

A DISCOURSE ON THE CHALLENGES OF THE UMMAH TODAY



MUHAMMAD SA'IDU JIMADA

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INTRODUCTION

This book is an explanatory commentary of the statement of Rasul (SAW): “I have left behind two things you will never go astray as long as you hold fast onto them i.e. the Quran and Sunnah.” As a result, it is important for each and every Muslim to acquire knowledge of the Qur’an and Sunnah in order to be guided onto the Straight Path. Thus, any seemingly new or controversial practice involving acts of *ibadah* (prayer, fasting, etc.) as well as interpersonal relationships like marriage, divorce, trade and commerce can be evaluated based on the provisions of these two and thereby be accepted or discarded. This brings about checks and balance in the Ummah. Therefore, anyone found guilty of going against the tenets enshrined in the Qur’an and Sunnah is pointed out and reprimanded. The first Caliph, Abu Bakr (RA) waged war against Muslims who refused to pay Zakat after the demise of Rasul (SAW). Today, what punishment awaits those who do not or willfully underpay Zakat? According to Jimada, the foundation for dealing with this challenge is that everyone – parents, teachers, leaders, followers – should have “basic standard knowledge” of Qur’an and Sunnah.

Next, the author correlated the bankruptcy of religious knowledge and discipline with bad leadership inherent in our democracy. Why is it that a typical Nigerian politician by default is a thief or a potential thief? Being a Muslim does not ensure or guarantee safety of public trust. Bribery and corruption has become our national identity. And a person or institution perceived to be a resistant force or a threat is impeded, frustrated or kicked out. Jimada stressed that Muslims who are active participants in this rotten system lack “basic standard knowledge” of Qur’an and Sunnah, distance themselves from the learned or are outright rebels who are ready to face God’s punishment in afterlife.

As a complete way of life, Islam regulates the entire livelihood of Muslims on the principle of “do not cheat and do not allow yourself to be cheated.” To this end, those who engage in criminal activities such as rituals, kidnapping, stealing of public resources, production and sales of fake or contraband products in order to be wealthy simply showcase their deficiency of religious knowledge and discipline.

The reader will discover that the solution to these challenges in addition to acquiring “basic standard knowledge” by all and sundry is that scholars must teach and live according to authentic tenets of Islam. Also, there should be a shift from “inheritance model” to “knowledge and discipline model” in succession of leadership of the Ummah.

Muhammad Imran Muhammad

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The Ummah of Muhammad (SAW) is made up of every and all Muslims across the globe. However, with respect to national boundaries, there is the Muslim Ummah of Nigeria. This is supposed to be without regard to differences not based on knowledge. And this is the beginning of the challenges.

Islam is based on the Qur'an revealed to the Messenger of Allah (SAW) and the Tradition that arose from his exemplary leadership of the COMPLETE GUIDANCE. Whatever is to be known, claimed or understood by a believer must find its seat on these, as established by authentic records of the integrity of transmitters, the consistency of the records with the Qur'an and the reputation of the collectors. It will therefore be dubious, confusing or simply misleading, to refuse to or fail to connect to this common background. It will be too ambitious to cling to any fellow believer who expounds any principle or practice without establishing it on the common basis. And it will not matter who the believer is. The justification for this is that, after the personal leadership and guidance of the Prophet (SAW), his four successive leaders in the Ummah remain unquestionably, the best models. They were certified as the guided leaders. Their history confirms this.

After them are admissible, the following three generations of Ummah leadership THAT REMAINED CONNECTED TO THE BASE UMMAH. This is for instance what stands the Imam Malik school out. It connects the principles, the practices to those living it in the very environment where the culture was bred and established. And his integrity can be appreciated in his strict selection of what sources to rely on. There was an occasion he met a respectable reference for Hadith. But when he witnessed the man's luring of a sheep to get food only to arrest it, Malik

discounted all that he got from that source. The reason is that the man has a trait of deception to meet his goal. Imam Bukhari who took the pleasure and pain to spiritually get guidance on every hadith he admitted is exceptional. And all of such scholars have recorded against themselves that **WHATEVER THEY HAVE ADMITTED THAT CONTRADICTS THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH MUST BE DISCARDED**. As a result, it will amount to foolishness for anyone to refuse or fail to reconnect to the foundation for clarity. It is not admissible to simply say one's father, teacher, mentor or scholar has made an unquestionable submission.

Islam is based on knowledge and not ignorance. It is based on simple and clear understanding and not sentiment. It is an affair of Allah (SWT) for every and all believers **AND NOT OF ANYONE**. The Prophet, Muhammad (SAW) is a reference only as a meeting point. Thus the instruction is that believers **TAKE WHATEVER ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER HAVE DECIDED ON. WHOEVER OBEYS THE MESSENGER HAS OBEYED ALLAH. THE MESSENGER DOES THINGS ON THE GUIDANCE OF ALLAH AND NOT ON PERSONAL VOLITION**.

No individual Muslim is therefore excused from acquiring basic religious knowledge that provides the spiritual foundation for our faith and orientation or culture. The knowledge and practice of the five pillars of Islam is the first standard. It will consequently not only be strange but condemnable to for instance adjust the mode of calling believers to prayer and success. There cannot be a responsible basis for this innovative madness. The times or structure of salat are not for amendment. The same applies to the other pillars. It will then be most embarrassing to have any part of the Ummah celebrating Eid without a certified sighting of the moon. But these are not impossible where strands of ignorance bind the leaders and followers.

The basis of leadership in the Ummah must therefore connect with knowledge of and proper or disciplined practice of the religion. It will not be based on some funny or serious inheritance line. It has no hanger on title bearing. A collection of ignorant crooks can safely adorn a criminal with a pleasant title. That is of no value in Islam. Leadership position in Islam is not just a name. We have had instances where animals are given the names of humans by humans who have either traits of animalism or are indeed animals in human forms. Hence, it is inconsistent to have a leader in the Ummah who is either not knowledgeable, not disciplined or both. Knowledge is the torch. The path can neither be seen nor walked without lighting it.

