

# A MODERN APPROACH TO ISLAM



Baqir Sattar







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## Preface

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The differences in methodologies of interpretation of the Quran and Sunna relate to many factors and are based on certain interpretational assumptions. Here we can address only the most important ones at a general level. We will compare the differences between the pre-modern and modern approaches and their interpretational implications as they relate to; view of the function and the nature of language in Quranic text and the nature of revelation itself; the process of how meaning is determined; the extent to which texts are contextualised and the relationship between text and context;; the extent to which texts are interpreted as a one unified, coherent whole; the role of reason in interpretation of Quran and hadith texts; the extent to which texts are interpreted to embody certain values and principles as the main objectives of their message; the extent to which the concepts of sunna and hadith are considered to be independent of each other. The pre-modern approaches to interpretation of the Quran and hadith texts are heavily philologically oriented. That is to mean that their interpretation is largely restricted to observable features of language. In other words according to this methodology one arrives at meaning through an exercise of simple retrieval of meaning which is accessible by following the rules of Arabic grammar, syntax and morphology. Additionally, the Qur'anic text as the verbatim Word of God is conceptualised as being entirely different from that of human language. It is considered to be operating outside history and that it is not in its entirety subject to rational human methods of analysis.

Modern approaches recognise that the Quranic text is ,its Divine origins notwithstanding, basically a text like any other text, specific to a time, place and culture. This approach is also premised upon the idea that Quranic language is also socio-culturally produced, i.e. it is an outcome of human convention and not of Divine designation. Furthermore, the meaning of God's speech is considered by necessity



to operate within the framework of human rational methods of analysis. Thus the nature of Quranic text as God speech is such that for all interpretational purposes it is to be considered as entirely human. The concept of the nature of revelation, moreover, is predicated on the idea that Revelation is closely intertwined with the mind and the psychological make-up of its direct recipient, Prophet Muhammad. The interpretational implications of these assumptions would include the idea that the sacred texts have a historical dimension, that the content and meaning of the same is historically conditioned and affected by socio-cultural context in which they were revealed and that in order to interpret them correctly one needs to pay close attention to this. We will say more on this below. When one interprets a piece of text one can form the view that the reader's understanding of the meaning of that text is primarily determined either by the author of the text the text itself or by that of the reader. Furthermore, the reader can believe that she is either in position to in principle discover the by the author intended objective meaning of the text or not to discover it but only to be able to continually better approximate this intended meaning. The pre modern approaches consider that in principle they can discover the objective meaning of the text and that its meaning is primarily determined by the author which the reader can simply and objectively retrieve. The belief in the objective existence of meaning in the mind of the author which is readily accessible again in an objective fashion to that of the reader also contributes to the idea of fixity of meaning of the text and that there exist only one correct interpretation of a piece of text. The modern approach, in the light of modern theories on interpretation, maintains that meaning is not simply recovered and that the reader is in principle not in a position to discover the intended meaning of the author in an objective fashion. Instead they emphasise that role of the reader, her socio-cultural background, education, sense of morality etc., in helping produce or create meaning and believe that the reader can only ever better approximate the intended meaning of the author but never completely and objectively capture it. One interpretational implication of this assumption is that although a text can be fixed in terms of its wording it can sustain a large number of interpretations which are only ever going to be its approximations.

This study is an asset for all scholars, researchers and general readers.

—Author



Text &  
Context

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## Introduction

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### Islam and Modernity

Man is not the only living creature who lives a <sup>friendly</sup> gregarious life. Many animals, especially insects, have a social life. They follow series of fixed rule and a wise, disciplined mode of life. The principles of mutual help, division of labour, production and distribution, command and obedience, order and compliance are in force in their social groups.

Bees and some ants and termites have been favoured with a civilization, discipline and organisation which human beings, who consider themselves the noblest of creatures, would take years if not centuries to catch up with. Their civilization, unlike human civilization, did not pass through eras such as the primitive jungle period, the Stone Age, the Iron Age and the nuclear age. They attained the same civilization and organisation that they at present have on the day they were brought into existence on this earth, and no change has occurred in their condition. It is only the human being, whose life, according to the Qur'an:

*(..and the man was created weak... Qur'an 4:28) begins from zero and moves forward without stop.*

For animals, the exigencies of the times are always the same, and do not further disturb their lives. For them the desire for modernisation and a love for what is new has no meaning. The new world and the old world do not exist. Science does not make new discoveries for them every day, and does not upset the pattern of their lives. Light and heavy technologies do not invade their market every day with new and better products. Why? Because they live by instinct and not by



instinct. Man on the other hand, is different. His social life is always subject to change and transformation. Every century the world changes for man. The secret of man's being the noblest of creatures also lies in this. Man is a fully-grown and mature son of nature. He is created with the state and the capacity of not having to stand in need of the direct guidance and protection of nature, nor of that mysterious power called instinct. He lives by intellect and not by instinct.

Nature has acknowledged human beings as being mature in mind and has left them as independent beings and withdrawn its direct control from them. All that an animal can do according to instinct and under the influence of untransgressable natural laws, must be done by a human being with the power of the intellect, through knowledge and according to positive laws and the shari'ah which it is possible to disobey. The root-cause of all the corruption and waywardness perpetrated by human beings in the course of progress and development, of decline, degeneration, collapse and destruction also lies here. Just as the roads of progress and development are open for human beings, so also are the roads of corruptions and deterioration not closed for them. Human beings have been given the status of carrying upon their shoulders, in the words of the Qur'an, the burden of trust which the skies, the earth, and the mountains could not bear. In other words, human beings consented to live an independent life and accepted the responsibility of duty and laws. By that very account they cannot be immune from transgression, ignorance, self-aggrandizement and wrong doings. In the same place where the Qur'an mentions the unique ability of human beings to bear the burden of trust and responsibility, it goes on, without a pause, to ascribe to them their tendency to be transgressors, and ignorant also.

These two possibilities in a human being, namely the possibility for development and the possibility for decline, cannot be separated from each other. A human being is not like an animal who, within his collective life, does not move a step forwards nor a step backwards, neither moving to the right nor to the left. There is in human life sometimes a move forwards and sometimes a move backwards, and if there is movement and speed, there is also stopping and slowing-down. If there is progress and development, there is also decay. If there is justice and virtue there is also injustice, vice and degeneration. If there are manifestations of knowledge and the intellect, there are indications of ignorance and sensuality also. There is always the possibility that the changes and new ideas and values that spring up in a particular period may be disadvantageous and injurious for mankind.

## Rigid People and Ignorant People

One of the characteristics of human beings is their tendency to go to extremes. If a man has moderate views, he tries to separate changes of the first kind from changes of the second kind. He tries to move forward in time with the power of knowledge, initiative, endeavour and hard work.

He tries to adapt himself to manifestations of progress and advance in his age, and simultaneously tries to cheek the mistaken directions taken in his times and refuses to conform to them. However, it is unfortunately not always like this. There are two dangerous diseases that always threaten man in this connection. These are: the disease of inflexibility and conventionalism, and the disease of naivity and instability.

The consequence of the former disease is stagnation, stopping, and keeping back from advance and development, while the consequence of the latter disease is backsliding and taking the wrong direction. A conventional, inflexible person hates everything that is new and accept nothing but the old, while the naive, unstable person counts every newly manifested thing as permissible in the name of a "necessity of the times" or modernity and progress. An inflexible person considers every new thing to be a corruption and a deviation, and the naive person counts each and every new thing as 'civilization' and an extension of knowledge and learning. An inflexible person does not distinguish between the kernel and the shell, the means and the end. To him, religion has the responsibility of protecting ancient traditions. In his view, the Qur'an was revealed for the purpose of stopping the flow of time and nailing down the situation of the world exactly as it is.

In his view, the recitation of the last part of the Qur'an, writing with a red pen, using a traditional box, taking ones bath in a traditional bath house, eating with the hand, using oil-lamps for lighting, staying unlettered and uneducated should all be preserved as religious observances. A naïve progressivist on the other hand, wants to know even new fashion, and new idea that has started in the west, and promptly follows them and calls them modernisation and requirements of the times. Both the conventionalist and the naive progressivist agree in supposing that any situation obtaining in times gone by was a part of religious commandments and rites. The difference lies in this: the conventional person deduces the conclusion that those rites ought to be maintained and preserved, and the progressivist that



religion is inextricably connected to the worship of the past, love of fixedness and stagnation. In the recent past the problem of incompatibility between science and religion has been a subject of keen discussion and controversy among the people of the west. The idea of incompatibility between science and religion arose basically because of two reasons. One of them was that the church maintained that certain matters of old science and philosophy were religious matters, and should, from the religious point of view, be accepted as dogma and then scientific advances showed these ideas to be wrong. Besides that, it was also due to the fact that the sciences altogether altered and reformed the pattern of life.

Religious conservatives wanted to bring the outward material form of life under the rule of religion, just as they had done with philosophical matters, giving them a religious tinge. The naive and the ignorant also thought that this was the case, and imagined that religion viewed the material life of people as a having a particular form and pattern. And when the material form of life had to be changed according to the judgement of science, science proclaimed that religion had been abrogated.

The inflexibility of the first group together with the ignorance of the second brought about the illusory idea that science and religion were incompatible.

### **The Story in the Quran**

Islam is a religion which moves forward and carries forward. So as to remind Muslims that they should always be in a state of growth, development and evolution, but within the framework of Islam, the Qur'an compares the followers of Muhammad (s.a.w.a) to a seed that is sown in the ground. That seed grows forth in the form of a tiny tender leaf, and afterwards strengthens itself and stands erect on its stem. It passes through stages with such speed and strength that farmers are surprised and joyful over it. This is an example for that society towards which the Qur'an points. Development is one of those goals towards which the Qur'an directs. The Qur'an lays the foundation of a society which is continuously in a state of growth, extension, dilation and expansion. (Will Durant said that no religion has called its followers with such strength as Islam has done) The history of the advent of Islam shows how vigorous and strong Islam was in establishing society anew and making it progress. It is against both inflexible conservatism and ignorant naivety. The danger which threatens Islam

comes both from the region of the first group and from the region of the latter group. The conservatives, the inflexibly minded, and those who like to show that every old thing belongs to Islam, when, in fact, it may have no connection with the pure religion of Islam, have given the naive progressivists an excuse to count Islam against development in its true sense. On the other hand, the imitation, fashion-worshipping, and aping of the west, and the belief that the prosperity of eastern people lies in their being physically and spiritually, outwardly and inwardly, westernized, gives the naive people the idea that they should take on all of the customs, manners and traditions of the west, that the civil and social laws should all be made to conform to western laws. They make the conservative group look pessimistically at every thing new and consider it a danger for their religion, their independence and their national and social status.

In the middle of all this, it is Islam that can amend the mistake of both groups.

The attitude of the conservatives gives good cause for the assaults and attacks of the progressivists, and the stupidities of the progressivists make the conservatives all the more adamant. It is strange that the apparently civilized progressivists suppose that time cannot produce mistakes and errors. Do they think that the changes of time are brought about not by man but by some other being? Since when and from what date has mankind become entirely infallible and thus made the changes of time free from any error or mistake?

Just as man makes new discoveries in every age for the benefit of humanity under the influence of his scientific, moral, aesthetic and religious inclinations, so he is also under the influence of his egotism, ambition, sensuality and greed for wealth and exploitation. Just as man is successful in making new inventions and finding out better ways and means of living, he is also, from time to time liable to make errors and mistakes. Any how, the self-centred progressivist does not understand these words. He always repeats his cliche that the world today is what it is. What is even stranger is that these people think of the fundamentals of life in the same way they think of their shoes, hats and clothes. Just as shoes and hats are once new and then become worn out and have value when new and just out of the factory and must be purchased then, but must be cast away when they are old, so all the realities of the universe are like this. The idea of these naive progressivists in respect of the good and bad of a thing is nothing except its being new or old. According of them feudalism, that is to



say, some powerful man unlawfully and forcibly calling himself a master, establishing himself comfortably while hundreds of hands work in order to feed that mouth, is bad, not in itself, but because it has now become outdated and the world today does not accept it. Its time is no more, and now it is considered as obsolete. Naturally, at the beginning, when such a thing first appeared and was brand-new on the world market, it was good.

According to them, it is bad to exploit women because the world today no longer approves of it and does not tolerate it but yesterday, when the world did not acknowledge the right of inheritance for women did not accept their right of ownership and did not pay any heed to their opinion and views, that too was once new, and had then come newly into the market.

According to people like them, because this age is the space age and it is therefore impossible to abandon the aeroplane and ride a mule, to ignore electricity and light an oil lamp, to disregard large spinning mills and use a hand spinning wheel, to turn, a blind eye on giant printing machine and write by hand, so also it is impossible to avoid dances, not to take part in bathing and picnic parties, not to get drunk and cavort around, not to play poker, not to wear skirts above the knees, because all these things are the phenomena belonging to the modern age. If these things are not done, it would mean a return to the age of mule-riding.

How many individuals have been ruined and what countless number of families have been wrecked by the phrase "the signs of the times". They say it is the age of science, the era of the atom, the age of the satellite, and the epoch of rockets. Very well, we also thank Allah that we live in this age and time and in this epoch and era and wish that we may increasingly and in a better way take advantage and derive benefit from science and art. Notwithstanding that, a question arises — have all the other incentives and motivating factors become dried up except the fountain head of knowledge? Are all the phenomena of this century the result of nothing but scientific progress? Does science claim that the nature of the individual scientist has been completely subjugated, made obedient and humanised? Science does not make such a claim for the individual scientist, and that is why a group of scientists and scholars can undertake research and make discoveries with the utmost purity and sincerity of purpose, while groups of power-hungry, ambitious and money-worshipping people employ the results of their scientific labour to attain their nefarious

purposes. The loud complaint of science is always that it has become the object of exploitation by man's unruly nature. The preoccupation and misfortune of our age is this very thing. Science takes a step forward in the field of physics and discovers the laws of light, but a group of profiteers make the same discovery a means to make films with unforeseeably destructive results. The science of chemistry advances, and finds out how to make new compounds, whereupon some people begin to think how to profit from this advance and cook up a catastrophe for the human soul and call it heroin. Science finds its way to the heart of the atom, and harness its wonderful power, but before any plans for its use for the betterment of humanity could be made, the power-hungry men of the world manufactured bombs from it and then dropped them on innocent people.

When a celebration was held in honour of Einstein, the great scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he himself mounted the rostrum and said, "In whose honour are you going to hold this celebration — one whose talents have been the source for the preparation of the atom bomb?"

Einstein did not use his intellectual power for the preparation of a bomb, but the ambitions of another group did exploit his genius.

Heroin, the atom bomb, this or that kind of film can never be accepted just because they are "signs of the time". If the most perfect bomb were to be dropped by the most ingenious array of instruments by a model pilot on innocent people, the savagery of the act would not be lessened in the least. The main argument of the people who say that in family duties we should follow western patterns is that time, and, with it, social values have changed, and the exigencies of the twentieth century demand that we follow them. Thus if we do not make our view regarding this point clear, our further discussions will be incomplete.

If we were to undertake a full and thorough discussion of this question, there would not be enough space in this series of articles, because many aspects need to be dealt with and examined. Some of them are philosophical, some to do with religious jurisprudence, and others moral and social. I hope to be able to discuss those points in detail in a book, *Islam and the Exigencies of the Modern Age*, which I intend to write. The preparatory notes are ready, and I shall examine the material in detail and present it before those interested. At present, it will be enough to clarify two points: Firstly, keeping up with the times is not as simple a matter as these ill-informed claimants imagine, and as they repeat with their clichés. With time, there is both progress and going astray. One should move forward according to the advance



of time, but fight against being led astray by time. To discriminate between the two one should look to see from which origins new phenomena and currents rise forth, and in what direction they flow. It must be determined from which of the drives and urges of man's existence they have sprung, and from which of his social groupings. Does the change arise from the higher, human drives of man; or from his lower, animal urges? Have men of knowledge and science and their selfless study brought about these changes; or have the indulgence status seeking and desire for wealth of the corrupt strata of society? These matters have been fully explained in the preceding two articles.

### **The Secret of the Dynamism and Flexibility of Islamic Law**

Another matter which should be made clear is that Islamic thinkers believe that within Islam there is a enigmatic secret which enables this religion to adapt to and improve according to the advance of time. They believe that this religion is in harmony with the forward movement of time, with the development of learning, and with the changes that arise from such development,

Now we must see what this secret is. In other words, we have to look into the "nuts and bolts" that went into the making of this religion and which have given it that quality of dynamism which has enabled it to remain in harmony with the changing circumstances arising from advances in knowledge and learning without needing to put aside any of its precepts, and without any contradiction arising among them. What is this enigma? This is the matter which will be explained in this article. Some of my readers will be aware of what I myself, more than anybody else, am conscious of, that this subject has a technical and specialized aspect, and that it should only be discuss with specialists.

However, seeing that there are many pessimists among those who have inquired from us and among those people with whom we have come into contact who are concerned about this matter, and having understood that they are unaware that Islam has such a special quality, we will enter into this subject only to such an extent as to relieve the pessimists of the pessimism and to give others an example of dynamism within Islam.

The respected readers may consult the excellent book *Tanbihu'l-ummah* (A Warning for the People) compiled by the late Ayatullah Nai'ini, and a very valuable article *Vilayat va za'amat* (Guardianship and Authority) by the great contemporary scholar Allamah Tabatabai

which is published in the book *Maraja'iyat va ruhaniyyat* (The Ulama' and Reference to Religious Authority), to see that discussions of this kind of problem have not been ignored by the leading scholars of Islam. Both the books are in the Persian language. There are number of factors which contribute to the secret of how the pure religion of Islam, with the fixed and unchanging laws that it has, can accommodate the development of civilization and culture, and can remain in conformity with the changing patterns of life, and we shall explain some of them.

### **Attention to Essence and Meaning as Opposed to Shape and Form**

Islam has not meddled with the outward pattern and form of life, which is wholly dependent upon the standard of human knowledge. Islamic instructions are concerned with the spirit, meaning and aim of life and the best course that a man should adopt to attain that final aim. Knowledge neither alters the aim and spirit of life nor directs to a better, shorter and safer route to attain the aims of life. Knowledge always places in the power of man better and more perfect resources for attaining the aims of life and for traversing the route to reach an attain those aims.

Islam by keeping the aims under its own authority, and by giving over the forms, models and tools to the realm of knowledge and skill, has kept away from all conflict with the development of culture and civilization. Furthermore, by encouraging the factors which develop culture and civilization, that is, science, labour, piety, determination, courage and perseverance, Islam has itself guaranteed the fundamental practical ground plan for the development of civilization.

Islam has set up in along the path of mankind. On the one hand, these indicators point towards the right course and the right destination, and, on the other hand, they warn the dangerous signs of deviation and decline. All Islamic injunctions consist either of the first kind of indicators, or the caution signals of the second kind.

The ways and means of life in every age depend upon the level of information and knowledge of man. By force of time and circumstances, the more man's information and knowledge increases, the more the means of life are perfected, and the more they replace comparatively defective means. In Islam, no one single means, and no one particular external or material form can be found that has an aspect of 'holiness' in it, so that a Muslim could consider himself constrained



to retain that means or form for ever. Islam did not specify that tailoring, weaving, agriculture, transport, war or any other activity should be carried out using such and such means, so that when that means became obsolete due to an advance in knowledge there could arise an antagonism and a conflict between science and the dictates of Islam. Neither has Islam given any special instructions regarding shoes or clothes, or determined that a building should be made with stone or steel, or that particular kinds of apparatus should be manufactured and distributed. This is one of the reasons why the job of conforming this religion to temporal progress has been easy.

### **A Permanent Law for a Permanent Requirement, and a Variable Law for a Varying Requirement**

One of the other peculiarities of the Islamic religion which has much importance is that it has ordained permanent laws for permanent human requirements, and has maintained a changing attitude towards varying requirements. Some requirements, which may be personal, individual, general or social, are unchanging and permanent. They are the same for ever.

The discipline that human beings maintain in respect of their instinctive urges, and the discipline that they establish for their society is, as a general rule, always the same. I am conversant with the concept of ethical relativity and with the idea of the relativity of justice, and I am aware of the fact that there are people who uphold these ideas, therefore, I shall make known my point of view to these people.

Another section of human requirements comprise varying human needs which call for varying and non-permanent laws. Islam has kept in mind a variable position with respect to these varying needs, by means of linking the varying conditions with invariable and stable principles. These invariable principles create particular auxiliary laws for each changing condition. I cannot expand upon this point any further in this article except that I shall try to clarify the point in the minds of my respected readers by means of a few examples.

*And prepare against them whatever force you can. (Qur'an.8:60)*

Apart from this, in the traditions of the Prophet there is a series of commands which has been handed down, and which is collected together in Islamic law under the title of 'horse-racing and archery'. There are commands that you yourself and your sons should learn the arts of horse-riding and archery to a degree of complete proficiency,



Horse-riding and archery were a section of the martial arts in those days. It is quite evident that the origin and the basis of the command about horse-riding and archery is the principle: *And prepare against them whatever force you can.* This means that the arrow, the sword, the spell, the bow, the mule and the horse are not fundamental in themselves in the eyes of Islam: the basic point is to be strong enough. The thing that has real importance is that Muslims in every period of history and in every age, should do their utmost to strengthen themselves with regard to military and defence forces against the enemy.

The necessity of being proficient in archery and horsemanship is an expression in which to cloth the necessity of being powerful. In other words it is the practical or executive form of the latter. The necessity of strength against the enemy is a permanent law which originates from a permanent and constant necessity.

However, the requirement of proficiency in archery and horsemanship is a manifestation of a changing necessity linked to time and it changes according to the age and the times. With changes in the conditions of civilization, other things such as the preparation of up-to-date weapons, and proficiency and specialisation in their use, take the place of that necessity.

Another example: another social principle has been laid down in the Qur'an, which concerns the exchange of wealth. Islam acknowledges an individual's right of ownership. No doubt there are vast differences between what Islam permits in the name of ownership and what is going on in this regard in the capitalist world, but there is no occasion here to discuss these points. The essential condition of an individual's ownership is exchange.

Islam has laid down principles to do with exchange: one of which is: *Do not consume your wealth amongst yourselves in vain, (Qur'an, 2:188).* This means that the property and wealth which passes from one person to another, which leaves the possession of the producer and the person has the prior authority over it and falls to another person and then to a third person, should always be in return for lawful profit, which should accrue to the previous owner. The passing of wealth from hand to hand without a return that may be human valuable for the owner is prohibited. Islam does not consider ownership as an absolute right of control. Besides that, it is made clear in the precepts of Islam that the sale and purchase of certain things, including

blood and human excrement, is forbidden. Why is that so? For the simple reason that the blood of man or a sheep cannot be put to any useful purpose and cannot be considered a useful commodity and a part of human wealth. The root cause of the prohibition of blood and human excrement is the principle of : *Do not consume your wealth amongst yourselves in vain*; the prohibition of the sale and purchase of these particular things is not the fundamental. The basic thing is that exchange of only those things which are of any human use should take place. The forbidding of the exchange of things like blood and human feces is merely an example of the prohibition of futile exchanges of wealth. In other words, it is a mere practical expression for the basic principle laid down in the words: *Do not consume your wealth amongst yourselves in vain*. Moreover, if there is no occasion for exchange, no wealth can be appropriated from another in Vain and put to use.

This principle is invariable for all times and is based upon a general and constant human necessity but the fact that blood and human faeces do not constitute wealth and are not exchangeable depends upon the times, the historical period, the level of civilization, the change in the conditions and advancement of knowledge, upon industry and the possibilities of right and profitable utilisation of these things. These factors may bring about alterations in the law.

Another example: Amir al-mu'minin' Ali ( a.s) in the latter years of his life, did not dye his hair in spite of the fact that it has become white. His beard was white as well. Some person asked him whether the Prophet had not given a command to dye white hair. He replied, "Yes, he did". The man asked why, then, he did not dye his hair. 'Ali replied that when the Prophet had given these instructions Muslims were few in number, and amongst them there was a number of old people who used to take part in the battles. When the enemy looked at the ranks of Muslim warriors and saw the white-haired old men, they worked up courage and became self-confident from the fact that their opponents were a lot of old men. The Prophet issued an order that old men should dye their hair so that the enemy should not realize that they were old. Then Ali told the man that the Prophet issued the order when the Muslims had been few in number and it had been necessary that a stratagem like that should be adopted. But in the time of 'Ali, when Islam had spread throughout the land, it was no longer necessary to carry on these practices. Everybody was free to dye or not to dye his hair. In the view of Ali (a.s.), the commandment of the Prophet that Muslims should dye their hair was not the basic



principle. The object of the commandment was something else. This was, so to say, the outer form in which the basic and the fundamental law was clothed. The purpose was to prevent the enemy from being bold in spirit or full of hope. Islam attaches importance both to the form, the external appearance and the outer "covering", and also to the spirit, the inner meaning and the heart of the matter, but always seeks that the form and the outward appearance, the "covering" should agree with the spirit and inner meaning, the "heart". It puts a shell round the kernel, and clothing on the body.

### **The Question of Change of Script**

There is presently under discussion in our country the question of changing the script. This matter requires to be examined closely from the linguistic and literary angle of the Persian language, as well as from the perspective of Islamic principles. From the Islamic perspective this proposition can be dealt with in two ways, Firstly, it is to be seen whether Islam has some particular alphabet; whether it distinguishes between different alphabets; whether Islam considers our present alphabet, which is the Arabic alphabet, its own, and considers other alphabets like the Latin alphabet as foreign alphabets. It is certainly not so. In the eyes of Islam, which is a universal religion, all alphabets are equal. The other aspect of the proposition concerns the result that the change of alphabet and script would have on Muslim society as regards its being merged into, absorbed and swallowed up by societies alien to it? What would be the result of severing the intimate ties of association of this nation with its cultural heritage which has, at any rate, written all its Islamic and scientific literature in this very alphabet for as long as fourteen centuries? Apart from that, the question arises as to who suggested this plan for changing the script, and who would enforce it? This is what needs to be investigated.

### ***It does not Matter what you Wear, as Long as you do not Imitate Slavishly***

People like me are sometimes confronted by questions that are asked in an attempt to belittle and ridicule. What does the shari'ah say about eating while standing? What about eating with cutlery? Is it forbidden to put on a hat? Is the speaking of foreign language prohibited? In reply to these questions I say that Islam did not issue, hard and fast orders regarding these matters. Islam did not lay down whether food should be taken with the hand or with a spoon. Islam has, however, directed that cleanliness be maintained. Regarding



shoes hats and dress, Islam has not specifically mentioned any particular fashion. In the eyes of Islam the English, Japanese and Persian languages are each as good as the others. However, Islam has said something else. It is forbidden to willfully destroy a particular speech form. It is forbidden to be intimidated by others. It is forbidden to imitate blindly. It is forbidden to be absorbed and swallowed up by others. It is forbidden to be bewitched by others, like a small animal mesmerized by a snake. It is forbidden to soak up the aberrations and misfortunes of others in the name of "moving with the times". It is forbidden to believe that an Iranian must become bodily, spiritually, inwardly and outwardly a European. It is forbidden to spend a weekend in Europe and then pronounce everything in French accent.

### **The Question of "Ahamm Wa Muhimm"**

Another aspect which provides Islam with the possibility of adapting to the requirements of the times, is the rational aspect of this religion. Islam has given its followers to understand that all its commands arise from a series of supreme exigencies; and, what is more, Islam has established the degree of importance of these exigencies. This consideration has facilitated the task of knowing the reality of Islam in cases where diverse exigencies find themselves in conflict with each other. Islam has permitted that, in these circumstances those who are deeply acquainted with Islam should determine the degree of importance of the exigencies, and select the more pressing exigencies, always in accordance with the guidelines set down by Islam itself. The fuqaha' (jurisconsults) call this principle *ahamm wa muhimm* (lit. "that which is more important and that which is significant"). Here also I could give many examples, but I shall refrain from doing so.

### **Laws with the Right of 'Veto'**

Another consideration which has given this religion the property of mobility and adaptability, and gives it eternal life, is that there is a series of principles and laws incorporated into this religion whose function is to control and harmonise the other laws. The fuqaha' call these rules *al-qawai'du 'l-hakimah* (governing principle) such as the principle of *'la haraj* ("no blame") and *la darar*, ("no harm") which have authority throughout *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The purpose of this series of principles is to control and harmonize the other laws. In fact, Islam has acknowledged these principles as having the right of veto over all laws and precepts. This subject has an extensive history into which I cannot enter here.

### The Governing Authority

Besides what has already been mentioned, another series of "nuts and bolts" are also used in the structure of the pure religion of Islam which have endowed it with the property of perpetuity and its position as the last religion. The late Ayatullah Na'ini and 'Allamah Tabatabai have, in this respect, laid great emphasis on the authority which Islam has conferred on a competent Islamic government.

### The Fundamental of Ijtihad

The Pakistani thinker, Iqbal, has said that *ijtihad* is the motive force of Islam. This is, no doubt right, but the main point is the ability of Islam to support *ijtihad*. If there were anything in the place of Islam, we would see how difficult the task of *ijtihad* would be. For then, the way to *ijtihad* would be blocked. The main point is the hidden secrets which have been employed in this amazing divine religion, so that in this way it has been given the property of harmonisation with the advance of civilization. Ibn Sina, in his book *ash-Shifa'*, sets forth the necessity of *ijtihad* on the same basis. He says that since temporal conditions change and new problems are continuously coming to the fore, and since on the other hand, the general principles of Islam are permanent and unchanging it is necessary that in every age and in every period there should be persons who have complete knowledge and acquaintance with Islamic matters, and who can be the answerers to the needs of Muslims with attention towards the new problems that come forward in every age.

In the supplement of the Constitutional Law of Iran such an anticipation has been made, that in every age a body of not less than, five *mujtahids* who are also "conversant with the requirements of the times", shall watch over the laws which are passed. The intention of the writers of this clause was that persons who are neither 'reactionary' nor 'ignorant progressivists' Who are neither against the advances of the era, nor subservient to or followers of others, should watch over the laws of the State.

The point which must be remembered is that *ijtihad*, as the word really signifies, means specialisation and expertise in the science of Islamic affairs. It is not the kind of thing that every educational "drop-out" can claim merely on the basis of having spent a few days in one of the centres of Islamic learning. In order to specialize in Islamic matters and to be competent to pronounce one's own opinion, entire lifetime, provided it is not short, is decidedly not too long. That, too

with the condition that the person is endowed with the liking for it, a certain powerful genius and is finally completely graced with the favours of Allah. Apart from specialisation and *ijtihad*, certain persons can be recognized as authorities for their viewpoints and opinions who are at the pinnacle of piety, and knowledge and fear of God. The history of Islam can show persons who, with complete scientific and moral competence, used to tremble like willows when they intended to express their opinions. I apologize to my worthy readers that the diversion in this topic has reached such a great length.

### **Part Seven: The Differences between Woman and Man**

The differences between woman and man! What an absurd idea! In spite of our living in the second half of the twentieth century, there are still people here and there, who think as if they were in the middle ages, and maintain old and out-of-date ideas of differences between women and men, and think that men and women are not the same as each other.

No doubt they wish to infer, like the men of middle ages, that woman is an inferior sex; that woman is not full human being; that woman is the link between animals and mankind. They think a woman does not have the ability or the esteem to live an independent and free life, and that she is obliged to live under the patronage and guardianship of man. Anyhow, ideas like these are now obsolete and out-of-date.

Now it is established that all those idle speculations were quite fictitious, and that, in the period of their domination over women, men had vigorously supported these arguments, while the true position was really just the reverse.

Woman, as a matter of fact, is the superior sex and man is the inferior and imperfect sex. But no in the twentieth century, due to the astonishing progress of science, the differences between men and women have become clearer and more well-defined. There is no idle speculation or fiction, in these hard facts. These are scientific and experimental realities.

Nonetheless, these differences have in no way any bearing on the question as to whether woman or man is or is not the superior sex, the other sex being lower inferior or imperfect. The law of creation brought these differences into being in order to make the relationship of a man and a woman within the family more firm, and the foundation of their unity more secure. The law of creation planned these differences



so as to allocate with its own hands the rights and duties of women and men. The law of creation has laid down these differences in men and women with a purpose, just like the purpose that is found in the differentiation of the functions of the different organs within a single body. If the law of creation has designed every organ, the eyes, the ears, the legs, the hands and the spine in a particular form, it is not because it has given a preference to two eyes, for example, and has unduly discriminated in their favour, showing cruelty to one part as compared with another.

### ***Is it a Question of Symmetry or One of Imperfection and Perfection?***

One of the things which surprises me is that some people insist that the difference between men and women in their physical and psychological make-up should be depicted as women being imperfect and man being comparatively perfect. This would show that the law of creation had some ulterior motive in creating woman an imperfect being. The idea that a woman is an imperfect creature arose among the people of the west before it did among us easterners.

Men of the west were quite unjust in their jeering at women and in calling her imperfect. Sometimes they claimed to be representing the church and remarked, 'A woman should be ashamed of being a woman'. Sometimes they said Woman is a being who has long hair and is short of understanding'. 'A woman is the last of all savage beasts whom man has tamed.' 'A woman is the last link between animals and human beings,' and so on.

More surprising than this is that a section of the people to the west have recently done a complete volte-face, and now want to prove by one thousand and one different arguments that man is an imperfect, inferior and humble being, and that woman is perfect and superior sex. If you, my dignified reader, had gone through the book *The Natural Superiority of women* written by Ashley Montague, which was serialized in *Zan-e ruz*, you would have seen how strenuously and with what shower of nonsensical talk the author wanted to prove that woman is more perfect than man.

That book, in so far as it presents the results of the discoveries of medicine, psychology or social statistics is very valuable, but when the writer himself proceeds to draw "inferences" and wants to deduce conclusions in support of his theory, which is represented by the title of the book, he goes to the extremes of nonsense. Why should they

consider woman to be so inferior and worthless an object one day and then be obliged the next day to make amends for the past and do away with all deficiencies and defects from the face of woman and transfer them to the face of man? Why should it be necessary to interpret the differences between man and woman as an imperfection in one and perfection in the other, and be obliged, at one time, to take the side of one and, at another time, to support the other? On the one hand, Mr. Montague insists on representing woman a species superior to man, yet, on other hand, he represents the distinctive attributes of man as being the result of historical and social factors and not the result of natural factors.

In fact, the differences between men and women are a matter of symmetry and not one of imperfection or perfection. It is the intention of the law of creation that these differences should be the source of a better relationship between women and men, who are without doubt created to live together. To live a single life is contrary to the law of creation. This point will become clearer during our subsequent discussion in connection with our clarifications of the differences.

### **Plato's Theory**

This matter is not one that has only recently been put out for discussion. It is at least two thousand four hundred years old, because it was discussed in the same form in Plato's *Republic*. Plato claims, in unambiguous terms, that women and men possess similar capabilities, and that women can carry out all the obligations and responsibilities which men are charged with, and benefit from all the rights that men enjoy.

The origin of all the new ideas which have come up for consideration concerning woman and, what is more, certain other ideas which people in the twentieth century have deemed to be excessive and consider unacceptable are also found in the thoughts of Plato. That these ideas belong to a man who is called the father of philosophy may look strange to the reader. Plato in Book V of his *Republic*, argued in favour of the State's control over women and children in connection with the improvement and the well-being of different generations, of its depriving some women, and men of their right to reproduce, and of its allocation of the right to reproduce exclusively to those who have especially excellent and distinctively superior qualities. He further more urged in favour of the arrangement whereby the education and training of children was carried on outside the environment of the family, and of permitting reproduction only in certain years of the

lives of men and women, the age at which they would be most full of vitality and vigour. Plato is of the opinion that women should also be given military training in exactly the same way as men and that they should also take part in athletic competitions exactly as men do.

However, there are two noteworthy points in what Plato said. Firstly, he admits that women in Physical as well as spiritual and mental powers are weaker than men, that is, he admits of a difference between women and as regards quantity, but he does not believe in their being different as regards the quality of their talents. Plato believes that men and women are alike in their talents, though, of course, woman is weaker than man in all respects; but, he asserts, it does not necessarily follow that men and women have a special ability to do one task rather than another. Plato thanks God for his being born a man and not woman especially because he considers woman to be weaker than man. He says; "I thank God that I was born a Greek and not other than Greek, that I came to this world as a free person and not a slave, and that I was born a man and not a woman."

The other thing is that whatever Plato said in respect of the well-being of children, their training, the similarity of the make-up of men and women, and the state's control on women and children, all of it concerns the ruling class, that is, philosopher-rulers, whom he considers specifically worthy to be rulers. As we know, Plato is, in politics, against democracy and favours an aristocracy. All that Plato said concerned the aristocratic class, and as far as people out that class are concerned his views were different.

### **Aristotle against Plato**

After Plato, the other figure of the ancient world whose thoughts and opinions we are acquainted with is Plato's pupil Aristotle. In his *Politics*, he expressed his ideas concerning the differences between women and men, and vehemently opposed his teacher, Plato. Aristotle believes that the difference between women and men is not only in the quantity of their abilities, but also in the quality. He says the nature of the abilities of woman and man is different, and that the functions which the law of creation imposes upon each one of them and the rights which have been designated to them are different in many respects. According to Aristotle excellence in the morals of men and women are also different in many respects. A certain behaviour may be regarded as a virtue for a man, and yet may not be commendable for a woman, and in exactly the same way a certain behaviour or



comportment may be praiseworthy and excellent for woman, but not considered worthy of a man. The views of Aristotle ousted the views of Plato in the ancient world, and the thinkers coming after them gave preference to the views of Aristotle over those of Plato.

### **The Opinion of the Modern World**

All that has been stated above concerns the ancient world. Now we have to see what the modern world says. The modern world does not rely on mere guesses and conjectures. Instead, relies on observation and experiment, on statistics and figures, on the study of the thing itself. In the light of profound medical psychological and social studies, more and multifarious differences between women and men have been discovered. These could not have been discovered by any means in the ancient world. Those in the ancient world who used to judge men and women did it simply on the grounds that one has a large frame and the other a smaller one; one is more coarse and the other more delicate; one is taller and the other shorter; one has a stronger voice and the other is soft-speaking; one is more hairy and the other has a more smooth body. The greatest extent they went to was to take into account the difference in the time of puberty, or to look at the differences in intellect and sentiments. Man was considered a symbol of intellect and woman a symbol of kind and affectionate feelings.

