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THE FAMILY AS AN INSTITUTION IN THE 21st CENTURY: IDEALS AND REALITIES



The Family conference from 13th to 14th December 2010 filled the event hall of the Institute with 26 speakers, honored guests, and hundreds of participants. Attendees were welcomed by Dr Osman Bakar of IAIS, Turgay Karaman of the Malaysian Turkish Dialogue Centre, and Ahmet Muharrem of the Journalists and Writers Foundation, Istanbul, which had convened a Family conference the month before in Turkey. The event was officially opened by the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Senator Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and closed by the Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Senator Dato' Dr Mashita Hj Ibrahim.

With speakers from as far west as the U.S and as far east as the Philippines, eight sessions were held through the two days, themed on Family Values and Family Institutions in Traditional Islam, The Muslim Family in the 21st Century, Women, the Family and Society, Domestic violence and the Issue of Family Health, Social and Globalisation Impact on Family Values and Institutions, Abandoned Babies, Towards a Healthier, More Dynamic and Peaceful Family and Home Environment, and Challenges in the Family Institution in Muslim Minority Communities. The ninth and final plenary just prior to closing was an interfaith

dialogue entitled "Challenges of the Family Institution in the 21st Century" where perspectives from Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam were presented.

Memorable conclusions reached included the following: (i) it will be the inter-faith arena which will most successfully control the threats and challenges to the contemporary family, (ii) the extended family, which had been such a valuable network of support in the past, must be revived, (iii) problems in the family arise from increasingly materialistic lifestyles, rising consumerism and unsustainable consumption patterns, (iv) the state should support fully and facilitate the adoption of abandoned babies, and they should be given full citizen status and standing by the state, and (v) a graduated approach, where education, baby hatches, and punishment for people who harm babies are all valid solutions in a more nuanced understanding of the baby abandonment problem.



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WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK LUNCHEON WITH THE PRIME MINISTER



Courtesy of The Committee For the Promotion of Inter-religious Understanding and Harmony

In a 'Majlis Ramah Mesra' at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre on 14 Feb 2011, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak held court with religious leaders at a luncheon held in conjunction with World Interfaith Harmony Week, an idea conceived by King Abdullah of Jordan and his personal envoy and special adviser Prince Ghazi Muhammad, presented to the United Nations and slated to be an annual event, observed in the first week of February.

As part of the Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs (Accin), IAIS Malaysia was represented at the event by a delegation led by Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Deputy CEO. Among others present were Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism president Rev Dr Thomas Philips, Accin council member Sabariah Abdullah and Buddhist Chief High Priest of Malaysia K. Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera.

Datuk Seri Najib emphasized that extremism in any faith would leave a negative impact on the community, leading to his call for the formation of a global movement of moderates at a United Nations General Assembly last year. Commending the setting up, locally, of a committee for the promotion of inter-religious understanding and harmony, he said it would bring together different religious groups for constructive dialogues towards a better understanding of religions.

EDITORS' NOTE

Editorial and Announcement of Inter-faith Harmony Week

Thanks to everyone who provided constructive feedback to us about the bulletin. We want to make this publication responsive to your needs. Last year, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution at the request of HM the King of Jordan and 29 other member countries that:

1. Reaffirms that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogues constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;
2. Proclaims the first week of February of every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;
3. Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, Temples and other places of Worship during that week based on love of God and Love of the Neighbor, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly informed of the implementation of the present resolution.

In the spirit of the above resolution, IAIS Malaysia has been coordinating with a number of governmental and non-governmental groups in Malaysia to spread the message of interfaith harmony.



ERIC WINKEL
Co-Editor

Interview: Prof. Osman on Interfaith Relations in Malaysia

Concurrently Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Senior Fellow at the Prince al-Waleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, Washington D.C.; Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Civilisational Dialogue in the UM; Visiting Research Fellow at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan

Q1: Your work in inter-religious and inter-civilisational dialogue is widely recognised and highly esteemed. Am I right in presuming that you may well be one of the pioneers, nation-wide or even region-wide, in this initiative?

