CHAPTER VI

COMMUNICATION OF EIDAH TO MISLIM CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"Read in the name of thy Lord who createth, createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, who teacheth by the pen. Teacheth man that which he knew not." 1

God in His Infinite Mercy bestowed on man the boon of knowledge. He unlocked the frontiers of knowledge for man. Not only that He gave man the key to knowledge - the Quran, the book of wisdom, but also blessed man with the ability of learning and understanding.

It is only through knowledge that man becomes that what he was not before. Man would have lived in complete darkness, in a state of ignorance, had he not received the power of learning and understanding by the All-Knowing God.

God Almighty neither wanted man to remain in the idle world of ignorance, nor did He wish man to remain in the cradle of innocence. He sent man on the earth with the Divine Guidance on one hand and Satan on the other. He wanted to see whether man would fall prey to the temptations of Satan or to the teachings of the Quran. Hence the only defensive weapon through which a man can defend himself from the Satanic teachings of all forms and kinds is the extensive and deep knowledge of the Quranic teachings.
The more man acquires knowledge the nearer he comes to Allah Almighty 'when he is seeking knowledge, man is in his heart always thinking of Allah.'

"Of men, it is the scholars who will achieve the virtue of fearing God." When man goes in depth in search of knowledge in any field, he realises and astonishes at the unbounded nature of God; he feels eternal presence of God pervading in all branches of knowledge and he reflects on the perfection of everything. In other words, when he pursues knowledge, he searches God. He seeks what he does not know and while knowing, he knows the All-Knower God. When he finds and sees God, he realises his position before God and while realising his position as a humble creature, as a servant of the Creator and Master, he fears Him.

From it, three conclusions can be drawn: Firstly, knowledge is essential to man to conduct life on the Divine Guidance. Secondly, while man attains knowledge, he realises the unbounded nature of God which is par-excellence and par-superc. Thirdly, this realisation of the Omnipresence of God, makes him fear God and thereby takes him nearer to God.

So far, the Islamic point of view of acquiring knowledge has been discussed. However, a basic point yet remains to be analysed i.e. what responsibility man holds when he attains knowledge and finds the truth in the Divine Guidance and follows
it? In other words, what is the purpose of God in sending the
divine guidance to man? The Qur'an answers this question in these
words: "Say to those who have been given the book and to the
ignorant, Do you accept Islam? Then, if they accept Islam,
they are guided aright, but if they turn away, then thy duty is
only preaching; and God's eye is on His servants".

It is the responsibility of those who have attained
knowledge, the responsibility of disseminating the knowledge,
the Truth, the Divine Guidance, Islam. It unfolds a very deep
meaning, that the purpose for acquiring knowledge for a Muslim
is to guide his fellow beings bearing the torch of Islam so as
to take them to the right path of peace and happiness. To put
it more explicitly, the very purpose of attaining knowledge for
a Muslim is to show his fellowmen what is wrong and what is right
and what is vice and what is virtue so as to save mankind from
getting itself crushed under the heavy stroke of Jahiliyya! Thus,
a Muslim who obtains knowledge gives to a 'man who is alienated,
confused and born as under almost to the point of schizophrenia
by the deep-rooted problems and anxieties that confront him in
modern society, an integrating force powerful enough to restore
his wholesomeness and re-define his purpose in life. 5

Now, a question arises here: what the Muslim Ummah,
the trustee of the real knowledge (Knowledge how to live to be
nearer to God), is offering to the confused humanity?
This question puts up two more fundamental questions: How far the Muslim Ummah has the perception about the (Truth) knowledge, rather guidance to life given to it? Secondly, to what extent and at what depth the Ummah has this knowledge?

Obviously, to guide the humanity, the Ummah is expected to have a complete view and a deep insight into knowledge.

Keeping it in consideration, it is deemed necessary to reflect on a much more serious aspect of this responsibility of Ummah. In particular it pertains to that part of the Ummah which is residing in a completely alien culture and alien environment. Hence, this problem pertains to all the Muslim minorities living in the West. Further it should be pointed out that this problem becomes more serious, when the case study of the Muslim children and youth is analysed in the context of the dominantly alien culture of Britain and it is the issue which is to be focussed in this chapter.

This chapter would be divided into two sections. In section 'A', mainly the role of parents towards their children would be dealt with while, Section 'B' would take up the role of Mosque Madarasahs, Islamic Centres and Religious Education (R.E.) classes in the English schools.

The primary concern in finding out how far the parents and Mosque Madarasahs are communicating Islam to children is to
discern three important points: At the first place, to see
whether the parents and the teachers rather Jlema at the mosque
madrasahs have enough knowledge to educate and train the
children? Moreover, to see what importance do they attach to
communication of Islam to children? Thirdly, for what do they
want to instill the Islamic teachings into their children?