Thus, in an environment where this kind of experience is on the ground, it is at least risky because of the damaging powers of ignorance. The so called leaders will logically influence affairs to the extent of their pleasant understanding. And the younger generations will be faced with the greater misfortune of ‘learning’ the wrongs being introduced or established. In a setting where either of the parties genuinely accepts the status of ignorance and incompetence, the leadership position will either not be given or the target recipient will honourably decline. There is no room in Islam for the appointment of a leader who is of dual bankruptcy in knowledge and discipline.

THE FOUNDATION FOR ATTENDING TO THIS CHALLENGE

In Islam, every person is born a potential believer until his parents redirect him. This means that, the first level of reference is the parents who are believers. In other words, if the Ummah is interested in attending to this challenge, parents or adults will be the first focus.

They must seek and get this basic religious knowledge. This will be for their own personal good and safety. This connects with getting the best partner for marriage and reproducing the additional members of the Ummah. The tradition instructs that men ask for the hands of good mothers for their children. And the best woman is the religious one in knowledge and discipline. Then, because men are outgoing, are further enjoined to teach and guide their partners. But nothing stops the knowledgeable and disciplined wife from leading the husband.

The parents must therefore logically and sensibly be the most preferred first point of learning and discipline for the children. But there is an evident big gap or incapacity in this respect, today. It is either the parents do not know, are careless by being too busy for this primary responsibility or do know but transfer the duties to someone or institution on contract for pay.

This is the juncture at which the leadership of the Ummah is tested at any point in time. The dividing or determining factor will be the existing learning outlets. If the Ummah lacks both the formal and informal means or standard for ensuring that only the right basic knowledge and practices are allowed and made available, that will be the basis for breeding confusion in the Ummah. The individuals who have the right basic knowledge and discipline will be in the preferred position of either inviting people to acquire the knowledge, direct those in search of knowledge to the right persons or schools and quickly alerting to correct whatever is fundamentally wrongly introduced ON FIRST OBSERVATION. Qadi AbdulQadir Orire of Ilorin was for example very symbolic of this in his environment – against tying marriage knots with pregnancy. Qadi Abubakar Gumi disdained arranged remarriage by a divorced party to ease return of the divorced parties together. These are disciplinary examples. Where there is an institution handling these

limitations against abuse, it may be perfect because it is not impossible to have the institutions representing questionable knowledge and discipline.

Therefore, the scholars who are the successors of the Prophet (SAW) by being torch bearers for the Ummah must first ENSURE that the reproduction of the Ummah is well placed on the principles and practices taught by the Messenger of Allah (SAW). Sex before marriage will be completely out of question and practice. Desperation for having children will be checked by relying on the will of Allah (SWT) as always the best for the believers. Requirements for marriage beyond a modest gift, consent of the parties and their respective *waliyy* along with witnesses must not be abused. While people vary in their capacity to provide, the modest terms as the best must not be lost sight of. The experience in northern Nigeria portends a stinking consequence of managing such confusion. Marriages become difficult to tie. Moral laxity becomes popular. And to check it a concerned political chief suggested that any person who chooses to take more than one wife will need to be assessed before it is allowed. But it was thrown out because the correction is required somewhere else. Then he followed up with, brides should be able to put up with whatever the groom is able to provide. This is contrary to the popular practices of the groom and his party being made to provide boxes of wears for a life time, the bed and bedding, etc. The amendment will ease the irresponsible burden of having material provisions inhibiting the tradition of the Messenger of Allah (SAW). Thus, the policies of minimum dowry and mass wedding have not helped the challenge of getting married much. If scholars will stick to the basic requirements and parents have this knowledge and discipline, those who wish to and can afford to continue may do so BUT WITHOUT ANY BENEFITS OF ADMIRATION OR COMMENDATION. This is why in a Muslim country you can find a law making it illegally for marrying more than one wife even when

freedom of religious practices should permit Muslims living under non-Islamic authorities practice the sunnah. This is why dowries of millions or even billions have become attractive for mentioning.

In essence, the blessedness of an activity or discipline logically connects to the purity or integrity of the person. This is why a hypocrite is not admissible as a witness. A slanderer is punished. The Ummah cannot expect to wag strong with a new culture of indecency and ignorance or avoidance of the basic standard. And the scholars have the first responsibility to correct the trend that is fast developing to admit questionable sympathies. For instance, orphanage in Islam is applicable to children of known parents in marriage. But today, orphanages are mostly of abandoned children, born outside wedlock. The debate of their innocence becomes valid. This complexity is definitely best attended to at its roots. We shy away or ignore it, but when one of the bastards becomes a religious leader, a political leader or a business leader, we complain of the shortage of blessings. I have personally experienced a shock in a mosque where the leader was giving his pregnant daughter out for marriage. A grumble arose from the attendees. The leader then openly challenged the audience, asking, HOW MANY OF US HERE CAN SWEAR TO ALLAH THAT AS FIRST CHILD, THEY WERE NOT GOTTEN BEFORE THE WEDLOCK OF THEIR PARENTS? There was silence to admit that it is an acultured practice. This is not to talk of marrying a non-Muslim and bringing up non-Muslim children by a Muslim leader. There are aesthetic cases where the Muslim father grants freedom to the children to choose whatever faith they prefer to follow. This is no doubt the peak of ignorance and irresponsibility of any believer, not to mention the case of a leader in the Ummah.

Basic standard knowledge of necessarily common foundation is the bedrock upon which the Ummah can stand, rest and prosper, not whimsical prejudices and

ignorance or avoidance of the truth. What will it cost to correct the examples of indiscipline above? The whims, the inordinate attachment to tradition, the fear of being different from the traditionalists. The fear or shyness of other than Allah (SWT) has taken root. It grows and develops in the abuse of the Sunnah AND WE COMPLAIN OR ADMIT IT AS CONSISTENT WITH SHARI'AH.

We cannot possibly have and sustain a wrong family structure through a corrupt marriage institution and expect the results of the marriage and family institution based on the Sunnah of Rasul (SAW). The active combination of leading failure and parental ignorance in the Ummah is logically only vulnerable to more compromises in an environment where Shari'ah is not the rule and the options of the contrary are variously available. Education and marriage are therefore intertwined because discipline cannot be devoid of knowledge base. A practice is informed by a clear principle.

