



MUSLIM YOUTHS AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES*

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INTRODUCTION

Any healthy and peaceful society with good foresight put its youth into a great consideration. They are nucleus of its success. Of course, they are the future leaders. The mission of all the prophets and the sages was to see that humanity through its spiritual and moral perfection brings about the establishment of a just *Ummah* (community).

Unfortunately today, the so called 'western civilization' is at variance with these goals. The West¹ having known that the change in any society lies in the youth, focuses on the Youths with their globalization since the old are going (or almost gone) and the pioneers of the future are the Youths. This globalization and modernization that are taking place in the world posed a lot of challenges to the Muslim Youths, thereby lead to incessant debasement of all the tenets of faith and moral decadence among the Muslim Youths.

I. MEANING OF YOUTH

Generally, youth has been defined as the time when a person is young and before a child becomes a full adult². This is a stage when the childhood has ended. It must be noted that the age of maturity (Sinnul -bulugh) under Islamic law varies in respect to different school of thoughts. However, they unanimously agree that a female child cannot attain the age of maturity before the age of nine (9) and the male child cannot attain same before the



age of twelve (12)³. Abu Hanifah extends the age of maturity of male to (18) eighteen years and seventeen years for female. Majority opine fifteen (15) years for both male and female⁴. This age of maturity is when the youthful stage starts in Islam. Youthful stage is the prime age of everyone, when individual is very strong, able and capable to prepare for his/her future. It is pertinent to say, Allah has made the age of forty a demarcation for another stage of life, when a person attains "full maturity". Thus, the youthful age ends at forty (40). Allah (SWT) says:

*... at length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years...*⁵

It is deducible from the above verse that the youthful stage leads to another crucial stage where one may remain with one's 'full strength' for a while before crossing to another stage. Hence, one must judiciously spend one's youthful age. This is further explained viz:

The age of full strength is held to be between 18 and 30 or 32. Between 30 and 40 the man is in his best manhood.

After a person attains "full strength", he remains for a while before he starts a gradual decline, till he reaches old age. Allah (SWT) says in respect of old age:

*".....Allah is he who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair"*⁶

The above verse is further explained thus:

*".....The helpless babe becomes a lusty man in the pride of manhood....."*⁷.



2. IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH

Every individual - youth, adult, and the aged - is charged with the responsibilities of propagating Islam. However, the role of the youth can not be under estimated. This is because; the youthful age is the best time to learn, discern and assimilate.⁸ It has been reported by *Ibn Mashood* that the Prophet (SAW) says: The son of Adam (Human being) will remain (standing) before his Lord, until he is asked of five (5) things. About his life upon what he exhausted it, his youthfulness, upon what he worn it out.....⁹ It is a common say that learning in the youthfulness is like inscription on the stone which will never fade away¹⁰. More so, youths are the pioneers of good future; they are efficient in terms of assimilation and jihad. These were the reasons why the prophet focused more on the youths during his life time.¹¹ Subsequently, the west is, with their foresight ironically targeting the Muslim Youths with the so called 'globalization' and 'modernization' which are designed to distract the Muslim Youths from the tenets of their faith¹².

3. THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The contemporary Muslim Youths are facing a lot of cultural, spiritual, social, and economic challenges globally in the last two decades. Much to one's utter chagrin, many who had sunk into the abyss of these problems do not realize, let alone, envisaging their solutions. Some of the challenges shall be examined below.

i. Influence of Western Ideology

The pervasive influence of western ideology has done many damages to the tenet of Islamic belief among the youth. Some Muslim youth find solace in watching pornographic films and some are engrossed with the watching European Football or all sort of



entertainment at the expense of praying five congregational prayers (Salat) and see no wrong done in these. All these are powered with the aid of "Globalization".

ii. Globalization

The term 'Globalization' has been defined by many scholars in different ways. All of which are tending to convey the same meaning. It is the 'coalescence of various transnational processes and domestic structures, allowing the economy, politics, culture and ideology of one country to penetrate another'¹³. Another views it in practical terms, as the "feature of the contemporary period in which humanity sacrifices or is made to bargain its identity, culture, norms and values for the sake of a "global village" in which all of us are connected as never before"¹⁴ The west no doubt, has reached the highest peak of moral debasement, thus, the direct and simplest means of spreading this moral decadence all over the world is through the aid of so called 'globalization'. This led to the springing up in an uncontrollable pace of the following challenges.