Answer: Others can verify whether or not I deserve to be called one of the pioneers in interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogues in this country. What I can tell you is this: I have been involved in such dialogues since the early 1970s. When I was a PhD student in Mathematics in London in 1971-1973 I took part in several dialogues with Christian groups. After I came back to Malaysia I had my first dialogue in 1975 with the Asian Christian Bishops Conference in Kuala Lumpur. A year or two later I was part of a Muslim youths group having dialogue with Buddhist youths in Penang. Since then I participated in various capacities in more and more interreligious dialogues. But the most memorable interreligious and inter-civilizational event which I helped to organize was the 1995 Dialogue between Islam and Confucianism at the University of Malaya. It was the largest conference ever held in the world on the dialogue theme. There were more than 1000 participants attending the conference. The University gathered leading scholars of Islam and Confucianism from all over the world. And I think the record is still unbroken!

I remember well how I was criticized by one of the participants (a Muslim) for calling the event "Dialogue between Islam and Confucianism." He said that by comparing and contrasting Islam with Confucianism I have upgraded the latter to the status of a religion when it is not. Of course

as Chairman of the Organizing Committee I defended the theme of the dialogue with arguments why it is legitimate to describe Confucianism as a religion. Interestingly, among the audience were a few followers of Confucianism from Indonesia who were soliciting support for the recognition of Confucianism as a religion in their country. At that time and until many years later the Indonesian government refused to recognize Confucianism as a religion. Recognition only came during the rule of President Abdul Rahman Wahid.

The impact of the conference was not only in Malaysia but also at the international level. Let me mention two of the post-Conference activities. One is the Islam-Confucianism Dialogue Circle based at Harvard University and headed by Professor Tu Wei Ming, a world leading scholar of Confucianism, who was one of the main speakers at the Dialogue between Islam and Confucianism in Kuala Lumpur. The other is a series of seminars held in China on the dialogue between Islam and Confucianism.

Encouraged by the success of the conference I helped to found in 1996 the Centre for Civilizational Dialogue at the University with the objectives of promoting and advancing the cause of interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogue both at national and international levels. After acting as Director of



the Centre for several months I succeeded in bringing Dr Chandra Muzaffar to head the Centre. With his incomparable credentials as an intellectual-activist in intercultural dialogues, his leadership was a great boost for the Centre.

I am happy to say that for nearly four decades now I have been part of a growing and expanding movement for interfaith and intercultural dialogues both at the national and global levels. My Professorship at the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University from 2000-2005 provided me with further opportunities to expand my interfaith and intercultural dialogue activities and network.

Q2: There has been much debate and some controversy over the term 'religious pluralism'. How would you define it, particularly in the context of multiracial, multi-religious Malaysia?

Answer: If we look at the popular English dictionaries in the world we will find that the term 'pluralism' conveys several meanings. The term is used first of all to simply refer to the socio-cultural fact of "plurality and diversity." Another meaning of it is not factual and

descriptive but interpretive. The term refers to a particular belief, philosophy or ideology that has been adopted to explain why there is plurality and diversity and why a particular policy is preferred to another in the management of plurality and diversity. Now, these meanings of pluralism are applicable to both religious and ethnic phenomena and groups. Thus we can speak of ethnic pluralism as well as of religious pluralism. Since there are many beliefs, philosophies, and theories that seek to explain plurality and diversity and since there are many beliefs and ideologies that seek to justify policies on dealing with them we have before us many ethnic or religious pluralisms. If this is what religious pluralism means why should we object to the usage of the term?

Of course we may find some of the beliefs or philosophies or ideologies in question as unacceptable from the viewpoint of Islam. In other words, those forms or types of religious pluralism are seen as contrary to the teachings of Islam. Clearly Islamic theology does not accept a religious pluralism which maintains that all religions are the same or equal. But if that is the case, then the rational thing to do would be to criticize and reject them without having to throw away the term 'religious pluralism' itself. There are other types of religious pluralism in currency that are not against the teachings of Islam. I maintain that there is indeed such a thing as Malaysian religious pluralism, which is not all contrary to Islam. And in my writings and speeches I have gone as far as claiming that there is such a thing as Islamic religious pluralism and I would support this claim by referring to the Qur'an and Islamic religious history.

In the case of Malaysian religious pluralism, Islam is made the official religion of the Federation and other

religions are allowed to be practiced in freedom. All Malaysians are equal before the law except in those domains that fall under the jurisdiction of Shari'ah law which concerns the Muslims alone. Malaysian religious pluralism is not perfect. It has weaknesses but it also has many points of strength. What we Malaysians need to do is to improve upon them. But we must first understand what religious pluralism is all about and what it is not.

