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### IWDM Study Library

# The Idea of Freedom in Al-IslamPt. 1

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

00:00 Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim. That is, with God's name, the Merciful Benefactor, the Merciful Redeemer. Al-Rahman Al-Rahim. We greet you with the greetings of peace, the greetings of all Muslims in Islam. Assalamu alaikum. We are very pleased to be addressing the topic or subject, freedom en el Islam or freedom in Islam.

00:44 IWDM: First of all, the prophet of Islam, the last prophet, Muhammad, upon him be the prayers and the peace, he's reported to have said, [Arabic]. And that means in English, everyone of you is entitled to his opinion. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion. So I start here with the idea of freedom in Islam. Human beings are prided in Islam for human intelligence, human intelligence. Muhammad the prophet said of the human brain, that God made nothing more resourceful. Nothing having more use and better use, than the human brain. When we look at man's influence in the natural environment, we see that no other life presents itself as human life presents itself. No other life has changed the natural environment as humans have changed the natural environment.

02:25 IWDM: And I think it's very inspiring really to see how some of God's creatures, small creatures beneath man, much beneath man in evolution or in developmental growth over the history of their life, but it's impressive to see their contribution to the environment. Bees, for one, they build their nests and their honeycombs, and they have their living community. They actually have a very impressive community. But there are ants and other creatures too, the beavers, how they work. Cut wood, cut logs, cut wood, and build them a house on the water. It's very impressive.

03:31 IWDM: But nothing compares in any way with man's imprint on the natural environment. Man has altered the natural environment greatly, so much so that the animals and plants and everything have been changed somewhat, have been increased or decreased, have been improved or not improved because of man taking over the environment, dominating the environment. I'm not looking at the problems for the environment right now, I'm just looking at and hoping you'll be looking at with me the great power and usefulness of the human brain. Man used to live in the wilds like animals, but his brain would not let him stay in the wild, living like animals. His brain produced for him ideas, plans for changing his environment. Today we live in the human environment, and it almost shuts out the natural environment. There's so many constructions built by man: Roads, buildings, transportation. Built by man, for man. So you walk out of your house, out of your private quarters and most of the time, there's no attraction to pull you away from what man has established.

06:01 IWDM: Unless it's raining or storming or something, then you look up the sky maybe. Or if it's very hot and bright sunny day, you might look up at the sky. But our attention is drawn to the works of man. And because man has been given the freedom in this creation or in the material world, man has been given the freedom to think and act upon his thoughts. We see man as being very, very special in the creation of all the things that we know in the material existence or in the material world or the universe. Because of this very, very special endowment, God has endowed the man with this brain and intellect and freedom to think and then act upon his thoughts, to alter creation, to alter his own life for the better hopefully, always for the better hopefully. It's a precious gift. It's a precious freedom we have. And that's where freedom should really start. Freedom should start with the most useful part of human life, the most useful part of human life. Useful in terms of serving human betterment but also useful in terms of serving the betterment of the natural environment also, natural environment as well. So that's where our freedom should start.

07:55 IWDM: And when we think of our freedom in the United States of America, we see that freedom started with freedom of the intellect. In fact, our great leaders of our society, they would trace the history of freedom to the philosophers, to thinkers, men of deep thought called philosophers. And one of the great philosophers, he said, "I think, therefore I exist." His exact words, "I think, therefore I am." I think, therefore I exist. So for human identity, we have to start with the human mind, with the human mind. The human mind is where we see the true human identity. If we were not free thinkers, if we could not think independent of our circumstances, if we were created and kept formed in the earth, we don't have to use the term created. If we were formed in the earth, in creation or in earth, and like an animal or a plant, as an animal we'd be governed by habit. The bird builds a nest, it's instinct. It's habit. Over a long period of time, that just becomes life for the bird, to build a nest.

