

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

In today's sermon I would like to share with you the ideas of the Promised Messiah(as) regarding progress be it material, social or otherwise. Very often it is heard that there are at least 57 Muslim majority countries in the world out of a total of 195 and the number of Muslims number around 1.6 billion. In Mauritius we have roughly 1.25 million people. So in order to have an idea of the number of Muslims in the world we need to multiply 1.25 million by at least 1,280 times. This means that the number of Muslims in the world is almost 1300 times the population of Mauritius. This is quite a huge number and it represents roughly 20% of the population of the world which is more than 7 billion these days. Unfortunately, there is not even one Muslim country in the 10 biggest economies of the world. In almost any table where there is a comparison of all countries most Muslim countries are at the tail of the list. Yet we are all well aware that in the Holy Quran Allah says "*Kountoum khayra ummatin oukrejat linnaase*" meaning "You are the best people raised for mankind" (3:111). We read also this verse "Slacken not, nor grieve; and you shall certainly have the upper hand if you are believers." (3:140). Unfortunately, what we have seen in the world in the past century is that Muslims as a group are divided and they have had to bear the brunt of the oppression of European countries and these days of the USA as well. Yet Allah is true to His Promise as always and He sent the Promised Messiah in accordance to the Prophecy of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) as the Hakaman (Arbitrator) and Adalan(Judge) and the Promised Messiah to establish peace between all Muslims. Unfortunately, the majority of Muslims have not recognized him and they have to bear the humiliation of copying other nations whilst their predecessors were the torch bearers of the world. So I will share with you what the Promised Messiah has told us to be the key to progress. He says:

"People desire progress, but they do not appreciate how progress is achieved. Worldly people assume that progress is achieved by emulating Europe, but I say that progress is achieved always through truthfulness. God has put before us a model of such achievement, namely, the example of the Holy

Prophet(saw) and his companions. There will be progress now in exactly the same manner as progress was achieved before and it is a perfectly true statement to say that the progress achieved earlier (at the time of the Holy Prophet(saw) and his companions) was achieved through truthfulness. They put themselves under the yoke of winning God's pleasure and brought themselves under the code of obedience to God Almighty. Any progress achieved now will have to follow exactly the same pattern.....”

Continuing he says:

“The fact of the matter is exactly that which has been taught by the Holy Qur'an. Until such time as Muslims fully practice the teachings of the Holy Qur'an they cannot achieve any kind of progress. They move away from the Holy Qur'an, so by the same token, they are removed from the paths of progress. It is practice of the [teachings of] the Holy Qur'an that is the source of progress and guidance. God has not forbidden trade, farming and other legitimate pursuits of livelihood. Such things should not, however, be turned into ultimate aims. On the contrary, they should be considered as an aid in the service of one's faith. One of the purposes of Zakat, for instance, is that a portion of wealth should be used in the service of religion.

Remember this well that the real means of achieving progress is to be aware that until a nation takes some steps for the sake of God, until its people (take measures to) purify their hearts, its progress is not possible. It is a misguided idea that it is only by learning to read English, by cladding oneself in English dress and by indulging in alcohol and other immoral acts of behaviour that any advancement can be made. On the contrary, this is the road to destruction. Did the people of Prophet Noah's(as) time not have a standard of living that allowed much comfort and indulgence? Similarly, at the time of Prophet Lot(as) people generally enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. In our own time, there exist many means of earning a livelihood among which is the profession that uses language (as its main tool of trade). However, the language that is the language of God has been made the key to all knowledge and profound understanding. When a people leave aside all prejudice and carefully consider the word of the Holy Qur'an and engage in prayer rather than indulging in shallow objections, there will then be progress.....”