When late Sheikh Uthman ibn Fodio wrote on the revival of the Sunnah, his approach was twinly simple. The specific requirements of the Shari'ah based on Qur'an and Hadith were laid out and used to evaluate by admitting or dissociation of specific practices in the marriage and family history of the society then. Those who claim to be on the same course should make this popularly available by studies and practices. Then, they will historically fit themselves into the course by building on what he has done. For example, in our times, there are practices like invitation cards, pictures of the prospective couples leaning, holding or hugging each other, bachelors or spinsters day or night, mothers' day or night, fathers' day or night, reception, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, honeymoon, wedding dress, wedding gifts, boxes for the bride, food items for the couple, furniture for the couple, night parties, etc. Where are the parents and scholars in guiding our generation? But history will not stop because nothing is done. Of what practical

benefits have the school curriculum on marriage and the family affected our faith and connection with Allah (SWT) as believers?

After marriage in our times, the records and weight of divorce cases in our courts of Shari'ah is an embarrassing mockery of the guardians in the Ummah. The husbands, the wives, the parents, the scholars, the leaders, etc. The Ummah has become so weak that even the concept and practice of orphanage has become so corrupted and is almost taken over by something else. In Islam, orphans are honourable members of the Ummah with special allotment for those who care for them. They are of the background of known legal parents. And they are cared for by tacit and subtle absorption within the society, free from serious institutionalizations. And a guide is that, it is against the Sunnah for an orphan to bear the name of the sponsor. But, what is our status today? Are there no hundreds and thousands of our known and clear relations that are orphans and uncared for? Are we not going or getting deeper and deeper involved in admitting children from unknown parents who have abandoned them? Is the concept of adoption not gaining ground? Indeed is our caring for orphans not growingly becoming ad hoc or interventional ceremonies? What an avoidable embarrassing shame to the Ummah?

Are we not concerned about sexual laxity in our times? Are we free from the germinating move to license prostitution? How are we managing same sex relationship, safe sex arrangements before transgender, over and above premarital and extra marital sexual orientation? On the line of family planning and the craziness to have children, what is our knowledge and disposition to having artificial insemination, test tube babies, babies by sponsoring mothers, sperm banks, posthumous conception, etc.? The Ummah cannot expect to be asleep and wake up to its safety. It is unhistorical. It is illogical. It is not sensible.

Where are the parents? Where are the teachers and scholars? Where are the institutions, forums and groups that light the way for the Ummah? Where are the successors or flag bearers of the flag of Sheikh Uthman ibn Fodio? Where are the universities? We have all of these and more but are getting more rotten and rotten. Our seeming existence continues to be in the name that is drowning in the environment of democracy. But democracy is not necessarily anti-Islam. In fact it cannot be where Muslims are alive.

How many of the leaders or guardians in the Ummah are for instance favourably disposed to marrying more than one wife? I personally recall a case of two intimate friends, a Kano man and a Niger man. Following the death of the Kano man the parents of the widow invited the Niger friend and gave him the hand of their daughter in marriage. How many guardians or leaders will submit to such today? This contrasts with another set of experiences in Kaduna state. A tailor was invited by a retired professor to sew materials for his daughters. The tailor narrated that on arrival he was accosted by three women and mistook them for his wives. But when they started relating with him without restraint he got scared and quickly left. The professor later called and complained that his daughters complained bitterly for not feeling free and disappearing. He told him to get them married and that he would not return to the house. The professor then indicated that people do not come around. Another case was that of a retired military general who sent a word to an Imam, to pick from the regular attendants to prayers one person he will give the hand of his BELOVED daughter to in marriage. It did not matter if he has no job or house. This sociological disconnect is widening. A more embarrassing and disgraceful experience was giving the hand of a late Muslim's daughter to a non-Muslim by his close associate. Do we not even have nominal leaders in our religion, even when their children are non-Muslims? They will be busy arguing

that polygyny is the exception. They cannot cover the Ummah with such sacrifice. They cannot bear such Sunnah. More and more are now living it and are sexually notorious outside marriage. They serve as quiet models for the younger generation that has greater and sharper inordinate greed for the good of this world. Marriage is virtually being reduced to a sexual window only. Responsibility is secondary. And democracy abundantly provides windows for sex, distinct from marriage. If the Ummah frowns at single parenting, how have we handled the growing propensity of matrons?

If the Ummah remains careless about its reproduction terms and the sustenance of the same, the first basis for the resting of Allah's *barakah* in the Ummah would be eroded or sacrificed. From collapse to the secondary level, we shall fall to the tertiary level. It is like raising the level of *mustahab* to the status of *fard* while *fard* is cut down. Eventually *makruh* will become admitted before haram takes the front line. For, who will say for instance that, children born out of wedlock deserve death or have no rights whatsoever? The guardians and especially the knowledgeable among them, have the primary and urgent responsibility to raise our general levels of knowledge, practices, discipline and orientation. We can afford not to be BROKE because we are certainly not bankrupt.

The Ummah has the responsibility of defining the terms and limits that fall in line and do not contradict the basic standards already perfected for our safe and successful livelihood. And the ultimate orientation that is losing out which needs to be recovered is, hooking up or connecting our livelihood of benefitting in the good things of this world FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH, with whatever attendant restraints and burdens that may be the consequence. We must stick to whatever Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) have decided on. We must avoid turning into viruses like the practice of *Mut'a* in the Ummah. The systematic exploitation

of the naivety, ignorance and sexual power or prison in our decadent circumstances is unholy, wicked and highly politically charged.

This element of the sociological setting of the Ummah fails to get any support by the general sociology. And the setting of the institution or structure of congressional praying mosques reveals this. Every monied member of the Ummah colours or completes his residence with a cute mosque. Every street gets a special gesture of mosque construction. Every organization has a mosque. Every ward has a mosque. Every community has a mosque. Every following, either as an association, a sect or an order, has a mosque. And Friday congregations are only lesser in scope by some forty percent. While no ordinary member of the Ummah is denied performing salat in any of the mosques, some groups can force their way to taking over the mosque of another. And a religious activity like tying the knot of marriage by an Imam of a mosque can be met with embarrassment in another mosque. This can be on asking for granting peace and blessings on our beloved Prophet (SAW). The Ummah is therefore continuously divided along the lines of differences that are SUPRA to the basic standards. Indeed there is now a growing adjustment to even the call to prayer. This is a trending towards adjusting other pillars. The *Baha'is* for instance claim association with Islam and have a version of fasting. The ties of family of birth, local origin, mother tongue are as a result wagging stronger and stronger over the ties of belief. This is not the culture of *shahada* declaration.

