

On Progress and Leadership

by

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The spread of critical ideas in a society is still very much irrepressible, despite attempts to suppress and neutralize such ideas. Islamic history has shown how Muslims have been sensitive and receptive towards new ideas and influences though they have also been sympathetic and slow towards eliminating those considered as destructive.

Faced by many challenges, it is thus important for Muslims to first of all adopt an attitude which is not one of dejection or uncertainty. If armed with a strong character and the right stream of thought, Muslims can face the challenges of the modern world.

The search and acquisition of knowledge do not for certain induce a man to act in a certain manner. The wealth of knowledge one has does not make him, for example, a good leader. A good leader must have the attitude or desire to strive and think. It is these attitudes that enable him/her to feel and act on the problems that occur in the society. A leader must have ethical integrity and a thinking capacity. It is his/her responsibility to contribute to society and this comes, not from his presence of knowledge but his psycho-emotional attitude that induce such thoughts and actions.

The importance of the right form of leadership and the right kind of people to hold the reins of leadership is vital for the development of a progressive society. Leaders should provide the settings for their society to think and act progressively. Inevitably, one's social surroundings influence one's thinking. As such, it is important for Muslims to introduce into his/her own circle the belief in the necessity of planning.

In addition, one has to be selective of the problems raised. There is a need to view the working of society as a living organism whose structure and parts are interdependent.

The society's activities have to move in the direction which allows it to attain a humane and well-defined ideal.

One cannot deny that one of the challenges that the world of Islam has to face is the socio-economic condition of the Muslims. The social deficiency caused by economic backwardness and oppression, internally and externally, has undeniably created hurdles; thus, making it harder for Muslims to be progressive. Hence, it is crucial for us to stress on the importance of having the right type of leaders. Leaders should put in place proper planning to overcome backwardness and oppression by allocating resources for the right purposes.

As mentioned by Syed Hussein Alatas, one pressing problem in many Muslim societies is the absence of a group of thinkers that is strong enough to become a force in the revival of religious values. The existence of thinkers in a society is essential to create awareness and to act on the problems that occur in a society. There is a need for a group of thinkers to pose problems of their society, to define these problems, to analyze them and to provide solutions for the society. Only then can a society overcome its shortcomings and progress. The presence of thinkers help to disseminate ideas and instill the attitude to strive and think, which is essential for a society to surge forward since it is the state of complacency that causes society to decline. Muslim communities must also be receptive to new ideas. They cannot be relying solely on former thinkers to explain or justify their present state. The Muslim world must evolve together with the changes in the modern world. Only then can we hope for progress.

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