

# **A New Paradigm for the Educational Advancement of Muslims**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Currently Muslims around the world are, in general, and in comparison to other, communities, nations and civilizations, lagging behind in education, economic prosperity and political development. As a community, Muslims are feared as a violent group, which disturbs the world peace. The primary cause of the backward state of Muslims is their deficiencies in advanced education. In the present Dissertation, the causes of the success of Muslims to create a Golden Age in the classic period (9-13 BCE) and then their degeneration are investigated. The legacy left by Muslims during and after the period of 900-1300 BCE made a huge impact on the European Renaissance which led to the scientific and industrial revolutions and eventually the contemporary modernization. Attempts have been made in the last two hundred years to revive Muslim civilization by Muslims thinkers/reformers/revolutionaries like Abduh, Afghani, Iqbal, Syed Ahmed, Shariathi and Khomeini. However, Muslim civilization is battered to such an extent by their political and religious leaders, dogmas and ritualism, and the Western colonialism, imperialism and totalitarianism for more than 500 years that if they start a fast paced reformation, it is anticipated that they would take several centuries to regain their lost glory. The current crisis of Muslim civilization is, in view of the present researcher, to a large extent due to the lack of education, corrupt and incompetent leaders, misguided ideologies such as nationalism and racism, and global dispersal of Muslims which prevents unity among them. This dissertation investigates and suggests a model based upon critical rationalism to advance the educational standards of Muslims from the root level in small communities in their adopted Western countries, where Muslims are more privileged and have greater opportunities than their native countries. The same model can then be swelled and projected in Muslim world, globally.

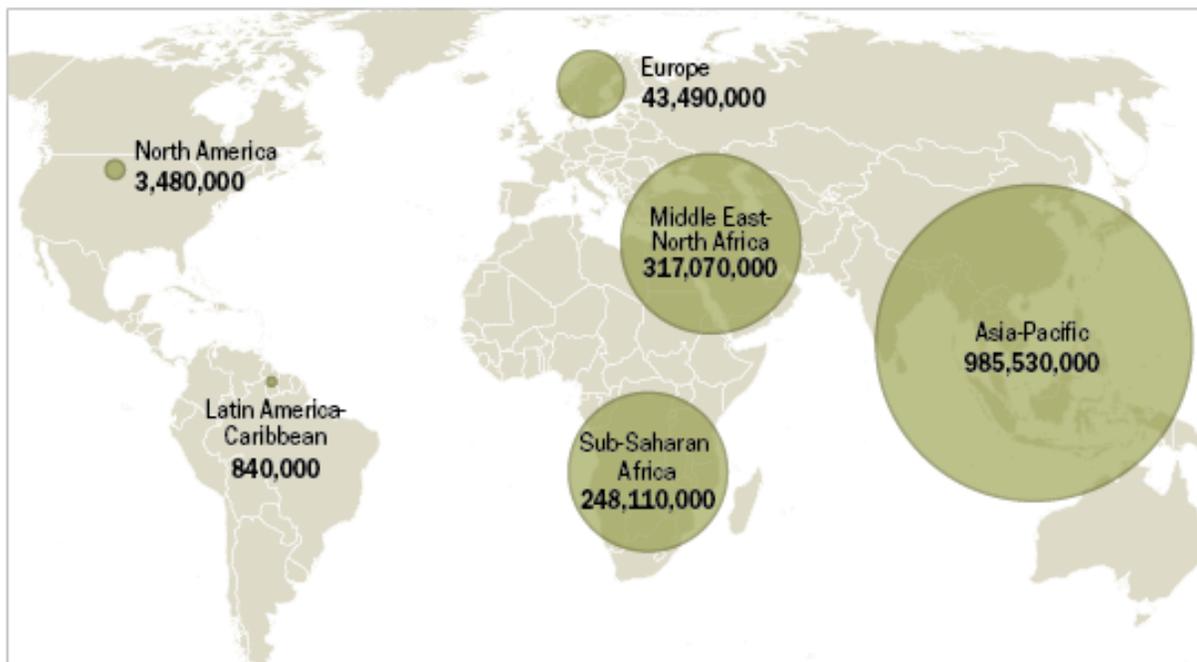
# CHAPTER (1): INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 MUSLIMS IN THE WORLD

In the most general terms, Muslim World (*Ummah*) means the collection of people who adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (S) as a group. Currently Muslim population has exceeded 1.6 billion and Muslims constitute approximately 23 percent of the world population. Muslims are the most widely spread religious group in the world [1].

### Regional Distribution of Muslims

*Population by region as of 2010*



*Percentage of world Muslim population in each region as of 2010*



Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

## 1.2 THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM

The Islamic Golden Age was a major part of the medieval period between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The medieval age is the era between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. “While in the East, al-Rashid and al-Mamun were delving into Greek and Persian philosophy, their contemporaries in

the West, Charlemagne and his lords were reportedly dabbling in the art of writing their names [2]. " Islamic faith encompassed both religious and social aspect of life. Prophet Muhammad (S) brought a revolution with his meagre means which changed the course of the world. Muslim empire evolved under the *Ummayad* and the *Rashidun* and grew rapidly. Starting from the school of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq to the *Bait al Hikmah* (House of Wisdom), Muslims made advances in philosophy, science and math by leaps and bounds. The Imam had his own school of medicine, was a founder of gnostic; saved Islam from impoverishment; started a movement of renaissance in Muslim world; stated that the earth rotates around its own axis; defined the composition of human body; mentioned about life in other worlds, discovered hydrogen and declared that diseases are transferred by rays. He formulated several theories for issues like origin of universe, opacity and transparency of materials, light, matter and anti-matter, perpetual motion and germs. He disproved Aristotle's theory of four elements [3].

### **1.3 DEGENERATION OF MUSLIMS**

After the 13<sup>th</sup> century, even though Muslims ruled in Ottoman, Arabia, Persia and India, Muslim civilization reached a stagnation after the "Mongolian Sack of Baghdad". The educational level of Muslims deteriorated. Scientific inventions and discoveries were rare, which weakened the economical and artillery system. Muslims got entangled in illogical beliefs and regressing thoughts and forgot their own scientific ways of thinking and became slaves of the technologically advanced West. There were few exceptions like Shams al-Din bin Ahmed al-Khafri al-Kashi, who was a religious scholar and astronomer at the beginning of the Safavid dynasty. He made huge advances in astronomy which later influenced Copernicus [4]. Philosophy also reemerged during the Safavid period in the 17<sup>th</sup> century which formed the Persian cultural renaissance but did not impact science. It was a great intellectual period of transcendent theosophy of Mulla Sadra which later influenced the contemporary scholars like Ayatollah TabaTaba'i, Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Murtaza Motahhari, Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr, Dr. Ali Shariati and Dr. Sayyed Hossein Nasr.

Paul Monroe, a professor of Columbia University was a member of Paris Peace Conference in 1919 after First World War. He learnt from losses Turkey suffered due to lack of education. He stressed upon the importance of education in a nation building and socio-economic development and recommended progressive curriculum – with training for adults and teachers at the root level to the American government [5]. According to historian Donald Quataert, general Muslim literacy rates were only 2 to 3 percent in the early nineteenth century, and perhaps 15 percent at its end.

The vast majority of Muslim women remained illiterate well into the twentieth century. Prior to 1840, an average of only eleven books a year were published in the imperial capital of Istanbul [6]. Muslims are not in the race of advancement and progress. Dynamic Islam has been brought to stagnation because of the dogmatic mindset of the *Ulema* [7]. Among Shi'as, orthodox ritualism also plays an important role. In general after the fall of the Abbasids in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslim consolidation was disintegrated.

Between 1901 and 2013, the Nobel Prize has been awarded 561 times to 876 people and only 10 Muslims have been able to achieve the distinction. In spite Muslim population being 23 percent of the world population, Muslims won only 1.14 percent of the Noble Prizes [8]. Only two Muslims have been able to win a Nobel Prize in sciences. Even though Jews comprise of less 0.2 percent of the world population, they have won more than 20 percent of the Nobel Prizes.

#### **1.4 PRIMARY CAUSES OF MUSLIM DENEGENERATION**

Several reasons are attributed to the degeneration of the Islamic civilizations but the forensics performed to evaluate the causes of this decay lead to three primary sources: drift of Muslims from the Islamic principles; the rise of the West and sectarianism [9]. The West gets blamed for its hegemony, colonization, totalitarianism and imperialism. Muslims yield to this concept. In fact the actual cause is the surrender of Muslims to the Western hegemony rather than the dominance of the West. Muslims even stopped thinking critically about the various concepts and rituals of Islam and the benefits derived from them. Islam is made into a cult rather than a universal system of guidance to conduct life in this world for those who are pious; those who establish their prayers and those who give charity [10]. It is not a private religion but a universal system of truth.

#### **1.5 ISSUES OF THE CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM WORLD**

The twentieth century has seen the concept of “one-world” called “Globalization”. There is a tremendous rise in the modern communication technologies and the information technologies with participation from all countries of the world. Communism was the biggest failure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The latest global events are creating a diaspora of transnational religious communities. The main issue faced by the religious leaders is how to live among social diversity without compromising traditional believes and practices. The man-created rituals can be transformed but the traditional source of Islam – Quran and the *Hadith* cannot be ignored. The *Ulema* have got so entangled in the rituals that they do not understand that the Quran requires its hermeneutics

according to the contemporary times because Quran is a book of guidance for all generations after its revelation.

Muslims are accused of anti-modernization and globalization (which is treated synonymous with Westernization). The general social practice in secular countries is that religion has become a private way of performing rituals rather than a way of life. It has become subordinate to politics and it is removed from the public sphere. This approach has not only become a concern for Islam but also other religions like Hinduism and Judaism, over issues such as schooling, law, the status of women, and dress codes.

Democracy also became a major crises faced by Islam because of Muslims' inability or reluctance with regard to using the technology of democracy and has caused problems for Muslim societies. In Muslim countries, either it is authoritarian form of government working with modernization or an Islamist form of government with very little scope of modernization. Both cases are harmful for Muslims because of lack of balance between too much of Western type modernization and radical Islam. True form of democracy which includes secularism and modernization is incompatible with Islamic form of government. Both Muslim dictators and Islamic radicals do not allow free thinking of Muslim minds. The chaotic political situation of the Islamic countries hinder in the growth of Muslims. Even though transnationalism exists among Muslims, as was seen in the Salman Rushdie and the Danish caricatures cases, there is no consolidation among the *Ummah*.

Hence, the major contemporary issues in the Islamic world are: scattered *Ummah* around the world with no consolidation in spite of transnational connections, intellectually weak class of *Ulemas* who do not have the capacity of deriving the hermeneutics of the Islamic sources according to the present day conditions, radical Islamists or authoritarian rulers not allowing free thinking among Muslims and the negative influence of the Western modernization. All these issues are driven by the fact that Muslims do not have high educational standards, which helps to shape a society.

## **1.6 DISSERTATION METHODOLOGY**

The research has been conducted within the general epistemological perspective of Critical Rationalism. It also used the method of Situational Analysis as a general intellectual framework for exploring what can be termed as 'human condition' in the context of Muslim communities. Within this framework historical data analysis of Muslims at large and the South Florida based

Shi'a Muslim community in specific and library research are used to collect the required data and information for the working model developed for promoting the main aspects of the new paradigm in secular and Islamic education among the members of the South Florida based Shi'a Muslim community called Islamic Jafferia Association (IJA).

The causes of the rise and fall of Muslim civilization and the contemporary issues among Muslims were researched and outlined in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation. After a town hall meeting (discussed in Chapter 4) at the IJA premises to discuss the educational issues of the community, a model was developed to enhance the educational standards of Muslims. The model is based upon bottom up principle wherein the overall development of Muslim world is suggested to be based upon the enhancement of the small communities in the Western countries and then scaled up to the entire Muslim world. In the Western countries Muslims have substantial freedom and academic opportunities to foster the spirit and the skills to enhance their potential and hence are at an advantage than Muslims living in the East, wherein the opportunities are less and many of the major Muslim countries like Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Bahrain, Libya and Egypt are in political and sectarian turmoil.

