developed countries. This language barrier must soon be dismantled if the quality of education has to attain international standards.

### **System of Education in Muslim Countries:**

Historically, in the early phase of educational development in the Muslim world the ruling elite and distinguished scholars like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) encouraged and maintained unity of revealed and rational sources of knowledge. This unity led to an explosion of knowledge in Muslim countries scholars and scientists of great eminence such as Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Al-Razi, Ibn Rushd, Al-Jaber and many others. The most important reform required in the Muslim Countries is to speedily restore the unity in the sources of revealed and rational knowledge.

One does not deny the importance of religious education for Muslims. It is crucially important. It is an important part of Islamic ethos and parents are normally keen that their children should be conversant with the basic tenets of Islam. Hence in order to compensate for the absence of religious education in the privately managed and government run schools, the *maktab* and *madrasa* system of education was developed. *Madrasas* are properly organized residential educational schools for imparting religious education in depth. Thus, the secular and *madrasas* are the two main streams of education currently prevalent in the Muslim countries, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. The secular schools and the *madrasas*

are running concurrently, independent of each other without any linkage.

These *madrasas* have been established by different schools of thought such as Deobandi, Barelvi, Salafi, Ahl-Hadith etc. Most of these, particularly Deobandi and Salafi, tend to promote conservatism, fanaticism and incite scholars even to resort to violence (*Jihad*). They claim to have a profound knowledge of the revealed sources of knowledge. They totally reject the rational sources of knowledge and consider them inferior to revealed sources, which are divine in origin. Such an approach exposes the ignorance of the religious scholars about the nature and character of the Qur'anic text. The Qur'an as stated earlier, though divine in nature is a highly rational document and contains references to scientific facts.

Similarly, the secular schools keep their distance from the Qur'anic text because they treat it as a book of religion, which cannot contribute anything to the development of modern scientific education. This again is a highly flawed argument and reflects total ignorance of the secularists about the significant contribution, which the Qur'an makes to the understanding of science and technology.

As a consequence of these diametrically opposite approaches of the religious and secular scholars the revealed and the rational sources of knowledge move in opposite directions displaying complete split between the two sources of knowledge with no chance of the twain meeting. Thus, most of the Muslim countries have two

parallel streams of education competing with each and trying to undermine each other. Since some of the *madrasas* tend to be dogmatic, they encourage bigotry, fanaticism and *jihadi* tendency leading to violence, there is a vocal demand that the *madrasa* educational system needs to be radically reformed.

It is evident from **Figure - 2** (Fragmentation and Segmentation of Education System in Pakistan), that two distinct and parallel systems of education are in existence in Pakistan and both are independent of each other. The educational system in Pakistan symbolises to a large extent the system of education being pursued in other Muslim countries as well. Muslim theologians all over the world refuse to combine the Islamic education with the modern scientific education.

This mutually incompatible dualism in the educational system has caused immense damage to the development of modern scientific education in the entire Islamic realm barring a few exceptions.

The reading and recitation of the Qur'an is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female. Knowledge of Qur'an is essential for a Muslim so as to know the basic tenets of Islam and to understand Islamic values, in order to distinguish between virtues and vice and to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the Islamic concept of Justice and human equality. Knowledge of the Qur'an will also bring out a strong relationship that exists between the revealed and rational sources of knowledge.

Since the secular schools completely exclude Qur'anic studies from their syllabi, the Muslim students who graduate from these schools are totally ignorant of Islamic values. The education of Muslim students in the secular schools is devoid of ethical values and principles, which should guide the conduct of their lives in this world. The absence of the knowledge of the Qur'an and its value system from the secular schools in Muslim countries makes it a highly flawed system of education. It is a system with a body devoid of its soul. It thus lacks the instrument, which directs mankind to the right path that inspires people to aspire for achievements, which will benefit mankind and lead to peace, progress and prosperity in the world.

This Qur'anic course would present Islam in its pristine purity unrelated to any of the schools of thought such as Deobandi, Barelvi, and *Salafi* etc. It should be neither Sunni Islam nor Shi'a Islam. It must be pure and simple Islam as preached and practiced by Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, particularly *Khulafa-e Rashideen*. This would be totally different from the religious education followed in *madrasas* or *Deeni-Madaris*.

### **Integrated System of Modern and Islamic Education**

The system of education currently prevalent in Muslim countries is obsolete and decadent which is evident from the fact that these countries have failed to produce scientists of world repute in the contemporary period. They have not made any contribution in the

technological revolution, which has transformed the global economy and system of mass communication. In contradistinction scientists in Europe and America through their path-breaking researches have enormously advanced the frontiers of knowledge and have bagged the Nobel Prizes, the highest award in the field of sciences, in almost every major branch of science.