Q3: How would you rate the success of interfaith work in this country; and if there is room for improvement, what would be the appropriate next steps?

Answer: If we understand interfaith dialogue and work in its comprehensive sense then it is not new to this country. Malaysians of all religious communities have dialogued and worked with each other since independence, even well before that. They talked to each other about such fundamental national issues as sharing of political power and national wealth, inter-ethnic peace, and national unity. Their dialogues and collaborative works touched on every aspect of Malaysian life except religion. The leaders feel that religion should be left out of the discussion because they consider it to be too sensitive. So, interfaith dialogue and work understood in its specific sense of pertaining to the purely religious issues is something new to this country. I don't see interfaith dialogue and work in this sense as having taken roots in our society. It is not yet a culture. How can it be so when so many people in the different religious communities are still prejudiced and suspicious of each other?

Still, I would say that there has been progress in interfaith dialogue even if it is only little. If we want to see more progress, then our hope is with

“ In a multi-religious country like Malaysia interfaith dialogue and work must become an integral part of our national culture ”

the religious leaders and scholars. If they fail in their task of laying a strong foundation for interfaith dialogue and work then I don't know how others can succeed. In my view, they cannot fail. In a multi-religious country like Malaysia interfaith dialogue and work must become an integral part of our national culture.

Q4: We are given to understand that the UN has declared the early part of February as an "Interfaith Harmony Week". Given your experience with earlier initiatives such as the 'Common Word', can you elaborate on how this came about?

Answer: On 20 October 2010 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution of King Abdullah and Prince Ghazi of Jordan that calls for the proclamation of "World Interfaith Harmony Week" among all faiths and beliefs and the event is to be held each year in the first week of February. King Abdullah has proposed the idea of the Harmony Week in his speech to the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2010. He proposed a special week "during which the world's people, in their own places of worship could express the teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the other, and peace." The long-term goal of the annual event is the ending of religious war, violence, and crime.

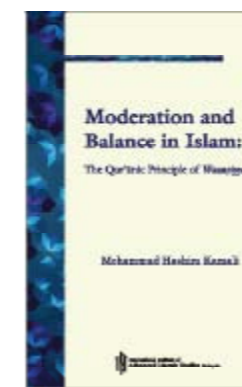
Prince Ghazi, the man behind the idea of the Harmony Week, has to his credit other interreligious and interfaith peace initiatives. I think the most

well-known of these initiatives is the "Common Word" Dialogue principally between Islam and Christianity. Both Professor Hashim Kamali and I have participated in one or more events in the dialogue series. After several interfaith and interreligious initiatives of global significance coming from Jordan I would say that the Kingdom has earned a reputation as the leading Muslim country in the world championing the cause of peace and mutual understanding in our multi-religious world community.

Q5: How would you envision IAIS in ten years time in terms of inter-faith work?

Answer: I cannot predict what will happen in ten years time as far as IAIS' interfaith works are concerned. It is safe to say that IAIS will be more involved in interfaith works. It will organize more events, do more research, and publish more works pertaining to interfaith and intercultural issues. One of the current six areas of research at IAIS is interfaith and inter-civilizational relations. I think this area of research will receive more attention from the IAIS management in the years to come. Of course developments in the country in interreligious relations, both positive and negative, will have an impact on the thinking and planning at IAIS on the issue in question. When talking about the future I can only say Allah knows best!

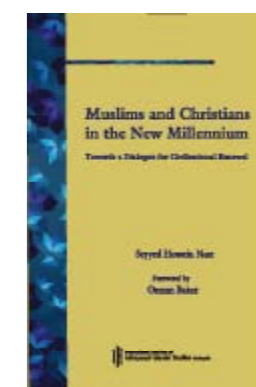
The forthcoming issue of this bulletin will feature an interview with Professor John Esposito on "Religious Pluralism in Malaysia".



