

تَرْبِيَةُ وَلَدِ الْمُسْلِمِ

فِي مُجْتَمَعٍ مُخْتَلِفٍ الْعَادَاتِ

Educating a Muslim Child in a Multi-Cultural Society

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Foreword

All praise to Allaah Who has taught men with the pen, He taught him what he knew not before. He is One Lord beside Whom there is none that shares any form of divinity or right to be worshipped with Him. I testify that He Only is worthy of all forms of divinity and worship, I also testify that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger; the Best of Mankind whom Allaah used, with knowledge, to set the mankind on the right course.

The key words in this piece are: education, Muslim child and multi-cultural society. This piece is not a dissertation such that the reader will want to know which Institute or College supervised it. It is also not a blueprint report such that he will think it was made after a conference. It is rather a write-up written to seek the Face of Allaah, most importantly, and to educate some willing ears and eyes among the Muslims regarding the proper education of their children and wards in this society of ours.

There is this likely fear that the work will attract some frowns especially from the modern Muslims, they might feel it wants to take the Muslims back in many steps because of the theme it has come with. There is no cause for fear however; the work just deserves a sincere reading from whoever seeks sincerity in statements and actions.

The author is a feeble and weak slave of Allaah who having made some little sojourn, very little indeed, into the realm of Islamic learning after years of wandering in the secular learning, came to realize that Islam is an embodiment of untapped precious gems many Muslims are leaving to wear out. Thus this is one of the attempts to let the Muslims re-claim the possession of the ornaments they have abandoned.

The book is divided into five short and interesting chapters bordering on the nature of Nigerian society, the effect of the Western values in the Nigerian society, how Islam and Christianity came to Nigeria, how the Christians have been making efforts to lord over the Muslims via the Western-prone education. It also sheds light on what real are the terms 'education' and 'literacy.' It looks at how Arabic Language has been made to be useless to the Muslims. It also delves into the origin of Western education vis-à-vis its philosophical basis. Then it looks at

how the proper Islamic education should be in this era. It does not fail to disabuse the minds of the readers from some myths that have been ascribed to Islamic system of education. Some statements of some scholars of Islam are also cited in making some of the points.

All thanks to Allaah for the work, may He reward all those who have contributed to its success in one way or the other.

By a slave in need of his Lord's mercy.

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Chapter One

The Nature of Nigerian Society

Nigeria represents a typical heterogeneous African society especially among the former British colonies. The country gained Independence from the British in 1960 upon a legacy of profound diversities that have left the country polarized ever since. Religions are among the major indices of the polarization. Generally speaking, Nigeria is divided into a Muslim North and a Christian South. There is no controversy about the fact that the Northern part of the country is predominantly Muslim while the South is predominantly Christian. A perfunctory look at the South will reveal that, according to legislative fiats, there are a South-West, a South-South and a South-East. While the South-South and South-East, made of tribes such as the *Igbos* [Chinua Achebes will not like they are called '*Ibos*'], *Efik*, *Ijaw*, *Ibiobio*, *Urhobo*, *Isoko*, *Bini*, etc., are convincingly Christian; the South-West, which is mainly Yoruba, with a ten of dialects and tribal variations, is not. The Muslims are in the majority in the South-West. Some people will kick because of this strange fact. The major cities of Yoruba land are populated by Muslims, starting from Ibadan [which is arguably most populous in Africa], Oyo [the last bastion of old Alaafin Dynasty], Iseyin, Shaki, Oshogbo, Ikirun, Iwo, Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode, Ede, Ikire, and even *Eko* [Lagos].

As for Nigeria as a whole, the Muslims are on the lead. There have been manipulations in the past and present to distort this fact. The Christians have always been perturbed that Nigeria has refused to be totally Christian. We believe they must have realized today that nobody can subjugate the Muslims.

The Permeation of Western Values into Nigeria

Raising Muslim children in Nigeria, despite the ostensible presence of the Muslims, upon the correct ethos of Islam, have been very difficult. The Muslim North is least affected, the region has ever been careful with the western civilization – including the form of education it brought along. The Islamic ethics are still jealously guarded, western values are not seen as things to pride in. For

instance, an average Northerner of Hausa-Fulani extractions will hardly 'blow English' in public even though he might be a Master's degree holder in English Language. The unofficial *lingua franca* in the North is Hausa even in areas populated by indigenous Northern Christians such as Southern Kaduna and Jos area. Till today, the Northerners are seen as being 'backward educationally' even though an average Hausa man had learnt how to read and write many years before the coming of the Britons. But so far it was not English he was able to read and write, he was illiterate according to the self-styled anthropologists who unfortunately are found in the academia.

Down South however, especially the South West, the Western values are in vogue. People fanatically exhibit them with no qualms. Give a Yoruba man some English, the neighborhood will not know 'peace' again. So sad that you will see two adult Yoruba men with massive tribal traits conversing in the language of Queen of England which they have even hardly mastered, and which is largely laced with accent that can make the Queen fart.

The Western values – including its form of education – were wholeheartedly welcomed in the South. To the Southerners, save some nationalists fighting for fame, the Britons were the liberators. To reject their values was to remain backward forever and ever.

It was a sad reality to the Muslims of the region; the new values were poised at supplanting whatever meager Islamic values in place then. The precedence of Islam over other values, save the heathen system, especially on Christianity which was a new value, was about to enter a jeopardy. The manifest spread of Islam in places like Iwo (which had been in the forefront of Islamic activities), Ikirun, Ibadan, Ede (where a Crown actually made Islam an official state religion), Oyo (where an Alaafin had been weighing an option of total capitulation to the Islamic ways of life); this manifest spread was about to nosedive.

The Early Christian Influence in Nigeria

There is no doubt that the Britons brought Christianity to Nigeria. O' Level History put it that their sojourn was first in the guise of trading (especially in the area of slavery; Badagry was a notorious hub of slave trade then) then conquest (such as

the toppling of Kings of Lagos, Opobo and Benin) which gave way to the Proclamations about the Northern and Southern Protectorates and the eventual forceful Amalgamation in 1914 that gave birth to an entity known today as Nigeria where an artificial boundary was created and the people within it [including the Muslims] were separated from others. It was after the conquest that the Mary Slessors of this world came in; of course, the Royal Forces had cleared the coast.

In fairness to the British political class, it was necessary that the Britons came to a region such as the Niger Area. Then was an era of expansionist motives. After all, the Europeans had gathered at Berlin in 1884-85, on the behest of Otto von Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, to share Africa among one another like a loaf of bread. The economic drive had been the major reason, the missionaries just made use of the opportunity to spread the *Gospel*, and of course to achieve some pecuniary gains to sustain the feuding denominations then. Wasn't that time the aftermath of the serious battle between the Catholics and the Protestants? Thus it was as a matter of 'go ye to the world and get more followers to our church before our rivals.'

The Catholics made better in-roads in the South-East and South-South while the Protestants such as the Baptist Church, Anglican, Seventh-Day Adventist, etc, shared the South-West among one another. Abeokuta was a major place they had their footprints. Samuel Ajayi Crowthers – who first translated Bible into Yoruba – was one of the products of the scheming.

Initially, the Britons did not intend to give anybody any much education, just some words with which the locals could express servitude to them. 'Yes Sir,' 'I am here Sir,' 'Okay Sir,' 'Your food is ready Sir,' etc, were just intended for the locals. As for the missionaries, they wanted to go a little up – an education that could make the locals read the Bible, *no more no less*. In no time, those willing to accept the Christ as the only Lord and Saviour, among whom were some Muslims, were taught some English and Arithmetic. Missionary schools sprang up and many people were caught in the web.

It is on record that many Muslim children were coerced to forsake their religion before they would be admitted to the few schools in existence then. You either join them or nothing. Many Muslims fell for the bait and were lost into

Christianity. Some Muslims played along somehow maintaining their faith but without some scars.

Today, one will wonder why the craze for that west-prone education then and now?

Chapter Two

What is Education?

To a layman, education is the ability to speak or write in English and that, to him, is quintessential literacy. To such people, the inability to speak and write in English is *un-education*. In that warped definition, the French, the Germans, the Russians, the Chinese, and the Arabs, who have had their language documented as means of formal communication in the world today, are sheer illiterates.