## **CHAPTER (2): HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 INCEPTION OF ISLAM**

The Prophet Muhammad (S) brought an unparalleled revolution which encompassed religion, politics, economy, moral, culture, social justice, peace, human rights, equality, fraternity and liberty and gave humanity, guidance for a complete system of life. He instilled great enthusiasm among his followers which eventually led to the “Golden Age of Islam”, which was the period between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century when Muslims made advancement in philosophy and science. The Islamic system introduced by Prophet Muhammad (S) revolutionized Muslims into a well-founded *Ummah* which saw enormous success in politics, military, philosophy, science and education. As a religious tradition encompassing several aspects of human life (inclusive of science, sociology, philosophy, politics), Islam deals not just with the *Shariah* (laws) and *Akhlaaq* (Ethics) but also with what humans should do, that is to gain knowledge.

### **2.2 IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM**

Knowledge is very important in Islam because it is the main source for salvation. Muslims ruled the world from China to Spain. Several physical sciences were developed by Muslims for better understanding of the Islamic sources – Quran and *Hadith*. A sense of wonder and an urge for exploiting reality and understanding it is the main motive of all genuine knowledge claims and on that pattern, the main source of scientific spirit among Muslims was to understand reality. Muslim scientists maintained that the whole of reality with all its fascinating aspects are created by God who is the Lord/Master of the realm of being. Muslims inherited the attitude in science during their quest for religious science. Most Muslim theologians and philosophers merged logic and reason with revelation in order to understand the revelation. The Quran continuously urges the reader to ponder over God’s creations. Muslim scholars were inundated with strong awareness of the Divine existence. Muslims took the injunctions of the Quran and the Prophet (S) about science seriously. The Prophet (S) gave the highest importance to knowledge and had mentioned that a Muslim should even travel to China to gain knowledge. Since Islamic knowledge was abundantly prevalent in Medina and other Arabian places, the Prophet (S) emphasized Muslims to gain knowledge about science [1].

### 2.3 ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

*Ilm e Kalam* (Islamic Theology) is deeply rooted in the Quran and *Hadith*. Theological scholastic debate started when *Ulema* had to provide responses to complex religious, moral and political questions beginning during the rule of the Ummayad (661-750 AD). Hence, *Kalam* was a discourse to provide rational justifications for doctrines of Islamic belief, both to settle disputes among Muslims and also to defend Islam against those who challenged it from outside. The early schools of *Kalaam* were the *Kharijites*, *Murji'ites*, *Qadarites*, *Jabarites*, *Muta'ziites*, *Ash'arites*, *Maturdites* and the *Shi'ites*. The first question raised by Muslim theologians was regarding free-will and pre-destination, which had a political and military dimension in that as Muslim army was making advances, there were collateral damages and innocent people inevitably died as the result. The *Ummayads* used the Quranic verse "Not a leaf falls from a tree unless God wills it" to justify their deeds. The discussion concerning free will and determinism inevitably led to the role of reason in settling disputes with eschatological consequences. Such a discourse provoked a closer study of the Quranic verses concerning God's mercy and His promise of punishment for wrongdoing [2]. Other issues like Createdness and Uncreatedness of Quran, attributes and essence of God, time and space and anthropomorphism cropped up [2].

Theological questions led to the need of philosophy. The Arab world was more focused on poetry and literature and did not have philosophy, which was imported from Syria and Alexandria. Hence the works of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates and their ilks were translated into Arabic. There is a disagreement about the role of Greek philosophy in the development of Islamic philosophy. Some believe that philosophy in Muslim world stemmed from the Quranic *Hikma* with a refinement touch of the Greek philosophy while others believe that Islamic philosophy is actually the Greek philosophy in the Islamic attire. All Islamic philosophers from al-Kindi to Sayyid Tabatabai have lived and breathed in a universe dominated by the reality of the Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam [3].

### 2.4 ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

The First Muslim philosopher, Al-Kindi introduced the Greco-Hellenistic scientific and philosophical works to the Arab world through the translations from the Syriac language by the Syrian Christians. He was followed by Farabi, rethinking Greek philosophy in Islamic doctrine. Muslim world opened their doors to the peripatetic philosophy through Ibn Sina, who combined the philosophy of Aristotle with Neoplatonism. Later in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Suhrawardi founded his

school of illumination (*Ishraqi*) mostly in contrast with the peripatetic thoughts of Ibn Sina (*Mashshai*) [4].

Knowledge was encouraged by the Abbasid who established *Bait ul Hikmah* (House of Wisdom). Many inventions and discoveries were made in the Islamic world till the 12<sup>th</sup> century [5]. Islamic civilization can be considered as the first society which promoted humanism, which is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings. It prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism and empiricism) over established faith and doctrine.

The works in the physical sciences by Aristotle, Archimedes, Galen, Ptolemy, Euclid and other Greek scientists were translated into Arabic. Using these bases, Muslims developed optics, magnetism, statics, dynamics, kinematics, theory of motion and astronomy. A list of Muslim scientists is provided in Table (1). As recently as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tipu Sultan had a rocket technology with a range of 1.5 km and was able to resist the British colonization in India for several years.

The University of Al Karaouine granted the first formal degree in education [7]. Ibn Al-Haytham is considered as the world's first true scientist because of his systematic scientific approach in experimentation. He introduced trigonometry, made advances in optics and generalized integration formulae [8]. Al-Jahiz discovered sciences of education [9]. Ibn Sina's "*The Canon of Medicine*" advanced the medical sciences and he is considered as the "*Father of Medicine*". Under the Islamic rule, diploma and licenses were given to the doctors for the first time and hospitals were organized and staffed with doctors, nurses and pharmacists. A 24-hours hospital service was introduced. It was illegal to turn down patients if they could not afford the hospital expenses. Art and architecture flourished in Muslim world as is seen from the Great Mosque of Kairouan, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque and more recently the *Taj Mahal*.

Empirical studies of nature through observation and experimentation were extensively deployed in Muslim world. From 750 to 1100 A.D. there was an unbroken succession of Muslim scientists like Jabir, Khwarizmi, Razi, Masudi, Abu'l-Wafa, Biruni and Omar Khayyam. In these 350 years, Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Persians—chemists, algebraists, clinicians, geographers, mathematicians, physicists and astronomers of the commonwealth of Islam—held the world stage of sciences. For the next 250 years, Ibn Rushd, Nasir al-Din Tusi and Ibn Nafis shared the honors for scientific developments with their European counterparts. An important reason for the success of the scientific enterprise in Islam was its international character.

Muslims were pioneers in historical sciences too. Quran continuously refers to the past for the readers to learn lessons. It helped Muslims to develop the sense of history. Abu Rayhan Biruni, Al-Masudi, Ibn Hayyan and Ibn Masud introduced criticism of history.

Muslim Scientist	Expertise
Jabir Ibn Haiyan (Geber)	Chemistry (Father of Chemistry)
Al-Asmai	Zoology, Botany, Animal Husbandry.
Al-Khwarizmi (Algorizm)	Mathematics, Astronomy, Geography. (Algorithm, Algebra, calculus)
'Amr ibn Bahr Al-Jahiz	Zoology, Arabic Grammar, Rhetoric, Lexicography
Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (Alkindus)	Philosophy, Physics, Optics, Medicine, Mathematics, Metallurgy.
Thabit Ibn Qurrah (Thebit)	Astronomy, Mechanics, Geometry, Anatomy.
'Abbas Ibn Firnas	Mechanics of Flight, Planetarium, Artificial Crystals.
Ali Ibn Rabban Al-Tabari	Medicine, Mathematics, Calligraphy, Literature.
Al-Battani (Albategnius)	Astronomy, mathematics, Trigonometry.
Al-Farghani (Al-Fraganus)	Astronomy, Civil Engineering.
Al-Razi (Rhazes)	Medicine, Ophthalmology, Smallpox, Chemistry, Astronomy.
Al-Farabi (Al-Pharabius)	Sociology, Logic, Philosophy, Political Science, Music.
Abul Hasan Ali Al-Masu'di	Geography, History.
Al-Sufi (Azophi)	Astronomy
Abu Al-Qasim Al-Zahravi (Albucasis)	Surgery, Medicine. (Father of Modern Surgery)
Muhammad Al-Buzjani	Mathematics, Astronomy, Geometry, Trigonometry.
Ibn Al-Haitham (Alhazen)	Physics, Optics, Mathematics.
Al-Mawardi (Alboacen)	Political Science, Sociology, Jurisprudence, Ethics.
Abu Raihan Al-Biruni	Astronomy, Mathematics. (Determined Earth's Circumference)
Ibn Sina (Avicenna)	Medicine, Philosophy, Mathematics, Astronomy.
Al-Zarqali (Arzachel)	Astronomy (Invented Astrolabe).
Omar Al-Khayyam	Mathematics, Poetry.
Al-Ghazali (Algazel)	Sociology, Theology, Philosophy.
Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Yahya (Ibn Bajjah)	Philosophy, Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy, Poetry, Music.
Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar)	Surgery, Medicine.
Al-Idrisi (Dreses)	Geography (World Map, First Globe).
Ibn Tufayl, Abdubacer	Philosophy, Medicine, Poetry.
Ibn Rushd (Averroes)	Philosophy, Law, Medicine, Astronomy, Theology.
Al-Bitruji (Alpetragius)	Astronomy
Ibn Al-Baitar	Pharmacy, Botany
Nasir Al-Din Al-Tusi	Astronomy, Non-Euclidean Geometry.
Jalal Al-Din Rumi	Sociology
Ibn Al-Nafis Damishqui	Anatomy
Al-Fida (Abdulfeida)	Astronomy, Geography, History.
Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (Ibn Battuta)	World Traveler. 75,000 mile voyage from Morocco to China and back.
Ibn Khaldun	Sociology, Philosophy of History, Political Science.
Ulugh Beg	Astronomy

TABLE (1): LIST OF PROMINENT MUSLIM SCIENTISTS (<http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic>) (Accessed June 8, 2014)

## 2.5 DECLINES OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazzali was punitive on the philosophers. In his *Tahafut al-Falsafah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) he brought forth 20 points against Muslim philosophers especially Ibn Sina and Farabi to prove them wrong. However based upon three of his doctrinal issues, Ghazali declared them as infidels – eternity of the world, denial of God's knowledge of the particulars and denial of bodily resurrection. Ghazzali challenged the philosophers that they could not provide rational proofs for metaphysical arguments. Due to his

stature in Muslim world, his *fatwa* is considered as one of the contributory causes of the decline in philosophy in the Islamic civilization. However, the root cause of the decline of philosophy in Sunni world was the *Asharite* way of thinking from the second half of Mamun's reign (813-833 AD) onwards. At another level, the resurgence of traditionalism under Ahmad ibn Hanbal and subsequent revivals under Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples, who were anti-*kalam*, rejecting not only its theses but its methods as anathema [10].

In the modern times, George Saliba has provided evidences of the relationships between the astronomical research performed by Ibn Shatir, Shams al-Din Khafri and Copernicus. Ibn Shatir lived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, more than two hundred and fifty years after Al-Ghazzali. Khafri in the sixteenth century developed science of astronomy unheard before. Copernicus has directly used his views in his book, *De Revolutionibus*. George Saliba argues that if philosophy and science were destroyed by Ghazzali in the Islamic civilization then how it produced a genius like Ibn Shatir and Khafri [11]. The European paradigm of conflict between religion and science does not apply to the Islamic world. The religion of Islam encourages rational and scientific inquiry. Muslims did not see insurmountable contradictions between their faith and natural laws. Studying religion and studying natural sciences does not create a conflict for Muslims. Many of the scientists in the Islamic world were also religious authorities at the same time. Ibn al-Nafis, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi and Ibn al-Shatir who lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, made important contributions to such diverse scientific disciplines as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, physics and philosophy.

