

DA'WAH ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED  
STATES: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

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**TERJUMAN-UL-QURAN**

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## **DA'WAH ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS**

By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Editor "Terjuman-ul-Qur'an" (the writer) spent best part of July, 1998, visiting the United States as part of a Da'wah mission. This write up has been penned down while travelling in the Orange County (California). It appears pertinent here to discuss in depth various aspects of Islamic Da'wah in America. The topic though confined to Da'wah in the U.S., has a direct bearing on the challenges being faced today by Pakistan and also the entire Muslim Ummah.

This visit, taking place after a long interval, has given me the opportunity to observe and understand the latest situation in the United States. I have been to U.S. nearly twenty times during the past thirty years. The last visit took place many years back, for attending an international conference in Washington. In spite of numerous invitations, I could not, however, avail the chance to be here again due to health problem and other pre-occupations. Thank God, I have maintained close links with the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Association of Muslim Social Sciences (AMSS) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), and have, in the past, been participating in their major programmes. I am here once again after a long interval.

The American Finance House - La Riba, USA has instituted an Award which it has been conferring annually for the last five years for outstanding services in the field of Islamic Economics and Finance. They decided to confer this award on me this year. The award giving ceremony was organized in Pasadena (California) on July 11, 1998. A week before that, ICNA held its 23rd Annual Convention at Pits berg from July 3 – 9. "Rediscovering Family" was the topic of the Convention this year. I had the opportunity to deliver three lectures. I also addressed the community get together at New York, the Orange County and in San Jose, and had the opportunity to talk to many friends and colleagues at various places. The last of the series of programmes was held in Houston; it was the first ever International Conference on Islamic Economics in the United States where I delivered the keynote address. The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), Rice University and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) jointly organized the conference. The conference was attended by a wide spectrum of specialists and senior executives, both Muslims and non-Muslims, engaged in the banking and economic sectors.

The busy 18-day American tour was extremely useful in that it provided me the opportunity of coming in contact with colleagues in the local Islamic Movement and members of the Muslim community belonging to different schools of thought and to exchange views with them and understand the local scenario. Naturally, all this while, the main subject of my discussions remained the Islamic Movement and the challenges it faced. Pakistan's nuclear tests and the economic sanctions also came up for discussion in almost all the conferences and gatherings, and thank God, I could explain the position of Pakistan and the Islamic Movement on these issues. In the July 11 function, useful discussion was held with Economic Editor of the "Los Angeles Times".

Issues covering the Islamic and interest-free banking also remained constant topics of these discourses.

Today if there be those 56 independent Muslim states wherein live 900 million Muslims and in a constant state of strife to restructure their individual and social lives according to the teaching of Islam, there also exist 85 Muslim communities, living as minorities in their respective countries, who together make-up 400 million beings. In their respective localities, they are also busy in the same struggle of molding their lives according to Islam. Thus, to discuss the U.S. affairs, in fact, may be helpful to understand the problems and carve out future course of action for a good part of the Muslim Ummah.

The specific importance of the U.S. is for many reasons. At the advent of the 20th century, U.S. was a regional power and its interest was limited only to the American continent which included Canada, the U.S. and some countries and islands in the Central and South America. This inward looking policy was based on the ideology called the "Monroe Doctrine". This meant that the U.S. sphere of influence covered the states of Northern, Southern and Central America, where no other country was to interfere. As for the rest of the globe, the U.S. was least interested. The Spanish-American War of 1898 broke this fortification and marked the starting point for the U.S. global role. Hawaii got annexed to the U.S. and the Philippines had to stay subservient inspite of independence. More recently and gradually, however, Europe and then Asia emerged as the play ground for the U.S.

The U.S. decision to induct its 350,000 armed personnel into the First World War (1914-18) proved decisive and consequently the U.S. became the dominant force in European politics. The Japanese air strike of the Pearl Harbor pushed the U.S. into the Second World War (1939-45). It did the 'feat' of dropping atom bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the end of World War II, the geo-political map had changed so much that the European nations, which had ruled Europe and best part of the world for almost 500 years and played the role of regional as well as global powers, were left with no voice and weight. China and Japan who were emerging as Asian powers got subjugated. Two new world powers, i.e. the U.S. and the USSR, then commanded the whole globe. With the end of the 50-year old cold war, following the dismemberment of the Soviet Union as a result of the death blood caused by the Afghan 'Jehad', a totally new scenario emerged. The countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia got free and the U.S. was left as the world's only super-power.

