**One World, One Family!**

[Huzaima Bukhari](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/huzaima-bukhari/)

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“What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family”?Mother Teresa

Family, the centre-point of human civilisation and the most precious of all social institutions comprises mostly of parents, offspring, siblings, uncles, aunts, etc. plus other blood relatives and those connected in matrimonial alliances whereby it becomes a group of descendants of a common ancestor. The significance of this association can be discerned from the fact that very close and intimate friends are honored by including them in the family. People take great pride in their lineage, their relatives, their names, and their professions. A human being, who enters this world as a baby is alone. But by familial associates, he finds all the necessary support, love, and happiness any person may desire to lead a contented life. Where there is a missing link, another comes in to fill up the gap which may not be an exact replacement but it helps to reduce the pain of separation to some degree.

Many might think that this is quite an idealistic idea of a family as there are hundreds of thousands out there who have no one to call their own or who have been abandoned by their own or have dubious or unknown family backgrounds but these are exceptions to the rule which is generally more in sync with the majority that occupies this earth. As F Scott Fitzgerald puts it: “Family quarrels are bitter things. They don’t go according to any rules. They’re not like aches or wounds, they’re more like splits in the skin that won’t heal because there’s not enough material.” Anyways, the main theme revolves around the concept of a few close persons who are the focus of each other’s attention and who are willing to sacrifice their wealth, careers, time, and even lives for their benefit. This is what makes them human. This is what motivates them to improve themselves to provide for their families, to make their lives easier, to help them on in all matters like education, health, ambitions, etc.

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Naturally, the whole notion of a family is based on a very small scale. Man marries a woman, and together, they have children, become parents then grandparents, then great grandparents and in between these various phases, there are uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces in the making so the normal clan size could be anything between three to three hundred or even more but it can never encompass the entire population of the world even though we are all related being part of the human race. If this could be possible then the whole world would be one huge family and there would be perpetual peace rather than the present scenario of unrest, armed conflicts, crimes, and misery.

On a different note, there can be certain situations where some well-intentioned people display their capacity to convert humanity into one large family. They are aware that to promote world peace, to bring prosperity to the doorsteps of masses, to uplift their “family” members from the ghettos of poverty, to ignite the fire of knowledge in the minds of the ignorant, to spread wisdom, to salvage relics of human civilization, to bring together “relatives” who have alienated themselves on account of diverse faiths, race, creed, political divisions, and prejudices, it is vital to do good across man-made borders and without expecting any return or acclamation and that too without the privilege of a throne or leadership of a country. One such unique individual is none other than His Highness, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, 49th Hazar Imam of Nizari Ismailis. He is perhaps the most revered human being on this planet who is highly acclaimed by every country of this world where he continues to leave his indelible footprints. Although the leader of a particular Islamic sect, his far-sightedness, wisdom, and benevolence are meant for the entire humanity and from whom many worldly statesmen can learn countless lessons. However, despite knowing that there is an inimitable example before their eyes, these shrewd and clever politicians prefer to look the other way yet even they cannot help but acknowledge the services of this great person. Consequently, the long list of awards, honorary degrees, keys to different cities, and citizenships granted to him is mind-baffling.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), of which His Excellency is founder and chairman, is a global network, having a presence in about 30 countries and employing around 80,000 people. Describing AKDN to the Canadian Parliament, Aga Khan said: “The AKDN’s fundamental objective is to improve the quality of human life. The (Network) has worked over five decades to assist in the enhancement of civil society.”

Pakistan is a beneficiary of AKDN in multiple ways. There are approximately 500,000 Ismailis in the country but the noble work in the form of educational and health institutions along with massive civil works in the Gilgit-Baltistan region in the north extend to all human beings living in these areas. One cannot but praise the profundity of this great leader in walking the tightrope of prejudices together with maintaining a subtle balance with world polity and facing judgemental opinions regarding his personal life yet never ignoring for a moment his principal objectives for the betterment of humanity at large.

The self-acclaimed leaders of our country urgently need to follow his example and for once turn their attention to actually serving their people instead of competing with each other for power and privileges. They must understand that mere words are useless. It is the practical work that will gain them popularity. These temporary periods in office without the blueprint for reforms and structural development are just a waste of time, energy, and resources, delivering nothing in the end. Great men like Aga Khan IV are undoubtedly a rarity but if their deeds are imitated in letter and spirit, then in all probability, the peoples of this planet can become one family and one nation-humanity.

*The writer is lawyer, author, Adjunct Faculty (LUMS), member Advisory Board and Senior Visiting Fellow (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics).*