The collapse of the Abbasid Caliphs resulted in small kingdoms which were not only at war with each other but also had to face invading crusaders, even then philosophy and science flourished in Muslim world till early 14<sup>th</sup> century despite shifting of energy and wealth on this front instead of patronage of scholars. Mongol invaders also destroyed the greatest library of the time at Baghdad that might have become a source of revival of scholarship [12]. However, this is very suspect since the Vizier of Holakou Khan was Khawja Nasir al-Din Tusi, who was one of the greatest Muslim scientists, philosophers and theologians of all times and was very keen in promoting knowledge and expanding libraries and centers of learnings. After the Abbasid, Muslim empire was never consolidated. Three major Muslim powers emerged – the Persians in Iran, the Ottomans in Turkey and the Mughals in India. Philosophy revived again during the Safavid rule in Persia and saw one of the greatest philosophers, Mulla Sadra.

## 2.6 MAKING OF THE EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE

Meanwhile the Europeans were influenced by Muslim civilization in the medieval period. The humanistic movement was initiated in Europe. The Europeans started thinking critically about Islam. John of Damascus called Islam heretical [13]. Byzantine writer Theophanes criticized the Prophet (S) and attacked Islam [14]. French Hilderbert de Lemans stated that Muhammad was a real prophet and produced miracles [15]. French Guillaaume de Tripolis was very hateful and offensive [16]. Italian St. Thomas Aquinas adopted the Islamic philosophy [17].

It was long before Roger Bacon introduced the systematic experimentation methods in Europe, Muslims had invented them and widely used them. Roger Bacon learnt Arabic and translated Muslim scientific works into English at the Oxford University. The study of optics in part five of *Opus Majus* draws heavily on the works of al-Kindi and Ibn al-Haytham [18]. Briffault stated "*It is not an overstatement to say that Science owes its existence to Muslims*" [19]. Till 15<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy and science were considered antagonistic to religion. Teachings of Aristotle and Averroes were banned. Bruno was burnt, Kepler was persecuted and Galileo was forced to retract. Most Muslim philosophers harmonized faith with reason and they made it possible in Muslim world and subsequently in Europe to unhamper the development of religion, philosophy and science together.

Renaissance, which being in Italy was a Cultural Revolution spanning between 14-17<sup>th</sup> century led to innovations in literature and arts and subsequently educational reforms. The major impact of the European renaissance was humanism, scientific revolution, industrial revolution and finally modernization. Based upon the above discussion, one of the major building block of the contemporary modernization is the work of Muslims between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Europe and the most of the Western countries advanced and on the other hand Muslim civilization degenerated.

## 2.7 DOMINO EFFECT OF MUSLIM DEGENERATION

The *Ulema* made Muslims to believe the Quranic verse "*And it was due from Us to aid those who believed*" (30:47) to live their lives while not stressing upon the verse "*Verily, never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves*" (13:11). Even though Muslims ruled in a large part of Europe, Asia, Middle East and North Africa with the Persians, Ottoman and the Mughals being the major Islamic kingdoms, Muslims were never able to cope with the European advancements. Muslim rule was never consolidated. There were constant wars

between the Ottoman and the Persians between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries [20]. *Ijithad* was replaced by *Taqlid* and the religion was completely monopolized by the *Ulema*.

## 2.8 REVIVAL AND REFORMATION ATTEMPTS

After staying in oblivion for more than 5 centuries, when the growth in the Islamic civilization was minimal, traces of revival was observed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Islamic revival movement is marked by greater religious piety and a growing adoption of Islamic culture with a nostalgia of Islam's spirit of compassion, solidarity, fraternity and social justice which led to the Islamic Golden Age. The Islamic revivalists mainly focused on reconstructing, reforming, reviving and synthesizing Islam to cater to the needs of the Western modernization without loss of Islamic traditions.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab attempted to purify Islam by reverting Muslims to the Islamic practiced by the first generation Muslims (*Salaaf*) and rejecting *Bid'ah* (innovations) and *Shirk* (polytheism). He taught that the primary doctrine of Islam was the uniqueness and unity of God (*Tawhid*). The first aspect being belief in God and His Lordship that He alone is the believer's Lord. The second being the oneness of worship to Allah and Allah alone. The third being belief and affirmation of Allah's Names and Attributes. Wahhab belonged to Najd and he never grew up among any elite Islamic scholar nor was he educated at any known Islamic Center. He was opposed by his father, Abd al-Wahhab and his brother Salman ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who even wrote a book (*The Final Word of the Quran, the Hadith and the Sayings of the Scholars concerning school of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab*) refuting his teachings. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was ostracized from Najd and he went to settle in Dariyah [21].

Syed Ahmed Khan had a strong passion for education and while pursuing his education, realized the advantages of Western-style education. Despite being a devout Muslim, Sir Syed criticized the influence of traditional dogma and religious orthodoxy, which had made most Indian Muslims suspicious of British influences. He established the Aligarh Muslim University modelled based on Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Several Muslims from India have benefited from the Aligarh Muslim University for the past 150 years but the organization has not been able to produce a top class scholar [22].

Jamal al Din Asadabadi (aka Afghani) was the forerunner of Islamic revival followed by his student, Muhammad Abduh. Asadabadi rejected both orthodox Islamic traditions with its uncritical defense of inherited Islam on one hand and blind imitation of the West on the other hand, emphasizing the reinterpretation of Islam according to contemporary times [23]. His other goal

was to mobilize Muslims to fight against the Western colonialism and liberate Islamic countries and reform them to stand up against the might of Western countries.

Muhammad Abduh believed that West was not superior to Muslims. The Westerners took the best of Islam and appropriated it to itself for their success and Muslims on the other hand abandoned the true Islam. Abduh stressed upon the realities of human situations rather than abstract Islamic philosophies and theology. He dealt with reform of education among Muslims with emphasis on scientific knowledge. His efforts were focused on infusing the Islamic heritage with modern ideas which led to the importance of reinterpretation of Quran in accordance with the modern times [24].

Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi formed the *Jama'at Islami* (the Islamic party) with his ideological vision. His revivalist position was radical communalism as it articulated only Muslim interest and sought to protect Muslims and sever social and political ties with the non-Muslims. He condemned Muslim members of the Indian National Congress, which was one of the main organizations that was responsible for India's independence from the British. He attempted to alienate Muslims from both capitalism and socialism. India was ruled by the British, which was a capitalist nation and Muslim rulers in India were subdued by them. The socialist of the Hyderabad state had revolted against the Nizam's rule (where Maududi lived for several years), a Muslim government. He emphasized on the mobilization of the Islam, based upon the needs of the political action [25].

Hassan al-Banna believed that Muslims degenerated because of their deviance from pure Islam and should revert back to the Islam practiced by the first generation Muslims, the *Salaf*. He was a proponent of Islamic principles in politics, social and economic issues of Muslim countries. Banna did not attend traditional Islamic schools but was educated in psychology, philosophy, economics, physical education, law and political science, which allowed him modernistic approach in his attempt to revive Islam [26].

Syed Qutb is considered as one of the most notable thinkers and activists of the modern era. Though he supported Gamal Abdel Naser during his struggle against the pro-Western monarchy of Egypt, they fell out because Qutb wanted the Egyptian government to be based upon *Shariah*, while Naser established a secular government. Qutb termed anything un-Islamic as *Jahiliyyah*. His legacy in the modern world is the terrorist Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda [27].

Most of Muslim reformists and revivalists of the last three centuries were focused on the revival of Islam according to the contemporary politics. Very few Muslims like Asadabadi and Sir Syed

gave prime importance to the education of Muslims. The ultimate duty of a Muslim is to serve God, the unknown.

*Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire. (Quran 3:191)*

For the cognizance of God, Quran continuously provides prove of God and commands humanity to think, ponder, reflect and rationalize. God is recognized through this world because humanity does not have the knowledge of the eternal world. Hence, the knowledge of this world in terms of ethics, philosophy, history and physical sciences is very important. Unfortunately, most of Muslim reformists did not pay attention to this aspect of Islam and most of the Islamic religious scholars never mixed science with Islam as was done during the first seven centuries of Islam. This has led to the segregation of the worldly and religious knowledge wherein the religious scholars think that they have the real knowledge and the professionals of the worldly knowledge think their knowledge is only for this world and would be useless for them for the eternal world. This segregation has led to several problems in the contemporary Muslim world, discussed in Chapter (3).

## **CHAPTER (3): CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

### **3.1 ISLAM – RISE AND FALL**

Islam was introduced by the Prophet Mohammad (S) in the barbaric, brutal, ruthless, merciless and cruel nomadic Arab world where women were treated as commodities and infanticide of female was a common practice. The culture of Arabian Peninsula was infested by traditions of revenge, vendetta, retribution, retaliation and reprisal. Arab men were greedy and selfish with desire for wealth, possession and women. They were polytheist and worshiped idols. Islam, introduced by Prophet Mohammad (S) was a revival of the monotheist Abrahamic faith which preached rejection of polytheism, belief in One God, asking forgiveness for sins, offering prayers, promotion of social justice, assisting those in need, rejection of worshipping mammon and enslavement by infatuation with wealth, freeing slaves, prohibiting cheating, and promoting being chaste as a prime responsibility of a follower. The religion grew rapidly both in spiritual and social sense. In the span of two hundred years, Muslims produced a Golden Age of knowledge, science and technology which lasted till the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

However, from the dawn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the degeneration of Muslims began. For the past five hundred years there has been an intellectual stagnation among Muslims barring rare cases.

### **3.2 MUSLIM POLULATION**

<b>Percentage of Muslim Population</b>	<b>Number of Countries</b>
1-10	147
11-20	16
21-30	4
31-40	4
41-50	3
51-60	5
61-70	1
71-80	3
81-90	6
91-100	34

**Table (2): Analysis of World Muslim Population**

Muslims today have their presence in almost every country of the world. In 2011, the world Muslim population was estimated as 1.6 billion which was approximately 23 percent of the world

population [1]. In table (2) an analysis of the percentage of Muslim population in the world countries is provided. Even though Muslim population is concentrated in about 50 countries, every country feels the presence of Muslims. The majority of Muslim population is in Asia, Middle East and North Africa.

### 3.3 LITERALISM AMONG MUSLIMS

The contemporary common Muslims are entangled between the literalist and/or ritualistic orthodoxy of the medieval period on one hand and the modern world influenced by the Western countries on the other. Literalism in Islam found its first prominent manifestation in the ideas of the *Kharjites*. Literal interpretation of Islam has been a problem since the time of the Caliphate of Imam Ali, when the *Kharjites* with their literal interpretation of Quran posed many problems to the Islamic community. In the Battle of Siffin (657 A.D.) against Mua'wiyah, when the army of Imam Ali (the fourth righteous Caliph) was near victory, Mua'wiyah played a trick and his soldiers raised the Quran on the spearhead [2]. The *Kharjites* got carried away and asked Imam Ali to stop the battle. The *Imam* explained that paper and ink is not the Quran and the true meaning of the Quran is in the minds and hearts of Muslims. The *Kharjites* did not agree and the battle had to be stopped. Later, they did not agree with the arbitration between Imam Ali and Mua'wiyah and labeled the *Imam* as a disbeliever. *Kharjites* believed that the judgement is God's alone. Imam Ali agreed that God's ruling ought to be observed but stated that the *Kharjites* had not understood the concept completely. The task of governance is to be managed by human agents and that requires sound interpretation of God's wisdom; by merely stating that the judgment is God's alone the rulers cannot escape their deeds. The rulers who are pious and faithful to God do good deeds - collecting taxes, fighting the enemy, protecting the citizens, being just, promoting peace and protecting the rights of the weak against the strong. The evil rulers enjoy the time by suppressing the people but one day death overtakes him [3].

Literalism in the Sunni sect of Islam after the *Kharjites* was continued by the Dawud ibn Khalaf al-Zahiri (815 - 885 A.D.) (founder of the *Zahirites* school of thought), Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (1263 – 1328 A.D.) and finally Mohammad ibn Abd al Wahhab (1702 – 1792 A.D.). *Zahirites* insist on sticking to the apparent meaning of expressions in the Quran and the *Sunnah* and did not accept analogical reasoning as a source of Islamic law [4]. Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah in the 13<sup>th</sup> century sought to return to Islam of time of the *Salaf* [5]. He believed that the *Salaf* were the best Muslims. He was jailed for declaring that visitation of Prophet's grave is a

*Bidah* (innovation) [6]. Finally, Muslims were most impacted by the literalism in the modern times by *Wahhabi* school of thought. *Salafi* and *Wahhabi* look up to the *Salaf* as their models for all succeeding generations of Muslims in their beliefs, exegesis, methods of worship, mannerisms, morality, piety and conduct and term it as “puritanical”. They reject philosophy that involves discourse and debate.