During the early phase of the rise of Muslim Empires, from 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the system of education was based on the unity of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge. This integrated system of education led to an explosion of knowledge and a phenomenal technological revolution. It produced a galaxy of Muslim scientists who significantly improved upon the Greek sciences and opened new vistas of knowledge in almost every branch of science. This brought about enormous progress and prosperity in the Muslim world. These Muslim scholars besides being eminent scientist were firmly rooted to their religion and were always inspired by the Qur'anic values and vision.

This harmony and synthesis of the revealed and rational sources of knowledge was initially disturbed by two distinguished Muslim scholars, Al-Ghazali (11<sup>th</sup>. century) and *Imam* Ibn Timiyah (13<sup>th</sup>. century). They insisted on the supremacy of the revealed source of knowledge, being divine in origin, as against rational sources. However, the edifice of the integrated system of Islamic education was completely dismantled when most of the Muslim countries came under the rule of colonial powers such as Britain, France, Holland etc after the

collapse of the Turkish empire, at the end of the First World War in 1918. These colonial powers imposed on the colonies their system of secular scientific education eliminating completely the link with the revealed sources of knowledge. This de-linkage deprived the Muslim scholars of their principal source of inspiration.

The *madrassa* system of religious education developed simultaneously with the rise of colonialism, particularly in the sub-continent of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in order to save the Muslim community from the corrupting influence of colonial system of education. These *madrassas* are narrowly focused on religion. Their courses are repetitive in nature teaching the same content repeatedly from generation to generation. They lack creativity. The syllabi are not subject to change and criticism. They follow antiquated text books, produced centuries ago to teach subjects like astronomy and medicine. Hence, they produce conservative religious scholars who are dogmatic, resist change and some of them even turn into fanatics.

The organizers of *madrassa* education fail to realise the strong link between modern sciences and Qur'anic revelations. These *madrassas* do not train their students in any other skills thus rigidly restricting their field of employment. They also do not teach courses to enlighten their students on social, economic and political changes which are rapidly transforming the Muslim societies all over the world. Consequently, students graduating out of the *madrassas* fail to contribute meaningfully in reforming

Muslim societies. Thus, *madrassa* education in its present form and structure has become obsolete.

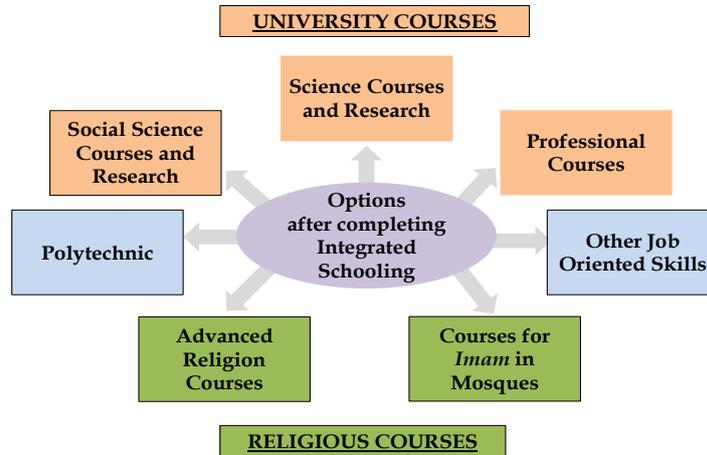
In order to put the Muslim countries back on the road to progress in all directions an Integrated System of Modern and Islamic Education needs to be revived which will integrate and synthesise the secular and the Qur'anic based systems of education. There is no justification for running two parallel systems of education, one religious and the other secular and modern, independent of each other. This segmented system of education will vertically split the population into two antagonistic intellectual and ideological factions, which will hamper the progress of Muslim societies.

The integration of Qur'anic education with modern scientific education (**Fig. 3**) will motivate scholars pursuing the course to acquire knowledge in order to ensure peace, progress and welfare of mankind. The current system of modern education lacks well-defined goals to ensure progress and prosperity of mankind in a peaceful environment with equity and justice. This has led to serious distortions in outlook of societies pursuing this system of education. It is substantiated by the fact that scientific education, which should have built up edifices of peace, has instead developed instruments of war, which should have eliminated social and economic inequality has actually magnified them. Modern educational system has promoted excellence at the cost of ethics and morality. Consequently it has been totally derailed, has lost both its bearing and moorings.

In order to put the educational system in the Islamic world on the right track it should be completely overhauled and radically reoriented. It has to be conceived with well-defined human goals and reinforced by strong ethical norms. The Model (**Fig. 3a**) stresses the point that in order to restore the unity of the sources of knowledge, courses in modern and Qur'anic education ought to be interlinked. It also emphasizes the strong link of some of the Qur'anic revelations with modern sciences.