The word ‘education’ is derived from the Latin word, ‘*educatio*’ which means ‘a rearing, a bringing up or a breeding’. That definition goes in line with the Arabic term for education which is التّربية [*at-Tar’biyah*] – an upbringing.

Education has been broadly defined as ‘*the process of facilitating, learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits.*’ So one will wonder why the fuss from some people when the word ‘education’ is mentioned. The word, without doubt, is a very loose one, narrowing it down to what the people think today is therefore very erroneous.

Therefore, when a person strives to acquire any knowledge – which is a wide spectrum in this context, he is under an educational process.

When he makes efforts to attain some skills, such as learning some vocations or trade, that can aid him in life especially in terms of livelihood, that is education.

So also is when he learns ‘values, beliefs and habits’, he is not wasting his time rather he is striving to be educated about those phenomena.

Kindly get that straight, the word ‘education’ is a broad term. Do not be myopic about it.

An important factor from the above disposition is the fact that what makes a society in terms of education is a variety of factors. Every member of a society who has acquired one form of education or the other [if you like call it skilled or unskilled] is a contributor to the growth of that society. In fact, in terms of pecuniary gains, financial success is not limited to one area than the other. For instance, it will be a gross fallacy to say whoever has a *formal education* [such as

the type acquired in schools and colleges] will be richer than those who have *informal education*. No sane person will say that.

What is Literacy?

Just as many people misunderstand what ‘education’ is, they also misconstrue what ‘literacy’ refers to. The colonial mentality with many people is that literacy is the ability to read and write in English Language! Some will even remove the writing ability. To the latter, if you can mutter some words in English, no matter how awkward they might be, you are literate. So sad that some city dwellers in places like Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Warri, etc., only speak Pidgin which they parade with fanfare, they cannot construct simple expressions in English, yet they see one another as literate! That is the nature of the society we found ourselves, ignorance is in-depth, and it is an endemic disease.

Literacy is the ability to read and write in any language whether codified or not, English is not a factor at all.

There was a 2015 UNESCO Institute for Statistics report that gave the global literacy level at 86.3% with sub-Saharan Africa at 64.0%. One of the countries with the highest literacy level is Armenia and Azerbaijan 99.8% each. Nigeria, with snobbishness of its people – the *acada*, is 59.6% far behind countries such as Bahrain (95.7%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (98.5%), Botswana (88.5%), Brazil (92.6%), Brunei (96.4%), Burundi (85.6%), Cameroun (75%), CDR (77.3%), Egypt (75.2%), Eritrea (73.8%), Gabon (83.2%), Ghana (76.6%), Jordan (97.9%), Kenya (78%), Kuwait (96.2%), Lebanon (93.9%), Mauritius (90.6%), Qatar (97.8%), Turkey (95%), UAE (93.8%), Saudi Arabia (94.7%). That has been a random selection. You would notice that most of the counties selected don’t speak and write English as an official language.

Therefore a codified language is the one that has letters with which it is depicted. Yoruba, Hausa and English Languages are examples. Yoruba Language and English Language are both set in Latin scripts (foundry types). Hausa Language was originally set in Arabic scripts until recent when it shifted to the Latin script. Other examples of codified languages are Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and the

Hieroglyphics of the Egyptian Civilization [which were the earlier forms of writings known to mankind].

Uniqueness and Universality of the Arabic Language

One of the unique and widely used codified languages is the Arabic. This is a language that has had great effects on other languages of the world such as Urdu, Hausa, and Persian; in terms of forms of texts. There is hardly a global language that is not influenced by the Arabic Language.

English Language, being too loose and over dependent, is one of such languages greatly influenced by the Arabic Language. Words such as *harem, sheriff, sultan, camphor, carat, caravan, caraway, cipher, coffee, café, cotton, crimson, damask, elixir, admiral, adobe, albatross, alchemy, chemistry, alcohol, alcove, algebra [popularized by Muhammad bn Musa al-Khwarizmi], algorithm, alkali, ambergris, apricot, arsenal, artichoke, assassin, average, azimuth, benzene, boron, table, talc, talisman, tamarind, tangerine, tariff, tazza, traffic, tuna, zenith, zero*, and many others, are words borrowed from the Arabic Language which many ‘civilized’ people freely use today and credit seldom given to those who own the words originally.

If we come to the local level, in the Nigerian context though, the Arabic Language has largely permeated many of the local languages such as Hausa and Yoruba. In fact, 50 percent of Hausa Language is Arabic whether word formations or sentence forms. When an Hausa says ‘*mai sunan ka?*’ You are likely to take it for ‘*mas’muka?*’ in Arabic; the meaning of both is ‘what is your name?’ ‘*Ka rubuta*’ [you wrote], ‘*ka karanta*’ [you read], *ka fahimta* [you understood] are among other similar Hausa expressions that are almost Arabic.

As for its effect on Yoruba Language, that is not far-fetched. ‘*alubosa (al-basal, onion), alubarika (al-baarakah, success), bale (al-ba’l, head of the family), sababi (as-sabab, cause), aniyani (an-niyyah, intention), aleebu (al-’ayb, fault), seriya (ash-sharee’ah, justice), riba, (ar-ribaa, usury), alafiya (al-’aafiyah, well-being), asiri (as-sirr, secret [the English usage here is even closer to the Arabic one]), wakati (al-waqt, time), faari (al-farah, pride), saa (as-saa’ah, hour), adua (ad-du’aa, supplication), kadara (al-qadar, kadara), alamori (al-amr, matter), tuba*

(at-taubah, repentance), woli (al-waliyy, saint), alufa (al-alf [one thousand men in one], priest), iwaju (al-wajh, face), etc, are among many of the Arabic words that have intrinsically entered into Yoruba Language such that there seem to be no original Yoruba words for them. Such was the case when the earlier translators of the Bible to Yoruba were helplessly making use of the Arabic words in their translation. Nothing called for that except the fact that Arabic Language had been in existence and had permeated the Yoruba communities before the arrival of the Britons who brought the Latin scripts.

Therefore the Arabic Language is one of those languages one will speak and write and will make one be confident of being in world tunes.

The Arabic Language falls within the five most widely spoken languages in the world. Guess the number one? You would be pushed to say English! No, it is Mandarin the Language of the Chinese and many Mongoloids of the region. You should know the reason Mandarin is number one; its speakers form the most populous in the world. China is more than a billion people today. Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and other neighbouring countries join them in speaking the Language. Interestingly, there are about ten million Muslims in China. Malaysia and Singapore are predominantly Muslims.

The Arabic Language, according to that report, is number five; after English and Hindi. Spanish is number one. But in Africa, more people speak Arabic than English. The contest is even between French and Arabic. English is not near.

Therefore, literacy is not about English Language alone. No doubt English Language is a global language but there are languages more global than it is, Spanish and Mandarin are while the Arabic Language is challenging English. If all the Muslims of the world, including those in Europe and America, can give more attention to Arabic, it will soon send English Language packing. No wonder the English speakers demonize the Arabic Language to make it less fashionable to the people.

You are therefore literate if you can read and write in any language. If it is in only Yoruba Language you can read and write, you are literate, according to UNESCO. When a literate man in Yoruba Language meets a literate man in English Language, let each of them exchange their correspondences and let them look for

respective interpreters, that is where lies the original freedom the nationalists of pre-1960 Nigeria ought to have fought for.

One of the problems with Yoruba Language, and of course Hausa Language, as well as many of the African and Asian sub-languages is that the West does not want the languages to rise. Had we been studying the modern knowledge such as Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Geography, etc, in Yoruba or Hausa, they would have been graded higher. But the West colonized everything about us, including our thinking, and they caused our underdevelopment. Walter Rodney did write a book, *'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.'* It was not the joy of the West that the Africans and the other people should rise. Just as they claimed that they abolished the slave trade in the interest of humanity. Findings have shown that they rather stopped slave trade due to the rapid mechanization of agriculture coming up then.