However, other kinds of differences have recently been discovered besides these, and it has been discovered that the worlds of women and men are different to each other in many respects. We shall mention all the differences between women and men which we were able to gather from the writings of the great scientists, and then we shall deal with the question as to how many of these differences are based in nature, and how many are the result of historical, cultural or social factors. A number of these differences can be listed by anybody after a little experience and attention, and some of them are so clear and self-evident as to be impossible to deny.

### **Reciprocal Differences**

**Physique:** Man, normally, is of a larger frame and woman has a smaller body; man is taller and woman is shorter; man is more coarse and woman is more delicate; man has a stronger voice and is harsh in his tone, while woman is more soft speaking and more melodious in her voice; the development of a woman's body takes place sooner than the development of man's body to the extent that it is universally said that the foetus of a girl develops sooner than that of a boy.

The muscular development and strength of a man's body is greater than that of a woman. A woman's power of resistance to many diseases is greater than a man's. Woman reaches the age of puberty earlier than man, and also becomes unproductive sooner as regards the reproduction powers.

A girl starts speaking earlier than a boy. The normal brain of a man is larger than the normal brain of a woman, but with attention to the proportional size of their bodies, the brain of a woman is larger than that of a man. The lungs of a man have the capacity to inhale more air than the lungs of a woman.

A woman's heartbeat is quicker than a man's. Psychology: Man has a greater preference for physical exercise, hunting, tasks involving movement, than a woman. The sentiments of man are challenging and warlike, while the sentiments of woman are peaceable and convivial. Man is more aggressive and quarrelsome, and woman is more quiet and more calm.

A woman refrains from taking drastic action, both with regard to others and with regard to herself, and this is the reason for the smaller number of suicides in women than in man. In a mood for suicide, man will take a hastier course in comparison with woman. Men will use a gun, hang themselves, shoot themselves, or jump from the top of a lofty building, while women tend to use sleeping pills, poison, and so forth, in such a crisis.

The feelings of woman are aroused quicker than a man's. Her sentiments are excited sooner than those of man; that is, a woman, in matters with which she is involved or of which she is afraid reacts sooner and with more acuteness just as she feels, while a man is more cool headed. A woman is naturally more disposed than a man towards decoration, ornaments, beautification, adornment and dress. The feelings of woman are more transient than those of man. Woman is more cautious, more religious, more talkative, more timid and more formal than man.

The feelings of a woman are motherly and these feelings are clearly visible in her childhood. Woman is more concerned with the family, and her attention is subconsciously directed more than man towards the importance of a home. In activities based on reasoning, and in abstruse intellectual problems, woman cannot equal man but in literature, painting and all matters that are related to aesthetics, she is not behind man. Man has more ability to keep a secret than woman and he keeps unpleasant private matters to himself better



than a woman. This is the reason why men are victims to some psychological illnesses more than women. These illnesses develop as a result of his keeping his confidences to himself. Woman is more soft-hearted, and instantly resorts to weeping, and occasionally to fainting.

### **Feeling Towards Each Other**

Man is the slave of his own passions and woman holds herself fast in the love of man. A man loves a woman, because he has admired her or chosen her while a woman loves a man because she has perceived his worth or has previously made an avowal of her sincerity. Man wants to take possession of the person of the woman and to wield power over her, and woman wants to conquer the heart of man and prevail upon him through his heart.

Man wants to master woman through her head, and woman wants to influence man through his heart. Man has a desire to embrace woman and woman has a desire to be embraced. Woman desires to see bravery and courage in man, and man wants to see elegance and charm in woman. Woman considers the support of a man the most valuable thing for her. Woman is able to control her sexual drive more than man. The sexual drive of man is aggressive and that of woman passive and inciting.

### **The Differences between Woman and Man**

In issue no.90 of *Zan-e ruz*, the view of an eminent American Professor of psychology Prof. Reek (?), was published. For many years, he had been making investigations and conducting research into the conditions of woman and man and he had arrived at certain concrete conclusions; he listed a lot of differences between woman and man in a voluminous book. This professor says that the world of man is totally different from the world of woman. If a woman cannot think like a man or act like a man, this is because the worlds of both are different. He observed that in the Old Testament it is mentioned that 'Man and woman have come into being from one flesh'. Yes, no doubt both have come into being from one flesh, but they have dissimilar bodies, and, taken as a whole, are different from each other. Moreover, the feelings of these two beings can never be alike, and their reactions to events and circumstances will never be the same. Man and woman take different actions according to and consistent with, their true sexual dispositions, and just like two planets they revolve in their two different orbits. They can have understanding between each other and be completely at one but they can never be one. This is the reason why man and woman can live together, love each other and not get

tired and bored with their particular and distinctive qualities and behaviours. Prof. Reek made a comparative study of the mentalities of men and women and pointed out a number of differences. Among others, he said that it is boring for a man to be always in the company of the woman he loves, whereas nothing is more pleasant for a woman than to live by the side of a man she loves. Man, in his heart, wishes to remain always in the same state day after day, while a woman always wants to have a new being and to rise every morning from bed with a new look.

The best words that a man can say to a woman are: "My dear. I love you" and the most beautiful words that a woman can say to the man she loves are: "I am proud of you". If a man has had relations with several lovers during his life, that man is considered attractive in the eyes of other women. On the other hand, a woman who has had relations with more than one man is disliked by men. When they are old men have a feeling of unhappiness because they miss their main support in life, that is, their work, but old women on the contrary feel satisfied because they have the best thing in front of their eyes, namely a home and some grandchildren.

In the eyes, of men, a successful life means to be regarded as a respectable personality in public, while in the eyes of a woman success means to win the heart of one man, and to hold and sustain it for the whole, of her life. A man always likes to convert his spouse to his opinions and nationality, while for a woman after marriage to change her beliefs and nationality to that of the man she loves is as easy as changing her family name.

### ***The Masterpiece of Creation***

Apart from the controversy as to whether the dissimilarities between men and women necessarily cause differences in their rights and duties concerning household matters, this phenomenon is basically one of the most amazing masterpieces of creation, and is a lesson in the Unity of God and in knowledge of Him, a sign and an indication of the wise and efficient order of the universe and clear evidence for proof of the fact that the process of creation is not based upon mere chance—nature does not go through its processes blindly, as if in the dark. It is an enlightening proof of the reality that the phenomena of the universe cannot be explained without invoking the fundamental principle of a final cause. So as to arrive at its own goal and to preserve its nature the gigantic apparatus of creation has brought into being the great device of reproduction. From its own workshop, females of



the same species and males of the same species are continuously brought into existence. Since, in order to maintain and prolong the existence of the subsequent generations, the cooperation of the two sexes, especially in the human species, is required, and so as to persuade these two sexes to help each other in this work, the foundation of their union and unity was laid.

It has been arranged in such a way that self-assertion and the seeking of ones own interest, which is natural in every living being is transformed into service, cooperation, forbearance and self-denial.

The two sexes are made with the desire to live together; and to make the plan completely practical, remarkable physical and mental differences are established between them, so that their bodies and souls can be better united. These differences are the source of mutual attraction, and are designed so that the male and female should feel love for each other.

If woman had the body, spirit, manners and behaviour of a man, it would have been impossible for her to attract man towards herself, and make him eager to become united with her. Likewise, if man had all the physical and mental attributes of a woman, it would have been impossible for woman to regard him as the hero of her life, and consider that her highest art is to hunt and conquer his heart. Man is born to conquer the world, and woman to conquer man.

The law of creation has constituted and built man and woman according to such a pattern that they are attached to and seek each other, but not in the way in which they are attracted to other things. The interest that a human being has in other things arises from his self-interest, in other words, a human being wants things for himself. He sees them as a means; he wants to sacrifice them for himself and for his comforts. But the attachment of a husband and a wife is in such a way that each of them wishes the well-being and comfort of the other, and is happy in forbearance and self-denial for the sake of the other.

### **A Union Stronger than Passion**

It is strange that some people cannot distinguish between 'passion' and 'affection'. Such people think that the only factor which can unite a couple is desire and passion, the motive of taking advantage, of benefiting, the same sort of interest that a person has in food, drink, clothes and cars. They do not know that besides selfishness and the desire to exploit, there are other interests which are innate and natural. These interests do not have their roots in self-interest. The source of

such attachments is exactly the reverse of what they think. These relations have their source in self-denial, forbearance and a preference of discomfort for oneself so as to ensure the comfort of the other. These are the relationships which reveal the humanity of human beings. Indeed, some of these sentiments are observed, as far as the couple and their offspring are concerned, even in animals. These persons imagine that a man has always looked and still looks towards a woman in the same way as a young westerner looks at street-walker, as if it is only passion which could unite the two of them. As a matter of fact, the union which constitutes the basis of the unity of the husband and the wife is greater than passion. It is the same thing which the holy Qur'an mentions with the name of "mawaddah" (love) and "rahmat" (mercy).

*And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider. (Qur'an, 30:21)*

How fallacious it is to explain the history of the relations of man and woman thinking only of the idea of profiting and exploiting, and, as it was previously mentioned, basing this on the struggle for survival. We have already referred to how much nonsense has been written about this. When I read some of their writings and their elucidations of the history of the relations of man and woman, I find that the only principle these people employ is that of contrast. They suppose that men and women are two different classes of society which have always been in conflict and at war with each other. Truly, it is all amazing for me, and I deplore their lack of reason and judgement. If they can account for the history of the relations of fathers and their children in terms of profit and exploitation, they can also interpret the history of wives and husbands in the light of that point of view. It is true that man is stronger than woman, but the law of creation has so constituted man instinctively that he could not perpetrate on his wife the atrocities which he has inflicted on his slaves, serfs, inferiors and even his neighbours, just as he could not practice that sort of cruelty with his own sons and daughters.

I do not deny the cruelties of men towards women, but refuse to accept the interpretation that is put forth concerning those cruelties, throughout history, men have inflicted a great many cruelties on women, but the motivation for these cruelties was the same as that which caused them to be cruel to their children, in spite of their great



concern for them, their careers and their welfare. These were, of course, the very things which caused them to be cruel to themselves as well, and the root cause was ignorance, fanaticism and traditionalism, but not the will to exploit. If I get time, I will give a detailed exposition regarding the history of the relations of men and women at an opportune occasion.

### **Reciprocal Differences in the Feelings of Men and Women Towards Each Other**

Man and woman do not differ from each other only in their outlook towards matters of family life, the very way in which, they are attached to each other is different. To be more clear the nature of the attachment of man to woman is not the same as the nature of the attachment of woman to man. Despite of the fact that attraction is mutual, still, unlike inanimate bodies, the smaller body attracts the bigger body towards itself. Creation has designed man as a symbol of searching, loving and demanding, and woman as a symbol of belovedness and attraction. The sentiments of man are characterized by asking, and the sentiments of woman are towards demureness; the sentiments of man are to seek, while the sentiments of woman are to be sought.

Quite recently the photograph of a young Russian girl who had committed suicide appeared in one of our daily newspapers. The girl had written on the paper which she had left behind: 'Up to this time no man has kissed me, and life is unbearable for me'.

This was the cause of a great defeat for a girl, that she had not been loved by a man or kissed by him; but which young man would he disappointed from life if a girl had not kissed him, or if he had not kissed a girl? In his detailed and comprehensive discussion. Will Durant says that if the criterion of the preference for, or worth of, a girl were learning and intellectual achievements, and not natural charm and subliminal cleverness, girls with lesser academic achievements would not have been very successful in finding husbands.

The true position, however, is that sixty per cent of university women are without husbands. He says that Sonia Kovalevsky, a distinguished scientist, complained that no one would marry her. "Why can no one love me? I could give more than most women, and yet the most insignificant women are loved and I am not" (*The Pleasures of Philosophy*) In the affair of finding a wife, a man feels defeat when he is unable to get the woman he loves, or if he gets her and is unable to keep her under control.

All these matters have a philosophy behind them: a stronger and deeper bond of attraction and unity. And why this attraction? Is it so that men and women can get more pleasure out of life? No, not just that; rather it is the foundation of human society and the structure of the maintaining and training of the coming generation which is laid on that base.

### **The View of a Female Psychologist**

In issue no.101 of *Zan-e ruz*, the opinion of a female psychologist, Cleo Dalsun (?) was quoted. This lady says that in so far as she is a woman psychologist, she is keenly interested in the study of the mentality of me. In recent past, she says, she was commissioned to research into the psychological factors in women and men and she came to the following conclusions:

1. All women like to work under somebody else. In other words, they prefer to work as a subordinate under the supervision of some superior.
2. All women want to feel that their existence creates, and is a matter of need.

After that this lady mentions her own opinion. She says that she believes these two desires of women have their root in the fact that women are under the commands of their feelings, whereas men follow their reason. It has been observed very often she goes on, that women are not only equal to men as far as intelligence is concerned, but are sometimes better than them. The only weak point in women is the intensity of their feelings. Men always think in more practical ways, arrive at better conclusions, are better organizers and give better instructions. So the mental superiority of men over women, she reasons, is something which is planned by nature. However much women may fight against this matter of fact, it will prove fruitless. Because they are more sensitive than men, women should accept the reality that they need the supervision of men their life. The most important aim in the life of woman is security, and when she succeeds in fulfilling her aim, she ceases to be active. A woman is afraid of facing the dangers involved in achieving her aim. Fear is the only feeling which they need help in order to dispel. Those tasks which require continued mental effort make women bored and tired.

### **A Hasty Movement**

The movement that was started in Europe to restore the suppressed rights of women took place haphazardly and in a great hurry because

they were very late in starting it. Feelings did not let reason speak and be taken as their guide, and that was how everything good and bad was washed away in one wave. This movement helped woman out of many misfortunes, gave her many rights, and opened closed doors for her, but, in exchange, it created a lot of other misfortunes and miseries for her and for human society in general. No doubt, if these matters had not been taken up hurriedly, the restoration of women rights would have taken a far better course. In that case the wailings of wise people against the present unpleasant situation and the even more horrendous future would not have reached the skies. Anyhow, there is still hope that knowledge and reason may prevail, and the feminist movement, instead of being led, as before, by feelings, will listen to the advice of knowledge and reason. The fact that the distinguished thinkers of Europe have given expression to their views on this matter is by itself a sign of hope in this direction. It can be seen that concerning the relations of men and women, the people of the west are themselves fed up and bored with their own behaviour, the very same behaviour with which the imitators of the west have recently become intoxicated.

### **The View of Will Durant**

In part four of his book *The Pleasures of Philosophy*, Will Durant has made a very detailed and comprehensive analysis of the problem of sex and the family. We shall make a short selection of certain parts of that book for our readers so that they may have an idea of the way of thinking of western scholars and abstain from passing hasty judgements.

Under the heading of "Love" Will Durant writes:

*"It is at puberty that love sings its first clear song. Literally puberty means the age of hair — the sprouting of vegetation on the male, particularly hair on the chest, of which he is barbarically proud, and hair on the face and chin, which he removes with the patience of Sisyphus. The quality and abundance of the hair seem to rise and fall (other things equal) with the cycle of reproductive power, and are at their best at the acme of vitality. This sudden foliage along with the deepening of the voice, is among the "secondary sexual characters" that come to the male at puberty; while to the blossoming girl nature brings the softened contours that will lure the eye, the widened pelvis that will facilitate maternity, and the filled out breast that is used to nurse the child.*



‘What causes these secondary characteristics ? No one knows, but professor Starling has found favour for his theory that when puberty comes, the reproductive cells begin to produce not merely ova and sperms, but certain “hormones” which pass into the blood and cause a physical and psychical transformation.

It is not only the body that is now endowed with new powers; the mind and character are affected in a thousand ways. ‘There are in life,’ said Romaine Rolland, ‘certain ages during which there takes place a silently working change in a man’ - or in a woman.

This is the most important of them all. New feelings flood the body and the soul; curiosity drives the mind forward, and modesty holds it back.’

“‘All men,’ says de Muset ‘are liars, traitors, babblers, hypocrites, strutters; all women are vain, artificial, and perfidious; ...but there is in the world one thing holy and sublime and that is the union of these two imperfect beings.’”

“In, adults the ritual of courtship is acquisitive advance by the male and seductive retreat by the female. There are exceptions here and there... Usually the male takes the positive and aggressive role, because he is by nature the fighter and the beast of prey; the woman is to him a prize which he must conquer and possess. All courtship is combat, and all mating is mastery.”

“The superior modesty of woman obviously subserves the purposes of reproduction. Her coy retreat is an aid to sexual selection; it enables her to choose with greater discrimination the lover who shall be privileged to be the father of her children. The interest of the race and the group speak through her, as the interests of the individual find their strident voice in man. Woman is cleverer than man in love because, normally, her desire is less intense and does not obscure her judgement.”

“Darwin considered the female of most species to be comparatively indifferent to, love; Lombroso, Kisch, Krafft-Ebing will have us believe that it is not physical delight that woman seek, so much as an indiscriminate admiration and a lavish attention to her wants and in many cases the sheer pleasure of being desired contents her. ‘Love in woman’, says Lombroso ‘is in its fundamental nature no more than a secondary character of motherhood, and all the feelings of affection that bind woman to man arise not from sexual impulses, but from the instincts — acquired by adaptation — of subordination and self-surrender (*ibid*)’

In the chapter gathered together under the title "Men and Women", Will Durant writes "The function of the woman is to serve the species, and the function of the man is to serve the woman and the child. They may have other functions also, but wisely subordinate to these; it is in these fundamental and half unconscious purposes that nature has placed our significance and our happiness. The woman's nature is to seek shelter rather than war; and in some species the female seems quite without the instinct of pugnacity. When she fights directly it is for her children." (*ibid*)

"She is more patient than man; and though he has more courage in the larger issues and crises of life, she abounds in diurnal and perennial fortitude for facing the smaller and endless irritations of existence.... But woman is pugnacious vicariously. She goes for a soldier and delights in a masterful man; some strange masochistic element in her thrills at the sight of strength, even when its victim is herself." (*ibid*) "Occasionally this ancient joy in virility overrides her more recent economic sense, and she will marry a fool if he is brave. She submits gladly to a man who can command; if she seems less submissive in our days it is because men have less force of character than before...."

"Woman's interests are familiar, and normally her environment is the home; she is as deep as nature and as narrow as four walls. Instincts adapt her to the traditional and she loves the traditional as any expert loves the sphere which reveals his excellence. She is less experimental in mind and morals (barring certain metropolitan exceptions); if she resorts to 'free love' it is not because she finds freedom in it, but because she despairs of achieving normal marriage with a responsible male. How gladly she would draw the man closer to her and absorb him into the home! Even if, in younger years, she thrilled to the shibboleths of political reform, and spread her affection thin over all humanity, she withdraws these tentatives when she finds an honest mate; rapidly she weans him and herself from this universal devotion and teaches him an intense and limited loyalty to the family. 'I would give the world for you,' the youth says in courtship's ecstasy; and when he marries he does. "It is just as well. The woman knows, without needing to think of it, that the only sound reforms begin at home; she serves as agent for the race when she transforms the wandering idealist into her children's devotee. Nature cares little about laws and states, her passion is for the family and the child; if she can preserve these she is indifferent to governments and dynasties, and smiles at those who busy themselves with transforming

constitutions. If nature seems now to fail in this task of protecting the family and the child it is because woman has for the while forgotten nature. But it will not be long defeated; she can at any time fall back upon a hundred reserve expedients; there are other races and other peoples, greater in number and extent than ourselves, through whom she can maintain her resolute and indiscriminate continuity" (*ibid.*) This has been a short selection, of the statements of distinguished thinkers, about the differences between women and men, and their views in this connection.

I had intended to discuss, under the heading of 'The Secret of Differences', how far historical and social factors have been effective in bringing about these differences. Anyway, I dropped the idea of a comprehensive discussion of this matter, so as to abstain from enlarging the scope of the subject matter. I hope this matter will become completely clear in the course of future chapters.

## Inner and Moral Dimensions

### *Shariah-the Law*

One image of the Shariah which has been assiduously cultivated, is that of a collection of laws enforceable only through political authority. This is not the case; all its laws are religious, but religion is not all law. Laws are therefore an important and integral part of the Shariah and, as we have already noted, it admits of no distinction between its parts: 'to pray' is as valid, enforceable, obligatory and sacred as 'to consult in collective affairs' or to 'prohibit interest' or 'to stone an adulterer'. Yet the Shariah overwhelmingly consists of morals, norms, manners and rules, from worship to statecraft, which depend for compliance entirely upon man's conscience. 'Law' in modern usage is only that regulation which is enforced by political authority, whereas Muslim scholars use this word to cover every act of human behaviour, even acts of the human heart; for the Shariah deals extensively with the intention, just as it does with the duties of prayer, fasting and alms-giving as well as with civil and criminal law.

### *Motivation and Sanction*

The entire sanction behind the Shariah is man's inner relationship with his Lord, his love and fear of Him, and his sense of responsibility and accountability to Him, here and after death. Much has been made of the punishments prescribed by the Shariah, but it is far less widely appreciated that the Quran and the Prophet have in fact laid down



very few such punishments-and, where they have, they concern serious crimes against a fellow human being's life, property or honour. Because of this, perhaps, the Shariah has been able to command a powerful and unparalleled following and obedience from Muslims down the ages, and, despite being often deprived of legal and political sanctions, has been accorded a remarkable adherence from one end of the world to the other. Inner motivation is the main reason why the institutions created by the Shariah-like family life, abstinence from alcohol, and chastity-have tenaciously survived for fourteen centuries. The punishment for drinking is rarely enforced, yet the Muslim world has no problem of alcoholism. Stoning for adultery is also rare-except in one or two areas-yet the amount of extra-marital sex is negligible. Divorce is easy to pronounce, but the divorce rate is extremely low.

### **Love and Law**

The Shariah experiences no tension between 'love' and 'law' or between 'faith' and 'deeds'. Both are integrated into a harmonious whole. Guiding man to Din, the Way, through the Shariah is an act of God's greatest mercy, kindness and love. Wherever the 'sending down of the Book' is mentioned in the Quran, the attributes of mercy, wisdom and omnipotence are also mentioned. 'A sending down from the Most Merciful, the Mercy-giving (Fussilat 41: 2). 'We sent it down in the blessed night... a mercy from your Lord' (al-Dukhan 44: 3-4).

And following God's guidance is what man's love for his Lord and Creator must lead to. 'Those who believe love God most' (al-Baqarah 2: 165). But: 'Say: If you love God, follow me [the Prophet]' (Ale-'Imran 3: 31). And only when one follows the Prophet out of love for God, his love is reciprocated by Him: 'God will love you and will forgive your sins' (Ale-'Imran 3: 31).

The very distinction between love and law is alien to the temper of Islam and incomprehensible in its vision. Love is all-embracing; how can it even conceive of displeasing the Beloved and ignoring the guidance given by Him? How can One who loves His creatures leave them wandering and groping in darkness to find answers to the complex problems of life?

### **Moral Ideals and Rules of Conduct**

In Islam, faith is not an abstract theological dogma, nor an intellectual creed, nor a philosophical proposition. It must spring forth into action in day-to-day life, extending from inner to outer, from individual to social, from moral to legal. It is the Shariah which translates faith

and moral ideals into clear, definable, viable and concrete goals, forms and codes and brings them within the grasp of every ordinary man and woman; this is why it is one of the greatest blessings of God and one of the greatest vehicles for human progress.

For men have groped endlessly to translate faith and moral ideals into viable actions and deeds. Some have been tempted to separate the two, others have been led into a never-ending philosophical quest. They have not been able even to define what is ethical, moral or good. But can ordinary men and women wait for such definitions and answers? If man has to live a morally good life, if he has been created with a purpose, if he has to meet his Maker-the moment he opens his eyes and becomes aware and conscious, he must know what to do and what not to do. And he must act in the certain knowledge that what he is following is universally and absolutely true and will please his Creator. Who else, then, other than his Creator should he look to for those answers? Herein lies the beauty of the Shariah. Every man knows what his outward conduct ought to be to conform with his faith, his moral ideals. He has an answer to the eternal question: what is 'good'? It matters not whether he is illiterate or a scholar, he can confidently act.

Not that all ethical and moral problems have been solved and buried for ever. So long as man is alive, he will continue to face difficult choices and dilemmas, old and new. This is a natural corollary of a worldview where man has to battle incessantly for 'good' against evil. But, in the Shariah, he has the means to find the best way to ease and facilitate his task.

### **Inner Dimensions**

To think that Islam emphasises submission to God merely in the outward conduct of man's life would be a gross misunderstanding. As the name used for the totality of the man-God relationship, Islam grips man's inner self in equal, or even more emphatic, terms. Significantly, the Quran prefers to address Muslims more as 'those who believe', and treats Iman, faith, and 'amal salih, good conduct, as an integrated whole.

Indeed, the Quran and the Prophet, at almost every step, stress the importance of the inner relationship to God as compared to mere outward conformity. The true heart of the Shariah is not at all formalistic. For example: although prayers cannot be performed without turning to Mecca, the Quran says, 'it is no virtue merely to turn your



face to the East or the West' (al-Baqarah 2: 187); charity is ardently desired, but an act of charity done for the benefit of the doer will bring no reward (al-Baqarah 2: 264); it is not the 'flesh and blood' of a sacrificial animal that God desires, but 'the taqwa (God-consciousness) inside you' (al-Hajj 22: 37), says another verse of the Quran; and, declared the Prophet, 'there are many who fast during the day and pray all night but gain nothing except hunger and a sleepless night' (Darimi); and, finally, only those who return to God with a pure and wholesome heart, Qalb Salim, will deserve to be saved (al-Shu'ura' 25: 89).

### **Shariah and Tariqah**

Some in Islam, naturally enough, have concentrated more on developing ways and means of purifying the inner self and of strengthening the relationship between man and God. Leading exponents of this approach-known as Tariqah-have been the Sufis. Much has been said about the conflict between the Shariah and the Tariqah. But what we have said above gives the lie to the often propagated idea of any inherent or continuing dichotomy and tension between the two terms-both of which interestingly enough, are of latter-day origin. (Early Islam used only Islam or Din which encompassed every aspect of man's self.) Special circumstances may have led this or that person to lay more emphasis on a certain aspect: a few may have even been sufficiently misled to try to generate tension and conflict between the two or extol one at the expense of the other. But there were never two different paths or two different expressions of man's relationship to God. Interestingly, both Shariah and Tariqah have exactly the same meaning-the way. According to Ibn Tamiya, a person observing only the law, without its inner truth, cannot be called truly a believer; and, similarly, a person claiming to possess 'truth' which is at odds with the Shariah cannot even be a Muslim.

Even, historically speaking, in early Islam, the two streams, of Sufis and the jurists never flowed separately. Hasan Basri, the doyen of Sufis, is a major pillar of fiqh and tafsir (jurisprudence and exegesis); whereas Ja'fer Sadiq, Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad-the founders of the main schools of Muslim jurisprudence-find pride of place in Fariduddin 'Attar's classical Tadhkira-al-Awliya (The Book of Saints). In the Quran and the a Hadith both inward and outward are inseparably intertwined. For example, when the Quran says, 'who in their prayers are humble' (al-Muminun 23: 1), then prayer is what one is likely to categorise as the Shariah, humility as the Tariqah.



Or, when it says, 'those who believe, love God most' (al-Baqarah 2: 165), love is likely to be taken to belong to Tariqah; but, at the same time, the Quran emphasises: 'Say: If you love God, follow me'. Thus prayer and humility, love and obedience are inseparable, two sides of the same coin.

## The Teachings of the Quran

### The Universal Import of the Quran

The Quran is not directed towards any one particular nation, such as the Arabs, or to a particular sect of Muslims, but to non-Islamic societies as well as the Muslim nation as a whole. There are numerous references to non-believers and idol-worshippers, to the People of the Book (namely, the Jews, or the Tribe of Israel, and the Christians), exhorting each one to strive towards a true understanding of the Quran and of Islam.

The Quran calls each group to Islam by providing proofs and never stipulates that they be of Arab stock. Referring to idol-worshippers, God says, "*if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due then they are your brothers in religion*" [IX:11].

Likewise, God talks about the People of the Book, (Jews, Christians and we include here the Zoroastrians), without referring to them as Arabs: *Say O People of the Book come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but God and that we shall ascribe no partners to Him and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God* [III:64].

It is true that before Islam spread beyond the Arabian peninsula, Quranic injunctions were obviously directed towards the Arab nation. From the sixth year after the hijrah (the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina), when the din of Islam was being propagated beyond the peninsula, there are references which demonstrate that the Quran is addressing itself to mankind in general; nor example, in VI:19, "this Quran has been revealed to me that I may warn you and whomever it may reach," and in LXVIII:52 God says, "*it is nothing else but a reminder to the worlds.*" We read too in LXXIV:3936, "*In truth this is one of the greatest signs, being a warning unto men.*" History has amply demonstrated that Islam has been embraced by a number of leading members of other religions, including the idol-worshippers of Mecca, Jews, Christians and by people from diverse communities, such as Salman of Persia, Suhayb from the Roman people, and Bilal of Ethiopia.

### **The Perfection of the Quran**

The Quran shows man the way to a realization of his goal on earth; it describes this path in the most complete terms. It is a way of correctly viewing the reality of things; a vision-personal, social and cosmic-based on a correct manner of behaviour and a precise method of interaction between men.

In XLVI:30 we read that the Quran "*guides to the truth and a right road,*" meaning the road of right belief and correct action.

On another occasion, mentioning the Torah and the New Testament, God says, "*We have revealed this Book to you with the Truth, confirming whatever Book was before it, and We keep watch over it*" [V:48].

The Quran thus affirms the truth of the ways of guidance taught by the earlier prophets. In chapter XLII:13, "*He has ordained for you that religion which He commended to Noah and that which We reveal to you (Muhammad) and that We commended to Abraham, Moses and Jesus,*" and in chapter XVI:89, "*And We revealed the book to you as an exposition of all things.*"

Thus we understand from these verses that the Quran not only encompasses the meanings and teachings of all divine books revealed before it, but also adds to and completes them. Every thing which a man needs, both in terms of his spiritual and his social life, is contained and explained in the Quran.

### **The Eternal Quality of the Quran**

The perfection and completeness of the Quran prove that its validity is not restricted to a particular time or place, since anything perfect is in need of nothing to complete it.

In chapter LXXXVI:13-14 God confirms that the Quran is "*a conclusive word*" and not a mere "*pleasantry.*" It contains the purest of teachings concerning belief in life-after-death, together with an exposition of the realities of existence, while, at the same time, encompassing the fundamentals of correct human behaviour.

Since laws governing transactions between men are directly linked to their beliefs, such a book can obviously not be annulled or changed with the passage of time. As He says in XVII:105, "*We have revealed the Quran with Truth and it has descended with the Truth,*" meaning that the revelations and their ongoing validity are inseparable from the Truth.



Thus in X:32, "*After the Truth what is there except error,*" and in XLI:41-42, "*In truth it is an unpenetrable book, error may not enter in it from before it or behind it.*"

In other words the Quran repulses, by its own perfection and completeness, any attempt to alter it; and neither now nor later can it be annulled or superseded. Many studies have been made of the permanence of the validity of the laws given in the Quran.

The reader is advised to consult them if he requires additional knowledge of the subject; to pursue the matter here, (namely, the position of the Quran in the lives of Muslims and the manner in which it demonstrates this), would be outside the scope of this book.

### **The Quran as a Self-Contained Proof**

The Quran, being composed of words and meanings like any other book, explains itself. It does not remain silent when the situation of the text demands proof. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Quranic terms mean anything other than the actual words being used. This means that every man, possessing a certain knowledge of the Arabic language, may clearly understand the meaning of the Quran just as he understands any other words written in Arabic.

There are many verses which are directed towards a specific group, such as the Tribe of Israel, or the Believers, or the non-believers and, sometimes, man in general; (they are addressed in phrases such as "*O you who disbelieve*" or "*O people of the Book*" or "*O tribe of Israel*" or "*O Mankind*") The Quran discourses with them, offering them proof of its validity or challenging them to produce a book similar to it if they doubt it to be the Word of God.

Obviously it makes no sense to address people in terms which they do not understand or to demand that they produce something similar to that which has no meaning for them. In chapter XLVII-24 we read, "*Why do they not reflect upon the Quran,*" implying that if it was from other than God, people would have found in it many inconsistencies. It is clearly indicated in the Quran that verses which have a subtlety or particularity of meaning demand that the reader reflect upon them to remove any seeming differences of interpretation or incongruities that may appear at first inspection. It also follows that if the verses themselves contained no apparent meaning, there would be no point in reflecting upon them in order to clarify the apparent problem of their interpretation. There are no indications from other sources, (such as the traditions of the Prophet), that demand a rejection



of the outwardly manifest meaning of the Quran. Some have argued that one should only refer to the commentaries of the Prophet in elucidating the meanings of the Quran. This argument is unacceptable, however, since the basis of the Prophet's commentary and of the Imams of his family must be sought for in the Quran.

It is difficult to imagine that the validity of the Quran is dependent on the commentaries of the Prophet or the Imams of his family. Rather, affirmation of prophecy and imamate must be contained in the Quran, which itself is the authentic proof and document of prophecy. This does not, however, contradict the fact that the Prophet and the Imams of his family were responsible for clarifying those details of the shariah law (Divinely revealed law) which were not apparent from the actual text of the Quran.

They were, likewise, entrusted with teaching the knowledge contained in the Book, as seen in the following verse: *And We have revealed to you the Remembrance so that you may explain to mankind that which has been revealed for them [XVI:44].*

A similar reflection occurs in chapter LIX:7 where, in reference to the code of practice and law brought by the Prophet to mankind, it states, *"And take whatever the messenger gives you. And abstain from whatever he forbids."*

In chapter IV:64 it says, *"We sent no messenger saw that he should be obeyed by God's leave"* and, again, in chapter LXII:2, *"He it is who has sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite to them His revelations and to make them grow and to teach them the Book and Wisdom."* According to these verses, the Prophet is the appointed explainer of the details of the shariah law as well as the teacher of the Quran. Moreover, according to the tradition known as *thaqalayn*, which was authenticated by an uninterrupted chain of narrators, the Prophet has appointed the Imams of his own family as his successors. This is not to deny that others also, by correctly applying the learnings of sincere teachers, may understand the meaning of the Quran.

### **The Inner and Outer Dimensions of the Quran**

In chapter IV:36 God says, *"And serve God and ascribe nothing as a partner to Him."* The verse prohibits pre-Islamic Arabs from their worship of idols, just as chapter XXII:30 urges them to *"shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech."* On reflection it becomes clear that an idol may exist in any form; therefore, idol-worship is forbidden

because it involves submission to an entity other than God. In chapter XXXVI:60 God treats the devil as an idol when He says, "*Did I did not charge you, O you sons of Adam, that you do not worship the devil.*" It also becomes clear that another form of idol-worship is submission to one's desires or to the will of others, over and above the will of God; this is indicated in XLV:23 which refers to "*him who makes his desire his God.*"

Thus it becomes apparent that one should turn to none other for help than God Himself and not forget Him in any circumstances, since to do otherwise would be to direct one's attention away from God. To submit to others is to belittle Him and this is the very essence of idol-worship. Thus, in chapter VII:179 God says of those who refused to worship Him, "*Already We have urged into hell many of the jinn and humankind,... These are the neglectful.*" The verse, "ascribe nothing to Him," clearly forbids worships of idols; that is to say, man may not, without God's permission, submit himself to others including his own desires, since any such submission would render him neglectful of God. In this way, the simple, apparent text of the verse unfolds multiple meanings and exemplifies a feature to be found throughout the Quran. Thus the saying of the Prophet, (related in the books of Hadith and commentary), become clear: *In truth the Quran possesses an inner and outer, and the inner contains Seven dimensions.*

### **The Wisdom Contained in the Two Facets of the Quran: The Inner and the Outer**

Man's primary life, namely, the temporal life of this world, is as a bubble on the immense sea of the material; and since all his transactions concern the material, he is throughout his life, at the mercy of the moving waves. All his senses are occupied with the material and his thoughts influenced by sensory information. Eating, drinking, standing, speaking, listening, like all other human actions, take place in the sphere of the material and not in the sphere of thought.

Moreover, in reflecting upon such concepts as love, enmity, ambition and nobility, one comes to better understand them by translating them into language derived from the senses or from actual material objects; for example, the magnetic attraction of lovers, a burning ambition, or a man's being a mine of wisdom. Capacity to comprehend the world of meaning, which is vaster than that of the material, varies from man to man. For one person it may be almost impossible to imagine the world of meanings; another may perceive it only in the most superficial terms and, yet another, may comprehend



with ease the most profound of spiritual concepts. One may say that the greater a man's capacity to understand meanings, the lesser he is attached to the world of the material and its alluring, deceiving appearance. By his very nature, each person possesses a potential for understanding meanings and, provided that he does not deny this capacity, it may be cultivated and increased further.

It is not a simple matter to reduce meaning from one level of understanding to another without losing its sense. This is particularly true for meanings possessing great subtlety which cannot be transmitted, especially to ordinary people, without adequate explanation. As one example, we may mention the Hindu religion: anyone reflecting deeply upon the vedic scriptures of India and studying the different aspects of its message will ultimately see that its basic aim is the worship of one God. Unfortunately this aim is explained in such a complicated manner that the concept of oneness reaches the minds of ordinary people in the form of idol-worship and the recognition of many gods. To avoid such problems, it becomes necessary to communicate meanings hidden beyond the material world in a language which is rooted in the material and readily comprehensible world.

Indeed some religions deprive their adherents of rights accorded to them by the religion itself: women, for example, in Hinduism; Jews and Christians who, in general, are denied access to knowledge of their holy books. Islam does not deprive anyone of their rights in the din, and both man and woman, scholar and layman, black and white are equal in being accorded access to their religion.

