

Volume 16, No. 1  2019

**JOURNAL OF**

*Islam in Asia*

A Refereed International Biannual Arabic – English Journal

**Special Issue: Islam in the China Seas**

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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JOURNAL OF *Islam in Asia*

Volume 16, No. 1. 2019

ISSN: 1823-0970 E-ISSN: 2289-8077



# *Journal of Islam in Asia*

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## **Expectations from Chinese Muslim Converts for Islamization of Society in Malaysia: Lessons from Life of the Companions**

### **Angkaan Pengubahsuaian Cina Islam untuk Pengislaman Society di Malaysia: Pelajaran dari Kehidupan Para Sahabat**

Mek Wok Mahmud,\* and Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef\*\*

#### **Abstract**

Reversion to Islam while opening golden opportunities for a revert in terms of divine guidance and spiritual salvation is coming with somewhat insurmountable challenges in terms of Islamization of the self, family and contributions to the overall development of Malaysia as a multi-religious country. This is especially so when Islam as an official religion has made the issue of Islamization of the Malaysian society and its systems amongst the pivotal national agendas in the country. As to what is the role of Chinese Muslims (reverts) in the process, studies, among others, have purported to present the statistics about their share in socio-economic development. Similarly, empirical studies point to the odds faced by this community at personal, family and community levels in their path for transition to the full Islamic way of life. To the presenters of this paper, however, the macro dimension of what it means to become a Muslim which is essential for adjustment to the Islamic requirements has not been sufficiently highlighted in discourses in the area. Accordingly, this paper presents the position statements on Islamic expectations from Chinese reverts with the purpose of motivating them to achieve greater things in the area of Islamization of their community and the nation to the effect.

**Keywords:** Chinese converts, Islamization, expectations and challenges.

#### **Abstrak**

kembalinya seseorang kepada agama Islam selain dari membuka peluang keemasan dalam mendapat petunjuk Ilahi dan pengisian rohani turut disertai dengan cabaran yang amat sukar untuk diatasi termasuklah cabaran Islamisasi diri, keluarga serta sumbangan kepada pembangunan keseluruhan Malaysia sebagai negara berbilang agama. Hal ini menjadi satu keutamaan terutamanya apabila Islam memegang status sebagai agama

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\*Associate Professor, Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

\*\*Professor, Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

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rasmi persekutuan yang menjadikan isu Islamisasi masyarakat Malaysia sebagai satu agenda nasional. Bagi menjayakan agenda ini, peranan umat Islam dari kalangan masyarakat Cina (cina muslim) juga perlu diambil kira. Statistik menunjukkan cina muslim turut mempunyai bahagian dalam menyumbang terhadap pembangunan sosio-ekonomi negara. Dalam pada masa yang sama, kajian empirikal membuktikan adanya bentuk bentuk cabaran yang dihadapi oleh komuniti ini di peringkat peribadi, keluarga dan komuniti dalam perjalanan mereka untuk kembali kepada cara hidup Islam yang sepenuhnya. Bagi kami pengkaji kertas ini, dimensi makro dalam menjadikan dan mengertikan seseorang itu Muslim terutamanya dalam menyesuaikan diri dengan ajaran Islam masih belum cukup diberi penjelasan dan penerangan yang sewajarnya. Oleh itu, makalah ini cuba menerangkan idea dan cadangan yang berguna kepada cina muslim dengan tujuan memotivasikan mereka bagi mencapai kejayaan yang lebih besar dari aspek Islamisasi di kalangan komuniti mereka seterusnya memberi sumbangan kepada negara.

**Kata kunci:** Cina Muslim, Islamisasi, harapan dan cabaran.

**Islamization of Malaysia**

The term Islamization is used to connote variety of meaning. The term 'Islamization' is defined differently by different scholars and is used in different context, for example, Islamization of Knowledge, Islamization of Education. In this paper, we append the term to its generic sense in terms of its connection to nation building which perforce subsumes the concept of Islamizing people and society. Accordingly, among the protagonist of Islamization, Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas defined Islamization as a struggle of Muslim community toward a realization of the moral and ethical quality of social perfection based on Islamic teaching brought by Prophet Muhammad S.A.W.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in this sense, it is not only about liberating Knowledge from the process of secular worldview but of the community and people.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi stated that, Islamization does not concern/benefit Muslims only but includes living a life based on truth, justice, peace and security. He further mentioned that, the application of Islamization would bring Muslims to seek the pleasure of Allah by practicing what is true and just, through transformation and improvement to achieve happiness, peace, security in this life and hereafter.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Rosnani holds that Islamization is a process to bring the faith, belief and worldview of human beings based on true Islamic teaching. This