Had the West not colonized Africa, the continent would have risen, if Allaah had willed. One, the Islamic liberation was in place, two, the indigenous people would have risen by themselves just as China and Japan rose without colonization. Today China is a superpower while Japan remains a force to contend with in technology. Interestingly, no English is spoken or written in China and Japan. Even in India, English is a sub-official language; Hindi is. No wonder many of Indians eschewed Christianity while they stick to their Hinduism. There are more Muslims in India than Nigeria. India has produced many Islamic scholars of repute than many countries of the world.

Why is Arabic Language Special?

The Arabic Language is special though, this is the Language in which the Final Revelation which is the Qur'aan came. Whoever claims to be a Muslim must master the language if he wants to understand his faith better. Unlike the English Language, which the same thing cannot be said with respect to the Christian Faith. The Bible was not revealed in English. In fact, it had travelled between many languages before it settled in English that is why the book has never ceased to attract controversies, and it will never cease to.

Chapter Three

What is Western Education?

There is this usual fuss about the term ‘Western education,’ some would say the West has no education rather it was the East [the Islamic region of the Arab countries including the old Islamic Maghrib] that had the education. People that often peddle this thought are the modern-day Muslims who have really got minced by the discovery that there was a time when the West was in total darkness vis-à-vis civilization.

‘Western education’ is indeed the type of education that came from the West during the Renaissance – the period after the Dark Ages. The education that seeks to project the West as the custodians of world knowledge. The education that changed the course of the technological feats of the world. The education that separated the state from the Church. The education that viewed morality from perspectives of individualism.

It was true that it was the Muslims that brought ‘civilization’ to the West but it was in form of a recycle or reselling. Islamic ethics and values are sacrosanct and immutable. They were the sources of the glory of the Muslims in the early period of Islam in the Arab Peninsular as it extended to the whole of Asia, part of Europe and Africa. The bedrock of the knowledge of Islam had been the Divine Texts of the Qur’aan and the Sunnah. Those were the actual liberators of the Muslims that made them had edges over the people of the world at the time such that in no time the Superpowers of the time – the Roman and the Persian Empires, were brought to their knees. It has remained a mystery how a *ragtag* Muslim army destroyed the big empires.

At a time however some Muslims ventured into Greek Philosophy and Mythology, this adventure caused a change in the focus of the Muslims because some horrendous thoughts crept into the mindset of the Muslims. As flashy as the newly-found sources of the knowledge were, that were unknown to the West, many Muslims sank into them and abandoned a good dose of Qur’aan and Sunnah. The Mu’tazilah Sect as championed by people such as Ma’bad b. al-Juhane, Waasil b. Ataa, Jahm b. Safwaan, Bishr al-Marisee, and host of others,

were the new proponents of these deviations. Many of them came under the influence of Greek Philosophy to say horrible things about the teachings of Islam.

The effort of Khaleefah Ma'moon in this area was a massive one. He was the Muslim ruler that commanded an official translation of Greek works into Arabic language for the Muslims to study, at the detriment of the Qur'aan and Sunnah. He was a son of Haarun Ar-Rasheed of the Abbasid Khilaafah. He came to power in 198 Hijrah and effected what he had desired for the Muslim state. He sent entourages to Cyprus and Rome to get access to the Greek works.

One of the effects of the derailing by these Muslims was giving priority to the intellect over the divine texts. The new Muslim philosophers sought to put all the Islamic divine texts through empirical procedures taught by the modern science. That led to the heretic statement that Allaah has no Attributes and that the Qur'aan was created, a thought unheard of in the Muslim land over the years.

As the Muslims 'progressed' in science, astronomy, sociology, medicine, etc., the West was in total darkness. Expectedly, the 'progress' in the Muslim world, that had produced people such as Ibn Sina [Avicenna, the Father of modern medicine], Ibn Batuta [the Great Traveller and Astronomer, who travelled more than the celebrated Macopolo, and gazed at the stars more than Galileo], Ibn Khaldun [the great historian and sociologist whose work in Sociology is still used till date], Ibn Rushd [Avicerroes who was a great physician], Abubakr Ar-Raazee [who first invented medical treatment by diagnosis] and host of many others whom the West is indebted today.

These feats by these Muslims however led to moral and religious decadence among the Muslims because the religious values were relegated. Therefore, the feats did not last long before the Muslim state 'capsized.'

Materialism was one of the major after-effects of the Muslim sojourn to Philosophy. While there was physical development in various fields such that places like Baghdad, Cairo, Granada, Cordova, etc, became knowledge hubs sought by the people from the West, the Muslim community was fast losing its moral and spiritual cohesion where lies its actual power and strength.

In no time, things boomeranged. The Muslims lost Spain [which they ruled for more than eight centuries; 800 years to be more specific], the Muslim lands

became devastated. And the glory of the Muslims went away. In the ensuing disarray, the Turks [the Ottoman Dynasty] assumed the leadership of the Muslims. They made effort to retrace the steps. They made some gains in the battle field, science and modernity. By then, Europe had become an entity. It felt challenged by the new force in the Muslim world and started new scheming to deal it a blow.

The Effects of Greek Philosophy on the Present Education

Today's education is therefore inherently Greek in origin. Virtually everything that is learnt in the university is borne out of one philosophy or the other.

'Philosophy' is loosely understood to be a body of thoughts surrounding a phenomenon; they say it is 'love for wisdom'.

From philosophy of education to philosophy of psychology, even philosophy of 'eating'. One will read and read until you become a doctor of philosophy [being the meaning of PhD] in a particular field, when you arrive there, you can make your independent judgments in matters relating to your field of study. So sad that this concept has been extended to knowledge aspects of Islam. How many people are PhD holders in Islamic Studies and Islamic Law that have proposed thoughts that are blatantly against Islam? Such is the case that many non-Muslims now claim authority in Islam because they are holders of one wretched degree or the other in an Islam-related field. David Cowan, an Arabic lexicographer, was one of those people.

Education, Greek and European Philosophers

Among the early Greek Philosophers was Plato (423-347BC) who wrote about what a better education should be in his work Republic, he said the individual, via education, should be made to be subservient to a just society...where his mind and body be considered as separate entities. Others in the enclave were Aristotle and Socrates who are believed to be the wisest people to have lived even above the Prophets. A vital problem in Greek Philosophy is that divine texts have no place.

Among the later philosophers who inherited and popularized the philosophies of the Greek philosophers were people like Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Georg Hegel (1170-1831), John Locke (1632-1704) – the proponent of the mind being an ‘empty cabinet’, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) – the proponent of isolated education.

And in the Muslim world, there was Ibn Sina (Avicenna [980-1037AD]) who wrote, ‘The Role of the teacher in the Training and Upbringing of Children,’ he was among the people that emphasized the role of classrooms in teaching. He said pupils at age 14 can start learning ‘Islamic Metaphysics [like the beliefs of the Sufis]’ alongside the Qur’aan. He was a supporter of the empiricist theory of ‘tabula rasa’ where knowledge is attained through ‘empirical familiarity with objects in this world from one abstracts universal concepts.’ Another philosopher in the enclave was Ibn Tufail [1105-1185CE] (known as ‘Ebn Tophail’ in the West), he also demonstrated what ‘tabula rasa’ was actually.

In Christendom, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was one of those arguing as to what better education should be. Just like the Muslim philosophers, he did not totally reject the ‘divine’ texts but that they must meet empirical demands. Works of people Thomas Aquinas are seriously learnt in catholic seminaries today.

So you can see where the journey has started from. The proper Islamic education system is quite different from what has been handed down to the people.

Christianization of Education in Nigeria

The early converts to Christianity were the first to embrace the education and culture of the West, they were very mad about it. The Muslims were wary because they had their faith to protect. While the Muslims in the North were successful in protecting their faith, the Muslims in the South were not. It was not very long before there came some compromise. But there were some Muslims in South West who stood their grounds.

The Muslims would have continued to hold out if not the inherent weakness in many of them vis-à-vis their religion at the time. Many Muslims in the south were

not actually practicing the religion as it ought to. The Sufi schools were mostly in place and many saw them as the real Islam. Had there been real Sunnah in the Muslims then, things would have been better than it is now. Alas the Malians that brought Islam to South West Nigeria that gave them the tag, *esin imale* [the religion of the people of Mali], brought an admixture of Islam and some things alien to it.