### **3.4 SHI’ISM**

Shi’aism is mostly found in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, India and Pakistan. After being suppressed for several centuries, Shi’a became powerful at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Persia. Shah Ismail declared Shi’aism as the state religion of Persia [7]. During that period, harsh anathema of the first three caliphs, the Shiite call to prayer which included the name of Imam Ali and the mention of the 12 Imams in the Friday sermons began [8]. The ritual mourning of Imam Ali’s murder and the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husain and the 72 martyrs of Karbala during the months of Muharram and Safar ranked among the most important religious practices in Persia. Even today, mourners of the Imam dishevel their hair, beat their chests and foreheads with their fists, and some even (despite explicit fatwas by the majority of *Mujtahids* against all practices which cause self-harm) cut themselves with knives, to express their grief and remorse for the innocent Imam Husain. This was intended by the Safavid monarchs who took no interest in the true Shiite theology [9]. Shi’a believe that Imam Hussain rescued Islam from utter annihilation and imminent corruption but instead of following the Imam in his true sense of sacrifice to save Islam from modern forms of tyranny, they are entangled in the rituals of mourning that became a part of Shi’a Islam.

### **3.5 MODERN MUSLIM REVIVALISTS**

In the modern times, revivalists like Mohammad Iqbal, Ayatollah Khomeini, Ali Shariati, Abdol Karim Saroush and Tariq Ramadhan have played major roles in the last 60-80 years. Mohammad Iqbal was a philosopher, poet and politician of modern times. He was among the first to initiate a separate state for Muslims in the undivided India along with Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He dreamt about Muslims regaining their lost glory. His six lectures compiled as “The Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam” combines the religious, political and legal philosophy of Islam. Iqbal saw Muslim politicians of his times as morally misguided, power hungry and with no obligation towards Muslim population and he rejected their political attitudes and conduct [10]. However, contrary to his believes, Indian Muslim politicians like Maulana Abul Kalaam Azaad and Dr. Zakir

Hussain who stayed back in India after the partition were revered both by Muslims and Hindus alike. He took a stance against secularism because he felt that mixing with other religions would corrupt Muslim heritage. Iqbal travelled to several Muslim countries like Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey to promote the idea of greater Islamic political cooperation and unity and shedding of nationalistic differences [11]. Iqbal's thoughts about Muslims can be summarized in his famous Urdu couplet in which he urges Muslims to elevate their horizon to such a level that even God takes their consent before deciding their fate.

*Khudi Ko Kar Bulund Itna Ki Har Taqdeer Se Pahle* (Elevate yourself so much that before writing your fate)

*Khuda Bande se Khud Pooche Bata Teri Raza Kya Hai* (God should ask your own advice)

Ayatollah Khomeini established himself as a theologian and a religious leader at a very young age. He was a student of Mulla Sadra's transcendental theosophy. He had a large network of students placed in key theocratic positions in Iran. He successfully blended politics with religion. He was critical of the manipulation of Muslim governments by Western imperialists and colonialists. During his exile in Iraq, he formulated the principles of *Vilayath e Faqih*, which eventually became the base of the Iranian theocratic government [12]. Ali Shariathi and Khomeini were among the main Iranians who were primarily responsible for mobilizing the Iranians in bringing down the autocratic rule of the Shah. The Shah was affluent, powerful and autocratic monarch who was solidly backed by the United States. Khomeini was a religious leader who, while being politically active, was not a politician. However, in some special circumstances he skilfully assumed the role of the leader of a revolution. Dr. Shariathi was an intellectual whose ideas sowed the seeds of revolution in the minds of Iranian youth. After the Shah was ousted from Iran, Khomeini established egalitarian principles and a theocratic government. On one hand, Khomeini was a determined person who began with very meagre means to topple the powerful Shah and establish an Islamic government but on the other hand, he was not able to champion in the arena of world politics and made enemies with many powerful Western nations like the USA, USSR and UK. Iran suffers today because of several economic sanctions against it [13].

Ali Shariati was a sociologist, who developed a novel approach to Islam and his interpretation of Islam was revolutionary. His ideas have been compared to the Catholic Liberation Theology [14]. *Mojahedin-e-Khalq* were influenced by Shariati's ideas in later stages of their developments. However, Dr. Shariati was not in favor of their tactics. He was of the view that armed activities are not useful and the best way forward is through educating people about revolutionary ideas in

Islam [15]. He was influenced by Karl Marx, Jalal-e-Ahmed, Mohammad Iqbal, Louis Massignon, Jean Paul Sartre, and Franz Fanon [15]. Shariati's slogan was: "Every day is *Ashura* and every place is Karbala" [16]. Shariati's theology has been well accepted among some Shi'a and also Sunni intellectuals. Shariati had modern and revolutionary views and he mostly remained within the confines of Islam. However, no amount of Shariati's stress upon the concepts of 'enlightened thinker' and 'social justice' could contest with the dogmas of Shi'a practice among masses. Even the intellectual thoughts of Shariati of putting the 12 Shi'a *Imams* in the framework of 'anti-colonial strugglers' and 'champions of social justice for the *Ummah*' could not influence Shi'a masses because of the controlling influence of the *Ulema* [17]. The *Ulema* as the Guardians of traditional Islam play a very important role in keeping dogmas alive by their emotional and non-rational teachings, which are many times contrary to the real teachings of Shi'a Islam and these 'teachings' of course have got nothing to do with genuine teachings of Islam. They are part of the 'folklore' of Shi'a creed and throughout the history the efforts of learned *Ulema* who were not in agreement with such 'teachings' to purge them have not met with great success. A good case in point is what is known as 'distorted narrative of the story of Ashura'. Many open-minded *Ulema* and scholars have tried to educate people about loads of untrue 'additions' to the event of Karbala and the uprising of Imam Hussain, but to no avail. Still *Ulema* on the pulpit narrate highly charged and emotive stories about the events in Karbala which have no basis in reality and yet masses of worshippers accept them as historical facts. Shariati tried to give Shi'a, a contemporary aura of Islamic doctrines but until Muslims explore these modernized Islamic doctrines, the Shariati perspective will not easily gain the following, necessary for a victory over orthodoxy.

Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush is an Islamic revivalist and has been listed as Times magazine's "100 Most Influential People" in 2005, Prospect magazine's "7<sup>th</sup> Most Intellectual in the World" in 2008 and has figured in Foreign Policy magazine's list of "Top Elite Intellectual" and "Top Global Thinker" in 2009 and 2010. Soroush gave a new introduction to the term "Religious Democracy". He stated that the values of religion plays a role in the public arena in a society populated by religious people [18]. Democracy is not violated when a faith is embraced but it is violated when a particular belief is imposed on the public or a disbelief of the public is punished. Soroush believes that faith is not mandatory and true believers embrace their faith out of their own free will. Faith cannot be imposed or inherited or be a part of dominant culture. A person who adopts to a faith under pressure or coercion is not a true believer [19]. Soroush's main thesis is called "The Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Sharia", which separates eternal and divine religion from finite,

limited and fallible form of human knowledge. In his theory, Soroush makes a distinction between 'religion' (per se or in-itself) and our interpretation of religion. Religion is like reality, the only way for us to get 'epistemic' access to it is through interpretations.

Tariq Ramadhan is a professor of Islamic Theology, who believes that Muslims living in the Western countries must create a "Western Islam", which should be separate from the "Asian Islam" or the "African Islam", taking into account the cultural differences [20]. Ramadan believes that Muslim scholars who live in the West must develop interpretations of Islam fit for the level of understanding of those who have been brought up in Western environment and producing appropriate interpretations of Islam that are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and for the denizens of the West. Like Soroush, Ramadan believes that one must separate 'Islam' from one's 'Understanding of Islam'. It is the latter which needs constant renewal and must be adapted to the level of understanding of the receivers of the message.

The Islamic message is universal and is just not meant for the traditional, orthodox and conservative Muslims. By re-interpreting the Quran in ways which takes into account the sensibilities of a Western-educated audience, Quran will also benefit the non-Muslims living in the Western countries. Muslims living in the Western countries have formed "Us" vs. "Them" mentality rather than a consolidated community based upon the grounds of humanity [21]. There is more freedom in the Western countries for Muslims to follow their religions than in the conservative Islamic countries for the non-Muslims to follow their religion. In Saudi Arabia, a church or Hindu temple cannot be constructed.

### **3.6 FIVE CATEGORIES OF MUSLIMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

In the light of the background of the development of Muslim civilization over a period of fourteen hundred under different cultural influence, the following five influential actors in the contemporary Muslim world can be identified. The five categories are discussed in subsections 3.6.1 through 3.6.5 of this dissertation.

- 1) Extremist groups like Al Qaeda
- 2) Groups which have tried to reform Islam instead of reviving it and have tried to innovate a new case of Islam. Revival (*Tajdid*) is the restoration of the basic tenets of Islam and interpretation according to contemporary times whereas

Reformation (*Islah*) is making changes or corrections. Reformation could be dangerous because it may involve changes to the basic tenets of Islam.

- 3) Masses of mainstream Muslim population who just follow the *Ulema* and the Islamic traditions blindly and are prone to be influenced by the extremist group.
- 4) Ambitious Muslims who believe in leading an advanced life by means of education or business, democracy, pluralism and are considered as modernized Muslims within the confines of Islam. They are more focused on the materialistic world than Islam.
- 5) Few intellectual Muslims in all eras have provided an interpretation to the Islamic sources according to contemporary time. They attempt to eliminate old dogmas which have become part of the religion over time. These Muslims are in danger of being declared as heretics or are ostracized from the mainstream Muslim societies

### 3.6.1 EXTERMISTS MUSLIMS

Extremism among Muslims is of two types:

- 1) An extremely conservative view of Islam, which doesn't necessarily entail violence even though it may have an emphasis on *Jihad*.
- 2) The use of extreme tactics such as bombing and assassinations for achieving perceived Islamic goals.

In either case, it is the literal interpretation of Islam. Let us take the example of the Quranic verse 5 from *Sura At-Tawba*, known as "The Sword Verse". Extremist groups like Al Qaeda have used this verse to kill innocent people. During the Umayyad rule, the *Ulema* who patronized the Caliphs, allowed this verse for the purpose for war for expansion of their kingdom [22]. They used the verse indiscreetly to kill the innocent which has become a pattern by the extremist Muslims of the modern times to kill innocent people. The verse was revealed after the capture of Mecca. The verse was revealed as a command by God to fight against the deceitful group of infidels who constantly violated the treaties and destroyed peace and security in Mecca. The purpose of the revelation was to restore law and order in the society. The verse was not revealed for the general purpose but only refers to particular groups of the Makkan polytheists, who were dishonorable wrongdoers. They used to hassle Muslims whenever they found them destitute and when

trounced, begged for forgiveness by making treaties which they used to break in no time [23]. War became inevitable and God commanded Muslims that they should fight with robustness in any form. However, the verse leaves a room for repentance and amendment. If the polytheist repented truly, Muslims were ordered to institute peace and harmony.

Literalists like the Wahhabis, members of Taliban and Al-Qaida groups and the anti-Islamists have misconstrued this verse and portrayed Islam as a violent religion which promotes terrorism. Likewise the extremists use several Quranic verses to justify their political agenda. In the name of Islam, they sway innocent Muslims to join their group to create conflict and discord in this world. This group has only brought a bad name to the religion and Muslims. It has never cared for the uplift of Muslims as a civilization. An example of the extremist group is Osama bin Laden, who was one of the founders of the terrorist group, Al-Qaida. He belonged to an extremely affluent and successful family of Saudi Arabia. He was the son of a construction industry magnate of Saudi Arabia. He attended the school for a civil engineering program. He was influenced by the extremist school of thought of Sayyid Qutb, which led him to become the most dangerous and destructive terrorist of the modern times.