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<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, *The History and Philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge: A Preliminary study of Pioneers' thought*(Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2010),p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Syed Muhamad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*(Kuala Lumpur : Institute of International Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1978),p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Ali, *The History and Philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge: A Preliminary study of Pioneers' thought*,p.14.

process can also be considered as calling mankind to Islamic teaching.<sup>4</sup> It is also referred as a process of incorporating Islamic teaching on social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life. The incorporation is aimed to spur the Islamic 'constituency' that might lead to formal and informal influence on Malaysian society.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Islamization in Malaysian context implies the idea of incorporating the teachings of Islam in every aspects of people's lives, social, political, economic, cultural and individual life by Malaysian government and society.

The agenda of Islamization of people, society and institutions, beyond its political rhetoric and vilification by skeptics, is a constitutionally settled issue. This is by virtue of the fact that Malaysia though a multi-religious and multiracial country has strong Islamic features as enunciated by the Federal constitution as the supreme law of the land. Its article 3 provides that Islam is the religion of the Federation but other religions are free to be expressed in their own ways.<sup>6</sup> Hence, as an official religion in Malaysia, Islam serves as the springboard to bring changes in line with Islamic teachings to Muslims in society. The function of Islam in Malaysia is not restricted to the ritual aspects but includes as a mechanism for every aspects of life.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, historians believe that Islam developed since the 1970s and thus the process of Islamization in Malaysia has started much earlier than that. Nevertheless, with the coming of British to Malaysia, and the colonialization, the process of Islamization was somewhat derailed the Islamization process in Malaysia.<sup>8</sup> The effect of constitutional declaration of Islam as the official religion of the federation after independence from British in 1957, was to rekindle the spirit for Islamization and give it new dynamic for the society and nation to bring it to fruition. In this process, Islamization of the country and society ever since has become a national agenda not only in the government policy decision making but has been picked up as the main mission statements by da'wak groups inside and outside the establishment. Parties such as PAS and movements, such as

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<sup>4</sup> Rosnani Hashim, and Rossidy, Imran, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Comparative Analysis of the Conceptions of AI-Attas and AI-Faruqi," *Intellectual Discourse*, 2000, Vol.8, no. 1, pp.19-44.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Pippas Abbott, and Gregorios Sophia Pippas, "Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics," *Contemporary Politics*. 2010, Vol.16, No.2, p.136.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Rahman Mahmood, *et al*, "Penerimaan Bukan Islam Terhadap Proses Islamisasi Di Malaysia," *Jurnal Hadhari*, UKM e-Journal System, 2009, Vol.1, No.2. p. 33-39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.36.

ABIM claim to champion the cause of Islamization of people and society in the country since 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

At the government level aside from educational measures to achieve Islamization, most tangible achievements have been in the form of institutional reform and Shariah law proclamation, products and services developments. The establishment of International Islamic University and the first Islamic bank in 1983 propelled the emergence of subsequent establishment of Islamic institutions in the country.<sup>10</sup> The adoption of “Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam” in 1985 was another attempt to incorporate Islamic values within the government. The core idea behind this agenda was to produce proactive human capital which is very important for Malaysian development as it helps to produce Muslim society who practices teaching and values of Islam in their daily lives.<sup>11</sup> Welcoming this idea some maintains that the policy of ‘*Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam*’ has a powerful impact in incorporating Islamic values in many dimensions of administration of government.<sup>12</sup> Another wave of Islamization was in the legal sector. In 1988, by virtue of a constitutional amendment it was held that Civil High Court will not have any jurisdictions on any matters related to Shariah Issues.<sup>13</sup>

