

FACING CHALLENGES OF A POST MODERN SOCIETY

Since Islam is firmly rooted in the Divine revelation, the glorious Quran, the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ and the consequences of the venerable ancestors (Salaf-Saliheen) it can withstand any intellectual and philosophical challenge.

Early in the second and third century it was able to successfully face the challenge of Greek philosophy. ﷻ (Allah) has taken it upon Himself to preserve the message of Islam - "We have indeed revealed the message and We shall protect it."

The question we must now ask is what strategies need to be adopted for successful adaptation in the West?

ﷻ has always blessed Muslims by giving them spiritual leaders who have given them guidance and direction. These auliya Allah (friends of ﷻ) have tackled the problems and challenges faced by the Ummah. Amongst the last centuries reformers who have given clear guidelines to people on facing the challenges of the West were people like Jamal Uddin Afghani, Maulana Ahmed Raza (died 1921), Professor Syed Ali Ashraf and Pir Mohammed Karam Shah (died 1998).

Amongst the contemporary thinkers and reformers we have Syed Hussein Nasr, Naqib Ul Atlas, Tariq Ramadan, Abdul Hakim Murad, M.A.K Cheema, Sufi Abdul Qadir Al Murabit, Br Yusuf Islam, Professor Khurshid Ahmed, Professor Akbar Ahmed etc.

These people have made serious attempts to guide the Ummah and have proposed practical steps. The five point plan discussed below is my understanding of the thoughts of these people. I have had personal contact with most of them and the others. I have read their works. Amongst them are traditional Alims and Sufis as well as sociologists, philosopher and educationalists. Each one focusing on his own field. I have distilled their thoughts in the following five point plan. These are really strategies which the Muslims have already adopted to varying degrees of success and intensity.

1. Coming to terms with a pluralist society. The contemporary western society is characterised by heterogeneity in its structure, thought and beliefs, it is a truly multi-cultural, multi-faith and a melting pot of all sorts of weird and wonderful philosophies. Muslims need to fully engage in a dialogue with this host society, through understanding it as well as challenging its premise's. At the same time the Muslim community needs to understand itself too, for it no longer is a monolithic and homogenous community. There is an urgent need for intra-community dialogue between various factions and groups of Muslims. This exchange of views will lead to a stronger Muslim community. The formation of several Umbrella organisations like the Union of Muslim Organisation are steps towards this end.
2. Being organised and establishing institutions. There are many thousands of sincere and hardworking individuals throughout the West who are working day and night for the deen of ﷻ. However their individual works are not bearing the fruits that one would like, why? My humble opinion is that it is due to lack of organisation. When two or three people work as a team then it is not simply an arithmetic addition but a synergistic effect, in other words the work of three individuals working as a team maybe equivalent to five or six people or even more. There are thousands of Muslim organisations which need to be better managed.
3. Participating in the life of wider society and becoming real citizens. This is vitally important if we are not to become marginalised and exchanged. What this means is accepting the burden of being responsible citizens, caring for the whole community Muslim and non-Muslim.
4. Re-establishing the traditional Islamic Educational system: A succinct definition of education is "being done to." When children are being educated something is being done to them. What is that something? The western education system is brilliant in producing technocrats and imparting technical skills, however it is poorly equipped to nurture basic human characteristics of compassion, generosity, love and seeking truth. Yet for a Muslim it is the latter that is very important. Due to this impoverished western curriculum Muslims must establish their own educational system which takes a holistic approach to child development. This Islamic educational system can take different forms, the full time Muslim school is the ideal way but this will not be possible everywhere, another means would be evening Quranic classes and weekend tutorial classes.
5. Strengthening the family unit. The family unit is fast crumbling due to the pressures of a permissive and consumer based society. Sexual perversion coupled with skewed feminism is fast eroding traditional family values. Muslim families are also feeling the shock waves but on the whole the second and third generations of Muslims in the West wish to maintain the family unit. Muslims will have to work very hard to preserve the family unit. But this is the most sure way of survival in the West.