It may be noted that on completion of this integrated course students will be having a fairly good idea of the achievements of sciences and efficacy of Qur'anic revelations. They will appreciate the close link between the two. If modern education gives us an idea of the heights of scientific achievements, the Qur'anic values will help in directing them to the right course. The scholars, after completing this integrated course, will be better equipped to choose their courses of specialization. They will have wide range of options to choose from including courses on advanced scientific, technological, professional and religious education as illustrated bellow:

FIGURE - 4 : OPTIONS AFTER INTEGRATED SCHOOLING



Whatever line they choose, they will always bear in mind the linkages between the two and will develop a balanced outlook. They will realize the importance of both rational and revealed sources of knowledge in ensuring a balanced, and healthy development of society. Those specializing in religious course will appreciate the dynamics of social, economic and political forces which *Shar'iah* laws ought to bear in mind. In view of the rapid socio-economic transformation existing *Shar'iah* laws may be amended and new laws may be framed but the basic object of these changes ought to be to accelerate socio-economic progress and to ensure their compatibility with the changing demands of the Muslim *Ummah*. The only point one has to guard against is that they do not violate the fundamental principles of Islam. It is hoped that the proposed integrated course will stimulate harmonious development of society. It will promote freedom of

speech, democracy, rule of law and will eliminate extremism. All decisions will be democratically taken in the best interests of the people as a whole including both the poor and the rich.

This unique combination of ethics and academic excellence will make the educational system dynamic and meaningful. It will direct our energies and channelise our thoughts to accomplish peace with harmony and without conflict, progress with honour and dignity and prosperity with equity. The system should internalize Qur'anic idealism, which should inspire educated youth to dedicate themselves to serve the cause of humanity, and work relentlessly to eliminate the miseries and sufferings of mankind. It is only through the application of the Qur'anic values that distortions can be rectified, corruption can be eliminated, and human dignity can be restored. These values can provide the orientation and motivation which modern educational system urgently needs to make it responsive to the needs and challenges of the society.

It is a monumental task, most challenging but extremely rewarding. It devolves upon the

Muslim intellectuals, the world over, to realise that they have a mission to perform, a commitment to keep, a cause to serve and a point to prove that integrated Modern and Islamic System of Education will *Insha Allah* convincingly establish the synthesis of Qur'anic and modern scientific education. It can simultaneously inspire scientific excellence, reinforced with impeccable ethical norms to usher in global peace and prosperity. We must

mobilise our energies and pool our intellectual resources to transform this thought into action and translate this dream into reality.

## CONCEPT OF *IJTIHAD* IN ISLAM

Islam does not visualize any conflict between the revealed and rational sources of knowledge. In fact, they complement each other. Scholars like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Abdouh in the 20<sup>th</sup> century attempted to synthesis the two primary sources of knowledge. In fact the Qur'an: the last and the most authentic revealed book, which has retained its original purity, is also a very rational book and it stresses its rationality over and over again. For instance, when the Jews claimed that Ibrahim (Abraham) was a Jew and the Christians claimed him to be a Christian, Allah closed the argument by stating in the Qur'an that Ibrahim was a Prophet long before the birth of Judaism and Christianity and hence he was neither a Jew nor a Christian (Chapter 3 – Al-e Imran; verse 67). Further, there are quite a few references in the Qur'an on themes relating to secular sciences such as earth sciences, medical sciences, and astronomical sciences etc., which stimulate the interest of the readers to research further into these fields of sciences.

As highlighted in the introductory chapter: Challenges to Islam, Islam at the time of its foundation was the most progressive of all the existing religions. It abolished many cruel and oppressive traditions, prohibited the practice of charging usurious interest, stressed on the equality of mankind, encouraged emancipation of slaves and introduced many other progressive measures. Social, economic and cultural

conditions have undergone a sea change since the revelation of the Qur'anic verses in the early seventh century. The world has now transformed from primitive tribal culture to a highly civilized sophisticated technology oriented global culture. This radical transformation in the economy and cultural morphology of the habitable world were not revealed in the Qur'an but the Prophet had clearly anticipated them, which are evident from the famous Tradition recorded in Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud.

The Prophet had appointed Ma'az bin Jabal, a *Sahabi* (Companion) of the Prophet, as the Governor and Chief Judge of Yemen, which had come under the political control of Madinah:

"The Prophet asked Ma'az Ibn Jabal, whom he had named as the Judge in the new environment of Yemen.

"Through what will you judge?" Ma'az replied: Through the book of God.