In a setting where more IGNORANCE covers the members, this is only logically expected. The question one wonders over is, IF THE LEADERS ARE GUIDING THE UMMAH TO DIFFERENT LORDS OR IF THE LORD HAS PROVIDED FOR DIFFERENT UMMAHS OR IF THE MESSAGE IS NOT CLEAR OR NOT COMPLETE?

THE REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP IN OUR DEMOCRACY

In a democracy, the rights to pursue one's identity and interests as an individual or group, without abusing those of others that may differ, is the golden guide. And in the process, it is expected that different but non conflicting identities and interests will be able to Foster to their utmost without risking deliberate elimination.

For the Ummah, it amounts to a safe window for believers, who are the best of mankind by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, to lead others in goodness and for others to feel absolutely safe with believers. In Nigeria, Christian brothers and sisters are expected to be partners in this goodness pursuit because the same Abraham (AS) is the fountain of our faith.

And the bridge that will enable this is KNOWLEDGE. This is the only tool for the guidance of the Ummah by the guardians – especially the political leaders in this case. Thus, where members of the Ummah who are either empty of guidance knowledge or are unwilling to lead as guardians of the Ummah, the consequence will be threefold. In the first place, whatever good they may offer will not add any value or credit to Islam or the Ummah because NEITHER themselves nor the PARTNER POLITICIANS identify them as symbolizing Islam. The second is that, they will not be predictable by fellow believers because the platform is not clearly and consistently defined. The third is that the believer in question will personally benefit along with the partners. Whatever benefits the members of the Ummah may derive will be a matter of chance. This is why, in the absence of the believer in question, the partners who are most satisfied with his performance will not look up to another believer but another UNDERSTANDING person. The logical consequence of this setting is that the believers are participants but not as conscious believers. And when fellow Christian brothers and sisters who suffer

similar bankruptcy in the knowledge and discipline of the revealed scripture partner with this believer, outright opposition to express prohibitions will be safe but not better. For example, they will resoundingly throw out any initial suggestions on same sex relationship for legal recognition. But they will not be together on fighting usury. They will shy away on prostitution and sex dolls.

Members of the Ummah who become leaders in Nigeria do not have to be politicians in the legislature, where laws are made for our common good. They can be in leadership positions of government bureaucracy, as accounting officers in Ministries and Agencies. Where such is the case and he or she is a believer, it does not send any signals to the employees that, the funds are safe. This is because hundreds and thousands of others have not made this impression. The cases of those that are even identified as VERY PRAYERFUL persons; some are indeed financially prudent while many others are crooks. The established record is therefore, IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE A BELIEVER FOR THE SAFETY OF PUBLIC TRUSTS. This is the true but shameful status of the identity of believers in relation to leadership, in Nigeria. But theft in any form is a major sin in Islam. The consequential misfortune for Nigeria is for that reason logical, when ignorant and discipline bankrupt members of the Ummah meet with others that may be neutral about protecting public trusts to serve Nigeria. It does not matter whether it involves other believers or even non-Muslims or non-believers. It does not matter whether it is in the course of organizational business or in processing annual budget with Honourable and Distinguished members of the legislature. The common cry against members of the National Assembly as thieves is short of recognizing that some Chief Executives do resist or reject such invitations and suffer punitive appropriation. Beyond this, it is also short of indicating that most of those who play ball along with the alleged National Thieves also partake in the

thievery in processing the theft. Indeed those who have come close to such relationships will confirm that at times the legislators get furious over being short-changed by the chief executives even as committee members whisper regrets for being short-changed by the leaders. Those who always benefit and are never heard of are the leaders in the chambers. The members or leaders who are Muslims, who are believers, have not been making any difference. The record of recipients of DROPS by the leadership of the legislature included Muslims. One was a radical, in addition to this attribute. Drops were cash-stocked cases given to key officers by external interests to obstruct responsible legislative proceedings, on a monthly basis.

The political executive does not have a different telling. It is a believer who was a minister that had a picture of his son sitting on piles of money in his house and vehicles in the house that appeared not in use were taken away, on discovering that they were stocked with cash. Incidentally, he has been associated with building a fanciful house for Allah. This is not commendable. Allah is clean and dissociates Himself from the unclean. But because of indiscipline across the ladder of believers, it is not surprising to find a scholar fuming over the arrest of another believer arrested for abuse of public resources. This is the height of irresponsibility that can befall the Ummah. The lowest level of Iman that involves dissociation has been thrown to the dogs after failing to have the authority to correct or to advise based on knowledge.

Believers with professional connection to the process of establishing justice have not helped the development of the Ummah. Even though criminal justice is reserved for common law courts, Muslims who have business for adjudication do not have preference for Shari'ah courts in civil disputes. The leaders are worse. When accused believing leaders are confronted with allegations of raping the

resources entrusted to them, they jump for luminary appeal barristers to defend them. The target is to get the case dismissed for weak prosecution or at least less than full sanctions prescribed for the offense. Have we not witnessed a believer leaving office and getting violent for being discovered to have stolen state funds and dug wells of indebtedness for the state to fill? In this same Nigeria, a Muslim governor spent relief funds through fake companies with no works done. And he was succeeded by another believer who shamelessly expressed that he cannot be questioned for non-achievements because he made no promises earlier. The filth is best imagined when it is established that the LEADERS of the two states have been superior leaders in this country. All Muslims. This is certainly contradictory to the tenets of Islam.

The clean and clear challenge is that the Ummah and Nigeria in general have not benefited from what Islam has to offer, at leadership levels. Members of the Ummah and Nigerians generally have suffered. This is an embarrassing shame and challenge to the Ummah and especially the leaders.

