

**ROLE OF MUSLIM
STUDENTS IN THE
RECONSTRUCTION OF
ISLAMIC WORLD**

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Role of Muslim Students in the Reconstruction of Islamic World

Note: Maulana Sayyid Abul 'Ala Mawdudi delivered this speech in the late 1960s at the annual conference organized by the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba, Lahore.

Mr. President, distinguished guests, and dear students,

It is heartening that students all over Muslim countries are devoted to the cause of an Islamic renaissance. They are becoming aware of their responsibilities as Muslims. Inspired by the Islamic spirit, they are striving to promote Islamic values in their educational institutions. In spite of their secular education they have succeeded in maintaining their Muslim identity and despite many obstructions they are struggling to hold aloft the banner of Islam. As one who holds dear the cause of the Islamic world, I commend their endeavours to promote the teachings of Islam.

You have invited me to speak on the role of students in the reconstruction of the Islamic world. Since the problems confronting students in Muslim countries are alike, my words are intended for all of them. Like you, they have been the victims of western colonialism. As in Pakistan, the socio-economic, political and educational systems in other Muslim countries were established on foundations they inherited from the West.

Islamic World Symbolizes the Muslim Ummah

The Islamic world constitutes the Muslim Ummah which, in spite of the difference of caste, colour and language, is bound together by a common culture and civilization. Man is mortal; he is destined to die. The survival of Islamic culture depends upon training and educating the younger generation along Islamic lines, so that it is able to preserve its cultural heritage and hand it over to the succeeding generations. Otherwise our culture will not survive.

What is Meant by Survival and Extinction of Nation?

When we say that a nation has become extinct it does not mean that it has been completely wiped off the surface of the earth. A nation is said to be extinct when it loses its national identity. The Babylonians or the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs became extinct because they lost their cultural entity. Their culture and civilization died because of their inability to equip future generations to become the custodians of their cultural heritage. A nation also loses its national identity when it adopts an alien culture. The ten tribes of Israel became extinct because they lost their cultural identity and merged with other communities. Consequently the progeny of these ten tribes is hardly aware today of its identity. But a nation survives if it prepares future generations to preserve its cultural heritage and thereby maintains its national identity.

Hand over Cultural Heritage to Succeeding Generations

Our ancestors acquired the territory now called the Islamic world in order to make it the repository of

Islamic culture and to implement the Islamic code of life. Like other communities of the world, the fate of the Muslim community hinges upon those future generations who are imbued with the Islamic spirit and who are able to safeguard their cultural heritage. An individual Muslim dies but the Muslim community will survive if it is able to transfer its cultural heritage from generation to generation. Pakistan will cease to be an Islamic state unless it preserves its cultural identity.* If you patronize western culture this will lead to the preservation of western rather than Islamic culture. Students play an important part in sustaining our cultural traditions. On them depends the survival of Pakistan as an Islamic state. It is, therefore, essential to provide them with an Islamic orientation so that they can become the sheet-anchor of Pakistan.*

How to Preserve our Cultural Heritage?

There are two ways to preserve our cultural heritage: firstly, students themselves must take the initiative; secondly, the government must introduce revolutionary changes in the educational system of the country.

Measures Students should Adopt

College and university students are mature enough to discriminate between good and bad. Their education, whatever its character may be, enables them to determine their course of life. They should not, therefore, depend entirely upon the government for the preservation of their cultural heritage; they should

* This speech was delivered in Pakistan

themselves take the initiative for this. Students must recognize that they are Muslims first and last. As the member of a Muslim community it is their responsibility to maintain their identity.

Fundamentals of Islamic Faith

Belief in the oneness of Allah, the finality of prophethood, and the Final Day of Reckoning is central to Islam. A man who is sceptical about these doctrines ceases to be a Muslim. The fate of Pakistan, as I have said above, is irretrievably linked with Islamic culture. Any attempt to cast doubt upon the above doctrines is tantamount to undermining Islamic culture as well as the ideological frontiers of Pakistan.*

This being so, Islamic-minded students should stand as an impregnable wall against any movement in their educational institutions which threatens Islamic values. Since the fate of the Muslim Ummah is linked with Islam, it is essential to offer strong resistance to anti-Islamic forces. Anyone who creates doubt about the fundamentals of Islamic faith is not merely guilty of heresy, but also guilty of undermining the cause of the Islamic world. You must not, therefore, allow anti-Islamic elements or philosophy to gain ascendancy in your institutions.

