

Institutional News

NATHAL M. DESSING

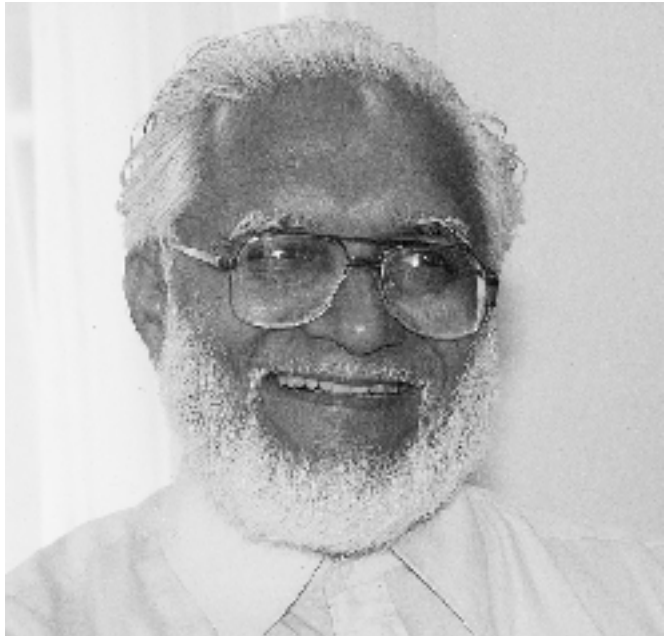


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Professor Muhammad Khalid Masud has recently been named Academic Director of the ISIM for three years. He succeeds Professor Wim Stokhof who, as Director in Charge, laid the foundations of the Institute and led the search for an Academic Director. We will miss the distinctive presence of Wim Stokhof, but we are delighted with the arrival of Muhammad Masud at the ISIM. Masud joins the ISIM from the Islamic Research Institute (IRI), International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan, where he was professor and head of the Islamic Law and Jurisprudence Unit.

Muhammad Khalid Masud was born in 1939 in India. His family fled to Pakistan when the state was formed. After working as a teacher, he entered the Punjab University at Lahore and in 1962 obtained an MA in Islamic Studies with honours. From 1963 to 1999, he was associated with the IRI, where he held many positions, including editor of the journal *Islamic Studies* for two spells in the 1970s and 1980s.

Masud took several periods of leave from the IRI in order to study and conduct research abroad. From 1966 to 1973 he studied at McGill University in Canada, where he received an MA in 1969 and a PhD in Islamic Studies in 1973. His MA thesis on Deobandi *fatwas* dealing with legal problems for which there is no precedent, such as those arising from Western dress, banknotes, the gramo-

phone, and the use of toothbrushes, established his enduring interest in methodology and the impact of social change on Islamic law. The questions posed by such novelties could not be solved within the framework of the widely accepted theory concerning the *'usûl al-fiqh*, developed by Al-Shâfi'i and further refined by subsequent Muslim scholars. According to them, there are four sources of evidence in Islamic law: the Koran, tradition literature (*hadîth*), consensus (*ijmâ'*), and reasoning by analogy (*qiyâs*). However, if no precedent exists, reasoning by analogy is not possible. Solving this category of legal problems requires alternative principles on the basis of which one is able to declare something lawful or unlawful. This methodological question led Masud to the Maliki Shâtibi (d. 1388), whose works (especially *Al-Muwâfaqât*, *Fatâwa*, and *Al-F'tisâm*) are frequently cited by modern scholars and have contributed to the modernists' conception of Islamic law. Unlike his predecessors, Shâtibi adopted the concept of *maslaha* as an independent principle: a method of inductive reasoning that takes into consideration the entirety of Koranic verses and *hadîth*, rather than specific verses and *hadîth*. According to Shâtibi, something is lawful if it is supported by textual evidence and social practice. In this framework of thinking, change is allowed in *'âda* but not in *'ibâdât*. Masud's doctoral dissertation on Shâtibi formed the basis of his book *Shatibi's Philosophy of Law*, published by the IRI in 1973 and in a revised and enlarged edition in 1995.

In 1977 Masud obtained a Fulbright post-doctoral award, which enabled him to visit libraries in Philadelphia and other cities in the United States for research that resulted in his

book *Iqbal's Reconstruction of Ijtihad* (Lahore, 1995). His extensive international experience also includes a stay in Nigeria from 1980 to 1984, where he was senior lecturer at the Centre for Islamic Legal Studies at the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. There he taught Maliki law and had the opportunity to become acquainted with Maliki law in practice. He was a member of the Committee on the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies, Social Science Research Council, New York, from 1985 to 1990. This appointment gave him the opportunity to widen his international contacts and to further develop his interest in social sciences. In 1990, the Committee held a workshop in London on the Tablighî Jamâ'at, a twentieth-century transnational movement for the renewal of Islamic faith. This meeting was organized within a wider project on Muslim transnationalism led by James Piscatori. Masud edited the proceedings of this workshop, entitled *Travellers in Faith* (forthcoming).

Masud has also conducted research on the position of Muslims in non-Muslim societies from the perspective of Islamic law. In 'Being Muslim in a Non-Muslim Polity', in *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* (1989), he distinguishes three approaches to the question of the permissibility for Muslims to live in non-Muslim countries. He argues that the approach that allows Muslims to live in non-Muslim countries provided they are allowed to fulfil their religious duties is the most constructive. Masud has surveyed this fundamental debate and elucidated many of its subtleties.

In his contribution to *Russia's Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis*, edited by Dale F. Eickelman (Indiana University Press, 1993), Masud explores the limitations

of existing scholarly analysis of Muslim politics. Supporting James Piscatori, he suggests that many scholars resort to impressionistic and general statements, for example in assuming that the nation-state constitutes an appropriate unit of analysis in the Muslim world. He has also co-edited a volume entitled *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas* (Harvard University Press, 1996). This is a collection of analytical studies of specific *fatwas* on various issues contributed by several scholars. His interest in Islamic law and social sciences also underlies his current research project on religion, law, and society in Islam.

As ISIM Academic Director, Masud will build on his broad international experience. As a Pakistani at the head of a Western academic institution, Masud will be able to assure that both Muslim and non-Muslim scholarly approaches to the Islamic world are represented and accepted at the ISIM, and that the appearance of double standards in dealing with Islam is avoided. His plans for the ISIM involve the development of a methodology based on three pillars: social sciences, religious studies, and history. Thus far, modern Islam has been approached mostly from the perspective of one of these disciplines, whereas Masud favours a multidisciplinary approach that builds on all three. Furthermore, to avoid stereotyping Islam, he emphasizes the importance of comparative studies of Islam and Muslim societies. In this way, Masud hopes to bring out the diversity of Muslim responses to contemporary problems, which is superimposed on the underlying unity of Islam. ♦

Nathal M. Dessing is a PhD researcher at Leiden University, specializing in life cycle rituals of Muslims in the Netherlands. E-mail: dessing@rullet.leidenuniv.nl