One critical root for this status is that apart from the majority of cases where the individual members are ignorant, the few who cannot be denied being knowledgeable, lack the basic discipline of believing based on knowledge. For example, a believer Judge was queried over condoning, by attendance of a marriage ceremony, having been informed that the bride is already pregnant, he responded by saying that it is culturally understood. Discipline requires that he openly condemns it by disallowing the tying of the knot or distancing himself from it. In Islam, the principles and required practices go hand in hand. This is why a praying believer is a loser in his constant interaction with Allah (SWT) if it does not distant him from committing evil deeds. In the same vein, as strong as the responsibility of a believer is to his neighbours, the rights are lost in the case of a

neighbour from whose evil he is not protected. Discipline defined by obedience or compliance and non-abuse of statutory laws, rules and regulations is what democracy allows and seeks to establish through transparency. This is the binding rule for man-made terms for ourselves, what more of the absolute laws of Allah (SWT) for believers? It is not only contradictory but degrading for a believer hesitating or refusing to support a fellow believer to succeed in politics or a non-Muslim, provided he is not leading to breaking the laws of Allah (SWT). In our democracy, it will be out rightly most unbecoming for a believer in any party to hesitate or refuse to either support the leader to establish good or to criticize the leader against insisting on proceeding to do what is evil. The psyche of making one's contributions available only when one becomes the leader is unIslamic. This is because a contributor gets equal reward for right guidance and positive results. Then it is for the sake of Allah (SWT). The contrary is clearly for self and does not benefit Islam, believers or Nigerians. Believers cannot be an asset to the Ummah and humanity, so long as they do not know and stick to the practice and support or propagation of what is right.

The inevitable consequence of this status of most of the believers who are in leadership positions is CORRUPTION. One face of it is that the name of Allah (SWT) is not glorified from the possible fruits of submitting to Him. A second face is that the laws of Allah (SWT) are understood as secondary or at best only competitive with man-made laws. A third face is that, the problematic or helpless believers who are leaders along with others are seen as the standard setters for Islam. In livelihood the powers and resources entrusted to such leaders and the official personal privileges accorded them ARE EMPLOYED TO ENTRENCH AND PROMOTE things that are questionable or giving value to things in an upside scale. For instance, the construction and beautification of roundabouts or

building a new government house takes priority over provision of clean water to the citizens. And the individual leader gets obsessed with makes and models of cars or cities to have houses in. Keeping mistresses or not remaining in office but jamborees from one state or country to another for food, drinks and women. Either way, the responsibility and duties of leadership suffer. The victims are the weak and low from among the governed. The women are lured into prostitution in different garbs. The youths are engaged in drugs and thuggery from where they proceed to crimes like kidnapping, robbery with cultism to protect. A lot of wealth is seen and access is made easy by following the wishes of the real misleaders. The leaders become a curse rather than a blessing to the Ummah and Nigeria. Power games then become the commitment of those in the executive arm against those in the legislature while those in the legislature become carefree about making laws with collective interests as the guiding principle or post. When they end up in the judiciary, the wiggers take their time according to possible safe benefits or submit to technical superiority of well-paid counsels. The price of leadership by the ignorant and the undisciplined stinks in smell, blurring in sight and weighs painfully down. They destroy the identity of the Ummah and de-characterize the society and history.

The power of the evils that they generate and envelopes them is partly accountable for their destructive character of relating with the knowledgeable, the scholars of discipline. One form is that of distancing themselves from the learned. Most of the time, those surrounding them and their confidants are real competitors in the inordinate greed of the good things of the world. And they can only guide them as such, out of which they satisfy their own interests. There is NO WAY any responsible leader can be all-knowing of what is right or appropriate in all cases or circumstances. And a leader needs to bond, but not with inferiors or nonentities.

Allah (SWT) ordered His Messenger (SAW) to CONSULT. And he did not surround himself with helpers based on blood relation or clan. Those who got so close were identified by their knowledge and discipline by all. A second characteristic of the ignorant and undisciplined in leadership in relation to the learned is that of treating them like contractors. They engage them to pray to Allah (SWT) to intervene for them in their governance. Once the goal is met, they pay them off. And how can an employee be admitted as a serious adviser? Interestingly, Christian leaders engage Muslim learned just as Muslims engage Christian priests. While for the Ummah the cases of such Muslims is a rude shock, some of the believers in leadership positions also engage sorcerers, witches and fraternities out of pragmatism. This is the logical and sensible explanation for the common attributes of telling lies, not keeping promises and betraying trusts across them. But in Islam, Jibril informed Muhammad (SAW) that the hypocrites from his Ummah have the bottom of Hellfire reserved for them. What more of leaders who have the burden of justice on their shoulders, whose ease for safety fire is like the ease of slaughtering a camel with a rope? And the madness in the competition to become leaders points at the maturity of those who do so. The third form is the most pretentious. The leaders welcome advice from the learned AT A DISTANCE by neither relating with them for clarifications nor working on the advice. There is no way the Ummah or Nigeria can benefit from such leadership sociology.

The weight of this challenge can be embarrassing in our political setting of democracy, where the age of adulthood is the universal qualification for franchise. Imagine the careless massive reproduction of our members and deteriorating knowledge and discipline against active and wide involvement in the leadership of this country. What will be expected and will be growing and developing? What culture and picture of Ummah can we afford? The dark picture will be evident

when it is appreciated that even for fair or proper democracy our literacy and familiarity levels for choosing candidates to represent us is very low.

THE CHALLENGES THROUGH OUR LIVELIHOOD

With a base of polluting regeneration of the Ummah through careless reproduction informed by ignorance and indiscipline driven by inordinate greed for preserving self and immediate family members, our livelihood is charted along the course of sustaining and building the rot.

The most visible is the direct craze for money, the means for exchange to get most goods and services. Persons who identify themselves as believers and cannot be denied membership or belongingness to the Ummah have been caught in crimes. And the indication or their submissions have been connected to the need to raise money to meet their needs, wants and fancies. The worst of these have been found with human parts used for such rituals. An organization was found with containers of human blood and a crate containing a preserved corpse. Armed robbers, kidnappers and cultists with supposed marks of prostration on their foreheads have not been different. These are aside of dupes in the form of money doublers. And there are printers of fake currencies. These are direct pragmatic worthless members of the Ummah.

There are those in the formal sectors of the public or private worlds. They either steal the time of the employer to do their own business or steal the resources and opportunities entrusted to them by the employer to build and run their own business. This class of entrepreneurs is so common place and has become a conventional culture. Like non-Muslims and non-believers to whom it may not matter, believers are giving them good competition.