"And if you find nothing in the book of God?" Ma'az went on "I shall judge according to Tradition (*Sunnah*) of God's Messenger."

"And if you find nothing in the Messenger's tradition (*Sunnah*)?"

"Ma'az answered confidently, "I shall not fail to make an effort (*ijtahidu*) to reach an opinion".

This answer satisfied the Prophet, who concluded, Praise be to God who has guided His Messengers to what satisfies God's Messenger. (Tariq Radadhan:p. 199) – *Hadith* mentioned in Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi).

It is abundantly clear from this tradition that the Prophet had visualized that in the process of development of human civilization, a time would come when Muslims would fail to get direct guidance from the verses of the Qur'an and his *Sunnah*. He, therefore, greatly appreciated Ma'az bin Jabal's reply that he would think independently (*ijtihadu*) to judge on matters where the Qur'an and *Sunnah* were not helpful keeping in mind the basic principles of compassion, justice, honesty, impartiality, equality etc as laid down in the Qur'an. This was the origin of the concept of *Ijtihad*. With the passage of time, it assumed a second meaning, which eventually emerged as the primary source of *Ijtihad* in Islam and was not the *Ijtihad*, which Ma'az bin Jabal had conceived and the Prophet had perceived. It is indeed amazing that not one of the distinguished scholars, whose works we have referred to while writing this brief note, have quoted the aforesaid *Hadith* (Tradition), treating it as if it had never existed. But it is crucially important to the understanding of the concept of *Ijtihad* and its significance.

The word *Ijtihad* has the same root as *jihad*. While *Jihad* means making an effort in the right cause such as to prevent oppression, tyranny, cruelty, injustice and also control own evil desires. *Ijtihad* implies effort within one's own self to arrive at the right decision whenever faced

with an issue for which clear guidance is not available from Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

The basic objectives of the *Shar'iah* laws are to promote compassion and mercy, maintain peace and dispense even handed justice without discrimination, fear and favour. *Ijtihad* should be used as an instrument to promote these Islamic values. Thus, *Ijtihad* is essential to ensure, peace, progress and prosperity of Muslims and for the survival of Islam itself in the contemporary world.

#### **Evolution of the concepts of *Ijtihad*:**

Ma'az bin Jabal used *Ijtihad* as a tool only if he could not get any guidance from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. In the process of its evolution, two distinctly different concepts of *Ijtihad* have emerged in the Islamic *Fiqh*, which is followed by members of the Sunni sect among Muslims.

#### **Concept One:**

According to this conception the activity of the *Mujtahid* involves deduction of the laws of the *Shar'iah* for emergent issues and new phenomena of life by employing general principles - and applying those to particular instances in external reality, thus obtaining *ahkaam* (Islamic Commandments) governing them.

According to this concept, *Ijtihad* is not counted as an independent source of law parallel to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, but merely as a means for deriving and determining the *ahkaam* from the sources. Islamic scholars make an effort to verify if the Qur'anic verses and the

*Sunnah* can justifiably be made compatible and applied to the contemporary situation. This method of *Ijtihad* needs high level of expertise, and can be executed by Muslim scholars who have profound and comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. This method of *Ijtihad* is limited in utility and restrictive in nature.

### **Second Concept:**

The second type of *Ijtihad* derives *Shar'iah Ahkaam* through personal judgement on an issue for which the *Mujtahid* does not find any express text in the Qur'an or the *Sunnah*. This thought is expressed in the writings of Abd al Wahab al-Khallaf and most of the Sunni *Fuqaha* (religious scholars) also subscribe to this view.

*Ijtihad* in this sense is considered by most Sunni scholars as an independent source parallel to the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, *Ijma* (consensus) and *Aql* (reasoning). It is acknowledged as one of the bases for determining the *Ahkam* - taking recourse to instruments like *Qiyas* (presumptions), *Istihsan* (discretion), *Istihlal* (legalization), etc. - derived from critical debate. In Islamic *Fiqh*, *Ijtihad* has had the meaning of a free and independent effort of the *Mujtahideen*, undertaken for the purpose of advancement and expansion of the Islamic sciences. This development was not possible except through freedom of scholarly research, free expression of different views, and clash between the views of the *Mujtahideen*, scholars and thinkers.

Thus, *Ijtihad* is an instrument used to keep Islam in harmony with the contemporary aspects of the socio-

economic and political situations. Its main function is therefore, to improve and to edify the conditions of the people. In the words of Ibn al-Qayyim, "Every *Ijtihad* that leads to justice, mercy and benefit and eliminates injustice, cruelty and harm is indeed upholding the *Shar'iah*"

It seems appropriate to clarify at this point that though *Ijtihad* helps Islam in modern times to retain its progressive character yet it is distinctly different from the term - modernity.