All in all, though the government sponsored Islamization policies and programmes have brought fame to the Malaysia in the international stage especially in the area of Islamic banking and finance, at the local scene, however it has irked suspicion on the part of its non-Muslim community on aspects which touches personal issues, or the focus of Islamizing forces dwell on trivialities. For instance some like Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dr. Khoo Kay Kim, stated that most of Islamic teachings provide surface and general picture on how Islam is. Islamic teachings only focused on prevention of alcohol and cannot touch dogs in Malaysia. This condition ignores the part of how mercy and tolerant Islam is, how beautiful is Islam served as a way of life.<sup>14</sup> Even some Muslims raise eyebrows on segmented application of Islamization. Zainah (2000) maintains that sometimes the true concept of Islamization is not fully described as it is. For instance, the definition of Islamization according to political perspective, does not fully refer to the universal message of Islam by emphasizing the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid,p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Abbott, and Pippas, “Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics,” P.139.

<sup>11</sup> Mahmood, *et al*, “Penerimaan Bukan Islam Terhadap Proses Islamisasi Di Malaysia,”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid,p.34.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid,p.45.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.46.

concept of justice, tolerance, equality and freedom but rather by fighting the issue of growing intolerance, repressive teachings and practices, and the shrinking of democratic.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond scrutinizing the veracity of such claims what is important for our purpose is that if such criticism are not addressed unemotionally, can pose serious hurdles in the path of nation building undertaken by Chinese Muslims in the country. However, Non-Muslims should understand that the issue of drinking wine or touching dog though trivial to non-Muslims are grave to their Muslim counterparts.

### Contextualization for Muslim Converts

If the essential hallmark of Islamization is to bring all one's behaviors in line with the teachings of Islam, then what it holds for Muslim converts as to prepare them to play their roles in the Islamization of Malaysia. The answer to us is to look back at the first generation of Muslim converts with whose dedications and sacrifices, not only self-reformation was possible but they transformed the communities around them, setting the stage for the Islamization of the world. As to what were secrets for such rapid transformation in the case of this generation, internal drive to change and the passion to become better humans were the most obvious motivating factors to which following beliefs and conviction were the most paramount:

#### 1- The Honor of God's *Hidayah*

The reverts to Islam at eschatological level should feel honored that they have been bestowed with Allah's guidance which is the biggest blessing of Allah swt on His slaves. The guidance (*hidayyah*) beyond its utilitarian benefits in terms of creating emotionally balanced, morally upright and materially satisfied individual and socially cohesive, is ultimately of great significance as the sole criteria for being saved from the hellfire and be worthy of admittance into the gardens of Paradise. Those who disbelieve and reject the guidance when it comes to them, have been described as the companions of the Hell-Fire. This is evident from the following verses, "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam."<sup>16</sup> "So those who believe in Allah and hold fast to Him - He will admit them to mercy from Himself and bounty and guide them to Himself on a straight path."<sup>17</sup> "Those - their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow [in Paradise], wherein they will abide eternally;

<sup>15</sup> Abbott and Pippas, "Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics," , p.140.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Iman:19.

<sup>17</sup> al-Nisa:175.

and excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers.”<sup>18</sup> “But those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those are the companions of Hellfire.”<sup>19</sup> Thus the one who has been bestowed with guidance should realize the value of this great blessing, work towards preserving this blessing and share it with the rest of humanity.

This is on this account that in the theological sense, Allah’s guidance as embodied in the revealed texts detailing God-enacted rules, moral exhortations, fundamentals of belief and spiritual programmes are designed to serve human welfare (*maslahah*) ultimately as Allah Almighty Himself is *Samad* (Free of Want). In the Islamic theology, Allah the omnipotent Who has the ability to create, nurture and sustain all that exists, should Himself be free of any need from his creation. The Qur’an make this explicit in numerous passages of the Qur’an, such as: “It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them.”<sup>20</sup> “Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.”<sup>21</sup> Reiterating that Islamic guidance is a bounty of Allah to those who believe and practice it, is for their own good otherwise defying in no way diminishes Allah’s magnificence, the Prophet also declared:

*O My servants, you can neither do Me any harm nor can you do Me any good. O My servants, even if the first amongst you and the last amongst you and even the whole of human race of yours, and that of jinns even, become (equal in) God-conscious like the heart of a single person amongst you, nothing would add to My Power. O My servants, even if the first amongst you and the last amongst you and the whole human race of yours and that of the Jinns too in unison become the most wicked (all beating) like the heart of a single person, it would cause no loss to My Power. O My servants, even if the first amongst you and the last amongst you and the whole human race of yours and that of Jinns also all stand in one plain ground and you ask Me and I confer upon every person what he asks for, it would not. in any way, cause*

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<sup>18</sup> Al-`Imran:136.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ma`idah:10.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Sajdah:4.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Insan:2.