Speaking about how in the midst of material progress we should never forget our ultimate objective he says:

“People who shout the slogans of ‘national progress’ amaze me and I wonder if they have forgotten that one day they have to meet their end – yet they give precedence to a life that is transient. They wish that they too should become wealthy and great like Europe. I do not stop them from making some efforts to a degree [in that regard], but excess is contemptible. It is an unfortunate state of affairs that the people who want progress consider every type of immoral act to be legitimate, even acts such as adultery, as the European way of life is showing. If this is progress, what then is destruction? You should, therefore, purify your intentions and try to please God. Engage constantly in prayer and pray for the spread of the message of your religion. After that, it is not forbidden to make use of the God given capabilities in the pursuit of one’s livelihood, be it farming, employment or trade. Do not, however, put all your heart into your profession or your trade by turning it into something to be pursued for its own sake. On the contrary, you should try to distance your heart from it, considering it to be a trial and keep praying to God Almighty that He may bring upon you a time when you may have freedom [from such worldly pursuits] for the remembrance of God. This is my purpose and this is my teaching. If someone wishes to oppose it or make fun of it, it is up to him. This is the truth [regardless of what people’s reactions may be]. Those who consider themselves to be ‘free-thinkers’ deride these ideas and consider those who propose such views as immature people who are trying to take them back 1300 years. However, those who are of a righteous nature and who remember death, can decide for themselves as to which of the two is on the path of truth.....”

These words call for reflection. Under no circumstance should we fall into the trap of seeking the world for its own sake. Whatever we get from the world should be made subservient to our religion. Hazrat Masih says further:

“Moreover, I see that these people [of modern day thinking] say what they say only so far as they enjoy good health. As soon as they go through some trial or suffering, they soon come to their senses. T h e ‘Naturalist’, for instance, displays strength of belief in relation to the level of worldly and material comforts enjoyed by him. His belief weakens as soon as he is faced

with some trial. He who holds a high position, enjoys worldly greatness and sees his honour as being something worldly to be granted by the people, how can such a one understand what religion is? [Malfoozat Vol. 8, pp.29-31 Review of Religion September 2001]

Even a cursory reading of the above extract will make it clear to an Ahmadi Muslim that this world is not everything. We can enjoy whatever Allah has granted us in this world within the limits of Allah's laws. However, we should always bear in mind our ultimate destination and be always prepared to face it.

Speaking about the existence of Allah Hazrat Masih(as) says further:

“It is commonly accepted that a person who has no relevant knowledge on a subject has no right to give an opinion. To give one's opinion on a subject, it is essential that one possess relevant knowledge. If a person who is ignorant of a particular subject, starts to give his opinion, would he not be considered foolish? Of course he would be. Moreover, other more intelligent people would put him to shame by pointing out his ignorance of the subject. The same is the case of those who state that God does not exist. What right have they to give such an opinion when they have no knowledge about this matter and they have never made any effort in search of God. The people who have the right to an opinion in this matter are those who might have set upon a path in search of God but who [for the sake of argument] may have been unsuccessful in finding Him. It is such people who would have the right to say that there is no God. However, when a person has not undertaken a search and has not made any effort to seek God, he has no right to deny God's existence. God does exist and He is a being such that the more one believes in Him, the greater is the power that is granted to the believer. God's being is hidden and deeply concealed, yet it gradually manifests itself to the believer who strives in God's path and he is eventually able to 'see' God clearly. The power of faith is such that it increases by the day. This is the one thing that should be sought by the world. The world, however, has become largely bereft of such powers. Islam was the religion that had come [to grant] such powers of faith but it is now itself in a weak position and the Muslims generally feel that they are weak. If this is not the case, then what is the reason for all the meetings and conferences that take place daily and for

the new groups that are formed who claim to be working to assist and support Islam. It is with much regret that I note that in these meetings slogans are raised for ‘our nation’ and calls are made for ‘national progress’ but the question is that previously when ‘the nation’ was formed, was it formed by following Europe? Was progress in the past achieved by following in the footsteps of the Western nations?”

Ahmadi Muslims in particular and Muslims in general should do their best to develop their faith. It is for this purpose, among others, that the Promised Messiah(as) came and he has told us that such people would continue to come in the future in his Jamaat. He continues:

“If it can be proven that the previous period of progress and success [in the world of Islam] was achieved in this way, then it would, indeed be a sin not to follow in the footsteps of Europe. However, should it be the case that it is not proven, and it will never be proven to be so, then it is an extreme injustice to abandon the principles of Islam and to abandon the Qur’an....[Malfoozat, Vol. 2, pp.155-158. Review of Religions: September 2001”

Incha Allah we will speak about the rest of this extract next week. May Allah help each one amongst us to understand and practice Islam as we have been taught by the Promised Messiah who walked in the footsteps of his master, Hazrat Mohammad (saw).