Nevertheless the Muslims were made to face a lot of difficulties in their quest for western education. They were told the type of education was only suitable for would-be Christians. So if a Muslim was ready to change his faith, he was welcomed in school. First, he had to change his name from *Jamiu* to *James*, as the case may be.

In his primary education, he was taught the hymns (if his school was owned by the Anglican Church). He must come to the morning and evening mass (if it was a catholic school). Church attendance was an obligation where he was taught to sing and dance aimlessly, endlessly.

On every Sunday, he must be in his Sunday wears (which was always white shirts and white trousers) dancing and singing haplessly. He was told Christianity was the best thing in his life, that without Jesus, he was doomed for hell. There was no teaching about Islam rather a series of blackmailing such as calling the Muslims backward people who did nothing than 'knocking their heads on the ground five times a day worshipping the sun.'

The curriculum of what was being studied was Christian. English passages were usually about Christian righteous men of old, the Three Wise Men, for instance. When teaching algebra in mathematics, no credit was given its Muslim founder. There was nothing like Islamic Religious Knowledge but a compulsory Christian Religious Knowledge for all students.

Later some Muslims, feeling cheated, began to establish their own schools such as Ansarudeen College, Ansarul-Islaam College, etc. while these people strove to 'Islamize' the education, they did so within a meager knowledge of Islam. Some of them, of recent, have gone as far as establishing Muslim universities. Muslim universities which when you get there you will ask where are the 'Muslims' they are named after let alone asking how Islamic the places are. The bane, from the past to the present, has usually been the lack of Sunnah. There were no

competent hands to really teach what Islam was rather these Muslims were striving to excel the Christians in secular subjects and manners where the latter had had an edge. There must be Muslim doctors, engineers and lawyers to meet up with the Christians.

Later in 21st century, due to some efforts of some Muslim youth organizations, such as Yombas Anjaena, Nacomyo and the MSS, the consciousness for Islamic education increased and which led to establishment of schools with Muslim orientation but still very far from the proper Islamic system of education. At this point, it became as if there was no way from the log-jam except that the Muslims must outdo the Christians at all cost [many of those Muslim schools celebrate Muslim kids who excel in secular subjects today]. In all the strivings, the quest for proper Islamic education was almost sacrificed.

Later some Sunnah-minded people began to establish basic and secondary schools that were ostensibly and ornamentally Islam in outlook and intent. For instance, many of those schools would include Qur'aan memorization programme and some Arabic studies in their programme alongside the secular subjects. However it has been discovered that many of these Sunnah-minded schools have jettisoned this goal or achieved less due to the fact that the secular drive used to become so potent such that the goal of Qur'aan memorization and the Arabic studies would be lost in no time.

Till today, the general system of official education in Nigeria, and many parts of the Muslim world, from primary to tertiary education is Christian. New university students still wear church gowns on their Matriculation Day, while those graduating will joyfully dress as choristers in church. There has been official 'Islamic Studies' in the curriculum but according to the design of the Orientalists – those Westerners who studied Islam and defined what Islamic curriculum should be. Unfortunately, many who graduate as first degree and second degree holders in Islamic Studies from the universities are trained by those trained by these Orientalists. You will wonder how a person will study Islam without the language of Islam which is the Arabic and become an authority in Islam. How many such professors do we have in their society today whom the people see as custodians of Islam! Some are Muslim rights' activists today.

Chapter Four

Muslims and the Present School System

Training Muslim kids under this system of education has called for a serious thought. The system of education may bring some relative materialism (such as wealth) but its effect on the psyche of the Muslims is profound. Many Muslims are just Muslim by name but Western in every other sense – from the mode of dressing to other way of life. The fire brigade approach of clamouring for *hijab* in government schools (including the Law Schools) and otherwise is not the solution. We need to go back to the basis.

The Muslims need to strive towards reclaiming our lost glory – that is sourced in the era of the Sahabah, the Taabioon and Those Who Followed Them, to assume the leadership position of the world again and set the world on a better course.

We need to re-produce the likes of Muhammad b. Ismaeel [al-Bukhaaree], Muslim b. Hajjaaj, Ahmad b. Hambal, Muhammad b. Idrees, Maalik b. Anas, Sufyaan b. Uyaynah, Sufyaan Ath-Thauree, Ibn Hajar, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Rajab, An-Nawawee.

We need to produce Arabic Grammarians such as Seebaway, Ibn Maalik, Al-Kisaa'ee, al-As'maee, Ibn Ajroom, al-Akhfash...

We need to produce Qur'aan experts such as Naafi, Ibn Katheer, Abu Amr, Hamzah, Kisaa'ee, Ad-Daane, As-Shaatibee, Ibn al-Jazaree, etc.

We must carry on from where people like Muhammad bn 'AbdilWahhaab, Al-Qaasimee, Ibn Baaz, al-Uthaymeen, Al-Albaanee, Muqbil, al-Jaamee, etc have stopped. Their efforts must blossom. Their service to Islam must come to fruition in us. If we fail to, we will have ourselves to blame in this world and the one to come.

وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ

“And if you turn away (from Islâm and the obedience of Allâh), He will exchange you for some other people, and they will not be your likes.” [Muhammad: 38].

We just have to retrace our steps.

Training the Muslim Child; from Where?

So in the actual sense, how will a Muslim train his child in this kind of environment for the betterment in this world and the hereafter?

Many theories have been propounded but instead of them to save the situation, they rather aggravate it. The best way is what Islam has proffered. But to make use of the option today is a big task because of the stigma and profiling that is attached.

The first fear most Muslim parents harbour when it comes to training a child is poverty. Many people believe if their children are strictly trained in the Islamic way, the kids will suffer in life (though they agree he will not suffer in the Hereafter) and will bring no fortunes for them as parents who have invested in them.

The fear is so complex such that the dull children are the ones that are dumped at *madrasahs* while the bright students ‘with future’, as they often say, are taken to the best of schools to become medical doctors, engineers, lawyers etc. Perhaps one day, the dull ones in *madrasah* will wake up and become marabouts or occasion-seeking ‘alfas.’

Firstly, the Islamic education needs to be given the biggest priority in life of a child, and every Muslim. It needs to be the first education every sensible Muslim parent must give to his child and ward, male or female.

What obtains in the society today is that parents send their children to western schools compulsorily in the mornings, when those children return in the afternoons, they reluctantly send them to the *madrasahs*. Some don’t even send

their children to *madrasahs* in the evenings but weekends when the children go at will.

Most Muslim parents do not pay attention to the Islamic education of their children primarily because it does not fetch money. Had the Islamic education been attached with some money, you would have seen people throng it.

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

They know only the outside appearance of the life of the world (i.e. the matters of their livelihood, like irrigating or sowing or reaping, etc.), and they are heedless of the Hereafter. [Rum: 7].

But haven't we even seen in this country people who never attended western schools in their lives becoming top shots in the western academia today? There are many examples of such people; people who only attended traditional *ile-keu* right from their childhood till they reached their higher Islamic education level after which they ventured into the western line and became highly successful, in all the material sense.

Material wealth is not the goal of the Islamic education; the Muslim parents must know this. Its goal is rather a good life and success in the hereafter. Meanwhile that one is schooled in the Islamic way does not mean one will become poor, and that one is schooled in the western way does not mean one will become rich. Even in this society, the Muslims scholars are not paupers. They command respect and are influencers. There had been some scholars in Nigeria whom some of the past rulers would never underestimate. Shaykh Muhammad Gumi and Shaykh Aadam al-Ilori were examples of such scholars in the North and South Nigeria respectively. These scholars were so influential such that if they commanded the rulers of their time to a bidding the latter would have no choice. And did you know that these scholars elected to be as normal as they were, they never sought wealth while the latter sought them.

There are many doctorate degree holders in Islamic disciplines in Nigeria today that are so wealth-to-do such that their counterparts in the secular fields envy them.

So what is the problem?

قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Say (O Muhammad): "All the bounty is in the Hand of Allâh; He grants to whom He wills. And Allâh is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, the All-Knower." [Aal Imraan: 73].