Modernity implies total break with the past and does not keep any link with its legacy. It devalues natural elements and substitutes science for God. It casts away the moral values around which societies have evolved. Modernity develops valueless societies where the kingdom of God disappears, yielding dominance to the era of reason, and adopts science as its God and assumes that natural phenomena are created without a creator. In contradistinction, *Ijtihad* is always subject to the values enshrined in the Qur'an.

Another point may also be noted here: the Qur'anic principles, laws and values cannot be violated while conducting any exercise in *Ijtihad*. Moreover, certain Qur'anic decrees cannot be subjected to *Ijtihad*. The basic tenets of Islam or the Five Pillars of Islam such as five time obligatory *Salaat* (prayer), *saum* (fasting in the month of Ramadhan), & *Zakaat* (poor due), *Hajj* and *Imaan* (proclamation of faith in the unity of Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe) are not negotiable. Similarly, values prescribed in the Qur'an regarding

honesty, human equality, justice, adultery etc cannot be subjected to the process of *Ijtihad*. Acts forbidden in Islam cannot be scrutinized for change through the process of *Ijtihad*. Instead, while carrying out an exercise in *Ijtihad*, scholars must be careful not to violate these Qur'anic norms.

Modernized western societies approve of couples living together without marriage, homosexuality is not considered a sin, and homosexual couples are being married even in some of the churches: these are most preposterous and atrocious act. Islam is uncompromising on these issues. Islam treats sex outside the wedlock as adultery and firmly adheres to it. Similarly, homosexuality is a sinful act and will always be treated as such. The people of Lot were destroyed in the historic past for indulging in homosexuality.

As explained earlier, *Ijtihad* in Islam implies creative and enlightened thinking to open new avenues of progress in Islam in order to improve the quality of life of Muslims within the value system prescribed in Islam. While deriving rules and formulating principles under the parallel system outside the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, the scholars take recourse to *Qiyas* (presumption), *Istihsan* (discretion), *Istihlal* (legalization) to arrive at a definitive conclusion which should not violate the fundamental principles and values as enshrined in the Qur'an.

As already explained, there are two different processes of *Ijtihad* in the Sunni *fiqh*. One that is directly derived from the Qur'anic sources and *Sunnah*, is the most

painstaking process and needs a high level of expertise in the fields of Qur'an and *Sunnah*, and can be competently performed only by Islamic scholars of eminence.

However, the process of *Ijtihad* should not by any means be the exclusive domain of Islamic scholars. In the other processes of *Ijtihad* where conclusions are derived based on presumptions and discretion on sources outside the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, an intelligent person who is well acquainted with Qur'anic values can freely participate in executing the procedure. Even women can participate. Thus, people can come out with some exciting and original ideas to facilitate the progress and prosperity of Muslim societies.

It may be mentioned here that the Shi'a sect in Islam is very conservative and rigid in exercising *Ijtihad*. First, they reject *Ijtihad* outside the sources of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Further, they insist that only competent Islamic scholars with a high level of expertise in the fields of Qur'an and *Sunnah* should be allowed to participate in the process. It is their faith that besides the twelve *Imams* who were divinely guided including *Imam Mahdi*, who is in a state of occult, the scholars who have passed out of the seminary called *Hawza* are alone competent to indulge in this exercise. Women are not allowed to participate in this exercise. These restrictions considerably limit the field of *Ijtihad* when we are fully aware of the fact that in the contemporary world there are plenty of issues on which we can hardly get any meaningful guidance from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* because the circumstances and

situations have substantially and radically changed. Such an approach leads to conservatism and radicalization.

**Areas where *Ijtihad* is required:**

The areas where the process of *Ijtihad* cannot be applied such as the five obligatory rituals – *Salaat*, *Zakaat*, *Saum* (fasting in the month of Ramadhan) and the Articles of Faith, i.e. *Imaan* and *Shahadah* has already been indicated earlier. Further, the Qur’anic text cannot be altered nor can the Islamic values and commandments of *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (permitted) as prescribed in the Qur’an violated. The remaining areas are open to *Ijtihad* and we should not hesitate to exercise those if the exigencies of the situation so demand.

It is worth noting that the *Shar’iah* laws were evolved and codified during the Abbasid period more than a thousand years ago. The political, economic, social, cultural environment was totally different. Changes in all walks of life are inevitable. In the true spirit of *Ijtihad*, the Islamic *Shar’iah* should have also kept pace with the time as everything changes with time. Unfortunately, this did not happen. One of the reasons for it was the segregation of religious scholars from the main stream and their self-assumed monopoly on issuing *fatwas* (opinion on a specific doubt). It soon came to be accepted as divine edict considered final and inviolable. The people engaged in daily grind accepted these scholars, majority of whom were cut off from day to day activities, as the guides and philosopher in all religious matters.