iii. West Modernism

Our Muslim ladies wear transparent material, do not properly cover their body anymore¹⁵, mix with the opposite sexes, and find it very difficult to put on their *Hijab*. The men (Youths), wear obnoxious dress, put on earring, show no care for five daily prayers, some who partially care, pray it at anytime they wish or pray parts and leave the rest, some do not feel bad about drinking alcohol, dancing and smoking. Some Muslim girls feel there is nothing wrong in marrying non-Muslims as long as they love and care for each other, all in the name of modernization. The success of the west in this globalization cannot be under estimated. It is their means of spreading American culture which is at variance



with African not to talk Islamic culture, and ideology all over the world. This American cultural imperialism made people to neglect their Islamic valuable cultures for the adoption of American obnoxious cultures.

This made Dr. Saied Reza Ameli¹⁶ shares this experience in his visit to the rural areas of Indonesia viz:

....The poor people there, they have problems for the food and for their everyday life, yet they are practicing MTV culture... They are really wearing the same cloths that people use to wearing in London. They make themselves up like the people in Western Countries and they are practicing their everyday life according to the life of the people in European Countries but if you go to their house you cannot see. The standard of life that the people have here....basically, they are consuming the corruption of western culture...."¹⁷.

More so, Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedia¹⁸ also, shares his own experience thus:

The young Muslim girls face even greater challenge in maintaining their moral fabric in tact when out in the society. There is very little understanding of the ways in which a Muslim girls existence and human rights are regularly violated in the society that looks down upon her Islamic moral outlook as 'old fashioned' and retrogressive.¹⁹

S.O. Muhammad²⁰ in his own view has this to say about his experience with Nigeria youth.

What becomes of our moral value, the value of hard work to earn legitimate living when the young one's



among us abandon schooling to look for quick money through all sought of "promo" available in Nigeria today! Or do you expect a young man of only 20years old who has made his millions through 'promo' to respect a poor elderly these day.²¹

The above explain cultural hegemony of the west which is being powered by "mass-media globalization" such as CNN, BBC, MTV, Reuters, AP, AFP and Internet.²²

iv. Rationalism and Secularism

Additionally, many Muslim Youths have been brainwashed, their thoughts and thinking are not in line with the tenet of Islamic faith anymore.

Abdulaziz Sachadina says:

The new age rationalism was characterized by its claim as the source of all human values that could be derived by each individual, without any reference to a sacred authority like God or the revealed message like the Quran and the Sunnah.²³

According to Saied Reza .A, there are two types of secularization, (objective and subjective secularization) objective secularization is when the religion is segregated from the law, education and political system. This is a serious (detrimental) but, it is not as crucial (detrimental) as subjective secularization where the religion is segregated from the mind. When the people don't have any concern about the Quran and the Sunnah or the tenets of religion generally, despite, they are still Muslims. This is a great challenge and very dangerous. Mind is the centre of the body²⁴ and if something can target our mind and change its direction then the danger is very serious²⁵.



v. Identity

A distinctive factor that distinguishes one from another is its identity. Therefore, identity of Muslim from others is very crucial. In our society today, it is very difficult to distinguished between Muslim and non-Muslim Youth in terms of character, dressing and manner. More so, alienation is when people immigrated from one land to another, thus feel, homesick. Muslim Youths today are in their own house (land) but still fill homesick. They don't want to be identified as Muslims. They don't or hardly answer greeting (*As-salam Alaekum*)²⁶ which is one of the uniting factor and tenet of Islam²⁷. This is a great challenge on Muslim Youth and blatant disregard of *Ad-deen*²⁸.

vi. Proper Islamic Education

Significantly, knowledge plays a crucial role, both in our spiritual and temporal life.

Allah says:

*...Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge.....*²⁹

also Allah says

*...Are those who know equal to those who know not?"*³⁰

The process of acquiring knowledge is through learning and training. This process is also known as education³¹. It is pertinent at this juncture to say that the prevalent educational system common to the West African Countries, (Nigeria inclusive), around the tenth (10th) century to the middle of Nineteenth (19th) century was Eastern Education. (Arabic language)³². Since it is the language of *Quran* and Islam generally, thus, it came along with Islamic religion to the people. However, with the advent of



European colonialists the Arabic and Islamic knowledge were gradually degraded for the elevation of western education. At first, religious knowledge was made compulsory at both primary and secondary school levels for all students. Gradually and eventually, it was degraded as optional for them this made some huge amount of students to run away from the knowledge of their religion. It is a great challenge that many of our Muslim Youths do not understand their religion let alone knowing how to recite *Quran* and the few, who partially understand their religion and can recite Holy Qur'an do not bother to fine-tune same let alone learning its meaning. It must be noted that English is to Christian what Arabic is to conscious Muslim³³. Western education is full of Non-muslims' ideologies, and some secular values, which are incompatible with chastity, modesty, diffidence and humility that are being taught and inculcated by Islam to the Muslims. Although, this is not to say western education is totally bad, but a good Muslim must be conscious of his religion.