If the U.S. global role is studied deeper, two things become evidently clear. One, its ambition for political and economic dominance, which has been the characteristics of all colonial powers; and two, championing of a message and an ideology different for those of other colonial powers. At the end of the First World War, the U.S. took upon itself to support the cause of democracy, the right of self-determination of nations and to establish such international institutions and bodies that could ensure global peace and respect for international laws. The 14 points of President

Woodrow Wilson and the idea of the League of Nation reflected the same U.S. image. However, soon Woodrow Wilson lost much of support in his own country. In spite of being the torch-bearer of the League of Nation, U.S. failed to become its member. Dictatorship and not democracy started gaining ground in Europe. Communism and Fascism surfaced in the worst of their shapes.

No doubt, U.S. economic power provided it base for its political power. (With a population that has never been more than 6 percent of that of the world, it owned 33 percent of the global GDP after the First World War). Still in spite of a good start between the two Wars, its political role, however, remained limited. After World War II, all the traditional European powers lay vanquished and dejected. The U.S. did take decisive part in the two wars, but had never itself been the battle-field. It was thus saved of the devastation of war. In short, both Europe and Asia were the battle-grounds and thus utterly ravaged. The USSR, though victorious, was bleeding. But the U.S. was unscathed and fully intact. Consequently its global role went on increasing after World War II. U.S. again took an ideological position; the cold war between the U.S. and the USSR turned into a tussle of the capitalist democracy against the communist dictatorship.

Superiority of capitalism and the market economy, human rights, liberty and supremacy of the democratic institutions were the topics of debate. There was thus an ideological overtone of the battle for political hegemony. When the USSR got disintegrated and ineffective following its defeat in Afghanistan, the U.S. strategists and scholars gave the world the slogan that liberal democracy was now supreme, market economy provided the solution to every problem and the American ideology has won over all other systems. Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington were its great preachers. The U.S. government under President George Bush presented its "New World Order" as its crowning glory and declared that the 20th and 21st centuries belonged to the U.S. The well known and influential U.S. political thinker, Mortimer Zuckerman, who is Chief Editor of "U.S. News and World Report", and a Publisher and Chairman of "The New York Daily News", writing in the famous "Foreign Affairs" magazine (May-June, 1998) under the heading "A Second American Century" and tries to take us to the conclusion:

"Seventeenth century belonged to France, the nineteenth was that of Britain and the twentieth of the U.S. Twenty first will also be American" **(p.31)**

Presently, U.S. share in total world production is 25 percent. In the next 12 years (by 2010), it is expected to drop to 20 percent. Even by holding one-fifth of the world's production, the U.S. expects to remain the single largest economic power in the next century. Apart from the economy, it dominates the world culturally and civilizationally. Jeans in dress, McDonald and Pizza-hut in food, Coca-Cola and Pepsi in soft drinks and Hollywood and Walt Disney in movie and films are various signs of this world dominance. Then, the monopoly over nuclear capability, masquerading as a champion and big boss of human rights, and through a new American legislation, its empowerment to impose economic sanctions against other countries for their alleged religious discrimination, as also its over-weening pride and vanity to impose American laws on other nations

in the name of macro-trafficking and terrorism - all these are part of the plans to subjugate the whole world by force, under the supremacy of the sole world power. No doubt, the American administration has targeted to maintain its supreme position unchallenged. Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski of John Hopkins's University, a former American National Security Adviser, declares this American position in quite clear terms in his latest book "The Grand Chessboard" (re-translated):

"Briefly the target of American policy, without an apology, should be double-edged. First, to maintain the dominant position of America for at least one generation and preferably for longer. Second, to create such a geo-political situation that can absorb the shocks and tensions of the socio-political changes and provide for collective responsibility to manage the world peacefully".