Commitment to Islamic Culture and Moral Values

The fate of Muslim also depends upon adhering to Islamic values, as well as to the Islamic faith. Faith and

* This speech was delivered in Pakistan.

moral values are inseparable. Islamic faith obliges us to abide by specific moral values. Our educational institutions have been promoting moral values which are antithetical to the spirit of Islam. It must be clearly understood that Muslims cannot prosper on the strength of western culture. They can progress only by upholding Islamic moral values. In the West a man, even though he drinks and indulges in immoral practices, is ever ready to stake his life for his country, because these practices are not contrary to his moral values, values which are based on a materialistic philosophy of life. By drinking, a Muslim, on the other hand, defies the divine mandate. So far as the effect of alcohol on the human body is concerned, it is injurious to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Since drinking is not prohibited in most religions, a man is not guilty of violating his religious injunctions if he drinks. When a Muslim drinks, he not only injures his health but also shows contempt for the instructions of Allah and His Prophet. This spirit of defiance emboldens him to violate the sanctity of divine injunctions in many other ways till he becomes an outspoken heretic.

Impact of Anti-Islamic Culture on Islamic Social Order

The impact of an anti-Islamic culture is detrimental to an Islamic polity. By adopting an anti-Islamic culture Muslims stake even their faith. It makes them defy Allah and His Messenger, which in turn makes them recalcitrant in temporal affairs. They show no respect for any law, divine or otherwise. They commit sin after sin with impunity. How can you expect a person who has violated divine injunctions to have respect

for man-made legislation? How can you expect him to sacrifice his life for the sake of his country? Such a person is not fit to be a member of any civilized society, let alone an Islamic society.

Promotion of Anti-Islamic Culture in Educational Institutions - A Criminal Act

Those who are promoting anti-Islamic values in our educational institutions and inducing students to transgress the Islamic moral code are not the well-wishers of Pakistan. They are, in fact, conspiring to weaken the Islamic foundation of Pakistan.* Students dedicated to the cause of Islam must frustrate their sinister design. They should mobilize fellow students against the deleterious impact of an alien culture. If students themselves shun western culture, the government cannot impose it against their will. Self-awareness and determination to refrain from adopting the vices of western culture—these are two things which students themselves can do. Students must also develop their knowledge about Islam. The fact that the government is not doing anything to promote the teachings of Islam among students does not exonerate them from their own responsibility in this regard. Born in a Muslim community, they are obliged to know about Islam. They must acquire basic knowledge about Islam on their own initiative. Islamic literature available in their own language can provide the fundamental knowledge about Islam which would enable them to understand the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, their

* This speech was delivered in Pakistan.

obligations as Muslims, and the moral principles of Islam. For this they are not required to join religious seminaries and study there for years. I sincerely wish every Muslim student to study Islam not for taking a degree, but for maintaining his Islamic identity.

The Responsibility of Government

The government should examine the factors which account for the widespread corruption in our social life. It should consider the question as to why corruption has made our legal system ineffective. The dishonesty of law enforcing agencies frustrates any government attempt to arrest the tide of corruption in the country. They are even liable to be exploited by our enemies. Recently the Pakistani army captured some parts of Indian territory and found thousands of sacks of corn which had been smuggled from this country. If a man can resort to dishonesty at home, he can also sell state secrets to the enemy. If he can be exploited by his own people, he can also be exploited by enemies abroad.

Let us now consider the question as to why corruption is rampant in our society. The men at the helm are responsible for most of the corruption. Those men are the products of the existing education system. This education system undermines students' faith in the oneness of Allah, the finality of prophethood, and the Day of Judgement on which the edifice of Islamic culture and moral values is founded. Students are gradually driven towards heresy and apostasy; only a few produced under this

system can manage to keep their faith intact. If the faith of educated people in the fundamental tenets of Islam is shaken, nothing can keep them on the path of righteousness and piety. If a man ceases to be God-fearing, if he has no fear of accountability on the Final Day of Reckoning, how can you prevent him from being dishonest? The spirit of self-sacrifice calls for loyalty to something higher than one's own self. For a Muslim it is loyalty to Allah, the finality of prophethood, and the Muslim Ummah which is superior to all other loyalties. If his loyalty to these things is weakened, he degenerates into selfishness and other vices.

Islamic Principles Essential to Reform the Muslim Ummah

The Muslim Ummah can survive by adhering to Islamic principles. The remedy for our degeneration lies in strengthening loyalty to Allah and His Messenger. It is the fear of accountability on the Day of Resurrection which can restrain us from becoming dishonest. It is the desire to earn the pleasure of Allah which can prompt us to sacrifice worldly gains. Other nations of the world are motivated by different loyalties and moral values. If you want to develop these alien moral values in a Muslim it would take several generations to thoroughly westernize him. On the other hand, if you want to shape his character along Islamic lines, it would take only a few years. Born in a Muslim family, he already believes in the fundamentals of Islam. Besides, the environment of Muslim society is also conducive to promoting Islamic beliefs. With some effort you can easily shape

a child's character in an Islamic mould. Since the British were not interested in keeping our culture alive, they introduced an education system which weakened our religious faith. Their political interests obliged them to pursue an education policy which was detrimental to our faith. Pakistan is now an independent country.* Should we follow the same education policy as bequeathed by the British, this would, in fact, be an act of suicide.