Once again, material wealth is not the goal rather a just society built on piety and fear of Allaah. There is no doubt that the best of Allaah's creatures are the scholars of Islam. They are better than the mundane professionals such as engineers, doctors, scientists, technologists, etc. The mundane professionals are useful but the scholars of the *Deen* are more useful. We need the mundane professionals but scholars of the *Deen* are more needed. The professionals are honoured specially in their fields but the scholars are honoured generally everywhere. Above all, the scholars of the *Deen* are rewarded for their efforts in projecting the Islamic scholarship; the professionals are not, otherwise we would say the inventors of inventions such as Michael Faraday would be in *Jannah*.

The scholars of the *Deen* are the transmitters of Allaah's message that came to the best of the Prophets, Muhammad, sallaLlaahu alahyi wa sallam. Aspiring to be one of them should be the wish of every sensible Muslim. Therefore nurturing one's child in their way should be a religious craving.

The issue is how do we train a Muslim child islamically? We have said that as a parent, you must set a priority and forget the cries of the people. The onus is on a Muslim parent to know what he wants to do about his child. Many people will look down upon him, they will criticize him, they will call him names. We don't think he will escape the tag, *Boko Haram*. But let him have a focus and continue in his mission.

Stages of Islamic Education for a Child

Islamic education ought to be acquired from age seven till age fifteen when the child is expected to have memorized all of the Qur'aan [with knowledge of its sub-divisions such as *Tajweed (Principles of Qur'aan Recitation)*, *Tafseer (Qur'aan Exegesis)*, *Uloomul-Qur'aan (Qur'aan Sciences)*, etc]¹, understand the Arabic Language with the ability to read and write it effortlessly (that qualifying him to be literate in the UNESCO standard) alongside subjects such as *Tawheed*, *Hadeeth*, *Fiqh [Jurisprudence]*, *Taarikh [History of Islam]*, *Faraaid [Laws of Inheritance]*, *Mutaala'ah [Reading]*, *Arood [Arabic Poetry]*, *Adab [Arabic Literature]*, *Mustalah [Science of Hadeeth]*, etc.²

One of the most important things he must learn at this stage is *Aqeedah* and *Manhaj* of the Salaf [the Creed and Methodology of the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah]. This will go a long way in guiding him in the rest of his life. In fact, the real reason many of the existing *madaaris* [Islamic Schools where the Islam-related subjects and the Arabic Language are learnt] are not fruitful is because those institutes are built on a methodology other than that of the Sahabah. Can you imagine a supposed *madrasah* of Islam where the pupils are taught the 'secrets of mystic powers' by hunting agama lizards?

Indeed there are big and popular *marakiz* in Nigeria [in places like Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, etc.] where the quality knowledge of Islam devoid of deviations is not learnt. One of those *marakiz* notorious for heretical practices is the one located at Agege Lagos. The *mar'kaz* has churned out more musicians than 'scholars.' The 'scholars' it even claims to have produced are

¹ Al-Imaam ash-Shaafi was reported to have composed:

All knowledge apart from the Qur'aan is a preoccupation

Except hadeeth, knowledge of jurisprudence in the deen

The knowledge is what has: He said: he narrated to us

Whatever is beyond that are whisperings of the devils.

² *Mantiq* [Logic] and *Falsafa* [Philosophy] are out of it.

deviants in human skin. A *mar'kaz* where its head, called *mudeer*, is a vanguard of aberrations. Allaah's aid is sought.

After that stage, the pupil can choose to either further in the Islamic education (to the university level such as the Islamic University Madeenah) which is the best, or consolidate his learning in western education such as sitting for O' level exams after probably three years of rigorous learning of the secular subjects, or learning a vocation such as plumbing, carpentry, electrical works, shoe making, tailoring, welding, etc. if he can acquire this vocation knowledge in a technical school (which is indeed a technical school not a mushroom one) then good.

The bottom line is that the Islamic education is compulsory in the formative years of a Muslim child.

A Muslim parent should know that the best gift he can betroth his child before he leaves this *dunya* is the Glorious Qur'aan.

The Messenger of Allaah – *sallaLlaahu alayhi wa sallam* – said:

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

'The best among you is he who learnt the Qur'aan and teaches it to others.' [Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim].

As for those who chose to go to the western or vocation line, they must seek to refresh their knowledge of Islam especially the Qur'aan. They must make it a duty to always revise their Qur'aan from time to time.

The Messenger of Allaah – *sallaLlaahu alayhi wa sallam* – said:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ صَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ كَمَثَلِ صَاحِبِ الْإِبِلِ الْمُعَقَّلَةِ إِنْ عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَمْسَكَهَا وَإِنْ أَطْلَقَهَا ذَهَبَتْ

'The similitude of a bearer of the Qur'aan is like a camel that is tied; if you take care of it well it will remain otherwise it will go away.' [Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim].

They must not be far from sittings of Islamic knowledge. They must remain under the tutelage of Islamic scholars where they continuously study the texts of the Shariah, this if Allaah willing can qualify them as Islamic scholars in future if they are really committed.

As for those who go in the Islamic scholarship line to the Islamic universities, they should study to their utmost. These are the people who will become the custodians of the Shariah which the Muslim society will depend on, *Insha Allaah*.

Alternatively after the formative years, there is an option of going after the scholars of the *Deen* wherever they might be to become specialized in a field or two of Islam. For instance, a child can pursue the knowledge of hadeeth sciences or Qur'aan sciences after the formative years. It was one of the traditional ways of learning in Islam that is very efficacious.³

The foregoing applies to the Muslim girl as it applies to the Muslim boy. The only difference being that, after the formative years, the girl who by then would have become a woman in the Islamic sense should go for marriage if it becomes a necessity otherwise she should further her own studies too or learn a vocation if she so wishes. Furthering her studies is however tasking because she has to always be accompanied by a male companion for instance any time she wants to travel. A willing husband can be of her help.

Parents should know that they have options – good or bad, better or worse. That we allow the kids pursue the Islamic education to the utmost, even at the expense of western learning, is the best option. Parents who release their kids for this effort should be encouraged and supported.

The other option of releasing the kids for western learning with little recourse to Islamic learning after the formative years is not so bad but it is not what is desired for the Muslim society. Some might argue how will the Muslim societies get their professionals such as engineers, doctors, scientists, etc.? The answer to that is

³ The *Alimanjiri* System of education, that has been ascribed to Islam, and commonly in practice in northern part of Nigeria, is a corruption of the real system of Islamic education. Dumping kids with mallams with no provision for their care and well-being is child abuse. Besides that, the content of what is learnt in the *Alimanjiri* System has been greatly anathematic to the teachings of Islam. No wonder that many of these kids are left to become street urchins and petty thieves with obscure purposes in life.

this: that a kid pursues his learning in Arabic does not mean he cannot become any of those professionals. Just know that those professions are also learnt in Arabic. One can study Medicine or Engineering in Arabic. So there is no problem.

Also Islam, as a global religion recording thousands of reverts, will always have new people in its fold. Those new people will come from various places, vocations and professions. Salmaan al-Faarisee was a Persian revert who told the Muslims about the techniques of the trench war. The Muslims made use of machine-catapults in the siege of Damascus, they were taught the how-to by new Arab converts then.

However, the most dangerous option for any Muslim parent is to starve his children of all forms of Islamic learning. How miserable is that home of a Muslim where nobody recites the Qur'aan, where nobody observes the Salaah! A home where if the head of the family dies, everybody begins to go to Church. May Allaah save us from such.

The Homeschooling Option

Much has been said about homeschooling of recent. This idea of homeschooling is an internationally acceptable concept. It simply means learning that takes place at home and that is aimed at producing the result which the learning at school will produce.

While the idea of homeschooling can be applied to the study of secular subjects on one part, and the Islamic studies on the other part, one of the limitations against it is that, it can only go as far as the capacity of the tutor at home whether the father or the mother or another individual appointed for the purpose. The child will still have to go out at one point or the other.

The greatest benefit of homeschooling is that it can make one tilt the moral behaviors of one's child as one desires.

Therefore, a Muslim woman so knowledgeable about the Qur'aan and the Arabic Language can carry out the teaching of her child at home to a level. This can also be applied to the secular knowledge too. For instance if one's child take his Qur'aan and Arabic lessons from *madrasah*, the mother or whosoever so wish by

the parents can take care of the secular aspects at home. It can be on some evenings or during the weekends – Saturdays and Sundays, as the case may be. The focus should be on basic things like identification of letters, formation of simple words, making little expressions, etc. And in mathematics, counting of numbers, additional and subtraction, the multiplication table, word problems in arithmetic, and so on.