With Islamic *Khilafat* degenerating to hereditary monarchy, the rulers found it expedient to woo pliant scholars to strengthen their hold on public. The importance and influence of these scholars overshadowed other scholars engaged in scientific work with no official patronage. Over a period of time, the most dynamic religion lapsed into stagnation cut off from the changing realities due to spread of Islam beyond Arabian Peninsula and passage of time. The process of *Ijtihad* too suffered from insufficient inputs and lost objectivity. With emergence of different schools of thought (*Masalik*), competitiveness also crept in taking the shape of hypothetical questions being raised in *inter-maslak* debates held in public by respective scholars. Ultimately, the doors of *Ijtihad* were declared closed to put an end to such debates. Thus Islamic *Shar'iah* got frozen and became almost irrelevant in modern age in many important fields.

Many *Shar'iah* laws are based on the concept of *Dar-ul-Islam* (land governed by Muslims according to Islamic *Shar'iah*) and *Dar-ul-Harb* (non-Muslim land at war with *Dar-ul-Islam*, where Muslims cannot live in safety and security and practice religion freely). This concept was valid in the initial stages faced with peculiar problems faced by Muslims who were stuck in Makkah. Many spouses did not convert and migrate. Wars were fought between Muslims and non-Muslims merely on account of faith resulting in the winning side taking possession of men and material found on the battlefield. Those conditions do not prevail now. Gradually Islamic state

fragmented into many states fighting each other for land and not for faith rendering concept of *Dar-ul Islam* and *Dar-ul Harb* meaningless. Therefore, concerned *Shar'iah* laws should be thoroughly re-examined and revised to conform to the present political situation. Unprecedented movement of population was seen with the onset of colonial rule. Many Muslims have settled in non-Muslim countries all over the world. They are living there as citizens or immigrants enjoying civil rights and freedom to practice their faith. Most of them are also enjoying fairly good standard of living. As residents of those countries, they have to follow the law of the land, which they are doing. Such countries may be called *Dar-al Aman* (non-Muslim lands where Muslims can live in peace and security with religious freedom). In such countries, Muslims have to exercise self-control and avoid indulging in acts that are forbidden in Islam but permitted under law of the land. This implies that every Muslim should have a good knowledge of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, which is not possible without proper integration of Qur'anic and secular education.

The status of Muslim women is another area of concern. They form 50% of the population yet have no say in the affairs of the family or the state. This was not the case during the period of the Prophet. They were treated with equity, honour and dignity. Women, like men, can acquire high levels of academic and technological qualifications and earn as much as men. Notwithstanding man's responsibility, they also contribute towards household expenses for better standard of living for

family. At present, *Shar'iah* laws are so interpreted that Muslim women find themselves under undue stress. Pre-Islamic tribal customs still prevail in many ways. Many Muslim countries, claiming to rule by Qur'an and *Sunnah* still deny voting rights to women. They are not allowed even to drive in some countries. It must be borne in mind that Islam does not forbid women from acquiring knowledge and taking up respectable jobs, or acting as entrepreneurs and actively participate in trade and commerce. It may be recalled that Syeda Khadijah, the first wife of the Prophet, used to manage her business personally. However, the tribal mindset, reinforced by skewed interpretation of certain verses of the Qur'an and *Ahadith* exhorting women to obey their husbands, ignoring many verses and *Ahadith* in favour of women, has gradually taken roots even in the minds of educated class. This deplorable attitude towards women is playing havoc in the Muslim families and, in many cases, driving women to rebellious ways.

Similarly, rules for *Nikah* (marriage) and *Talaaq* (divorce) ought to be clearly codified. The ceremony of *Nikah* on telephone/internet should be banned by an act of legislation and only that system of *Talaaq* should be treated as religiously and legally valid which is prescribed in the Qur'an i.e. *Talaaq Ahsan* (to be pronounced once at time leaving the doors of reconciliation open). Moreover, if the woman finds that her relationship with her husband has become incompatible she should be granted full right to seek divorce (*Khula'*) from her husband without depending upon the discretion of husband. Under the

existing system men have the over-riding right to divorce their wives at will which is unjust and totally against the spirit of Islam. There are references the Traditions that the Prophet agreed to *Khula'* when a woman insisted that she just could not live with her husband. He also conceded the right of a girl to refuse to marry a man proposed by her parents on valid grounds. In other words, parents do not have the right to fix the marriages of their adult daughters without their consent. Presently *Shar'iah* laws regarding marriage and divorce are heavily weighted in favour of men, which is grossly unfair. Under the guardianship rule, a father in Jeddah is presently preventing his 35-year-old daughter from marrying by rejecting all her marriage proposals. This needs to be rectified because it is against the spirit of Islam. Women should be given the right to marry a respectable man (Muslim) of their choice.