M.H.Kamali
Moderation and Balance in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah



Constance C. Govers
Shari'ah and Legal Pluralism in Malaysia



S.H.Nasr
Muslims and Christians in the New Millennium



M.H.Kamali
Civilisational Renewal: Revisiting the Islam Hadhari Approach



M.H.Kamali
IAIS Malaysia: Exploring The Intellectual Horizons of Civilisational Islam



Chandra Muzaffar
OPS 1: Islam and the Future of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Malaysia



John Obert Voll
OPS 2: Dialogue Between Islam and the West



Christian Troll
OPS 3: Dialogue as Encounter in Faith



John Esposito
OPS 4: American Muslims and the Future of American-Islamic World Relations



Shamsul Amri
OPS 5: Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Relations in Malaysia

RESEARCH UPDATES

Professor Dr. Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Presentation on "Freedom of Expression under Malaysian Law and Islam" for IAIS-EU conference on 1-2 March 2011.

Paper on "Shariah, Finance and the Common Good" for an International Conference in Oxford, 12-13 March 2011.

Paper on "How the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Could be Substantiated in the Context of Various Countries and Cultures" for an International Conference in Jordan, 21-23 June 2011.

Dr. Karim D. Crow

Ongoing research into issues of Rationality and Modernity (Islam, faith & reason), as well as Peace-building and Security-Peace (Islam & global order).

Dr. Christoph Marcinkowski

Finalizing work on the book edited by him entitled Malaysia and the European Union: Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century, forthcoming in Summer at LIT Verlag, Berlin. He is also working on two new books on the Malaysian State of Penang and EU-Turkish relations, respectively.

Dr. Eric Winkel

Projective Geometry and Topology in Islamic Eschatology.

Abdul Karim Abdullah

Similarities and Differences Between Islamic Sukuk and Conventional Bonds.

Tengku Iskandar

Islamic Perspective on Creativity.

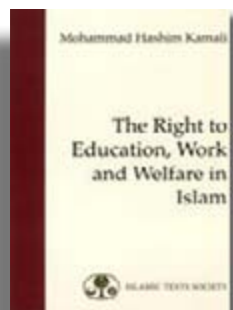
Sheila Aionon

Design and development of IAIS Quarterly Series Booklet on "Issues in Sukuk: Prospects and Reform". Articles to be published: Sukuk defaults; Cross-border sukuk: Malaysian model of Shariah-friendly tax jurisdictions.

Tengku Hazri

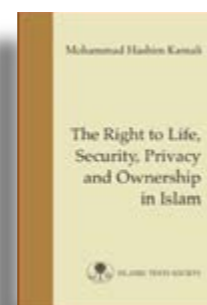
The Commoditisation of Knowledge as a Challenge for Civilisational Renewal.

LATEST PUBLICATIONS



The Right to Education, Work and Welfare in Islam,
pp.x + 294
By Mohammad Hashim Kamali
ISBN: 978-1903682-59-3
Published: 2010
Publisher: The Islamic Texts Society

In *The Right to Education, Work and Welfare in Islam* Professor Kamali develops an Islamic perspective on three connected and complementary areas of rights and liberties. The book is a university text on its subject representing vol. 6 in a seven-volume work on fundamental rights and liberties in Islam.



The Right to Life, Security, Privacy and Ownership in Islam,
pp xxv + 318
By Mohammad Hashim Kamali
ISBN: 978-1903682-54-8
Published: 2008
Publisher: The Islamic Texts Society

A person's rights to life, personal security, privacy, and ownership are the most basic of all the fundamental rights and liberties and are of concern to all legal systems and traditions. To address them side by side with one another, as is attempted in the present volume, is reflective of their natural priority and significance. This book too is a university text on its subject, representing vol. 5 in a seven-volume book the author has written on fundamental rights and liberties in Islam.

BIRD SYMBOLISM

An excerpt from Sheila Aionon Yussof's upcoming publication, The Islamic Art of Safavid Persia and the Malay Archipelago on Bird Symbolism

This paper examines the works of art from Safavid Persia and the Malay Archipelago depicting birds as symbols to represent the behaviour potentials in man and the inward journey of soul purification. In both civilizations and in different eras, birds are used to symbolize the soul and flight to 'higher states of being'. Birds are frequently taken also as symbols of the angels, where they are depicted in paintings as mythical birds conveying a mysterious language called 'the language of birds'. When art is approached from spirit, from divine inspiration, it conveys the one single message of unity with the Divine Muse. The paintings (miniatures) and textiles (batik) selected for examination in this study highlight the diverse influences from Indian cosmology to Iranian Sufism in the mystical dimensions of Islam as shown in their stylistic and artistic expression. Yet there was unity of purpose in producing works of art that bear witness to the Divine Beauty. Islamic art and other sacred art forms during these periods had functioned as an instrument of unity within multiplicity.