Whatever is being learnt at home should not be given more priority than what is learnt in the *madrasah*. The moment the parents observe that what is being learnt in *madrasah* is being jeopardized due to the activities at home, then a new course should be charted.

And the crazy idea of imposing the speaking of English Language at home should be done away with. The best language a child can learn at home is his mother tongue (which can be English Language in some climes) then the language of the child's faith which is Arabic. It is good we let our children master their native language very well right from their childhood, the society is in need of this more than any other language. Speaking English in the home is not totally frowned out but it should never be made a standard practice.

That Muslims inculcate the habit of speaking Arabic, which is the language of their faith, is aiding the *Deen*. Said ash-Shaykh Muhammad bn Saalih al-Uthaymeen, may Allaah bestow mercy on him:

*'Spreading pure Arabic language among the people is no doubt a factor that can ease the understanding of the Book and Sunnah upon many people, it is with this we come to know that whoever is spreading other languages among the public is only harming himself and his language so also he is harming whoever has given him a place, or has taught him. We do hear that it is from the foolish ones among us those who teach their kids words that are not Arabic.'*⁴.

To illustrate the importance of Arabic in the Sharee'ah, we once ran this article:

All Prophets sent by Allaah were sent with the language of their people.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

⁴ Shar'h alfiyah ibn Maalik p. 17

“And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allâh misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.’ [Ibrahim: 42]

So Prophet Muhammad (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) was sent with the Arabic Language, therefore the Sharee’ah sent with him is with this language. In fact the whole of Qur’aan and Sunnah were revealed with it. Thus the Arabic language has become a language a Muslim cannot shun, that if he wants to worship his Lord as proper.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’ân in order that you may understand.” [Yoosuf: 2]

كِتَابٌ فَصَّلْتُ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“A Book whereof the Verses are explained In detail; a Qur’ân in Arabic for people who know.” [Fussilat: 3]

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ * عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ * بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

“[Qur’aan] which the trustworthy Rûh [Angel Jibreel)] has brought down. Upon your heart (O Muhammad) that you may be (one) of the warners. In the plain Arabic language.” [Shuaraa 193-5]

So, if the Final Explanation from the Creator to mankind is via the Arabic Language therefore all existing languages today is inferior to Arabic language. This is purely a religious position. If we are talking nationalism or loyalty to one’s country then one can go ethnocentric, in fact, if you like your tribe so dearly, you can say your dialect is better than Arabic, no qualms. Thus there is no place for the warped ideas of the sociologists here. The issue is, we are talking about the language the Creator used to communicate His Message to His creation. When it was Aramaic, that was superior. When it was a Babylonian language, that was superior. When it was Talmudic, that was superior. [Interestingly, Allaah has never

communicated in Latin or English even though they all came from Him; He knows best]. Now it is Arabic, not English, French or Turkish. You may not like the Arabs; in fact liking the Arabs has never been part of the Muslim Creed. You may not like the Arab Cities (beside Makkah and Madeenah, which a Muslim must also love). But you have to start liking the Arabic Language, as a Muslim, because your religion demands that.

Ibn Faaris said: *'So when Allaah – the Mighty and Most Sublime – limited the explanation to Clear Arabic, that indicates all other languages are inferior.'*⁵

A Muslim must pray practically at least five times a day; the language to use is Arabic. He will need to go over the Qur'aan, yet it is Arabic. A Muslim, of course, knows that there is no Islam without the Qur'aan. Let him also know that there is no Qur'aan without the Arabic Language.

Az-Zamzamee said in his popular poetry on Sciences of the Qur'aan:

'It [Qur'aan] is forbidden in other than Arabic Language/Recitation or that it should be interpreted.'

Al-Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee said: *'Every Muslim MUST learn from the Arabic Language according to his capacity to facilitate his saying **'ash-hadu an laa ilaaha illa Llaah wa anna Muhammadan rasoolullaah'**, and to be able to recite the Book of Allaah, say the words of remembrance obligatory upon him such as **'Allaahu Akbar'** and other commandments with respect to **Tasbeeh, Tashahhud** and others...'*⁶

Therefore the learner of the Sharee'ah should know that he can never understand the Book of Allaah, know its goals, know the juristic statements, manners of deriving rulings of the Sharee'ah, and terminologies of the jurists unless he is vast in Arabic language and its sciences. The more he is vast in Arabic Language, the more he comprehends all those. We need not state that, he will need to have more teachers. You can't just pick a book on Arabic Language and start learning; someone has to put you through. The best of students have the best of teachers. Only Allaah grants success.

⁵ [As-Saahibee: p.40]

⁶ [Ar-Risaalah: 48]

Al-Imaam Ash-Shaatibee said: *'The Sharee'ah is Arabic; if it is so, none can understand the Sharee'ah except when he understands the Arabic language as expected...thus a new learner of Arabic is a new learner in Sharee'ah...when he reaches the highest point in Arabic he will reach the highest point in Sharee'ah...whoever has not attained perfection in Arabic is lag.'*⁷

The *Salaf* did counsel the *Khalaf* (people of the latter generations) about the Arabic Language.

Said Ameerul-Mu'mineen, Umar bn Al-Khattaab, may Allaah be pleased with him: *'Learn the Deen, learn Arabic, and be good in your vocal presentation.'*⁸

He also commanded that none should teach the Qur'aan except someone who has knowledge of Arabic Language.

The *Salaf* would also seek forgiveness from Allaah when they made grammatical blunders. Hamaad bn Zayd said: We were with Ayyoob (as-Sakhtiyaanee) when he narrated a report and made a grammatical blunder. Al-Khaleel bn Ahmad was there that day, the latter looked at the former in the face then Ayyoob said: *'I seek pardon from Allaah'.*

⁹Al-As'maee even said: *'What I fear most for a learner is that if he does not know Nahw [Arabic Grammar] that he should fall into what the Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) warned about that **'Whoever knowledge lies against me should get his place in Hell'** because the Prophet would not make grammatical blunders; so whatever is narrated from him while the narrator is making grammatical blunders, such has lied against him.'*¹⁰

Muhammad bn Al-Hasan Az-Zubaydee said: ***'The scholars among the Companions and those who came after them never ceased from***

⁷ [Al-Muwaafaqaat vol.5 p.53].

⁸ [Fadaail-Qur'aan p.350].

⁹ [Al-Muhaddith Al-Faasil: p.525]

¹⁰ [Mu'jam Al-Udabaa Vol.1 p.54]

counseling the people on learning the Arabic Language, memorizing (its principles) and having concern for its meanings. This is because the knowledge of the Arabic is from Deen in all ramifications.'¹¹

Al-Mur'tadhaa Az-Zabeedee said: 'Whoever hates the Arabic Language will eventually hate the Qur'aan and Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah. That is kufr, no doubt; and an eternal doom. We ask Allaah for mercy.'¹²

Al-Qannaujee said: 'The knowledge of Arabic is prerequisite to knowledge of the Sharee'ah because the basis of the rulings of the Sharee'ah is from the Book and Sunnah which are in Arabic Language, those who transmitted the knowledge of the Sharee'ah among the Companions and the Taabioon were Arabs...there is no way from acquiring knowledge about matters that have to do with this language for whoever wants to learn the Sharee'ah.'¹³

Therefore it is knowledge of the Arabic Language, among other languages, that must take the much of the time of a Muslim who wants to learn the Deen. While he may learn English, French, Russian, German, etc, for mundane reasons, and sometimes for Da'wah purpose (like the one we are doing here), he must learn with immediate effect the language of the Qur'aan and Sunnah provided if he wants to really attain the sweetness all of Islam is contained.

If there is any language Muslims must organize seminars, workshops, and tutorials for, then it is Arabic. Brandishing and cherishing other languages especially English language which has captured most of the minds today is a misplacement of priority.