God affirms this in chapter III:195, *"Indeed I do not allow the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost,"* and, again, in chapter XLIX: 13, *"O mankind! Truly we have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the best in conduct."*

In this manner the Quran addresses its teachings to mankind at large and affirms that every man may increase himself in knowledge and, thereby, perfect his own behaviour. In fact, the Quran addresses its teachings specifically to the world of man. Since, as mentioned earlier, each man has a different capacity of understanding and since the expounding of subtle knowledge is not without danger of misinterpretation, the Quran directs its teachings primarily at the level of the common man. In this manner, the subtlest of meanings can be explained and multiple meanings and ideas expressed, to the ordinary person, by co-relating them to concrete sensory meanings;



meaning, therefore, is always inherent in the letter of the words. The Quran reveals itself in a way suitable for different levels of comprehension so that each benefits according to his own capacity. In chapter XLIII:34 God emphasizes this idea: *Truly We have appointed it a lecture in Arabic so that you may perhaps understand and indeed in the source of the Book, which We possess, it is sublime, decisive.*

God describes the different capacities of man's comprehension in the following metaphor in chapter XIII:17 He sends down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure; and the Prophet, in a famous tradition says: *"We prophets talk to the people according to the capacity of their intellects."*

Another result of the multiple meanings within the Quran is that the verses take on a significance beyond their immediate text. Certain verses contain metaphors which indicate divine gnosis far beyond the common man's understanding but which, nevertheless, become comprehensible through their metaphorical form.

God says in chapter XVII:89, *"And indeed We have displayed for mankind in this Quran all kind of similitudes, but most of mankind refuse everything except disbelief."* And again in chapter XXIX:43 God talks of metaphors as a means of expression, *"As for these similitudes, We coin them for mankind, but none will grasp their meanings except the wise."*

Consequently, we must conclude that all Quranic teachings which deal with subtle profound knowledge, are in the form of similitudes. /

### **The Two Kinds of Quranic Verses: The Explicit and the Implicit**

In chapter XI:I God says of the Quran, "This is a book whose meanings are secure. From this we may draw the meaning to read "whose meanings are perfected, expanded, firm and strong." In chapter XXXIX:23, it reads, God has revealed the fairest of statements (consistent with and in relation to each other) and arranged in pairs (according to meaning) which cause the flesh of those who fear their Lord to creep. In chapter III:7 He says, "He it is who has revealed to you the Book in which are clear revelations, (that is, verses whose meaning is immediately clear and which Muslims use for guidance). They are the substance of the Book and others which are allegorical. But those in whose heart is doubt indeed follow the allegorical seeking dissension by seeking to explain it. None knowest its explanation except God and those who are of sound instruction say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.

The first of the verses describes those sections of the Quran whose meaning is explicit, clear and unambiguous, and safe from misinterpretation. The second verse refers to all those verses whose meanings are implicit, and which are considered allegorical. It then proceeds to indicate that both types of verses, (the explicit, or clear and the implicit, or allegorical), share certain common qualities: beauty and sweetness of language, and a miraculous power of expression which are present in the entire Quran.

The third verse under consideration divides the Quran into two parts: the explicit and the implicit, the clear and the allegorical, or, in Quranic terms, the *muhkam* and the *mutashabih*. The *muhkam* and those verses which are explicit, clear and immediate in their message and, therefore, incapable of being misinterpreted; the *mutashabih* verses are not of this nature. It is the duty of every firm believer to believe in and act according to the verses which are *muhkam*. It is also his duty to believe in the verses which are *mutashabih*, but he must abstain from acting upon them; this injunction is based on the premise that only those whose heart is corrupt and whose belief is false follow the implicit, *mutashabih*, verses, fabricating interpretations and, thereby, deceiving common people.

The meanings of the Explicit and the Implicit Verses, According to the Commentators and Scholars There is much difference of opinion amongst the Islamic scholars concerning the meaning of explicit and implicit verses, with almost twenty different views on the matter. We can, however, conclude from the views of commentators, ranging from the time of the Prophet to the present day, that the explicit verses are clear and unambiguous, and that one is obliged to believe in and act according to them. The implicit verses, on the other hand, are those which outwardly seem to express a meaning, but which contain a further truer meaning whose interpretation is known only to God; man has no access to it. However, he is enjoined to believe in them but to avoid acting upon them. This view is held amongst the Sunni scholars. It is also maintained by the Shi'ite scholars except they believe that the Prophet and the Imams of his family also understood the hidden meanings. They also maintain that the ordinary man must seek knowledge of the implicit verses from God, the Prophet and the Imams. This view, although held by most commentators, is in several aspects not in accord with the text of the verse beginning, *He it is who has revealed to you the Book in which are explicit verses (whose meanings are immediately clear)...*



## **The Method of Guidance and Explanation used in the Rest of the Quran**

This we may attribute, firstly, to the fact that there is no verse whose meaning is totally obscure since the Quran describes itself as a light, as a guidance and as an explanation. Thus it is not befitting that there be verses which fail to reveal their meaning, or to illuminate the Quran as a whole. We should examine again the verse, *Will they not ponder on the Quran. If it had been from other than God they would have found much inconsistency in it* [IV:82]. Thus reflection on the Quran would remove all kinds of seeming inconsistencies making it unacceptable to say, as do most of the scholars, that the implicit verses cannot be totally understood and that apparent inconsistencies cannot be resolved.

Other scholars say that what is meant by the implicit verses are the letters found at the beginning of certain chapters. (These are known as the muqatta'ah-letters, like Alif, Lam, Mim, Alif, Lam Ra', Ha, Mim, whose real meaning is unknown).

We must, however remember that the implicit verses are so-called when read in relation to the explicit verses. This denotes that, accompanying the hidden meaning of the implicit, there is a surface (or literal) meaning whereby the real and the apparent meanings come together in intricate relationship with one another. It should be understood that the letters at the opening of certain chapters do not have any literal meaning. It seems that a group of misguided men use the implicit verses to mislead people, but never in Islam has one heard of anyone trying to use the muqatta'ah-letters to do so.

Some commentators say that the meaning of the word *mutashabih*, (in the verse), refers to the famous story of the Jews who wanted to find an indication of the duration of Islam within the order of the letters, but the Prophet used to read the letters one after the other and so confuse their calculations. This view is also without substance since, even if the story is true, it is not of sufficient impact nor conviction to be considered as an interpretation of the implicit verses. Whatever the Jews talked, it contained no malice because, even if the religion, *din*, of Islam was for a limited period of time (and, thus, subject to abrogation), their remarks would in no way be a criticism of the purity and reality of Islam considering that all religions revealed by God prior to Islam were for a specific period and open to abrogation. Secondly, this view implies that the word *ta'wil* (which may be translated as "interpretation") in the verse refers to a meaning other



than the apparent literal meaning and that it is used only as a reference to the implicit verses. This is incorrect, as we shall see in a later chapter dealing with exegesis *ta'wil* and revelation, *tanzil* (the actual text or letter of the verse) how exegesis in Quranic terminology does not refer to one meaning but to several, encompassing such terms as realization, fulfilment, interpretation and explanation.

We shall also discuss how all Quranic verses have a specific interpretation, *ta'wil* and not just their explicit and implicit definitions. On examination, the words of the explicit verses (*ayat muhkamah*), are seen to describe the phrase "They are the source of the Book," meaning that the explicit verses include the most important subjects of the Book, and the theme of the rest of the verses is secondary and dependent upon them.

This implies that the real point intended to be conveyed by the implicit verses refers back to the explicit verses. Thus, the meanings of the implicit are illuminated by referring back to the source (or explicit) verses.

Thus we are left with no verses which have no obvious indication as to their true meaning; they are either immediately clear by virtue of their being in the class of explicit verses or, in the case of the implicit, made clear by the other explicit verses. As for the *muqatta'ah*-letters at the beginning of the chapters, they do not have any apparent meaning since they are not words in the normal sense and possess no meaning comprehensible to man; thus, they are outside of the classification of explicit and the implicit. Again, we would refer the reader to an examination of the following verse in order to emphasize the truth of our view: *And so why do they not reflect upon the Quran or are there locks upon their hearts. "And, likewise, the verse, "and why do they not reflect upon the Quran, if it were from other than God they would have found much inconsistency in it."*

### **The Commentary of the Imams of the Prophet's Family Concerning the Explicit and the Implicit Verses**

It is made clear from the different commentaries of the Imams that there is always a way to discover the real meaning and aim of the implicit verses. Each verse, even if its meaning is not apparent, can be explained by reference to other verses.

Thus the real meaning of the implicit verses can be found in relation to the explicit verses. For instance, the verse "*The Beneficent, One who is established on the throne,*" [XX:5] and again the verse,

“And your Lord came,” [LXXXIX:22] appear to ascribe bodily characteristics to God, but when compared with the verse, “Nothing is as His likeness,” [XLII:11] it becomes clear that the “sitting” on the throne or the “coming” of God has a meaning other than a physical one. The Prophet, describing the Quran, says: *In truth the Quran was not revealed so that one part may contradict the other but rather was revealed so that one part may verify the other. So that what you understand of it then act accordingly and that which is unclear for you then simply believe in it.*

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali, said that one part of the Quran bears witness to another and one part clarifies the other. The sixth Imam said the explicit verse is that which one acts in accordance with, and the implicit is that which is unclear only for the man who is ignorant of its real meaning. From these narrations, we may conclude that the question of explicit and implicit is relative; it is possible that a verse may seem explicit to one person and implicit to another. It is said of the eighth Imam that he considered, “the person who refers to the implicit *mutashabih*, verses in the Quran to the corresponding clarifying explicit verses”, as having “found guidance to the right path.” He is also reported to have said that, *In truth in our traditions are recorded implicit verses like the explicit of the Quran, so refer the implicit to its corresponding explicit verse. or tradition, and do not follow the implicit and go astray.*

Thus it is clear from the traditions and, in particular, the last tradition, that the implicit verse is one which does not contain a clear meaning without reference to the explicit verse, and not that there exists no means to understand it.

### **The Quran Possesses Revelation and Exegesis**

We shall discuss the word, exegesis, *ta’wil*, in relation to three Quranic verses. Firstly, in the verses concerning the implicit *mutashabih* and the explicit verses: *But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, in truth, that which is allegorical talking dissension by seeking to explain it. None knows its explanation except God.* [III:7] Secondly, the verses, *In truth we have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Do they await anything but the fulfilment of it.*

(Here the word *ta’wil* is used connoting the appearance or clarification of meaning). *On the day when the fulfilment of it comes, those who are forgetful of it will say: the messenger of our Lord brought*



*the truth [VII:52-53]. Thirdly, the verse, And this Quran is not such as could ever be invented... but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation (ta'wil) of which had not yet come to them. Even so it was that those before them deny. Then see what was the consequence in the wrongdoers. [X:37-39].*

In conclusion, we should note that the word exegesis *ta'wil* comes from the word *awl*, meaning a return. As such, *ta'wil* indicates that particular meaning towards which the verse is directed. The meaning of revelation *tanzil*, as opposed to *ta'wil*, is clear or according to the obvious meaning of the words as they were revealed.

### **The Meaning of Exegesis, According to the Commentators and Scholars**

There is considerable disagreement as to the meaning of exegesis, *ta'wil*, and it is possible to count more than ten different views. There are, however, two views which have gained general acceptance. The first is that of the early generation of scholars who used the word exegesis, *ta'wil*, as a synonym for commentary, or *tafsir*. According to this view, all Quranic verses are open to *ta'wil* although according to the verse, "nobody knows its interpretation (*ta'wil*) except God," it is the implicit verses whose interpretation (*ta'wil*) is known only to God. For this reason, a number of the early scholars said that the implicit verses are those with *muqatta'ah*-letters at the beginning of the chapter since they are the only verses in the Quran whose meaning is not known to everyone.

This interpretation has been demonstrated in the previous section as being incorrect, a view which is shared by certain of the late scholars. They argued that since there is a way of finding out the meaning of any verse, particularly since the *muqattah*-letters are obviously not in the same classification as the implicit verses then the distinction between the two (*muqatta'ah* and implicit, *mutashabih*) is clear.

Secondly, the view of the later scholars is that exegesis refers to the meaning of a verse beyond its literal meaning and that not all verses have exegesis; rather only the implicit, whose ultimate meaning is known only to God. The verses in question here are those which refer to the human qualities of coming, going, sitting, satisfaction, anger and sorrow apparently attributed to God and, also, those verses which apparently ascribe faults to the messengers and Prophets of God (when in reality they are infallible). The view that the word exegesis refers to a meaning other than the apparent one has become



quite accepted. Moreover, within the divergence of opinion amongst scholars, exegesis has come to mean "to transfer" the apparent meaning of a verse to a different meaning by means of a proof called *ta'wil*; this method is not without obvious inconsistencies.

Although this view has gained considerable acceptance, it is incorrect and cannot be applied to the Quranic verses for the following reasons. Firstly, the verses, *Do they await anything but the fulfilment of it* [VII:53] and, *but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation of which had not yet come to them* [X:39] indicate that the whole Quran has exegesis, not just the implicit verses as claimed by this group of scholars.

Secondly, implied in this view is that there are Quranic verses whose real meaning is ambiguous and hidden from the people, only God knowing their real meaning. However, a book which declares itself as challenging and excelling in its linguistic brilliance could hardly be described as eloquent if it failed to transmit the meaning of its own words. Thirdly, if we accept this view, then the validity of the Quran comes under question since, according to the verse, *Why do they not reflect upon the Quran, if it were from other than God they would have found in it many inconsistencies*.

One of the proofs that the Quran is not the speech of man is that, despite having been revealed in widely varying and difficult circumstances, there is no inconsistency in it, neither in its literal meaning nor in its inner meaning, and any initial inconsistency disappears upon reflection. If it is believed that a number of the implicit verses disagree with the sound, or *muhkam*, or explicit, verses this disagreement may be resolved by explaining that what is intended is not the literal meaning but rather another meaning known only to God. However, this explanation will never prove that the Quran is "not the speech of man." If by exegesis we change any inconsistency in the explicit, or sound (*muhkam*), verses to another meaning beyond the literal, it is clear that we may also do this for the speech and writing of man.

Fourthly, there is no proof that exegesis indicates a meaning other than the literal one and that, in the Quranic verses which mention the word exegesis, the literal meaning is not intended. On three occasions in the story of Joseph, the interpretation of his dream is called *ta'wil* (exegesis). It is clear that the interpretation of a dream is not fundamentally different from the actual appearance of the dream; rather, it is the interpretation of what is portrayed in a particular form in the dream. Thus Joseph saw his father, mother and brother

falling to the ground in the form of the sun, the moon and the stars. Likewise, the king of Egypt saw the seven-year drought in the form of seven lean cows eating the seven fat cows and also, the seven green ears of corn and the seven dry ears. Similarly, the dreams of Joseph's two fellow-inmates in the prison: one saw himself pouring wine for the king (in the form of the first pressing of wine), while the second saw himself crucified (in the form of birds eating from the bread basket on his head).

The dream of the king of Egypt is related in the same chapter, verse 43 and its interpretation, from Joseph, in verses 47-49 when he says, *you will sow seven years as usual, but what ever you reap leave it in the ear, all except a little which you will eat. Then after that will come a year when people will have plenteous crops and then they will press (meaning wine and oil).*

The dream of Joseph's fellow-inmates in the prison occurs in verse 36 of the same chapter. One of the two young men says to Joseph, *"I dreamt that I was carrying upon my head bread which the birds were eating."*

The interpretation of the dream is related by Joseph in verse 41 *O my two fellow-prisoners! As for one of you he will pour out wine for his Lord to drink and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head.*

In a similar fashion, God relates the story of Moses and Khidr in the chapter "The Cave" [XVIII:71-82]. Khidr made a hole in the boats; thereafter, killed a boy and, finally, straightened a leaning wall. After each event, Moses protested and Khidr explained the meaning and reality of each action which he had carried out on the orders of God; this he referred to as *ta'wil*. Thus it is clear that the reality of the event and the dream-picture which portrayed the event-to-be are basically the same: the *ta'wil*, or interpretation, does not have a meaning other than the apparent one.

Likewise God says, talking about weights and measures, *"Fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance, that is proper and better in the end,"* (that is, more fitting in the final determination of the Day of Reckoning) [XVII:35]. It is clear that the word *ta'wil* used here in respect to the measuring and weighing refers to fair dealing in business practices. Thus the *ta'wil* used in this way is not different from the literal meaning of the words "measuring" and "weighing"; it merely deepens and extends the significance of the mundane to include a spiritual dimension.



This spiritual dimension is of significance for the believer who has in mind the reckoning of the final day together with his own day-to-day reckoning in the affairs of trade.

In another verse God again uses the word *ta'wil*, *and if you have any dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the messenger... that is better and more fitting in the end* [IV:59]. It is clear that the meaning of *ta'wil* and the referring of the dispute to God and His messenger is to establish the unity of Society and to show how each action or event in a community has a spiritual significance. Thus, the *ta'wil* refers to a tangible ordinary reality and is not in opposition to the actual text in the verses which refers to the dispute.

In all, there are sixteen occasions in the Quran in which the word *ta'wil* is used but on no occasion does it have a meaning other than the literal text. We may say, therefore, that the word *ta'wil* is used to extend the idea expressed to include a further meaning which, (as will be made clear in the next section), is still in accordance with the actual word *ta'wil* occurring in the verse. Thus, in the light of these examples, there is no reason why we should take the word *ta'wil* in the verse about the explicit *muhkam*, and implicit, *mutashabih*, meanings to indicate "a meaning basically other than the apparent meaning."

### **The Meaning of Exegesis in the Tradition of the Quranic Sciences**

What is apparent from the verses in which the word *ta'wil* occurs is that *ta'wil* does not indicate a literal meaning. It is clear that the actual words of the dream described in chapter XII, "Joseph", do not in themselves contain the literal interpretation of the dream; the meaning of the dream becomes clear from the interpretation.

Andy likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the actual words of the story are not the same as the interpretation which Khidr gave Moses. Moreover, in the verse, *fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance*, the language does not in itself indicate the particular economic conditions which we are intended to understand. Again, in the verse *And if you have a dispute concerning any matter then refer it to God and the messenger*, there is no immediate literal indication that what is meant is the Unity of Islam. Thus, although the words indicate something not essentially different from their literal meaning, there is, nevertheless, in all the verses the same shifting of perspective, namely, from the actual words to the intended meaning. Moreover, all the meanings are based on a real situation, an actual physical event. In the case of the dream, the interpretation



has an external reality which appears before its actual occurrence in a special form to the dreamer. Likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the interpretation that the latter gives is, in fact, a reality which is to take place as a result of his action.

Therefore, the interpretation of the event is rooted in the event. In the verse which orders man to fair dealing and measuring, the aspect of the verse is a reality which appears as a social benefit. Thus the order is connected to the effect it is supposed to have in the raising up of society and, in particular, of trade. In the verse concerning referral of the dispute to God and His messenger, the meaning is again fixed to reality, namely, the spiritualization of the life of the community. To conclude, we may say that interpretation of each verse springs from a reality; the interpretation looks forward to or, in a subtle way, actually brings into being the reality it is talking about. Thus its meaning both contains and springs from a future or ulterior event. Just as the interpreter makes the interpretation meaningful, so the manifestation of the interpretation is already a reality for the interpreter.

The idea is also present in the form of the Quran since this sacred book has as its source realities and meanings other than the material and physical or, we may say, beyond the sensory level. Thus it expresses meanings which are more expansive than those contained in the words and phrases used by man in the material world. Although these realities and meanings are not contained in the literal explanation of man, the Quran uses the same language to inform man of the unseen and to produce correct belief and good action. Thus, through belief in the unseen, in the last day and in the meeting with God, man adopts a system of morals and a quality of character which allows him to achieve happiness and well-being. In this way the Quran produces a spiritual effect which, in turn, produces a physical social change, the importance of which will become clear on the Day of Resurrection and the meeting with God.

There is further reference to this same theme when God says in chapter XLIII:2-4, *By the Book which makes plain. Take heed, we have appointed it a lecture in Arabic that perhaps you will understand. And indeed the source of the Book which we possess, it is indeed sublime, decisive.* It is sublime, in that the ordinary understanding cannot fully comprehend it, and decisive in that it cannot be faulted. The relationship of the last part of the verse to the meaning of exegesis *ta'wil*, (as we have discussed above) is clear. It says, in particular, that "perhaps

you will understand," implying that one may or may not understand it; it does not imply that one will understand the book fully, merely by studying it. As we have seen in the verse concerning the explicit *mahkam* and the implicit *mutashabih*, knowledge of exegesis *ta'wil*, is particular to God; moreover, when in this same verse corrupt men are blamed for following the implicit *mutashabih*, verses and for intending to sow dissension and conflict by searching for an exegesis, *ta'wil*, or special interpretation, it does not state that they necessarily find it. The exegesis of the Quran is a reality, or several realities, which are to be found in the Source Book, the Book of Decrees with God; the Source Book is part of the unseen and far from the reach of corrupters. The same idea is treated again in chapter LVI:75-80 when God says, *Indeed I swear by the places of the Stars-And truly that is surely a tremendous oath if you but knew-that this is indeed a noble Quran, in a book kept hidden, which none touch except the purified, a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.*

It is clear that these verses establish for the Quran two aspects, namely the position of the hidden book protected from being touched and the aspect of revelation which is understandable by the people. What is of particular interest to us in this verse is the phrase of exception, "*except the purified.*" According to this phrase, we can arrive at an understanding of the reality of the exegesis of the Quran. This positive view of man's capability to understand the Quran does not conflict with the negation of the verse, "And no one knows its *ta'wil* except God." Since the comparison of the two verses produces a whole which is independent and harmonious. Thus we understand that God is alone in understanding these realities, yet one may come to know these truths by His leave and teaching. Knowledge of the unseen is, according to many verses, the special domain of God but in chapter LXXII:26-27, those who are worthy are excepted from this: "*He is the knower of the unseen and He reveals to no one His secret, except to every messenger whom He has chosen.*" Again we conclude that *knowledge of the unseen is particular to God and that it is fitting for no one except Him and for those he gives leave to.*

Thus the purified amongst men take the verse concerning the "*purified ones*" as leave to enter into contact with the reality of the Quran. In a similar way we read in chapter XXXIII:33, "*God's wish is but to remove uncleanness from you, O people of the Household, and clean you with a thorough cleaning.*" This verse was revealed, (according to a sound tradition with an unbroken chain of transmission), specifically with regard to the family of the Prophet.



## The Existence of Abrogating and Abrogated Verses in the Quran

Among the verses in the Quran containing orders or laws, there are verses that abrogate verses previously revealed and acted upon. These abrogating verses are called *nasikh* and those whose validity they terminate are called *mansukh*.

For example, at the beginning of the Prophet's mission, Muslims were ordered to cultivate peace and friendship with the people of the Book, "*Forgive and be indulgent (towards them) until God gives command,*" [II:109]. Some time later, fighting was allowed and the order to establish peace was abrogated: *Fight against such as those who have been given the Book but who believe not in God nor the last day, and do not forbid that which God has forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth...* [XI:29]

The common notion of abrogation, that is, a cancelling of one law or code by another, is based on the idea that a new law is needed because of a mistake or shortcoming in the previous one. It is clearly inappropriate to ascribe a mistake in law-making to God, Who is perfect, and whose creation admits of no flaws.

However, in the Quran, the abrogating verses mark the end of the validity of the abrogated verses because their heed and effect was of a temporary or limited nature. In time the new law appears and announces the end of the validity of the earlier law. Considering that the Quran was revealed over a period of twenty-three years in ever-changing circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine the necessity of such laws. It is in this light that we should regard the wisdom of abrogation within the Quran: *And when We put a revelation in place of (another) revelation and God knows best what He reveals-they say: you are just inventing it. Most of them do not know. Say: The Holy Spirit (Gabriel) has revealed it from your hand with truth and as a guidance and good news for those who have surrendered (to God)* [XVI:101-102]..

### Applicability and Validity of the Quran

Bearing in mind that the Quran is valid for all times, the verses revealed in special circumstances informing Muslims of their specific duties are also valid for those who, in future, experience the same circumstances. Similarly, those verses which praise or reproach certain qualities, and promise reward or threaten punishment accordingly, are applicable to all ages and places. Thus the meaning of a verse is



not limited to the circumstances or the times of its revelation. Similar circumstances occurring subsequent to the revelation of a verse are to be followed; this is known in Quranic Science as jary, or applicability. The fifth Imam said, "were a verse after its revelation to pass away with the passing away of that people, then nothing would have remained of the Quran." "As long as the heavens and the earth exist, there are verses for every people, wherever they be, which they may read and act upon for the benefit or reject at their loss.

### **Quranic Commentary: Its Advent and Development**

Commentary on the words and expressions used in the Quran began at the time of the first revelation. The Prophet himself undertook the teaching of the Quran and the explanation of its meanings and intent. Thus, in chapter XVI:44 God says, "*And we have revealed to you the Remembrance that you may explain to mankind that which has been revealed for them.*" And He says in LXII: 2, "*He it is Who has sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own to recite to them His revelations and to make them grow and to teach them the Scriptures and wisdom.*"

At the time of the Prophet a group of men, on his orders, were instructed to read, record and learn the Quran by heart. When the Prophet's companions passed away, other Muslims took over the responsibility of learning and teaching the Quran; and so it has continued until the present day.

### **The Science of Quranic Commentary and the Different Groups of Commentators**

After the death of the Prophet a group of his companions, including Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Anas, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Musa, and, above all, the famous 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, were occupied with the Science of Commentary. Just as they had heard the Prophet explaining the meanings of the verses, they would transmit it orally to other trustworthy persons.

The traditions specifically concerned with the subject of Quranic verses number over two hundred and forty; many were transmitted through weak chains of transmission and the texts of some have been rejected as incorrect or forged. Sometimes the transmission would include commentaries based on personal judgements rather than on a narration of the actual sayings, Hadiths, from the Prophet. The later Sunni commentators considered this kind of commentary as part of

the body of Sayings of The Prophet, since the companions were learned in the science of Quranic commentary. They argued that these companions had acquired their knowledge of this science from the Prophet himself and that it was unlikely they would say anything which they themselves had invented.

There is, however, no absolute proof for their reasoning. A large proportion of these sayings, or traditions, about the reasons and historical circumstances of the revelation of verses do not possess an acceptable chain of narration. It should be noted that many of the narrators like Ka'b al-Akhbar, were learned companions who had belonged to the Jewish faith before accepting Islam.

Moreover, it should not be overlooked that Ibn Abbas usually expressed the meanings of verses in poetry. In one of his narrations over two hundred questions of Nafi' ibn al-Azraq are replied to in the form of poetry; al-Suyuti in his book, *al-Itqan*, related one hundred and ninety of these questions.

It is evident, therefore, that many of the narrations made by the commentators amongst the companions cannot be counted as actual narrations from the Prophet himself; therefore, such additional material related by the companions must be rejected. The second group of commentators were the companions of the followers (*tabi'un*), who were the students of the companions. Amongst them we find Mujahid, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah and Dahhak. Also from this group were Hasan al-Basri, 'Ata' ibn Abi Rabah,, 'Ata' ibn Abi Muslim, Abu al-'Aliyah, Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi, Qatadah, 'Atiyah, Zayd ibn Aslam, Ta'us al-Yamani.

The third group were comprised of the students of the second group, namely, Rabi ibn Anas, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam, Abu Salih al-Kalbi and others. The *tabi'un* sometimes narrated the commentary on a verse as a tradition of the Prophet or of the companions and, sometimes, they explained its meaning without attributing a narrator to the source, this they did especially when there was any doubt as to the identity of the narrator. The later commentators treat these narrations as traditions of the Prophet, but count them as *mawquf* in their science of the levels of Hadiths (that is as a tradition whose chain of narration does not reach back to the Prophet). The fourth group comprised the first compilers of commentaries, like Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, Waki' ibn al-Jarrah, Shu'bah al-Hajjaj and 'Abd ibn Humayd; others from this group include Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the author of the famous Quranic Commentary.'



This group recorded the sayings of the companions and the followers of the companions with a chain of narrators in their works of commentary; they avoided expressing personal opinions except, perhaps, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari who sometimes expressed his views by indicating his preference when discussing two similar traditions. The basis of the work of later groups may be traced to this group.

The fifth group omitted the chain of narrators in their writings and contented themselves with a simple relation of the text of the traditions. Some scholars regard these commentators as the source of varying views in the commentaries by connecting many traditions to a companion or a follower without verifying their validity or mentioning their chain of narration. Consequently, confusion has arisen allowing many false traditions to enter the body of traditions, thus undermining the reputation of this section of Hadith literature.

Careful examination of the chains of transmission of the traditions leaves one in doubt as to the extent of the deceitful additions and false testimonies. Many conflicting traditions can be traced to one companion or follower and many traditions, which are complete fabrications, may be found amongst this body of narrations.

Thus reasons for the revelation of a particular verse, including the abrogating and abrogated verses, do not seem to accord with the actual order of the verses. No more than one or two of the traditions are found to be acceptable when submitted to such an examination. It is for this reason that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who himself was born before this generation of narrators, said, "*Three things have no sound basis: military virtues, bloody battles and the traditions pertaining to Quranic commentary.*" Imam al-Shafi'i relates that only about one hundred traditions from Ibn 'Abbas have been confirmed as valid. The sixth group consists of those commentators who appeared after the growth and development of the various Islamic Sciences and each undertook the study of Quranic commentary according to his specialization: al-Zajjaj studied the subject from the grammatical point of view; al-Wahidi and Abu Hayyan' investigated the verses by studying the inflection of the verbs, the vowels and the diacritical points. There is also commentary on the rhetoric and eloquence of the verses by al-Zamakhshari in his work entitled al-Kashshaf. There is a theological discussion in the "Grand Commentary" of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. The gnosis of Ibn al-'Arabi and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani treated in their commentaries. Other narrators, like al-Tha'labi, record the history of transmission of the traditions. Some commentators,

among them al-Qurtubi, concentrate on aspects of fiqh (jurisprudence). There also exists a number of commentaries composed of many of these sciences, such as *Ruh al-bayan* by Shaykh Isma'il Haqqi, *Ruh al ma'ani* by Shihab al Dm Mahmud al-Alusi al-Baghdadi *Ghara'ib al-Quran* by Nizam al-Din al Nisaburi. This group rendered a great service to the Science of Quranic commentary in that it brought the Science out of a state of stagnation (characteristic of the fifth group before it), and developed it into a Science of precise investigation and theory. However, if one were to examine closely the precision of this group's research, one would see that much of its Quranic commentary imposes its theories onto the Quran rather than allowing the content of the verses to speak for themselves.

### **The Methods Used by the Shi'ite Commentators and their Different Groupings**

All the groups mentioned above are Sunni commentators. Their method, used in the earliest commentaries of this period, was based on *ijtihad*, that is, the reports of the companions and the followers of the companions were examined according to certain rules in order to reach an acceptable understanding of the text. This resulted in varying opinions amongst those making *ijtihad* and caused disorder, contradiction and, even, fabrication to enter into the body of the traditions. The method employed by the Shi'ite commentators, however, was different, with the result that the patterning of the groups was also different. The Shi'ite commentators in their study of a verse of the Quran, viewed the explanation given by the Prophet as proof of the meaning of the verse, they did not accept the saying of the companions, or the followers, as indisputable proof that the tradition was from the Prophet.

The Shi'ite commentators only recognized as valid an unbroken chain of narration from the Prophet and through members of his family. Accordingly, in using and transmitting the verses concerning Quranic commentary, they restricted themselves to the use of traditions transmitted by the Prophet and by the Imams of the Prophet's family. This has given rise to the following groups: The first group comprises those who have learned these traditions from the Prophet and from the Imams of the Prophet's family, studying and recording them according to their own method but not in any particular order. Among them we may mention such scholars as Zararah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Ma'ruf and Jarir who were companions of the fifth and sixth Imams. The second group comprises the first compilers of the commentaries,



like Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi, Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, Muhammad al-'Ayyashi, 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi and al-Nu'man who lived between the second and fourth centuries after Hijrah. The method of this group was similar to that of the fourth Sunni group of Commentators. Thus, they avoided any kind of ijtehad or passing of judgement. We should remember that the Imams of the Prophet's family were living amongst Muslims and available for questioning (on matters of commentary, for example) for a period of almost three hundred years. Thus the first groups were not divided chronologically but rather according to their relationship with the Imams.

There are very few who recorded the tradition without a chain of transmission. As an example, we should mention one of the students of al-'Ayyashi who omitted to record the chains of transmission. It was his work, instead of the original of al-'Ayyashi which came into common use. The third group comprises masters of various sciences, like al-Sharif al-Radi who provided a commentary concerned with Quranic language and Shaykh al-Tusi who wrote a commentary and analysis on metaphysical matters. Included, too, is Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi's philosophic work, al-Maybudi al-Kunabadi's gnostic commentary and 'Abd 'Ali al-Huwayzi's commentary Nur al-thaqalayn. Hashim al-Bahram composed the commentary al-Burhan and al-Fayd. al-Kashani compiled the work known as al-Safi. There were others who brought together many different themes to their commentaries, like Sheikh al-Tabarsi who in his Majma' al-bayan researches different fields of language, grammar, Quran recitation, gnosis of death, after-life and paradise, and knowledge of the traditions.

### ***How does the Quran Lend Itself to Interpretation?***

The answer to this question is contained in the previous section where we discussed the eternal validity of the Quran: it speaks to, instructs and guides man now as it did in the past. As we have seen, the whole text of the Quran is a challenge to mankind and particularly to the enemies of Islam in that the Quran itself is proof of its own argument; it announces itself as a light, an illumination and an explanation of all things. Thus a document which states and demonstrates that it is self-illuminating, hardly needs others to illuminate it. As proof that it is not the speech of man, the Quran says that it is a harmonious speech, without the slightest inconsistency and any seeming inconsistency may be removed through reflection on the Quran itself. If it were not the word of God, the Quran would not be as clear as it is. Moreover, if such speed needed something or someone else to explain its meaning

and purpose, it would neither be the proof nor the absolute authority that it is so obviously is. This clarity is absolute, even if a seemingly contradictory passage becomes the object of dispute; it could be understood by cross-reference to the text of the Quran.

For instance, at the time of the Prophet, such matters could be referred to him since his knowledge of the Quran was perfect and he did not need to refer to other verses for clarification. Those who insisted on disagreeing, or disbelieving in the Prophet's fallibility, were not satisfied. Therefore, commentaries which solve problems of interpretation by quoting the commentaries of the Prophet, without giving proofs from other Quranic verses, are useful only for those who believe in Prophethood and the Prophet's infallibility. These people do not go unmentioned in the Quran; we are familiar with the following verse, *if it had been from other than God then they would have found many inconsistencies in it.*

This is a clear argument against those who would seek for inconsistencies in the Quran and find fault with the Prophet. The Quran itself declares that the commentary and explanation of the Prophet is valid while the Prophet himself has confirmed the validity of the Quranic commentary of the Imams. We may summarize this by saying that in the Quran some verses may be explained by comparison with other verses and some by using the instructions and teachings of the Prophet and the Imams. The latter commentaries are not, of course, different from the explanation which is produced by comparing and analysing different verses. There are three roads open to us when making commentary upon the Quran. Firstly, by using knowledge that one already possesses.

Secondly, with the help of the sayings of the Prophet or Imams. Thirdly, by using a combination of methods: by reflection and analysis, or by allowing the verse to become clarified by comparing it to other verses, or by use of the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, whenever possible. The third way is the one which we have outlined in the last section and it is this way which the Prophet himself and the Imams of his family indicate in their teachings. As we have seen, the Prophet said that, "The verses were revealed to confirm each other," and Imam 'Ali said that "One part of the Quran explains another and one part witnesses to the other."

It is, moreover, clear that this method of commentary is other than that warned against by the Prophet when he said, "Whoever makes a commentary upon the Quran according to his own opinion prepares for himself a place in the Fire." This method uses the Quran



to explain itself and is not based merely on explanation arising from whim or fancy. The first method is unacceptable and exemplifies commentary based on opinion, except in cases where it agrees with the third method. The second method is the one used by the early scholars and for many centuries afterwards, and is still in use amongst both Sunni and Shi'ite scholars of the traditions of the Prophet. This method is limited, considering the vast nature of the subject and the countless number of questions, (both general and particular), arising from over six thousand verses.

Where, one asks, is the answer to such questions? Where is the solution to so many intricate and perplexing questions? Or, should we refer to the body of tradition concerning the verses? Let us not forget that the total number of traditions of the Prophet accepted and transmitted by the Sunni scholars number no more than two hundred and fifty; we should also remember that many of them are weak and some even totally unacceptable. It is true that the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams transmitted by the Shi'ite scholars number a thousand and that amongst them are to be found a considerable number which are fully trustworthy. Consideration of these traditions is not enough, however, given the countless questions which arise and the many Quranic verses that are not even mentioned in this body of traditions. Should one refer in such matters to the appropriate verses?

As we have explained, this is not acceptable according to the method under consideration here. Should one simply abstain from investigation and imagine that the need for knowledge is non-existent? In this case, what is one to understand by the verse, *And we reveal the Book to you as an exposition of all things*, [XVI:89] which is clear proof that the Quran itself is not a mystery but rather explains, among other things, itself, by its own light.

Chapter IV:82 contains the injunction, "*Will they not ponder on the Quran.*" Similarly, in chapters XLVII:24 and XXXVIII:29 "*(This book) is a Book that we have revealed to you, full of blessing, that you may ponder its revelation and the men of understanding may reflect.*" Likewise in Chapter XXIII:68, "*Have they not pondered the word, or has something come to them which did not come to their forefathers.*"

What are we intended to understand by these verses? How are we to act in the light of the totally trustworthy traditions of the Prophet and the Imams in which they advise us to refer to the Quran itself in case of problems of interpretation and discordance of opinion? According to many well known traditions of the Prophet, transmitted

in unbroken chains of transmission, one is obliged to refer the tradition to the Book of God; if the tradition is in accordance with the Book, then it is accepted and used in commentary and, if in disagreement, it is rejected. It is clear that the meaning of these traditions is applicable when one discovers through the Science of Commentary that the inner meaning of one verse is contrary to what is contained in another verse. In this case, one must reject what one has discovered through the study of commentaries. These traditions are the best proof that the Quran, like speech or writing in general, has meaning and will always have meaning, even when studied independently of the traditions. Thus it is the duty of the commentators to take into account and reflect upon the traditions of the Prophet and Imams concerning Quranic verses but only use those traditions which are in accordance with the verse under scrutiny.

### **An Example of Commentary on the Quran with the Aid of the Quran**

On four occasions in the Quran God says "Allah is the creator all beings," [XXXIX:62]. The meaning is clear on each occasion; God is stating that everything man may possibly imagine in the world has been created by him and is sustained by Him. However, one should not ignore the fact that in hundreds of verses the Quran affirms the existence of cause and effect and attributes the action of every doer to the immediate cause. Thus the effect of the burning of fire is a direct result of the fire itself, the growing of plants, the action of the plants, the falling rain caused by the state of the sky; the actions which man chooses to undertake are, according to the Quran, the result (and consequent responsibility) of man. We may also say that the doer of any action is the one responsible for that action, but God is the giver of existence, the Creator of deeds and the owner of deeds.