There is a universal saying which asks humanity to "Let Nature Be Your Guide", which is in conformity with Islamic beliefs that nature is a divine revelation, a source of spiritual and metaphysical knowledge and a counterpart of the Holy Qur'an.

Bird symbolism in art has been used by various civilizations to represent a certain shared norm or beliefs or even mystical knowledge that is universal in its meaning. Thus in the many systems of religious and mythological concepts, birds are symbolic images or epiphanies of the gods, spirits and divine beings, demiurges and heroes. They act as symbols of divine essence, the sky, the sun, the thunder, and the wind. They also appear as messengers of the heavenly divine beings and herald in new situations (climatic changes) in advance and serve as guides. Moreover, birds symbolize man's soul or spirit as it is released from the body during sleep, ecstasy or in death. The bird is a symbol of absolute freedom and transcendence of the soul from the body, of the spiritual from the earthly. Hence the symbol of a bird is often associated with divinity/deity, immortality, spiritual victory, power and royalty.

The 'Natural World' is variously (and universally) described in different religious traditions as an effect, a manifestation, symbol, or reflection of the 'Spiritual World' whilst conversely the 'Spiritual World' is described as the cause, principle, root, or archetype of the 'Natural World'. All men are said to be living in the very midst of the 'world of divine symbols', and these are accessible to anybody if only he has the mental and spiritual capacity to interpret them as symbols. According to Al-Ghazali, everything that exists in the natural

world is a symbol of something in the higher world. The world is Two Worlds, spiritual and material, or, if you will, a World Sensual and a World Intellectual.

The Prophet said that the Qur'an has an outward and an inward, an ending and a beginning. The Light Verse (Surah An-Nur) in the Qur'an is symbolic of the gradations of human spirits, just as birds are employed in the Mantiq-al-Tayr to represent the various stages of the human souls. The symbol of the bird is regarded as multivalent, capable of standing for a wide variety of spirits, persons, and experiences. And so the imagery of birds flying in a celestial garden is used to indicate the role of prophets, angels and saints. SA



Cenderawasih or Bird of Paradise: Oil on canvas copy of 1950's batik fabric from Pekalongan, Indonesia. From the Private Collection of Sheila Aionon Yussof as exhibited in the National Art Gallery, Malaysia. October, 2010 under exhibition theme: 'Kepada Mu Kekasih Yang Maha Esa'

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Islam in Russia: Historical Facts and Modern Development
Elmira Akhmetova

Islam in Europe: Reflections on Present Trends and Future Challenges
Christoph Marcinkowski

New Approaches Towards Knowledge and Development in the Muslim World
Amer al-Roubaie and Rasha Shaker Abdul Wahab

Interfaith Engagement and Positive Peace: What Works and What is Missing
Katherine Marshall

Justice in Islamic and Western Legal-Political Thought: A Dual Heritage Affecting Gender Justice in Malaysia
Nik Noriani Nik Badli Shah

Envisioning the Future: An Islamic Perspective of Visions of the Future
Eric Winkel

Science and Spirituality in the 21st Century: Is Integration Possible?
Elisabet Sabtouris

Islamic Finance and Economics in Crisis: Fiqhonomic Doctrines and Theoretical Issues
Salah El-Sheikh

