

ICA ANNUAL MUBALIGHEEN CONFERENCE

Masjid Al-Husayn, MKSI Leicester Community Centre

Sunday 18th October 2009,

11.30 Tilawat-e-Quran

11.35 Leicester Jamaat Committee Member Welcome Message – Sajjad Bojani

11.35 Introduction by the Chairman of ICA

Start by the remembrance of Scholars and Ulema who have passed away with a Sura-e-Fateha. Prophet Musa said he enlightens the graves of those who teach others. The Prophet Muhammad said “The best form of charity is to gain knowledge and then teach it to others.” Their station is above the Shuhada and below the Prophets in Jannat. Therefore we pray that we can utilize today for discussion which can become the highest form of Ibada.

11.45 Welcome Message from president elect, Al-Hajj Husein Jiwa

Zakireen play very important part in the enlightenment of the community. Today we face many spiritual and religious challenges, and therefore it is important that the Zakireen work very close together, and a forum like this allows the Ulema to work close together constructively, and discuss how the community can be best guided.

11.50 Session 1: “Spirituality – How we can express this from the pulpit” – Sheikh Bahmanpour

The issue of Spirituality in our environment has been diluted by those who are not Muslims, disbelievers and people of faith alike, who talk about spiritual experiences, which is not like the spirituality we understand. What exactly is spirituality? It is that sense of wanting to become close to God. This is different to theology. The best path is to simply follow the instructions and guidance of the Prophet and Imams.

Kumayl Ibn Ziyad asked Imam Ali to tell him about Haqiqah, as he is his very close companion. Imam Ali replied him that who are you that I should tell you everything you want to know from me, just because you have picked up splashes of my knowledge. Therefore we see that we should know our position, and not just follow all paths to spirituality which may have been shown to us, such as the teachings of Irfan.

One of the best books on Akhlaq, which is a good book to read about spirituality, is written by Syed Kashani. He used the works of Ghazali, “Ihya ud Din”, and took out exaggerations and added the hadith of the A’immah. He also wrote “Tafsir us-Safi” and again included hadith of the A’immah, and ideas from the prominent Tafsirs of the shi’a world. He says his

book will elevate anyone who has a heart and lends an ear to it.

Spirituality is a light which “moves from heart to heart”. It cannot be learnt from a book as the person has to have a sincere heart. Syed Kashani says that a person who wants to learn must purify himself of blameworthy acts. This is because knowledge is the worship of the heart, just as Salah is the worship of the body. Your heart is a house where the angels want to enter, but if there are “dogs” (i.e jealousy, malice, dishonesty, impurities) in your heart they will not enter, and it is only angels which put Nur into your heart. Bibi Maryam has said do not talk about Hiqmah with people who cannot understand because then you have wronged Hiqmah, and if you do not talk about it with people who understand, then you have wronged those who understand.

12.20 Session 1 discussion

Sheikh Mouslim: if we give people who do not understand knowledge he can't cope with, we will only destroy him. Instead we should give him only drops of knowledge so he can increase his capacity. However, how can we make them understand how much work is required?

Question from ladies: What is the best way to understand when the audience is ready? Also is a lecture the best medium for increasing spirituality or would discussion circles or other mediums be a better medium?

Reply: People should be taught gradually, and then it is possible to know when they are ready for more. This way, they can progress. We should use the same mediums Shaytan uses to deviate propel to bring people back. Allah will only change the people if they change themselves, so they should constantly strive towards him and he will bring them towards him. There are various different mediums possible, and they are all useful in different ways.

Table 4: In society we have various extremes such as Sufi, Salafi and Akhbari, who focus on spirituality. How can we address these? Can we encourage people to go to Qum and study?

Reply: All these groups started from those who wanted to achieve a very high level of spirituality. Qum in some ways is the source of such groups, who offer people way to achieve spirituality. There are some extremist beliefs which have the affect of attracting the pure hearted ones. People say that the community did not give me the spirituality that I needed and that is why I have followed this ideology. However, the level of spirituality achieved by the Ulema which some, especially youth, aspire after is achieved after a lifetime of strife and gradual progression, not just instantly.

Syed Amir Husein Naqvi: The best way to see how we can improve spirituality in the people is to go back to the time of the Prophet and see how he increased the spirituality of the companions, for example Abu Dharr. The best method would be to give a lot more attention

to Qur'an and understand the Ayaat in the order they were revealed.

Sheikh Shafiq Hooda: When we think of spirituality, we sometimes think of the idea of mysticism and detaching ourselves from the world, but this is not necessarily what spirituality is. This is not a unique challenge to Muslims, but is similar in other faiths as well.

Muallim Maqbul Rahim: Today, the youth want an instant fix to get spirituality at the speed of broadband. The solution is not to teach at a low capacity, because the youth are moving towards these ideologies because their capacity is not being fulfilled. Instead, we need to find a long term solution to solve this problem.