Nobody has said learning *Boko* is *haram* but the troublemakers and criminals along the border of Lake Chad. But we are saying for A Muslim to learn Arabic is more important than for him to learn other languages. If he knows other languages after Arabic then good. He can make do with the former without the latter but not the latter without the former. With

¹¹ [Tabaqaatun-Nahwiyeen Wa Al-Lughawiyeen p.12]

¹² [Al-Mafsal: p.3]

¹³ [Abjadul-Uloom vol.1 p.232].

Arabic Language, he can become whatever he wants to become in life, and most especially his Deen will be greatly favoured.

But will anybody understand?

We ask Allaah for well-being.¹⁴

Some Verdicts of Shaykh al-Uthaymeen about English Language

What is the ruling on learning a foreign language [other than the Arabic for the Arabs] and speaking it?

Question: O Shaykh, you made a reference to learning English Language, does this mean that you prohibit the learning generally or is there any explanation? There is this hadith that goes thus: ‘Whoever learns a language of a people will be safe from their plots.’ How do we merge between this and that hadeeth?

Answer: Learning other than the Arabic Language is not forbidden in fact it can become imperative when inviting the non-Arabs rests on it, meaning that whenever we are unable to invite them to Islam except we know their language to address them with it, then learning that language becomes a communal responsibility because we must take the Deen to these non- Arabs, otherwise which other means? That is with their language as Allaah the Mighty said:

{ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ } [إبراهيم: 4]

“And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them.’ [Ibrahim: 42]

¹⁴ Partly adapted from *An-Nubdhah Al-Mufeedah Fee Idaahis-Silah bayna al-Arabiyyah wa al-Aqeedah of Duktoor Yoosuf bn Khalaf Al-Eesawee.*

Sometimes learning the foreign language can become imperative when inviting the people that speak that language rests on learning their language.

But what I detest and I see we must be wary of is when we teach our young kids who are five years old or four years old, or what is similar to that, the English Language such that their tongues become accustomed to it in future. This is what I detest. But whenever there is a need for learning English Language to invite the people to Islam, learning it becomes a communal obligation [such that if some people carry out the obligation is removed from the rest] so also is when the need calls for mundane matters that are ordinarily permissible, learning such things become permissible.

It has come authentically from the Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) that he commanded Zayd bn Thaabit to learn the language of the Jews which was Hebrew. Correspondences used to come from the Jews to the Messenger of Allaah (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) and the latter used to send messages to them, so it became necessary to learn their language so that the person that understood it would be able to reply whatever came from them.

Shaykhul-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah – may Allaah bestow mercy on him - said: ‘Zayd bn Thaabit learnt that language within sixteen days. He learnt it in these short days because Hebrew was closer to the Arabic Language.’ That statement is correct. Besides that, the Arabs of old were stronger and more perfect in understanding, they were powerful memorizers such that a poet would come and chant some hundred lines of poetry and leave and the people would memorize them easily. Today, if a line of poetry is narrated just a time to the students who have come to learn how many would memorize it among them? Just a person or two.

In any way, what I detest and that I see we must be wary of is teaching our young kids the English Language because it will become their tongue. I am also afraid

and want to ask, ‘do we learn English language just because we want to speak it?’ no and never. Some will soon pick up written texts in English language, read some of the literatures therein or others that are the same with them then comes in a big evil. So the issue is not because we do not want the tongue to change to theirs. No.

A person might want to read some books written in this language so that he can attain some proficiency in it, and so that his tongue will be soft with it, but we do not know what is behind these books, there are usually evil motives behind books that are written in English Language.

As for what the brother said about the hadeeth he mentioned that ‘whoever has learnt the language of a people is safe from their plots,’ this hadeeth is fabricated and is a lie. It is not authentic from the Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) even from the perspective of the meaning. Do you really believe that when you learn the language of a people you are safe from their plots? No.

We that are Arabs are not even safe from the plots of our fellow Arabs while we speak the same language.

Question: O honourable Shaykh! What is the problem in teaching the kids two languages together: he is learning Arabic and memorizing the Qur’aan, and he is learning the English language while this kid has the prowess to make use of the two languages together while he imbibes the Islamic teachings?

Another question is: ‘If I take a female kid to the kindergarten where she learns a foreign language after that she will leave that school – which most times are public schools – qualified to start primary school while their counterparts who did not pass through what she passed through cannot. My question is: ‘is your advice

really a religious verdict or a jurisprudential exercise from you? May Allaah reward you.’’

Answer: ‘Firstly, I don’t know the difference between a religious verdict and an advice, an adviser is a religious verdict giver and above that, because the *mufti* explains the ruling, he might not have the traits of exhorting or warning, but an adviser has the ruling and can exhort and warn. What I worship Allaah with is that whoever teaches his kids who are in this level [in this manner you have mentioned] is not being just to them.

The issue that they are both learning Arabic and English Language with Qur’aan and what is similar is a delusional obligation. Kids today when they learn the English Language, you will see them speaking and communicating with it. One of them today will say: Bye! Bye! That is what they learn, they covet the English Language because it is strange to their tongue.

The claim that they are qualified [to proceed], yes because the government schools do not follow this pattern, but the best thing for me is that my son should be in my house when he is still young while I pronounce things to him, I read the letters to him and he repeats them after me and whenever he attains the age the Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) said he could go out then I will let him join [the institute]. The Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) had said: ‘Command your sons regarding the Salaah when they are seven beat them over it when they are ten.’ That is the correct training. But that I trouble him from his tender age with learning might not be a good training.

Question: O Honourable Shaykh! There are some people who communicate with one another as youths in English Language or make use of some words from it, can we say this is permissible for a person at a particular work, like we speak English Language in the hospital conversing with our co-workers in English Language most times even when there is no need for speaking but we have

become accustomed to that due to mixing with them. Is there any blame upon a person that speaks other than Arabic Language, does he become a sinner due to that?

Answer: Speaking other than the Arabic Language sometimes has no blame. The Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) indeed said to a bondswoman that came from Abyssinia and he saw a nice dress on her, he said: *'Adhaa sannan! Adhaa sannan,'* that is, 'This is nice! This is nice' in Abyssinian Language because she came from a place close to Abyssinia.

Speaking a language other than the Arabic Language sometimes to someone who only understands that other language has not blame and there is no problem with it. But that some people come to us who do not understand the Arabic Language then we begin to speak that foreign language to them before they learn Arabic such like when you see some people talk to a person who is not Arab, instead of him to say: 'I don't know.' He will say: 'There is no knowledge.' Why will he say: 'There is no knowledge?' so that he will know what he is telling him. What is correct is to say: 'I don't know.' So that the non- Arab will know that is the correct usage, but today we are afraid if we will not turn ourselves to non-Arabs.

Source: *Al-Liqaa Ash-Shahree*, number: 3.¹⁵

¹⁵ **Similarly ash-Shaykh Muqbil al-Waadi'ee was asked:**

What is the ruling of a fellow who takes his wife and kids to America, and the latter join some schools there to learn the Christian ways?

Answer: Such a man shall be questioned before Allaah the Mighty and Most High regarding this matter. A kid will see his teacher as the best example to emulate and take after, whether the latter is righteous or not most especially when he is taken to the Christians who have been striving to Christianize us while we are in our land, now a person is in their country. Learning in those institutes of Jaahiliyyah is not permissible especially due to the free-mixing between men and women; that is a great trial. It is imperative on the Islamic governments to establish schools and universities upon Sharee'ah. As for a school or a university where there is free-mixing, that will have adverse effects on learning, learners and teachers. The Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa

Chapter Five

The *Boko Haram* Phenomenon in Nigeria

The phenomenon of *Boko Haram* became an issue in 2009 in the Maiduguri metropolis. The idea was borne out from enthusiastic feeling of one Muhammad Yusuf who, confronted by the permeation of the Western culture in an otherwise Muslim society, declared all of the secular knowledge to be forbidden. He said the Muslims had to forsake everything about the West and build a virile Islamic society.

There is no doubt that the position of Muhammad Yusuf was an extreme one. Declaring otherwise permissible things to be forbidden is itself a grave sin in Islam. This is called *al-Istihlaal*. Allaah the Mighty said in the Qur'aan:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَذَلِكَ
نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

Say (O Muhammad): "Who has forbidden the adoration with clothes given by Allâh, which He has produced for His slaves, and At-Taiyibât [all kinds of Halâl (lawful) things] of food?" Say: "They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) exclusively for them (believers) on the Day of Resurrection (the disbelievers will not share them)." Thus we explain the Ayât (Islâmic laws) in detail for people who have knowledge. [Al Araaf: 32].