NEWS AND EVENTS

1. The IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) interviewed Prof. Kamali for a TV show on the "Role of the Media in Promoting Unity Among Muslims".
2. Prof. Kamali's book *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction* is being translated into Italian to serve as a textbook for Islamic Law in Italian universities. The book is also being translated into Bosnian and Japanese.
3. The Turkish Cultural Center donated 190 books to IAIS, including titles such as "Ikhlas and Taqwa," "The Story of the Reed."
4. Greg Barton of Monash University visited the institute, and he made a presentation on the resurgence of Islam in the 21st century in South East Asia.
5. Our Senior Analyst Tengku Iskandar gave a presentation on Islam and Creativity.
6. IAIS Malaysia welcomes a new staff member, Mr. Mohd Nuruddin bin Abdul Manap as the new Conference and Public Relations Executive starting January 2011. He holds a Master's degree from University of Malaya.
7. IAIS Malaysia bids farewell to Mr. Ari Effendi Abdul Hadi who will be leaving the Institute at the end of February 2011. IAIS Malaysia wishes him every success in the future.
8. On 1-2 March 2011, IAIS Malaysia and the embassies of the Netherlands and the European Union to Malaysia jointly hosted the international conference "Religion in the Public Space". The event featured presentations by Professor Maurits S. Berger (Professor of Islam in the Contemporary West, Sultan of Oman Chair for Oriental Studies, Institute for Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities Leiden University), and Professors Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Datuk Osman Bakar (IAIS Malaysia).
9. Our Senior Analyst Sheila Aion presented her research project work on Shari'ah Audit in Islamic banking.
10. Zarina Nalla and Eric Winkel presented their work on Abandoned Babies in Malaysia.
11. Dr. Jay Wysocki, Visiting Scholar at University of Malaya, gave a lecture on the concept of Work and Religion.
12. Masood Khalid, High Commissioner for Pakistan, and Amar Aftab Qureshi, its Counsellor, paid a courtesy call to IAIS. A possible area for collaboration is the subject of the Media and its role in promoting Muslim unity.
13. Zarina Nalla and Eric Winkel participated in an ARROW (Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women) roundtable on reproductive rights.
14. In January 2011, Emeritus Professor Datuk Osman Bakar was elected one of the three Vice Chairmen of the Southeast Asian Cooperation (SEACO) Task Force, Malaysia, an outfit to help give shape and meaning to the OIC-approved regional cooperation initiative for the five Muslim majority countries — Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, Secretary-General of the World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) and former Secretary-General of the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, chairs this Task Force.
15. Our ICR Journal has three distinguished professors joining its International Advisory Board, Professors Abbas Mirakhor, Mathias Rohe, and Carl Ernst. Welcome!

Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations have been excerpted from longer research articles carried in the IAIS Malaysia Journal of Islam and Civilisational Renewal, Vol. 2, Number 1, October 2010:

In *Constitutionalism and Democracy: An Islamic Perspective*, Mohammad Hashim Kamali concludes that normative teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah are more supportive of freedom of religion and pluralism than scholastic interpretations of schools and scholars of the Shari'ah. Furthermore, evidence shows Islam being in harmony with the principles of democracy, affirmative of religious and intellectual pluralism, and supportive of the democratic principle of separation of powers.

Chaiwat Satha-Anand's *The Ship and the Stranger: A Metaphorical Approach to Governance and Islam* points to highly limited governance in Islam, especially in terms of the power to punish, due to limits which come from a cautious approach to penalties and the circumstances of being human. 'Soft governance' would influence a choice of punishment judged within limits of human reason and understanding, opening up the possibility of a much larger space for the accused to redeem himself.

Through his *Religion, Law and Governance in Malaysia*, Abdul Aziz Bari proposes that any kind of 'Islamisation policies' in future proceed within the existing framework of the Malaysian Constitution, and observes that Malaysians in general, especially the non-Muslims, are more aware of their rights, particularly those enshrined in the Constitution. This, he stresses, should not be seen as a threat by authorities and the Muslim community at large, but rather as a change for true nation-building.

Dato' Dr Zaleha Kamaruddin, in *A Malaysian Perspective on Qur'anic Governance: Family Autonomy vs. State Intervention*, argues that a proper understanding of the role of the shari'ah, its unique approach, the ways in which shari'ah statements are codified into contemporary law, and how best courts interpret the law, would require careful articulation. The state should therefore exercise care when intervening in family matters to ensure equilibrium and reasonable balance.

In *The Rule of Law and Legal Pluralism in Malaysia*, Constance Chevallier-Govers proposes the creation of a distribution body to allocate sensitive cases either to shari'ah or to civil cases, insertion of a basic structure provision in the Constitution, joining the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) [albeit with certain reservations concerning Shari'ah law]; and adoption of a federal law on apostasy, taking as model Negri Sembilan's Enactment that is currently in force.

Azyumardi Azra's *Islam, Corruption, Good Governance, and Civil Society: The Indonesian Experience*, recommends the strengthening of Indonesia's KPK or 'Anti-Corruption Commission', to more effectively pursue efforts to combat corruption.