### **3.6.2 REFORMISTS MUSLIMS**

The second category of Muslims consists of people like Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Amina Wadud and Irshad Manji. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he was the divine reformer of the 14th Islamic century, the promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by Muslims. He introduced changes to Quranic and traditional Islamic beliefs. The second coming of Jesus were metaphorical in nature and not literal because Jesus is dead. Jesus died in Kashmir of old age. Though Quran is the final message of God for mankind, He continues to communicate with his chosen individuals in the same way he is believed to have done in the past. No verse of the Quran abrogates or cancels another verse. The history of religion is cyclic and is renewed every seven millennia [24].

Amina Wadud's lectures and leading prayers in a mixed congregation has been criticized by the traditional Muslims. Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian theologian stated that while a woman could lead other women and even possibly her young children in *Salat*, she could not lead a mixed group including non-*mahram* males. According to the Quran and Islamic traditions, all prophets sent by God have been males.

Irshad Manji is a Canadian author, university course instructor at New York University and an advocate of a "reform and progressive" interpretation of Islam. Manji is also founder and

president of Project Ijtihad, a charitable organization that has innovated a 24/7 service to advise people, especially young Muslims, who are struggling with faith. Manji is openly lesbian [25]. Quran prohibits same sex act in verses 7:80-81 and 26:165.

### 3.6.3 MAINSTREAM MUSLIMS

"*Ummah*" is a common Arabic word meaning "people group", or "nation." The term takes on a religious connotations in the Quran where God is said to have sent to each *Ummah* its own messenger and Muslims believe that they are the best of the communities God has send [26]. The *Ummah* for all Muslims in the world is the Islamic *Ummah* patterned after the community founded by the Prophet (S) based on the Quranic believes. The third category of Muslims is the common Muslims. The 1.6-1.8 billion Muslims throughout the world speak hundreds of different languages and live in dozens of different countries but still share a common Muslim culture. This culture is embedded in certain common beliefs that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is His messenger. Muslim customs and traditions include Islamic/Muslim clothing, food, wedding traditions and other aspects of Islamic life that Muslims have adopted in their respective countries.

Common Muslims have been influenced by the religious leadership from the days of the Prophet (S) to the four rightly guided Caliphs to the days of Umayyad and Abbasids to the present day. Muslims have been divided among various sects – Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili, Zaidi, Alawi etc. Most of Muslims have loyalty first towards their sects and then to Muslim *Ummah* in general. Although some Muslims have achieved high ranks in their professions, in general the economic and educational standard of Muslims is far below the world standards. Muslims make about 23 percent of the world population but own only 6 percent of the world income [27]. The average literacy rate is about 38% among Muslims of the world [28]. The general pattern of the common Muslim life is to strive for daily living, practice the essential Islamic rituals and have affiliation to local mosque. The common Muslim because of their lack of Islamic and worldly education are gullible and get led easily by the local religious leaders. If a Sunni Muslim is affiliated with a mosque which has a leader with the *Wahhabi* school of thought, they are influenced by the literalism of the *Wahabbis*. A Shi'a Muslim gets influenced by Shi'a dogmas and ritualism which has been practiced since the Safavid times. In the local mosques due to lack of education, extremist groups use religion as the main mechanism for recruiting juveniles for their terrorist

activities. Approximately 40% of al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are composed of juveniles under the age of 18 [29].

#### **3.6.4 SOCIALLY AND FINANCIALLY ADVANCED MUSLIMS**

The fourth group focuses on the social and economic advancement of Muslims and this generally is on nationalistic basis and not as a complete Muslim *Ummah*. Mustafa Ataturk wanted to Westernize Turkey and make it into a progressive nation. He aimed at effective elimination of Islam first from the public sphere and gradually from the private domain as well in line with his conception about modern culture as a whole. The abolishing of the caliphate was followed by a sustained process of curtailing the influence of Islam in society that began with placing all educational institutions under state control and the abolishment of religious courts. In his modernization program, he even banned women wearing headscarves in public [30].

#### **3.6.5 INTELLECTUAL MUSLIMS**

The fifth and the final group consists of intellectual Muslims like Mohammad Iqbal, Ayatollah Khomeini, Ali Shariati, AbdolKarim Soroush and Tariq Ramadhan. Iqbal boasted the morale of Muslims in the undivided India and was responsible along with Mohammad Ali Jinnah for the formation of Pakistan. Khomeini and Shariati were responsible for the ousting of the autocrat monarch of Iran. Saroush and Ramadhan are contemporary Muslim intellectuals with their theories of Islamic revival. Soroush's ideas have met with strong opposition from conservative elements in Iran. Both he and his audiences were assaulted by Ansar-e Hezbollah vigilantes. A law imposing penalties on anyone associating with enemies of the Islamic republic is thought by his allies to have been at least in part provoked by some of Soroush's lectures and foreign affiliations [31].

#### **3.7 CURRENT STATE OF MUSLIMS**

None of Muslims of the modern era have explored, analyzed and implemented educational strategies among Muslims globally in countries with a long Islamic traditions and in countries where Muslims are in minority like UK and USA. The common Muslims have generally neither kept pace with the accelerated growth of world sciences nor with the hermeneutics of the scriptures according to the contemporary times. Young Muslims living in localized communities do not find role models to look up to.

The majority of Muslim population is generally ignorant of the rapid development of science and technology in the Western countries and their high standard of living. They are made to think by the religious leaders that their poor economic, educational and social status is the Divine Will. This is un-Islamic way of thinking because the Quran says: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (13:11).

Mahathir Mohammad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia during the 2013 Islamic Conference in Kuala Lumpur stated: "It is necessary for Muslims to give up their illogical beliefs and regressing thoughts and be prepared to face the challenges of the fast changing social order. Our present predicament is not pre-ordained by God. It is entirely our doing" [32]. Long before Mohammad Iqbal stated about Muslims:

*Teri barbadiyon ke mashware hain aasmanon meim* (There are clear indications in the sky of your fall from grace)

Muslims should realize their follies and rise from their disgraced position to regain their pride and lost glory. Apart from qualities of dedication to Islam in the true sense and unity amongst themselves, the main focus should be on both religious and secular education. Muslims should critically rationalize the religious knowledge they obtain so that the irrational knowledge accumulated over hundreds of years is sieved.

## **CHAPTER (4): THE NEW PARADIGM**

### **4.1 OVERVIEW**

In this chapter, a new paradigm to enhance the educational standards of Muslims is suggested. A community meeting was conducted in Miami to discuss the education of the children belonging to Muslim community. During the meeting questions were posed to the participants and the responses to the questions were analyzed and used to build a model for the educational advancement of Muslims (discussed in section 4.6). Even though all the concepts used to build the model are very simple, the blending of the concepts to maximize the relevance of the model to the needs of a tightly knit community with common goals is stressed upon. In addition, factors that are causing Muslims to lag behind in education and fail to replicate the success of other communities are discussed.

### **4.2 THREE SUCCESSFUL WORLD COMMUNITIES**

Before embarking on discussions concerning identifying ways and methods to enhance education among Muslims, a brief review of the success of three communities is provided. These communities are Jews, Ismailis and Zoroastrians.

During the World War II, a large number of Jews were killed by Hitler [1]. The war affected most of Jews in the world. With their hard work and dedication, Jews quickly regained their losses and excelled in science, philosophy, art, music, literature, economics, banking, media and business. Since 1950, there have been 11 Jewish Noble Prize winners in literature, 29 in Chemistry, 43 in Medicine, 43 in Physics, 7 in Peace and 26 in Economics [2]. Rabbi Chaim Miller, Editor-in-Chief of Kol Menacham Publications attributes the following seven Judaic teachings for the success of Jews [3].

- *Every descent is for the sake of future ascent.* (Hasidic Wisdom)
- *Hard work is crucial to success. No exceptions* (Talmud)
- *A person should always say: "The world was created for my sake."* (Talmud)
- *Action is the most important thing.* (Ethics of the Faith)
- *Since the Temple was destroyed God can only be found in the four cubits of law.* (Talmud)
- *Words that come from the heart enter the heart.* (The Sages)
- *All the days of your life are to bring the Messiah.* (The Sages)

The Quran has very similar teachings like the Judaic teachings and is considered as the revival of the Torah and the Gospel. It is mentioned in the Quran that God help those who help themselves (13:11). God made man His *Khalifa* on this earth and hence this earth is governed by man (2:31).

The Quran and *Hadith* serve Muslims as sources of inspiration as well as correction or corroboration of their proposed conjectures. Muslims are also waiting for the Messiah, Mahdi.

Zoroastrians are remarkably well-educated and affluent followers of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster. Zoroastrians are centered in India, but are increasingly spread thinly throughout the world. Mahatma Gandhi said of them, "In numbers, Zoroastrians are beneath contempt, but in contribution, beyond compare" [4]. During British rule of India, when Zoroastrians became the commercial leaders of India, Zoroastrians capitalists, such as the Tata dynasty, built much of India's heavy industry. Rumi Engineer, a Zoroastrian living in the United States attributed the success of his community to their tradition of intensive education.

The Ismaili (also called the Aga Khani in the modern world) are a very industrious socially closely knit community with strong leadership from Prince Aga Khan. They are very successful in business and trade. In 1972, General Idi Amin issued an edict for the Asians to leave Uganda. Prince Agha Khan used his influence to get approximately 100,000 Ismaili migrated to Canada [5]. Strong leadership, hardwork and a closely knit community whose members pay their religious taxes promptly are responsible for the success of the Ismaili.

#### **4.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEFICIENCIES IN THE MUSLIM EDUCATION**

The level of education of Muslims is far below the world averages, as demonstrated in the chapter (3). There are several issues in the present day Muslim World that contribute to their lagging behind in the state of the art education and research. Muslim countries may be very rich like Saudi Arabia, economically weak countries like Bangladesh or even thoroughly modernized like Turkey. And yet, when it comes to education, none stands out in the international arena. Some of the factors which have cumulative effects on lack of satisfactory educational progress in Muslim world are briefly discussed below.

- 1) **Language:** Most of the research in the present day world is done in English and not much scientific literature is available in languages like Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Malaya. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) survey and records, only five Muslim countries are among the top 50 countries that translate foreign books in their languages - Turkey, Iran, Albania, Egypt and Indonesia [6]. One of the major reasons of the success of Muslim scientists during the Abbasid period was that at *Bait ul Hikmah*, translations of several Greek, Persian and Indian books took place demonstrating the humanistic attitude of Muslims.

- 2) **Education:** Secular education at primary and secondary levels is available in many countries only at a handful of urban schools. Further, universities and technical schools emphasize teaching rather than research. Hence, no major inventions and discoveries have been made by Muslims in the last 300-400 years.
- 3) **Research:** Muslim countries have no shortage of scientists and engineers, but they lack career researchers. Some Muslim countries like Iran and Pakistan have outstanding individual researchers and projects but not adequate to compete with the advanced countries like the United States, United Kingdom and Germany. Many of the top science and engineering graduates get employed in lucrative private sector jobs or migrate to the West.
- 4) **Industrial import:** Muslims are users of technology rather than being inventors of technology despite the fact that they show a great deal of ingenuity in modifying and indigenizing the imported technologies. Countries of the GCC have the state of the art technology in forms of hi-rise buildings, modernized machineries, computer systems and automobiles but with imported technology.
- 5) **Resources:** Lack of financial resources and incentives has been a major barrier to research. Whereas Japan, the United States, Germany, and other Western countries spend 2 percent or more of their gross domestic product (GDP) annually on research, no Muslim country spends more than .50 percent of its (much lower) GDP on research [7].
- 6) **Government incompetence:** Applied-research units in government ministries, such as agriculture or construction, have often become sinecures for political appointees with little or no interest or capabilities for research [8] which results in obsolete techniques in project implementations.

Muslim rulers are aware of the educational deficiencies among Muslims. Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) was established by the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in May 1979. ISESCO is one of the largest international Islamic organizations and specializes in the fields of education, science, and culture. Its headquarters is in Rabat, Morocco. There are 52 members of ISESCO. The mission of ISESCO is to develop the educational system and strengthening the role of the education in addressing the development issues [9]. However, in the past 35 years, no scientific invention or discovery in any Islamic country has been made as a result of the activities of ISESCO. The sad fact that a Muslim living in a Western country

never uses, on a daily basis, a product which is invented by a fellow Muslim, is a damning testimony against the level of advancement of technological advancement in Muslim countries.

