

AIMS AND OBJECTS

OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
ISLAMIC RECONSTRUCTION

By
Muhammad Asad

Director of Islamic Reconstruction

West Punjab Government

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AL-ILM TRUST

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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IN view of the great changes, both physical and spiritual, which the Muslim Millat in our country is undergoing in these days, the Government have found it advisable to create a new Department which would deal with certain problems arising from those changes. The ultimate aim of this Department is, to help our community to reconstruct its life on Islamic lines, and therefore it has been named Department of Islamic Reconstruction. It is for the first time in the modern age that the word "Islamic" has appeared in the designation of any Government Department in this country. The departure from all previous governmental traditions evident therein is so great that some words of explanation are due to the public before we start our work.

A lot has happened to us, the people of Pakistan, in the last few months. Dangers of great magnitude; loss of lives and of property on an unprecedented scale; millions of refugees; sufferings which words cannot adequately express: all this has been our portion since we began, and even before we began, to function as an independent State. And even now we cannot say that we have reached our journey's end. For, though Pakistan has become an established fact which no power on earth can undo, a tremendous effort is still needed on our part to ward off the perils that beset us from all sides and to achieve, in the words of the Qaid-e-Azam, "a State of our own concept"—that is to say, a State which would fully satisfy our desire to have a polity built on the principles of Islam. We have barely started on our march, and the road before us is long and hard—far longer and harder than many of our impatient brethren seem to realise. It is no easy task to achieve a truly Islamic polity after all those long centuries of debasement and slavery which have sapped a good deal of our strength and undermined our social morale: but, nevertheless, it is a task which we have to face if we are not to belie all our past assertions.

As everyone knows, our struggle for the attainment of Pakistan has been fought on an ideological

platform. We have maintained, and we do maintain to-day, that we Muslims are a nation by virtue of our adherence to Islam. To us, religion is not merely a set of beliefs and moral rules but a code of practical behaviour as well. Contrary to almost all other religions, Islam does not content itself with influencing the life of the spirit alone but aims also at shaping all the physical aspects of our life in accordance with the Islamic world-view. In the grand scheme propounded to us in the Quran and in the life-example of the Holy Prophet, all the various aspects of human existence—moral and physical, spiritual and intellectual, individual and communal—have been taken into consideration as parts of the indivisible whole which we call "human life". It follows, therefore, that we cannot live a truly Islamic life by merely holding Islamic beliefs. We must do far more than that. If Islam is not to remain an empty word, we must also co-ordinate our outward behaviour, individually and socially, with the beliefs we profess to hold.

This peculiar aspect of Islam, well known to everyone who has the slightest acquaintance with its principles, is the foundation on which we base our claim to an independent State of our own: for it is only within the framework of an independent State endowed with all the paraphernalia of govern-

ment, law and social organisation, that the scheme of Islam can be brought to practical fulfilment. It is because of this ideal that we have struggled for an independent Pakistan and have undergone, and are still undergoing, sufferings greater than any other nation had to bear in modern times. And it may well be that our sufferings are so great because our aims were so high. Indeed, in a world ruled by concepts of nationalism on racial or purely cultural lines, the concept of an ideological State is so unique, so out of all proportion with what the rest of the world regards as "modern" and desirable, that we were bound to encounter the most formidable opposition. For, most of the people in our time have grown accustomed to look upon racial affinities and historical traditions as the only legitimate basis of nationhood: while we, on the other hand, regard an ideological community—a community of people having a definite outlook on life and a definite scale of moral values in common—as the highest form of nationhood to which man could aspire. We make this claim not only because we are convinced that our particular ideology, Islam, is a Message from God Himself, but also because our reason tells us that a community based on ideas held in common is a far more advanced manifestation of human life than a com-

munity resulting from accidents of race or language or geographical location.

This, as I have said, is not a view commonly held in our days, for most of our contemporaries in other countries are still entangled in the old-fashioned, nationalist aspirations and prejudices evolved in past centuries—aspirations and prejudices which are largely responsible for the chaos in which the world finds itself to-day. It is not for us, the Millat of Islam, to follow that path of chaos: and so, obeying the eternal call of Islam, we have embarked on the great experiment of creating an ideological State.