*any loss to Me (even less) than that which is caused to the ocean by dipping the needle in it.*<sup>22</sup>

2- Effacing of the Past Sins. An eternal spiritual privilege of transcendental value which comes with reversion to the original state of human innate nature of recognition and submission to Allah is the effacing of one's sins and even if they involve major violations. It is reported that a group of Non-Muslims with past records of homicide, sexual promiscuity came to the Prophet and said to him, "What you say and what you are calling for is good. If only you could tell us that there is any expiation for what we have done before." Then Allah the All-Mighty revealed: 'Say:

*O 'Ibadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, such spiritual salvation is contingent upon resolute determination not to commit them again as expounded by Allah:

*Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.*<sup>24</sup>

Membership of cohesive community. The privilege of joining the Universal Islamic Brotherhood. Coming to Islam at ideally confers upon one the citizenship of Islam in which no other worldly considerations, such as race, ethnicity, color of the skin, nationality or language except spiritual worth matters. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad as the seal of the prophets in his last sermon, made this universal declaration to outlaw all forms of discrimination on account of such social constructs that plague the world to this day:

*.. an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action.*<sup>25</sup>

In another occasion, he also said,

<sup>22</sup> Muslim, Ibn al Hajjaj, *Saheeh Muslim*(Dar Ihya Al-Kutub Al-Arabiyya, n.d), Vol.4, p.70.

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Zumar: 53.*

<sup>24</sup> *Al-Furqan:70.*

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Ibn Hanabal, *Musnad Imam Ahmad*(Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1993), p.278.

*Verily Allah does not look to your faces and your wealth  
but He looks to your heart and to your deeds.*<sup>26</sup>

He also said,

*No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for  
his brother what he likes for himself.*<sup>27</sup>

As such the universal concept of Islamic brotherhood if carried to its terms and realized requires its members to be sensitive of other needs and be willing to feel the pain, of others suffering and empathize and work towards uplifting their fellow believers from hardship and misery.

### **Role Model to Emulate in Meeting the Challenges**

The pre-Islamic way of life, in terms of belief, outlook on life, life style, manners, cultures and habits though converge in some common shared values with Islamic way of life inherently diverges on some other aspects which a new comer to Islam must take cognizance and be prepared to make the necessary adjustment. This requires preparedness to use all one's talents and resources to comply with the dictates of Islam which demands constant self—exertion which the Qur'an terms it as a kind of enterprise entered between God and His servant, the profits of which are accrued by the latter.

*O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a  
transaction that will save you from a painful punishment?  
[It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and  
strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your  
lives. That is best for you, if you should know.*<sup>28</sup>

Such dedications expected of a Muslim applied across the board the intensity of which may vary in the case of new reverts and born Muslims is universal law.

The most successful illuminating Muslim generations of Muslim reverts during the early of Islam, namely the Sahabah are paradigmatic for all who join the fraternity of Islam for all times to come. The amount of sacrifices, adjustment and transformation from *jahiliyyah* life style to Islamic way achieved by Sahabah earned them the honor of having secured God's pleasure and being entitled to admittance to paradise by the Qur'an:

*And of those who led the way - the first of the Emigrants  
(Muhajirun) and the Helpers (Ansar), and those who*

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<sup>26</sup> *Sahih Muslim, Vol. 45, p.42.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid, Vol.1, p.77.*

<sup>28</sup> *Al-Saff:10-11.*

*followed them in the best possible manner - Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Allah. He has prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers flow; therein they will abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.*<sup>29</sup>

That is the why the Prophet classified them as the exemplary role models in terms of believing and practicing Islam for all the succeeding generations of Muslim to come until the end of the world.

