

■ ARE OUR ACTIONS IN KEEPING WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR RELIGION?

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We SURTI SUNNI VOHRAS have over the past 70 or so years made a lot of progress in making available madaris and dar-ul-ulooms for both male and female students in Gujarat and in the countries where they had migrated to. The availability of learning facilities allowed young children the opportunity to learn to read the Holy Qur'an and acquire some basic education about their religion. Those who went on to dar-ul-ulooms got opportunities to learn more about their religion and acquire qualifications as hafiz, qaris and ulema and female students, qualifications as alimas. Our villagers were also helped towards making available secondary schools to enable our village based, boys and girls to acquire secular education and enable some to go onto colleges to study for degrees in various subjects as well as seek professional qualifications.

The availability of facilities helped the children of Vohras and other Muslims to learn about their religion as well as acquire secular education we feel for most of our Vohras and for other Muslims the learning they acquired helped them know how to offer their daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramzaan, give Zakaat and if they had the means, go for Hajj. Similarly, those who went onto study at secondary education providing schools or went onto colleges to do degree courses or seek professional qualifications often ended up by seeking employment or working in their chosen professional field. We feel and most of our readers as well as other Muslim

brothers and sisters will agree with us that the education both religious and secular acquired by most of our young persons did not help prepare most of them to live as Muslims in a secular, democratic and a socially, economically and politically fast changing country.

We feel and our readers will agree with us that our religion is not only about offering namaaz, fasting during the month of Ramzan, giving zakat and going for Hajj. Our religion is about everything we need to do, and we must comply with and all the actions and activities to avoid throughout our lives. Whilst most of our people know about what to do and not to do but most of our people do not adhere to what our religion tells us to do or expects of us. Similarly, most of those who acquired a few years of secular education often ended up by knowing how to read and write and do simple calculations but not much beyond this.

Historically we have always lived as neighbours or in adjoining villages with those who were not Muslims. As a result of our proximity and our economic dependence most of us, we feel, were attracted by the activities and dealings engaged in by those who were not Muslims. Many of us had no other socially or economically advanced Muslim community to refer to or learn from. We therefore followed those we were in touch with thinking that doing what they did will bring us prosperity and better recognition. What most of us failed to see or learn about the guidance provided for us by our religion on how to go about doing our activities in different ways. For us Muslims following our religion in whatever

we did was certainly to help us acquire prosperity if prosperity was meant for us by ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY. Similarly, we failed to realise that getting recognition of some form or other was in the hands of our CREATOR and it was not dependent on us trying to get recognition by engaging in activities engaged in by those who were not Muslims.

Most of us, SURTI SUNNI VOHRAS as well as other Muslims are inclined towards achieving quick success and quick recognition like those from other faiths. in whatever we do. For example, most of us no longer feel content with asking the ALMIGHTY ALLAH for good health or for relieving us of an illness. We believe only medical doctors with their M.D.'s can help us. Can they really cure us without the help from our CREATOR? Similarly, we are inclined to belief that our wish to accumulate wealth can only be achieved by engaging in business activities according to the methods used by

Western entrepreneurs. Is there any guarantee that leaving our Islamic business principles will bring us wealth?

We can go on citing examples to show how we are willing to follow the practices of followers of other faiths or those who have no faiths rather than adhering to own faith and looking for ways and methods of resolving the issues we may face. If we tried, we will find answers to all our problems from the HOLY QUR'AN and the AHADITH and from the writings of our great Muslim thinkers and example setters of the past. Unfortunately, for most us what the "OTHERS" say or examples they set are more appealing and we become willing followers and adherents of these.

Can we stop for a few seconds and

reflect upon some of our everyday activities and try to isolate those activities in which we followed our faith from those we followed what the others said or engaged in. From this very short and simple exercise we will be able to learn the extent of our reliance on what those from other faiths tell us. Should we go on following others and not stop for a few seconds to find out what our religion tells us? Should we follow others even if it means following them into a LIZARD'S HOLE. This is where our irrational and un-Islamic thinking and practices will take us as our PROPHET S.A.W. said. We need to admit that by following those who are not Muslims, and this is exactly what we are doing, are we not following the others into the LIZARD'S HOLE. MAY THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH HELP US and allow all of us to go back to the ways and methods shown us by the HOLY QUR'AN and the AHADITH and try to look for methods to help us live as practicing Muslims whilst facing all sorts of challenges.

We feel we SURTI SUNNI VOHRAS and other Muslims should combine our efforts to work towards getting fellow Muslims to stay very close to the teachings of our religion. Our general lack of interest towards learning about the activities engaged in by our brothers and sisters and our lack of will to help our fellow Muslims to learn about the expectations of our religion in every action we engage in will not help us to move towards the sort of progress we Muslims should be aiming for and hoping for. We Muslims need to stay wide awake if we have any wish to distance ourselves and our brothers and sisters from what the world and its people invite us towards. The invitation as we all know is towards everything that will take us further away from our religious beliefs. ■