Bahtiar Effendi, in his *Islam and the State in the Indonesian Experience*, argues in favour of partial accommodation as a viable option for a more enduring relationship between Islam and the

state, as well as open articulation and expression of Muslim concerns, while safeguarding the construct of Indonesia as a nation-state

In concluding his *Filipino Muslims and Issues of Governance in the Philippines: Some thoughts by a Local Practitioner*, Datu Michael O. Mastura concedes that there are manifold reasons for continuing political ties with Manila, and that

the transitive process leading toward autonomy should first and foremost lead to a stop to political violence. The interest in outright independence would be substantially lessened and bring about an end to the conflict through some form of perpetual autonomy or self-governance.

Finally, in *Uniquely Singapore: The Management of Islam in a Small Island Republic*, Suzaina Kadir

recommends that the state allow a new set of Muslim elites to emerge, and that Muslim politics in Singapore require a careful balance between the administration of Islam and allowing space for Islamic society to reform itself from within. This may entail lesser centralisation and more space for greater pluralism within Islam.

IMAM AND THE PASTOR: An Inter-faith Visit



Prof Mohammad Hashim Kamali flanked by Pastor (Dr) James Movel Wuye, left, and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, right

Boardroom. Described as 'both a moving story of forgiveness and a case-study of a successful grass-roots initiative to rebuild communities torn apart by conflict' the film offered a message of hope for the world from an unexpected quarter.

In the 1990s, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa led opposing, armed militias, dedicated to defending their respective communities as violence broke out in Kaduna, northern Nigeria. In pitched battles, Pastor James lost his hand and Imam Ashafa's spiritual mentor and two close relatives were killed. Now the two men are co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in their city, leading task-forces to resolve conflicts across Nigeria. The Imam and the

Pastor documentary tells how they made this remarkable transition (see 'Initiatives of Change International' website, www.iofc.org).

Lo and behold, the very next day, 25 November, we were most privileged to meet the protagonists themselves, in a visit made possible by our friend in JUST, Mr K. Haridas, with assistance from Zarina Nalla and Tengku Iskandar. Fresh from watching the documentary there were questions aplenty from an enamoured audience, awed, encouraged and inspired by this near-miraculous interfaith initiative. The animated, albeit very brief discourse (being a small part of the duo's whirlwind world tour) ended on a positive note of future collaboration.

Wise Words

Words are under your control until you have spoken them, but you come under their control once you have spoken them. So guard your tongue as you guard your gold, for many a word snatches away blessings and brings adversity - *Ali ibn Abu Talib*

It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business - *Mahatma Gandhi*

Feed your heart in conversation with someone harmonious with it; seek spiritual advancement from one who is advanced - *Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi*

When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it - *Dalai Lama*

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless - *Mother Teresa*



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An Interfaith Perspective on Nature and the Environment

by Norhayati Mustapha

A Common cause

Protection and nurturing of the environment is a basic tenet of virtually all the different faiths adhered to in the contemporary world; but it would appear that in the current pace of progress and mad race for industrialization, our early scriptures on the creation of mankind and planet earth have either been misunderstood or intentionally misinterpreted.

There is an urgent need to recognize the role of spirituality and religion in establishing guidelines to protect the environment. We are after all, part of nature and should adopt humility, not arrogance, in our dealings with it; we need to be aware that changing our behaviour, and therefore our impact on the planet, is necessary and ethically right, and is the path dictated by wisdom.

In Asian traditions, nature is commonly infused with religious significance. Buddhism and Hinduism consider it wrong to cause injury to any living creature; strict Jainism go to great lengths to avoid harming even the smallest insect. Japanese Shintoism has an extremely close relation with the natural world; its shrines usually built in sacred groves evocative of the mystery and peace pervading the countryside. The following is a cursory glimpse of scriptural references to nature and the environment in the respective belief systems:

Buddhism teaches that in this universe of energies, everything affects everything else. The ocean, the sky, the air are all inter-related, and inter-dependent – water is life and air is life. Buddhist practice is based on regarding one's existence as not more important than anyone else's; and the Buddha commended frugality as a virtue in its own right, advocating a simple, gentle,

non-aggressive attitude towards nature. Once nature is treated as a friend and therefore cherished, mankind can see the need to change attitude from dominating, to working with, nature; and would realize that men are an intrinsic part of existence rather than in control of it.