The plight of the widows is even worse. The restrictions placed on the widows during the period of her *Iddat*, after the death of her husband, sound unreasonable. She is not allowed to work and in some cases, even to stir out of the house. They are literally imprisoned or kept under house arrest. According to the Qur'an, *Iddat* is prescribed as a waiting period for a woman to check if she was pregnant or not. (Chapter 2 - Al-Baqarah; Verse 234) After this period, if she is not pregnant she can remarry. Thus, the period of *Iddat* is a period of restriction on remarriage. In the Indian sub-continent, widowed woman is literally imprisoned within the four walls of their houses. Under these circumstances, how can she feed her

children and meet their educational expenses if she is the only breadwinner after the death of her husband? The restrictive rules on women immediately after the death of her husband need to be thoroughly reviewed. However, it should be understood that nobody is challenging the period of *Iddat*, which is ordained in the Qur'an with a specific objective. Much is talked about the Islamic system of economic support to the divorced and widowed women. However, in practical terms these women are left to fend themselves. A perusal of Saudi newspaper Arab News will reveal the prevailing situation in the most important Islamic state said to be ruled strictly by Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

In view of this, it time to re-examine the *Shar'iah* laws framed more than one thousand years ago by the four *Imams* - *Imam* Abu Hanifa, *Imam* Shafa'ee, *Imam* Ahmed bin Hanbal, *Imam* Malik that is followed by the Sunni Muslims who form the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the world. The sacredness attached to them is uncalled for and unjustified.

Economics is the other important area where the exercise of *Ijtihad* has to be used objectively. Scholars of *Shar'ia* who framed the laws had no notion of the modern system currency, banking and international trade that emerged in 18<sup>th</sup> century and has become the standard practice all over the world. Muslims are struggling to evolve a parallel system with some cosmetic changes to address the concerns of the conservative lobby. The banking services and requirements of investments for setting up large industries and enterprises have become so

vast and complex that the old simplistic rules do not suffice. Even while being part of the existing system, Muslims can avoid those practices that are not in consonance of the spirit of Islamic principles. Blind opposition to everything that has not originated in Muslim era or lands is not a rational approach. Interestingly, even the most conservative Muslims have not hesitation in benefitting from many facilities invented and introduced by industrialized nations.

Another area that needs to be addressed urgently is the excessive exploitation by technologically advanced countries such as USA, United Kingdom, France, Germany etc., of the resources of the developing countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia etc. These developing countries continue to remain poor partly because of the corruption in their own countries and partly because they do not get the right price for their valuable products. Further, the developed countries who exploit the resources of the developing countries refuse to invest in their socio-economic development under the Millennium development programme. This has led to an excessive inequality in the distribution of wealth between the developed and the developing countries. Barring a few exceptions, Muslim countries are politically, socially and economically amongst the most backward countries in the world. Most of these countries are ruled either by dictators or by monarchs who are interested in concentrating political power and wealth in their own hands rather than transferring power to democratically elected governments. Consequently, there is acute deficit

of democracy and there is no freedom of speech. The ruling authorities in all these countries, whether dictators or monarchs, have exclusive control and concentration of the wealth of their country. They along with their coterie of political and military leaders, with whom they share power and wealth, are more interested in accumulating wealth and filling their coffers than in investing in educational, social and economic development for the benefit of their people. Official religious authorities routinely brand any voice of dissent as rebellious and hence *haram* under *Shar'iah*. Even in a democracy like Pakistan, the real power is in the hands of feudal lords who control the army and the bureaucracy. Above all, even most of the members of Parliament belong to the feudal aristocracy. Some of the feudal lords in Pakistan do not allow educational institutions to be established in their fiefdom because they fear losing the cheap labour force with the advancement of education.

On account of acute differences in income between the rich and poor and with hardly any investment in socio-economic development, the unemployment problem has magnified particularly because fifty percent of the population is within the working age group of 20 and 55. The youth in the working age groups are restless. They are clamouring for jobs and the jobs are just not there. The people are thus rising in revolt of late, which has caused the fall of governments in Tunisia and Egypt. Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian dictator, had deeply entrenched himself in office yet he was forced to quit by dissatisfied youth who demand more say in the functioning of their

government. If the Arab governments want to avert the catastrophe they must immediately correct their course by introducing political and economic reforms. They should transfer power to the people and end the monopoly of the rich over the wealth of the nation. It must be equitably distributed. The poor have as much claim over the resources of the nation as the rich. Economic reforms leading to equitable distribution of income must be speedily introduced.