*Verily, my Companions are like the stars (nujūm) in the sky; whichever of them you follow, you shall be guided rightly.*<sup>30</sup>

To be specific, the biographical studies of the companions, outlines exceptional examples of luminaries from among the companions who stand out in so many ways in terms of self-transformation and contributing to the cause of Islam (Islamization of the first State Madinah). First, in terms of adjustment to the new faith and commitments, they developed true faith in the teachings of the Qur'an. This involved being convinced of the truthfulness of the Prophet and his message being a revelation from Allah. Abu Bakr, for instance was role model in terms of true faith and conviction to such a mission. A cogent proof which is his unequivocal affirmation of belief in what Prophet was relating about his night of heavenly journey (Mi'raj) to his companions. It is recorded that when the Prophet returned from the miraculous night journey and ascension (Isra wal miraaj), the Quraysh jeered at him and disbelieved in his ascent to the heavens. However when the news of the Isra and mi'raj reached Abu Bakr, he readily affirmed to it and believed in it and that is why he was nicknamed as Siddiqh.<sup>31</sup>

Another embodiment of true faith about what Prophet was conveying is Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit who affirmed the conclusion of a sale transaction between the Prophet and a Jew even he had not personally witnessed it. When he was asked as to why he bears testimony for a transaction which had not taken place before him, he replied, that he believed in the Messenger of Allah. And on this account, the Prophet nicknamed him as *dhushahadatain*, a credible witness whose testimony is equivalent to that of two eye witnesses.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Al-Tawbah:100.*

<sup>30</sup> *al-Baihaqi, p.319.*

<sup>31</sup> Safiur. Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*(Riyadh: Dar us Salaam,1996), p. 151.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmad Ibn Shu'yab Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan Al-Nasai*. Aleppo-Syria: Maktab Al-Matbu'at Al-Islamiyyah, 1986),Vol.4, p.199.

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Another shining example of unmatched dedication and fidelity to the Islamic faith was Bilal al-Hanbshi (a black Ethiopian slave) who was tortured in the most brutal manner for accepting Islam. Yet he was steadfast and his faith never wavered. The persecution was finally lifted after a long struggle. Despite the fact that slaves (especially black slaves) were hardly given any rights in pagan Arab society, the Prophet honored Bilal and made him the first person ever to give the call to Prayer (Adhan). Bilal participated in all the battles during the life of the Prophet and proved to be a beacon of hope, perseverance and steadfastness.<sup>33</sup>

No to mention the non-Arab luminary military expert, Salman Al-Farisi, who prior to coming to Islam was a fire worshipper from Persia. He left his religion and set out in search of Truth, and traveled for many years in search of the truth. In his quest for truth, he met and lived with many monks who advised him to keep looking for the truth in the direction of Arabia. He was then enslaved and brought to Madina. When the Prophet arrived in Madina, Salman recognized that Muhammad was indeed the true Prophet and thereafter he accepted Islam and became a Muslim. Among other tangible contribution to the cause of Islam, his deep insight into Persian war tactics helped the Muslims defend themselves during the Battle of Khandaq.<sup>34</sup>

The resolve not to be shaken by the most gruesome brutalities to stay true to the Islamic faith was displayed by Ammar Ibn Yasir and his family, his father Yasir and Mother, Summayah. When they accepted Islam, Abu Jahl felt enraged and led his group of gangsters to their house, burnt their house and took the trio, chained them and brought to the desert. He asked them to deny the existing of God and deny the truth of the Prophet's claim. But they refused. Then they began whipping them until they started bleeding. They placed rocks on their chest so to suffocate them when leaving them under the scorching heat of the sun. When all did not work to shake their firm belief, Abu Jahl, returned and cut opened Summaya's belly with his spear until she bled to her death and then kicked Yasi's belly until he also succumbed to his injuries. They committed all these atrocities before the eyes of Ammar who was responsible for getting his family to the new faith. Then Abu Jahl turned to his, telling him that "if you do not praise our God then is your turn". To save his life, then Ammar uttered, "Hubal (an idol) is great!" Then he was unchained but felt great remorse and when

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<sup>33</sup> `Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir, *Asad Al-Ghaba fi Ma`rifat Al-Sahabah*. Dar Al-Kutub Ilmiyyah, 1994, Vol.1, p.415.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, p. 312.

meeting the Prophet related the episode to him. The Prophet asked him, "when praising Hubal, did you mean it?" He answered in the negative. Thereafter, Allah approved such use of legal stratagem when he ordained:

*Not, he who is compelled while his heart is at rest  
because of his faith(al-Nahl: 106).*<sup>35</sup>