Keeping in mind this general relationship between the Creator and His creation, we may read in chapter XXXII:7 "*Who made all things beautiful and good which We created.*" When we join this verse to the previous one we see that beauty and goodness necessarily accompany His creation and so anything which has existence in the cosmos is also good and beautiful. We should not forget, however, that in many verses, the Quran affirms the existence of good and its opposite, evil, useful things and harmful things, beauty and ugliness; and it enumerates many bad actions, wrong doers and bad events. These are all, however, negative aspects of the human character and are mentioned as a measure of man; they are relative and not intended



as proof that the creation of man is basically bad. For example, the snake or the serpent is harmful but only to man and animals who suffer the effects of its sting; to stones and earth it is harmless. Bitter taste and foul smell are unpleasant, but only to the human sense of taste and smell, not to all animals. Certain behaviour may at times appear wrong but this is often the result of observing human behaviour in relation to one particular society of men; in another society or circumstance it may not be considered wrong.

Indeed, if we dispense for a moment with those negative aspects of man's character which are secondary or relative to the miracle and perfection of His creation, we witness only the beautiful symmetry and proportion of the cosmos in its entirety and the amazing beneficence of the Creator. Words are not able to describe this beauty since they themselves are part of this world of beauty.

In reality the above-mentioned verses awake man to an awareness of the relative nature of beauty and ugliness; they invite him to a comprehension of absolute beauty and prepare him for an understanding of creation as a whole. In fact, there are Quranic verses which explain or comment upon the different aspects of creation in the universe, either as isolated individual examples or as groupings and classes. Each creation, whether a single manifestation or joined to a larger structure and patterning, is a sign and indication of God.

Whichever way we regard creation, it all points to the existence of God. This way of understanding or seeing the universe and its signs, leads to an appreciation of the stupendous beauty which encircles the whole world and allows us to realize that it is His beauty, emanating from the domain of His power, and made visible in the signs of the skies and the earth. Each aspect of the cosmos lends beauty and dimension to everything surrounding it, yet at the same time it is insignificant in relation to the whole. The Quran affirms in other verses that perfection and beauty manifest themselves from the domain of his power; thus He says in chapter XL:65 "*He is the Living One, there is no god save Him,*" and in II:165 "*... power belongs completely to God,*" and in IV:139, "*Truly all power belongs to God,*" and "*He is the knower, the All-Powerful.*" On another occasion we read "*And He is the Hearer, the Seer,*" and in XX:8, "*Allah! There is no god save Him. His are the most beautiful names.*"

We realize from these verses that the beauty which manifests itself in the visible world has its reality in the domain of His power and grandeur. All other beauty, all other power, is illusory or

metaphorical of His power. In affirmation of this explanation, the Quran states that the beauty and perfection created by man is limited and temporal but that of God boundless and eternal. God emphasizes that all creation is from Him and under His power. In chapter LIV:49, "*Truly we have created everything by measure*" and in the chapter XV:21, "*And there is not a thing with us but there are stores of it. And we do not send it down except in appointed measure.*"

Careful observation reveals that the Book itself declares its own perfection and beauty, that it encompasses all aspects of creation and the Creator, and that there is no fault or shortcoming in it. Such is the perfection of the Quran, which itself is one of the signs of God, that it makes the reader forget himself in rapturous appreciation of its beauty.

This we read in II: 165 "*Those who believe are stauncher in their love of God.*" Love, of its very nature, demands the self and the giving over of the self to God. It demands the handing over of one's affairs completely to Him and allowing Him to be one's Lord: "*And Allah is the protecting Friend of the believers*" [III:68].

This idea is also contained in II:257 which declares, "*God is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light,*" and also in VI:122, "*Is he who was dead and We have raised him to life and set for him a light in which he walks among men...*" Likewise, we read in LVIII:22, "*As for such, He has written faith upon their hearts and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him.*"

This spirit, this new life and light, is given by God to the man who perceives reality and truth and who understands the path of happiness and well-being in society. In another verse in LVII:28, He explains the effect of such light: "*O you who believe! Be mindful of your duty to God and put faith in His messenger. He will give you two fold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light in which you shall walk.*" Again, in another verse, He makes a commentary on "faith in the Prophet" by explaining it as submission and obedience to Him; chapter III:31, "*Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If you love God follow me; God will love you.*"

The nature of this path is explained in chapter VII:157, "*Those who follow the messenger the Prophet, who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospels (which are) with them. He will rejoin in than that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul; and He will relieve them of their*



*burden and the fetters they used to wear. Still more vividly, the path is explained in another verse which is also a commentary on the previous verse [XXX:30], So let your purpose (O Muhammad) for the din (of Islam) as a man by nature upright-the nature of (God on which he has created man. There is no altering God 's creation. That is the right way of life, but most men do not know..."*

The right way of life, or din refers to the correct path for society to follow for its well-being and happiness. According to this verse, the way of Islam is also the way desired by the Creator for man. In other words, the legislative framework given to man by God is the very framework which is appropriate for the creature man. This divine law is in complete harmony with the nature of man, living a life of piety and obedience.

God says in another verse IXCI:7-81, *"And a soul and Him who perfected it. And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right."* The Quran is the only revealed book which equates the happiness and well-being of man with a pure and sincere way of life. Moreover, unlike other religions, Islam does not separate worship of God from the actual programme of living; it establishes the word din to mean not only religion but also life in general as well, the actual day to day routine of man, both on a personal and social level. The Quran establishes a programme of living which is in accord with the functioning and the reality of the cosmos, and the Quran mentions many of the benefits and virtues to be expected by the man of God and the lovers of Truth, including a certainty of faith and tranquillity of the heart.

### **The Validity of the Commentary of the Prophet and the Imams**

From an indication in the Quran itself, the commentary of the Prophet and the Imams, (as discussed in the previous sections), is established as being absolutely true. Authentication of the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams is clearly established by the existence of fully trustworthy chains of transmissions. A tradition may not, however, be recognized as totally acceptable if it has been transmitted by one chain of narration only. The validity of the tradition may be disputed amongst the Muslim Scholars of Commentary: amongst the Sunni's a tradition of a single chain of transmission, classified in their terms as sahih (sound), must be accepted and acted upon; among the Shi'ite scholars a tradition with a single undisputed chain of transmission is also accepted as a proof. However, in the laws of the shariah it is not valid and must be investigated and checked before use as a proof.

## The Inner and Outer Dimensions of the Quran

In chapter IV:36 God says, *“And serve God and ascribe nothing as a partner to Him.”* The verse prohibits pre-Islamic Arabs from their worship of idols, just as chapter XXII:30 urges them to *“shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech.”* On reflection it becomes clear that an idol may exist in any form; therefore, idol-worship is forbidden because it involves submission to an entity other than God.

In chapter XXXVI: 60 God treats the devil as an idol when He says, *“Did I did not charge you, O you sons of Adam, that you do not worship the devil.”* It also becomes clear that another form of idol-worship is submission to one’s desires or to the will of others, over and above the will of God; this is indicated in XLV: 23 which refers to *“him who makes his desire his God.”* Thus it becomes apparent that one should turn to none other for help than God Himself and not forget Him in any circumstances, since to do otherwise would be to direct one’s attention away from God. To submit to others is to belittle Him and this is the very essence of idol-worship. Thus, in chapter VII: 179 God says of those who refused to worship Him, *“Already We have urged into hell many of the jinn and humankind,... These are the neglectful.”* The verse, *“ascribe nothing to Him,”* clearly forbids worships of idols; that is to say, man may not, without God’s permission, submit himself to others including his own desires, since any such submission would render him neglectful of God.

In this way, the simple, apparent text of the verse unfolds multiple meanings and exemplifies a feature to be found throughout the Quran. Thus the saying of the Prophet, (related in the books of Hadith and commentary), become clear: In truth the Quran possesses an inner and outer, and the inner contains Seven dimensions.

## The Relationship of the Quran to the Sciences

### ***Praise of Knowledge and the Stimulation of the Desire to Study***

No other revealed book praises and encourages science and knowledge as does the Quran and it is for this reason that the Quran names the age of the desert Arabs, together with their pagan cultures, before Islam as the “age of ignorance.” In over a hundred verses reference is made to science and knowledge in a variety of ways; and many of these verses praise the value of scientific knowledge. In XCVI:5 God indicates the favour he has done man by bringing him out of his state of ignorance. *“He teaches man what he did not know.”*



Likewise, we read in LVIII:11, "God will exalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge to high ranks," and in XXXIX:9 God says, "Are those who know equal to those who do not" Besides the many verses in the Quran concerning knowledge, there are also countless traditions of the Prophet and the Imams on this subject which rank second only in importance to the Quran.

### **The Sciences which the Quran Invites Men to Study**

In verses too numerous to mention, the Quran invites one to reflect upon the signs Of creation: the heavens, the shining stars and their astonishing celestial movements, and the cosmic order which rules over them all

.Similarly, the Quran urges one to reflect upon the creation of the earth, the seas, the mountains, the desert, and the wonders contained below the surface of the earth, the difference between night and day and the changing cycle of seasons.

It urges mankind to meditate on the extraordinary creation of the plants and the order and symmetry governing their growth, as well as the multiplicity of the animal kingdom.

The Quran invites one to witness the interdependence of beings and how all live in harmony with nature. It calls upon man also, to ponder on his own make-up, on the secrets of creation which are hidden within him, on his soul, on the depth of his perception, and on his relationship with the world of the spirit.

The Quran commands man to travel in the world in order to witness other cultures and to investigate the social orders, history and philosophies of past people. Thus it calls man to a study of the natural sciences, mathematics, philosophy, the arts and all sciences available to man, and to study them for the benefit of man and the well-being of society.

The Quran recommends the study of these sciences on the condition that it leads to truth and reality, that it produces a correct view of the world based on an understanding of God.

Knowledge, which merely keeps a man occupied and prevents him from knowing the reality of his own existence, is equated with ignorance. God says in XXX:7, "They know only some appearance of the life of one world and are heedless of the Hereafter" and in chapter XLV:23, "Have you seen him who makes his Desire his goal, and God sends him astray purposely and seals up his Heart and sets a covering on his Heart. Then who will lead him after God (has condemned him)."

The Quran not only stimulates the desire for study but is itself a complete system of education of divine knowledge; it provides, too, a model for human behaviour and thought. This complete way of life is called Islam, the way of submission.

### **The Sciences Particular to the Study of the Quran**

There are many sciences devoted to the study of the Quran itself. The development of such sciences dates from the first day of Quranic revelation; over a period of time they were unified and perfected. Today countless books are available on these sciences, fruit of the labour of different researchers over the centuries.

Some of these sciences investigate the language and vocabulary of the Quran, and some the meanings. Those concerned with language are the sciences of correct Quranic pronunciation and reading (*tajwad* and *qira'ah*). They explain the simple changes which certain letters undergo when occurring in conjunction with others, the substitution of letters and the places prescribed for breath-pausing, and other similar matters. They also study the different ways the Quran has been written down and the several generally accepted ways of recitation, together with the three lesser known ways and the rarer modes of recitation.

Other works enumerate the number of chapters and their verses, while others relate these numbers to the whole Quran.

They discuss the tradition of Quranic calligraphy and how it differs from the normal Arabic script. They research, too, into the meanings of the Quran and the general division of subject matter, such as the place and circumstance of revelation, the interpretation of certain verses, the outward and inner meanings, the *muhkam* (clear) or the *mutashabih* (ambiguous), and the abrogating and the abrogated verses.

Others study the verses containing the laws (which, in fact, are part of what is known as Islamic fiqh or jurisprudence). Others specialize in the commentary of the meanings (already seen in a previous section of the book). Specialists in each of the different sciences have published numerous works on each subject.

### **The Sciences which Developed because of the Quran**

The sciences of the din of Islam came into being at the beginning of the Prophet's mission and the revelation of the Quran, including laws governing the behaviour and transactions of Muslims. Study of



these sciences developed in the first century after the Hijrah although initially, not in any formal way. Since the Caliphs had prohibited the writing down of the tradition, they were handed down by word of mouth by the companions and their followers.

A small number of Scholars wrote on jurisprudence and on the science of the traditions at the beginning of the second century when the prohibition was lifted, allowing Scholars to record the traditions.

It was at this point that a number of disciplines came into being including the Science of Traditions and the Science of establishing the authority and sincerity of those men who transmitted it; the Science of analysis of the text of the traditions; the Science of the foundations of jurisprudence and jurisprudence itself; the Science of belief in the judgement after death and the after-life. Even philosophy, which entered the Islamic arena via the Greek, and remained there for some time in its original Greek, took on the colour and beliefs of the people after a time. Changes in the subject matter and the structure of disciplines took place such that today, amongst Muslims, all subject matter concerning divine gnosis is supported by proofs and reasons taken from the Quran and the traditions.

All these subjects were also studied as an integral part of the Arabic language: mastery of the science of verb declensions grammar, meanings of words, commentary and explanation, the art of metaphors and good style, and the philosophy and science of derived meanings allowed greater precision and clarity in the study of the Islamic Sciences as a whole. Indeed what stimulated scholars to record and arrange coherently the laws of the Arabic language was the sense that they were serving God; love of Him drew them to a clarity and sweetness of style which in turn generated the Science of correct speech and composition. It is thus related that Ibn 'Abbas, who was one of the commentators amongst the companions, explained the meanings of verses by taking examples of the vocabulary in question from Arabic poetry. He advised people to collect and learn Arabic poetry saying, *Poetry is the court of the Arabs (meaning the place where the finest language may be heard)*.

The famous Shi'ite scholar Khahl ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi wrote the book al-'Ayn on the subject of language and also described the science of poetic rhyme. Many others also wrote on the same subjects. The subject of history was initially derived in Islam from stories of the lives of prophets, in particular that of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), and the description of the course of past nations. To this basic

material was added an account of the events during the period immediately following the appearance of Islam. All this was developed into a history of the world in the writings of such men as al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, al-Ya'qubi and al-Waqidi. The original reason the Muslims translated and transmitted the natural Sciences and mathematics from other cultures and languages into Arabic was the cultural stimulation given to them by the Quran. Many different Sciences were translated from Greek, Syriac and Sanskrit into Arabic.

Access to these sciences was at first available only to the Caliph (who was at that time leader of only Arab Muslims). Gradually they were made available to all Muslims and improved upon as research methods, structuring, classification and ordering of the subjects developed. One of the main reasons the civilization of Islam, which formed after the death of the Prophet, came to include a large part of the inhabited world (and which today numbers over six hundred million inhabitants), was the Quran. We as Shiahhs, however, deny that the caliphs and the kings who followed them had legitimate claim to the guardianship and execution of the law even though they expanded Islamic civilization, and do not fully agree with the way they explained the realities of Islam.

Indeed the light of wisdom which illuminated the world was from the light of the miracle of the Quran. The appearance and diffusion of the revelation caused a change in the direction of history and generated a chain of important events resulting in the progress and development of the culture of man.



## Basic Aspects in Islam

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### Women, Islam and the Push for Reform in the Muslim World

Across the Islamic world, women's rights are contentious politically and ideologically. Attitudes toward women have defined and divided the worldviews of conservative and progressive Muslims. Conservatives link women's piety to the purity and Islamic authenticity of their societies. They use religious justifications to enforce that piety through a limited public role for women, gender segregation, and harsh punishments for any perceived transgressions. For decades, powerful Islamists have successfully smeared women's groups as being slavish followers of an illegitimate, Western agenda.

In this toxic environment, it is clear that women's empowerment will not be imposed from outside. Men and women within conservative Islamic communities need to find their own reasons and their own justifications for allowing women a fuller role in society. Increasingly, they are finding those reasons within Islam itself. This article describes how those efforts are coming together, slowly, in an emerging global movement of "Islamic feminism" and how that movement is transforming the broader Middle East.

Islamic feminism is the promotion of women's rights through Islamic discourse. Just as conservatives have used Islam as a barrier to women's empowerment, Islamic feminists are using Islam to promote gender equality. They argue that Islam, at its core, is progressive for women and supports equal opportunities for men and women alike. By firmly grounding their arguments within Islamic discourse, Islamic feminists offer a culturally acceptable and sustainable way to expand opportunities for women. Their success holds promise for a more

stable, prosperous, and progressive Middle East. Islamic feminism incorporates the ideas of numerous Muslim intellectuals and activists. Some of its leading proponents are actually men—distinguished scholars who contend that Islam was radically egalitarian for its time and remains so in many of its texts. Islamic feminists claim that Islamic law evolved in ways inimical to women, not due to any inevitability, but because of selective interpretation by patriarchal leaders.

They argue that the worst practices toward women, like those of the Taliban, are in fact a subversion of Islamic teaching by tribal customs and traditions. They seek to revive the equality bestowed on women in the religion's early years by rereading the Quran, putting the texts in historical context, and disentangling them from tribal practices and other local traditions. The great potential of Islamic feminism is its grassroots appeal. In this regard it is quite the opposite of the secular feminism we are used to in the West. Secular feminism—in the Middle East and in the West—has usually been the province of urban elites and intellectuals, and that has long been its weakness. Social change takes time to make its way from city salons and urban newspapers to the countryside, especially in places with few roads and little public education. But Islamic feminism has the potential to be embraced by local leaders and, perhaps most importantly, by religious leaders, who can lend their authority to the difficult changes at hand. Islamic feminism strives to work within the values of Islam, not against them. It offers direct social and economic benefits to families through improved opportunities for daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers.

### **Political and Cultural Backdrop**

Islamic feminism can be viewed as part of a much larger struggle taking place today within Islam itself.<sup>6</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl,<sup>6</sup> one of the world's leading Islamic scholars, describes these times as a transformative moment for Islam, a competition between two opposing worldviews—"moderate" versus "puritanical" Islam. Other scholars use terms such as "liberal" or "progressive" Islam versus "conservative" or "extremist" Islam to explain this same divide. In our post-9/11 world, talk of a "clash of civilizations" between the West and the Islamic world is widespread. At the heart of this talk is the presumption that Muslim-majority countries and Western liberal democracies do not share the same values. A superficial reading of headlines would seem to confirm this premise. However, there is a surprising convergence in terms of political values. Overwhelming



majorities (85 percent or more) in both Western and Muslim-majority countries concur that democracy is the best form of government and the one they desire for their countries. Instead, the big differences in attitudes arise around social issues. Respondents in Muslim-majority countries are less tolerant of homosexuality, abortion, and divorce. But the biggest gaps involve attitudes toward women, and the biggest gaps of all exist in the perspectives of younger generations. While youth in Western societies presume equality between the sexes, younger generations in Muslim countries have remained deeply traditional, creating an expanding cultural chasm between Muslims and Westerners. As some have noted, what we really have on our hands is a "sexual clash of civilizations."

Islamist movements depict women's social freedoms, and their economic and political freedoms as well, as sowing the seeds of cultural corruption. For many Islamists, women's empowerment represents nothing more than a slippery slope toward Western decadence and godless secularism. Linking feminism with the "heresy" of the West is good politics and helps turn patriarchy into patriotism.

On these grounds, some religious and tribal leaders resist girls' education, and powerful Islamist groups have successfully protected unequal laws in the name of upholding shariah, particularly in the realm of family law. Indeed, in many Islamic countries, reformers have largely abandoned attempts to replace shariah with secular law, since that route has often proven politically futile. Women's empowerment has also suffered due to its long association with colonialism and secularism. During the tumultuous decades of decolonisation in the Middle East, a number of military leaders came to power who attempted to modernize their societies by forcibly diminishing the role of the religious establishment and overturning centuries of traditions. The best known of these was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the heavy-handed founder of modern Turkey. He inspired imitators in other countries who followed closely in his secular footsteps.

Inevitably, these secular reformers focused on women. While some made real efforts to improve women's status through better access to education and public life, all of them struggled, and mostly stumbled, with the symbolic lifting of the veil. Their shortcut to modernisation was emulation of the West, beginning with the cultural touchstone of women's dress. For opponents of these changes, feminism was perceived as a rejection of local culture in favour of that of the West. It became a class issue, with urban elites embracing social change as much as

rural traditionalists resisted it. And it also became a political issue, pitting strong-arm rulers with deep ties to former colonial powers against entrenched religious authorities whose status and power were threatened by secularism. Tied to the fortunes of the region's authoritarian rulers, secular feminism has risen and fallen as they did. And over the last several decades, from Algiers to Baghdad to Tehran, many of those secular leaders have fallen, undone by rampant corruption, brutality, and, ultimately, their failure to deliver on the promises of modernisation.

Today, secular governments can be said to exist in only two countries in the region—Tunisia and Turkey—and both fight a constant rearguard action against Islamism. Indeed, elections in 2007 delivered political control of Turkey to the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP), causing many to fear the end of Atatürk's legacy of secularism. The Turkish military threatened to intervene, as it has in the past, to keep the flame of secularism alive. In Tunisia, it takes the mechanisms of a none-too-subtle police state to maintain the secular system. It is fair to say that secularism as a political force is on life support across the Middle East. While secular opposition groups exist in every country, they lack a grassroots following and cannot begin to compete against better organized, better financed, and more widely supported Islamist movements. Given the cultural, religious, social, and political sensitivities to women's empowerment, the negative connotations of secular feminism and the ascendance of political Islam in the region, Islamic feminism could be one of the most promising ways to promote gender justice today across the broader Middle East.

### Reason and Faith

Many Islamic feminists are strong proponents of *ijtihad*, the process of arriving at new interpretations of Islamic law through critical reasoning, rather than blindly following the views of past scholars. In the early centuries of Islam, the process of *ijtihad* was an important contributor to the shaping of Islamic law. When the Quran and Sunnah (the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) did not explicitly address an issue, or when conflicting statements were attributed to Muhammad, a qualified legal scholar could use independent reasoning to come up with a solution. This legal ruling, expressed as a fatwa, could then be accepted or rejected by the followers of the scholar as they wished. *Ijtihad* was a vibrant legal process until the end of the tenth century, by which point many doctrines were settled by jurists



representing the various schools of law. Around this time, influential orthodox Sunni ulama (Muslim clergy with several years of training) began to argue against the process of independent reasoning, claiming that it could distort Islam. They instead advocated for a literal reading of religious texts. Reformers resisted, warning that a rigid interpretation of shariah can be profoundly unhelpful in answering contemporary questions. But over the centuries, the literalists gained ground, leading to what some have referred to as a "closing of the gates of *ijtihad*."

At the heart of Islamic feminism is an attempt to push open those gates of *ijtihad*. Across the Muslim world, Islamic feminists are combing through centuries of Islamic jurisprudence to highlight the more progressive aspects of their religion. They are seeking accommodation between a modern role for women and the Islamic values that more than a billion people in the world follow.

Islamic feminists are also taking advantage of rising levels of female education and greater access to global media across the Middle East to shift the terms of religious debate. Networks across countries are forming to help even illiterate peasant women marshal the religious justifications they need to push back on centuries of tribal customs and traditions that have been sustained in the name of Islam.

### Challenges

Islamic feminism is not without its challenges. For starters, it is unpalatable to diehard secularists, both in the West and in the Middle East. Some years ago, I gave a talk in New York about the promise of working with religious leaders in some of the most conservative regions of the world to promote girls' education.

I had recently been to Afghanistan and had seen how some mullahs in the countryside had become champions of girls' education, even opening their mosques to classes for girls. When the discussion turned to the use of the mosque itself as a classroom for girls, a woman in the audience interrupted. This was exactly the wrong approach, she insisted: "We should be working to dislodge religion, not further entrench it." Clearly, she has never been to the highlands of Afghanistan, I thought to myself. And she is probably also unfamiliar with the long history of failure of those who have tried to dislodge religion in places where it dominates every aspect of life. Outright opposition to religion is simply counterproductive in many Muslim-majority countries today, as it is in many Western countries too. If women's rights in the Middle

East depend on the removal of Islam, Muslim women will be waiting a long time indeed. At a conference in Morocco sometime later, I discussed the concept of Islamic feminism with a history professor from Tunis University who is also an adviser to the minister of higher education in Tunisia. He smiled knowingly and leaned back in his chair as he adjusted the cuffs on his pinstriped suit. "Ah, they have gotten to you," he smirked, his accent revealing his French education. "The Islamists want women to play on their field, where they can tie them up in religious arguments forever. No, no. Secularism is the only way forward for women." Taking a very long-term perspective, over many decades, he might ultimately be right. But outside of Tunisia and Turkey today, where does secularism have a chance in the near term in the Middle East?

Later in our conversation, the Tunisian professor admitted that despite Tunisia's ban on women wearing *hijab*, the headscarf, in public offices and schools, over 80 percent of the female students and faculty at the university defiantly still wear one in class. "We cannot enforce the ban," he bemoaned. "We would have to shut down the university if we tried." Measured by the ubiquitous *hijab*, Islamism is alive and well in Tunisia, despite, or perhaps because of, the country's enforced secularism. Across the region, the headscarf is as much a symbol of resistance to authoritarian secularism as it is a sign of piety.

Islamic feminism will also be unappealing to Islam bashers, many of whom dismiss Islam as an inherently misogynist religion and refuse to allow that it can be a force for women's empowerment. Some of the Muslim women who are leading the charge to promote moderate interpretations of Islam have been accused of whitewashing their religion. They are denounced on anti-Muslim websites that find nothing redeemable about Islam. Critics contend that by emphasizing the parts of the Quran that are progressive for women, and minimising those sections that are harder to reconcile with gender equality, Islamic feminists are simply glossing over the fundamental issues. But is this not the same process of interpretation and contextualising that has occurred over the centuries in every major religion in the world? Indeed, many Islamic feminists see their efforts as a critical driver of a larger reform initiative within Islam. As Muslim women themselves engage more deeply with Islamic texts and jurisprudence, through casual study groups, as scholars and activists, or even through formal training to become religious leaders, they are forcing debate over Islamic interpretation.



The different ways Islam can be interpreted were driven home for me on a trip to Saudi Arabia several years ago when a Western-educated Saudi friend tried to explain away his country's restrictions on women. He told me earnestly that the only reason women in Saudi Arabia cannot drive, vote, or travel without a male guardian is because Muslim women are so revered. "These restrictions are only to protect women," he good-naturedly insisted. To prove his point, he then quoted a well-known hadith, or saying of Muhammad: "Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers." Later on the same trip, when I was discussing these issues with a group of Saudi women, one of them interrupted the conversation. "You know," she announced, stabbing her finger in the air, "we deserve all these rights and more, because Muhammad said that 'Paradise lies beneath a mother's feet!'"

Many Islamic feminists disavow the label: they cringe at the term "feminism" in any form and go to great lengths to distance themselves from the Western cultural baggage it carries. They prefer to see themselves simply as Muslims pursuing rights for women within Islam. But asked whether they believe that the spirit of the Quran is one of gender equality, and whether Islamic discourse can and should be used to promote women's empowerment, their answers will be a resounding yes. Their Islamic feminism is playing a small but important role in one of the great ideological struggles of the twenty-first century.

Critics dismiss Islamic feminism as a fringe movement—they say it is too small, too weak, too marginal to move mainstream opinion. For all their good intentions, these women will never be able to overturn 1,400 years of oppressive Islamic law and practices. The women, however, are undeterred. They recognize they are at the beginning of a long, intergenerational process but insist that time is on their side.

Still, some of these activists will undoubtedly disappoint Western observers with their views. They can be stridently anti-Western, antiglobalisation, and anti-Zionist. Some do not condemn all forms of armed struggle as terrorism. Some of the more conservative women approve of certain deeply entrenched social practices, like polygamy, that others believe to be repressive. While their conservative dress, their religious discourse, their support for Islamist causes, and their working-class roots may sustain the status quo in some ways, these factors can also provide Islamic feminists with the credibility and influence they need within their communities to be effective agents of change. Some of the women are deeply devout. Others are not. Some wear the headscarf for reasons of piety, others do so only for tactical

reasons. They adhere to social conventions in an effort to enhance their credibility. A few eschew the headscarf completely—their understanding of Islam does not require it. But all of them are using Islamic discourse in one way or another to promote women's access to education, to jobs, and to the public sphere, access which is already beginning to transform Muslim societies.

Women's rising literacy across Muslim countries, and ultimately their rising religious literacy, is shifting the terms of debate. No longer can women's groups advocating for greater rights be so easily dismissed as "anti-Islam." Increasingly, women know the texts well enough to challenge the practices they are used to justify. They also understand the need to avoid pitting women's rights against deeply held religious values. Whereas conservative Islamic interpretations have been a big part of the problem, more progressive interpretations of Islam can be part of the solution.

### **The Long Term**

The ongoing scholarly process of contextualising and re-examining the original meaning of Islamic texts, which is so central to Islamic feminism, has the potential to be as transformative in this century as the Christian Reformation was in the sixteenth century. The growing ability of Muslim women to read the Quran for themselves could be commensurate with the sea change that occurred when average Christians began to read the Bible directly. Progress for women will be uneven—faster in some countries and painfully slow in others—and will undoubtedly suffer setbacks. Over time, Islamic feminism, like other reform movements that preceded it, may well end up unapologetically secular. Only then will never-ending debates over religious interpretation be removed from politics. In the meantime, Islamic feminism is an important emotional and intellectual stepping stone—and tactic—to reconcile religion with women's desires to live in the modern world.

### **Women, Legal Reform and Muslim Identity in South Asia**

In Urdu writings of the late nineteenth century, Muslim reformers as diverse as Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh (1817-1898), Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi of Deoband (1864-1943), and Syed Mumtaz Ali of Lahore (1860-1935) evolved a critique of contemporary Muslim life and culture in response to the pressures of colonial rule. The themes of this critique were threefold. First was the consciousness of the decline brought about by the loss of political power to foreign rule.



Second was the analysis of the causes of that decline that included the squandering of power and resources by the military and landed élites, and the loss of religious and cultural vitality. Third was the evolution of a programme of reform that would remedy that decline. Foremost in this programme of reform was the need for improved education. Whether that education was a Western curriculum that included an Islamic element for the male leaders of the community (Sir Syed), or a reformed Islamic curriculum for the religious guides of the community (Deoband), or else a literary and practical education for both men and women (Mumtaz Ali), was a matter of considerable controversy. There was nevertheless one point upon which all reformers could agree: the status of Muslim women required amelioration.

In this, their discourse resembled that of Hindu social reformers of the time. Both Hindu and Muslim social reformers saw the roots of decline in a subsoil of rituals and customs that they regarded as unnecessary accretions, corruptions of a pure standard embodied in a reinterpreted past. For both Hindu and Muslim reformers, the solution to their current decline included the purification and rectification of religious life, and to that end, the reform of the role of women who were viewed - paradoxically - as both the chief perpetrators of wasteful and invidious customs and as the chief victims of such customs. For the reformers, therefore, women needed to be rescued from ignorance and superstition and also from abuse. Social reform, as articulated in the late nineteenth century, was thus the responsibility of men. Women were to be the beneficiaries of the actions of men, not actors on their own behalf. Women became symbolic, not only of all that was wrong with cultural and religious life, but also all that was worth preserving. If their discourse was similar, however, Hindus and Muslims looked to different textual sources for their inspiration. For Hindus, the golden age was variously Shastric or Vedic, but certainly pre-Muslim. For Muslims it was scriptural, prophetic and non-Indic.

As their discourses concerning the reform of women's intellectual and religious lives evolved, Hindus and Muslims either revived or created certain norms and boundaries for their communities. Reformers thus helped to articulate separate identities, to define what it meant to be either a Hindu or a Muslim, for both men and women.

### ***Discourses of Muslim Reform: Custom vs. Shariat***

Syed Ahmad Khan, regarded as the father of Indo-Muslim reform, was a champion of Western education for Muslim men. He regarded such education for women as premature, but was in favour of home

education for Muslim women and, to his further credit, felt that the custom of purdah, as practised in India, had been carried to extremes. Such isolation, he argued, was the cause of women's ignorance. They were credulous and clung stubbornly to outmoded customs; they made men's lives difficult. In the great days of early Islam, he claimed, women had been educated. They could inherit property and had to be able to manage it. Hence, they needed to know not only how to read the scriptures, but also how to write and calculate. Islamic civilization had fallen on evil days and thus the status and rights of women had been abridged. This was not true Islam, but the result of adherence to bad custom.

Sir Syed's argument found echoes among other reformers, younger men who were even more outspoken about the potential benefits of education for women. Education would break down women's isolation, and combat superstition and bad custom. This was a line of reasoning heard again and again in Muslim reformist discourse. Muslims thus seemed to accept the British cultural critique that Indian weakness was a result of moral as well as political collapse. But such an argument had been present in Muslim discourse well before the British displaced Mughal power. Shah Waliullah in the eighteenth century, and before him, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in the seventeenth, had lamented the loss of religious compass in the Muslim elite and linked it to the loss of political power. Re-establishing the authority of God's law (*Shariat*) as opposed to spurious custom in Muslim lives was thus a prelude to regaining political and cultural ascendancy. By the late nineteenth century, women were viewed as an essential part of this process.

For Muslims in favour of change, challenges - whether external or internal - had to be met by arguing for a return to a pristine Islam, as variously interpreted. For Muslim reformers as for Hindu, social and religious change did not mean aping the West, but rather arguing for a revitalisation of tradition. The *ulama* were very much a part of this effort. Indian *ulama* in the late nineteenth century, in the absence of a Muslim state, resorted to two main strategies to perpetuate Islamic learning. The first was to institutionalize founding a number of *madarsas* that were not only repositories of the Islamic curriculum, but that incorporated ideas derived from Western institutions such as academic departments, examinations and the offering of degrees. The second was to emphasize individual piety and dedication to the faith, based not on custom but on personal knowledge of the scriptures and the laws. That, of course, involved literacy. The *ulama* were



heavily involved in publication: popular guides to religious practice, polemical pamphlets, scholarly quarterlies and less scholarly monthlies. A number of *madarsas* had their own lithographic presses that contributed to the expansion of Urdu as a medium of public discourse.

The Deoband *madarsa* was one of the major manifestations of these trends. Deobandis sought to purify personal religious observance and to spread the knowledge of the *Shariat* more widely among Muslims in India. To advance this project, some *ulama* also championed women's education. To purify household rituals, to increase knowledge and observance of scriptural religion as opposed to folk customs, and to improve individual piety in the Muslim community, it was important for women to be educated in their religion.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi of Deoband accordingly decided to write a compendium of useful knowledge for women, a guide not only to learning, but to the pious life. He began by citing a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh): "It is a duty incumbent on every Muslim man and every Muslim women to acquire knowledge". This *Hadith* was frequently cited by Muslim educational reformers as evidence that the Prophet himself favoured education for women. Maulana Thanavi then went on to explain the rationale for this book, *Bihishti Zavar* (The Ornaments of Paradise):

For many years, I watched the ruination of the religion of the women of Hindustan and was heartsick because of it. I struggled to find a cure, worried because that ruin was not limited to religion but had spread to everyday matters as well. It went beyond the women to their children and in many respects even had its effects on their husbands. To judge from the speed with which it progressed, it seemed that if reform did not come soon, the disease would be nearly incurable ... [T]he cause of this ruination is nothing other than woman's ignorance of the religious sciences. This lack [*sic*] corrupts their beliefs, their deeds, their dealing with other people, their character, and the whole manner of their social life ... I have for some time, therefore, realized that in order to manage women, it is absolutely necessary to teach them the science of religion-even if it must be through the medium of Urdu.

Maulana Thanavi here echoes a number of themes articulated by other reformers. Women's ignorance of religion is a problem for the society as a whole, for they infect their children and husbands with a contagion of indiscipline, ignorance and decline. Women are singled out as the carriers of that illness, an imagery suggesting the need to

treat not just symptoms, but the root causes of the contagion. In evidence here is a second idea: that what happens in the home is of importance to the society at large, and that through social relations, women's influence extends well beyond the home. There is also the idea of control. Women need to be 'managed' via proper instruction in Islam. According to this reasoning, women are deficient, but this deficiency can be remedied by discipline and instruction. Women are, therefore, potentially equal to men in their capacity for understanding, and hence their reform and 'management' is central to the religious reform of all Muslims.

Given Maulana Thanavi's egalitarian assumption, which derives from the preaching of Islam, if women have inferior status, it is not due to their inherent inferiority - for their souls are the equal of men's - but because of degenerate custom, falsely identified as religion. *Bihishti Zevar* devotes a lot of space to attacking and rooting out false custom, as did other reformers. Thanavi's concerns are religious, although one also hears echoes of economic concerns about excessive expense and ostentation. The material and spiritual consequences of useless custom are closely allied for both middle class reformers and reformist 'ulama'. Maulana Thanavi describes marriage customs:

The women of the family gather and confine the girl in a corner. Etiquette calls for the girl to be seated on a low platform, for ointment to be placed on her right hand, and for her lap to be filled with rice and sweets. Rice and sweets are also distributed among those present. From that day on, the women continually rub the girl with ointments. This custom involves much foolishness. The first objection is to the requirement of seating the girl alone. Whether it is hot, whether it is stuffy, whether all the doctors and physicians in the world say she will get sick, this obligation must not be missed. This entails the evil of strict adherence to set customs. ... [P]lacing the ointment on her right hand and felting her lap with puffed rice and sweetmeats seem to be some kind of omens or superstitious acts. If this is so, it is polytheism. What Muslim does not know that that is opposed to the *Shariat*? The rich composite of Hindu and Muslim observances that evolved over the centuries in the *zenana* in connection with marriage and childbirth is here attacked as both wasteful and un-Islamic.

Maulana Thanavi goes on to object to ostentatious charity and to the use of silver implements and silken garments also as wasteful and irreligious, particularly the latter. The mark of a pious Muslim is his or her devotion to God's will, not these vestiges of the nawabi lifestyle



which, in his view, convey false status. Thanavi's insistence on the egalitarian message of Islam has striking implications for the Islamic society as a whole, implications that the Maulana - even with his theme of women's need to become more like men in matters of self control and religious observance - does not fully explore. His emphasis on individual piety meets the needs of a time when an aristocratic culture based on birth was gradually being displaced by a middle-class culture based on individual achievement. This ethic of individual achievement for both men and women was rendered more possible by the culture of print, which made easier the dissemination of works such as *Bihishti Zevar*. But the equal status of all believers when face-to-face with God was, in practice, superseded by the hierarchical relationships of the society. Members of the middle-class service elite, generally speaking, remained preoccupied with status, both among social groups and within families.