Those engaged in production of goods and trading goods are not certainly better when the identity is that of believers. They can engage in contraband, expired products, fake products, inferior products, smuggled products etc. Price hiking and hoarding of products are not different. It is so bad that Muslims are often invited to show sympathy or mercy to fellow humans in the month of Ramadan.

The point here is that believers in economic activities do not and have not made any difference to the quality, by virtue of their identity as believers. In the end, the greater consequence or overriding effect is that the mill of the combination of whatever works for non-Muslims and careless believers' admission gets stronger and bigger in the making of our history. And for democracy, this can be alright.

This participatory pattern is inevitable even though the details can make a good difference. For example, if farmers who believe will not be attracted to the 'benefits' offered by tobacco companies to produce their raw materials because it has a doubtful status in Islam, neither the farming of the raw materials, the factory production nor smokers will have comfortable life wire. Whereas it does not amount to prohibiting tobacco for all Nigerians, the promotion and burdens/benefits that accompany it will distinguish the role of belief from that of others. The very same will apply to farmers that are required for brewing alcoholic beverages. The system requires a market to dump the product at a cost for the drinkers and producers of the grains for the alcohol.

Unfortunately, the situation in which we have landed ourselves is of double jeopardy. We do not know of the superior value of connecting with Allah (SWT) through His grace for depending on land, sunlight and rainfall for animal and crops farming. The other is that, those who are so connected remain at the level of raw materials production and are not moving to the levels of processing and

transforming them into new values. The case of hides in relation to leather works or products and cotton in relation to textiles is another. No one requires the degree of being a Doctor of Philosophy to appreciate the collapsed economy of Nigeria from this perspective. And believers are on the bottom line.

This is very contrary to the principles of Islam that govern and drive economic activities. In addition to making participation in economic activities mandatory for believers in order to honourably earn their living and build up prosperity, it provides for intermittent obligatory sharing and a regular window for sharing. The weak, the disabled, the travellers are specifically mentioned. And the bedrock for developing these is ALL THINGS THAT ARE WITHIN PERMISSIBLE SCOPE. If believers either do not know the things that are halal, or do not engage in their optimal production and legally too, how will they be standing before Allah (SWT) five times every day to interact? What will be the prospect of having their pleas for His intervention safely or gracefully admitted? What will make His grants to believers distinct from the goods He provides to others but limited to this life? Of what benefits will the ablution and concentration in prayers of believers be when the body is fed with Haram, the covering is Haram?

And our financial livelihood or orientation is a good indicator of our poverty. When the present Umaru University was conceptualized for having an Islamic University for the Ummah, how far did the Ummah contribute? Indeed, as of today how Islamic is the institution? When the concept of having an Islamic bank was initiated how zealous were we in getting the bank off the paper to the ground? How many have accounts with the bank? How many even know what the bank is involved in? How many Imams and Islamic organizations or institutions or Muslims owned businesses have accounts with the bank, where the branches are available? How many states that touted the practice of Shari'ah are part of it? How

many millionaire and billionaire believers bank with it? How many believers have, following the education floated against usury, become attractive to the new related packages introduced by other commercial banks? At what pace is the bank expanding, with the size of the Ummah and the capacity of its members? Indeed HOW CLOSE ARE WE to becoming part of correcting the problems and mistakes of the bank today?

This indicator is an indication to the discouraging truth that, any member of the Ummah who seeks to pursue safety and prosperity for the Ummah is on his own, whereas the Ummah is supposed and required to be a bricks-building holding unto each other like the Messenger of Allah (SAW) interlocked his fingers when he guided. Thus, what the Ummah stands to overcome include ignorance, indiscipline, unwillingness of the majority of members before the deviance of a few that will insist on what is wrong. And in these challenges parents, adults, political leaders, workers or business leaders, teachers, students and scholars all have roles to play. But, the special roles of the Scholars is highest and most weighty because they are rightfully first leaders of all leaders.

It will be appreciated that knowledge is the background causative bankruptcy that is principally responsible for the wrongs that are responsible for the disorientation of backward and embarrassing history the Ummah is in, DESPITE THE KEY ROLES ITS MEMBERS HAVE BEEN OPPORTUNE TO PLAY, FOR THE BENEFIT OF NIGERIANS AND MANKIND.

THE ROOT AND CHARACTER OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE SOLUTION

There is no doubt whatsoever that the real root of all the problems defined above, the sociological, the political and the economic, are rooted in the bankruptcy of knowledge and discipline.

To be sure, for every endeavour, for every movement, community, society, nation, history or epoch, knowledge and discipline are the driving forces. In Islam, the embodiments of these are the Scholars, the successors of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) or his Inheritors. For the Prophet (SAW) left only the revealed Qur'an and his Sunnah behind, upon death. And he specifically directed believers to hold unto these for guidance. At his last sermon, believers present acknowledged that he had fully conveyed the message of Allah (SWT); he urged those who were present to transmit the same directive to those who were absent.

The Scholars are those who have the knowledge and live it accordingly. It is therefore impersonal. The affair of Islam is not of or for the Prophet (SAW). Indeed he affirmed that Allah (SWT) to Whom Knowledge and Guidance belong gives knowledge to whomsoever He decides to favour. The Prophet (SAW) was only a distributor but the grant is of Allah. This logically connects with the promise of punishment for those who are so favoured and abuse it by personalization, selfishness or misleading the Ummah. These corrupt believers will be the first serving to the eager servant of Allah (SWT), the Hellfire.

Before discipline, or method, there must be knowledge or definition of standard. In our case, the Qur'an and Sunnah. And the closest we base it on what Rasul (SAW) guided by those closest and approved by him the BETTER. The further references

are from him, the weaker, even if they are consistent with the closest to him. And his specific indication that his generation is the best of his Ummah, there should be no struggle over the superiority of their rightness. It will amount to scandalous futility to be arguing about the rightness of anybody COMPARABLE to those closest to him. And NONE can be admitted along with the four rightly guided Caliphs REGARDLESS of whatever status may be associated with them.