Another remarkable example of commitment to Islam is that of the Ansar at the first pledge and second pledge of Aqbah, wherein they accepted Islam and pledged to protect and spread Islam, they were ready to face all the tribes of Arabia for the sake of Allah. Their commitment to this pledge was one of the main reasons that Islam and the early Muslims were able to survive the horrors of religious persecution in Makkah by migrating to Madinah.<sup>36</sup>

Next expectation of becoming a Muslim is to establish a constant state of submission, service and worship to Allah, namely *'Ibadah* in the broader and true sense which is the *raison d'être* for the very creation of humans and jinns.<sup>37</sup> The word *'ibadah* literally denotes bondage (*'abdiyyah*), obedience (*ta'ah*), submission (*khudu'*), establishing a state of slavery by the slave to his master (*'ubdiyyah*) and performing the religious rites (*ada' al-sha'a'ir*).<sup>38</sup> In the Islamic terminology it does not only cover the ritual acts such as prayer, fasting, hajj and zakat but it encompasses submission to all rules handed down by Allah as an expression of constant slavery to Him. Capturing this, Muhammad al-Ghazali maintains: "*Ibadah* means acknowledging Allah as one's God and following the path that He has ordained (His *shari'ah*).... *'ibadah* in this sense, therefore, embraces two types of actions: First, actions whose forms, essence and structures are laid down by Allah and which are known only through His message alone, such as *salah* and fasting. Second, actions that are done with the intention of obeying Allah. And *'ibadah* henceforth, in the second sense covers a vast domain of human activities so much so that even a purely mundane activity will be regarded as *'ibadah* if the underlying intention behind it is to prepare oneself to live as a dignified servant of Allah. For instance, the Qur'an declares the reward for a trader, who with the purpose of sustaining his family engages in business instead of participating in *jihad*, to be the same as the reward for the one who actually undertakes *jihad*.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Prophet described farming activities as charity/*'ibadah* from which others,

<sup>35</sup> Ammar Bin Yasir, at <https://www.al-islam.org>(accessed 27 December 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, p. 154-157.

<sup>37</sup> The Quran, 51:56.

<sup>38</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-'Ibadah fi al-Islam*.Cairo:Maktabat Wahbah, 1995), pp.27-28.

<sup>39</sup> al-Muzammil 8: 20.

aside from the farmer himself will benefit.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the scope of `ibadah in Islam is as vast as the domain of Islam as a way of life. Hence, any activity that is carried out with the intention of obeying God and surrendering to His Will, shall be counted as 'ibadah, as the Qur'an aptly provides;

*Nay whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward from his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.<sup>41</sup>*

This is on this score that the Qur'an when defining `ibad al-Rahman (the slaves of the Compassionate) does not only characterizes Muslims not only ritual worshippers but embracers of whole Islamic way of life:

*And the servants of God most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant addresses them, they say, "peace"; those who spend the night in adoration, of their Lord prostrate and standing; those who say, "our Lord! avert from us the wrath of Hell, for its wrath is indeed an affliction grievous, evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in; those who when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes); those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for a just cause, nor commit fornication; and any that does this (not only) meets punishment but the penalty in the day of judgement will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy,- unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for God will change the evil of such persons into good, and God is often forgiving, most Merciful, and whoever repents and does good has timely turned to God with an acceptable conversion; those who witness no falsehood, and if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honourable avoidance; those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, droop not down at them as if they were deaf or blind; and those who pray, our Lord! grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us the grace to lead the righteous. Those are the*

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<sup>40</sup> Muhammad Ghazali, *Hakadha Dinuna* (Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1975), pp.82-87.