09:38 IWDM: And we could take any other living creature in creation and look at his life and look at his history, and we will see the same picture. The same picture would show itself, that they are not changing like man is changing. They have not changed the way they live over a long period of time, the stretch of their lifeline, the stretch of their existence, except when you look at the progress for their biology. Science says that many of these creatures, the way they look now, they didn't look like that originally. But they were not formed yet, [chuckle] so we're not really talking about those species. If we're talking about something biological, some germ that was a dog and it doesn't look like a dog, it's not having the picture of a dog, then we're not talking about a dog. And same thing for humans. If you're talking about some form of life that existed but it didn't take on this picture and this design that we have, so you're not really talking about a human. You're talking about the beginning of existence for a particular life. But once that life form takes a life form, then we can say we are talking about that life.

10:53 IWDM: So when we look at man and look at the other creatures, man is superior, much superior to all other living things. And man has taken pride in his superiority, the superiority of his intellect, superiority of his intelligence, superiority of his brain. He has taken pride in that. And the brain serves community. The brain serves family. The brain serves the human heart. The brain serves the human heart. And the heart tells me, "Oh, this is a burden on my heart to look at these conditions the way they are." And the heart tells me that, "It's a burden, these conditions, the bad conditions in my life, bad conditions in my area, bad conditions in my neighborhood, bad conditions for my friend or for a stranger." And my heart will dictate to me. Say, "this is not comfortable". Who takes over the responsibility to do something about it? What part of me will take over the responsibility to do something about it? My brain. My brain.

12:04 IWDM: Alright. So when the prophet said each of you is a right, a leader in his own right, entitled to his own opinion, the prophet was giving us an idea of freedom in en El Islam. We have a concept we call "shura" and that "shura" is a governing body. And we are told in our holy book Quran that the believers, the Muslims, we conduct our affairs by "shura." Having members in a body qualified upon their character, good character and knowledge and experience as Muslims, to know how to judge matters, how to contribute to decision-making on all levels of concerns, smallest to the biggest, this is required of Muslims. If we address an issue in our life, we should address it with respect for one other. Those who have knowledge, experience and good character and can make a contribution to a discussion and to a decision, so we can come to decision as to what to do. So it's called "Shura Baynahum." And that's respect for each other's intelligence, for each other's character and intelligence.

14:01 IWDM: And a lot of us forget that intelligence evolved man. [chuckle] Intelligence evolved even man's moral life. Intelligence evolved man's romance with females. Without intelligence, his romance would be disgraceful in a human society. We tend to want to separate morals or moral life from intelligence or from rational life. We can't do that. Moral life is intelligent life if it's advancing. If your moral life is advancing, that's intelligent life. There's intelligence in every aspect of the human form. There's intelligence in my hand, there's intelligence in my ear, there's intelligence everywhere. There's intelligence in my skin. If something gets on my skin, my skin tells me it's not comfortable, that's intelligence in my skin. [chuckle] So man's whole life is intelligence.

15:22 IWDM: When a baby cries because it has dirt on him. He has dirty his diaper and his cries, he wants someone to come, mommy or somebody, to come and clean it, take him, put on a fresh diaper. You call that moral? Have the baby grown up to understand what we mean by moral? That ain't moral, that's intelligence. [chuckle] So we seem to categorize intelligent life, we seem to categorize intelligent life and say this is moral and this is rational. But no, you cannot make that kind of separation and be correct. For moral thinking, if it's good moral thinking, it's also rational. [chuckle] Freedom should be freedom of the dome. Free-dome. This is a dome on top of the house, this is the dome on top of the temple, or on top of the house, this is the dome. The President, he sits in the Oval Room, it's a big dome. Yes, churches and mosques like to have a lot them designed with big dome, big dome. It all started right here, the dome, the head, the brain, the brain, the brain. And an open area, big round open area is really a reference to the sky.

17:20 IWDM: Country dwellers when they wake up in the morning, they don't look at buildings and all these obstructions in their view. They look at the open land. And it seems like the sky is coming down and touching the earth. Like it's one big dome over the earth. So that's the freedom we want. We want the freedom to engage the total environment with our brains. Now all of us won't be interested to do that. But we want those who will be interested to do that.