Hinduism bequeathed the Bhagavad Gita which conveys the message "Conserve ecology or perish" in a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna. In verses 3.14-16 the dialogue describes the ecological cycle as follows: "All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced from performance of yajna (sacrifice), and yajna is born of prescribed duties ... One who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas certainly lives a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain".

Sikhism asks its followers to be kind to people, animals and birds, and teaches against a life of conspicuous, wasteful consumption. The Guru Granth Sahib recommends a judicious utilization of material and cultural resources available to humans, as per the following quote: "Then why get attached to what you will leave behind, Having wealth, you indulge in pleasures bout, From that, tell me, who will bail you out?, All your houses, horses, elephants and luxurious cars, They are just pomp and show, all totally false." It is noteworthy that towards the end of the 17th century, the last living Guru of the Sikhs listed the use of tobacco as one of the four major acts forbidden to initiated adherents to the Sikh religion.

Taoism, in its basic classic, the Tao de Ching, presents a verse which goes: "Humanity follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, Heaven follows the Tao,

and the Tao follows what is natural", implies that the whole of humanity should attach great importance to the earth and should obey its rule of movements. Furthermore, everything is composed of two opposite forces known as Yin and Yang, the former representing the female, the cold and so forth while the latter represents the male, the hot and so on, the two forces being in constant struggle within everything. Only when they reach harmony is the energy of life created – thus stressing the importance of harmony to nature.

Confucianism in its teachings tells us that "Confucius fished with a line but not with a net. While fowling he would not aim at a roosting bird" (Analects 7.26). A quote by Mencius I.A.3 goes "If you do not allow nets with too fine a mesh to be used in large ponds, then there will be more fish and turtles than they can eat; if hatchets and axes are permitted in the forests on the hills only in the proper seasons, then there will be more timber than they can use... This is the first step along the kingly way."

Christianity tells of St Francis of Assisi who started the tradition of preventing cruelty to animals. According to the Old Testament, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden "to till and preserve it" (Genesis 2:15). Jesus says in the Gospel of Luke, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Ch 12, verses 6-7). Pope Paul VI commented in his Apostolic Letter: "by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he (humanity) risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation ... flight from the land, industrial growth, continued demographic expansion and the attraction of urban centres bring about concentrations of population difficult to imagine." The Pope in

his New Year message for 1990, said "Christians in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."

Judaism taught the Jews that the prosperity of the land depends on the obedience of people to God's covenants. An expression of man's obligation to preserve his natural environment may be found in the commandment against wasteful destruction. In general, the commandment prohibits the destruction of anything from which humans may benefit. It applies to the destruction of animals, plants and even inanimate objects. Even in war, Jews, as Muslims, are "not to destroy the trees (Deuteronomy 20.19)". Sefer haHinnukh in the discussion of this particular prohibition, justifies it so: "... And this is the way of the pious: They love peace and rejoice in the good

fortune of others, and bring everyone near to the Torah, and do not even waste a mustard seed, and they are pained by all destruction and waste that they see".

In **Islam**, the essence of an ecosystem is beautifully described in verse 16:19 of the Qur'an "And the earth We have spread out; set therein mountains firm and immovable, and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance". Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his commentary of this verse states that every kind of thing produced on this earth is in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable, and they in turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them (excess is eliminated, the waste of one is made the food of another and vice versa, leading to a cosmic symbiosis). Maurice Bucaille commented on and classified Qur'anic verses on astronomy, earth, formation of

universe, creation of earth and heavens, animal and vegetable kingdom, human reproduction etc. Next to revelation, the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), provide not only a commentary of the relevant verses but also touch upon and demonstrate the methods to put them into practice. Nature, hygiene, resource conservation, land reclamation are referred to, among them: "Whoever bringeth the dead land to life, i.e., cultivateth waste land, for him is reward therein" (ibid, p 76). The Prophet, pbuh, forbade a fire be lit upon an anthill, and related that an ant once stung one of the prophets who then ordered the whole colony of ants burned. In a Hadith by al-Bukhari, Muslim et al. on the authority of Abu Hurayra, God then rebuked: "Because an ant stung you, you have destroyed a whole nation that celebrates God's glory."

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