<sup>41</sup> *al-Baqarah*: 112;

*ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven, because of their patient constancy: therein shall they be met with salutations and peace.*<sup>42</sup>

Accordingly, again the living examples of such *`ibad*(true slaves of Allah) were the first Muslim reverts, the *sahabah*. Khadeeja, the first wife of the Prophet, gave everything she had for the cause of Islam. She looked and cared after the Prophet diligently ensuring that he was comforted in every possible manner. Her material and moral support to the Prophet was so monumental that the year she passed away was known as the Year of Grief.<sup>43</sup> Khadija was a role model of a strong, modest and upright woman who did all that was in her capacity for the spread of truth.<sup>44</sup> Companions were competing with each other to perform non-ritual *ibadah* by financing the Islamic cause. For instance, Abu Bakr who was known for spending his wealth without hesitation for an Islamic cause. Once the Prophet commanded people to give charity and contribute for the cause of Islam. At that time Umar (another famous companion) had some wealth and he said: "Today I shall surpass Abu Bakr if I surpass him any day. I, therefore, brought half my property". The Prophet asked: "What did you leave for your family?" Umar replied: "The same amount". Abu Bakr brought all that he had with him. The Prophet asked him: "What did you leave for your family?" He replied: "I left Allah and His Apostle for them."<sup>45</sup> Uthman Ibn `Affan was another big hearted companion to dedicate his asset for Islamic causes. He was a wealthy merchant of cloth prior to Islam. When he entered Islam devoted his whole wealth to finance socio-economic projects and other philanthropic causes. Immediately after migration to Madinah, he procured a well to overcome water scarcity faced by the new community. On every Friday he was paying for emancipation of slaves. In the Battle with Byzantine when Prophet called for raising military fund, Uthman among other contributed 900 equipped camels (sponsored a third of the Muslim army of 30,000 men). In spite of his wealth, he lived an austere life and would often sleep, wrapped in a blanket, on the sand of the mosque.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Al-Furqan:63-75*.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, p. 125.

<sup>44</sup> Bukhari, Vol.5,p.53.

<sup>45</sup> Abdul Aziz As-Shanawi, *The Ministers around the Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2004), p. 154.

<sup>46</sup> Aisha Stacy.(2013). *The Third Caliph- Uthman Bin Affan(RA)*. At <http://islam.ru/en/content/story/third-caliph-uthman-ibn-affan-ra-0> (accessed 28 December 2017).

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To contribute to further to the cause of Islam one need to engage in outreach programmes to bring forth the beauty of Islam and Islamic *hidayah* to other fellow humans by using all his resources and capabilities. That is why the Prophet ordains Muslims to be proactive in spreading the message of Islam and Knowledge about its magnificent teaching even if they have the knowledge of one verse.<sup>47</sup> A pioneer role model to emulate was Caliph Abu Bakr, at whose hands many famous, rich and powerful companions accepted Islam.<sup>48</sup> He spent more than 40,000 gold coins for Islam humanitarian cause of freeing slaves who had accepted Islam.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Musuab ibn Umayr was sent as an envoy to Madina by the Prophet SA, and he tapping on his social and diplomatic skills was able get entire people Madina to accepted Islam.<sup>50</sup> Zaid Ibn Thabit another prominent companion utilizing his language learning ability learnt Hebrew with the purpose of preaching Islam to the Jews.<sup>51</sup> Malik bin Dinar a prominent scholar from among the Tabi`in travelled over 3,500km to invite people of the Indian Malabar coast to Islam. He also established the first mosque in India (al-Mamun).<sup>52</sup> Poetic skills being the most powerful tool in enkindling interest and mobilizing masses during the pre-modern Arab culture was also skillfully employed by Hassan ibn Thabit to defend Islam and the Prophet. His poetic compositions survive till this day in the form of Diwan Hasan ibn Thabit. Likewise using oratory skills to keep the Muslim steadfast on the faith particularly after the demise of the Prophet was the resource which Suhail Ibn `Amr applied.<sup>53</sup>

It is also required of a Muslim to participate in the process of establishing Islamic institutions, systems and state apparatus based on the principles of the Qur`an and the Sunnah. It is rational and natural that after embracing Islamic ideology, one needs to work on building Islamic personality and family and become a role model for others to join and support Islam and the move to develop socio-economic and political infrastructures for Islam and the Islamic way of life to thrive and flourish,

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<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Ibn Sma`il al-Bukahri, *Saheeh Bukhari*(Dar Ibn Katheer, 1993), Vol.,2, p.380.

<sup>48</sup> Shahid Ashraf, *Encyclopaedia of Holy Prophet and Companions*( Anmol Publications, 2004),p.234.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Tabari, Vol.3, p.426.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, p.155.