All these conclusions would be drawn from their answers
to the questionnaire, informal interviews and self observation.
Section 'A' comprises four tables and the interviews. Section 'B'
of this chapter consists of three tables and informal talk.
Since this questionnaire was served to all, whether married or
unmarried, those not interested have put N.A. (i.e.,) not
applicable.

SECTION 'A'

It is at home that a child learns his first lessons of
morals, etiquette and discipline. Parents bear the greatest
responsibility in moulding the thoughts and feelings of their
child.

To merely feed the children, to provide all their
basic requirements and material needs is not an end in itself.
The greatest responsibility of parents is to protect their kith
and kin from the fire of the Hell. The responsibility of the
family (wife and children) lies on man to save them from fire
as it has been ordained in the Quran.6 Again, both mother
and father are responsible for educating and training their children in Islamic principles. Following tables 1-4 discuss these aspects.

**TABLE 1**

**What is the best way to communicate Islam to your children?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through example of your practice</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through educating them</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through both</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable (N.A.)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 1 discloses the fact that the majority of 151 respondents think that to communicate Islam to their children, they have to set their own example by following the Islamic teachings in their life and also to educate their children in Islamic ideology. However 50 respondents believe that through their own example, their children would learn Islam, and 76 respondents think that they should simply provide education to their children about Islam. It may be realised from the table 1, that the parents are really concerned about their children. But, the main problem in communicating Islam to their children lies somewhere else.

The question is how far the parents themselves are
following Islam in their life? From the previous chapters III, IV and V, it is found that their perception of Islam itself is not clear and complete. It can be very easily understood from the above conclusion that they do not lead their own life according to the Islamic dictates.

Near the utmost what they think about showing good example to their children is to offer prayers and occasionally to instruct their children to offer prayers, ask their daughters to take scarf while going out of the house, forbid their sons not to mix with the whites since they eat pork and such other things.

Neither this is good example for their children nor is it a good way of communicating Islam to them. An unclear view of Islam, inconsistency in following the Islamic teachings and occasional instructions of some of the Islamic injunctions to children move their children away from the domain of Islamic ideology rather than to bring them nearer to it.

This type of attitude of parents creates tension and confusion in the minds of their children. In my informal interviews with some of the parents, I found the majority of (9) respondents out of 10 have the same type of attitude towards their children and the climax of the problem is that to this type of attitude is termed as Islamic. Almost all my respondents felt quite content with saying that their children attend both the English schools and the Mosque Madarsah of their locality and
once a while they sit with their children to see whether they are able to recite the Quran properly or not. They also added that they are very much strict with their daughters and have stopped them from joining colleges, since the atmosphere there is extremely vicious.

Three conclusions can be drawn from this talk: Firstly, they believe that the education which their children are obtaining from the Islamic Centres or Masque Madarassas is quite sufficient. Secondly, their only duty is to see whether their children can recite the Quran fluently. Thirdly, in view of the permissive society of the West, they forbid their daughters from attaining higher education.

It shows that their concept of education is limited and narrow and they fall too short in educating and training their children. All this cause frustration in the minds of their children who look upon Islamic ideology as dull and colourless. A student of London University said: 'Muslim elders are rigid, inflexible and ultra-conservative. Often they are unaware of the correct Islamic position with regard to a variety of social situations. The teaching of Islam is a hodge-podge, making youngsters frustrated, and, often indifferent. She suggested that the fundamentals of Islam should be taught to elders and they should be asked to set a good example to youngsters."

It follows from it that the elders are required to learn
and understand the fundamentals of Islam and that their disheartened attitude towards the girls in connection with their higher education is wholly un-Islamic. Islam encourages both to men and women to attain more and more education so that they may fear God and lead a pious life.

It is also found that there are two hurdles on the way of understanding of Islam for children. Firstly, the parents do not have such command over English language which their children have. Since the parents fail in conveying their thoughts and ideas to their children in the language which their children can understand clearly, it creates problems. The other hurdle is the lack of literature on Islam for youngsters. There are very limited books in English for the youngsters which can allay their confusion arising from the Westernised and secularised education they receive at their schools. The Table - 2 gives an idea of these problems.

**Table - 2**

**Concerning children who are growing up in Britain and who go to British schools, what hurdles do you find with regard to communication of Islam to them?**

| Inability on your part to communicate in English | 179 |
| Scarcity of books in English on Islam | 48 |
| Both | 35 |
| N.A. | 30 |

**Total:** 300
It is found from the table - 2 that the greatest number (179) find difficulty in communicating Islam to their children and (48) respondents say that it is the scarcity of books in English which is a hurdle in the understanding of Islam. Yet, 35 respondents think that both of the above factors deter the understanding of Islam for their children.