The challenge of the Scholars in our Ummah is the establishment of this standard by expression, teaching and living. And NONE SHALL DIFFER FROM WHAT IS ESTABLISHED. There is NOTHING mysterious, difficult or impossible for NECESSARY UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICING in the combination of the Qur'an and the Hadith collection by Imam Bukhari, for any believer. It is these that are required for optimal teaching and living in the Ummah. While these are not limited to the five cardinal pillars of Islam, the same principle of certainty of rightness as dependent upon the earliest exposition and sustained practice by DIRECT LEARNERS FROM THE PROPHET applies.

And in Nigeria, we cannot deny that a lot have been done and a lot are being done. These are in the forms of literature, teachings or preachings. However, there should always be a distinction by LIVING IT. And the measure of this IS NOT the school or town of acquiring the knowledge or the certified qualification(s). A degree of Doctor of Philosophy in any aspect of Islamic knowledge is NOT the beginning of Scholarship UNTIL the INDIVIDUAL lives it RESPONSIBLY to the RESPECTFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT of any believer THAT IS KNOWLEDGEABLE of the standards. Thus, it is not measurable by the size of followers in human shape alone or those who drum or chant support for what he says. The number of EDUCATED BELIEVERS by knowledge and discipline the scholar earns their respect is the measure. And these must not be limited to his

allies. Whoever disagrees with his prejudices and even objective non-Muslims should honourably acknowledge his standing on the standard. This qualitative attribute is what stands out the tradition in Madina and Saudi.

This cultural development is impossible where the scholars are stingy with the continuous acquisition, teaching and living of knowledge. A learned, who lives on a band of naive or ignorant persons' approvals, likes, praises is more harmful to the Ummah than a non-Muslim or a hypocrite because, he is entrenching a closed and dead cultural orientation. The inevitable consequences of this cannot exclude personalization of the affair of Allah (SWT). This will be most unfortunate and unbecoming in the Ummah. It is therefore not IMPRESSIVE TO GROW A CLUB, SOCIETY OR MOVEMENT on this line.

This reveals the challenge to the Scholars between INSTITUTIONALIZATION of the basic standards against differences, prejudices and opinions. In history, it is not enough to have the right knowledge, at the level of practice, it is more important to establish the limits of basics IN ORDER TO HAVE A COMMON ACCEPTABLE STANDARD FOR IDENTITY AND EXPANSION. Anything beyond that may become acceptable must first rest on the basic standard. The more there is deviation from this principle and approach the earlier and more vulnerable will it be to disintegration, internal inconsistencies and collapse. Even scientific knowledge that is open to adjustment and changes or transformation, the embodiments of the state of knowledge STICK until they are PROVEN TO BE WRONG. And the protectors can send the 'apostates' to dis-recognition if not prison or expulsion or execution. So, in the case of Islam, where the message is certified complete and final, THE BASIC STANDARDS CANNOT BE OPEN TO COMPROMISE OR DEBATE. And the same Scholars who have knowledge of the LIMITS set by Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW), have the

responsibility of sustaining keeping to the limits, for keeping the Ummah together. For example, NO RELIGIOUS PRACTICE CAN JUSTIFIABLY MAKE A HARAM TO BECOME HALAL, JUST AS NO *MAKRUH*, *MUSTAHAB* OR *SUNNAH* MUST BE MADE *WAJIB*. This will amount to RESTRUCTURING the Shari'ah. For example, it is wrong to submit a believer's wife to any so called leader to cohabit with for 'blessings.' It is also disorderly to criticize or condemn or restrain any believer from composing a positive salat for Muhammad (SAW). It can also not be admitted to have mixing up of men and women in any activities that will expose the women that should be in hijab. There is NO ROOM for restructuring or reordering. It will consequently be most disorderly to institute any practice for believers that will ADD or SUBTRACT from the existing standard. And this does not inhibit a believer who chooses, as an individual, to top up OVER WHATEVER IS ADMISSIBLE. For instance, Rasul (SAW) recorded that he used to ask for the forgiveness of Allah (SWT) between seventy and a hundred times daily. It will amount to madness to restrain believers to asking for forgiveness to those limits in a day, just as it will be abnormal to introduce or replace the wordings of taslim other than the standard wordings. This is why it is insane to make adjustments to the wordings of *adhan*. Another example is FIGHTING over activities that are similar or in imitation of what non-Muslims do, like celebrating birthdays. The scholars know that Rasul (SAW) fasted like the Jews, thanking Allah (SWT) for His favour of saving Musa (AS) and his followers. And they know that Rasul (SAW) encouraged us to be keen about our identity through differentiation. Believers should keep long beards up to four holds but not moustaches. And when he ordered differing from the Ignorant who kept their women isolated during their monthly flow, by staying together, he dismissed the suggestion to cohabit with them in that state. This is keeping to the limit of Allah (SWT) who has prohibited cohabiting during menstruation.

In the history of Islam in northern Nigeria for example, late Sheikh Uthman ibn Fodio gave flags to representatives in localities or for localities based on basic knowledge and discipline with the charge to promote the same. And he handed to each his own writing on the immediate challenges against the Habe system as an additional reminder. But today, how many of the occupants that succeeded them have the knowledge and discipline as their first credentials? How many know and have cared to look at and work on the tenets of the reminder book or build on it? How many have become so NOT BY CLAN STATUS, HOUSE STATUS OR BIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP? How then can we expect anything different from the good by chance or gamble? Knowledge and discipline are acquired and imbibed to earn the INVITATION to lead, in Islam. Who was your father cannot replace the basis for your suitability and competence.

And this is best handled by fellow believers in knowledge and discipline. This is because right knowledge is not the reserve of any scholar in absolute terms. The Ummah is not to rest on special knowledge reserved for some slaves of Allah (SWT). It is between such believers and Allah (SWT). Standard basic knowledge is the basis to rest and build the Ummah. And this is accessible and understandable by most men. For example, just like the Messenger of Allah (SAW) indicated that between the call to prayer and the readiness to start prayer, there is a prayer for those who wish, it need not be a ground for the formation of a group or society. This is not a difficult or complicated thing to understand. Thus, while a believer who does this prayer will be admirable it will be wrong to institutionalize it even at the risk of a misleading psych that, they are more or better worshippers. This means that, the building of the Ummah rests FIRST on the EXPANSION OF THE SCOPE OF LEARNEDS IN THE BASIC STANDARDS. And ALL scholars have this responsibility regardless of the difference of prejudices of any or some.