**("The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Geostatic Imperatives",  
Z.Brzezinski, 'Beni Books', New York, 1997, p.215)**

In this regard, the worthy Professor considers, side by side with the military and economic power, the global onslaught of the NGOs, the multinationals and the Hollywood culture as being of equally prime importance. It is also felt necessary that no contesting power is allowed to emerge in Europe and Asia (re-translated):

"It is essential that no challenge should now surface which could dominate Europe and Asia, and might have the potential to challenge America" **(p.xiv)**

What Brzezinski views as the gist of his book and the outcome of this whole struggle would be possible only when:

"Geostatic success in the case would represent a fitting legacy of America's role as the first only/last truly global power."

These are, thus, the intentions of the American leadership. But what remains to be seen is whether this strategy can, in fact, meet the challenges the world is facing today. Over the past 10 years, some such weaknesses of the market economy have once again surfaced that have disturbed many thinking minds. They are now frantically looking for a system that preserves the positive aspects of the free-market, yet eliminates the emerging problems like the ever widening economic disparity gaps, the regional and global rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, and the general financial instability, which has upset most of the big economies. Within the last four years, Mexico, France, Britain, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia have had a bitter experience of that unbridled system. The IMF potion is not working. The load of debt is on the increase. The U.S. itself owes 5000 billion dollars in debt. The debt of the developing countries is more than \$ 2200 billion. They pay 260 billion dollar annually as interest, which is even more than the economic aid and investment they receive. The economies of the developed nations are today like bubbles that may explode any time. The daily marketing of foreign exchange

derivatives is now over \$ 1000 billion, which is 30 times more than the daily world trade of actual commodities. Thus, by the sheer force of their paper assets and speculative trade, a few banks and capitalists have taken over the control of the world's entire financial system. They can turn any country or person bankrupt, at will, within minutes. The irony of the situation is that even the famous speculator, George Soros had to lament:

"The international monetary system has been wrecked systematically. The IMF programmes to correct the situation have not proved fruitful".

**("Financial Times", London, Dec 31, 1997)**

In other words both capitalism and economic liberalism have lost the capability to emerge as a panacea for the world's economic ills. On the internal front, many changes have taken place in the U.S. as well. After a year of recession, the economy is showing positive growth, though it may remain short-lived and unstable. The situation prevailing in Japan and East Asia has started affecting it. The budget deficit is getting controlled, but the annual burden of \$ 280 billion of interest remains there. The government and the common citizen are equally in the tight grip of debt, which has risen to the level of 90 percent of America's national wealth (GDP). More than this is the havoc the social and sociological anarchy has wrought. The composition of the population is continuously changing. Thirty percent of the total populations are Afro-Americans and 6 percent Asiatic. The number of those who have migrated from Mexico and Latin America is so high that big communities of the Spanish language and culture have sprung up all over. The U.S. has no way out but to accept, think and develop itself as a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural and even a multi-lingual country. In spite of all the legal and institutional reforms, ethnic segregation is a fact, which is leading to a situation of resistance and clash. The social integration and cohesion, which had saved the big powers from internal conflicts and tensions, are no more there. Crime rate is on the rise; the institution of family stands shattered. The sentimental commotion, mental unrest, sexual ailments are eating up the society from within. The emotional and spiritual vacuum, lack of faith and absence of common resolves are dangerous portents for the civilization. The army is well-equipped but lacks the will to fight or the spirit of sacrifice. This was proved not only in Vietnam but also in Lebanon and more recently in Somalia, where war dependence was more on machine than the human mettle. A situation like this reflects the other side of the picture, which gives the task of Islamic Da'wah in the United States a new meaning and added significance.

Historically, Muslims migrated to the American continent in various phases. Perhaps, the largest wave of Muslim migration surfaced first from Spain and reached the Central and Southern America. Then came the 19th century movement from Europe, Middle East and Central Asia. The effects of both these waves soon vanished. The third movement was the one in which the African Muslims were enslaved and forcefully transported here. They were deprived of their liberty, religion, language and culture. Today's Afro-Americans are the product of that period and are in search of their roots. After the Second World War and particularly during the last 30 years,

Muslims migrated here in great number in search of better prospects. Taken together, the Muslims based in North America today are about 6 million or 3 percent of its population. Islam and Mormon are the two religions considered to be spreading fast. There are more than one thousand mosques and in every locality, Muslim's religious, educational and welfare organizations are being established. As basic human rights are secured for every citizen, and because the Muslims coming from abroad are generally educated and skilled, they are finding a better position in the society. God willing, they are expected progressively to emerge as a force to reckon with.