Teachers Casting Doubt upon Islam are Traitors

The academic staff in our institutions are engaged in alienating students from the anchor of Islam. They exploit every opportunity to cast doubt upon the efficacy of Islam in offering solutions to the problems of the contemporary world. They impress upon students that Islamic culture, and its political, economic and legal systems are outmoded and inappropriate for the modern age. They underestimate the achievements of Muslims in various fields. Let me say without reservation that teachers who are propagating these ideas are the foremost enemies of the Islamic world. The younger generation cannot be entrusted to them. Worse still, in some Muslim countries the departments of Sociology and Education are run by American or American-oriented teachers who present a distorted picture of Islam to students.

Drawbacks of Present Education System

The government should now consider how to remove the drawbacks of our education system. I do not

* This speech was delivered in Pakistan.

question the usefulness of various subjects which are currently taught in our schools. The defect lies in the approach to these subjects. Since the exponents of western learning are heretical, they stress that the universe is functioning without a Master Mind or Planner, and that man is independent and does not need divine guidance. These are anti-Islamic concepts which undermine our culture and civilization. We should, therefore, re-interpret these subjects to give them a purely Islamic orientation. It is important to read science, philosophy, and the social sciences and benefit from research in these fields. Yet you must read them as Muslim. Otherwise you are bound to come adrift from Islamic roots. This is the core of our educational problem, and the sooner we understand this, the better.

Islam and Science

It is generally held that there is no compatibility between Islam and science. The fact that the U.S.S.R. follows Soviet-oriented science invalidates this proposition. If there is no compatibility between science and Islam, what relevance is there between science and Marxism? A socialist country does not approve the study of capitalistic-oriented science, philosophy, history, economics, political science, and other subjects. In a socialist country these subjects are taught from a Marxian point of view to produce socialist scientists, philosophers, historians, and economists. A country with a specific ideology cannot expose its youth to alien philosophies because any such attempt will strip them of their national traits.

Two Aspects of Science

It is alleged that science, being a universally accepted fact, is incompatible with religion. There are two aspects of science. So far as scientific facts and natural laws are concerned, they are, no doubt, accepted universally. Yet the mind which describes these scientific facts is by no means universal. Every civilization describes scientific facts differently according to its specific belief. What I want is to see the second aspect of science thoroughly changed. While most other substances contract when they are cooled, water expands as it freezes. Ice, being less dense than water, floats on it. This scientific fact can be described differently by two persons. An atheistic scientist describes this scientific fact as being essentially inherent in the quality of water, whereas a God-fearing scientist describes this scientific phenomenon as the manifestation of divine wisdom to make life possible in the rivers and seas. The two approaches build different impressions on the minds of students. The one approach is intended to undermine the existence of Allah and His Providence, whereas the other approach strengthens belief in the existence of Allah and His Providence. Instruction along the first line will produce atheistic Muslim scientists, whereas instruction along the second line will produce God-fearing Muslim scientists.

There is hardly any branch of science which does not strengthen our belief in the existence of Allah. The study of physics, chemistry, biology, physiology,

anatomy, astronomy, in brief every branch of science, reveals facts which can make us staunch Muslims. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly draws our attention to the various phenomena of the universe as the evidence of divine omnipotence. Secular scientists have correlated scientific facts according to their specific beliefs to undermine the concept of Allah. The government should understand the difference between the two approaches. By teaching "profane" science or philosophy we cannot produce God-fearing scientists or philosophers. The government should set up an academy to reorient western learning along Islamic lines. Otherwise the very existence of Pakistan is likely to be at stake.

Second Task Before the Government

A second imperative is to provide moral orientation to students as well as to government functionaries. The government should stress the moral orientation of civil servants including military and police personnel. All government training academies should introduce a special course on Islamic studies to acquaint the trainees with the fundamentals of Islamic faith and moral principles. It should be obligatory for the trainees to observe Islamic Sharia, and not indulge in immoral practices. The future of Pakistan would be safe in the hands of a God-fearing administrative machinery. At present training programmes of the various services are confined to their specialized duties. It is assumed that trainees, since they are already Muslims by nomenclature, do not require further instruction in Islam. But, because

of a lack of moral orientation they have no scruples in resorting to corrupt practices. If a few of these trainees are imbued with Islamic moral values, it is not due to the blessing of the training programme itself, but due to their inherent spiritual strength and their family upbringing. Our training programmes for various services are hardly distinguishable from western training programmes. With a few exceptions, our training programmes have not produced morally sound officers.

Military training programme is equally defective. In some Muslim countries the armed forces have shown a spirit of self-sacrifice and performed wonderful feats of valour. However, the credit for this does not go to the training programme itself, but to those pious mothers who brought their sons up, as well as to the Muslim society which retains some Islamic values. If the present degeneration continues, future generations will not get even this last ray of spirituality. The women produced by our educational institutions are ill-equipped to provide moral training to their children along Islamic lines. Today's women are more interested in film actresses, games and sports than in religion. Do you think that children brought up by these women would lay down their lives for the sake of Allah? If you want to produce soldiers inspired by a spirit of self-sacrifice, you must build their character on an Islamic foundation along with professional training.