It has been noticed that the problem of language is two-sided. On one side the parents do not know English, the language of the people where they are staying. On the other side, the children do not know their mother-tongue or that they are not so fluent in their mother tongue as in English.

It is therefore necessary for the elders to learn English and the youngsters to know their mother-tongue so that they can fully convey their thoughts to each other, discuss them and reflect on them. But here again the short-sighted perception of Islam of the elders stand as an obstacle on the way of understanding Islam. Some of them think that there is no need for them to learn English since they do not work in the offices with the English people. Such reasons are found most common amongst Muslim women.

Moreover, their parents can only speak their native or regional language. Most of them do not know how to read and write in their own language. Hence they can not teach their children their own regional language.
The language problem is a hurdle in understanding Islam for children. In one of the families, it has been observed that there were some seven to eight children, three women, two men and an old man, the grand father of the children. A tutor was there for children to provide them with Islamic teachings. The tutor gives a formal teaching to these children, i.e., recitation of the Quran, saying of prayers, performing ablution (wudu) and such other things. The elders feel quite content with whatever education their children obtain.

Seeing this when my wife asked one of the women about her knowledge of Islam and her concern about the children, she replied that she was not sent anywhere outside the house and she hardly know what Islam is. Further she said that she could not communicate in English with her children. Her husband gets very little time for rest and hence he also fails to spare any time for children. Therefore the grand father merely asks questions to the children like: How many Rakat are there for Salat? What is to be prayed in Wuzu and how and such other things. He calls all the children and asks them to stand in a line and put these questions. The children very happily answer these questions.

The second obstacle, as indicated in the Table 2, is concerning the scarcity of books on Islam in English. There is enough literature on Islam in the English language, yet very little is written for the youngsters. Moreover, whatever material is available for them, it hardly provides answers to the
innumerable questions which arise in their minds.

There is a great need for such books on Islam which could present the Islamic teachings and point out the differences between the Islamic ideology and the Western ideology and its culture and also explain that the Islamic ideology stands for the whole mankind and for all ages.

The children always have scores of questions in their minds for they get a very biased, prejudiced and distorted image of Islam in their school and the Islamic centres fail in presenting the complete picture of Islam before them.

From the table-3 it can be seen that a great number of respondents say that their children often raise questions about Islamic ideology.

**TABLE- 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do your children often raise questions about Islamic Ideology?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A great majority of respondents (189) say that their children often enquire about Islam. A very small number (47) hold
that their children do not show any anxiety to find out about the teachings of Islam. It means that those children who do not enquire about the fundamentals of Islam either simply want to live in unawareness or get the necessary guidance from the books. What is evident from the Table-3 is that most of the children get confused on seeing the permissiveness of the Western society on one hand and the pristine purity of the Islamic society described in the books on Islam on the other. Moreover they also look at the degeneration in the Muslim society of the West. All these observations give rise to a number of questions in the minds of children. But the parents owing to lack of knowledge and unclear perception of Islam and very little hold on the English language fail to satisfy their children which in turn entail more problems for children in understanding Islam.10

The parents have a decisive role in moulding the minds of their children. They are to be affectionate as well as firm with their children. They should have the patience to educate their children in an interesting manner. But often it is found that either they turn extremely rigid in some of the ideas which actually have no sanction of Islam or they get easily swayed by thoughtlessness. The following table-4 shows the position rather the stand of the parents towards their children.
TABLE 4

What position do you take while instructing your children?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm and strict</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenient</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is found out from the responses of the respondents as shown in the table 4 that the majority (140) take a firm position towards educating their children about Islam whereas 110 respondents take it easy.

Hence, during my interviews I tried to know what they actually mean by taking a firm position? It is found out from their answers to my questions that they have strictly instructed their children not to eat meat in their schools, not to take swimming lessons and to make their daughters to wear trousers and take scarf. It is in these areas that they are stern and firm. They do not show the same firmness in giving them lessons in the fundamentals of Islam and in moulding their minds according to Islamic teachings. The reason is quite obvious - they are themselves unaware of Islamic system in all aspects of life. One more researcher has also concluded that the parents are engaged in their livelihood and give very little time to communicate Islam to their children and that they do not always accept their share
of responsibility for the Islamic education of young ones.