What we desire is a free society open to all who believe in our ideology, as well as to all those who do not believe in it from the religious point of view but are nevertheless willing to co-operate with us in giving it a trial. This is a very important point, and I would request our non-Muslim citizens to give it the consideration it deserves. We are an *open* society—that is to say, we do not restrict social co-operation, with all the benefits of full citizenship accruing therefrom, to members of the Muslim community alone. We shall welcome the co-operation of every citizen, Muslim and non-Muslim, who is prepared to work with us on the basis of the Constitution which Pakistan's Constituent

Assembly will be called upon to evolve in the near future. All that this State demands of its citizens is active loyalty towards the Constitution; and loyalty will be the only criterion of a good citizen, whether it be the result of religious belief or of a common-sense acceptance of the social ideology agreed upon by the majority of the citizens.

For, naturally, the main burden of framing our Constitution will fall upon the shoulders of the Muslims. It is they who form the overwhelming majority in this country, and it is they who are the torch-bearers of the ideology for the sake of which Pakistan has been established. And it is the Muslim community as a whole, and not only the members of the Constituent Assembly, who will be ultimately responsible for the quality of our Constitution. There can be no greater mistake than to believe that a successful Constitution could be evolved in a vacuum, as it were, by a limited group of people chosen for this purpose by the Legislative Assemblies. Though, undoubtedly, it will be these representatives of ours who will be entrusted with the actual task of formulating the laws and clauses of which the Constitution will be composed, their endeavours cannot possibly bear the desired results unless they are supported and backed by the will of a united nation. And our nation cannot become

really united, and cannot achieve that singleness of purpose so essential for a Muslim Millat, unless and until we overcome that shameful confusion and demoralisation, that loss of faith and of social integrity, that moral corruption which seems to have become our portion during the recent weeks and months. And this is where the new Department of Islamic Reconstruction comes in.

I should like to make it clear that this Department, of which I have the honour to be the head, does not arrogate to itself the right to intrude upon the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. All that we are expected to do—all that we *can* legitimately do—is to help the community to co-ordinate its spiritual and intellectual resources, and to revive the moral strength of which the Millat *must* be capable by virtue of its being the Millat of Islam: in other words, to help the Millat to re-create the Islamic atmosphere so necessary for a revival of Islamic life in its practical aspects.

In the following I am giving an outline of the programme to be pursued by the Department of Islamic Reconstruction. It should be understood that this programme is by no means complete. A revival of Islamic thought and practice, after centuries of decadence, is a task so stupendous that it will require the collaboration of all the best brains

in this country to chalk out a definite line of action in all its details; and so the final shape of our activities can be settled only after the Department has been fully organised as an instrument of policy and has established contacts with responsible public opinion. The outline given below aims, therefore, at no more than the "pegging-out" of the field within which we propose to tackle the problem of Islamic reconstruction.

For the sake of greater lucidity, our objectives have been listed under several sub-headings: in practice, however, it will be found that many of the functions here dealt with separately will overlap, thus necessitating their integration into one systematic effort.

I.—EDUCATION

GENERALLY speaking, the Muslim community as a whole requires to be re-educated in the Islamic spirit; and this applies more particularly to the Muslim youth which is now receiving its training in schools and colleges. It will be, therefore, one of the duties of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction to place before the educational authorities,

from time to time, suggestions and proposals designed with a view to making our schools and colleges fully representative of the new life which the Millat has decided upon. These proposals will relate to certain aspects of the curriculum, text-books, and allied subjects, as well as to the general attitude to be observed in our educational institutions with regard to matters Islamic. Religious education will have to be made a compulsory subject for Muslim students. It must begin and end with a systematic study of the Holy Quran and of Hadis—including, in the higher classes, their methodology and interpretation—and must aim at making the student familiar with the meaning of the Holy Book and the Prophet's Sunna, as well as—in the final stages of the course—with the different methods of approach to these sources adopted by the various schools of Islamic thought. To this end, a very detailed, critical study of earliest Islamic history will have to be incorporated in the curriculum of religious instruction quite apart from the role which may be assigned to it within the framework of general history tuition. Also, the various branches of Islamic philosophy will have to be considered within the context of religious instruction apart from the general study of philosophy. In the final stages of the new curriculum, the over-all scheme of Islam should be