17:58 IWDM: We want philosophers in modern times. They shouldn't just be a thing of the past. We want philosophers in modern times. Those who will engage creation with their intelligence, with their heart. The heart is intelligent. Nat Cole, he used to really be my man, and he sung a song once called "My Foolish Heart." Well if there's a foolish heart, must be also an intelligent heart. You wouldn't use that kinda language if the heart didn't have intelligence, "My Foolish Heart." Yes. So we want intelligence, we want to take pride in intelligence, and we want freedom for our intelligence. You can lock my body up in a cell for some reason, justified or not, but if I have an active mind, my mind will be free. And I can make a lot of progress for my life while physically confined. Maybe spend a year or two in confinement, or 10 years or 20 years in confinement, come out with an idea and a plan and build a wonderful life for myself. Using my intelligence when my body was confined, my intelligence was free.

19:22 IWDM: So the idea of freedom we have today is our, say, a reaction to bad experiences. Our reaction to denials. Or United States used to hold us back. They won't hold me back anymore, we're free, we're free now! So I'm free to play music so loud it hurts my ears, it punishes my ears, about 10 years of it I won't be able to hardly hear, but I'm free! I can turn this box up as loud and turn the volume as high as it'll go! And pull up beside you and give you some of it too, in the streets. Pull up beside you and shake your car with my volume. You're free to do that. Free to be vulgar, free to be rude, disrespectful in your home, disrespect family members, your mother, your father, this is free. Is this the freedom? No, this is not freedom. That's freedom for the ignorant interest, not freedom for the intelligent interest. Real freedom starts with the freedom for the intelligent interests, not for the ignorant interest.

21:07 IWDM: So I hope we'll be able to come back to what is real freedom. And this is freedom in Islam, and this is also freedom for Bible people. We have the same freedom given to us by the one God who reveal the scripture to the prophets, and the Christians have it as the Bible, and we have it as our Quran, the Holy books. So don't think I'm telling you something about Islamic freedom that's not also true of freedom for the people who follow the Bible. So I would like to now take questions or comments from my guests I have with me here today.

21:56 Speaker 2: Thank you very much, Bro. Imam . My question would be, "What's the greatest hold back for us today, from achieving and enjoying our freedom, freedom of spirit, mind, etcetera?"

22:20 IWDM: Yes. The greatest hold-back?

22:24 S2: Or hinderance?

22:26 IWDM: Yes. The greatest hold back is the separation from progressive life. The loss of our best traditions. That's the greatest hold back. We have lost our greatest traditions. Our leaders before the Emancipation Proclamation, our leaders were leading their people to have an appreciation for human life, and to not tolerate a life subhuman or a life of a slave under a people that claim natural superiority or human superiority over blacks. So that was the beginning of our freedom, that say our leaders, males and females, so females among them too. Our leaders, our thinking people, that prove to be helpful, very helpful, and got recognition from their own people in the bad circumstances and became their leaders, their mouthpiece, the mouthpiece for those people. They were trying to address us, to give us a stronger spirit for declaring our right to be treated as other human beings are treated, whites or anybody, you see.

24:11 IWDM: So, that tradition was taken over by the church. In time, the church became the place for that, for those discussions. The text of the preacher would have teachings and influence, words that would influence the members of that subjected, controlled society to get a better sense of worth as a person, and to build on the better sense of worth as a person, so that their spirit to demand change and better would grow. And from the slaves and from the church leadership, to Du Bois and political leadership, it progressed. The political leaders were addressed to the same thing. The need for us to appreciate the great, beautiful life, the beautiful and great life that we call human life, to appreciate it and put pressure on a society that was denying us the right to express that human life.

[pause]

25:46 IWDM: After Du Bois, then came other movements. In education, we had Carter G. Woodson, and he was saying that the way we were perceiving our own life was influenced by those who were denying us our life. And we should come to see our own life with our own eyes and our own intelligence. And take responsibility for writing our own history. This was Carter G. Woodson.

26:21 IWDM: So when we look at the life... Our life in the past and how that life was advanced from slavery 'til today, we see a continuous effort to better the human condition of black people in society and also at...