SECTION III

Parents, Mosque Madarasa or Islamic Centres and annexes and the Religious Education (R.E.) are the sources through which the Muslim children in Britain got the Islamic teachings. In this section, the Mosque Madarasa and Religious Education which they receive at school would be discussed. The main focus is on the parents' view of the Islamic education given at the Islamic centres and R.E. classes at schools so as to know how far they perceive the problem and what steps they are taking to solve the problem. Hence, a few direct and indirect questions were put forth in the questionnaire and the interviews to know the views of the parents.

TABLE - 1

Do you think the Islamic education which your children are receiving from the Islamic Centres to be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete and sufficient</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete and insufficient</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table - 1, shows that half of the respondents (150) think that the Islamic education given to children at the centres
is not sufficient and (100) respondents feel quite content with it.

However during my interviews when I tried to find out as to why these people feel that the education at the Centre is not enough, I found that most of them talked about the groupism and division at the Centres concerning the Bara'vi group and the Wahabi group, and also about the views and ideas of different Jamats. Further, they have a number of complaints against the teachers that they are not capable to educate the children about Islam. A few of them complained that children learn only how to recite the Quran at the Centre and nothing more.

It is therefore found that 'only a small number of Muslim Children (10-20 percent) throughout Britain attend the classes at the Centres and the rest rely solely upon parental tuitions which is usually inadequate and often non-existent. 13

All these complaints seem quite appropriate, but these are not the only problems. The greatest limitation lies at the grass-roots of these Centres - they do not have such a syllabus with them as to present the meaning and message of Islam to children, its characteristics, its totality, vitality and Universality.

The importance of the recitation of the Quran cannot ever be undermined. But its teachings which pertain to the
whole life of an individual Muslim and the whole of Ummah, its message to mankind, the revolutionary spirit of the Quran the stirring dynamism of the Quranic wisdom are left unattended.

The living force of the Quran cannot be divorced from the Islamic education. Islamic education would be reduced to nothing, if its meaning and message are excluded from it. But, out of 15 respondents of my interview, only one respondent pointed out this grave problem of Islamic education.

Apart from the Islamic Centres, the Muslim children also get a little of the Islamic education from *(R.E.) Religious Education* classes at their schools. School children in England and Wales are taught about religion as part of their normal school experience. The 1944 Education Act lays down very clearly what is to be taught in the religious classes. These lessons are given in the Junior schools by the ordinary class teacher and in secondary levels, by a teacher who is a specialist in teaching religion. The object of teaching religion in school is to create an awareness of religious issues and an understanding of religion and to help the child to make an intelligent choice about religion for himself, based on knowledge of the facts and insight into them.

The Religious education at School which has been associated to foster community relations and to deepen religious understanding is virtually creating misunderstandings towards
religions, particularly about Islam. Yet there are very few parents who are conscious of the confusion which the R.E. classes have been creating in the minds of their children, as is evident from the Table - 2.

**Table - 2**

Does the Religious education at school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide basic teachings of Islam</th>
<th>140</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create confusion and tension in the minds of your children</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.A.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It shows that majority believe that the R.E. at school provides basic teachings of all religions to children and they are just unaware of the syllabus, the teaching material and the methodology of teaching. During my interviews I tried to find out the reasons of their satisfaction with the R.E. at school. I found that most of them look on the R.E. at school as a healthy and creative step towards community relations. Some of them believe, that R.E. should not generate any controversy, as only the basic ideas of all religions are taught.

They are absolutely unaware of the fact that an accurate and clear image of Islam is not fostered on the children and that the teachers take strides in superficiality and prejudice. In a
survey of 'Teaching World Religions in England and Wales', Bruce Gates notes that "less than 40% of the Religious Education teachers in secondary schools have specialized qualifications and of these only a minority have had world religions courses in colleges or universities". He goes on to observe that "the competence and motivation of those who have sought to introduce world religions in their schools is not always above reproof. It is not unknown for a teacher to set about teaching world religions with no more background understanding than that required from an introductory school text intended for 12-15 years old. The risk of superficiality and distortion is enormous any way - even for the specialist - but in such instances as this, 'good intentions' are almost bound to be counterproductive."

One of the teachers of Religious Education admitted, "it is so easy to fall in the trap of being patronizing, gimmicky or superficial."

Such being the case of Religious education, the parents should have shown more concern about the education of their children. However carelessness and negligence on their part has been found.

As far as those who understand the perplexed situation of children owing to the superficiality in Religious Education classes at school, it is found that they hardly do any thing to present any practical solution since they are either busy in
livelihoo or are uneducated themselves and do not have adequate knowledge in Islam.