analytically studied in its relation to various problems of contemporary life in the sphere of economics and social sciences. All this will necessitate a gradual overhaul of our educational aims with a view to imbuing the entire system of education with the spirit of Islam. It is of course impossible to achieve such an overhaul all at once. The problems are so many and so far-reaching that they will require a most careful examination by various committees of scholars who will be invited in due course to deliberate on the proposals to be made to the authorities. The reports of these committees will be published as soon as they are available.

It is also intended to set up a committee of noted educationists and orientalist scholars who will be entrusted with the task of (a) determining whether the Arabic language should be made a compulsory subject in our schools and colleges, and (b) elaborating a practical scheme to this effect in case the preceding question is answered in the affirmative.

Apart from matters relating to the curriculum, the Department of Islamic Reconstruction will make definite proposals aiming at co-ordinating the life in our schools with the tenets of Islam.

ONE of the greatest difficulties in evolving a clear-cut, practical scheme of Islamic reconstruction is the absence of a uniform code of *shar'ī* laws relating to matters of social concern. In other words, a most regrettable confusion exists within the Millat as to what is "Islamic" and what "un-Islamic" in all the socio-economic plans and proposals which are now being hotly debated in all quarters. The differences in this respect between the various schools of thought—both old and modern—are being caused, in the main, by different methods of approach to the interpretation of Quran and Sunna. As long as these differences are not harmonised, at least with regard to problems of practical, communal concern, it is impossible to draft a scheme of Islamic action which would recommend itself to the acceptance of all or even the majority of the existing schools of thought. In view of the complexity and diversity to which Muslim *fiqh* has attained in past centuries, it would be a vain attempt, for the time being, to eradicate the existing *fiqhi* differences and to harmonise all the different methods of interpretation and *ijtihadi* deduction responsible for that complexity. If, therefore, a practical—and practicable—scheme of Islamic action is to be evolved, we must eschew at

present all matters requiring interpretation and deduction and confine ourselves to the self-evident *shar'ī* laws which are clearly formulated as such in the obvious (*zahir*) wording of Quran and Sunna, and with regard to which there is no dissension between the various schools of Islamic thought. If such laws are codified, they will supply a minimum basis of agreement for the purposes of Islamic social reconstruction.

The Department proposes, therefore, to issue a call to responsible Ulama of all schools of thought to nominate their most outstanding representatives as members of a Shariat Committee to be set up in the near future. It will be the task of this committee to collect and codify such social and economic laws of Quran and Sunna as fall within the category of *nusus*—that is to say, are absolutely unequivocal in meaning and purport by virtue of their own wording and do not therefore lend themselves to conflicting interpretations. It is to be understood that there is no question of “drafting” or even “re-drafting” of *shar'ī* laws. Under the terms of reference to be issued to it, the committee will simply have to collect all the *nass* ordinances forthcoming from the Quran and from authentic Traditions accepted by all schools of thought, and to codify them under specific headings. It is

hoped that in this way it will be possible to obtain a code of comparatively small extent, bearing on matters of social concern, which could be regarded as the largest common denominator between the various schools of thought. If we succeed in this endeavour, the Millat will be in the possession of a *minimum* code of *shar'i* laws relating to questions of public import, which could subsequently form the basis of further deliberation and the starting-point for practical legislation.

III.—ISLAMIC LAW AND ECONOMICS

ANOTHER committee, composed of Islamic scholars and economists, will have to devise practical suggestions for a sound development of our economic life on Islamic lines. The necessary prerequisite for the work of this committee would be forthcoming from the "minimum" code of Shariat laws suggested in the preceding. The committee's terms of reference would include an investigation of certain modern economic problems in their relation to the Law of Islam—e.g., banking, life insurance, credit operations, requisition of private property for communal use, agricultural reform (including the question of nationalisation of lands), laws of inheritance, and so forth. It is not in-

tended to produce in this way any "blue-prints" for economic planning, which must be left to other agencies of the State. All that the above committee will be expected to do is (a) to clarify the attitude of Islamic Law with regard to certain economic problems, and (b) to find out how the requirements of our present-day life can be fitted into the economic scheme visualised by Islam. The conclusions thus arrived at may subsequently be utilised by the properly constituted legislative bodies of the State.