One reformer whose views on women's status were egalitarian in practice as well as in theory was Sayyid Mumtaz Ali of Lahore, founder in 1898 of one of the first Urdu journals for women, the weekly newspaper *Tahzib un-Niswan*. It was edited by his wife, Muhammadi Begum. Mumtaz Ali was also the author of *Huquq un-Niswan* (Women's Rights), a treatise in defence of women's rights in Islamic law, inspired by both his early Deobandi education and his experience of debating with Christian missionaries in Lahore.

The missionaries criticized Islam, as well as other Indian religions, for the low status accorded to women and blamed these religions for the lack of education among Indian women. Mumtaz Ali knew that the position of women in Islamic law was theoretically higher than their actual current status. The cause of this discrepancy he felt, was adherence to false customs - in this as we have seen he was not alone. Answering missionaries with theoretical arguments, however, was not enough. Changing Muslim practice had to be the highest priority. Women's adherence to false custom had to be combatted, but so too did the views of men, who felt that keeping women in ignorance and isolation was part of their religion. To attain these aims, he wrote *Huquq un-Niswan*.

Mumtaz Ali denied all English influence upon his writing, arguing that anyone who knew the *Shariat* and who followed the example of the Prophet and his family must be prepared to reject ignorant customs. He thus placed himself firmly within the framework of Deobandi reform, seeking to revalidate Islamic law and prophetic example in

Muslim dally life, and to eradicate superstitious customary accretions. The first section of *Huquq un-Niswan* addressed all the various reasons why men are considered superior to women. He showed that the distinctions made between men and women that are justified on religious grounds are, in fact, the products of social custom. If these distinctions were subjected to the scrutiny of reason, well bolstered by a knowledge of the religious sciences, the fallacy and injustice of male supremacy would become clear.

Mumtaz Ali points out that even though men and women have different physiques and fulfil different biological functions, both are human and hence equal in God's sight. Mumtaz Ali's arguments, however, go beyond the equality of souls found in Ashraf Ali Thanavi's *Bihishti Zavar* and encompass greater egalitarianism in gender relations as well. While admitting that men have greater physical strength than women, he states that this does not automatically give men the right to rule over women.

A donkey can carry more on its back than a man, but does that mean that donkeys are superior to men? Perhaps in the dark ages, 'might made right', but with the advance of civilization, rulers needed to have more understanding and compassion. Thus the right to rule should belong not to the strong, but to the wise. As for men's supposed greater intellectual capacity, he notes that men and women are of the same species. Any differentiation between the brain powers of the two genders must be something that the society has attributed to them, not that God has created. Indeed, if the intelligence of women were less than that of men, the human race would rapidly become stupid, for intelligence would be transmitted in lesser degree to each succeeding generation. Mumtaz Ali argues for a broad, humanistic education for women, not a narrow, household-centred one. Based on the assumption that men and women have equal rational and moral faculties, the education of women needs to be as complete as that of men, with some additional emphasis on household skills. He also discusses purdah in Islamic law, maintaining that purdah as practised by Indian Muslims goes far beyond anything that the *Shariat* intended. Such customs have debilitating social results, but, he admits, they are very difficult to dislodge. Arguing from verses in the Koran that refer to the need for modest behaviour, and from *Hadith* in which the Prophet ruled on various aspects of social interaction, Mumtaz Ali draws a clear distinction between what is customary - and thus subject to change - and what is normative or desirable according to the *Shariat*. He does

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not argue for the abolition of purdah, but rather for a pattern of *Shariat*-inspired modest behaviour on the part of both men and women and for allowing women greater freedom of movement and social discourse, as befits their status as responsible human beings.

Mumtaz Ali then discusses marriage, and here too his emphasis is egalitarian. He notes that the Prophet decreed that a marriage contracted without the consent of the partners is unlawful, but that this consent is usually simply assumed. The boy is cajoled by his parents; the girl is supposed to sit passively during the ceremony, mutely accepting her fate. These customs go completely against the *Shariat*. He also discusses certain reforms in the payment of dower (*mahr*) and in the granting of divorce (*talaq*). In Islamic law, the wife has a right to the payment of *mahr* by the husband, part of which is given upon marriage and part of which can be defected. Parents often demand a huge dower at the outset, in the hope that this will discourage divorce, but this only embitters family relationships. More beneficial in terms of protecting the wife's interests is the placing of stipulations in the marriage contract (*nikahnama*). For example, the husband might agree to pay a higher amount only in the event of a divorce or a second marriage, and the wife would agree not to demand payment except under such circumstances. In this way, there would be mutual understanding, and both partners would benefit. The wife would have security without demanding ruinous *mahr*, and the husband would know that he would not be liable to a high payment except under certain specific conditions. Other stipulations in the marriage contract could limit polygamy and give the wife more control over her fate, i.e. the husband could agree to give his wife the right to divorce if he took a second wife. She would thus retain her right to *mahr*, but also the right to initiate divorce under certain conditions. These suggested reforms are fully in line with the *Shariat*. Some benefit the wife, some the husband, but all emphasize the need for mutual agreement and equality in contractual dealings, which are absolutely necessary to ensure equitable and happy marriage based on the free choice of the partners.

Mumtaz Ali's approach to marriage emphasizes close adherence to Islamic law, and human relations based on mutual respect between men and women and understanding between the families concerned. Such considerations carry over into his discussion of relations between spouses. When men recognize that women's rights in Islamic law are equal to their own and grant them an education commensurate with

their abilities, then it will not be necessary to consider the problem of marital relations, he maintains - rather too optimistically - since he feels that the problem will disappear of itself. He admits, however, that this is not currently the case. The cure for injustice is for men to become more enlightened and to realize that their wives are human, he argues. Until women are treated like human beings, it is no use blaming them for not living up to their potential.

Mumtaz Ali, who heretofore had emphasized mutual responsibility for improving marital relationships, here places greater responsibility upon men for bringing about social change. He also emphasizes that simply talking about the need for change in public is not enough; men must begin by setting an example in their private lives. Educated men, government servants, professionals, and the like who talk about the need for self-government in India should realize the connection: if they are unwilling to grant greater education and rights to their women, how can they, in all seriousness, demand greater self-determination for themselves? The educated sections of the community must lead the way in recognising the rights given to women in the *Shariat*, which have been forgotten.

One of the legal reforms that Mumtaz Ali advocates in *Huquq un-Niswan* is the passage of a divorce law that would recognize a Muslim woman's right to initiate divorce (*khula*). This right is present in the *Shariat*, provided the woman gives up her right to the payment of *mahr*, but it is not in force in India. He thus anticipates by some forty years the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act of 1939.

## Introduction

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall was an Englishman, an orientalist, and a Muslim who translated the meaning of the Holy Quran. His translation was first published in 1930 and he was supported in this effort by His Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad (the ruler of Deccan, in the South), India. Pickthall travelled extensively to several Muslim countries, including Syria, Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Arabia and India. He spent several years in India and had interacted with the Muslims of India.

In 1927 Pickthall gave eight lectures on several aspects of Islamic civilization at the invitation of The Committee of "Madras Lectures on Islam" in Madras, India. Parts of Pickthall's lectures were made available in India at various times. All of his lectures were published under the title "The Cultural Side of Islam" in 1961 by Sh. Muhammad



Ashraf Publishers, Lahore from a manuscript provided by M.I. Jamal Moinuddin. The book has gone through several reprints since then. An abridged version of his fifth lecture on the "Tolerance in Islam" is presented below. His long lecture frequently used quotations from the Holy Quran to emphasize many points and to support his analysis and conclusions. The major theme of his lecture is retained here. All of Pickthall's eight lectures draw upon his vast knowledge of Islamic history, the Western religious, political and intellectual history through the ages, and their reasons for rise and fall. His lectures are very enlightening, analytically useful, and of great value even today.

### ***An Abridged Version of Pickthall's Lecture***

In the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant, and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Before the coming of Islam, tolerance had never been preached as an essential part of religion.

If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension.

Innumerable monasteries, with a wealth of treasure of which the worth has been calculated at not less than a hundred millions sterling, enjoyed the benefit of the Holy Prophet's (Muhammad's) Charter to the monks of Sinai and were religiously respected by the Muslims. The various sects of Christians were represented in the Council of the Empire by their patriarchs, on the provincial and district council by their bishops, in the village council by their priests, whose word was always taken without question on things which were the sole concern of their community.

The tolerance within the body of Islam was, and is, something without parallel in history; class and race and colour ceasing altogether to be barriers.

One of the commonest charges brought against Islam historically, and as a religion, by Western writers is that it is intolerant. This is turning the tables with a vengeance when one remembers various facts: One remembers that not a Muslim is left alive in Spain or Sicily

or Apulia. One remembers that not a Muslim was left alive and not a mosque left standing in Greece after the great rebellion in 1821. One remembers how the Muslims of the Balkan peninsula, once the majority, have been systematically reduced with the approval of the whole of Europe, how the Christian under Muslim rule have in recent times been urged on to rebel and massacre the Muslims, and how reprisals by the latter have been condemned as quite uncalled for.

In Spain under the Umayyads and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifas, Christians and Jews, equally with Muslims, were admitted to the Schools and universities - not only that, but were boarded and lodged in hostels at the cost of the state.

When the Moors were driven out of Spain, the Christian conquerors held a terrific persecution of the Jews. Those who were fortunate enough to escape fled, some of them to Morocco and many hundreds to the Turkish empire, where their descendants still live in separate communities, and still speak among themselves an antiquated form of Spanish. The Muslim empire was a refuge for all those who fled from persecution by the Inquisition.

The Western Christians, till the arrival of the Encyclopaedists in the eighteenth century, did not know and did not care to know, what the Muslim believed, nor did the Western Christian seek to know the views of Eastern Christians with regard to them.

The Christian Church was already split in two, and in the end, it came to such a pass that the Eastern Christians, as Gibbon shows, preferred Muslim rule, which allowed them to practice their own form of religion and adhere to their peculiar dogmas, to the rule of fellow Christians who would have made them Roman Catholics or wiped them out.

The Western Christians called the Muslims pagans, paynims, even idolaters - there are plenty of books in which they are described as worshiping an idol called Mahomet or Mahound, and in the accounts of the conquest of Granada there are even descriptions of the monstrous idols which they were alleged to worship - whereas the Muslims knew what Christianity was, and in what respects it differed from Islam. If Europe had known as much of Islam, as Muslims knew of Christendom, in those days, those mad, adventurous, occasionally chivalrous and heroic, but utterly fanatical outbreak known as the Crusades could not have taken place, for they were based on a complete misapprehension. I quote a learned French author:



*“Every poet in Christendom considered a Mohammedan to be an infidel, and an idolater, and his gods to be three; mentioned in order, they were: Mahomet or Mahound or Mohammad, Opolane and the third Termogond. It was said that when in Spain the Christians overpowered the Mohammadans and drove them as far as the gates of the city of Saragossa, the Mohammadans went back and broke their idols.*

“A Christian poet of the period says that Opolane the “god” of the Mohammadans, which was kept there in a den was lawfully be laboured and abused by the Mohammadans, who, binding it hand and foot, crucified it on a pillar, trampled it under their feet and broke it to pieces by beating it with sticks; that their second god Mahound they threw in a pit and caused to be torn to pieces by pigs and dogs, and that never were gods so ignominiously treated; but that afterwards the Mohammadans repented of their sins, and once more reinstated their gods for the accustomed worship, and that when the Emperor Charles entered the city of Saragossa he had every mosque in the city searched and had “Muhammad” and all their Gods broken with iron hammers.”

That was the kind of “history” on which the populace in Western Europe used to be fed. Those were the ideas which inspired the rank and file of the crusader in their attacks on the most civilized peoples of those days. Christendom regarded the outside world as damned eternally, and Islam did not. There were good and tender-hearted men in Christendom who thought it sad that any people should be damned eternally, and wished to save them by the only way they knew - conversion to the Christian faith.

It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant; and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Therefore the difference evident in that anecdote is not of manners only but of religion. Of old, tolerance had existed here and there in the world, among enlightened individuals; but those individuals had always been against the prevalent religion. Tolerance was regarded of un-religious, if not irreligious. Before the coming of Islam it had never been preached as an essential part of religion. For the Muslims, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are but three forms of one religion, which, in its original purity, was the religion of Abraham: Al-Islam, that perfect Self-

Surrender to the Will of God, which is the basis of Theocracy. The Jews, in their religion, after Moses, limited God's mercy to their chosen nation and thought of His kingdom as the dominion of their race. Even Christ himself, as several of his sayings show, declared that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and seemed to regard his mission as to the Hebrews only; and it was only after a special vision vouchsafed to St. Peter that his followers in after days considered themselves authorized to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Christians limited God's mercy to those who believed certain dogmas. Every one who failed to hold the dogmas was an outcast or a miscreant, to be persecuted for his or her soul's good. In Islam only is manifest the real nature of the Kingdom of God.

The two verses (2:255-256) of the Quran are supplementary. Where there is that realisation of the majesty and dominion of Allah (SWT), there is no compulsion in religion. Men choose their path - allegiance or opposition - and it is sufficient punishment for those who oppose that they draw further and further away from the light of truth. What Muslims do not generally consider is that this law applies to our own community just as much as to the folk outside, the laws of Allah being universal; and that intolerance of Muslims for other men's opinions and beliefs is evidence that they themselves have, at the moment, forgotten the vision of the majesty and mercy of Allah (SWT) which the Quran presents to them.

In the Quran I find two meanings (of a Kafir), which become one the moment that we try to realise the divine standpoint. The Kafir in the first place, is not the follower of any religion. He is the opponent of Allah's benevolent will and purpose for mankind - therefore the disbeliever in the truth of all religions, the disbeliever in all Scriptures as of divine revelation, the disbeliever to the point of active opposition in all the Prophets (pbut) whom the Muslims are bidden to regard, without distinction, as messengers of Allah.

The Quran repeatedly claims to be the confirmation of the truth of all religions. The former Scriptures had become obscure, the former Prophets appeared mythical, so extravagant were the legends which were told concerning them, so that people doubted whether there was any truth in the old Scriptures, whether such people as the Prophets had ever really existed. Here - says the Quran - is a Scripture whereof there is no doubt: here is a Prophet actually living among you and preaching to you. If it were not for this book and this Prophet, men might be excused for saying that Allah's guidance to mankind was



all a fable. This book and this Prophet, therefore, confirm the truth of all that was revealed before them, and those who disbelieve in them to the point of opposing the existence of a Prophet and a revelation are really opposed to the idea of Allah's guidance - which is the truth of all revealed religions. Our Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself said that the term Kafir was not to be applied to anyone who said "Salam" (peace) to the Muslims. The Kafirs, in the terms of the Quran, are the conscious evil-doers of any race of creed or community.

I have made a long digression but it seemed to me necessary, for I find much confusion of ideas even among Muslims on this subject, owing to defective study of the Quran and the Prophet's life. Many Muslims seem to forget that our Prophet had allies among the idolaters even after Islam had triumphed in Arabia, and that he "fulfilled his treaty with them perfectly until the term thereof." The righteous conduct of the Muslims, not the sword, must be held responsible for the conversion of those idolaters, since they embraced Islam before the expiration of their treaty.

So much for the idolaters of Arabia, who had no real beliefs to oppose the teaching of Islam, but only superstition. They invoked their local deities for help in war and put their faith only in brute force. In this they were, to begin with, enormously superior to the Muslims. When the Muslims nevertheless won, they were dismayed; and all their arguments based on the superior power of their deities were for ever silenced. Their conversion followed naturally. It was only a question of time with the most obstinate of them.

It was otherwise with the people who had a respectable religion of their own - the People of the Scripture - as the Quran calls them - i.e, the people who had received the revelation of some former Prophet: the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians were those with whom the Muslims came at once in contact. To these our Prophet's attitude was all of kindness.

The Charter which he granted to the Christian monks of Sinai is extant. If you read it you will see that it breathes not only goodwill but actual love. He gave to the Jews of Medina, so long as they were faithful to him, precisely the same treatment as to the Muslims. He never was aggressive against any man or class of men; he never penalized any man, or made war on any people, on the ground of belief but only on the ground of conduct. The story of his reception of Christian and Zoroastrian visitors is on record. There is not a trace of religious intolerance in all this. And it should be remembered - Muslims are

rather apt to forget it, and it is of great importance to our outlook - that our Prophet did not ask the people of the Scripture to become his followers. He asked them only to accept the Kingdom of Allah, to abolish priesthood and restore their own religions to their original purity. The question which, in effect, he put to everyone was this: "Are you for the Kingdom of God which includes all of us, or are you for your own community against the rest of mankind?"

The one is obviously the way of peace and human progress, the other the way of strife, oppression and calamity. But the rulers of the world, to whom he sent his message, most of them treated it as the message of either an insolent upstart or a mad fanatic. His envoys were insulted cruelly, and even slain. One cannot help wondering what reception that same embassy would meet with from the rulers of mankind today, when all the thinking portion of mankind accept the Prophet's premises, have thrown off the trammels of priestcraft, and harbour some idea of human brotherhood.

But though the Christians and Jews and Zoroastrians refused his message, and their rulers heaped most cruel insults on his envoys, our Prophet never lost his benevolent attitudes towards them as religious communities; as witness the Charter to the monks of Sinai already mentioned. And though the Muslims of later days have fallen far short of the Holy Prophet's tolerance, and have sometimes shown arrogance towards men of other faiths, they have always given special treatment to the Jews and Christians. Indeed the Laws for their special treatment form part of the Shari'ah.

In Egypt the Copts were on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms at closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day. In Syria the various Christian communities lived on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims in the first centuries of the Muslim conquest, and they are on terms of closest friendship with the Muslims at the present day, openly preferring Muslim domination to a foreign yoke....

From the expulsion of the Moriscos dates the degradation and decline of Spain. San Fernando was really wiser and more patriotic in his tolerance to conquered Seville, Murcia and Toledo than was the later king who, under the guise of Holy warfare, captured Grenada and let the Inquisition work its will upon the Muslims and the Jews. And the modern Balkan States and Greece are born under a curse. It may even prove that the degradation and decline of European civilization will be dated from the day when so-called civilized statesmen



agreed to the inhuman policy of Czarist Russia and gave their sanction to the crude fanaticism of the Russian Church. There is no doubt but that, in the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. Let no Muslim, when looking on the ruin of the Muslim realm which was compassed through the agency of those very peoples whom the Muslims had tolerated and protected through the centuries when Western Europe thought it a religious duty to exterminate or forcibly convert all peoples of another faith than theirs - let no Muslim, seeing this, imagine that toleration is a weakness in Islam. It is the greatest strength of Islam because it is the attitude of truth. Allah (SWT) is not the God of the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims only, any more than the sun shines or the rain falls for Jews or Christians or Muslims only.

## **Tolerance and the Quran**

### ***Understanding the Unavoidable Islam***

A member of the Gideons (an organisation which distributes the Bible worldwide) was telling the story of handing out Bibles in the streets of Marseille, a city in France. According to him, the French city of Marseille now claims Islam as the religion of the majority. It was in this city that Muslims who were offered Bibles took them, and either threw them over his head or burned them in front of him. Such an attitude would not be expected from the majority of westerners even if they strongly disagreed with literature distribution and its message. With Islam coming to the West through immigration and conversion, it is to be expected that attitudes in the "public square" are going to be affected. The social reality of religious pluralism, where Islam and other religions cannot live in isolation any more, forces us to take seriously the implications of such a plurality of religious views and examine the effects on religious freedom and tolerance. Can Muslims and other religious people live together in peace and harmony? As a student of world religions says: "Frankly, the history of religion is not reassuring."

What makes some Muslims behave as they did in the streets of a French city? What leads some Muslims to blow up the World Trade Centre towers in an American city, killing thousands of civilians? Is this behaviour an expression of true Islam or a perversion of it? What does Islam teach on religious tolerance? These are questions that cannot be answered quickly or easily and yet the answers are there if one looks diligently.

### **The Importance of Understanding the Islam of the Quran**

As Jacques Ellul says: "It is impossible to judge the Islamic world in a general way: a hundred different cultures have been absorbed by Islam. It is impossible to study all the doctrines, all the traditions, and all their applications together. Such a study can only be undertaken if one limits oneself to the study of specific questions, disentangling what is true from what is false."

My task in this piece of writing is to look at the environment of the interfaith exchange in a pluralistic society, especially focusing on the impact of Islam on such an environment. It is important to clarify that the Islam I have in view in this writing is the Quranic Islam – the Islam that is faithful to its source, the Islam which cannot exist without the Quran as it is – not innovative forms of Islam, or the Islam of people who do not understand and do not follow their religion as prescribed for them in the Quran. I will not analyze the differences between numerous branches of Islam with their specific teachings and beliefs. I choose to focus on the teaching of the Quran since this is the common denominator for all the different branches of Islam. It is the one source which all Muslims accept, whilst other sources of authority are interpreted and believed (or denied) in unpredictable ways. My concern, therefore, deals exclusively with the *unavoidable Islam*, that form of Islam which will exist as long as the Quran exists.

I will specifically explore the extent to which Quranic Islam tolerates other religions. The central question to be investigated in this study is this: "Is the Quran's teaching compatible with tolerance in a pluralistic society?"

The professor and author Edward W. Said, who was born in Palestine but has resided in US since the 1950's, claims as a matter of fact that "ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union there has been an active, explicit search in the United States for new official enemies, a search that has now come to settle on 'Islam' as a manufactured opponent." Seeking to avoid projecting a "manufactured Islam," one of the goals of this paper is to combat prejudice – that is, a posture which is not based on relevant information and experience, either favourable or unfavourable, about Islam.

In a recent article in *Time* magazine, Michael Elliott comments on the PBS documentary "Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet" (funded partially by a number of Islamic foundations). He writes: "What the world needs is not a hagiography of the Prophet or an apologia for



Islam but a clear sense that modern Muslims are prepared to engage in an honest debate on the way in which their faith has been perverted by those who kill thousands of innocents." In this writing I seek to contribute toward the need for a clear sense in the debate about the relationship of the Muslim faith and its violent expressions.

The importance of understanding the *unavoidable Islam* involves exposing the lies of some presentations of Islam and raising awareness about the challenge presented by a *faithful* expression of Quranic Islam. We will also look at how it may affect the future of the democratic society, as formed by the values of Western civilization.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, a Muslim, has said: "The Democratic system that is predominant in the world is not a suitable system for the peoples of our region." It is important to determine why Fahd believes this to be so; and if the Islam to which he adheres is the Quranic (*unavoidable*) Islam, then how do Islam and democracy co-exist in a pluralistic society. Can Islam be tolerant?

### **Defining "Tolerance"**

Since we need to understand what the Quran teaches about religious tolerance we must define what tolerance is, and then we must see if there is such a thing taught in the Quran. Some Muslims may object to this approach, saying that the Quran ought to define the meaning of tolerance. The goal here, however, is to compare the concept of tolerance as generally understood in the democratic West with "Quranic tolerance."

***Tolerance is Different from Toleration. Jay Newman Wrote:...*** We are reminded that there are two different nouns corresponding to the verb 'tolerate' – 'tolerance' and 'toleration.' The latter seems to have a broader application; it refers to any instance of tolerating. But 'tolerance' is more closely related to the adjective 'tolerant.' Toleration is merely instantiated in each instance of toleration; the term is entirely behavioural. Tolerance is expressed as well as instantiated in tolerant actions. A person can be tolerant on one occasion and intolerant on another. But most of us believe that some men are generally tolerant while others are not. 'Tolerance,' then, unlike 'toleration,' is often seen as a character trait, a disposition, and usually as that kind of disposition that we call a 'virtue.' To describe a person, a religion, or a doctrine as both tolerant and intolerant says nothing about the disposition or character of such an entity with regard to tolerance. It is not possible to characterise any person or religion as both tolerant *and* intolerant

if tolerance is understood as a normative and defining virtue. One person or religion can be intolerant, although at times may show toleration; another can be tolerant but, inconsistently with the tolerant character, may show lack of toleration in specific or isolated occasions. This distinction between "tolerance" as a normative virtue (something we ought to exemplify consistently) and "toleration" merely as an instantiation of tolerance (occasioned by expediency), is important to bear in mind as we investigate Muslim scripture and history where there may be examples of toleration.

### **Tolerance and the View of Truth**

What does it mean to tolerate another's beliefs? To "tolerate" another's beliefs does not mean that one accepts them as true; but in being tolerant one respects another's right to free will to choose what to believe. As Newman clarifies, "Tolerating a religious belief, then, does not involve a half-hearted acceptance or endurance of the belief *in itself*, but rather it involves acceptance or endurance of *someone's holding* that belief, that is of a certain case of believing."

Relativists modify this meaning of tolerance to make it more of a propositional attitude, which involves respecting another's religious beliefs as being of equal value to all other truth claims, even one's own convictions. If this line of thought, however, is followed to its logical conclusion, a person could end up holding as equally true both propositions, even if they are obviously contradictory.

Metaphysical relativism considers metaphysical constructs as valuable in that they give significance to our lives; but it is not necessary for them to correspond with something objective outside of our minds. They are basically our own constructs. The motivation for such a conclusion may be epistemological (doubting the possibility to know things as they are in themselves, following the Kantian postulation of the categories of the mind that give shape to reality as experienced by us) or moral (in seeking to accommodate everybody's view). When metaphysical relativism is considered as a foundation for tolerance, we end up with no tolerance at all because it deprives the belief of any significance which makes it worth holding. On the other hand, this view also ends up being another dogmatism itself, as Newman writes: "Tolerance, after all, does not demand that one believe that every other person's metaphysical views are as true or as reasonable or as profound as his own. Indeed ... tolerance is possible only because we are capable of putting up with things that we do not like ... or agree



with." This condition implies: (1) having a certain belief and (2) being introduced to another person who holds beliefs with which you disagree. If we didn't have to put up with those who hold beliefs contrary to ours, there would be no need for tolerance. If all believed the same thing, namely, that all religious beliefs are not to be taken seriously, but rather are to be considered merely as different keys in a piano (which may be different but not true or false), than what is there to tolerate?

In conclusion, we can say that tolerance means exemplifying an attitude of respect or endurance toward another's views, even those one may consider false, and tolerance as such can rightly be a virtue in one who believes in absolute truth. Muslims and Christians (and others who believe in the nature of truth as absolute and objective), have a real opportunity to be tolerant in this sense of the word, while relativists don't.

### **Muslim Background Beliefs**

To understand the Muslim view of tolerance we need to understand some basic concepts of the Muslim worldview and sources of authority. The answer to many questions about Islam and its nature is connected with understanding "the very structure of Islam as a religious and political complex." Although the so called Christian Byzantine Empire and the Western Holy Roman Empire, with the close association of the Christian Church and the State throughout the Middle Ages might suggest a similarity with the Islamic religious-political structure, it is a wrong assumption to consider them identical.

Islam is radically different in that in its very identity is a political-religious structure. Fazlur Rahman, a well respected Muslim scholar writes: "Islam insisted on the assumption of political power since it regarded itself as the repository of the Will of God which had to be worked on earth through a *political order* ... To deny this fact would be both to violate history and to deny justice to Islam itself."

The concept of God as "Allah" is of a being that is totally other, wholly transcendent to the point of implying that Allah is unknowable in himself but known in his will and requirements revealed in the Quran (Sura 42:11; 112:1-4). In the words of a Muslim scholar: "You may not have complete transcendence and self-revelation at the same time." This view of God is accompanied by a view of humans as the "slaves" of God (Sura 19:93). One major concept in Islam is captured in the very meaning of the word "Islam" itself: namely "submission," which

carries the sense of laying down arms before the victor and is taken to exemplify the total submission of every aspect of life, as an individual and society to Allah (The God).

The Quran teaches about itself that it is God's direct and verbal word, that it is eternal and came down from what is preserved in heaven (Sura 85:22) as the "Mother of the Book" (Sura 3:7; 13:39; 43:4). Although the Quran considers the Old and New Testaments as God's word (Sura 3:93; 4:163; 5:46 etc.), it considers its own authority as greater than theirs (Sura 5:48). Even the Arabic language of the Quran is considered an integral part of Allah's word (Sura 20:113; 12:2), therefore, Muslims consider the Islamic culture as of heavenly origin. So, Islam is a political, cultural and religious system. Religion, as based primarily on the Quran, is a *part* of the system, which informs all the other aspects of the Islamic system. Religious doctrine, however, is viewed in Islam as a preamble to Islamic law, the *Shariah* (divine law), which is a comprehensive code governing every aspect of life, because Islam is a religion primarily oriented toward law rather than theology.

Another important Muslim concept is the "Umma," or "the community of submission." Although Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, had been reciting the earliest Suras of the Quran starting in A.D. 610 for about 13 years, it is A.D. 622 that marks the beginning of the Muslim era, because this marks the emergence of the "Umma," the establishment of the Muslim political-religious structure. Dr. W. Bonar Sidjabat writes: "... the Islam of the Quran is theocratic and the Muslim state was a theocracy from its first ascent to power."

Prior to A.D. 622, Muhammad had not attracted many with his monotheistic message. The people of Mecca, the city of Muhammad's birth and his first decade of religious activity (which started when he was 40 years old), were not responding positively to Muhammad's message. They eventually made life so miserable for Muhammad and his few followers that they decided to flee to Medina, another city three hundred miles to the north, where some people had invited Muhammad to mediate differences between various tribal groups.

● William J. Saal writes: That well-known event, the *Hijra* [emigration to Medina], gave Muhammed opportunity to gain control of Medina and eventually extend that control to the entire Arabian Peninsula and beyond. This event is the pivotal event of Islamic history and has become the starting point of the Muslim calendar. ● Muslims believe that God's ultimate objective was the *creation of a new universal*



*social order*. The Hijra marks the beginning of this new world order, today identified with the Nation or Community of Islam, the *Ummah*. There are many issues that require further development at this point in tracing the history of Islam; the looting of Meccan caravans and subsequent battles with Meccan protectors of the caravans (Sura 2:216-218) in A.D. 624; the conquering of Mecca in A.D. 630; massacres of Jews; and military campaigns against the Christians in the north of Arabia under the leadership of Muhammad.

He died in A.D. 632 "... but not without ordering about a month before his death another expedition to the North." We should turn to our main question now and will pursue history only in relation to defining the Quranic view of religious tolerance.

### ***The Quran: its Importance***

The Quran is the absolute authority of Islam (socio-political-economic-cultural-religious system). Fazlur Rahman writes: "This 'Other' [Allah] through some channel 'dictated' the Quran with an absolute authority."

The high esteem with which Muslims regard the Quran seems best captured by a Muslim scholar, Yusuf K. Iqbal, who says: "It is not a book in the ordinary sense, nor is it comparable to the Bible, either the Old or New Testaments. ... If you want to compare it with anything in Christianity, you must compare it with Christ Himself ... Christ was the expression of the Divine among men, the revelation of the Divine Will. That is what the Quran is."

***With Regard to the Importance of the Quran in Forming a Concept of Tolerance in Islam, Sidjabat Correctly Observes:*** Although the Muslim opinion about any problem does not always find its answer literally in the Quran, but also in and supported by the Sunnah (custom) and Hadith (tradition), the Ijma (consensus) and Qias (analogy), the value of the Quran as the primary source of any Islamic religious problem is decisive. ... Its significance for the concept of religious tolerance is obvious, if we realise that the Quran can be considered as the command of God ... Following the contents of the Quran means practically being obedient to the will of Allah no matter how tolerant or intolerant this might be for others.

Sidjabat even goes so far as to suggest that Muhammad's "political tolerance or intolerance should not be primarily attributed to Mohammad himself but rather to Allah from Whom – as Mohammad believed – came the Quran."

### **Quran's Nature and the Problem of Chronology**

One would assume that if we just read the Quran we should be able to follow its teaching on tolerance easily, but that is not the case. Ignaz Goldziher, considered one of the outstanding European Islamists, wrote: "In its entirety, [the Quran] represents an amalgam of the two essentially heterogeneous periods that form the infancy of Islam [Meccan and Medinese]." Nevertheless, chronology and delineation of those periods, is downplayed in the present arrangement of the Quran; "ignoring its own pivot," as Kenneth Cragg puts it. Cragg says:

Through the sequences of [Muhammad's] career – yearning, vision, utterance, pertinacity, controversy, endurance, rejection, emigration, militancy and triumph – the accumulation of the Quran moves in parallel relation, fusing meaning with mission, and truth with setting. It is as events unfold that the whole grows into entirety ... [But] In many circles, the non-chronological form of the Quran as it stands, however we account for it, becomes in this way a virtue in disguise or, rather, a proper parable of the necessary transcendence of mere point and circumstance which the believer should attain. God had not allowed the Quran to be arranged in sequence, in order to preclude notions of the time factor and of calendar time itself, seen as embarrassments to its celestial status.

The Quran was not written down systematically during the time of Muhammad but was primarily memorized by Muhammad's followers. It was not until after his death, and due to the fear that those who knew the Quran by heart were dying in the conquering battles Muslims were fighting, that Umar got the idea to ask Muhammad's successor (*caliph*) Abu Bakr (632-634) to "order that the Quran be collected." Although that compilation of the Quran doesn't exist and there was another compilation made during the third successor, Uthman (644-656), the order of the chapters (*Sura*) was decided at the time of the first official copy as the order of length rather than chronology. All the other competing variants of Quran, "whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, [were ordered to] be burned."

The Quran itself does not help in determining the order of the chapters and sometimes, even verses from one chapter come from different periods. Cragg observes: "... the Surahs, especially the longer ones, are composite within themselves as well as irregular in time, so that the continuous reader oscillates bewilderingly across the years and has, indeed, a better chance of being in historical step if he starts at Surah 114 and reads back to Surah 2, than if he lets the paging



guide him." On the one hand, Muslims believe that since the Quran is eternal there is no need for a chronological order but, on the other hand, as Fazlur Rahman says: "the 'occasions of revelation' were recorded [in the Hadith] as a *necessary* aid for fixing the correct meaning of the Word of God." Some construction of the chronological order therefore has been undertaken by scholars, which should be supplemented with the "historical traditions containing reports about how those among whom the Quran first appeared understood its injunctions and statements."

The reason chronology is very important for our search for a definition of Quranic tolerance is related to the doctrine of abrogation taught therein. Sura 2:106 says: "Whatever communications We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it." Zamakshari, a famous Muslim scholar, commenting on this verse, wrote: "To abrogate a verse means the God removes (*azala*) it by putting another in its place. To cause a verse to be abrogated means that God gives the command that it be abrogated. ... Every verse is made to vanish whenever the well-being (*maslaha*) (of the community) requires that it be eliminated ... *We bring a verse which is better* for the servants (of God), that is, a verse through which one gains a greater benefit, *or one which is equal to it* in this respect."

In the earlier Meccan period, Muhammad may well have taught that he was to "declare openly ... and turn aside from the polytheists" (Sura 15:94) or to "call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner" (Sura 16:125). But when Muhammad went to Medina "it was ... time for a different watchword: '... kill the idolaters wherever you find them; take them prisoner, lay siege to them, and wait for them in every ambush' (9:5); 'fight in the way of God' (2:244)." Have the later verses of Medina abrogated the earlier ones in this case to serve better the interests of the Muslim Community? Many commentators think that this is the case, although they disagree about the extent of the abrogation and the specific suras it applies to. Following some chronological arrangement for the Suras (according to Nöldeke's listing) that is generally accepted by Muslim scholars, we will now look at some pertinent verses from the Quran.

### **Quranic Teaching on Relating to "Religious Others"**

Although the majority of Surahs (90 out of 114) were recited during the first 13 years of persecution in Mecca, it is interesting to notice that none of them contains commands to fight and kill. It is

after the Hijra, the establishing of the first Muslim community in Medina, that the teaching on attacking religious others unfolded. Rev. Richard Bailey, in his study "Jihad," traces the progression of the attitude toward religious others in four stages: (1) No retaliation (in Mecca), (2) Defensive fighting permitted (in Medina), (3) Defensive fighting commanded (in Medina), and (4) Offensive war commanded (after conquering Mecca). I will follow the same progression but in three phases, linking phases two and three together.

### **No Retaliation (Toleration)**

In the Meccan Sura 67:26 and 22:49 we read: "Say '... *I am (sent) only to warn plainly in public*'" and "Say, 'O men! I am (sent) to you only to give a clear warning.'" During this period it is clear that Muhammad did not perceive his role to be that of a ruler and military leader. Another Meccan Sura 17:54, confirms this understanding by saying: "... We have not sent thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them." At this time in Mecca (A.D. 610 – 622), Muhammad seems to uphold tolerance in the real sense of the term as discussed earlier when he recites: "Repel evil with that which is best ... We are well acquainted with the things they say. And say, 'O my Lord! I seek refuge with thee from the suggestions of the evil ones. And I seek refuge with thee of my Lord, lest they should come near me'" (Meccan Sura 23:96).

Mecca was the city of the Ka'aba, a cubic structure where 360 idols were presented for worship. Meccans, who profited from being the guardians of Ka'aba, did not welcome the Message of Muhammad. Their economic and religious traditions were threatened, therefore they ridiculed and harassed the little group of Muslims up to the point where they forbade them to go to the Ka'aba for their religious ritual, while all the polytheists could visit the shrine freely.

It is difficult to understand why monotheist Muslims would want to worship at the shrine of 360 idols, but whatever the reason, it is in this context of prohibiting them to worship at the Ka'aba that the words "repel evil with that which is best" were recited. These words can give the impression that the virtue of tolerance is being taught in the Quran. If this was the whole of the Quranic teaching it may well have been the case that it teaches tolerance in the real sense, namely enduring religious others whilst disagreeing with their beliefs. But, in light of future developments, there is another possible interpretation of these verses, which might render this phase of the history of Islam as one of *toleration* rather than characterising Islam



as tolerant. It could have been simply a strategic position in order to survive since, being such a small number (no more than 150 converts), they would have been obliterated if they had decided to retaliate (Sura 8:26).