What these people do is to discuss with the teacher on the matters like prayer at assembly, swimming and sports, meals and such other things. The following Table - 3 throws ample light on this aspect:

**Table - 3**

What problems do you think are the most important ones to be discussed with the school authorities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer at Assembly</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming and Sports</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconception developing in your child about Islam</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your Educated</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table - 3 unfolds that the parents are really worried about the Islamic injunctions and that they really want their children to follow them. Further, the Education Act of 1944, gives right to the parents to request to the Head Master of the school to excuse their children from attending the daily school assembly. The parents often discuss with the teachers about mixed swimming (P.E.) Physical Exercise, music and movement. Muslim girls have been
known to produce medical certificates for exclusion from mixed swimming. The medical grounds may be hypothetical or real, but that is the only acceptable reason for non-participation. 20

Conclusions:

Thus, after analysing the problem of the communication of Islam to Muslim children in Britain from an ideological point of view, it is found that neither the parents nor the Islamic Centres are seen capable enough to cater to the needs of the Islamic education of Muslim children. Therefore many of the parents are worried about their own inadequate knowledge of Islam which prevent them from being able to give the power and satisfactory answers to their children.

An Imam of a mosque at Bradford having knowledge of the Muslim community in Bradford commented that "their observance of Islam is incomplete and their faith weak". The researcher on the Bengali Muslims of Bradford sums up the remarks of the Imam in these words. He says: "The Imam perceives the root of this weakness to be in a deficient understanding of Islam itself and the result of a lack of Islamic education. He says that the majority of Bengali migrants had at most only a few years schooling. Their view of Islam was shaped by participation in the daily and seasonal rituals of the village, not by formal learning of the Quran and Hadith. On the other hand, those who are fully literate and professionally qualified received an education that was secular
rather than Islamic in character. Finally the researcher concludes: "The children of both parties are seen by the Imams as subject to the influence of parents who are not true Muslims." By 'true Muslims' the researcher meant that the Imams of Bradford meant to be a true Muslim, i.e., a conscientious and a committed Muslim, one who not only possesses a complete and clear perception of Islam but also practices it.

Since, the teachers, the Ulama at the Islamic Centres and mosques are also incompetent to provide the necessary Islamic teachings to children, the Muslim children are faced with a very serious situation. Such teachers are required who should be versed in Islamic ideology and also in the Western ideology, with a command over English so that they may explain the children the meaning and message of Islam and point out the differences between Islamic ideology and Western ideology and also inspire the young generation to invite their fellow friends and follow citizens to the Islamic ideology. It is what an Imam of the Islamic Cultural Centre, London says: "And finally we do need a team of capable Islamic teachers. They should be well-versed not only in the Quran and Sunnah but in other faiths and ideologies as well. A good command over the English language is another pre-requisite."

Considering all the above facts, we draw following conclusions: Firstly, the parents show concern only about the superficial problems of Islamic education. They do not perceive
the real nature of problems and hence fail to discover that
their children should be provided with the meaning and message of
Quran, its essential elements, characteristics of Islamic ideology
and its culture, and that they should be given necessary lessons
in Hadith, and should be taught Islam as the complete code of
life for the whole humanity.

Secondly, the Muslim teachers or Ulema have also limited
knowledge of Islam and their knowledge of the Western ideology is
much more limited. Hence, they are incompetent to solve the
queries of the Muslim children of the British society.

Thirdly, the Muslim children are in a tug of war not
between Islamic ideals at home and Christian concepts at school,
as it has been often incorrectly described, but are in a tug of
war between the incomplete and ambiguous Islamic ideals at home
and Western concepts at school. It would not have been so
difficult for the Muslim children to fight against the Western
concepts, had they been equipped with the Islamic ideals at home.
But it is not the case with them. Since, they are not taught
efficiently and properly with the commands of Allah - Almighty
(Quran) and the instructions of the Prophet Mohammad p.b.u.h.,
they fail to discern the drawbacks of the Western ideology and
to strike at them. It is the reason that the young Muslim
soldiers during the process of war embrace either fully or
partially the concepts and ideas of their rivals.
Finally, the communication of Islam to Muslim children is a two way process. On the one hand, the parents are required to strengthen and widen their knowledge of Islam and other ideologies and on the other, the teachers and heads of the Islamic centres should deepen their insights into the Islamic ideology and other ideologies and to instill the Islamic thoughts into the minds of children in contemporary milieu. It is only then, the Islamic education would strengthen and sharpen the intellect of the young generation and then this young generation would enjoy a place of its own in the Western society and preserve its identity. They would call their fellow citizens to Allah Almighty as the Qur'an has enjoined them:

"Call men to Allah with vision and good counsel". 23

Hence, much depends on efficient communication of Islamic teachings to children.