In the beginning, the emigrants had thought their stay would be temporary and after completing education or working for a while, they would return to their respective countries. During these 30 years, however, there has been a basic difference in approach and the 'migration' mentality has given way to the idea of making America their home and playing a role as part of the land. The immigrants and the local Muslims have the desire and the motive to form one strong community. A part of the Afro-Americans Muslim Movement of Elijah Muhammad, still works as 'Nation of Islam' under the leadership of Farkhan, but its bigger groups and individuals on their own have discovered the true Islamic teachings. They are trying to follow true Islamic way of life, establish such communities, or get merged with in the rest of the Muslim society. As a result, a distinct Muslim community is getting shaped. Islam in America now is not an imported force. It is rather its integral part. This is the big change I have noticed.

'Islam' and 'Muslim' make a very sensitive relationship. Of course, a Muslim is one who accepts Islam, submits himself totally to the servitude of Allah (S.W.T.), and devotes himself or herself for the realization of the objectives and goals set for the human life by Allah and His Prophet (p.b.u.h.). That is why a Muslim is subservient of Islam, and not vice versa. Islam is not what the Muslims do, as some Western thinkers like Wilfred Smith have erroneously taken to believe. Muslims have to be a true model of Islam. A standard Muslim is one whose life reflects Islam. Islam is a criterion and a touchstone. It is the Guidance from Allah (S.W.T.); a "Deen" or a way of life and not mere 'religion' or a set of rituals. This is the straight path revealed for the benefit of mankind through all the Prophets down the ages. This is the ultimate in guidance for humanity, perfected through His last Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and preserved in its true form in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam is a trust in the hands of the Muslims; they have themselves to first follow this Deen in all walks of their individual and collective lives and then become its standard bearer before the whole humanity to fulfill their obligation of 'shahadah' (as a witness unto Truth). Islam is neither an ethnic religion nor the Muslims as a race having monopoly over it. The Qur'an itself has warned the Muslims: "If you will not properly discharge your duty (to convey the message of Islam to all), this responsibility will be entrusted to others". 'Bani Israel' betrayed the 'Amanah' (Trust) reposed in them by Allah and they were dismissed from the position and leadership of nations. This mantle of leadership has now been bestowed upon the followers of the last Prophet, the Muslim Ummah. Their rise and fall depend entirely on their allegiance to this trust. This has been proved by their own history.

Just as Allah is "Rab-ul Mashriqain wa'al Maghribain" (The Lord of the Easts and the Wests) and The Sustainer of all that exists and our Leader and Guide Muhammad (S.A.W.S.) has been sent as the Messenger of Allah for the entire humanity and a blessing and divine favour for the world at large, in the same way the Muslim Ummah as the torch bearer of the universal message, is not confined to a particular region or a geographic boundary. The whole earth belongs to Allah and according to a saying of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.), is like a place of worship (mosque) of the Master. So, it is not just the right but also a duty of every Muslim to take the message of Islam to every nook and corner of the globe and strive to establish the Islamic way of life. The present day Islamic Movements have been able to successfully project this message and concept of Islam. Thank God, the Muslims are engaged the world over today to uphold this ideology and concept.

Leading Muslim jurists had introduced the terms of 'Dar al-Islam', 'Dar al-Harb', 'Dar al-Kufr' and 'Dar al-Amn' (to distinguish various domains, their rights and relationships). These were perfectly right. But as every sovereign country in the world today is a member of the United Nations, new relationships have emerged based on mutual recognition, diplomatic and trade ties, cooperation in the realm of the communication and transport etc. This has given rise to a situation which necessitates proper restructuring of the approach and strategy for the realization of the objectives of the Islamic Da'wah. That is why the renowned Muslim scholar and preacher Dr. Yousuf al-Qardhawi has aptly termed the whole world as 'Dar al-Dawah'. The way 'Habashah' (Ethiopia) was treated in the days of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.) , provides us a good example. Later, following the tradition set by the Companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.), the Muslim traders and preachers took along with them the message of Islam wherever they went. They established Muslim settlements and new communities emerged which became the breeding grounds for Da'wah and the Islamic Movement. From Gujrat (India), and Moplas of Malaka to Sri Lanka and as far as Canton and Shanghai in China, Muslim communities emerged and prospered. On the pattern of this historic tradition, Islamic Da'wah can now be organized in America, Europe and other countries and the emerging issues considered and resolved accordingly.