#### **4.4 A MODEL TO ENHANCE THE EDUCATION OF MUSLIMS**

The best option for Muslim world would be to enhance educational standards and advance scientific research in Muslim world globally. However, in order to cross the barriers of language, nationalism and culture, there are several political, cultural and economic intricacies. There are different types of governments in Muslim countries – monarchy, dictatorship and democracy with immense political rivalries. There is a vast economic variation among various countries like Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Bangladesh on the other. Culturally there is a big difference between Muslim countries; the Arab states, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia, African countries, Muslims in the Indian sub-continent and in Urdu speaking countries, and Muslims living in the Western countries are culturally very different.

During the time Muslims developed what is now known as the Golden Age of Islam, the political power was centralized and the Abbasid dynasty was commanding a great deal of power. In the present times Muslims are living across the globe under the rule of various nation-states and it is not possible to centralize Muslim power. Hence, instead of enhancing Muslim education across such a vast and diverse constituency, a sensible way forward is to build a model from the root level (bottom – up rather than top – down) in a Western country, try and test it, and then, if successful, export it to the Eastern flank of Muslim world.

The advantage of building a model in a Muslim community in a city located in a Western country is that, firstly, the population of Muslims in most cities in the Western world (North America and Europe) is small and most of Muslims, in most such cities, are affiliated to their community centers. Secondly, the educational facilities available to Muslim students in the Western countries are better than the facilities in Muslim countries in most of the cases.

To develop a model along the line explained above, the author has chosen Shi'a community of South Florida because of ease of access, proximity, and his close connection with the members of the Community.

#### **4.5 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SHI'A COMMUNITY IN SOUTH FLORIDA**

The local Shi'a community in South Florida is mostly associated with the Islamic Jafferia Association (IJA), though there are three other Shi'a centers in South Florida. South Florida

comprises of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties with a total population of approximately six millions [10]. There has been a Shi'a presence in South Florida for the past 35 years. Most of Shi'a are immigrants from Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Kenya and India. The estimated Shi'a population in South Florida is approximately 2500. The majority of Shi'a in South Florida who attend programs at IJA are Urdu speaking. The infra-structure of IJA was established in 1992. Ever since then, the community meets every Thursday evening, for *Jumma Salaah* (Friday prayers), on all Ramadhan days, approximately 40 times during the month of Moharrum and Safar (Islamic calendar), *Eid* days, birthdays and death anniversaries of the Prophet (S) and Imams. It would be safe to conclude that the community meets at least on 150 calendar days every year. The attendance varies between 100 on Thursdays to approximately 800 on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Moharram. Food is served on all occasions.

IJA also conducts Sunday Islamic school for approximately 9 months every year. Classes in Quran, Hadith, *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Akhlaaq* (ethics) and history are offered by a dedicated group of young Shi'a teachers, who are not formally trained, on a voluntary basis. The school has adopted Islamic academic curriculum developed by the North American Shi'a Ithnaasheri Muslim Communities (NASIMCO). The resident *Alim*, Maulana Jafar Banglari serves as an advisor and also offers classes to the high school students. However, the school does not offer a curriculum for the students to think and critically rationalize the concept of religion.

It is estimated that approximately 300 Shi'a students who live in South Florida have either attended the entire American schooling system (from kindergarten to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade of high school) or attended that system from the middle school and high school till the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The community has produced graduates in education, law, medicine, engineering, business, finance, human resources, architecture and arts. Few of these students attended the University of Miami but most of them attended Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, Nova Southeastern University or the local community colleges. Only one student from the South Florida Shi'a community attended Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta. University of Miami is ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation and the Georgia Institute of Technology is ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation [A9]. Rest of the schools mentioned above are not ranked.

In the table (3), the top three ranked American universities in the fields of medicine, engineering, law, mathematics, physics, journalism and media according to the US News survey are provided.

Shi'a community living in South Florida has not been able to send a single student to these educational institutions in the past 35 years.

Rank	Medicine	Engineering	Law	Mathematics	Physics	Journalism	Media
1	Harvard	MIT	Yale	MIT	MIT	University of Southern California	MIT
2	Stanford	Stanford	Harvard	Princeton	California Institute of Technology	Boston University	Pomona College
3	John Hopkins	University of California, Berkley	Stanford	Harvard	Harvard	Washington and Lee University	Brown University

**Table (3): Best Universities in America [11]**

The visiting *Ulema* from India and Pakistan who are highly revered, do not have the intellectual capacity to encourage social enhancement of the community and critical and rational thinking. The general pattern of the lectures include explanation of the *Tafseer* of the Quran in an outdated manner, praising the *Ahle ul Bait* and mourning the martyrs of Karbala. In general, the younger generation are drifting away from the regular organizational proceedings of the mosque. The attendance of the youth during congregations of important occasions is decreasing because they are not willing to accept sermons which do not make sense.

In the past 35 years, the first generation immigrants of IJA have worked hard to establish themselves in the United States. Some of the first generation immigrants hold degrees in medicine, engineering, accountancy, information technology and business while some of them have worked as storekeepers, housing security and in the cab industry. However, no Shi'a living in Miami is a research scholar, an elected official, a high ranked journalists or made a mark in the United States as a top class professional. Having lived in Miami for approximately 20 years and being associated with the local Shi'a community, I have observed a very slow growth among Shi'a Muslims and in general, the community can be classified as stagnant.

#### 4.6 PUBLIC FORUM AT IJA REGARDING EDUCATION

A meeting to discuss the education of Shi'a students of South Florida was organized on August 1, 2014 on the auspicious occasion of Ramadhan *Eid* celebrations. The meeting was attended by approximately 150 Shi'a participants. A brief discussion about the Quranic verses and Hadith about knowledge and education was made by the author and was supplemented with discussions

about the Medina school of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq and the contributions of great Muslim scholars like Ibn Sina (medicine), Ibn Haitham (scientific methodologies and experiments), Jabir ibn Hayyan (chemistry), Musa Al Khwarizimi (Algebra), Nasir al-Din Tusi (astronomy) and Ibn Shattir (astronomy). Further, critical remarks about the impact of Muslim scientists on the making of the European Renaissance were made and finally the issue of the degeneration of Muslim civilizations was discussed.

After the lecture, selected participants were questioned (Please see Appendix A for the list of questions) and a questionnaire was passed on to all the participants (Please see Appendix B for the list of questions). The main questions to the participants were related to the causes of a slow progress of the IJA community and what can be done to accelerate its progress. The main reasons of the slow progress of the community was attributed to the lack of advanced education of the first generation immigrants, absence of proper role models, lack of intellectual discussions among the community members, lack of hard work and lack of community programs to encourage students. The topics discussed during the Q and A session are discussed in the following sub-sections.

In general during the meeting, there was a consensus among all participants that the IJA community has stagnated and projects like coaching students in subjects like mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology need to be offered. Further, for the adults, debates about useful topics like contemporary issues in Islam should be conducted. A proposal for an IJA Book Club was made, wherein a book gets assigned to the members and after a period of one month, the Book Club meets to review and exchange views on the contents and thoughts in the book.

#### **4.6.1 REASONS FOR LOWER EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS BY THE IJA STUDENTS** (Question 1 - Appendix A)

##### **RESPONSE**

The first generation immigrants were more occupied with establishing their own credentials and adjusting to the professional and cultural atmosphere of their adopted country. Most first generation immigrants came from non-English speaking countries like Iran, Arab countries, India and Pakistan. Even though India and Pakistan mostly have English as the business language, the grammar, style and dialect are very different and requires an adjustment in the United States. It takes several years for them to understand the American colloquial language and the customs.

The first generation Muslim immigrant do not thoroughly understand the American school system because it is different from the school systems of Asian countries, where students are made to labor more by memorizing their lessons. The teaching methodologies in the United States are different. For example the solution of the classic quadratic equation  $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$  is taught in one class in India, whereas in the United States, it is taught over a period of 3 months, where different graphical approaches are taught to understand the solution of the equation. Hence, they are not in a strong position to help their children in their education. The children are neither focused nor dedicated and do not have motivation to grow. Further, they are subject to different culture and values at school and at home, which influences their personalities and upbringing. The social behavior of Shi'a community is generally laid back with no urgency to succeed as individual or as a community.

### **ANALYSIS**

As discussed previously there are not many highly educated Shi'a among the first generation immigrants. Among those who are highly educated, most belong to professions like medicine, engineering, information technology and accountancy, which are good professions for making large incomes but are not very suitable for critical thinking and for influencing the government and people of other communities regarding the Islamic concepts. There are no philosophers, politicians, bureaucrats and journalists or even research scholars in pure sciences like physics, chemistry and biology among Shi'a of South Florida. Hence the children do not have suitable role models in these fields to look up to.

#### **4.6.2 MODEL TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF EDUCATION** (Question 2 – Appendix A)

### **RESPONSE**

During the interview, the respondent could not suggest a model to enhance the education of Shi'a children at the IJA. However, he stressed upon hard work for the children, removing distractions during high school and university education like vagaries and gallivanting, being focused, being aware of the importance of time management, being well organized, planning the course of study and believing in one self. Parents were advised to create a routine for their children studies, keep their study place quiet and encourage intellectual curiosity among their children.

### **ANALYSIS**

The same question was put to the general audience. The feedback from the audience made it clear that an effective model to enhance the educational patterns of the children at the IJA could not be suggested by the general audience. It became apparent that none from the audience had the understanding to realize the importance of advanced education, research and progress which are essential for Muslims to succeed and regain their lost pride. Further, the fact that only 150 out of the 2500 Shi'a residing turned up for the *Eid* party which was coupled with the debate on the important issue of education was a good indication of how much significance members of the community attach to education in their own lives and the lives of their children.

#### **4.6.3 HARD WORK PERFORMED IN THE NATIVE COUNTRIES OF MUSLIMS** (Question 3 – Appendix A)

##### **RESPONSE**

The respondent explained about the hard work Muslims did while they attended school in their native countries. They came from middle class families and had financial hardships growing up. They succeeded in being selected in professional education programs like medicine and engineering amidst tough competition where the population to the seats in professional college ratio was very high. They had the urge to excel in their careers and make a better living. They migrated to the United States because of the opportunities offered in the country. In the initial years of their immigration to the United States their struggle continued while attending the higher education programs. The next phase in the lives was the job search and changing the immigration status from temporary resident to permanent resident, unless they were sponsored by their relatives. The first generation immigrants did not make a professional impact in their native countries and the pattern has continued after their immigration to the United States. Muslims tend to become complacent on achieving small goals. The general tendency among most Muslims is that education is only for the purpose of seeking a job and living a comfortable life.

##### **ANALYSIS**

The population of Muslims in North America in 2013 was approximately 3.48 million [12]. Muslims have been living in the United States for more than 50 years. There are a handful of successful Muslim doctors, engineers, businessmen, scientists and journalists but negligible in comparison to Jewish and Hindu immigrants. Fazlur Rahman Khan, structural engineer from Bangladesh gave the world the concept of hi-rise building design using concentric tubes which is probably the most significant invention by a Muslim in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His concept was used to design the Sears

Towers (now Willis Tower) in Chicago in 1973 and subsequently most of the hi-rise buildings constructed after that. Sears Tower held its rank of being the tallest building in the world for about 25 years. Ahmed Zewail, an Egyptian scientist is a Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry. Fareed Zakaria, is a CNN prime time news anchor. Several African American Muslims gained fame in basketball and American football. Immigrant Muslims from countries like Iran, India, Pakistan and the Arab world did not make an impact in North America where they could influence the decision making in favor of Muslims worldwide like Jews did. There are many Muslims who are now working as lecturers and professors and professionals in the West, but perhaps with very few exceptions, have stood out and have become an internationally renowned figure.