IV.—CO-ORDINATION OF AWQAF

IN this country there are numberless *awqaf* and public religious institutions, some of them with considerable income, which have been established at various times with a view to promoting the interests of the community in the spheres of worship, education, or social service. A few of these *awqaf* are properly administered; the overwhelming majority, however, is utterly mismanaged, and some are even shamelessly exploited for the personal benefit of a few *mutawallis* etc. Apart from the flagrant misappropriation of funds evident in many cases, a lot of waste is being caused by the entirely un-co-ordinated working of all these in-

stitutions, and many facilities which could be productively used in the Millat's interests are now being squandered. Among many well-intentioned Muslims there is a persistent demand for a co-ordination of all these *awqaf* under the supervision of one central authority—which obviously should be the Muslim Government—so that both mal-administration and wasteful duplication of activities might be avoided. If this demand is fulfilled, the community will obtain a centralised source of great income which could be used for Muslim uplift in accordance with the wishes of the pious persons who have established those *awqaf* in past times. After meeting the legitimate demands of the institutions concerned, the available surplus could be utilised for setting up and running a great Academy of Ulama (perhaps on the lines of Jamia al-Azhar of Cairo), which would produce generation after generation of real Islamic scholars and would contribute to making Pakistan the spiritual centre of the Muslim world.

The Department of Islamic Reconstruction proposes to inaugurate a committee of prominent Ulama and other well-known citizens, who would examine the question of *waqf* properties from the *shar'ī* angle and, after having duly considered all the relevant view-points, draw up and submit to Gov-

ernment a definite plan for a co-ordination of all the *awqaf* in this country under the supervision of a central authority to be nominated for this purpose by the Government.

V.—CIVIC MORALE

THE most perturbing aspect of our communal life is the utter deterioration of our morale from the Islamic and civic point of view. If Pakistan is to attain to its cherished goal and to become the cradle of a resurgent Islamic civilisation, the active co-operation of all well-meaning Muslims must be secured in the service of civic morale. Otherwise, even the best intentions of the Government cannot possibly bring about that change of outlook which is indispensable for our becoming an Islamic Millat in the true sense of the word.

Let there be no mistake about it: It is we, the people of Pakistan—we alone in the modern Muslim world—who have openly broken away from the selfish prejudices of race and nationalism and have proclaimed our intention to build a State on no other foundation but the fact of our being Muslims. However deficient our behaviour may hitherto have been from the view-point of this ideal, there is no doubt that the movement which has led to the establishment of Pakistan is so far the only mass

movement in the modern Muslim world that has an Islamic polity for its declared goal: and so it is *our* moral quality, *our* behaviour and *our* actions that will decide the future of Islam for many generations to come—and probably not only in our own country, but in all countries where Muslims live. If we, the people of Pakistan, succeed in making our land a full-fledged Islamic State; if we are able to prove to a disillusioned world that Islam does indeed provide a solution of mankind's social and political ills, all other Muslim nations are bound to follow our example sooner or later, and Islam will revive to its pristine glory. But if, God forbid, we fail in our endeavour, it is not only we, the people of Pakistan, who will lose faith in Islam as a practical proposition: the whole Muslim world, which at present looks expectantly towards us, will be utterly disheartened by our failure, and will get fully accustomed to the idea—so assiduously preached by our enemies—that religion cannot be made the basis of a nation's politics and economics. In other words, if *we* attain to our glorious objective, the whole Muslim world will attain to it with us; and if *we* go astray, the whole Muslim world will probably go astray with us, and for centuries to come people will cease to consider even the possibility of building an Islamic State.