Mulla Roshanali Versi: One of the problems constituting to the problems with spirituality is that half scholars are preaching and they are a danger to faith, just as a half doctor would be a danger to health. It is important that we recite Du'a as they are very powerful, and will aid in achieving spirituality and staying on the right path.

Table 5: The community leaders are sometimes silent on the face of the problems with spirituality, and the solution may be to encourage our governing bodies, CoEJ, and the scholars to present a united front

Muallim Jaffer Ladak: The first point is that when discussing spirituality, we should not use our own lives as examples, but we should use the lives of our Aimmah. Sometimes we encourage spirituality too much and forget the importance of Taqwa, which is important in moments of solitude when we have to be aware of God's presence when we may be tempted by Shaytan.

Sheikh Mustafa Mawjee: Is Irfan the same as spirituality, and isn't the closest and the best way towards Allah gaining Taqwa?

Reply: The students who are teaching Irfan and spirituality are all people who have a pure heart, and therefore are not a problem we need to fight against. They are not after power and status as some are, and just feel what they have been taught is the path to Allah and spirituality. Love of Allah is not the path, it is the destination. There are many words for spirituality. Irfan is used to explain embarking on the path to knowing Allah and spirituality. The words mysticism and gnosis are also used.

Al-Hajj Husein Jiwa: As a community, we always treat the Ulemas and Zakireen with the utmost respect.

2.30 Introduction to ICA

- Encouraging better understanding of our faith and culture within our community;
- Coordinating needs of member jamaats for Alims and Zakirs

- Publishing leaflet, DVDs and online resources
- Assisting CoEJ in administration of Alim grant and Hilal advisory
- Interfaith activities

2.55 **Session 2: “Student scholar Link (SSL)” – Mehjabeen Rahim**

This will give lecturers access to the subjects affecting the youth. It aims to bridge the gap between the floor and the pulpit. There will be representatives from the youth from different areas.

Some of the issues youth are experiencing are:

- Which Marja’ to follow – difficulty deciphering differing ruling with Marja
- Reasons behind certain rulings, regarding chess for example
- Marriage and the boundaries of Islam regarding social behaviour
- Mysticism and spirituality – lack of clarity distances them from it and can also brings them towards it the wrong way
- Relevance of Islamic history
- What are my duties to the Imam of the time
- How to answer questions from Sunni brothers.

Sheikh Shafiq Hooda: Regarding the issues in the differing rulings between Marja’, we can look at the adverse situation. What if all the rulings of the Marja’ were exactly the same as previous Marja’. Doctors always have different diagnosis, but we do not criticise this. It is not necessary for us to have the same Eid to achieve unity.

Sheikh Mouslim: All the Zakireen could teach about the same topic, for example Imam Hasan. People could receive different view points on the life of Imam Hasan. This would be taught in the Majalis and the Madaris. An example of this is how Ayatullah Khamanei tells the people that the topic of discussion this year is Rasool, and how the schools and lecturers all teach the people the same topic.

3.15 **Session 3: “Ideological Challenges facing our Community” – Syed Muhammad Naqvi**

When the Khoja community was first formed, due to lack of communication, the whole community was united following one Marja’. Since we have seen, and are still seeing the

development of Marji'at. For example, there is a group which believe that logically it is impossible to believe that one single individual can be the most knowledgeable, and therefore they find it impossible to simply follow one of the Marja', and instead, they believe different Marja' are experts in different fields. Today, Ayatullah Sistani is enjoying the most popularity as the Marja'.

In the time of Mulla Asgher, Mulla Asgher wrote to the community when Ayatullah Khoui passed away saying he was now following Ayatullah Gulpaygani after consulting with the Ahlal Kuboor. He then wrote to the community that he was following Ayatullah Sistani after consulting with Ahlal Kuboor. Now we see there is no single person that the whole community will follow in his Taqlid. Already we are seeing many are following the Taqlid of Marja' other than Ayatullah Sistani, and after he passes, it is likely that the community will become even more divided in their Taqlid. There are also problems these days in the interpretation of the rulings of the Marja'. For example, with Music, one Ayatullah says Music is not allowed if it is vulgar, whereas Ayatullah Sistani says classical music is allowed. There is now a problem due to ambiguity

There are a group of people known as Hermeneutics, who interpret texts. They read an ayat, and they study why Allah may have brought a certain ruling in the Qur'an. They then study its place in today's society, and try to come up with an alternative by themselves

There is a necessity for CPD's now because the scholars need to provide a unified front against such problems such as interpretation of rulings of Marja', Hermeneutics, the increasing presence of Akhbarism and other prevalent ideologies. Youth will undoubtedly become confused when they get different answers from every scholar they ask. They are asking more and more questions brought on by modern issues such as being surrounded by a community of Kafireen which allows homosexuality etc, but also on issues such as leadership.