#### **4.6.4 DOGMAS, ORTHODOXY AND RITUALS PRACTICED BY MUSLIMS**

(Question 4 – Appendix A)

##### **RESPONSE**

The respondent agreed that Muslims are trapped in dogmas and outdated rituals, most of the rituals originating from the culture of their native countries which subsequently got amalgamated with Islamic rituals. He felt that the thinking of Muslims is influenced initially by their parents and then by the clerics of the religious organizations with which they are affiliated. These clerics do not have much education in modern sciences. They are highly revered by the community at large and their lectures, sermons and preaching are accepted without being questioned. Muslims practice Islamic traditions and rituals without analyzing them and most of them are so accustomed to blind following of their religious preachers that they do not question the authenticity of the practices and claims preached by these preachers as part of the Islamic tradition and do not bother to ask themselves how such things could be related to the essence of Islam.

##### **ANALYSIS**

During Moharrum, IJA invites Urdu speakers from India and Pakistan. In order to praise Imam Ali, an *Alim* has narrated that Neil Armstrong heard the *Azaan* (call for prayers) and *Asha Do Anna Amir ul Momineena Ali un Wali Ullah* (I bear witness that the leader of the believers, Imam Ali is the leader nominated by God), when he landed on the moon. The rumor in 1970 was that Neil Armstrong heard *Allah o Akbar* (God is great) and he denied this claim in Malaysia during one of his lectures [13]. Another *Alim* narrated that the theory of buoyancy was explained by Imam Ali, which was later proved by Archimedes. Imam Ali lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and Archimedes lived

in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Recently another *Alim* recounted that an earthquake occurred in Medina at the time of the Caliph Abu Bakr and Muslims gathered at his place to find a solution. The Caliph stated that he had no knowledge about earthquakes and asked them to consult with Omar ibn Khattab. Muslims went to Omar's house who sent them to Imam Ali because of his knowledge. Imam Ali gathered Muslims and took them to an open ground and recited the *Surah Al-Zalzalah*. Then the *Alim* stated that the man in the *Surah* is Imam Ali. He quoted the book *Kokab e Durri*, written by a Sunni author Sayyed Muhammad Saleh Kashfi, to authenticate the incident. The *Alim*, who narrated this incident did not think that Medina is in a Zero seismic zone and the entire process of Muslims going to Caliph Abu Bakr, Omar and Imam Ali must have taken about half hour and still the earthquake was in action. This proves that majority of Muslims accept the claims of *Ulama* without questioning them. In his essay "Ashura – Misrepresentation and Distortions", Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari severely criticized the *Ulema* who distort and misrepresent facts and essence of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. These misrepresented facts have become part of the religion [14].

#### **4.6.5 RESPONSE OF MUSLIMS TO HATE CRIME**

(Question 6 – Appendix A)

##### **RESPONSE**

Shi'a in South Florida have started intermingling with Sunni on the occasion of *Eid*. Sunni are also invited to IJA when a popular Shi'a scholar visits South Florida. Several members of IJA participate in several community outreach programs like Feed the Poor, an organization named Universal Heritage offering free medical assistance in a black neighborhood and attending inter-religious debates. IJA has invited the Mayor and the Chief of Police of the local government of the City of Hialeah Gardens, where IJA is located to introduce them to the community and the basic tenets of Islam as a peaceful religion.

##### **ANALYSIS**

In Muslim countries, Shi'a have been victims of hate crime, mostly at the hands of the *Wahabi* in Pakistan, Iraq and Syria. In the Western countries, Muslims are subject to hate crime at the hands of the White racists radicals. Their activities against Muslims increased after the September 11 incident. Muslims are subject to more security checks at the airports and at public places. Further, after September 11, 2001, Americans are not very receptive towards Muslim immigrants even though the American diaspora have a long history of receiving and assimilating millions of

immigrants. Polk County Pastor Terry Jones had burnt Quran in a public rally in Florida [15]. Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh residing in Mesa, Arizona, was murdered when the hate crime mongers mistook him for a Muslim [16].

The Quran being one of the most widely read book, is often misquoted than being quoted. Islam has been projected as a violent religion by Muslim extremists and the Western media. Efforts need to be made to eliminate the misconception about Muslims and Islam in Western countries by intermingling with people of different faith, education about Islam in public areas like the libraries, participation in community programs, contesting in elections at the local, state and national levels, training the youth to qualify to obtain high positions in governments like City Manager, City Attorney and Secretary at the state level and federal level (the position is called Minister in several countries). The Author has given several lectures at the local libraries explaining Islam and its relationship with other Abrahamic faiths.

#### **4.6.6 ECONOMIC GROWTH OF MUSLIMS WITH GOOD EDUCATION**

(Question 7 – Appendix A)

##### **RESPONSE**

The respondent, an accountant by profession stressed upon higher education which leads to lucrative jobs and aids in the economic growth of the community. In the industrialized capitalist nations, the financial status of a community is important to influence the politicians and the bureaucrats.

##### **ANALYSIS**

In South Florida, some Muslims have attained high positions as doctors, engineers, professors, businessmen and accountants. However, the overall economic standards of Muslims in the United States is considerably lower as compared to Jewish and Hindu immigrants. Table (5) provides a data of the current economic status of Muslims as compared to Jews and Hindus [17]. The percentage shown in the table (4) is the percentage of the total population of each religious group.

<b>Income Range</b>	<b>Jews</b>	<b>Hindus</b>	<b>Muslims</b>
Greater than \$100,000 p.a.	46%	43%	16%
Less than \$30,000 p.a.	14%	9%	35%

**Table (5): Income Analysis of Jews, Hindus and Muslims in the US**

## **4.7 NEW PARADIGM**

In order for Muslims to succeed, a paradigm shift and change in thinking is required. The first change Muslims living in the Western countries need to incorporate in their social lives is the concept of a strong united community with a desire to grow and succeed so that Islam is projected as a progressive ideology rather than a violent religion. Not only the children and the youth but also the adults of the community should continuously enhance their educational and intellectual level to harbor the urge to succeed. Role models for the children and the youth, education of the Resident *Alim* in modern sciences, offering classes for the preparation of university admissions like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) and training in pure sciences like physics, chemistry, botany, zoology and mathematics to reinforce and monitor students in their academic pursue, introducing incentives programs to encourage students to succeed and educating students at the Sunday Islamic School to think critically and rationally are some of the issues that need to be collectively incorporated in Muslim communities. These issues are discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **4.7.1 The ROLE MODEL**

Sociologist Robert K. Merton, first coined the term “Role Model” during his career [18]. He defined the term as a person whose behavior or his achievements and success is/can be emulated by others, especially by the youngsters. The youngsters see themselves reflected in their role models. As a member of a community, each individual is responsible for the growth of the community. For children, the concept of role model begins at home with their parents. Maternal influence, for example, has been found to be the leading factor for shaping the education and the character of a child. Dr. Ian Walker, Professor at the Lancaster University Management School, found that for every year a woman stayed in full-time education, the likelihood of her daughter also staying for an extra year is 20 percent and the likelihood of her son staying for an extra year is 10 percent [19]. The educational achievements of fathers make less impact on the off spring’s academic achievements. Hence, mothers are stronger academic role models for their children, especially their daughters.

The second in line as a role model is child’s teacher, who spends a considerable amount of time with the child for five days a week. Muslim children in the Western countries have a major issue of mixed culture and religion. Most of Muslim children who go to schools in the Western countries have either both parents or at least one parent with a different heritage

than the Western culture. Hence, Muslim children are subject to a different culture at home which is (most probably) diagonally opposite the culture outside the house. In addition to the culture Muslim children belong to a religion, which is feared and despised in the Western countries and its practice is most demanding [20]. Muslim parents, who are the first generation immigrants have difficulty understanding the situation of their children because the culture and educational system to which their children are exposed are different from what they have had experience of. Hence, in order to understand the cultural and educational needs of the children, parents need to educate and counsel themselves regarding the culture and education of their adopted countries. Having done so, parent must then come up with a plan to counter the outside influence to which their children are exposed. Television is also one of the biggest outside influences. Alternative past times and the supervised viewing of television would partially avert children from being influenced by the negative aspects of the Western culture. Finally, Muslim children should be made to think that their encounters are their learning experiences rather than obstacles. Former First Lady of the United States, Hillary Clinton stated that children who truly grasp that they have a choice are most likely to be more responsible [21].

Successful professionals of the community should mentor the children of the community explaining the importance of education, scientific research, careers and how Islam can be projected as a progressive ideology. Even though there are no world class Muslim professionals available in the local communities but at least to a smaller extent these Muslim professionals must mentor Muslim children and act for them as their role models. For the above steps to be effective, their combined effect should be cumulative.

#### **4.7.2 ROLE OF ULEMA**

Muslims in most parts of the world, live in communities that are affiliated to the local mosques especially in the Western countries. These mosques are led by the local clerics who are called with different names like *Ulema*, *Maulana*, Resident *Alim*, religious scholars, *Imam* etc. In Shi'a communities, these *Alims* deliver lectures on Thursday nights, Moharrum, birth and death anniversaries of the Prophet and Imams, lead the Friday prayers congregations and participate in the Sunday Islamic schools. They also perform marriage and divorce ceremonies and counsel during some family and other social issues. They are mostly available to respond any questions regarding the *Shariah*. Most of Shi'a *Alims* attend *Hawza* (school) at Qom or Najaf and attain the

title *Hujut ul Islam* (authority on Islam or proof of Islam) before becoming *Mubaligh* (Islamic propagators).

Islamic educational organizations like Shi'a *Hawza* have restricted themselves to offer students only courses in classic *Mantiq* (Logic); *Usul al-Fiqh* (Principles of Jurisprudence); *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence); *Tafsir al-Quran* (Quran Exegesis); *Ulum al-Quran* (Quran Sciences); *Ilm al-Hadith* (The Study of Traditions); *Ilm ar-Rijal* (Science of Narrators); *Tarikh* (History); *Aqaid / Kalam* (Theology); *Lugha* (Language Studies); *Falsafa* (Islamic Philosophy) and *Irfan* (Islamic Mysticism). Rarely, courses like mathematics and physics are added to the curriculum [22]. But in such rare cases the mathematics and physics courses which are offered are not the state-of-the-art. Hence, the religious scholars are aliens to most of the worldly sciences.

In India and Pakistan, children are sent to Islamic schools (*Madressa*) if they do not perform well in the secular schools or if the parents cannot financially afford the secular schools. Graduates from these *Madressa* rarely get jobs in secular organizations and they depend mostly on income from preaching in local communities. Few of these religious scholars get opportunity to migrate to Western countries to become full-time Resident *Alims* at local Islamic centers. Even in the Western countries the *Alims* do not attend classes in modern education either due to the lack of their interest or due to lack of sponsorship. They do not have the drive to make extra efforts to attend programs other than religion at universities.

Growing up, I have experienced at both Shi'a and Sunni places of worship, in India, the Middle East and the United States, that the clerics who are indoctrinated with conservative Islamic values foster sectarianism and religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians; Muslims and Jews; Muslims and Hindus and Shi'a and Sunni. Even though the clerics have reverence in the community and their voice is heard by Muslim children, youth and adults and they can make a difference in the communities, they do not stress enough to motivate Muslim children to excel in their education. The primary reason is that these clerics lack the vision, education in worldly sciences, and intellect to recognize the value of higher education for the growth of Muslim community. Islam has been blamed by the West as a religion of rituals and spirituality that does not manifest itself in the temporal affairs [23]. Muhammad Iqbal wrote that these *Mullas* do not recognize what Islamic civilization and the leadership of the Islam civilization is because of their lack of intellect and education. They are just capable of leading the prayers congregation.

*Qaum kya cheez hai, qaumon ki immamat kya hai* (What is civilization and what is leadership of communities?)

*Iss ko kya samjhain ye becharey dou rakat kay Imaam* (How can these naïve clerics understand who are just capable of leading prayers?)

A close inspection the history of Islamic civilization shows that the role of Muslims in the advancement of the fields of natural sciences and humanity was directly related to the driving force of Islam. The Quran continuously challenges the intellect of mankind and provides evidences to recognize God [24]. The Islamic ideology consists of both idea and the method to implement the idea as a practical manifestation of ideas in reality. In the Islamic Caliphate, worldly sciences found the correct environment and methodology to flourish and improve the quality of life.