One of the pillars of Islam is the system of *Zakaat*. *Salaat* and *Zakaat* have been mentioned together as the two most important pillars of Islam. Anyone who showed slightest disinclination was considered outside the fold of Islam. It is a well-known fact that many tribes and individuals refused to pay *Zakaat* after the passing away of the Prophet. But his companions had no doubt about the mandate of *Zakaat* that the first *Khalifah* of Islam, Abu Bakr, declared *Jihad* to recover it even against the advice of some of his colleagues. Unfortunately, with the fall of Abbasid *Khilafat* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the system of central control of *Zakaat* fell apart, even as the congregational *Salaat* survived. Surprisingly, neither the government authorities nor the Islamic scholars have made any effort to revive it. Ironically, the best tool of eradication of poverty gifted to the Muslims remains used with hunger, disease and illiteracy rampant in Muslims. It is estimated that Muslims still pay billions of dollars' worth of *Zakaat* year after year. It is simply cornered by Islamic scholars to fund and run their *madrasas* or the jihadist activities. All efforts to use this huge charity for eradication of the

ailments of the community by establishing institutions of excellence to impart knowledge in modern subjects for the benefit of economically backward Muslims are nullified by the self-serving *fatwas* of these scholars. Even the amounts collected by sale of thousands of skins of animals sacrificed annually at the time of Hajj are taboo for modern education. This is un-acceptable any longer. With integration of religious of secular education, there should be no objection from any quarter for use of these funds to help poor and illiterate, which is possible only with good education.

In order to speed up economic reforms, re-examine the Muslim views on economic policies of the socialist and former communist countries such as the Soviet Union is urgently called for. We rejected them outright without analyzing the pros and cons of their economic policies because they were initiated by an atheistic government. This was blatantly wrong. Although the *Helpful-Foul* covenant, (a league formed in Mecca that took an oath to intervene for those who were subjected to oppression and injustice in any deal. The Prophet was its youngest member.) was initiated by the polytheists, the Prophet participated in it enthusiastically because it was essentially a sound policy to protect the weak and the meek against the oppression of the strong and mighty. It is, therefore, appropriate that the monopoly of the rich ruling elite over the wealth of the nation and their exploitation of the poor who constitute an overwhelming majority ought to be terminated because it is contrary to the principles of Islam. The resources of the country

belong to its people and all should benefit equally. The adoption of the communist economic policy, which recommends nationalization of basic economic resources and the state's control over their production so that the benefit to the people is maximized, is a sound idea. In order to implement such a policy, political control must be transferred to the people through a democratic process in the true spirit of Islamic system of *Shore*. Hence, political reforms are equally important for introducing radical economic reforms. This is an appropriate area for the application of *Ijtihad*. It needs to be rigorously applied in order to spread the economic benefits to the maximum number of people and protect them from the exploitation of the rich and the powerful.

Political reform is another area, which calls for *Ijtihad* in the Islamic world. Presently political power is concentrated in the hands of the privileged few who prevent the economic benefits to reach the people. In order to maximize the benefits of economic reforms democracy must be introduced in all those Muslim countries, which are currently ruled, by monarchs, dictators and military Junta. Political power must be transferred to the people to ensure the effectiveness of economic reform. This will be possible only if democratic governments elected by the people replace the present dictatorial and monarchical regimes. Dictatorship should be abolished and monarchs should function as constitutional heads. Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia are good examples where democratically elected governments

have been able to implement socio-economic reforms which have benefited the maximum number of people.

Finally, the Islamic realm, which is a land of darkness in the field of knowledge with extremely low percentage of educated population, should be transformed into a strong knowledge based society. Barring a few exceptions there is no tradition of research in sciences and social sciences particularly in the Arab countries. The Muslim societies in the Islamic realm cannot apply the process of *Ijtihad*, and pursue and implement effectively the benefits of political and economic reforms without advanced level of knowledge.

*Ijtihad* is a process, as pointed out earlier, to maintain the progressive character of Islam. In the words of Matador Khan, it is used as an instrument "to articulate a more compassionate, more modern and perhaps even a more liberal understanding" of Islam. He further adds that "the challenge for Muslims today is to latch on to the currents of democracy, modernity and globalization without losing the connection to divine revelation and traditional culture. This cannot be accomplished without an adequate knowledge of both the modern sciences and social sciences and of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. (Matador Khan: Two Theories of *Ijtihad* - Internet).

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