Another sensitive issue is that of the relationship of the Muslim Ummah and the Western nations. What the West and the U.S. have done and are doing to the Muslim World, is a fact and it is the responsibility of the Muslim masses and their governments to bravely face and counter the situation. In this regard, it is imperative not to mix up the U.S. and the Western governments and the common man there. The targets of our criticism are the leaderships of these countries and their neo-colonial and oppressive policies and designs. But being an Ummah responsible for Da'wah, it is our duty not to treat the common man of the West as our enemy. We should instead take our message to them and try to reform them individually and as a society. This will be in line with the benign tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.S.). This may be a gigantic as well as sensitive task but it has to be carried out on proper lines without sacrificing one for the other. Sure, the message is also to be conveyed to the tyrant rulers. Yet, because of their oppression, it will be wrong for us to keep away from the general public and stop trying to win them over. The Muslims have to do



this duty of Da'wah and spreading the message of 'din' under any circumstances. In a democratic set up, it becomes more important and easier to create supporters among the masses and positively affect the government policies. A pre-requisite for this is that the Muslims should become standard-bearer of justice and support the oppressed in a society. We should rise against all forces of injustice and oppression. We should try to grasp the real issues facing a society, be they moral, economic, political or cultural and help in guiding their solutions. Our image before the public must not be that of a hollow preacher; we should instead be the spokesmen of the oppressed, the succor and strength for the weak, so that together we could stand up to promote the cause of justice and virtue. Justice should be our forte, even with our adversaries. We may then find them soon joining our ranks. We are not to fight for the rights of the Muslims alone; we should instead stand up as the champion of right and justice for all. Only then shall we be a catalyst for change, a change that will tear apart the vesting's of the prejudice and ignorance and win over the hearts of the deadly opponents. A case in point may be the glorious example for the following incident of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah. Abu Jehl, the Quraish chieftain and sworn enemy of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.) had purchased two precious camels from a person and, inspite of all efforts, Abu Jehl was not making the payment to him. On his complaint, he was mockingly guided by the Quraish to take his case to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.). The man came to the Holy Prophet, who accompanied him to the house of Abu Jehl and knocked at his door. Finding the Prophet (S.A.S.) standing at his door, Abu Jehl was dumb founded. He was almost pale and trembling with fear. He admitted his mistake and silently went to bring back the payment. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.) was armed with no deadly weapon other than the moral strength of a sterling character. Not alone the American Muslims the world over have much to learn from this aspect of the glorious life of our Holy Prophet (S.A.W.S.)

The unity of the Muslim Ummah is a great blessing of Islam. In this age of nation-states, the national and geographical boundaries cannot altogether be overlooked. To remain enchained to those boundaries will, however, be a big tragedy. The Muslims will have to follow the middle path. Wherever they, they must on the one hand make Da'wah the objective of their lives while fighting for the rights of their compatriots - Muslims as well as non-Muslims. On the other hand, they must also establish and sustain their relations and linkages with the Muslim Ummah. They must not forget their roots, consider the problems and constraints of the Ummah as their own and do their best to resolve them. We can discharge our duties only if we have the understanding of our role, both as an individual in a society and as a member of the Muslim Ummah. A Muslim should always keep it in mind that the first area of his activities is his own locality, where he should stand out as a witness unto the sublime Truth, work hard for the supremacy of the World of Allah in the society and establish suitable institutions for the purpose. The following four areas are of vital importance in this regard:

- 1) Self Reformation: The first and foremost are the efforts to strengthen and preserve one's moral, religious and cultural identity. Individual is the corner stone of the

Islamic structure. Our da'wah and other activities will be fruitful only if every Muslim - man, woman, young and old - becomes a good human being and a living model of Islam. This must be the first objective of our da'wah program.