### **Defensive Fighting (in Medina)**

After Muhammad and his followers went to Medina, 13 years after the beginning of the movement, we see a different attitude toward those who didn't believe the message of Muhammad. The Medinan Sura 2:190-194 says:

*Fight in the cause of God* those who fight you, but do not transgress limit; for God loveth not transgressors. *And slay them wherever ye catch them*, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for *tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter*; But fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, *slay them*. *Such is the reward of those who suppress faith*. But if they cease, God is oft-forgiving, most merciful. *And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God*; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression ... If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, *transgress ye likewise against him*. But fear God, and know that God is with those who restrain themselves. (Emphasis mine.)

In his commentary Yusuf Ali writes: "If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and *it would be cowardice* to ignore the challenge or to fail in rooting out the tyranny." This is in stark contrast to the previous Meccan attitude of bearing with and not retaliating against those who didn't let Muslims go to perform the ritual at the Ka'aba, forcibly preventing them from exercising their sacred rites and in effect declaring war on Muslim religion as Ali interprets the opposition against Muslims.

The previous attitude of non-retaliation was not considered cowardice before but now the same persecution is considered worthy of war. What has changed in the situation is the strength of the Muslim community in military terms. The verses we have looked at so far present two different responses toward the same situation, namely, no retaliation at one time and retaliation at a more opportune time against opponents of Muslim religion. In the face of this drastic change in the proposed response of Muslims toward those who oppose

them, Rahman says: "... so far as the Prophet was concerned, there was *absolutely no* change in him from Mecca to Medina, except that in Medina external circumstances were favourable to him, something that he had longed for in Mecca." We can conclude, therefore, that the first attitude of non-retaliation was not a normative virtue but rather an expedient attitude due to circumstances, which cannot qualify as tolerance toward religious others but merely as expedient *toleration*. Rahman referring to Muhammad in Medina says: "... the Prophet turned to the task that was the crux of his Prophetic mission: to bring Mecca to accept Islam and through the religious centre of Mecca to spread Islam further. All his efforts thenceforward are directed to this end." Fleeing for his life after failing to influence Mecca from inside, Muhammad sought to convert the Meccans by force, which was eventually achieved after eight years of fighting.

***One Clear Example from the Quran with Regard to the Unprovoked War by Muslims, is Found in Sura 2:216-218, Which Says: Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But God knoweth, and ye know not.***

They ask thee concerning fighting in the prohibited month. Say: 'Fighting therein is a grave (offence); but graver is it in the sight of God to prevent access to the path of God, to deny Him, to prevent access to the sacred mosque [polytheistic Ka'aba in Mecca prior to its Muslim conquest], and drive out its members.' *Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter.* Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can. And *if any of you turn back from their faith and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the hereafter.* They will be companions of the fire and will abide therein. Those who believed and those who suffered exile fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of God, they have the hope of the mercy of God, and God is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (Emphasis mine.)

To understand the significance of the passage one has to know the historical context it refers to. Rahman explains: "The Quran ... is referring to a skirmish that took place without the Prophet's explicit permission between a Meccan caravan and a group of emigrants during the 'forbidden months' (when fighting was not allowed by Arab inter-tribal law) in [A.D. 624]." Whatever the "explicit permission" and "a skirmish" means for Rahman, another respected Muslim scholar, Baidawi, explains:



*"... the Prophet sent out his paternal cousin 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh with an expeditionary force, in order to be on the look-out for a caravan of (the tribe of) Quraish ... they killed 'Amr, took two of his men captive, and drove away the caravan, which contained the goods of trade from at-Ta'if. This happened at the beginning of (the month of) Rajab, while 'Abd Allah and his people believed it was (still) the (month of) Jumada l-Akhira. ... This is supposed to have been the first booty in Islam."*

Amazingly, after quoting the Quranic verse above, and after saying earlier that the prophetic task was to convert Meccans (implying the use of force), Rahman writes: "It is, therefore, obvious that the Prophet's measures in terms of militaristic operations from Medina were not unprovoked." Some things need to be pointed out about this conclusion of Rahman.

If Meccans were going to fight Muslims in Medina it seems strange that they would go in war with caravans of goods. It is obvious that it was Muslims, attacking the Meccan caravans as they were passing to go home, who started the wars between Muslims and Meccans.

They broke the customs that pagans themselves didn't break, namely fighting in the sacred month, considered by the Quran itself as "great offence." W. Montgomery Watt commenting on Sura 2:194 about the holy month, writes: "Though the taboos were originally matters of pagan religion, many were accepted by Islam." How can one say that the Meccans provoked the Muslims in this situation, except by the lure of goods to be looted from the caravans? There is plenty of testimony in the Quran itself that Muslims suffered from the greed of looting (Sura 8:1; 8:67-69; 3:152).

Important to note in this Quranic passage is the attitude of distrust toward religious others: the portrayal of them as seeking to convert Muslims to another faith by force and thus motivating Muslims to do the same. Another aspect is the threatening attitude toward a Muslim who may convert to another religion. One hadith makes it more specific with Muhammad saying: "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but God and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In *qisas* [retaliation] for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse *and one who reverts from Islam and leaves the Muslims.*"

This prescribed attitude toward a Muslim embracing another religion has implications for tolerance. Moucarry correctly observes what true religious tolerance involves as he focuses on Christians and Muslims: "Christians and Muslims will be genuinely tolerant only when they have accepted the idea that debate, or dialogue, may lead to conversions either to Christianity or to Islam."

Based on the Quranic passage above, therefore, we cannot fail to note that the Quran does not convey a situation where religious others can co-exist as equals with Muslims. The relationship between people of different religions is seen as between ruler and the subdued.

Another example from the Quran regarding this concept of ruling and authentication of the true religion by military victory and political supremacy (the seal of approval from God for the Muslim cause is seen in political dominance), is the passage referring to the battle of Badr, called the "testing" or the "criterion." Surah 8:38-42 says:

*Say to the unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them, but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them). And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God altogether and everywhere. But if they cease, verily God doth see all that they do. If they refuse, be sure that God is your protector – the best to protect and the best to help. And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war), a fifth share is assigned to God, – and to the Apostle, and to near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer, – If you do believe in God and in the revelation we sent down to our servant on the day of testing, day of the meeting of the two forces. For God hath power over all things.*

Remember ye were on the hither side of the valley, and they on the farther side, and *the caravan on the lower ground* than ye. Even if ye had made a mutual appointment to meet, ye could certainly have failed in the appointment, but (thus ye met), that God might accomplish a matter already enacted, that those who died might die after a clear sign (had been given), and those who lived might live after a clear sign (had been given). And verily God is He who heareth and knoweth (all things). (Emphasis mine.) Commenting on the "day of testing," which refers to the meeting of Muslim and Meccan forces, Yusuf Ali considers the criterion between right and wrong to be decided by the



military victory between two armies: "the forces of faith and of unbelief." The winning of the physical battle justifies the Muslim cause and to this day this kind of success, namely political rule, is seen as the mark of true, authenticated Islam.

The Muslims obviously didn't know that Meccans would have an army coming to protect the caravan (that is why the meeting of the armies is considered an appointment of God not foreseen by them) but when they saw the Meccan army, since they were small in number, Muslims decided to deal with the danger of the Meccan army rather than loot the Meccan caravan which was what they originally desired. The Muslims won and that was believed to justify the Muslim cause. The belief that their strategy of asserting themselves as Muslims by waging war had God's approval continued to cement their confidence and motivate further fighting.

What concerns us at this point is the attitude toward religious others. As far as we can tell, the Quran makes the case that fighting was against unbelievers as such. The phrase "Fight them until there is no more oppression" refers to fighting Meccans who still would not allow Muslims to perform the ritual at the Ka'aba. But, the extent of the war, which is to continue until "there prevail justice and faith in God altogether and everywhere" points to the real agenda of imposing Islam as supreme religion. Again, the envisioned environment with religious others, indelible in the Quran itself, is not one of equality, i.e. a pluralistic society, but of a victorious religion which subdues the others. This is what is actually said in Sura 8:67-69: "It is not fitting for an Apostle that he should have prisoners of war *until he had thoroughly subdued the land.*" (Emphasis mine.)

Yusuf Ali's comment follows: "An ordinary war may be for territory or trade, revenge or military glory – all temporal goods of this world. ... But a jihad is fought under strict conditions under a righteous imam, purely for the defence of faith and God's law. All baser motives therefore are strictly excluded." Here we have one definition of Jihad as being a war for God's cause, to establish the rule of Islam by the use of force. Moucarray presents the Muslim concept of militaristic jihad in this way:

In the event of God's cause being in danger, Muslims are under an obligation to take up arms and fight the enemies of Islam, even if they are reluctant to do battle (2:216-218; 4:77) ... Indeed, it is preferable to engage in combat rather than to expose the Muslim community to sedition and run the risk of seeing God's cause defeated

(2:191-193; 8:39). Armed combat or holy war is therefore the extreme form of *jihad*. Its aim is to defend Islam from its enemies. Muslims love to paint a picture of this being a defensive war in the normal sense of the word "defence," but one cannot escape *another* understanding of such a war; that is, one which subdues religious others and establishes Islam as supreme.

This is made obvious by expressions like: "[no] prisoners of war until [Muhammad] had thoroughly subdued the land." The concept of "defence" in the Muslim understanding is related to the Muslim view of the Umma. Bannerman writes: "... followers of Islam ... were required, in pursuit of God's will, to seek to establish a universal community comprising all mankind in which public order was regulated by the revelation [Quran]." Muslims consider the destiny of the world order to be the rule of Islam, which they identify with the rule of God; the Muslim community is what that rightly ruled society will look like.

"The world was divided into *dar al Islam* (the territory of Islam) and *dar al harb* (the territory of war: and, by extension, the territory of unbelievers). ... *Dar al harb* comprised the rest of the world which Muslim rulers were duty-bound to bring under their authority ... Clearly, *dar al harb* must in due course be transformed into *dar al Islam* by one means or another." War against the unbelievers is considered to be defending the cause of God to whom belongs the territory which the unbelievers unjustly occupy simply by existing there. As Bannerman observes, Al Shafi'i, [787-820 AD] ... held that it was a duty to wage war on the unbeliever simply because he was an unbeliever, whether or not there was any threat to the community ... [this understanding] was re-established later on by Ibn Taymiyya [1263-1328 AD], and appears to be the view of the majority of today's [Muslim] jurists for whom reality clearly circumscribes the ideal. Al Shafi'i's reasoning is consistent with the obligation to establish the universal *umma* ...

### **Offensive War against All Religious Others**

We have to skip over many verses which clearly uphold the same teaching of waging war against the unbelievers during the years in Medina but will now pick up one Sura from the last years of Muhammad's life, after conquering Mecca in A.D. 630, which establishes fighting not as defensive any more, but aggressive Jihad against all unbelievers. As Bailey writes in the context of this last phase of Quranic development, "[S]ince this is the final teaching of the Quran regarding Jihad, it is what is still in force today."



**Sura 9:1-6 Says:** A (declaration) of immunity from God and His Apostle, to those of the pagans with whom ye have contracted mutual alliances. Go ye, then, for four months backwards and forwards (as ye will) throughout the land, but know ye that ye cannot frustrate God (by your falsehood), but that *God will cover with shame those who reject Him*. And an announcement from God and His Apostle, to the people (assembled) on the day of the great pilgrimage – that *God and His Apostle dissolve (treaty) obligations to the pagans*. If, then ye repent, it were best for you. But if ye turn away, know ye that ye cannot frustrate God. And *proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject faith*. (But the treaties are) not dissolved with those pagans with whom ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfill your engagements with them to the end of their term, for God loveth the righteous. But when the forbidden months are past, then *fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them*, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in *every stratagem (of war)*. *But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them*. (Emphasis mine.)

The list of unbelievers (hence the enemies of Allah) includes Jews and Christians besides pagans as Sura 9 continues in verses 29-31:

Fight those who believe not in God nor the last day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of truth, (even if they are) of the people of the Book [Bible], until they pay the jizya with willing submission, feel themselves subdued. Jews call Uzair [Ezra] a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God ... God's curse be on them; how they are deluded away from truth! They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary. Yet they are commanded to worship but One God. (Emphasis mine)

“Those who reject faith” are those who do not want to become Muslims and at this point no more treaties of non-attack are to be observed, since it was decided that they “cannot frustrate God” any longer. The Quran clearly establishes an attitude of war toward all those who don't believe Islam, wherever they may live, until they “repent and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way to them.” Yusuf Ali's comment is: “when war becomes inevitable, it must be prosecuted with vigour.” This gives you the impression that it is a war not chosen by Muslims but by God,

as it is viewed in the context of a mandate to subdue the world for Islam. The inevitability of war is interpreted not as the Muslims' choice but as something imposed upon them. The time had come to abolish all agreements of peace with religious others and fight them until they become Muslims and follow Islamic laws.

Muslims would say that it is essential that God not to be frustrated, meaning that Islam has to cover the whole earth as the supreme religion. Since nonbelievers reject Islam there is no other alternative left but for Muslims to show that nonbelievers "cannot frustrate God" by waging war and conquering the world for Islam. "But even then there is room for repentance and amendment on the part of the guilty party, and if that takes place, our duty is forgiveness and establishment of peace," continues Ali.

It seems clear that the guilt of the religious others lies in not embracing Islam and not being ruled by Islam. This is especially clear when Jews and Christians are included in the enemies to be conquered for Islam, even though their religion is considered valid for salvation at the Day of Judgment (Sura 2:62; 5:69).

This means that Muslims do make a distinction between being *under* Islam and being *in* Islam, just as Moucarray says: "Submission to the political order of Islam does not necessarily imply assent to its doctrinal content [Surah 49:14; 48:11]." This "establishment of peace," means Muslim political rule of all who either become Muslims or live with "a grievous penalty to those who reject faith" in the form of a poll-tax and other humiliating conditions of the status of the *dhimmi* ("the protected").

### **Conclusion on Quranic Teaching about Relating to Religious Others**

During the Meccan period, Muhammad claimed that his role was to warn people. Later, it seems that all those who don't believe what he taught and forbade, are not simply warned but are to be fought, cursed and commanded to embrace Islam. Nevertheless, since it is logical (due to the nature of belief formation) that "there is no compulsion in religion" (Sura 2:257), those who choose not to embrace Islam have the alternative to live in submission, paying a tax to be allowed to believe what they had believed before but in such a way that they "feel themselves subdued."

Compared with the concept of tolerance defined at the beginning of this paper, Quranic "tolerance" is nothing less than *religious persecution*. Muslims would never accept this charge of intolerance



but they must remember their own complaint when they were the persecuted ones in Mecca. Rev. Bailey makes a valuable observation at this point:

*When the pagans were in control and the small number of Muslims were not permitted to enter the Ka'aba, their persecution was called a 'sacrilegious act' and 'an open declaration of war.' Brigadier S. K. Malik says, 'The enemy repression reached its zenith when the Koraish denied the Muslims access to the Sacred Mosque to fulfill their religious obligations.' Now that the tables are reversed, the denial of the pagans' right to fulfill their religious obligations is not called 'repression' but is excused on the grounds that they must 'shut out all impurity' because the pagans 'are unclean.'*

*In a Late Medinan Surah 9:28 we read: "O ye who believe! Truly the pagans are unclean, so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque." (Emphasis mine).*

### **The Interpretation of Quran is a Fossilized Teaching beyond Change**

The Quranic teaching on how to relate to religious others is normatively exemplified in the life of Muhammad and the first community. Muslims cannot be free to interpret Quran differently from Muhammad's interpretation throughout his life and as shown in the way his earliest followers imitated him.

The Quran says: "And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he surely strays off a manifest straying" (Sura 33:36).

Yvone Yazbeck Hadad writes: "Islam is one as revealed in the Quran, and the ideal and perfect Islamic community is that of Medina where the *Umma* lived under divine guidance through the mediation of the Angel Gabriel and the Prophet Muhammad."

As said earlier, the flight to Medina in A.D. 622 is the watershed event that marks the emerging of the Muslim community (umma), which would remain the model for the future as a God-ordained model for society. Bat Ye'or, traces several significant events in the life of Muhammad and the first Muslim Community:

*In 624 Muhammad, joined by more followers, called upon the Qaynuqa, one of the Jewish tribes of Medina, to recognise his prophetic mission. When they refused, he besieged and overcame them. ... their lives were spared, but they were expelled from the city, their lands and a part of their possessions being confiscated by the Muslims. The following year the Jewish Nadir tribe suffered a similar fate: Muhammad burned down their palm groves and divided all their fields and houses among the community of the Believers.*

... In 627 ... guided by the angel Gabriel, Muhammad ... turned his host against the Jewish tribe of the Qurayza. ... Because the Jews refused conversion, Muhammad attacked and overwhelmed them ... six to nine hundred of them ... were led forth in batches and decapitated. ... The Prophet then divided the women, children, houses, and chattels among the Muslims.

... In 628, taking advantage of a treaty of nonbelligerency (Hudaybiya) with the Meccans, he attacked the oasis of Khaybar. ... The assailants came to the oasis at night and in the morning attacked the peasants as they were coming out in the fields, carrying spades and baskets. After a siege lasting a month and a half, the inhabitants surrendered under the terms of a treaty known as the *dhimma*. According to this agreement Muhammad allowed the Jews to continue cultivating their oasis, on condition that they ceded to him half of their produce; he also reserved the right to break the agreement and expel them whenever he wished.

Based on the *dhimma* of Khaybar, the relationship between Muslims and conquered peoples everywhere and for all time was held as an example for the future status of peoples under Muslim rule, the status of the *dhimmi*. When the early successor of Muhammad, Umar Al-Khattab, expelled the Jews and Christians from the Hijaz (Mecca and Medina) in A.D. 640, he referred to what Muhammad had said at the siege of Khaybar: "The land belongs to Allah and his Messenger." Based also on the Prophet's advice: "Two religions shall not remain together in the peninsula of the Arabs," even to this day there are no non-Muslims that can set foot in Mecca.

It is because of such examples left by Muhammad for all of his followers in all times and places, that one is baffled to learn of Muslim scholars like Pickthall who go "to the extent of asserting that Muhammad's attitude to Jews and the Christians remained tolerant till he died."



Against such a background, it defies understanding to read some evaluations of history by Hassan Al-Turabi who, as of 1983, was Attorney General of the Sudan. He wrote: "The historical record of Muslims' treatment of Christians and Jews is quite good especially compared with the history of relations between different religions and religious denominations in the West." After reading the Quran, it is surprising to encounter declarations such as Ahmad A. Galwash made: "There is not even a single verse in the Holy Quran which directly or indirectly insinuates the alternative of death or Islam for the unbelievers." Another Muslim claims that: "Mohammad did not merely preach toleration; he embodied it into law. In all conquered nations he *offered* liberty of worship. A nominal tribute was the only compensation they were required to pay for the observance and enjoyment of their faith." (Emphasis mine.)

What, then, are the implications of having to pay "compensation" for the "favour" of observing one's religion? This clearly denies the "fundamental, and inalienable human right – the freedom to reach, hold, freely exercise, or change our beliefs independent of governmental control."

It is important to clarify that people who lived under Muslim rule didn't have rights that flow from the mere fact of being a human being, but only as prescribed by a "concessionary charter" (the *dhimma*) which could be changed at the decision of the Muslim ruler. As Ellul notes: "... In the case of the 'concessionary charter,' ... one enjoys rights only to the extent that they are recognised in the charter and only for as long as it remains valid. As a person, by the mere fact of one's 'existence,' one has no claim to any rights. And this, indeed, is the *dhimmi's* condition."

This view of human rights is diametrically opposed to the rights that a liberal democracy envisions for its citizens. Nicholas Wolterstorff gives a definition of what democracy involves: "Equal protection under law for all people, equal freedom in law for all citizens, neutrality on the part of the state with respect to the diversity of religious and other comprehensive perspectives present in society, and equal voice for all citizens within the fair voting schemes." Weigel says: "Democracy is a way of public life, a way of being a political community," which will work if it includes people "who have made their own the values, the moral truths, that teach us to be civil, tolerant, respectful – in a word, democratic." I am fully aware that democracy is a fairly recent phenomenon even in the West but the point here is to see if Islam,

with the Quran as its defining factor, can ever be compatible with democracy and the religious tolerance democracy epitomizes. In light of the Muslim concept of the Umma, the status of religious others in Quranic Islam is not negotiable. Ellul says that the status of the *dhimmi*:

*... was not the product of historical accident but was that which ought to be from the religious point of view and according to the Muslim conception of the world. In other words, it was the expression of the absolute, unchanging, theologically grounded Muslim conception of the relationship between Islam and non-Islam. ... One must know as exactly as possible what the Muslims did with these unconverted conquered peoples, because that is what they will do in the future.*

Given the Muslim view of God as rule-giver, but not relational, tolerance as a concept is understood to be the undeserved and capricious generosity of a ruler toward the ruled. Epistemologically, given the authority of the Quran and Muhammad's example, tolerance is defined according to the regulations of the *Shariah* law (divine law of the Muslim theocracy) and the normatively interpretative example of Muhammad and the first Muslim Community. Theologically, Muslims view everything in light of the destiny of Islam to rule the world and, therefore, they are committed to what they believe is God's will, involving jihad (holy war). Moreover, there is the utilitarian dimension of Muslim intolerance, which includes reasoning that the greater good (for the umma) justifies hard measures.

The same worldview and understanding of Islam as superior (not only as a religion but also as a form of government with which it is inseparably linked) persists today among Muslims generally. As Watt writes: "... the thinking of the fundamentalist Islamic intellectuals and of the great masses of ordinary Muslims is still dominated by the standard traditional Islamic world-view and the corresponding self-image of Islam."

### **The Will to Deny the Obvious**

Nothing that is presented in this paper is new or unheard of by those informed on the subject. Nevertheless, even among those who should know better, there is a tendency to behave like the proverbial ostrich, denying the obvious implications of the Quranic teaching. Daniel Pipes, who surveyed about 25 experts in religion (professors



in Harvard, Georgetown, Duke University, Baylor, Rutgers, University of Wisconsin etc.), found only four of them who considered the term "jihad" to have any military component whatsoever and this, he says "is quite as if historians of medieval Europe were to deny that the word "crusade" ever had martial overtones ... [but rather the term "crusade" actually meant] 'crusade on hunger' or 'crusade against drugs.'" It is also disturbing that, even in post 9/11 America, as Pipes testifies, "one who dares to dissent and utter the truth on the matter of jihad falls under enormous censure ... We have thus reached a point where merely to state a known fact about Islam earns one the status of a hostile bigot."

The will to believe that Islam is a religion of tolerance may cause some to be convinced that it is; but in reality it doesn't *make* Islam a religion of tolerance. After being confronted with the facts of Islamic teaching, some still continue to say: "Please tell me this is not Islam." Even when one correctly observes that "Islam cannot but be ruling – and ruling on its own terms, and deciding what minorities it will allow and how," exemplifying the ostrich mentality, the same person still hopes against hope that Muslims will choose "Meccan priority (choose to make normative the Meccan attitude of toleration), in terms of the twenty-first century, [which] *must* emphasize an Islam that ... tolerates diversity ..." This is just another way of saying, "please tell me this is not Islam."

We live during the worst time for the West to confront Islam because of the loss of clarity on the nature of truth. The relativistic view of truth explained earlier in relation to tolerance is prevalent in the affluent, sleepy (even if restless) western society. The openness of the West toward third world religions is not because the West has become more tolerant (relativism just stupefies the mind giving the illusion of tolerance), but because it is confused about its own identity; it has educated itself to be ignorant and dismissive of its own heritage; it is embarrassed by colonialism and blows out of proportion the mistakes of the past throwing out the baby with the bath water.

It is as if the West is living the tale of the ugly duckling in reverse. Westerners, for a time, thought the West was beautiful but lured by the "nonconformists" and looking at the exotic "others" they now feel like as if the West is the ugly duckling. There is a need for people like Dinesh D'Souza, who emigrated from the East to the West and can't be fooled by the hype of criticism against the West, to convincingly declare how beautiful America and the West, still are.

The West built a legacy of religious tolerance because it believed that objective truth existed; because truth mattered and because people should be free to pursue it. As was made clear earlier, in order to have tolerance at all, a view of truth as objective and an attitude of respect for humans (who are endowed by the Creator with dignity and rights that involve the exercise of their free will), is essential. This view of tolerance is part of the glorious legacy the West has bestowed upon the world. Therefore, it is tragic that one can be considered a bigot today in the West because one believes that another view can be wrong. America and the world have an opportunity to overcome this untenable relativistic stance as we face the ugliness of ideologies which result in events such as September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

### **Contemplating Change: the Impossible**

At the end of his book *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*, Newman wants to strike an optimistic note: "... we ... still have a moral obligation to believe that further civilization – further civilizing – is possible. If the prospects for religious tolerance are not bright, then it is our business as human beings to *make* them bright." Another hopeful voice was Watt, suggesting that: "... a programme for the correction of the faulty self-image of Islam may seem utopian and unlikely to be realised. [but] ... That at least is the outcome for which the believer in God, Muslim or non-Muslim, should be praying."

I also wish that such a change in Islam were possible but understanding the nature of Islamic religion, forces one to agree with the incisive words of Ellul who says:

*After all, ideas and concepts are known to change. ... But precisely what seems to me interesting and striking about Islam, one of its peculiarities, is the fixity of its concepts. ... Wherever the social organisation is based upon a system, it tends to reproduce itself far more exactly. Islam, even more than Christianity, is a religion that claims to give a definite form to the social order, to human relations, and claims to embrace each moment in the life of every person. Thus, it tends toward an inflexibility that most other forms of society have not had. Moreover, it is known that the whole of Islamic doctrine (including its religious thought) took on a juridical form. ... Of course, there can be an evolution (in practical matters, in jurisprudence, etc.), but when there is a text, which is regarded in some way as an*



*“authoritative” source, one has only to go back to that text and recent innovations will collapse. And this is exactly what has happened in Islam. ...*

One should be aware that when one is dealing with some Islamic term or institution of the past, as long as the basic text – in this case, the Koran – remains unchanged, one can always return to the original principles and ideas whatever apparent transformations or developments have taken place, especially because Islam has achieved something that has always been very unusual: an integration of the religious, the political, the moral, the social, the juridical, and the intellectual, thus constituting a rigorous whole of which each element forms an integral part.

These words express exactly the thrust of my argument: there is an Islam that is unavoidable, namely the Quranic Islam, which can be rediscovered time and again. Just as Kenneth Woodward says: “Israeli commandos do not cite the Hebrew prophet Joshua as they go into battle, but Muslim insurgents can readily invoke the example of their Prophet, Muhammad, who was a military commander himself. And while the Crusaders may have fought with the cross and their shields, they did not – could not – cite words from Jesus to justify their slaughters.” It is the Quran that binds Islam to intolerance and since Islam without the Quran is not Islam, there cannot ever exist true Islam that is tolerant. Again we may wish to believe that Islam can become tolerant but we will have to live with the consequences, which are inevitable given the hard evidence.

### **Contemplating Change: The Possible**

If, as I have come to conclude, it is true that the Quran ultimately does not teach tolerance but rather intolerance toward other religions in the society it seeks to dominate, I am afraid that there is nothing we can do about it; we cannot change the Quran. This doesn't preclude on the other hand sympathizing with Muslims and seeking to understand where they come from so we may responsibly address the issues of concern. They are fellow human beings, much more similar to us than different. Not every Muslim believes what the *unavoidable Islam* may suggest, and Muslims can and have changed or converted to another worldview. I am one among unnumbered Christians who come from a Muslim tradition. Given the content of the Quran and the unquestioned place it has in Muslim religion and system, one fails to see how the Quranic Islam – the *unavoidable Islam* can possibly change but a change in its adherents is a different matter. Therefore,

we should not get tired of upholding the truth, exposing falsehood, showing the consequences of certain views, seeking to win all people to the truth, and being prepared to stand our ground when the evil hour comes, as people who have hope.

## **The Concept of Coexistence in Islam**

*by Dr. Abbas Al Jirari*

It is quite obvious that the concept of coexistence arose with the emergence of societies, and grew out of the affinities between its members, but soon afterwards coexistence evolved to the point of arising as a result of necessity. Consequently, it is clear that whenever the number of members of any human society grows larger, the element of resemblance becomes weaker, in spite of its importance, and the element of necessity becomes stronger and leads to a situation whereby coexistence becomes imperative.

While this notion of coexistence in its general linguistic meaning and according to the requirements of the Arabic grammatical stem tafaa'ul, refers to the fact that one (group) has to live with the others, in its modern conventional meaning, this notion refers to the idea that such a coexistence has to be founded on peacefulness and quietude. This is confirmed by the fact that the word coexistence most often collocates with the attribute peaceful.

When one ponders over the depth of the meaning of the expression peaceful coexistence, as well as its morphology and syntax in various languages, one reaches the conclusion that the expression reflects somewhat an uneasy position, fluctuating between peace in its clear and straightforward meaning and war in its traditional and well-known meaning.

In reality, the new dimension, that the notion of coexistence has taken, has been acquired during the period of and as a result of the emergence of atomic armament, which has given rise after the two world wars to two world powers, each one with its allies, which fought over world supremacy. This competition was taking place within a new context, which preserves their diplomatic relations, as well as some aspects of co-operation resulting from the need of a feeling of overall security and the necessity to counter any attempts of potential attack. This situation has led at the same time to the achievement of desired common interests and has made the two superpowers endeavour to avoid the conventional head on confrontation, which may otherwise lead to mutual destruction. These powers also



endeavoured to preserve some degree of balance within the framework of the ideological differences which distinguish the two camps. In this context, which resembles more to a situation of truce, the expression cold war was coined. This expression reveals a sly and tricky situation whereby what is political is almost intertwined with and indistinguishable from what is warlike, and even a situation whereby the political aspects take on a warlike character. The reason is that the notion of war has taken on another semantic dimension, which no longer makes of it a means to secure a legitimate right or to impose a particular legitimacy. War has instead become a means of imposing the supremacy of a particular power, and the expansion of its sphere of influence, through relations which are based on apparent understanding and underlying conflict at the same time. These relations may also be based on conflict, which is expressed through an apparently peaceful interaction, such as ideological confrontation, and economic and technological competition, while at the same time racing to develop modern lethal arms.

In spite of the spontaneous collapse witnessed by the eastern camp, the situation still stands, although it has started to take another orientation the objective of which is to monitor powers whose effectiveness is likely to emerge, or, at least, to recuperate this effectiveness at the international level in order to neutralise it. Otherwise, the purpose from this attitude is at least to stop the influence of these countries before it spreads and before they reach the logically appropriate position amongst the powers of the world. Historical experience can confirm the extent of the occurrence of such a situation.

This is the context of the attitude towards Islam and the Muslims, which consists in the attempt to present Islam and its followers in a distorted manner. Among the characteristics of the distortions that Islam is taxed with we find extremism, intolerance, chauvinism, and the incapability to coexist with others.

It is from this particular angle that the present monograph attempts to address the reality of the coexistence that Islam calls for, beyond the usual meaning of the term even when it is modified by the attribute peaceful. Going beyond this basic meaning, allows us to consider larger meanings. One of such meanings is the possibility of living with one another, outside the context of conflict and within the context of one of the most important values of Islam and one of its distinctive features, i.e. tolerance which allows for the full range of freedom that it conveys to all humanity, and equality amongst all,

without race or sex distinctions. This attitude also conveys that all inherited enmity should be eradicated, and assumes that all humans look at each other with noble and considerate feelings and that they all aspire to truth and freedom. It also overcomes all the selfishness which might control one's actions. And this is usually the case, as can be witnessed by the bloody events recorded in history, which were greatly influenced by the conflicts arising from cultural factors such as intellectual and religious differences and likewise all the distinctions that thinking and freedom of speech might unfold.

The importance of these issues and their great influence on events and the outbreak of conflicts and wars is obvious, as is the importance of the way peoples and nations look at each other's culture.

If it is impossible to imagine the likelihood of eliminating the conflicts which arise from these factors and the characteristics they provide each society and each group with, therefore it is undoubtful that the reduction of the gap between countries and communities on the basis of complementarity and on the strengthening of communication and exchange will lead to rapprochement or to some kind of solidarity. This will allow the two sides to realise the value of what the other has and the possibility of self-advancement by inspiration from it. This might even lead to mutual attraction and otherwise competing in case there is a big difference, without this leading, however, to tension then to conflict. And this will only be possible through tolerance.

From the very start, we would like to insist that tolerance is a very important value in Islam and that in Arabic etymology it originates from the word meaning indulgence. It is an overall feature of Islam which characterises all its aspects of worship, jurisprudence and behaviour.

The Prophet (PBUH) has highlighted the importance of this feature and made it the epitome of Islam when he said : "I came with the upright and tolerant religion". And when somebody asked him (PBUH) : "Which religion is liked most by God ?", he replied : "The upright and tolerant religion."

As to "the upright religion", it has been mentioned in several verses of the Holy Quran, as in God Almighty's command when he orders the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims to express their view concerning what some people of the Book allege about Islam, including the chauvinism expressed in their views and defamation of others,



and to state that they believe in all the holy Books and the messengers upon whom these books were revealed : "And they say : Be Jews or Christians, then ye will be rightly guided. Say (unto them, O Muhammad) : Nay, but (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright, and he was not of the idolaters. Say (O Muslims) : We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and unto Him we have surrendered."

The upright is he who has a sincere inclination towards what is right and who is truthful and obedient to God's command, without wryness or hypocrisy following thus the pattern according to which Abraham (PBUH) lived, and which later on became the characteristic of every Muslim on the basis of the fact that Abraham's religion contains the roots of the creed of God's oneness. This is the same point of view that was expressed in the following verse of the Holy Quran : "The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - We make no distinction between any of His messengers."

The Holy Quran considers this tolerant and comprehensive belief a sign of being well guided and a proof thereof. If this is otherwise, then such a belief is only a false appearance leading to ignorance and conflict. God Almighty states : "And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then are they rightly guided. But if they turn away, then are they in schism."

The link between divine guidance and Abraham's uprightness occurs in many Quranic contexts as in God Almighty's verse : "Say : Lo! As for me, my Lord hath guided me unto a straight path, a right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater."

As to the adjective "tolerant" it is related in Arabic derivation to magnanimity, indulgence and permissibility. From an etymological point of view it refers to meanings such as generosity, and open-handedness. Then, it acquired the meanings of ease and leniency in interaction with other people and contexts which call for tolerance and generosity. The Prophet (PBUH) says : "Indulgence reaps benefit and tighthandedness reaps misfortune". He (PBUH) also says : "God Bless an indulgent man when he sells, when he buys and when he is in

need". A man asked him once : "O Prophet of God, which is the best work ?", the Prophet (PBUH) replied : "Belief in God, almsgiving and fighting holy wars for the sake of God and a blessed pilgrimage". The man said : "This is hardly possible to achieve, O Prophet of God". The Prophet (PBUH) then replied : "Addressing others tenderly, generosity, indulgence and treating others nicely".

● This notion of indulgence is attributed to several factors which represent the true face of Islam. The most important amongst these are :

**First:** It is a natural religion in the sense that it suits the natural predisposition of man and is accessible to his understanding and dedication. God Almighty says : "So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright - the nature (framed) of Allah, in which he hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not".

**Second:** It is the religion of moderation. God Almighty says : "Thus We have appointed you a middle nation..." Moderation is the best of attitudes. It may be between two extreme attitudes : negligence and exaggeration or disengagement and excitement. And this is exactly what the Prophet (PBUH) means when he states : "The best stand is the middle one".

**Third:** It is the religion of ease. God Almighty says : "Allah desireth for you ease, He desireth not hardship for you". And the Prophet (PBUH) says : "Religion is ease and it will overpower whoever wants to make it otherwise, so be guided and be optimistic". He (PBUH) also warns against straying away from ease in religion : "Beware of exaggerating in religion, those before you who did so only met with ruin".

**Fourth:** It is a religion which insists on good behaviour, which should be characterised by civility, gentleness and be based upon good deeds, generosity and high morality. God Almighty gave the following emphatic description of his Messenger (PBUH) : "And lo! thou art of a tremendous nature". He also gave him the following advice which rather highlights one of the Prophet's characteristics : "Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he between whom and thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend". It is no surprise that the Prophet (PBUH) says later on : "I was sent to perfect high morality in people". From this behavioural side and all aspects which derive therefrom and which are related to Islam in



its whole, the notion of tolerance appears as a distinctive feature which characterises the society which Islam advocates and where people are called upon to coexist. It is a religion of magnanimity, in which there should be neither discomfort nor chauvinism, neither exaggeration nor extremism, neither violence nor terrorism, be it towards oneself or the others. We refer here to all those who live in this society be they Muslims or otherwise, and even those who belong to other societies as they also have their rights, those we refer to today as human rights. These rights concern the civil, political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the life of the individual and that of the group. These rights focus on one central aspect which is that of freedom. And as we know, freedom is a natural right for all individuals. These individuals cannot survive without tolerance, i.e. without the right to differ.

It still remains that the issue of tolerance examined from this wide perspective needs clarification, albeit from a brief discussion of the morphology of the word tolerance. The word *tasaamuh* (meaning tolerance) has the same form as that of *ta'aayush* (meaning coexistence) already referred to, and coined on the basis of the form *tafaa'ul*. It is closer in meaning to the verb of origin which is that of forgiving, or to the meaning of spontaneous compliance resulting from the tolerance of the religion itself and its call to all Moslems to be tolerant. All this in spite of the fact that we do not discard the form of *tafaa'ul* which refers to the notion of participating in efficacy and reciprocity. This obviously points to the positive stand of Islam towards mutual forgiving, if the other party is capable of doing so also. This is what makes the reality of tolerance in Islam and the resulting coexistence thereof point to three dimensions :

### **The First is Internal to Islam and Concerns Muslim Society**

The Second is also internal to Islam but concerns the non-Muslims living in a Muslim society; the Third is external to Islam and concerns the relationships between the Muslim society and the other non-Muslim societies.

Before dealing with these three dimensions, we should point out that Islam - as a religion - considers that religion is a personal matter, on the basis of the fact that it concerns the individual, in that religion is a relationship between the individual and his creator, with all the necessary obedience, awe and contemplation that such a relationship obviously presumes. At the same time, Islam is concerned with societal

life in the sense that it advocates the setting up of a legitimate society which has its own legislation, regulations and principles which govern the different matters of its life.

As such, Islam is a religion which concerns at the same time the individual and the society(1). It takes the individual as a starting point to encompass the group. It looks at individuality in its philosophical and psychological meaning which is synonymous with personality. It also looks at it in its social dimension making of individuality the state of the individual which considers him a component unit amongst all the units which make up society. Individuality is also looked at from the point of view of a unit having its own features and faculties which make it capable of living within that society, and which make it free of all the kinds of behaviour which might lead the individual to be selfish and solitary, considering only his own interests with the exclusion of the others'.