Therefore—*we must not fail*. We must, on the contrary, rise to the great responsibility which God has placed on our shoulders: the responsibility of proving to the world that Islam is indeed a practical and practicable proposition for our time and for every time. If we but realise this responsibility, our present weakness will soon become the source of our strength—for we will learn to regard the trials we are now undergoing not as a calamity, not as a punishment from God, but as the sacrifice which He demands of those whom He has chosen for a special mission. For, undoubtedly, He has chosen the people of Pakistan for the greatest, the most glorious mission which any people might ever be called upon to fulfil, namely—

لَتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“that you may become a people inviting the world to equity, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong: and such people, indeed, attain to spiritual happiness.”

But we cannot remain true to the mission which God seems to have entrusted to us, we cannot even dream of achieving an Islamic polity, unless we free ourselves from the shameful habits of our

decadence and become more upright, more truthful—in short, more decent in our behaviour than we are now. In order that we should be able to invite the world to equity, we must learn ourselves to behave equitably towards those who are weak; in order to be able to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong, we must learn to judge ourselves more severely than we judge others; and in order to attain to spiritual happiness, we must learn to be far less materialistic than we are now. God demands of us faith and courage, honesty and self-respect, purity of mind and purity of action: and this is surely not too heavy a demand to make of those who call themselves sons and daughters of Islam, and not too heavy a price to pay for the future which God has promised to His faithful followers. But it is a demand which *must* be fulfilled, and a price which *must* be paid for the privilege of being a Muslim.

The Department of Islamic Reconstruction will regard it as its supreme duty to carry the message of practical Islam to every thinking man and woman in this country: for, if we are desirous of *living* in terms of Islam, we must, first of all, learn to *think* in terms of Islam. In accordance with a carefully elaborated plan, the Department will issue continuous publications on the social, moral

and intellectual problems with which the Millat is now confronted. In addition to the reports of the various committees alluded to in the foregoing, we shall publish (a) series of pamphlets written by notable Muslim thinkers, (b) series of newspaper articles, and (c) series of radio talks—all of them dealing with the burning questions of Islamic reconstruction. We shall institute a *Dars al-Quran* which will be regularly broadcast by Radio Pakistan; to this end we shall avail ourselves of the collaboration of prominent scholars, who will expound the teaching of the Quran with special reference to present-day problems and difficulties and thus help the community to derive practical guidance from the Holy Book. In good time, when our organisation is fully developed, we shall approach the Muslim masses directly in mosques and at public meetings—not merely for the sake of delivering sermons, but in order to mobilise the spiritual resources of the Millat for the great and noble task of building an Islamic polity worthy of its name, and to overcome that degradation of the spirit, that moral and social corruption which has darkened the heart of the Millat since the days of its slavery.

In pursuance of this mission, the Department shall from time to time submit to Government

various suggestions for Islamic social improvement, both of the kind which can be effected immediately, without recourse to special legislation, as well as of the kind which demands new legislative measures.

The Department contemplates the establishment, after some time, of regional Councils of Islamic Reconstruction, starting with Lahore and gradually expanding over the whole of this country. These regional Councils will consist of prominent citizens and social workers who are prepared to help us in our task of drawing ever-widening circles of the Muslim public into the ranks of active fighters for the building-up of a truly Islamic polity.

IN short, we propose to make the Department of Islamic Reconstruction a sort of "clearing-house" of ideas and endeavours aiming, cumulatively, at a religious and social uplift of the Millat. It goes without saying that a programme of this magnitude—which may even be still further augmented as our work goes on—can be implemented only in stages and not all at once. Ours is an infant Department, and our beginnings are small: and so we must request the Millat to have patience with

us and not to expect miracles. We can do no more than work and try—and it is for the Millat to co-operate with us in such a way that our work becomes a success. The one form of co-operation we must insist upon from the very beginning—a co-operation which, indeed, the whole Government must insist upon—is the creation, by the people themselves and within themselves, of a new spirit of hope, determination and social integrity. It is only on the basis of such a co-operation that our dream, to build an Islamic State, can come true.

I pray to Almighty God that He may give all of us the wisdom and the moral strength to work for the greatness of Islam—

والتوفيق من الله