The west is striving with all its enormous capacity to make everyone follows its way and see any culture that is not its own as rubbish, while Islam does not impose its value and ways on non-Muslims but only Muslims.³⁴ It becomes instructive to say, we are created, but for *Ibadah* (worship)³⁵. *Ibadah* which is compulsory can only be attained through the means of its knowledge, thus this means (knowledge) becomes inevitable.³⁶ The prophet (SAW) says in an *Hadith* narrated by *Abi Dardahi* that whosoever follows a part in which he is seeking (religious) knowledge, Allah will make that to create for him a part leading to the *Janah* (paradise) and indeed, the angels (*Al-malaikah*) spread their wing (to march on it) in satisfaction and approval, for whoever is in the way of seeking knowledge.³⁷



vii. Education (Western Education)

Predominantly, western education has been the means to employment opportunity. No matter how vast you are in Arabic language, you may be useless in our mundane affairs unless you can express the same in English language. In Nigeria, for example, some of our colleagues who got scholarship to study in Arabic abroad find it very difficult on their returning to secure a good job, except to teach in *Madrasah* (Arabic and Islamic school).

More so, *Da'wah*, nowadays can only be facilitated through a proper knowledge of Western Education (i.e. English Language) since it is our official language.

Muslim Youths also lack behind in some scientific knowledge thus made us largely depend on the west for their technologies. Science like Aeronautical engineering and automotive engineering will play a large role in reducing our mixture which is detrimental to Islamic religion with the west, if Muslim Youth can partake in them. This western educational challenge makes many Muslim Youths feel with inferiority complex hence, dominated in their affairs of governing and ruling by the non-Muslim in so many parts of the world. It is not disputed that western education is doing a lot of damages to our Islamic culture and morality. However, proper Islamic training must be given as a background and continuously be given to whoever is into western education.

Allah says:

'And it is not (proper) for the believers to go out to fight (Jihad) all together of every troop of them, a party rally should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in (Islamic) religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware (of evil)'³⁸.



Going into western education must be seen as jihad to our religion (Islam).

viii. Ignorance

The time spent by the Arabian before the advent of Islam was named "era of ignorance" (*Asrul - Jahiliyyah*). This is not because they could not read or write but for their attitude of *Kufu* (disbelief) and spreading of immorality (*Fasad*) like *Zina* (Adultry), sinfulness (*Fusuq*), oppression (*Zulim*) Niggardliness (*Tatfif*) cheating (*Ghish*) confusion (*Fauda*) etc³⁹. Nowadays, many dreadful attitudes have their prevalence among Muslim Youths. More so, they condemned western education because of atrocities contained in it, like mixing up of man and women, and some orientations that are not in line with the tenet of Islam faith. For example; the Taliban banned all images of living beings. In Iran, television used to be called *Sunduq-l-Shaytun*, (Box of Satan).⁴⁰ In Nigeria, a sect called "*Boko Haram*" which means "Western Education is a sin." This so called sect is said to be Muslim⁴¹ (Youths).

It becomes axiomatic at this juncture to say, one can not totally condemn western education because it brings a lot of advantages to the religion, thus the principle of *Ad-Daruratu Tubiyh al-mahzurah* (necessity makes the unlawful lawful) under Islamic law is applicable and those embarking on it must be timely guarded and guided.

ix. Economic Challenges

Contemporarily, unemployment has been a major problem virtually all over the world. The seeker of employment outnumbers the available resources. It is a matter of whom you know before you can secure a good job. Many governmental and non-governmental sectors are headed by the non Muslims. In



Nigeria the few opportune Muslims are egocentric and ethnocentric. This made some Muslim youths to be wandering about like a thirsty travelers that are ready to drink any water that comes their way.

In British, for example, it is said that Muslim are by far the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labor market. They are three times likely to be unemployed than the majority white group. In Europe, the vast majority of Muslims were marginalized in low-paid jobs⁴².