And between the scholars, what inhibits anyone from affirming his personal difference or that of another by reference to the foundation references? What even stops the interested believer from seeking for affirmation from spiritual guidance? Has possible interaction with Rasul (SAW) closed or have the ways of Allah (SWT) closed for such? Imam Bukhari did it. And the burden of integrity over truthfulness of the believer is between him and Allah (SWT). Rasul (SAW) has already established that whoever tells a lie against him will be hosted in Hellfire. Moreover, for such fancy or bonus, why should or would the believer in question involve another or another believer indulging in such special thing or practice BLINDLY? It is only proper and responsible to do so CONSCIOUSLY. Every believer therefore has some role to play just as the scholars have more and superior role to play. It is only when these burden of RESPONSIBLE DISCRIMINATION are bored across the board of the Ummah that we can hope and expect ELIMINATION or MINIMIZATION of ENCROACHMENT on our UNITY AND STRENGTH by ambitious fellow believers. The religion is of Allah (SWT) in which we have equal or superior stand, by our fear of Allah (SWT). And this fear is enveloped with love and dependence. For instance, the presently living Imam Sudais was wrong as a kid when he disorganized foods and drinks organized for guests in their house. His mother was pissed off and prayed to Allah (SWT) to make him a Hafiz of His Qur'an and an Imam in His mosque. His present status is proof of the acceptance of those prayers. That is knowledge and discipline that defines the culture of Islam.

Consequently, a revisit and evaluation for actions, of our delivery or transmission methods to achieve the required knowledge and discipline is an urgent responsibility for every and all members of the Ummah. And for clarity, the engagement of the government is secondary UNTIL THE UMMAH CAN

LEGALLY MAKE IT PRIMARY. Nobody has the liberty or excuse to seek for Jannah or safety from *Jahannam*, by what the government is able to do. It will as such not be enough for believers and especially the scholars to merely strongly call on the government to intervene.

The first implication of the challenge is not to deny that efforts have not or are not being made. A lot can be pointed at. HOWEVER, the defining factor is building and expanding members of the Ummah with the right basic knowledge and discipline. For example, the results that can be achieved in one month out of the twelve calendar months of Islam can be minimal and non-sticking because of irrelevance, where the focus and objective is to dress down or criticize another believer, scholars or group. The fool who indulges in this, wastes his time and resources FOR BUILDING. It is logically and sensibly better to write a scholarly challenge of the difference that is not shared and send this to the fellow scholar. It is most immature to gather ignorants and naive persons who will be shouting blind support and the few learned believers around shut down from interacting. Most of those engaged in Ramadan outings should further engage in TEACHINGS in the other months. This also means that the provisions of the curricula for Islamic studies in formal schools is not enough and needs to be reviewed and upgraded. This will cover the content, the teaching and examination. Therefore, those with recognizable degrees have a challenge to present themselves to contribute to the process in formal institutions. It is useless to hold a Ph.D. in any aspect of Islam and neither WRITE, SUPERVISE NOR TEACH.

This leads to the big and immediate challenge to attend to the informal efforts through the almajiri system that has been bastardized. The inalienable qualities of direct scholar-student relationship, in a blessed ground floor sitting relationship, progression according to individual ability, living Islamic relationship and rating of

scholars according to knowledge and discipline by the students who graduate and have met other teachers etc. **MUST NOT BE RUBBISHED** because we want to be computer literate and connect with formal system of education. This means that formal qualifications are insufficient for leadership in Islam. The discipline of what has been learned in the life of the scholar and the recognition of this by fellow scholars and learned believers is more important and useful. Nana Aisha from whom Rasul (SAW) referred us for half of our religion had no degree or formal certificate. Nana Khadijah the Angel Jibril (AS) was instructed to convey a gift of a special palace had no form of formal degree. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) was not literate. Neither the religion of Islam nor the Ummah is being built **WHEN THE ELEMENTS OF DISCIPLINE AND BLESSINGS ARE NOT CARRIED ALONG IN THE PROCESS OF IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE.**

What Allah (SWT) asks of us as believers is submission to Him and the means are clear knowledge and discipline. This was why the primary target of Rasul (SAW) for conversion was not the Jews or Christians. And whoever of them accepted Islam was assured double reward. Unbelievers are the primary target. This is because unbelief or idol worship are the most hateful and wrong things. But again this will have to be with knowledge and consent. It should not be with force. Scholars therefore have the big challenge **EDUCATING** one another between the limits of minor shirk and qualifying as a *Mushrik*, without becoming a liar. The common practice of labelling fellow believers as *Mushrikun* is most unwelcome and abominable. Over and above this, making popular the required closeness to Allah (SWT) by means practiced in the daily living of Muhammad (SAW) beyond the compulsory injunctions is another worthy invitation. For example, du'a for various routine daily activities – on waking up, before going to bed, constant and

generous greeting of fellow believers and others, before eating, after eating, etc. etc.

Examples of individuals, believers, scholars and leaders that I have personally encountered that have made impressions on me are like Qadi Mahmoud Gumi, Qadi Bashir Sambo, Qadi Ahmed Lemu, Qadi AbdulQadir Orire, Qadi Sulayman Wali, Ambassador Nuhu Muhammad, Ambassador AbdulRahman Mora, Mallam Ibrahim Sulayman. These are people who have put on record some life lasting contributions to basic knowledge and remain to be referred to because of their disciplined livelihood. And they all connect to formal livelihood in Nigeria. There are some I will not need to mention their names that I have met and were disappointments to these challenges because they are stingy with sharing knowledge or too highly placed as to attend to basic things. And they have not done the little or much the named have done, whereas we need to build on those.

Unless and until we build the Ummah on knowledge and discipline either as adults who care and are so favoured, as parents or guardians of wards, as political leaders, as heads of organizations, as mothers, business chiefs, as Imams leading congressional prayers, as preachers, as teachers, as scholars etc. etc., we cannot expect to succeed in our pragmatic history by our utmost efforts and the special support of Allah (SWT). And the success in the hereafter may be illusive because, this life is the stepping trial for achieving that, with the mercy of Allah (SWT).

May Allah (SWT) guide us aright.