- 2) Muslim Family: The family system faces great challenges throughout the world. In America and Europe, highly organized social movements are busy destroying the family institution. They have the limitless resources to wage their war on most scientific lines. The fact is that the future of human civilization is at stake. Nothing can save a nation if its family system is destroyed. Protection of the Muslim family and its progress should be one of the major targets, especially in America. Essential to understand is that the family system has to be structured and organized on the principles laid down in the Holy Qur'an and the 'Sunnah' (Tradition of the Holy Prophet). There are customs and traditions, devoid of any religious sanction and having the irreligious but local colour. These may be carefully discarded or improved. The central importance attached to the family system in Islam and the general division of responsibilities on which it is based, needs be developed and promoted according to the letter and spirit of Islamic injunctions. The system should run on the lines of the Islamic principle of consultation (Shoora). The rights and obligations are as balanced as Islam has enjoined. The Holy Quran says:

"O' ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones" **(Al-Tahreem: 66 : 6)**

It is, therefore, imperative to give due importance to home, to attend to the family needs, to take care of its proper education and to cater not only for its corporal needs but also to run the affairs of the family in accordance with the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah, for which may be followed an Islamic model as suited to a country. Mothers have undoubtedly a very important role to play in such a family system. But other members of the family, including fathers too have much to contribute for the success of the system. If we fail to do our part effectively we cannot avert the doom inevitable for all those who transgress from the course of nature.

- 3) Establishment of a Muslim Community: Islam lays stress not only on the individual life and struggle; it also makes group formation (jama'ah) and a collective and organized effort as an essential component of the Islamic way of life, or rather its distinctive feature. Without a social life based on Islam the Ummah cannot exist as an entity. For this, a collective struggle is necessary to enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and to ensure establishment of institutions which may strengthen the society. Such institutions are mosques, schools, endowment trusts, welfare

organizations, da'wah institutions, social security institutions, facilities for academic excellence, vocational training and mental, physical and moral uplift for men and women and children, formations of information and mass awareness, recreative facilities, income-generating activities, conciliation courts and administration of justice, supremacy of law, and above all an arrangement to make the authority of the State subservient to Islam. Extension of the Islamic way of life demands that wherever possible such institutions be established and the Muslim society is organized and based on the foundations of 'Shoora'.

- 4) Ties with the Muslim Ummah: Efforts must be made to forge close links with the Muslim communities everywhere, international institutions be established and supported for better understanding of the problems and challenges facing the Ummah and to cooperate for their settlement, and the pace of Islamic resurgence be accelerated at the global level in order to strengthen the Islamic forces for the supremacy of 'Deen' (Islam).

As Muslims it is our duty, wherever we may be, to set our targets and priorities within this framework and initiate action for whatever is achievable, while remaining restive to accomplish what is hard to realize.

We would like specially to seek attention of the American Muslims and the leadership of their organizations, that in the light of the benign teachings of Islam and the glorious traditions of the Muslims, they should, according to their prevailing conditions, design their strategy. The Divine injunctions can never be compromised. On this depends our salvation here and in the life hereafter and which guarantees our distinct identity. Following arrangements may, however, be desirable:

1. In settlements, where Muslims have migrated from different parts of the world and have brought with them their peculiar contradictions and problems, customs and traditions specific to their original localities, an awareness has to be created to enable them to distinguish between what is basic and of prime importance and what is peripheral and of secondary nature. The local Muslims and particularly the Afro-American Muslims of the United States, who make a sizeable portion of the Muslim community, deserve respect and love. There is a need to feel for their constraints and respect their traditions. New institutions should emerge to promote better understanding, sympathy and fellow feeling among these communities. Muslims should not get themselves compartmentalized and divided into islets. Small groups wherever they may exist need to be integrated and united through inter-linkages. If we fail to produce a unified picture of a homogenous community, how can we project the universal message of Islam. To establish the difference between 'Deen' and the local customs and the quest for points of unity within the diversity of the Muslim community, are the serious challenges.