Abdulfattah, in his view says

*"The contemporary Islamic economy is dominated by poverty and uneven distribution"*⁴³

x. Violence

An idle hand is an evil hand; one of the consequences of the above challenges is the engagement of the youths by the politicians as political thugs in the name of 'youth empowerment'. Some engage in robbery or Bank-ATM fraud etc. Many of the so called religion riots in the northern part of Nigeria and some other parts of the world generally cannot be totally free from idleness and political undertone.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

If a good society must be built, Ummah leadership is inevitable. There must be a leader who will spearhead the affairs of Muslims in any given society. The Muslim in that society will only act on his instruction in which the leader himself is guided by some laid down rules regulation.

Charity, they say, begins at home. The Parents should strive to inculcate Islamic ideology into their children right from the childhood. It is a duty imposed on them by Allah in which their



failure will attract sanction⁴⁴.

More so, Muslim individuals should involve in *Dawah* (social welfare and missionary) activities in order to overcome the powerful assimilative influence of the American mainstream in our western education. not only that, Muslims should also attempt to reach more achievable goals by promoting co-operation among themselves and see Islam as a major unifying factor instead of focusing their concern on ethnic group or homogenizing diverse Muslim ethnic group.

Lastly, Muslims should try to transform the stereotypical negative image of Islam through proper use of the media and, by presenting themselves as a good image of Islam in any gathering and interaction, be it Muslim or non-Muslim function.

CONCLUSION

The Muslim, unlike others must be conscious of Allah in all his/her endeavours. They must know that one day; they will account and be adjudged for all their deeds. The fear of Allah and his piety will go a long way in solving all our problems.

Allah says

*...O you who believe! if you obey and fear Allah, He will grant you furqan (a criterion to judge between right and wrong) or (makhraja, i.e. a way for you to get out from every difficulty), and will expiate for your sins, and forgive you; and Allah is the owner of the great bounty"*⁴⁵

He also says:

....And whosoever fear Allah and keeps his duty to him, he will make a way for him to get out (from



every difficult) and he will provide for him (sources)
he never could imagine and whosoever put his trust
in Allah he will suffice him....."⁴⁶.

Lastly, Muslim must not do away with prayer in any situation and condition. Allah does not promise us trial-free life. It is his way of knowing the true believers from the bogus ones⁴⁷. However, with struggle, patient and prayer, he will help and pave way for us.

Oh you will believe! Seek help with patient and as-salat (the prayer). Truly, Allah is with As-sabirun (the patient).⁴⁸

ALHAMDULLILLAH RABBIL – 'ALAMEEN

END NOTES

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¹ The European and the American

² A.S Hornby, 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary' (5th edition oxford university press 1995) pg 1390, Al-Mu'jamul-waseet (place and date of publication not supplied vol. 1-2) pg 495

³ Muhammad Bakr I., *Al Fiqih al – Wadih Minal – Kitab Wasunnah 'Alal – madhahibil – Arba'ah* (2nd Darul – Manar, Cairo, Vol. 2 1998) Pg. 174 , *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden, New ed., Vol. 8, 1995) p.821

⁴ Ibid Pgs 174 -175

⁵ Q 46 : 15

⁶ Surah Ar-Rum, 54

⁷ *The Holy Qur'an English Translation of the meanings and commentary*, (ed. by the Presidency of Islamic Researcher, IFTA, Madina) pg 1195

⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p.822



⁹ At-tirmidhi, quoted by Muhammad Ibn Ahmad "Salwatul-Hazeen waaladh-dhatu As-saleen" (Darul-watan lilnashri Riyad 2002) pg 57.

¹⁰ Umar A., *Al-Muntakhabat frib al-Mahfuzat* (vol. 1) pg 13.

¹¹ Example of such youths are Ali bn Abi Talib, Sa'd bn Abi Waqqes, Abdulrahmon bn Awf, Sa'eed bn Zaid, Amr bn Nufail, Abdullah bn Umar, Abdullah bn Abbas etc.

¹² Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Muslim Youth in 21st century" available at <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~aas/article2.htm> Saied Reza Ameli, 'Muslim Response to Globalization' (lecture delivered at Royal Holloway University of London) available at <http://www.inminds.com/globalization-muslim-response.htm>.

¹³ Ali M., and Muhammadi A., "Globalization or Recolonization? The Muslim world in the 21st century" quoted by Dawud O.S. Noibi, 'Globalization, Terrorism and the Muslim world' *Al-'ADL(The Just)* (A publication of National Association of Muslim Law Students (NAMLAS) University of Ibadan Chapter 2009) pg 217.