The verse 39:9 of the Quran states that people with knowledge and people without knowledge are not on the same footing. The word *Hikma* mentioned in the Quranic verses 2:129 and 2:151 as a corollary to the Book of God is indicative that rational outlook is the key to proper understanding of the Quran. *Hikma* is knowledge that did not reach its perfection at the time of the death of the Prophet (S) but it is an ongoing process of mental alertness. Using the quest of attaining the highest possible level of *Hikma*, Muslim civilization reached the Golden Age.

In the contemporary times, Muslims do not combine the scientific knowledge with the revealed knowledge. The misconception about the very nature of knowledge or its classification into Islamic and non-Islamic has created split personalities among Muslims. Those belonging to the secular stream of education have this awful feeling that their efforts may not be beneficial to them in the hereafter. While on the other hand, religious scholars (*Ulema*) live under the illusion that they being religious scholars, means that they are heirs to the Prophet (S) and that they alone are in the possession of the true knowledge. The idea of a full-fledged university for imparting Islamic education though now quite an established tradition, does not conform to holistic concept of knowledge in Islam. Examples of such seminaries are the *Hawza* in Qom and Najaf. In these religious institutions, mathematics, logic and physics have been included for many years in the curriculum indicating the importance of the subjects but have not been stressed enough to produce scholars who have a fair degree of knowledge of worldly sciences so that they understand the contemporary issues in line with the modernizing world. Muslims will only progress in pace with the modernized world if there is a paradigm shift with regard to this concept.

In order to enhance the intellectual capacities and the knowledge of modern sciences of the clerics, more courses in modern sciences (whether physical, biological, social or human sciences) should be introduced at the *Madressa* level. And after completion of their religious studies,

students should attend programs in modern sciences. In the Western countries at the local Islamic Centers, the resident *Alim* should be encouraged and mandated to attend modern universities so that they understand the issues of the importance to Muslims in the contemporary world. The other option would be that Muslims with modern education should attend Islamic schools like the Islamic Center of Advanced Studies (ICAS) in London and participate at the local Islamic centers as preachers/lecturers encouraging the young Muslims to think critically and excel in their education.

#### **4.7.3 CRITICAL THINKING IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS**

In most Islamic Sunday schools, the curriculum comprises of Quranic recitation, Quranic sciences, *Fiqh*, history and *Akhlaaq* (ethics). Students are not taught to think critically about the Quranic verses or historical facts. Students are not made to think about questions like why Imam Ali did not contest the election of Caliph Abu Bakr or Caliph Omar ibn Khattab as the Caliph or did Caliph Omar ibn Khattab pushed the door which eventually led to the death of the daughter of the Prophet (S) and wife of Imam Ali along with the unborn baby (Mohsin) she was carrying. Was Imam Ali not brave enough to counter Caliph Omar? Why was a name (Mohsin) given to an unborn baby?

In the Islamic thought framework, both this world and the eternal world are represented. Hence a Muslim is required to acquire knowledge of both modern sciences and the religion. When Europe was in dark ages, Muslim *Ulema* were making scientific progress by leaps and bounds. Muslims gave several mathematical and scientific concepts to the world like algebra, astrolabe and the quadrant which helped the European world to advance. Religion and science comes from God and so does His system of creation and development.

Study of religion is important but the knowledge gained needs to be critically assessed and improved upon. Islam encourages Muslims to think critically because the Quran continuously demands its readers to think, ponder, reflect and rationalize.

The Quran and *Hadith* serve us as sources of inspiration as well as correction or corroboration of our proposed conjectures. The task of producing conjectures as solutions for our problem belongs to the "Context of Discovery". There are no set procedures to obtain the desired solutions but requires a systematic approach, adequate knowledge, proper background and intellect. Further an element of luck needs to be added. If all the above are properly combined, then the solution, in the shape of a conjecture, may be found in the course of a flash of insight, an epiphany or light

of an intuition. After producing the conjecture, it needs to be examined in a critical manner to determine defects or any non-compliance with the Quran and the *Hadith*.

Hence, teaching children to think critically and rationally would make them adopt the true essence of the religion rather than being entangled in useless dogmas which deteriorates their thinking and making Muslim community lag behind the rest of the world.

#### **4.7.4 COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

One of the most important social concepts the Prophet (S) introduced and stressed upon is the concept of the *Ummah* (community with a common goal). Unity among Muslims was one of the reasons for the rise of Muslims during the Golden Age of Islam. Generally there is a fair degree of unity among the members of Muslim communities in the Western world but there is scarcely an urge to rise collectively and support each other in a planned approach.

Community programs like scholarships, incentives and recognition programs for students to encourage them to perform better and to introduce a sense of competition at schools should be established. Educational programs to prepare students in examinations like SAT, ACT and GRE for admission to universities should be offered by dedicated community members. Students should be coached in subjects like mathematics, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology and literature to prepare them to excel in the schools. A collective effort in the community enhances the sense of competition and make most of the children to think competitively.

#### **4.8 ENHANCEMENT OF THE MODEL**

The model discussed in the section 4.7 is proposed to be implemented at the IJA. In fact, the author has started offering preparation classes for SAT mathematics and has sponsored scholarships for elementary, middle and high school students based upon the grades of the students and an essay competition. IJA awards gift certificates to students graduating from high school.

Most of Shi'a Islamic centers in North America are affiliated to NASIMCO. Since Shi'a population in North America is small in comparison to the world Muslim population, a Shi'a Muslim educational foundation can be easily established in line with NASIMCO because of smaller logistics. Shi'a Islamic centers need to be urged to become members of the education foundation. The role of the educational foundation would be to establish a curriculum for the Islamic education for Shi'a children and also prepare guidelines for activities to enhance secular education for Shi'a children. The foundation should also offer online training to the volunteers

who teach at the Sunday schools. The main goal should be to train the volunteers to think critically and rationally; students and their teachers should be educated with regard to critical rationalism. The model should also be implemented in European countries with sizeable Shi'a population like UK and Sweden.

While in the past the Abbasid rulers at the top level used their political and financial power to promote scientific research and Muslim civilization developed its Golden Age, Muslims in this era should attain academic excellence in fields like medicine, literature, engineering, pure sciences, mathematics, law, journalism, business and finance to achieve success and power enough to influence the policy makers in the powerful Western nations and provide them with meaningful assistance in solving global issues, including issues affecting Muslims world-wide. There will be no dependence on the corrupt rulers of Muslim countries or those religious leaders who, though physically live in the 21st century, but intellectually, belong to previous centuries. This model, though difficult, is nevertheless, attainable and if achieved could revolutionize Muslim world and facilitate the bringing about the badly needed reformation in Muslim world.

## **CHAPTER (5): CONCLUSION**

Even though Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are members of G-20 major economies, in general the economy of Muslim countries and the financial status of Muslims is very low. According to the 2013 OIC annual report, the average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for 2013 in Muslim countries is \$ 3019 per year, whereas the world average is \$ 12,700.

There are several political crises in the Muslim world. The Palestinians get battered in the conflicts with Israel. There is turmoil in countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. There is Shi'a-Sunni conflict in countries like Bahrain and Pakistan.

Socially, standards of the Muslims communities/societies are low. This is, to some extent, due to their failure to adjust themselves in a proper and constructive manner to the fast pace of modernism. Muslims are still entangled in orthodoxy and dogmas, which contribute to their intellectual stagnation. Muslims cannot even interpret their own book, Quran according to modern canons of scholarship and with the benefit of the fruits of modern philosophical and scientific advancement. This inability to cope with the modern world and its requirements has, to some extent, contributed to the rise of fundamentalism and adoption of the strategy of violence and terror among some Muslim groups. Theological enterprise has been of secondary importance in Islam. Islam preaches belief in God by its loyalty to fellow believers and adherence to a way of life prescribed in the Quran and demonstrated by the Prophet (S). On the contrary today's Muslim world is dictated by the tensions of religio-social ferment.

Hence, Islam is not occupying the place of political, economic and cultural supremacy in the world that it once did. The exterior causes like the Western domination are of minor impact and far less than the impact of interior causes which include lagging behind in education, lack of intellectualism, disorientation of Muslim population due to their global dispersion and corrupt political and religious leaders.

This dissertation proposed a model to revive the Muslim civilization by enhancing both modern and religious education at the root level in small Muslim communities of the Western countries and then swelling its rank globally. The change would require dedication and commitment of all members of the communities – children, youth, adults, parents and the Resident *Alims*, each performing their role to build a community with a common goal (*Ummah*). Changing the curriculum of the Islamic education of the children to induce the concept of critical rationalism in them, mentoring the children in their modern education to compete with the fast-paced world, educating Resident *Alims* and exposing them to modern sciences, and educating the adults with respect to modern approaches to Islamic Studies, are the key factors. No doubt Muslim countries and big Muslim organizations like the OIC and ISESCO have been making attempt to improve Muslim standards of living and education but due to the dispersal of the Muslims globally, these programs have produced little results. Hence a bottom up pedagogy for the Muslims residing in the Western countries is proposed. The proposed program is a greater chance of success because of small size of Muslim communities in the West and the modernized opportunities available in the Western countries for the Muslims.

The program should then be exported from community to community to result in major educational foundation for the Muslims in the Western countries so that Muslims become a powerful academic, scientific, financial and political force in the Western countries. Of course at each stage, those who are in charge of promoting the model must take stock of the collective experience of Muslim communities who are implementing the model. Lessons must be learnt from the failures and shortcomings of the

implemented programs and efforts must be made to remove the defective aspects of the model and make it better adaptable to the situation of each community. Then, the model should be exported to the Eastern countries where there is large concentrations of Muslim population. Though the bottom up design idea is extremely difficult to implement this revolution is the need of the time for Muslims and therefore it must be regarded as a genuine '*jihad fi sabil allah*' and a compulsory (*wajib*) duty for each and every Muslim.

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### CHAPTER (2)

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"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim." - Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74  
"One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to Paradise made easy by God..."  
Riyadh us-Saleheen, 245  
"A servant of God will remain standing on the Day of Judgment until he is questioned about his (time on earth) and how he used it; about his knowledge and how he utilized it; about his wealth and from where he acquired it and in what (activities) he spent it; and about his body and how he used it." Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 148  
"Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the cause of God." Tirmidhi, Hadith 108  
"God, His angels and all those in Heavens and on Earth, even ants in their hills and fish in the water, call down blessings on those who instruct others in beneficial knowledge." Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 422

- "Acquire knowledge and impart it to the people." Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 107  
 "If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, God will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge. The inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and (even) the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave (no monetary inheritance), they leave only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion. Sunan of Abu-Dawood, Hadith 1631
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## **APPENDIX “A” – INTERVIEW QUESTION**

### Question (1):

Harvard, Stanford, University of Pennsylvania, MIT, Berkley, John Hopkins, Princeton, University of Texas, Columbia and University of Maryland are the US schools which have first three rankings for business, engineering, medicine, law, math, physics, media and journalism programs. The local university, University of Miami is ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the nation and Florida International University is not ranked. In the last 35 years none of our children have attended any of these programs. Why not? What can be done to send our children to these schools?

### Question (2):

Can you suggest a model to improve the standard of education of our children?

### Question (3):

There is tremendous competition in India for the medical programs because of the vast population, less number of medical school and a very hard working community. What kind of hard work you did to get admitted to the medical program in India? After 40 years, the competition may be 10 folds. What efforts would have made now (or) would you have not attempted for an admission at the medical school.

### Question (4):

Are we as Muslims trapped in dogmas and thinking in rigid and unchanging boundaries? Why Muslims seldom value analysis? Why they are not keen to incorporate the canons of critical and rational thinking which involves, among other things, exercising a degree of healthy skepticism with regard to all knowledge-claims.

### Question (5):

World is fast paced. What can we do to accelerate projects at IJA and make sure that most of or the entire community participates in them? Make projects interesting, useful, and efficient.

### Question (6):

We, Muslims and in particular, we the Shi'a, are targets of hate crime and discrimination. How can we strengthen and equip ourselves to not only face the situation but also change it to remove all elements of discrimination?

### Question (7):

Do you think Muslims could achieve economic prosperity and growth through enhancing their educational credentials?

### Question (8):

What steps would you recommend to make the children think critically, analytically and rationally at the Islamic Sunday School?