It is in this perspective that Islam is concerned with the individual in the utmost manner and that is reflected in several areas, the most important of which are the following:

**First:** Allowing him to enjoy his rights in order for him to live freely with the due respect, honour and equality with others.

**Second:** Intrusting him with a number of duties, which define his role, and make of him a responsible individual within society, who undertakes a number of duties which enable him to gain his rank and importance and above all which make him perform useful duties within that society.

**Third:** Educating him in such appropriate manner that allows him to benefit from his rights and to perform his duties. Such an education is achieved only through the adequate and complete upbringing which takes into consideration the two factors which make up the individual : his body and his soul.

Such attention which is paid to the individual is, by extension, the basis of the attention that the society as a whole enjoys. All that concerns the individual, be it positive or negative, is eventually reflected upon society. Society is nothing but this individual who constitutes the basis and the seed which bears the fruit. As a result, the upbringing of upright individuals is the basis of the constitution of a sound and healthy society. The extent of these individuals spreads little by little in units and families which grow gradually until we reach such a society. Islam intended such a society to be tolerant with itself and



the others and coexisting with them. Such intention has many reasons and motivations which we will summarise in the following three aspects

**First:** Islam discredits all kinds of chauvinism, be it racial or religious, because such chauvinism is based on nothing but selfish and idiosyncratic tendencies in the exclusion and lack of respect for others. Islam also insists on the individual being honoured. God Almighty says : "Verily We have honoured the Children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above of those whom We created with a marked preferment"(1). God Almighty has honoured the human beings by making them respectful and not lowly.

They were preferred over all other creatures and were given a distinct position in this world. God thus gave them faculties to be civilised, to acquire different kinds of knowledge and to achieve development. God also made opportunities for them on earth and intrusted them with responsibilities that were beyond the capability of other creatures. God Almighty says : "Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it"(2). This honour was provided since birth, as God created man from earth and breathed into him of His spirit, then ordered the angels to prostrate to him in honour and respect. God Almighty says : "When thy Lord said unto the angels : lo! I am about to create a mortal out of mire. And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down before him prostrate"(3). Then, soon after that God provided man with the knowledge to allow him to make his life and existence according to the way God willed them to be as the following verse of the Holy Quran states : "And He taught Adam all the names"(4).

**Second:** Islam advocates making acquaintance with others. In other words it calls upon people to meet each other, to live together and to give and take whatever is useful according to the needs of each other. Thus it advocates coexistence, with all the giving and taking that it involves and also the lasting mutual influence, avoiding all racial chauvinism, regional discrimination and cultural arrogance. Thus, Islam does not recognise any reason why one may be considered superior to the other, except in faith. God Almighty says : "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct"(1). Best in conduct here

refers to asking for preservation and immunity from all the damage and adversities that may befall one. The first verse of the Holy Quran that mentions those who are characterised by this quality says : "Alif. Lam. Mim. This, the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil)"(2), and thus shows that in the Book that was revealed unto our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) there is advice and guidance leading to the righteous path, which takes one to the righteous goal. The two following verses show that the faithful believers are those who believe in the unseen and accept and trust everything that was revealed upon the Prophet (PBUH), including what the brain and the feelings can hardly fathom. Those are the ones who perform their prayers regularly and without any interruption. Those are also the ones who spend what God has bestowed into them in charity and who give alms and who are generous. Those are also the ones who believe in all the Holy Books and the Messengers upon whom they were revealed. Finally, they are those who believe firmly in the Hereafter, where there is reckoning and recompense. God Almighty says : "Who believe in the unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them. And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter"(3). Knowing people presume being able to do so, including the capability to accept difference in opinion and difference in creed.

**Third:** Islam assumes that difference is an inherent part of the essence of life and of the natural disposition of man. God Almighty created the universe and all the things and creatures that live on it on the basis of obvious difference both in terms of variety and quantity. This is clear in all aspects and appearances. God Almighty says : "Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the difference of night and day are tokens (of His sovereignty) for men of understanding"(4). He also says : "And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge"(1). God Almighty stresses this truth which cannot be subject to change and says : "And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing, save him on whom thy Lord hath mercy; and for that He did create them"(2). In other words, God's rule on earth is based upon the differences between human beings, be they race, language or religious differences or any other difference in any one of the components of civilisation and culture. Islam thus



considers the matter to be under God's will and the underlying motivation which is inherent in it. God Almighty emphasises this will and what it engenders concerning the absence of coercion upon people to adopt Islam and says : "And if thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers ?"(3). This noble verse expresses the fact that if God had willed it, he would have made all people have the same levels of understanding and comprehension that would lead them to Islam. On the basis of this, His Prophet (PBUH), cannot eradicate this difference whatever he did.

For all this, and especially from the perspective of difference, Islam does not oblige or coerce anybody to adopt it. God Almighty says : "There is no compulsion in religion"(4). In the same verse, God Almighty responds to whoever might wonder about the reason for this lack of coercion : "The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believed in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break." This is a motivating response, which also means that God Almighty promises the tolerant Muslims, who have faith that they are safe and successful, like the man who holds unto a sturdy rope cannot fear that he will collapse or fall.

Indeed, the secret in allowing difference is that Islam advocates faith which should be based on observation, contemplation and then choice. At the same time God Almighty has given the opportunity to those who believe and who perform good deeds to reap requital and recompense, as opposed to those who neither believe nor perform good deeds and who should expect all the punishment that should ensue therefrom. It should be understood that when Islam allows freedom of faith, it also leaves the final word to difference about it to God Almighty who says : "It is your God who arbitrates between them on the Day of Reckoning upon their differences (about religion)"(1).

In this respect we should construe the verse : "There is no compulsion in Religion" to mean that nobody should be made to adopt Islam through the use of force, persecution and intimidation or similar means, because it is a religion that is based on thought and contemplation. Thus, the notion of freedom of faith, in the view of Islam, starts out from the idea that religion is both faith and belief. Any personal and inner feeling has to be based on conviction, inclination and ease. This is because adopting Islam means that one has led and submitted himself to God Almighty. There are those who may object to this, basing their objection on the Prophet's (PBUH) saying : "I was

ordered to fight people until they declare that there is no God other than Allah and that I am Allah's Messenger. So if they do they will have spared their blood and belongings thanks to their declaration and for the sake of Allah "(2). We wish to show that this order was issued to the Prophet (PBUH), to urge him to face the attacks of the idolaters who confronted him and stood in the face of the call of Islam in Mekkah, and forced him and his followers to emigrate to Al Madinah. But after the conquest of Mekkah and the establishment of Islam therein, our religion considered its adversaries with tolerance, as long as they did not fight it and did not attempt to establish tyranny or injustice and whatever persecution would result therefrom. God Almighty says : "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah"(3). The notion of persecution refers to whatever stands in the way of the call for Islam, which is permanent and continuous, or at least that is the way it should be.

Islam distinguishes in its treatment of its opponents between those who fight Muslims and those who are at peace with them. As to the opponents who are at peace with Muslims, God Almighty says : "Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just dealers"(1). As to the opponents who actually fight Islam God Almighty says in the following verse : "Allah forbiddeth you only those who warred against you on account of religion and have driven you out from your homes and helped to drive you out, that ye make friends of them. Whosoever maketh friends of them - (All) such are wrong-doers"(2).

If we now attempt to consider some of the aspects of the coexistence that Islam advocates, we will find that they are reflected across the three component levels that characterise the Islamic society and that polarise its interest :

- 1- The Muslims who make up this society, be it in totality or just a majority.
- 2- The non-Muslim minorities who live with them in the same society, when the case arises.
- 3- The other societies which differ from them.

As to the Muslims, their glorious religion commanded them to erect a society based on pillars of tolerance which can be summarised in the following four points :



**First:** It is based upon love, generosity and brotherhood. These values have been insisted upon in the Glorious Quran and the Noble Tradition of the Prophet in several instances. God Almighty says : "And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another"(3). In other words, these are brothers on account of religion, who support, back and help each other. God Almighty also says : "The believers are naught else than brothers"(4). In other words, there should not be any enmity between them. The use of the privative particle 'innamaa means that there is no stronger and sturdier kind of brotherhood than this, including that of blood and kinship. God Almighty says : "Those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer (the fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot"(5). This means that they prefer the other and deprive themselves in order to give him, this is what is known as altruism. Its opposite is selfishness, which means preferring oneself over the others. The Prophet (PBUH) explains how the Muslims should exchange love, generosity and help. They should also have compassion for the other in the case of adversity and says : "The case of the believers in their mutual help and compassion is like the situation of the body when one of its parts aches, the rest of it is subjected to restlessness and fever"(1).

**Second:** Islamic society is one of solidarity, which is an aspect of brotherhood and a corollary thereof. In such societies the individual is under the protection of the group. The group protects his basic rights and protects him from adversity. The Prophet (PBUH) says : "Muslims are to each other like a building whose different parts hold each other"(2).

As the members of a society have duties to perform, and if they do not perform them their society will perish, they also have rights which, if not honoured, will also lead to the collapse of that society. If the concern is over the rights of all members of the society, in the case of solidarity particular attention is paid to those of senior citizens and to those of the sick, along with those of the widows, orphans and the poor. In such a situation rights and responsibilities take their natural course in the context of the achievement of a humane environment for the individual and the society. Such an environment includes food, security, justice, morality and faith as well as all the wealth, happiness, freedom, respect and honour that mankind aspires to and whatever else is necessary to make a just and fair living for all.

According to Islam, solidarity within these dimensions is a philosophy of life. It is on its basis that a sound society can be erected, a society that has neither tyrants, nor tyrannised people, nor does it have a man of right as opposed to a man of evil, nor a good doer as opposed to an evil doer, nor those who monopolise wealth as opposed to those in need, nor persons who are fully fed as opposed to those who are hungry.

It is a philosophy that is based on the notion that working for the purpose of earning one's living is one of the means of getting closer to God and attempting to live within the principles of brotherhood and friendliness. This is what makes solidarity mean more than just giving charity, especially the charity that is accompanied by boasting and hurting. Charity requires that one looks at the other as he looks at himself in all that one desires or abhors. The Prophet (PBUH), says "You only have faith when you desire for your brother what you desire for yourself"(1).

**Third:** Life in this community presumes that every member thereof is aware that part of the duties in this society are his responsibility. The Prophet (PBUH) says : "Every one of you is a shepherd and each shepherd is responsible for his herd, the king is responsible for his subjects as the father is responsible for his family, and the woman is responsible for her husband and his children, so everyone of you is a shepherd and each one of you is responsible for his herd"(2). This responsibility concerns both the outer and inner aspects of life, as well as what the human talks about and what he keeps to himself. This responsibility is subject to liability which necessitates a free, a sound, and a fully aware conscience that takes into account God, the people and the self, through the principles and values which regulate how these accounts are administered and through the relationship of responsibility with good deeds. God Almighty says : "And say (unto them) : Act! Allah will behold your actions, and (so will) His messenger and the believers, and ye will be brought back to the Knower of the invisible and the visible, and He will tell you what ye used to do"(3). This is the responsibility which relates to trust that God has made as one of the most important duties of man and which He considers as one of the most important aspects of honouring Him. Giving accounts for this responsibility surpasses all legislations, because the self deals with it, and after people see it, it ends in God Almighty's hand for the final and inescapable but just assessment. There is no doubt that when a person is aware that he is in charge



of a responsibility, be it big or small, for which he is accountable before God and about which there is no trickery and for which there is no escaping divine justice, the sense of righteousness and fairness settles in his mind and conscience. When this sense becomes part of the person's spirit, then justice prevails, injustice is eradicated and solidarity is generalised.

**Fourth:** That it is established on the basis of freedom which Islam considers an important value, as it relates to the nature and innate instincts of man. This is what the Caliph Omar Ibn Khattab (may God be pleased with him) expressed in his famous saying: "How can you enslave people, at a time when they are born free". Freedom is one of the basics of human rights and one of the most salient aspects of honouring God. We may even say that the expression of honour, as already stated, is nobler than the expression of "human rights" which has become of current use lately. The term rights connotes that there is taking and fighting, whereas honouring refers to the generous supply of wealth and favours.

The freedom that God Almighty has bestowed upon man concerns his faith, work, lodging, correspondence, thinking and his expression, which form his personality and are the focus of his life, and which allow him to be productive. This is also the basis of the strong and united society where the sharpness of the struggle is subdued. The notion of struggle is used here in the sense of competition between opposing factions which try to eliminate and replace each other. This kind of fighting is a common human feature and law, which is almost general. The reason is that Islam has turned that into a competition which the Glorious Quran has insisted upon as in the following verse: "For this let (all) those strive who strive for bliss"(1).

If Islam advocates freedom, it is because it is a religion of life, which calls upon the person to exert his being by his presence, activity and productivity. This presence is also supposed to be based upon coexistence and characterised by dignity and honour. The primary aspect of this behaviour is connected with the belief in only one God, a phase which liberates man from idolatry in all its aspects, starting from the worship of idols and fetishes through straying into idiosyncrasies and the giving in to the tyranny of money and the exploitation of man by man. In this way, the freeing of man from believing in more than one deity has led to another level of freedom, that of freeing man from all kinds of domination that might control him and hinder his existence. Islam has thus allowed man to be sheltered from enmity, and tyranny,

or anything that might usurp his freedom, or his life, or his religion or deprive him of his belongings, family and all his sacred values. God Almighty explained the importance of security from hunger and fear and its reflection on worship in the following verse from the Glorious Quran : "So let them worship the Lord of this House, Who hath fed them against hunger and hath made them safe from fear"(1). The Prophet (PBUH) stressed the importance of the psychological and social security of man in the following Hadith : "Whoever becomes safe in his home and society, and sound of health, who has his daily food, should consider as if he were given the whole world"(2).

Thus Islam has been a precursor of all constitutions and legislations which mention human rights and which have highlighted its individual and general freedoms. Suffice it to only mention some of the aspects that Islam has called for in this context, as is the case of the protection of shelter about which God Almighty says : "O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace upon the folk thereof"(3). And also the freedom of correspondence and all such instances where Islam forbids its violation by spying. In this context, God Almighty warns people against trying to find out about what is not readily apparent in people's personal life and says : "And spy not, neither backbite one another"(4).

The most salient aspect of freedom is probably that of the freedom of speech. In Islam it is considered as a favour that comes directly after the favour of life. It is through this freedom that God Almighty shows the superiority of man over the creatures which neither speak nor explain. God Almighty says : "The Beneficent hath made known the Quran. He hath created man. He hath taught him utterance"(5). It is in this context that we can explain how the Glorious Quran makes man responsible for speaking the truth and condemning the act of not doing so. God Almighty says : "Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth"(6). It is in this context that one can talk about "enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency", and Islam has linked it with faith, and has made of it what has given the Islamic community its distinguished stand and superiority. God Almighty says : "Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah"(7). As for the non-Muslim communities, which constitute minorities in the Muslim society, Islam has shown such an extent of tolerance that allows a coexistence which not only ensures their freedom of faith and worship but also makes of them full-fledged

citizens. Such citizens who are very well integrated in this society with all the due freedom and respect and with no feeling of loneliness or marginality. Suffice it in this respect to mention only five aspects:

**First:** Warning Muslims against polemising, especially with the people of the other Holy Books, except in a polite and positive manner. God Almighty says : "And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say : We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender"(1). This is undoubtedly a rigorous attitude on the basis of the sensitive aspects concerning the issues of faith. These issues have been raised and are still being raised at the level of the Muslim-Christian dialogue(2) especially concerning the notions of idolatry and unbelief and the issue of Christ (peace be upon him).

This attitude is not in contradiction with the necessity to spread the word and to continue to transmit it. The same is also true for the necessity to "enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency" as both necessities are considered pillars in the preservation of society and in putting it on the path of development, progress and improvement. Islam, as has already been mentioned, is a religion which concerns the individual as well as the group and endeavours to the setting up of a brotherly and compassionate society where freedom and tolerance prevail and where each member takes it upon himself as his responsibility to develop it and to preserve it.

**Second:** Islam also ensures the freedom of worship for non-Muslims of their religion in its rites and rituals and in its different celebrations and seasons, with the observation of the holidays and fêtes. Non-Muslims are also allowed to establish their own places of worship and to preserve them and ensure their maintenance and their organisation, along with the respect of the traditions and the customs, beginning with the observation of the rites of birth and those of marriage and divorce and all other customs. Among the facilities that ensure the freedom of worship these minorities are given the right to establish and organise the supervisory bodies in charge of their religious affairs. These include the justice issues related to family and individual law and the resolution of disputes over contractual situations. All this has been witnessed in the experience of the Islamic nation and it is still being witnessed in its treatment of non-Muslims. It has been stated that "...if they had disputes over their religion and if they differed in their beliefs no opposition was shown them and their



differences were not exposed. If they had a dispute over one of their rights and they went to their governor, they were not prevented from it”(1). Islam insists upon the freedom of faith and worship without any coercion to interrupt or alter worship, even where the possibilities of pressure were present. Further, if a non-Muslim asks a Muslim to protect him and provide him with security, the Muslim has to accept and to make sure that no harm reaches his protege, until he reaches the place where he feels secure, i.e. his own house or the location of his people. God Almighty says : “And if one of the idolaters seeketh thy protection (O Muhammad), then protect him so that he may hear the Word of Allah and afterward convey him to his place of safety”(2).

**Third:** Allowing marriage with peoples of the Holy Books and the eating of their foods. God Almighty says : “This day are (all) good things made lawful for you. The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And so are the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those who received the Scripture before you (lawful for you)”(3). What is meant here is the food of Jews and Christians including all what they slaughter and what they cook. Originally, all this was not allowed because of the slaughtering rites and other conditions in Islam. Afterwards, God allowed this after they established themselves and after they lived with other peoples. The meaning of this refinement resides in the respect that Islam has for the peoples of the Holy Books, on account that they follow a heavenly religion which requires rites of cleanliness and the avoidance of uncleanness. This does not, in any way, mean allowing Muslims to do what is originally disallowed for Muslims such as the consumption of pork and alcohol.

As to the issue of marriage and the possibility of the Muslim man to marry a woman who has adopted the religion of another Holy Book, it is because his religion recognises hers and allows her to keep it and to observe it freely. The man of the Holy Book can marry a Muslim woman only if he adopts Islam. This is because societies agree that children belong to their father’s lineage. Therefore, if this condition is not observed, the child would belong to another religion than that of the innate, that is Islam, because he cannot do otherwise. Muslim society has reached far in achieving coexistence while safeguarding its Islamic pillars.

**Fourth:** The nomination of non-Muslims to posts of responsibility within a Muslim nation, especially in the political, diplomatic, financial and administrative domains. Both in the remote and near periods of

Islamic history there is evidence that non-Muslims used to be and are still in very crucial positions of responsibility and help with the most important decisions. "It used to be said that it is allowed that a minister(1) may be from non-Muslim citizens dhimmis"(2). It is well known that Omar Ibn Khattab employed some prisoners from Caesurae in the services of the state. Among the examples during the Ummayyad Dynasty we can mention "Antinaach Arrahaoui" who headed the administration of Alexandria and who used to be referred to in official correspondence as "The Great Secretary"(3).

**Fifth:** The use of the term "People of the Holy Books" and "Book People" by Islam to refer to non-Muslims who live with Muslims in the same society proves that Muslims recognise the Holy Books and the Messengers upon whom they were revealed. They are also called the people of protection or proteges (ahl adh-dhimma or dhimmis), i.e. the people of the covenant, peace and security. This is a name that has a wider meaning than the People of the Holy Books, because it includes the religions of the Holy Books as well as other religions and which were known and recognised, as the Magians, Samaritans and Sabians. It is related that some Muslims told Omar Ibn Khattab about some people who worshipped fire and they were neither Jews, nor Christian nor Peoples of the Holy Books. This caused a problem for Omar. Then Abdurrahman Ben `Auf said : "I was witness to the Messenger of God when he said 'Deal with them as you deal with the Peoples of the Holy Books'"(1). It is also related that the Prophet (PBUH) accepted the tribute (Jizyah) from the Magians of Hajar without allowing the consumption of the meats they had slaughtered or marriage with their women. Then when Khalid Bin Walid was Abu Bakr's Governor, he required it from the people of Iraq, who were Persian, in a correspondence to their provincial governor. Afterwards, Omar Ibn Khattab accepted it from them, and after him, Othman Ibn Affan also accepted it, and also from the Berbers, who were Magians(2).

Then tolerance resides in the fact that the different creeds were respected and people were given the right to practice their own religions. The extent of the tolerance resides in the practice and application within the society as a whole, on the basis of the Prophet's (PBUH) instructions, as we read in the following Hadith : "Whoever harms a protege is my enemy and whoever is my enemy I ignore on the Day of Reckoning"(3) and : "Whoever insults a protege is punished on the Day of Reckoning with a whip of fire"(4), and further : "Whoever kills a person of the covenant will not smell a whiff of paradise"(5).

These instructions have been followed by the Orthodox Caliphs, the commanders of Islamic conquest in all the contracts and agreements they signed(6).

And if it is necessary to reinforce these pillars in all eras, it seems even more pressing to do so nowadays, because of the misunderstanding of the real meaning of the notion of coexistence, be it for Muslims or for others, and also because of its consequences in terms of negligence in religious matters and straying away from religion in many walks of life, and the deviance in the behaviour of the individuals and groups and all that has resulted from that in terms of the crucial conditions within which both the Muslims and whoever lives with them suffer from, and all this because of internal and external factors. This necessitates that one should start by self-correction and resolving one's problems which should result in the strengthening of the society and all the Muslim societies in their internal structures and to make them capable of facing up to all the challenges and aggressions.

From this point of view, it is clear that the non-Muslims live with the Muslims within Muslim societies, while enjoying total equality, and differ from them only in that they pay the tribute. They pay this tribute and in return their safety and security are ensured, and in exchange of their waiver from observing two obligations that all capable Muslims have to honour :

1. Paying tithes;
2. Participating in holy wars.

While paying tithes is a duty for Muslims, non-Muslims pay the tribute instead. The tribute is subject to the intervention of the state in terms of its collection or exoneration for those who are liable to pay it without any obligating system. It should be noted, however, that tithes are spent on the poor and the needy and others, without Islam being a condition. Endeed, the non-Muslim may get money from the public treasury if he is poor or needy just like the Muslim as we shall see later.

As to the participation in the holy wars, it is replaced by the tribute for non-Muslims while it is an obligation for Muslims which God has imposed on them to respond to the attacks of the enemy and to defend themselves, their nation and their religion. This is not the case for the non-Muslims who live in Muslim nations, and for whom the tribute is somewhat of a substitute for the protection provided by the Muslims of their belongings, honour, and individual and general



liberties. All this ensures for them a respectful life in a Muslim society, and also their protection from the slightest harm which might befall them or which they might encounter, without their own active participation in this protection. In his testament to the succeeding caliph, Omar Ibn Khattab says : "I advise you to be good to the people of the covenant, to fight in their place and not to impose on them more than they can handle, if they have paid their dues to the believers"(1); for it is not necessary to oblige a non-Muslim to risk his life defending a religion - Islam in this case - in which he does not believe, bearing in mind that wars used to be in old times of a religious nature.

The tribute is mentioned in the Quran, where God Almighty says : "Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low"(2). That is, those who are able to pay it should do so, and this is what is meant by the expression "readily". Such payment is made in return for their submission to the state-system which takes it upon itself to defend them and to safeguard their rights; and also as a token in recognition of this system and their full acceptance and yielding to it, and this is what is meant by "being brought low".

For further clarification of this glorious verse, it is well known that the word meaning tribute in Arabic is "derived from the word meaning recompense. Therefore it is the responsibility of the rulers to obligate those People of the Book who have asked for protection to pay it in the Muslim countries and to be compensated in return for two rights. The first one is that of being left alone and the second one is to have enough protection so that they are sure to be left alone in peace."(3)

It is also well-known that : "... the tribute is a contract which ensures the preservation of life and the protection of the belongings and honour and all other obligations that ensue from this. This contract is a preserver of lives as Islam is; and God Almighty has subjected all Muslims to all obligations in His contract of faith. In the same way He obligated the proteges to all these conditions in his protection contract. The tribute obligates us to honour some rights that they are entitled to, because they are in our neighbourhood and our protection. They are also in the protection of God Almighty, that of His Messenger (PBUH) and that of the religion of Islam. Whoever harms them, be it with a bad word or slander of the honour of one of them, or any

kind of harm or even helps to harm them, will have squandered God Almighty's protection and that of His Messenger (PBUH) and that of the religion of Islam."(1)

**But the Tribute is Dropped Under One of Two Circumstances :**

1. *Weakness and poverty:* The Muslim jurists (fuqaha) stressed that "if he is established to be well-off, then you make him pay, but if he is not, he does not pay because the poor are not obligated to pay the tribute."(2) It was related that Omar Ibn Khattab was passing by some people's house when a poor man was knocking at their door asking for charity, he was an old and blind man. Omar held him by the arm and asked him : "Which People of the Book do you belong to ?" The man answered : "I am Jewish." Omar asked : "What has led you to begging ?" He said : "The tribute". Omar took him by the hand to his house and gave him some charity. Then he wrote to the treasurer and said : "look at this man and his likes, we have not been fair to him as we made him pay during his youth and then we are still robbing him at his old age. Charity should be available for the poor and the needy and this man is from the poor of the People of the Book. Then he waived the tribute on him and his likes."(3)

In this same context, Khalid Ibn Al Walid's letter to the Al Hira family stated the following : "I have ordered that any old person who has become too weak to work, or has been hit by some catastrophe, or was rich and became poor, and the people of his own religion started to give him charity, then he is waived from the payment of the tribute and is provided for from the Muslim treasury as long as he lives in the house of migrants in a Muslim country."(4)

2. The participation of non-Muslims in the obligations of holy wars and defence, as long as this is the result of volunteering, as was the case during the time of the Prophet (PBUH), who was never witnessed to have forced a non-Muslim to participate in a war, as he was never witnessed to have prevented non-Muslims from participating with the Muslims in a holy war, except in one particular situation which will be discussed below.

He thus made volunteering essential for the participation of a non-Muslim in the holy war, as the latter's religious feeling might be affected in some cases such as those when the Muslims may have to

fight adversaries who happen to have the same religion as his. If the Muslim legists disfavour the help of non-Muslims to Muslims during holy conquests, based on the following saying of the Prophet (PBUH) : "I will not seek the help of an idolater"(1), in response to one who requested from the Prophet to participate in the battle of Badr. The origin of this disfavour is what is understood from the attitude of the Prophet "that he (PBUH) noticed the impact of Islam on the man; and he, therefore, refused his participation."(2) But in situations other than this, the help of non-Muslims is allowed "because he (PBUH) used the help of People of the Book in his battles against the worshippers of idols." (3)

There are events in the history of Muslims which confirmed this interpretation of the Prophet's tradition, as in the case of what happened after Abu Obeydah conquered Antioch and gave its governorship to Habib Ibn Muslimah, who conquered Jurjumah, a city on Allukam, a mountain above Antioch. "Its inhabitants did not fight him but they hastened to ask for safety and truce. Then a truce was signed on the proviso that they help the Muslims and be as armourers and soldiers on the Allukam Mountain, that they be dispensed from paying the tribute, and that they pass over the loot of those whom they kill from the enemies of the Muslims if they participate in a battle."(4)

This is the same as what happened between Captain Abdurrahman Ibn Rabia when he had reached inner parts in Turkey, which was under the rule of king Shahriyar, who was of Persian origin. The latter wrote to him "and promised him to ensure his safety while visiting him. So he did and they met.

Then, Shahriyar said : 'I am in the presence of a wild enemy and that of many nations without any proper genealogy. It does not fit those of noble origin and reason to help such people or to seek their help to fight those with proper ancestors and origins. Those of noble origin are indeed close to other people of noble origin wherever they are. You have defeated my country and my nation; I am, therefore, one of you now, and my hand is with you and my attachment is to you. So may God bless us all. Our tribute will be paid to you, we will assist you, and we will do whatever you want us to do.' Abdurrahman said : "There is a man above me who has given you his shelter, so go to him and take his permission.' So he went to Suraqah and met him and said the same thing to him. Suraqah said : 'I have accepted that' ... and so Suraqah wrote to Omar Ibn Khattab about all this and he gave him permission and appreciated what he did."(1)



It is in this way that the Muslims lived with people who do not share their religion but with whom they shared social life. They lived in a humane relationship, which is inspired from Islamic principles, and which has no objection to accepting religions which believe in the principle of monotheism. It is also from this principle that this relationship can draw all the elements which relate the nation's parts to each other and which continuously enriches its personality in a firm symbiosis between nation and religion.

Man is the basic element in this humane relationship, in his quality as a set of capabilities and energies, which constitute the features of his humanness. This instils in him the feeling of existence within himself and with the others, and provides him with the possibility to work and to produce, as it also provides him with the means of efficacy and influence.

There is no doubt that among those capabilities and may be among the most important ones, there is what is inherent in man's nature, as he is an individual in a given land where he moves, consciously or unconsciously, and on that basis, he tries to preserve himself and develop his personality.

If the innate nature of man enables him to live on earth with a horizontal and superficial dimension, the spiritual element intervenes to allow man to transcend earthly matters through faith and religion. The spiritual element gives him a celestial dimension which allows him to achieve the necessary balance for a true human life with all the necessary values and the individual and group behavioural principles. It also gives all the requirements of a behaviour which preserves the relationship between the individual, the universe and the creator.

Along with innate elements and the spirit, the mind intervenes at the levels of consciousness, feeling, will and intellect in order to guide, plan, execute and monitor man's movements. And this is what gives citizenship its real meaning, i.e. as it is supposed to be in the mind of Muslims and others who live in a Muslim nation.

Allegiance to this country resides in all what it represents in terms of land, faith, history, civilisation, culture, present and future. In other words, this allegiance resides in a set of principles and values which everyone believes in and shares and which imbibes everyone's mind, spirit and psyche. Thus it becomes the engine which incites one to militate and endeavour to develop the society in the direction of

progress and evolution. There is no doubt that this is a noble and responsible citizenship which draws its nobility from God's honouring of man as was stated earlier.

Islam provides the non-Muslim in a Muslim society with an integrative presence within which he can preserve all the components of his personality. The first one among these components is the religious element, with all the related rites, rituals and traditions which allow him to express his religious, cultural and psychological characteristics. With these he can also confirm the characteristics of his identity, within the general framework of the characteristics which make up the notion of citizenship. All this allows one to belong to that Muslim society. Belonging to this society also gives one the right to acquire the nationality of the country. It may allow him more than that, since nationality is the legal framework which gives the individual his political identity, and gives him also the citizenship and the membership within the state which has given him the nationality. This individual becomes a member of its people, and he becomes a national or even a patriot in opposition to the foreigner who does not enjoy this citizenship. Evidently, this citizenship can also be acquired through other means, such as birth, lineage, residency and all the other possibilities which are provided for by the citizenship laws in the different countries.

The extent of the coexistence of Muslims with non-Muslims who belong to other societies remains clear in the peaceful relations that they develop, in the friendly relations that they have, in the security that they share, and in the fact that they are against wars. The expression occurs in the Quran in several places and with its different derivations. God Almighty says : "O ye who believe! Come all of you, into submission (unto Him) and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Lo! he is an open enemy for you"(1). It should be noted here that following the call to join peace by advising against following the steps of Satan means that the opposite of peace, i.e. war, is a suggestion of Satan. God Almighty also says : "And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it and trust in Allah"(2), that is, if they feel an inclination towards peace out of a genuine desire and a true faith.

In order to show the importance of peace in Islam, it is sufficient to know that the term Islam itself is derived from it. It means : following God's commands and being faithful to worshipping and serving Him; this is referred to as peace. Suffice it also to know that Assalam is one of the attributes of God. God Almighty says : "He is

Allah, than whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)"(3). It is quite likely that the use of this name for God resides in the peaceful meaning that we are discussing. It also resides in the fact that God Almighty is free from imperfection and defect and of being affected by the adversities that affect others like annihilation. God Almighty also summons people to the abode of peace as in His saying : "And Allah summoneth to the abode of peace, and leadeth whom He will to a straight path"(4). The meaning is that of the abode of security, stability, and happiness. Some interpreters of the Holy Quran explain the house of peace as paradise.

We should also add that we invoke peace at the conclusion of every prayer, and we exchange greetings with the same word. The Prophet's (PBUH) exalted saying states : "You will not enter paradise until you have faith, and you will not have faith until you love each other. Do you want me to point out to you something that will enable you love each other ? Spread peace amongst you"(5).

Peace, in the meaning given to it by the True Religion, does not mean giving in or weakness, it means the securing of one's right. It also means the exchange of relations and services on the basis of equality and mutual respect and also on the basis of agreements which are binding to all parties, as will be explained below.

**Whoever Gives Careful Consideration to the Islamic Call for Peace will Realise that it has Three Underlying Principles :**

The principle of coexistence amongst human societies which, in spite of the differences which may characterise their points of view, their components and their interests which may lead to incompatibility, requires models for its own development which should achieve a minimum level allowing these societies to exchange services, needs and the means to fulfil them. Among the most important aspects of these models is the acquaintance with each other which the Glorious Quran has mentioned in a verse that we discussed above. The verse says : "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware"(1). It is a principle which confirms that coexistence must be based on dialogue, which according to Islam allows the making of acquaintance with each other and the exchange of points of view in order to resolve differences with no recourse to



violent confrontations whose aim is to decide on who is the winner and who is the loser. God Almighty says : "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright"(2). God Almighty also says : "And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say : We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you, our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender"(3).

It is also a principle which resides in the fact that the Glorious Quran advocates on the necessity to avoid quarrels and fights and what they might lead to in terms of losses. God Almighty says while mentioning the story of Adam's (May God Bless Him) two sons, when Abel killed his brother Cain, as a result of the jealousy created by the fact that one's gift was accepted but not the other's : "But (the other's) mind imposed on him the killing of his brother, so he slew him and became one of the losers"(1). Quarrels and fights lead to strife that may squander everything. This what the following verse refers to : "And guard yourselves against a chastisement which cannot fall exclusively on those of you who are wrongdoers"(2). God Almighty also says : "And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you"(3).

One issue that is generally raised in this context and which is most of the time misunderstood is that of the call of Islam for the holy war(4). We would like to raise the following three points in order to clarify this issue:

**First:** Islam rejects the use of force to convert non-Muslims to Islam. God Almighty says in a verse that we referred to earlier : "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break"(5).

**Second:** Islam's call for peace does not mean giving in to enmity and tyranny, and letting evil deeds and injustice go unspoken against and giving in to immorality or any such behaviour which is a violation of human life which God Almighty has based its shari'a (Islamic law) upon knowing each other, forgiveness, coexistence and living together.

**Third:** Through this Shari'a, Islam considers that the basic attitude of man is his inclination toward peace, and that recourse to war occurs only in absolutely necessary situations. Evidence for such

a position is clear in the Prophet's (PBUH) call to Muslims to avoid wishing for fighting, and to be firm when they are led into fighting. He (PBUH) said : "Do not wish to fight your enemy and ask for God's forgiveness, if you do encounter him, call the Name of God and be firm"(1). As such he considers war a violation of peace and thus a crime, as long as there are no particular situations which call for war and which make it fair and legitimate. This is exactly what various modern international treaties agree with. To mention only one of these treaties we can refer to the United Nations Charter, which urges nations to solve their differences through peaceful means, and to avoid the use of violence and threats in order to preserve international peace, security and justice. This is also what makes this charter prohibit war except in situations of legitimate defence as has been defined in Article 51, which stipulates that : "there is nothing in this Charter that weakens or curtails the natural right of nations, be they individuals or groups, to defend themselves should an armed force attack any one of the members of the United Nations, until the Security Council takes the necessary measures to keep international peace and security."

Therefore, Islam advocates that holy wars should have as a purpose to fight all the situations of the violation of the nature of such law, and to defend its sound values, starting with legitimate defence concerning the individual, his family and his belongings and also the defence of one's society, nation and creed, in order to preserve one's sacred values from being violated and for the protection of the individual and group entity from being violated and ridiculed.

If the enemies of Islam have considered the Muslim holy war as a sacred war which arouses terror and fear in the minds and hearts of non-Muslims, the reality of these wars in the Islamic context makes them synonymous with war and fighting with the aim of defending oneself, one's rights and one's religion.

That is why the nation was addressed in such a way as it is a nation (Ummah) with a mission and a purpose. This does not mean that it is a belligerent religion as it was interpreted by some adversary thinkers. There are even some defenders who believe that by making such statements they make Islam look stronger. Even had it been the religion of wars and swords, it would have vanished soon after the end of the heyday of its leading states and would not have stayed alive in the minds of people. By making such claims, they often compare it to Christianity which has been claimed to be the religion of forgiving

and leniency and that it prohibits wars, whereas that is not true and that, like Islam, it resorts to swords in necessity. Among the sayings of the Christ (peace be upon him) in the Book of Matthew : "Do not think that I have come in order to cast peace on the earth; I have not come to cast peace but sword"(1). He also said in the Book of Luke, as he was asking his companions : "When I sent you without bags, provision sacks, or shoes, did you need anything ? They replied : No! Then he said to them : Now, however, he who has a bag should take it, and also a provision sack; and he who has not any, should sell a garment and buy himself a sword"(2).

Holy fighting in Islam has various dimensions and stages including political activity, the spending of money and such activities which are resorted to in order to secure one's rights and to react to aggression and to save one's honour. The most noble kind of fighting is the fight against one's lustful desires, idiosyncrasies and greed, or as it was called by the Prophet (PBUH) the "higher holy" war when he said : "We have returned from the lower holy war to the higher holy war. They said : What is the higher holy war ? He said (PBUH) : The fight of the heart or the fight of the spirit"(3).

From the point of view of Islam, holy fighting involves the person's heart and tongue, and only after that does it involve one's property and one's self. Holy fighting which calls upon the self is always linked with one's property. God Almighty says : "Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah!"(1).

Yet, the first verse which allowed holy fighting linked it with the fight against injustice, as it states : "Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged, and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory; those who have been driven from their homes unjustly, only because they said : Our Lord is Allah"(2). The meaning is implicit in the verse, that is sanction is given to fight. This meaning is confirmed in another verse, in which God Almighty states : "Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not"(3).