¹⁴ Abdulfattah Ibn Raji, "Globalization: The Muslims response" (Al-Mustaghfirun research institute, Lagos 2007) pg 72.

¹⁵ Allah says: "and tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil gloves, head-cover, apron etc), and to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks, and bosoms) ..." Q24:31 also "O prophet: tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies..." Q33:59

¹⁶ Founder of Islamic Institutes of Islamic Studies, and former Director of Islamic Centre London-England, Researcher on Sociology of culture and mass media at the royal Holloway university of London.

¹⁷ Saied R. Ameh, "Muslim response to Globalization" available online @ <http://www.inmind.com/globalization-muslim-response.html>.

¹⁸ A lecturer in the University of Virginia.

¹⁹ Abdulaziz S., "Muslim Youth in the 21st century" available at <http://people.virginia.edu/~aass/article2.htm>.

²⁰ S.O. Muhammad is a Justice in the Sharia Court of Appeal, Ilorin, Kwara State.

²¹ S.O. Muhammad, "Moral decadence and our youth: The role of parents"



being a lecture delivered at the royal Shekinah suites, Ilorin on December 26, 2009 under the auspices of "KLOB TWO-SEVERN" Ilorin Kwara State.

²² Abdulfattah Ibn Raji, *"Globalization: The Muslim response"* op cit. pg 75.

²³ Abdulaziz S. *"Muslim Youth in the 21st century"* op. cit pg 2

²⁴ See the sixth hadith of '*matnu Al-Arba'na An-nawawiyyah*' where the prophet was describing "mind" or heart as if being good, the whole human body is good.

²⁵ Saied R. A A. *"Muslim response to Globalization"* op. cit pg 4.

²⁶ Peace be upon you

²⁷ Allah Says "When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally...."4:86, The prophet in one Hadith has also be reported to have Said with swearing that you will not enter Janah (paradise) until you believe and you cannot believe until you love (one another) and the best way to create love is to greet with "As-salam Alaekum" among yourselves see Hadith 5193 of Sunnanu Abi Daud (new edi, Daru Ibn Hazm, 1998) pg 78.

²⁸ The Religion of Islam.

²⁹ Q58:11

³⁰ Q39:9

³¹ A. S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* op. cit pg 369.

³² Adam Abdullah, *Nisamu At-Ta'leemil 'Arabiyyah watarikhih fil-'alamil-Islamiyyah* (Darul 'arabiyyah, lebanon pg 18-19, Adam Abdullah, *"As-sira'u beyna l-'Aeabiyyah wal-injiliziyyah fih Nayjeeriya"* (Agege, Nigeria) pgs 5. 19-10. (translation mine).

³³ Adedimeji M.A., *"The challenges of academic pursuit in the Nigeria University system to the Muslim Youth"* Al-Maslaha Journal of Law and Religion. (A publication of the Nigeria Association of Muslim Law Students (NAMLAS) University of Ilorin chapter vol. 3, 2004-2006) pg 169.

³⁴ A.A. Oba, *"Sex (or sexuality) Education in Islam and the Western World"* Al-Maslaha (2004-2006) op. cit pg 187.

³⁵ Q51:56.

³⁶ Imam Burhan, *Ta'leemul-muta'allim Tareeq At-ta'alim* (Istanbul (1332) pg 4. (Translation mine).

³⁷ *Sunanu Abi Daud* op cit pg 560.

³⁸ Q9:122.

³⁹ Zakariyah Huseen, *"Al-ma'dubatul-Adabiyyah"* (Daru An-nur, Auchi, 2000) pg 17



⁴⁰ See an interview with Prof. Fred Holliday (A teacher of international relation at the LSE) by 1lit.com ezine's European editor ,Nadeem Azam available online. @ www.angelfire.com/doc/inbooks/mythofconfrontation.html

⁴¹ See newspaper. "The Nation on Sunday" October 10, 2010. pg 67.

⁴² Akbar S. Ahmad, "In Considering The Younger Generation, the American versus the Europe experience plus Muslim integration in western nation available online at www.islamfortoday.com/akbar05htm.

⁴³ Abdulfattah Ibn Raji, *Globalization: The Muslims response*" op. cit pg 78.

⁴⁴ Allah says: O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a fire (hell)...."Q66:6 see also Q33:66-67.

⁴⁵ Q8:29

⁴⁶ Q65:2&3

⁴⁷ Q29:2&3, Q2:155 & 156.

⁴⁸ Q2:153.