So the forbidden things are clear just as the permissible things are. For a Muslim to say something is forbidden, he must rely on an authentic proof for it from the Book and the Sunnah.

sallam) had said: 'Be wary of the world and be wary of women.' He also said: 'I never left a trial behind me more harmful to men than women.' He also said: 'I have not seen those as deficient in intellect and deen but who affect the best of men as any of you [women].' We have a tape on this entitled: *Tahdheer ad-Daaris min Fitnatil-Madaaris*, we would not say more on that.' *Tuhfatul-Mujeeb*: p. 58

Therefore declaring all of the secular subjects to be forbidden is an alien and newly-founded concept in Islam.

The other extreme however is total abandonment of Islamic learning for the purpose achieving feats with secular knowledge.

Learning and speaking English as well as other languages can be very useful in Da'wah to Allaah. That we have different tongues is from the signs of Allaah.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

And among his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of Your languages and colours. Verily, In that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge. [Rum: 22]

There were among the Companions those whom Allaah gifted with the ability to speak many languages such as Roman and Persian, they all used the skills well for Islam especially in the areas of communication with the rulers of other states. The Messenger of Allaah (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) too used to say some Persian words like the one he said to al-Hasan bn Alee.

أَخَذَ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا تَمْرَةً مِنْ تَمْرِ الصَّدَقَةِ فَجَعَلَهَا فِي فِيهِ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَيْخَ كَيْخَ لِيَطْرَحَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ أَمَا شَعَرْتُ أَنَّا لَا نَأْكُلُ الصَّدَقَةَ

Al-Hasan bn Alee – may Allaah be pleased with both – took hold of a date from the dates of charity, and took it to his mouth. The Prophet (Sallallaahu alahyi wa sallam) said: 'Kikh! Kikh! (Leave it! Leave it!) So that he would throw it away then he said: 'Don't you know that we don't eat from charity.' [Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim].

Al-Imaam Al-Bukhaaree mentioned the report under the chapter: 'Chapter of He That Spoke Persian.'

The knowledge of astronomy and its subsidiaries such as Geography, Physics and Mathematics can never be downplayed. Allaah mentioned *alamaat* – the

signposts, and the *najm* – the star, in the Qur'aan, it was a call to knowledge about those things.

وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

And landmarks (signposts, etc. during the day) and by the stars (during the night), they (mankind) guide themselves. [Nahl:16]

The *guidance* intended in the Verse is with respect to astronomy not astrology. While the former is permitted in Islam the latter is not. For instance, the knowledge of Geography is important in knowing the direction of Qiblah and locations while travelling on land.

And to show the importance of technology, Allaah said He taught Nabee Daawud some technological know-how:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَالنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ * أَنْ اْعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ
وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And indeed We bestowed grace on Daawud [David] from us (saying): "O you mountains. Glorify (Allâh) with him! And you birds (also)! And We made the iron soft for him." Saying: "Make you perfect coats of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armour, and work you (men) righteousness. Truly, I am All-Seer of what you do." [Saba: 10-11].

He also informed us that he was the One that facilitates knowledge about things we make use of in our daily lives:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَصْوَابِهَا وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا أَثْنَا وَمِثَالًا إِلَى حِينٍ * وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْهَا خَلْقَ ظِلَالٍ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ بَأْسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ

“And Allâh has made for you in your homes an abode, and made for you out of the hides of the cattle (tents for) dwelling, which you find so light (and handy) when you travel and when you stay (in your travels), and of their wool, fur, and hair (sheep wool, camel fur, and goat hair), a furnishing and articles of convenience (e.g. carpets, blankets, etc.), a comfort for a while.

And Allâh has made for you out of that which He has created shades, and has made for you places of refuge in the mountains, and has made for you garments to protect you from the heat (and cold), and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence. Thus does He perfect His Grace unto you, that you may submit yourselves to his will (in Islâm). [Nahl: 80-81]

He said He sent down the steel for the purpose of armoury and other mundane things. Making use of such things requires some technological skills.

But He warned that the technology of the people of old was of no avail when the punishment His came to them due to their insolence.

كَذَّبَتْ عَادَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (*) إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (*) إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (*) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا
(*) وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (*) أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ (*) وَتَتَّخِذُونَ
مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ (*) وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ (*) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (*) وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا
تَعْلَمُونَ (*) أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ (*) وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (*) إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (*)

'Ad (people) belied the messengers. When their brother Hûd said to them:

"Will you not fear Allâh and obey Him?" Verily! I am a trustworthy messenger to you. "So fear Allâh, keep your duty to Him, and obey Me. "No reward do I ask of you for it, my reward is only from the Lord of the mankind, jinns, and all that exists. "Do you build high palaces on every high place, while you do not live in them? "And do you get for yourselves palaces (fine buildings) as if you will live therein forever. "And when you seize, seize

you as tyrants? "So fear Allâh, keep your duty to him, and obey Me. "And keep your duty to him; fear Him who has aided you with all (good things) that you know. "He has aided you with cattle and children. "And gardens and springs. "Verily, I fear for you the torment of a great Day." [Shu'araa: 123-135].

As for Thamud, He the Mighty said about them:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (*) إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلا تَتَّقُونَ (*) إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (*) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (*) وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (*) أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِينَ (*) فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (*) وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ (*) وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَارِهِينَ (*) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (*) وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (*) الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (*)

Thamûd (people) belied the messengers. When their brother Sâlih (Saleh) said to them: "Will you not fear Allâh and obey Him?" I am a trustworthy messenger to you. "So fear Allâh, keep our duty to Him, and obey me. "No reward do I ask of you for it, my reward is only from the Lord of the mankind, jinns and all that exists. "Will you be left secure in that which you have here?. "In gardens and springs, and green crops (fields etc.) and date-palms with soft spadix. "And you carve houses out of mountains with great skill. "So fear Allâh, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. "And follow not the command of criminals and sinners, "who make mischief in the land, and reform not." [Shu'araa: 141-152].

Therefore, as Islam emphasizes the religious knowledge which is about the Qur'aan and the Sunnah [and their tools such as the Arabic Language and Poetry], it does not rule away having knowledge about the mundane things. Only that we need to learn those things in the Islamic sense.

Yes, studying Science in the conventional schools is always done with the indoctrination that 'nature' caused everything, that there was no Creator behind things. Science should not be studied by the Muslims in that context. There are many theories in Science that must be expunged from the syllabus of the Muslims

such as the theory that ‘energy can neither be created nor destroyed;’ that is sheer disbelief. Then such things as the Evolution Theory [of Charles Darwin] and the Big Bang Theory are just nonsense. Learning those things is forbidden, there is no doubt.

This reminds one of a Malthusian economic theory of world’s population in a geometric progression and that of the resources in arithmetic progression; that the world should be careful lest the resources become so scarce that they cannot go round the people.¹⁶ That theory is evil and devilish. Allaah has been the Provider and He will never cease to be One.

And generally Philosophy – which seeks to incite a thinking in one that that there is no Creator – is forbidden. The whole of Qur’aan and Sunnah suffice the Muslims from the whole of Philosophy there is no gainsaying about this.

Challenges to Face Proper Islamic Education

The concept of Islamic education is not a Utopia such that a person might think it is impracticable. One, there had been an era in the Islamic history where such was what was in practice. That era brought good for the Muslims.

The major challenge is the Muslim to stand by this truth. Therefore the duty is on every Muslim community especially where the Sunnah is in place to create an enabling environment for this reality. Some Muslims have to start to serve as examples for others.

The watchword once again is being upon the Qur’aan and the Sunnah the way the best era had done it.

If it is done sincerely for Allaah, the result will not be far to behold and we would have all contributed our quota to the meaningful and purposeful growth of the Islam and the Muslims in our society.

¹⁶ By Thomas Malthus [1766-1834] in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*.

Conclusion

May Allaah forgive this writer for all the shortcomings that might be in this work. May He exalt the mention of Muhammad, his household, Companions and those who follow their footsteps.