2. The gender role is also an important issue. To quote examples that Islam forbade live burial of girls and gave them a respectable status in society is not enough. The crying need of the day is that staying within the limits of 'Shariah' (Islamic code), both Muslim men and women should perform their respective roles to protect the family institution and to enforce virtue and prohibit the society from wrong. The Islamic spirit of 'Shoora' (mutual consultation) should guide over affairs at home. Women should get Islamic education as well as general education, living within the prescribed limits of Islamic modesty (hijab), the spectacle of a well-knit family and a model society should be brought before the world.
3. Education and training of the children merits special attention. It should naturally start at home and in the family environment. It is, however, necessary to simultaneously establish on Islamic lines schools, colleges and organizations for the boys, girls and youth which may undertake extensive activities suited to their age, need and aptitudes. Youth organizations, thanks God, have come up, but there is a dire need for suitable institutions for boys and girls aged 8 - 13 years. These must be planned and set up forthwith.
4. Muslims must not lag behind in the realm of education and research. In fact, this should be a leading role, so that the Muslim community may come up well equipped with necessary skills and leadership qualities. It is essential that the future religious leadership of Muslims should emerge from the local population of America as well of Europe. To achieve this, solid foundations are to be laid for religious education based on modern means of communication and Da'wah techniques. Institutions for the purpose should be set up at the regional and national levels.
5. Another important pre-requisite is grooming of individuals and institutions to prepare new Islamic literature. Praise is to Allah, I had the opportunity this time to see much new literature for the children. New publications and audio-visual material have also started pouring in on subjects concerning this particular society. Much more, however, remains to be done. Literature prepared elsewhere may be useful only to some extent. The available literature must be redrafted and produced afresh to conform to the popular taste of the new readership. New writers should be groomed and encouraged to produce Islamic literature taking into account new concepts and modern technology. There should be a coordinated effort in this respect by various organizations to pool their resources and divide the work for better results. Keeping in view the size of the American market, appropriate marketing organizations must also be set up.

6. The time has now come for setting up a Muslim trade network to help the Muslim community follow the precepts of 'Halal' (permitted by Shariah) and Haraam (forbidden), and to facilitate them create new institutions for the economic self-reliance and mutual cooperation. In this regard the problems faced by Afro-American Muslims are very complex. There is a strong movement of conversion to Islam in jails. But correspondingly the arrangements to absorb these new converts into the society are far too meager. There is a great need to help them sustain themselves economically once they are out of jails. This warrants immediate attention.
7. Another need of the hour is to develop Muslim media on priority basis. Muslims should have their own media and a clout in the national media as well. I saw Islamic programmes on the Internet in America and was greatly pleased. The need, however, is to effectively enter into every sphere of activity. Efforts should be made in this regard in an organized manner and the youngsters be guided in career planning, according to community needs.
8. The imperative need for work in the local population and keep contact with every segment of the society can hardly be over-emphasized. In addition to Da'wah activities, the local population should be brought closer by personal examples and their practical involvement in the social activities of the community. There is no exclusive Missionary class in Islam, nor a religious establishment like that of Christianity. Every Muslim is duty-bound to engage himself/herself in Da'wah activities in his/her locality, office, factory, school, college, university etc. He/she has to set his/her personal example through his/her words and deeds. A Muslim is required to take interest in other's affairs, win over their sympathy, help solve the common problems of the community and let the people realize how by following the Islamic teachings, individuals can benefit spiritually and morally and how the community life and the world system at large can be improved. Today, the American society is without any message or a model. It has no example to offer to its own people or to the humanity. It is now our duty to let Islam emerge as a message, a model and an example.
9. Lastly, the policies of the country and its political leadership concerning the country's community life and its national and international affairs should also form part of our sphere of interest. Democratic societies have their own ways to influence the policies. It is not wise to let others have their say in society matters. To create sympathy for the problems of the Muslim Ummah and to present the community's case with sound arguments is also a very important area of activity. America, its people and the Muslim Ummah have many common points of interest. If a

particular small group can dictate America to blindly toe its line of interest, can we, the Muslims, not make the Americans realize that friendship with the Muslims is in their own interest? Muslims living in America and Europe can become a bridge between the World of Islam and the West. They can play a pivotal role in minimizing the chances of conflict and coercion in the world and paving the way for mutual cooperation and co-existence.

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