

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# ALI 495: Living Islam in the West: Challenges and Opportunities

Part 1

Academy for Learning Islam

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# Outline

1. Muslim Settlers in the West
2. Importance of Knowing your Society
3. Stages of Western Society

Traditional, Modern and Post-modern societies

4. Challenges and Opportunities
5. Strategies for developing faith
6. Strategies for nurturing faith

# Muslim Settlers in the West

Stages of settlement:

**Stage One:** Some early settlers came as temporary residents

**Stage Two:** Later settlers consider themselves as permanent residents

**Stage Three:** Children of settlers consider themselves primarily as Canadians or Americans.

In stage three, Muslims are increasingly influenced by Western thought and lifestyle.

# Importance of Knowing your Society

العالم بزمانه لا تهجم عليه اللوابس

One who is knowledgeable about his era  
will not be overcome by doubts (Imam al-Sadiq (a))

1. Muslim community is not immune from the culture of host society
2. Focus in the Muslim community tends to be on behavior
3. The primary focus should be on philosophies and ideologies

# Stages of Western Society

Traditional society:

Pre 16<sup>th</sup> century

Christian theology: focus on God and Church

Submitted to the authority of scripture and the priest

Collectivistic

Duty to serve the king or queen

# Stages of Western Society

## Modern Society

Post 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Weakening of the Church and growth of humanism and naturalism

Submitted to the authority of reason and empiricism

Individualistic, growth of liberalism

Growth of nation states and democracy, duty of the state to protect human rights

# Stages of Western Society

## Post-Modern Society

Post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, disillusionment with modernity

Growth of relativism and pluralism, post-truth societies

Anti-authority, neither reason or revelation

No defined purpose to life, rise of existentialism

Traditional, Modern and Post-modern ideas are spread through popular culture and lifestyle.

Eastern societies may also have a modern or post-modern approach.

# Challenges and Opportunities

What are some of the challenges posed by modern and post-modern ideas to faith?

What are some of opportunities within modern and post-modern societies?



# Challenges to Faith

1. The need for faith and organized religion is questioned
2. Exclusive claims to the truth are not easily accepted
3. Scientific explanations replace religious explanations
4. Scriptural claims and values are critically evaluated
5. Scriptural authorities are replaced by individual authority
6. Growth of increasingly diverse interpretations of faith

# Opportunities for Faith

1. Develop a rational understanding of faith
2. Develop a deeper understanding of faith
3. Develop a pure understanding of the faith
4. Practice a relevant and dynamic interpretation of faith
5. Enhance our life experiences through faith

# Strategies for Developing Faith

1. Develop a rational understanding of the beliefs.

Intellectually satisfying

Learnt through acquiring knowledge from scholars

2. Be selective and smart about media consumption

Books, articles, shows, movies, posts

Read alternate views, but seek guidance from scholars

3. Critically evaluate trends, policies, agendas and statements

# Strategies for Nurturing Faith

1. Faith is not nurtured by reading books or listening to lectures.

*Knowledge is not acquired by excessive learning, rather it is a light that God casts into the heart of whom He wills.*

2. Faith is nurtured by living a lifestyle in-line with the faith.

*To him rises the good word, and the righteous deeds raise it.*

3. Faith is nurtured slowly and consistently

4. Faith is nurtured by having positive influences

*Man lives by the religion of his friends, then let each of you see whom he chooses as a friend.*