4.00 Group Questions

Main ideological challenges facing our Community

1. Different opinions and interpretations on Marjaiyyah, and its validity
2. Different opinions and interpretations on the rulings of Marja'.
3. Issues with marriage, and the idea of marrying early. The increased awareness of the temporary marriage and the place of an arranged marriage in our community.
4. Ensuring students who go to university are kept on the right path and are encouraged to become part of a new community.
5. Strong foundation in Islam is needed with strong belief in God, and a strong belief in

the Aqaid with explanations

Tackling Problems of Akhbari and Malungi Influences – Table 8, 2

- Malungi believe simply following Imam Ali and doing Azadari is enough for them
- They have come about due to over emphasis on the historical facts and constructing stories to make people cry, and also over emphasis on Azadari, Matam, crying etc
- Solutions include:
 - Emphasize that Azadari is a form of worship to Allah
 - Ensure correct historical facts are given
 - Zakireen should take the driving seat in terms of Azadari and control it
- Akhbari challenge Marjaiyat and don't believe in Khums
- Akhbarism was prevalent before hand, but was then suppressed. Are there tools used last time available for us to suppress it or has it resurfaced differently

Issue of Religious Pluralism and Theory of Mind (Hermeneutics) – 3, 6, 9

- Identify fundamental issues and combat them, finding counter arguments
- Become proactive, ensuring we deal with issues in advance, , educating people in advance rather than waiting for them to become an issue in the youth
- The reasoning used by Marja' to determine Fatwas after Qur'an and Ahdith cannot be used by all as you need a strong background in the subjects.
- Theory of religious pluralism is common in modern multi-faith societies, but does not stand because where do you draw the line, at ahlal kitab, atheists etc

Marjaiyyah

- We need to establish in the community the credibility and trust in the institution of Marjaiyyah, and we should respect them, not challenge and oppose them.
- Need to build strong communication and relationship with the Marja' himself, no middle man, as people will not accept rulings from anyone except the Marja' himself.
- We need to educate the youth as to what Taqlid is, why it is needed and just how important it is, giving them a strong foundation and a proper education.

Universal Solutions

- We should dedicate the year to teaching Marjaiyyah, ensuring that all communities are properly educated in this issue.
- Create awareness of differences and prevalence of these issues
- Strengthen awareness in own beliefs and rulings
- United and informed approach
- Accept there are these problems and solve them rather than deny them
- Ensure all scholars are aware of the issues and problems with these ideologies
- Ensure Zakireen are not preaching the wrong ideas
- Be proactive, dealing with issues with the youth rather than waiting for the issue to become an issue in our community
- Alims should meet regularly and discuss issues above
- Teach the community what they need to learn and do not just lecture them on what they want to hear to get the appreciation.

5.40 “Attracting the Youth and Projecting the right message” – Sheikh Shaffiq Hudda

The first thing is we do not need to sugar coat Islam for our youth. We need to bear in mind that the youth need something from us. They want us to be a part of them rather than being elevated in such a way that youth don't feel like they can sit with them. The youth should be able to relate to the Zakireen and feel they can approach the Zakireen. Zakireen should work actively to build the trust of the youth and to build their love. They should also understand that the Marja' are not aloof from us but they are able to meet them, and they have been through training for years, starting from the same level as us.

Youth are very scientifically minded, and they want a rationale for everything. Therefore Zakireen need to give a rationale where possible, yet still educate them to the fact that there is not a rationale to everything because Allah has ultimate knowledge of some things such as why is the sky blue, or why Zohr is 4 rakats. On this issue, youth should also understand that the scholars and Marja' are also scientifically inclined, tackling modern issues such as cloning.

Youth should be encouraged by empowering the youth to arrange programs so they feel a part of the organisation. Give them responsibility.

Youth also need to understand that unity is not necessarily unanimity. Our responsibility is to primarily follow our Mujtahid, even if it means there are more than one Eid. We have to follow the Marja', and we can't compromise on our beliefs at all, because if beliefs are compromised once, then they youth think it can be compromised again. Stay firm in the beliefs of Islam, and they need to accept it.

6.00 Islamic Education of World Federation – Sheikh Abbas Ismail

IEB support the Zakireen. They used to encourage the Zakireen to visit centres around the world, who would report back to the IEB about how the Jamaat is doing. However, this has recently stopped. The IEB seek to revisit this, encouraging Zakireen to give reports on how Jamaats are doing, how the spirituality level is and what is needed at the various Jamaats. Zakireen should report on whatever they think there is a problem on in the community. The presentation shown includes what is needed in the report, and is available online. The IEB seek to making the reports submitted online, which will follow soon.

The slides about the Muballigheen training program will be available online.

6.10 Du'a by Muallim Murtaza Bandali