

Women and the challenges of the modern world

(continued from last week)

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4. Morality

The fourth challenge is an even more serious challenge which I consider the root cause of all our problems. This is the moral challenge. Materialism has become so widespread that we are losing our sense of morality. We find ourselves in a race for money. To have more and more wealth has become a major objective of life of the modern man.

Islam does not stop us from getting rich but it requires us to use moral and ethical means in generating wealth. We may very easily surrender to a lust for wealth and power if our sense of morality becomes weak.

In Islam, we, human beings, are essentially moral beings, responsible for our behaviour and conduct to our Creator. This sense of accountability keeps us humble, content and balanced in our pursuits.

Materialism weakens our sense of morality. In this aspect women have a great responsibility to strengthen the moral consciousness of members of the family. Women, in the Islamic framework, not only communicate moral values to their children, but they also support the moral behaviour and conduct of their husbands, children and fellow human beings.

If we are aware of our moral responsibilities, we can build a dignified Islamic society which is truly peaceful.

5. Cultural invasion

Last but not least is the challenge of cultural invasion. People of the world, Asians and Africans in particular, are under the spell of a cultural invasion made through movies, stage shows, songs which convey one single message: enjoy food, sex and dress. The purpose and goal of human life is reduced to fulfilling a few bodily needs. Universal values, which are a

heritage of humanity in the East and the West, are eroded. Justice, loyalty, honesty, integrity, dignity, respect for the elderly, love for children, care for the needy; these and many other virtues are sacrificed at the altar of immediate pleasure and personal gain.

These universal values are not particular to Islam although they are more central to Islam than any other system of life. I am sure these values have been given great importance in the major cultures of the world, such as the Chinese.

This challenge is to be taken seriously by us, Muslims, as well as all those who are concerned about a world with peace, dignity and honour.

This is why the Qur'an greatly emphasizes observing *huquq 'ibad*, that is, rights due to human beings or servants of Allah while it also demands observing *huquq Allah*, i.e., rights of our Creator, Allah.

I am not suggesting that we alienate ourselves from the world. I am only thinking how to stop this cultural invasion by a positive approach. This has to be done with confidence and trust in the values and culture given by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This has to be done by strengthening the family bond. This has to be done by encouraging our coming generations to observe their own cultural values and not to be brainwashed by the Western popular culture like Hollywood, Disneyworld.

Let us move forward with universal Islamic values, and build a more peaceful, respectful, secure and progressing world.

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