<sup>51</sup> Muhammad Khaalid, *Men and Women around the Messenger* (El-Mansoura, Egypt: Dar Al-Manarah, 2002), pp. 310-316.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-Atheer, *Asad Al-Ghaba fi Ma`rifat Al-Sahabah*, Vol. 22, p.585.

and ultimately contribute to civilizational development based on the worldview of Tawhid alongside with people of other orientation. The foundation for such social agenda rests on education which is compulsory for both male and female based on the Prophetic statement: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim."<sup>54</sup> The first batch of Muslim reverts, not only had exceptionally talented male teachers but also leading female scholars and educators the most erudite among whom was Aisha RA. She narrated more than 2,100 prophetic narrations. One of her students, Hisham Ibn Urwah, said regarding her: "I never saw anyone more knowledgeable in poetry, or the knowledge of religious obligations, or Islamic jurisprudence than Aisha" (Shayba, 1999, 391). In establishing the rule of law and implementing justice Caliph Umar shines spectacularly. Umar was a responsible leader who lead an extremely simple life. He is reported to have said, "if a dog dies hungry on the banks of the River Euphrates, Umar will be responsible for dereliction of duty" (Mohtsham 2007).

Just administration and living by the rule of law as an asset which greatly contributes not only to the process of nation building was also another characteristic feature of early Muslim administration which attracted people of other ideological orientation to accept Islam. For example, Umar bin Abdul Aziz ruled the vast Muslim empire for just three years but during this short period of time, he filled the Muslim lands with peace and justice. Poverty had almost vanished and people were given their dues. He was not only a just ruler but also an accomplished scholar of the religion. He used his wealth and power to help Islam and the Muslims. He sent out several emissaries to faraway lands like China and Tibet to call people towards Islam. Due to his honesty and justice, millions of Non-Muslims living under his rule accepted Islam and became Muslims. He never hoarded wealth rather he spends every penny he had in seeking the pleasure of Allah. (Al-Sallabi, )

To top it all, at time of self-defense and resisting the fire power of hostile forces against Islam, Muslims and their existence, the pioneering and heroic place of Muslims of the first Islamic generation in term of resilience, sacrifice and struggle are paradigmatic. Musa Ibn Nusayr due to his exceptional display of bravery and political strength was made the Governor of Iraq, later on the Governor of Africa. During his governorship in Africa, he invited the African tribes to Islam, and many of them accepted the truth

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<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Ibn Yazid Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah*(Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah), p. 224.

and became Muslims. From these new Muslims was a man named Tariq bin Ziyad. Musa bin Nusayr appointed Tariq as the head of the expedition to free the people of Spain from their tyrant and oppressive visigothic rulers. Thus both of them were responsible for the entry and spread of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula (Arnold, 1931). The transformation and change of heart by Khalid Ibn Waleed, a brilliant fighter and tactician of unrivalled stature and the staunchest enemy of Islam before coming to Islam has no example in Islamic history. He was opposing Islam for many years and was responsible for defeating the Muslims in the battle of Uhud. But he became totally a different man after accepting Islam. He served as the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army. The Muslims never lost a single battle fought under the leadership of Khalid Ibn Waleed. He was responsible for the conquest of much of Syria and Egypt. This resulted in the spread of Islam in these new lands due to his efforts and military genius.<sup>55</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above, it is safe to submit that coming to Islam is a mercy of Allah for the one whose heart is guided by divine guidance so as to revert to his original state of belief and submission to Him. Thereafter, he has to move on in order to make changes in his lifestyle, habits and behavior in line with God and His Messenger have ordained. Nevertheless, such a migration and break from ones past culture and way of life requires firm self-determination, perseverance and endurance as the odds are huge and at times insurmountable. No doubt that attaining the Islamization of the self which lays the foundation for achieving Islamization of family, society and social systems can be facilitated by social support systems and communal actions, but the most pivotal factor in self-transformation is one's own decisiveness/self-exertion. Indisputably, we have contemporary individual examples of luminaries in terms of becoming the sources of inspiration for others to emulate. In this study, however, we presented a bird-eye view of unimpeachable examples of the first generation of Muslim converts, namely the Sahabah whose resilience and conviction to attain holistic Islamization, overcome all odds from both within and without, are unparalleled.

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<sup>55</sup> In al-Atheer, *Asad Al-Ghaba fi Ma`rifat Al-Sahabah* , Vol.2, p.140.

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