Excerpt: His Highness the Aga Khan on the nature of poverty and poverty alleviation

by NANOWISDOMS ARCHIVE

The Aga Khan explains that in Islam, the objective of poverty-alleviation programmes, and, more generally, all forms of generosity, is to help individuals enjoy the dignity of self-sufficiency and independence.

"[Charity] is a word that we do not like. Islam has a very clear message about the different forms of generosity. There is that with regard to the poor, which takes the form of gifts. But the recipient remains poor. There exists a second form of generosity that contributes to growing the independence of the person. This concept, in which the goal is to make the person the master of their destiny, is the most beneficial in the eyes of Allah. (2)

"Our duty is to try to free people from poverty. And to me, poverty means being ... without hope of ever controlling one’s own destiny. This means condemning one’s children and grandchildren to unacceptable living conditions." (1)

He stresses that a correct understanding of poverty and its causes is fundamental to sound poverty-alleviation programmes:

"Overcoming these problems will require a searching re-examination of what poverty really means. (3) We need to establish an exact diagnosis of poverty, a concept which is still poorly understood. (2) I am increasingly inclined to define poverty not only as a matter of income, but rather as a state of marginalisation in all of those conditions which contribute to the quality of human life. A state of poverty is a state of deprivation with respect to health and nutrition, education and security, housing and credit, and all the other conditions which are essential to human well-being. (3) We think [poverty] is comprised of a societal phenomenon, characterised by a lack of access." (2)
The Aga Khan suggests that “lack of access” is a form of poverty itself and a central characteristic of generational poverty:

"We’re worried about another form of poverty, which is lack of access. We’re beginning to sense the lack of access in society for the ultra-poor is one of the things that defines poverty from one generation to the next. People simply don’t have access to the social support systems that a normal individual would have. Therefore it’s not only material poverty, it’s actually quality of life poverty, and that is a dramatic situation." (4)

Extracted from NanoWisdoms’ summary document, *Key themes of His Highness the Aga Khan’s Golden Jubilee celebration speeches (2007-2009)*. Click here to read the full summary ...¹

**Speeches referenced:**

1) State Banquet (Madagascar), 27 November 2007²

2) Translation of: L’Express Interview (Aiglemont), 4 July 2007³

3) Conference on Central Asia and Europe: A New Economic Partnership for the 21st Century (Berlin, Germany), 13 November 2007⁴

4) Vancouver Sun Interview (Toronto, Canada), 28 November 2008⁵

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**References**

1. ^ Extracted from NanoWisdoms’ summary document, *Key themes of His Highness the Aga Khan’s Golden*
Jubilee celebration speeches (2007-2009). Click here to read the full summary ...

2. ^1) State Banquet (Madagascar), 27 November 2007
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8339/ )

3. ^2) Translation of: L’Express Interview (Aiglemont), 4 July 2007
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8106/ )

4. ^3) Conference on Central Asia and Europe: A New Economic Partnership for the 21st Century (Berlin, Germany), 13 November 2007
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8292/ )

5. ^4) Vancouver Sun Interview (Toronto, Canada), 28 November 2008
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9087/ )

6. ^Click here
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/wp-content/uploads/facebook/2012.06.24-%20Excerpt-%20His%20Highness%20the%20Aga%20Khan%20on%20the%20nature%20of%20poverty%20alleviation.pdf )

7. ^Click here
( http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/summary-documents/thematic-quote-browser )

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