For this reason, Islam has given the utmost importance to holy fighting involving one's self and money. It has also considered this kind of fighting to be better valued than both the major and the minor pilgrimage and all kinds of extra worship, be it in the form of prayers or fasting. In order to highlight such a value, it will be sufficient to



quote God Almighty's following saying : "O ye who believe! Shall I show you a commerce that will save you from a painful doom ? Ye should believe in Allah and His messenger, and should strive for the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if ye did but know. He will forgive you your sins and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings in Gardens of Eden. That is the supreme triumph. And (He will give you) another blessing which ye love : help from Allah and present victory. Give good tidings (O Muhammad) to believers"(4). The Prophet (PBUH) also said : "The highest of faith in Islam is fighting for the cause of God"(5). He (PBUH) also said : "There are two kinds of eyes which are not harmed by hell's fire : one kind is that which has cried from the fear of God and the other is that which has spent the night watching out for the cause of God"(6). He (PBUH) also said : "He who stays up one night for the cause of God is like one who has fasted and prayed for one thousand nights"(7).

In spite of all this, when the Muslim state is led to war, such a situation has idealistic and human laws, conditions, regulations, and ethics which govern it. This is clearly stated in the Prophet's (PBUH) : "Conquer in the name of God, for the cause of God, fight those who do not believe in God; conquer but do not exaggerate or betray, and do not maim or kill an infant"(1). He (PBUH) also said : "Go and fight in the name of God and for the cause of God. Fight those who do not believe in God, without betraying them, or exaggerating, or maiming. And do not kill infants or monks"(2). He (PBUH) also said : "Do not kill an old weak man, or a small child or a woman"(3).

These laws also comprise the aftermath of war including what concerns the prisoners of war, which the Prophet (PBUH) summarises in his noble saying : "I am the messenger of mercy, but I am also the messenger of fierce battles"(4). This is an important aspect which has been dealt with quite profusely by the Muslim jurisprudence.

The Righteous Caliphs have followed the same path as that of the Prophet in this domain. The first one of them is Abu Bakr As Sadiq who advised Yazid Ben Soufiane, the Commander of the Syrian Army as follows : "... I would like to give you ten pieces of advice : do not kill a woman, or a child, or an old man, do not cut a fruitful tree, do not destroy a shelter, do not kill a sheep or a camel except for eating it, do not burn or sever any palm trees, do not enslave the defeated and be not a coward"(5). It is useless to mention that the Islamic state in times of peace establishes political, economic and

social relations with other countries, and has exchange relations which are based on equality, mutual respect, the preservation of common interests, and the endeavour to make these interests last. This is done on the basis of contracts and agreements upon whose respect the Holy Quran insists, as in the following verse : "Fulfil the covenant of Allah when ye have covenanted, and break not your oaths after the asseveration of them and after ye have made Allah surety over you. Lo! Allah knoweth what ye do"(1).

The agreement lasts as long as none of the agreeing parties violates, and thus rejects it, in the same way as the Prophet (PBUH) did with the idolaters about whom God Almighty said the following : "Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and His messenger toward those of the idolaters with whom ye made a treaty"(2). God Almighty has excepted from these those who respect the agreement in the following verse : "Excepting those of the idolaters with whom ye (Muslims) have a treaty, and who have since abated nothing of your right, nor have supported anyone against you. (As for these), fulfil their treaty to them till their term"(3). The issue of the respect of the clauses of agreements and contracts has reached such an extent that the Prophet (PBUH) turned down any idolater who became Muslim without the consent of his legal guardian, in accordance with the clauses of the truce of Al Hudaibiyyah.

This is the real coexistence as Islam has uniquely viewed it. We have tried to highlight its main characteristics in this limited piece of research. It is no wonder that Islam has been the only one to view it as such and to be itself the religion of coexistence, par excellence. Islam is the last religion that has been revealed, so it is God's latest word. Thus, it is the essence and the source that comprises the rest of the heavenly creeds and that covers them. In addition to this, it is a religion which, on the basis of its principles, has established a nation where both Muslims and non-Muslims have lived. This nation itself has enjoyed friendly relations with other nations. This has made and still makes Islam a mission which starts with the oneness of God and ends with the call to unity within which all human beings can live. Such a situation requires justice, equality, freedom, security, happiness and honour without any element of disunity, class differences, sectarianism, chauvinism or apartheid. It is in this context that one can understand God Almighty's statement : "And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them

by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the Truth which hath come unto thee. For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Hath Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of what wherein ye differ”(1).

When one considers this verse carefully, it becomes clear that the meaning of faith refers to accepting all heavenly religions, even though their commandments may relate to past times, which had their specific conditions and contexts. Such a consideration refers to the situation of hegemony in terms of the control and the assessment of all the deviations from their origin, that these religions have undergone. As a result of this assessment one can confirm what has remained from their original state and has not undergone any deviations or falsifications. At the same time, we are led to understand that the violation of the law of Islam is linked to the commandments that the different religions have brought, and which have changed according to the ambient conditions. Islam came and introduced these commandments under new formulations which made them more attractive but without contradicting the essence of those commandments as they are heavenly creeds, based on monotheism. God Almighty says in this context : “He hath ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying : Establish the religion, and be not divided therein”(2).

If we take this reality as a starting point which represents the essence of the Islamic spirit, then Muslims can aspire to achieve coexistence amongst themselves, and even with the ones who have adopted different religions but who live with them, and also with foreign peoples and nations which have established links and relations and have exchanged with them interests and needs.

Thanks to this understanding of coexistence in both its meanings, Muslims have been enabled to establish modern societies which are advanced in their internal organisation and their external relations. They have also been enabled to establish a civilisation and a culture based on the way Islam views knowledge and life and on their values and components. This has been clear from all their undertakings, be they political, military, economic, social or cultural, and has been reflected in the institutions which have regulated their affairs both



in times of peace and war. It has also been reflected in the legislation which they have referred to even in their trade relations with others. This view was comprehensive to the extent that it impressed this civilisation and culture to the greatest degree and led it to its development, on the basis of a co-ordinated dualism which they both could have access to in all their aspects. Such dualism is reflected in such pairings as the invisible and the felt, the spiritual and the material, the religious and the worldly, the individual and the collective, the particular and the general, the useful and the pleasing.

This development could not have progressed, shined and reflected the humanness of the Islamic civilisation and culture, had it not been for a capacity of open-mindedness which transcended all obstacles and hindrances. This capacity resides in its focus on Islam and not on the race of those who adopted it as a religion, while allowing non-Muslims in the spheres of consultation and discussion, and those of giving and taking, no matter when and where and whatever might result therefrom in terms of tribal or regional differences. This capacity also led this civilisation to benefit from variety and diversity, and in a deep-rooted solution for what concerns the self and the other including the issue of tradition and modernism in all their general aspects. It also resides in the stability which results from coexistence and cohabitation on the basis of forgiveness and peace. All this had the deepest influence on the evolution of thought and the improvement of life.

On the basis of this capacity, it was possible for the culture and civilisation created by Islam to interact while preserving a balance which still allowed them to keep all their own bases and highlights. They also kept their particular characteristics whose scope widened and improved as they kept interacting and competing. These interacting aspects did not lose any of their characterising features which they integrated in the comprehensive Islamic melting pot where they coexisted and got synchronised within it.

If the Muslims have experienced along the latest ages events which have brought with them many negative aspects from which they suffered and are still suffering in their lives and relations, the spirit of forgiving is still alive and living on. And it is thus in spite of the distortions and attempts of destabilisation emanating from the enemies of Islam, and even from some who pretend to be related to it. That spirit of forgiving is in dire need of being rescucitated from all sides within a clean and neat context of mutual trust and a belief in the self and in the other, and through an optimistic outlook on the

present and the future. This has to be based also on the assumption that the person who enjoys these qualities is also responsible and has a purpose in life.

It is for this purpose that he works for both his own sake and that of humanity in general. His work is inspired from the lasting religious values and the heritage they have engendered and also from the developed modern scientific culture. This person has also to be keen on avoiding defects and errors which mar the present civilisation and on curing the sicknesses that have resulted from its purely materialistic attitude. Humanity in its totality is certainly awaiting to find who to carry this message and spread it, in order to avoid the total annihilation of mankind, its environment and its security.

It is in this context that we should remember the notion of "monotheism" that has been advocated by the different heavenly religions, and that Islam has adopted and completed. Islam has thus transcended all factors of difference, quarrels and fighting, thanks to its forgiveness and open-mindedness, as well as its outstanding capacity of assimilation and absorption as well as the unification of all its people, even those who are not Muslims. These people look at themselves and at others and to the world around them with a comprehensive and clear look which allows them to coexist within that context of forgiveness and living together and a lasting exchange of giving and taking and of interests. This situation is possible only if we start from a context of multiplicity and variety, and the resulting distinctive characteristics which lead to interaction, unity, integration, and social equality among all human beings. All these characteristics have been epitomised in the Quran by the term *ta'aruf*(1). It is possible to say that this term means what is nowadays called coexistence, even if the former has a deeper meaning as it contains a cognitional aspect that has a wide semantic dimension, and which goes beyond the single aspect of living together.

Such an acquaintance could not have been achieved had it not been for the forgiveness which is itself one of the distinctive characteristics of Islam. This shows, without any doubt whatsoever, the extent of the capacity of openness which the Upright Religion has; starting from the disregard to the differences of religion, which transcend the mistaken uses which Muslims had to face and which came from non-Muslims, and are still in force. Any coexistence that is advocated today has to be linked to this openness which has become the feature of the day, after distances have been abbreviated, and civilisations have become

closer to each other, economies have become complementary and the cultural gaps have been bridged between the different peoples. The world has started to undo all aspects of abstruseness and confinement, or, at least, it is striving towards that, so it has started a dialogue with all counterparts, even those who had, in the past, opposed, confronted or even fought Islam. As such, Islam started the dialogue with the heavenly religions, especially with Christianity. It has also started with Judaism, with which this dialogue will certainly last long provided that the Palestinian people recover all their usurped rights, and all occupied Arab territories are freed and also if a comprehensive peace, whose first features are appearing, is achieved.

Openness is a psychological readiness which means in its first and simplest stages the desire to imitate and the capability to do it. What I mean by imitation here is imitation of what the other has, in high consideration of him, and in a forgiving attitude with him. This needs to function in a two-way manner so that it allows giving and taking within the context of the special individual characteristics of each party.

Therefore, we can say that there is neither openness nor dialogue, and consequently there is no coexistence without an individual entity and a special characteristic, i.e. without preserving them. Thus there should be no attempt to give these aspects up, and especially religion, otherwise there is no openness, and no dialogue and no coexistence, but there would be supremacy and tyranny and what they may lead to in terms of dissolution, or unrest and quarrel. This is the case of what the Muslim minorities undergo today in non-Muslim countries and even what some people want to impose within some Muslim countries themselves.

### ***The Insistence Upon Such a Dialogue is Based on Two Points :***

***First:*** In order to increase the extent of understanding that leads to coexistence.

***Second:*** In order to strengthen the belief in God in people's hearts, especially in a time when materialism and its values have permeated and overwhelmed the youth throughout the world.

The reason is that the belief in God is the context of communication and encounter as it is linked to the nature of man, and this is confirmed in God Almighty's verse : "So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright - the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of)



Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not"(1). The reason is also because faith in Islam has a comprehensive meaning which we must understand and advocate, as it is open to dialogue and discussion. God Almighty says in the verse that we have already mentioned in the introduction of this paper : "The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - We make no distinction between any of His messengers - and they say : We hear and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto Thee is the journeying"(2).

Our Noble Prophet (PBUH) says : "My own standing and that of the prophets before me is like the case of the man who built a house and embellished it except for a brick corner, which people started to visit and to like and then ask : have you made this brick corner ? I am the brick corner and I am the last of the prophets"(3).

The word Islam itself in its larger meaning reflects this comprehensiveness in faith, in the same way as Abraham and Ishmail said after they had built the foundations of the house as in God Almighty's verse : "Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful"(4). It is well known that it is Abraham who named us Muslims, God Almighty says : "He hath named you Muslims of old time"(5). This general meaning completes the particular meaning which makes Islam, the religion which was revealed by the Prophet Sidna Mohammad (PBUH). God Almighty speaks the truth when He says: "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM"(6).

- Part of a Hadith related by Ibn Hanbal in his Masnad, on the authority of Abu Imamah.
- It was related by Ibn Hanbal in his Masnad, on the authority of Ibn Abbass. It was also related, with some difference in the wording, by Al-Bukhari in Kitab Al-Imane and by At-Tirmidhi in Al-Manaqib.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 135-136.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 285.
- Ibid, 137.
- Al-An'am [Cattle] : 161.
- It was related by Al-Qudha'i on the authority of Ibn 'Awn and Ad-Daylami on the authority of Abu Hurayra.

- It was related by Al-Bukhari and Ibn Mājjah on the authority of Jaber.
- It was related by Ibn Hanbal in his Masnad, on the authority of Omar Ibn Al'Ass.
- Ar-Rûm [The Romans] : 30.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 143.
- It was related by Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Kinanah.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 185.
- It was related by Al-Bukhari and An-Nissa'i on the authority of Abu Hurayra.
- It was related by Ahmad; An-Nissa'i; Ibn Majjah; and Al-Hakim on the authority of Ibn Abbas.
- Al-Qalam [The Pen] : 4.
- Fussilat : 34.
- It was related by Malik in the Muwatta.
- Tasamuh al-Islam ma'a adh-Dhat wal Akhar (Tolerance of Islam toward the Self and the Other), book made by the author to the 3rd Session of the Summer University, organised by the Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs in Casablanca on 4-6 Sha'ban 1414H/17-19 January 1994. (The present research is based on this book.)
- Al-Isra' [The Children of Israel] : 70.
- Al-Ahzab [The Clans] : 72.
- Sad : 72-73.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 31.
- Al-Hujurat [The Private Apartments] : 13.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 1.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 3-4.
- Al-Imran [The Family of Imran] : 190.
- Ar-Rûm [The Romans] : 22.
- Hûd : 118-119.
- Yûnus [Jonah] : 100.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 256.
- Al-Baqarah (the Cow) : 113.
- It was related by Al-Bukhari; Muslim; At-Tirmidhi; An-Nissa'i; and Ibn Majjah on the authority of Abu-Hurayrah.

- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 193.
- Al-Mumtahanah [She Who is to Be Examined] : 8
- Ibid : 9.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 71.
- Al-Hujurat [The Private Apartments] : 10.
- Al-Hashr [Exile] : 9.
- It was reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on Nu'man Ibn Bashir.
- It was reported by Al-Bukhari; Muslim; At-Tirmidhi; An-Nissa'i; and Ibn Hanbal, on Abu Mussa, and added : "He entwined his fingers".
- It was reported by Al-Bukhari in the book titled Al-Iman on the authority of Anas. It was also related by Muslim and Ibn Hanbal.
- It was reported by Al-Bukhari; Muslim; At-Tirmidhi; and Ibn-Hanbal, on the authority of Ibn Omar.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 105.
- Al-Mutaffifun [Defrauding] : 26.
- Qureysh : 3-4.
- It was reported by At-Tirmidhi on the authority of 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Mohsen Al-Ansari Al-Khutaymi.
- An-Nûr [Light] : 27.
- Al-Hujurat [The Private Apartments] : 12.
- Ar-Rahman [The Beneficent] : 1-4.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 42.
- Al-Imran [The Family of Imran] : 110.
- Al-'Ankabût [The Spider] : 46.
- The present author was invited to some of such meetings.
- Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyyah, by Muhammad Ibn Al-Hosseïn Al-Farra' Al-Hanbali, p. 160-161 (Authenticated by Muhammad Hamed Al-Faky, Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1403H/1983A.D.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 6.
- Al-Ma'idah : 5.
- Meaning an executive minister by contrast to a deputy minister.



- Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyyah by Al-Farra', p. 32. This point of view is shared by Abu Al-Hassan Ali Ibn Muhammad Al-Mawardi in Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyyah, pp. 21-22. (Authenticated by Muhammad Badr An-Na'ssani Al-Halabi, Al-Khaneji Editions, Egypt, 1327H/1909A.D.)
- Kitab Al-Kharaj by Abu Yûsuf Yaaqûb Ibn Ibrahim, p. 74, Edition Salafiyyah, Egypt, 1347H.
- Al-Kharaj wa Sin'at al-Kitabah, by Qudamah Ibn Ja'far, p. 225 (authenticated by Muhammad Hossein Az-Zubaydi, publication of the Ministry of Culture and Information, Dar Annashr Arrashid, Iraq, 1981. In addition, it is related in Al-Bukhari and in At-Tirmidhi that the Prophet (PBUH) took the tribute from the magians of Hajar. It is also related in At-Tirmidhi that he (PBUH) took it from the magians of Bahrain; and that Omar took it from the Persians; and that Othman took it from the Persians and the Berbers.
- It was related by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi on the authority of Ibn Mas'ûd.
- Reported by Al-Bukhari; Muslim; and At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Abu-Hurayrah.
- It was related by Al-Bukhari; Muslim; and Ibn Majjah on the authority of Omar Ibn Al-'Ass.
- Al-Bayan wa At-Tabyine, by Al-Jahiz, Vol. 2, p. 46 (authenticated by Abdussalam Harun, 2nd edition, 1380H/1961A.D.).
- At-Tawba [Repentance] : 29.
- Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyyah, by Al-Mawardi, pp. 127-128.
- Al-Furûq, by Shihab Eddine Abi Al-Abbas Al-Qurafi, Vol. 3, pp. 11-14, Beirut : Dar Al-Ma'rifah.
- Adh-Dhakhirah, by Al-Qurafi, Vol. 3, p. 454 (authenticated by Muhammad Bukhubza, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami).
- Ibid.
- It was related by Muslim on the authority of 'Ayesah in the end of Kitab Al-Jihad wa As-Siyar.
- Adh-Dhakhirah, by Al-Qurafi, Vol. 3, p. 406.
- Ibid.
- Futûh Al-Buldan, by Al-Baladhari, p. 246.

- Tarikh At-Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 236.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 208.
- Al-Anfal [Spoils of War] : 61.
- Al-Hashr [Exile] : 23.
- Yûnus [Jonah] : 26.
- It was reported by Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah.
- Al-Hujurat [The Private Apartments] : 13
- An-Nahl [The Bee] : 125.
- Al-'Ankabût [The Spider] : 46.
- Al-Ma'idah : 30.
- Al-Anfal [Spoils of War] : 25.
- Al-Anfal [Spoils of War] : 46.
- The present author has already dealt with this topic in two research works :

Madrasat Muhammad Al-Khamis fi Siyaq Al-Fikr Al-Siyyassi Al-Maghribi min Khilali Dhahirati Al-Junuh li As-Silmi (Published among the proceedings of the International School on Mohammad V - The king leader - starting page 471. Organised by Ribat Al-Fath Association; 16-20 November 1987. Also published in the book titled Ma'alim Maghribiyah, p. 25. First edition, Rabat, 1411H/1991A.D.).

*L'Islam*: religion de paix et de jihad. A contribution of the author to the International Conference held in Nice (France) on 13-14 December 1990, which was organised jointly by the Institute of Law for Peace and Development and UNESCO on : "Religions et Guerre". The proceedings of this Conference were published under this title by : Editions Universitaires et Editions Mame.

- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 256.

It was reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah.

- Chapter Ten : Verse 34.
- Chapter Twenty-four : Verses 35-36
- It was reported by Al-Beyhaqi on the authority of Jaber Ibn Abdullah.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 41.
- Al-Hajj [The Pilgrimage] : 39-40
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 216.

- As-Saff [The Ranks] : 10-13.
- It was related by Ibn Hanbal.
- It was related by At-Tirmidhi and An-Nissa'i.
- It was related by Ibn Majjah.
- It was related by Ibn Hanbal.
- It was related by Ibn Hanbal.
- It was related by Abu Dawud.
- It was mentioned by Ibn Sa'ad in his Tabaqat on the authority of Mujahid. There is another like it in Ibn Hanbal's Masnad on the authority of Abu Mussa; and also in Tabarani's Al-Kabir.
- It was related by Malik on the authority of Yahya Ibn Sa'id.
- An-Nahl [The Bee] : 91.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 1.
- At-Tawbah [Repentance] : 4.
- Al-Ma'idah : 48
- Ash-Shûra [Counsel] : 13.

The author's contribution "Ath-Thaqafah Al-Islamiyyah wa mada Tafa'uliha ma'a Ath-Thaqafat Al-Ukhra Madiyan wa Hadiran" to the Conference organised by the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco on : "Ath-Thaqafah Al-Islamiyyah bayn Al-Akhdh wa Al-'Ata", 4-5 December 1991. (Published as part of the proceedings of the Conference in the publications of the Academy).

- Ar-Rûm [The Romans] : 30.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 285.
- It was related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah.
- Al-Baqarah [The Cow] : 127.
- Al-Hajj [The Pilgrimage] : 78.
- Al-Ma'idah : 4.

### **Killing in the Name of God: The Problem of Holy War**

In spite of the many differences among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, they share a fundamental belief in God as compassionate and just. As a result, those communities have often nurtured people of extraordinary kindness and courageous commitment to justice. In



contrast to the deep hatred that obviously inspired the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, the vast majority of Muslims, like their Jewish and Christian counterparts, are appalled and sickened by terrorism, and utterly repudiate the mass murder of innocent people.

Why then do some members of those same communities believe that it is their moral obligation to wage aggressive holy war, even to annihilate innocent people in God's name? What aspects of their scriptures and traditions tend to support violence against "infidels"? What ethical principles—religious and non-religious—can we affirm in response to those ideas and the atrocities that they sometimes engender?

Religion is clearly not the only catalyst of total war and other forms of indiscriminate violence. People seem to be able to invent all sorts of rationales for mass killing without feeling the need to cite the will of God. For example, just a few days prior to the September 11 attacks, two young men from the Sacramento area each killed half a dozen people, apparently out of personal revenge. And some of the most appalling atrocities in history have been rooted not in religion per se but rather in racial or class hatred. There may even be a genetic tendency in our species, like that of our chimpanzee relatives, to attack and kill others for no reason except that they aren't "one of us." (Wrangham and Peterson)

But religious violence can take on a particularly intense and ruthless character, if the objects of that violence are seen as blaspheming or insulting God, as the enemies of God or God's way narrowly conceived. The problem of indiscriminate holy war is particularly difficult for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to eliminate from within because it's so deeply rooted in their scriptures and traditions. The same religious traditions that affirm God to be compassionate, merciful, and just, also include more disturbing claims that promote religious hatred and intolerance, and sadly have provided a rationale for aggressive holy war. We need to face these things head-on. Questioning the moral justification of holy war leads, moreover, to troubling questions about the legitimacy of some basic theological claims and the authority of foundational religious scripture.

Most of my comments will be about Christianity, but I'll start with the Hebrew Bible, since it is considered sacred by all three traditions. One of the Mosaic commandments prohibits murder (Exodus 20:13). Why is murder wrong, other than its obvious conflict with love

of neighbour (Leviticus 19:17-18, 33-34)? Essentially because people are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, 9:6). One might infer from that idea that no killing of persons would be allowed at all, that the concept of human beings as made in God's image would entail strict pacifism, an absolute duty not to kill people. But that is not what the ancient Hebrews concluded, since many offences were subject to capital punishment, a form of killing. So perhaps we might interpret the image-of-God idea to mean, All persons have a basic right not to be killed, but they can forfeit that right if they commit a serious enough crime. This would also be consistent with punishing only those guilty of crimes (Deuteronomy 24:16) and limiting the use of deadly force to the defence of innocent others or oneself. This is probably what most Jewish people would affirm today.

But collective punishment and indiscriminate war were also commanded or approved in the Hebrew Bible, especially in cases of idolatry. The first of the Mosaic commandments prohibited the Israelites from worshipping any other gods but Yahweh. God demanded purity and strict obedience, and idolatry and blasphemy were punishable by death (Exodus 20:3, 5). Non-Israelites who lived within the area believed by the Hebrews to have been promised to them by God were seen to pose a great temptation to them to abandon their faith. This led them to justify the slaughter of entire communities (Deuteronomy 20:10-18). And their holy wars eventually inspired similar wars many centuries later by Christians who admired Old Testament warriors like Joshua: "[Joshua's army killed everyone in Jericho], both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.... Joshua defeated the whole land... he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded." (Joshua 6:21 and 10:40)

***In the Islamic Tradition, There is a Similar Mixture of Values Restraining War Along with Others Promoting it.***

The Quran repeatedly refers to God as compassionate and just. It also says that "there is no compulsion in religion" (2:256): submission to God must be freely chosen, not forced (Ali). The Quran urges Muslims to use "beautiful preaching" to persuade people to accept Islam and to "argue nicely" with Jews and Christians who are seen as worshipping the same God as their own (16:125, 29:46, Firestone). This is probably the attitude of most Muslim people today. Jewish and Christian communities have often been tolerated and protected under Muslim rule.

Muhammad was said to have practiced non-violence early in his prophetic career but soon came to believe that God commanded the use of force, not only in defence of his growing religious community (Quran 22:39-40) but also in the form of offensive jihad to expand the territory of Islam. (Kelsay; Firestone)

The word jihad, by the way, means struggle or effort. Jihad can refer to the struggle of the individual Muslim to conform his or her will to Allah's, or to a peaceful effort to persuade others to accept Islam. But jihad can also mean holy war. In fact, there's a sense in which the only completely just war in Islamic terms is a holy war since it has to be approved by proper religious authorities and waged to defend or promote Islam or the Muslim community. (Kelsay; Johnson)

In spite of the Quranic statement against forcing religion on others, Muslim leaders have sometimes threatened to kill unbelievers if they did not accept Islam (Peters). Although Islam spread to some parts of the world like Indonesia mainly by means of "beautiful preaching," much of its expansion elsewhere was due to offensive war, first by Muhammad to unify Arabia, then by his followers in conquering Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Persia, parts of India, North Africa, Spain, Turkey and the Balkans.

Now, Muhammad and his successors did express some important moral rules for fighting holy wars: women, children and the elderly were not to be directly attacked (though they could be enslaved). Jihad was not supposed to be total war involving indiscriminate killing (in spite of what Osama bin Laden might claim). But Muslim leaders were permitted by Muhammad to kill all captured soldiers and male civilians if they were not Muslims or had abandoned Islam. The fact that you might be a civilian or a soldier who had surrendered didn't necessarily protect you from being killed after a battle against Muslims was over. Thus, Islam traditionally did not have a generic principle of noncombatant immunity though many Muslim leaders today uphold such a principle. (Kelsay; Johnson)

Of course, Muslims are probably as prone as Christians and Jews to seeing in their holy scriptures only what they want to see, ignoring other passages that contradict their preconceived beliefs. Someone inferring a mandate to wage indiscriminate, offensive war from Quran 9:5, "Kill the idolaters wherever you find them," could only do so by ignoring the particular historical context of that passage, verses elsewhere that urge defensive and limited uses of force only, such as



Quran 2:190, "Fight in the path of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for God does not love transgressors," and numerous other verses praising patience in adversity and nonviolent preaching. (Firestone)

Turning to Christianity, its early history was characterised by a fairly strict form of pacifism. That approach slowly gave way to an acceptance of violence in defence of the innocent. And sadly, some Christian leaders eventually came to advocate force against heretics and infidels, and even total war in the interest of defending and expanding the faith. (Bainton)

In spite of the loving and peaceful tenor of his teachings and example overall, Jesus did occasionally show anger, as when he confronted the merchants in the Temple (John 2:13-16). Some New Testament passages also appear to accept the institution of the military, if not explicitly praise it: Roman soldiers who met Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul were not asked by any of them to abandon their vocation (Luke 3 and 7, Acts 10 and 27). (Arguments from silence are notoriously weak, however.) There's even a passage where Jesus seems to permit his disciples to carry swords, and by implication to use them in some situations, though that passage appears only in Luke 22 and is very ambiguous.

Jesus also claimed the authority to call on legions of angels to protect him, but held back because it would conflict with his sacrificial mission (Matthew 26). Paul in Chapter 13 of his letter to the Romans declared, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." He who is in authority "is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer." This text was cited by many later Christians as divine justification for military force.

But Jesus also set very high ethical standards for his followers, including an unbounded willingness to forgive wrongdoing, non-retaliation against evil, and love of enemies (Matthew 5). Three of the Gospels say that he rebuked one of his disciples for using a sword to defend him at his arrest. Most of his early followers seem to have interpreted Jesus' commands to prohibit all uses of force by Christians, even in defence of the innocent. Paul echoed Jesus' nonviolent message in his letter to the Romans, Chapter 12: "Repay no one evil for evil ... never avenge yourselves." Over a century later, Tertullian argued that holding public office and being a soldier would inevitably require actions forbidden to Christians; in his view, "It is more permissible

to be killed than to kill." Hippolytus thought that Christians should not join the army; but if they were already in the army, they must disobey orders to kill. (Swift)

Although some Christians served as Roman soldiers during the Church's early history, a very significant shift in Christian thinking about war occurred in the fourth century when Emperor Constantine began to use the Roman state to support the Church. According to an influential bishop named Eusebius, Christian pacifism was from then on to be strictly for clergy, monks, and nuns; lay Christians would now be obligated to defend the empire with force. (Bainton; Swift). Ambrose, another important bishop of that era, held that Christians may not use force in personal self-defence—his way of interpreting Jesus' commands not to resist or retaliate against evil. But he also thought that Christian love entailed a duty to use force to defend innocent third parties—indeed, a Christian who refused to prevent injury to another person would be as bad as the one who inflicted it. Ambrose also shifted the focus of Christian moral concern from the act of violence to attitude of the agent: Christian soldiers should love their enemies, even as they repel them with deadly force! In effect, Ambrose "baptized" Roman military virtues for Christian purposes: risking one's life to defend the empire became courageous, just and noble for Christians. (Ibid.)

But he and his famous student Augustine also believed that there should be moral limits on war. Even in cases where Augustine considered war to be the lesser of evils, he regarded killing as ultimately tragic, always requiring an attitude of mourning and regret on the part of Christians. (Ibid.) Partly due to his influence, throughout most of the medieval period, killing in war was considered a very serious sin. If a Christian soldier killed an enemy soldier, even in a war that was considered just, the Christian soldier would have to do penance for the killing, usually by fasting and prayer for a year or more. (Verkamp)

Beginning around the ninth century, though, another important evolution of Christian thinking occurred. Killing unbelievers was actually declared by popes Leo IV and John VIII to be spiritually beneficial for Christian soldiers: Their sins could be erased if they killed in defence of the Church. In the year 1095, Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade, urging European leaders to rescue the Christian holy lands from their non-Christian occupiers. He referred to the Muslims who then controlled Palestine as an "unclean nation"

that had polluted Christian holy places. Killing Muslims became itself a form of penance for Christians for remission of their sins. Moral rules governing the conduct of war were abandoned, and unlimited tactics were permitted. No one was immune from attack by Christian crusaders; whole cities were slaughtered. (Halsall)

Tragically, some advocates of aggressive religious war can still be found today in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. What they cannot legitimately claim, though, is that their position is the authentic expression of their faith. Every major religious tradition contains ethical principles that are incompatible with total war. People of all faiths can agree, I hope, that innocent civilians should never be directly targeted, that indis-crim-i-nate weapons and tactics should never be used against military targets in ways that would produce large civilian casualties, and that captured soldiers should not be tortured or executed but treated humanely. I also hope that in our present crisis we can resist the temptation to excuse the "indirect" killing of large numbers of noncombatants as "collateral damage" dictated by "military necessity." But a necessary step toward achieving interfaith consensus on such things is the recognition and repudiation of troubling values embedded deeply within religious scriptures and traditions. In many Christian worship services, it is a common practice for someone to read aloud a passage from the Bible, and indicate the end of the passage by saying, "The Word of the Lord," after which the congregation responds, "Thanks be to God." Imagine that you are seated in your congregation of choice, listening to the following readings:

"I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.... The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins; their cities you have rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.... The LORD will swallow up his enemies in his wrath, and fire will consume them. He will destroy their offspring from the earth ... their children from ... humankind." (Psalms 9:2, 6, and 21:9-10)

"Thousands of angels proclaimed with loud voices: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth, wisdom and might, honour and glory and praise!'... I saw heaven wide open, and a white horse appeared; its rider's name was Faithful and True, for he is just in judgment and just in war.... He was robed in a garment dyed in blood, and he was called the Word of God. The armies of heaven followed him.... Out of his mouth came a sharp sword to smite the nations; for it is he who will rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the sovereign Lord." (Revelation



5:11-12 and 19:11, 13-15) "How many were the populations We [God] utterly destroyed because of their iniquities, setting up in their places other peoples. When they felt our punishment (coming) ... they (tried to) flee from it.... They said, 'Ah, woe to us! We were indeed wrongdoers!' And that cry of theirs ceased not, till We made them as a field that is mown, as ashes silent and quenched." (Quran 21:11-15 [Ali])

Now if the reader were to end such passages with, "The Word of the Lord," I hope that the congregation would not answer, "Thanks be to God," but rather, "I respectfully disagree," or "I don't think so." Or perhaps to avoid causing unnecessary offence, the congregation might respond at that point with stony silence, then "argue nicely" after the service is over. Because these are not the words of a compassionate and just God. The God portrayed in those texts, traditionally considered sacred by Jews, Christians, and/or Muslims, is not a God who is worthy of our love and worship.

### **Permit Me to Offer a Few Additional Theological Suggestions.**

If you believe in God, no matter what religious tradition you identify with:

- Hold firmly to the idea that God is compassionate and just.
- Consistent with that belief, abandon the idea that God ever has commanded or condoned—or ever would command or condone—the mass slaughter of innocent people, even if such claims are made in sacred scripture or asserted by otherwise trustworthy religious authorities.
- Consider the possibility that it does not blaspheme or insult God to believe that God's actions are limited by objective moral principles. To say that God would never do or command anything cruel does not represent a significant limit on God's power.

Now if we can agree together in the rejection of total war, we still need to wrestle with some contending ethical perspectives on the use of force. Here are some concluding thoughts:

- According to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus said to "turn the other cheek" when struck, not to resist evil or retaliate against it. But is it really wrong to use force to defend an innocent person (including yourself) against an unjust, violent attacker? And isn't it right to arrest and imprison people who commit horrible crimes? (Note that a system of criminal justice almost always requires some degree of force, though it need not impose capital punishment.)

- Also according to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus said to love our enemies. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many Buddhist teachers have shown that it is possible to convert some enemies into friends through nonviolent responses to injustice and to restrain ourselves from lashing out against perceived enemies. But is it really possible psychologically to love a true enemy? (Imagine someone who has murdered or raped one of your friends or relatives.)
- Even if it's psychologically possible to love a true enemy, is it fair to expect anyone to love such an enemy?
- If I am personally victimized, surely I can choose to love or forgive my attackers if they show remorse. (Perhaps I could even be morally obligated to do so.) But do I have the right to love or forgive someone who murders or rapes another person?

In sum, if compassion should temper our fury and restrain us from waging wars of annihilation, are there also times when justice should override mercy? *Postscript:* In public discussion following my speech, faculty colleagues suggested that a definition of "love" was needed. Here is what I tentatively propose should be included in that concept: benevolent feelings toward particular people; a desire that they flourish, that they achieve good things and are happy; empathy for their suffering; respect for their dignity, rights, and rational autonomy. With that concept in mind, consider again whether it is psycho-logically possible to love a true enemy, and if so, whether we are morally obligated to do so.

## Essence of Islam

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### Scholar Works with the Powerless in Navigating Islamic Law

In 2002, Amina Lawal, a young Nigerian woman, was tried for adultery under Shariah, Islam's traditional law. She was saved the following year with the help of Hauwa Ibrahim, a Harvard scholar and visiting lecturer on women's studies and Islamic law at Harvard Divinity School(HDS).

Ibrahim, the first female lawyer among a population of 250,000 in northern Nigeria's predominantly Muslim Gombe region, used Shariah law to fight the Shariah system, but she also had to battle society. You have to win these cases in the courts, said Ibrahim, but you also have to "win the hearts and minds of the villagers."

As a 2008-09 fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Ibrahim explored the theoretical foundations of Shariah penal code and examined its impact on the legal practices and the human rights of women in West Africa. Currently she is working on a book telling the story of the Shariah system through the eyes of her clients, the women, children, and men whose lives have been affected by Islamic law. She discussed her new project during a Thursday (April 7) lecture at HDS titled "Humanizing Shariah — A Memoir of the Human Face of a Legal Practice."

With her new work, Ibrahim said she hopes to convey the importance of common humanity, written in a familiar style with a language accessible to lawyers and laymen alike. I can do that, said Ibrahim, because "I am an insider, I am a daughter of the soil." Calling her own education an accident, Ibrahim said she takes clients on for free because it "is



her passion.” While her husband disagrees with much of what she does, he supports her. The problem for so many of her clients, she said, is that they are poor, illiterate, and powerless.

“They don’t have a voice.”

With her new work, Ibrahim said, she hopes to tell their stories, and to shed light on Shariah. In working on the cases, she said she learned that Shariah is never about stoning, flogging, or amputation, but that it is actually “a path to peace.” “Are there opposing forces against this? Yes, of course ... Are there verses in the Quran contradictory? Without a doubt, just like any other religious book. But let me tell you finally I am seeking to do what is right ... through Shariah.”

### **Unintended Consequences**

A perfect storm is gathering in the Middle East. Fuelled by revolution, international interference, and the repositioning of world leaders as they try to hold on to their power in the region, the streets are now churning with what is called the ‘Arab Spring’. The outcome is anything but certain.

The Rolling Revolutions of 2011 have dramatically changed the playing field in countries throughout the Middle East. They have created a void in leadership as the fall of dictators opened up opportunity for Islamist organisations. Intent on taking control and redefining nations under Shariah law, organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, al Qaeda in Yemen and Libya, and the leaders of Iran and Turkey have been rushing to fill the vacuum.

The success of revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya empowered a struggle that has been spreading like wildfire, sowing chaos wherever the revolutionary fever strikes. The surge of revolution has not yet subsided, and the rumours and threats of larger, impending wars that will spill across national boundaries to become regional conflagrations are real. They are the consequence of the empowerment derived from the successful revolutions that toppled governments and empowered the street. They should be taken with the utmost seriousness by Western governments, who are their ultimate target.

They represent a threat to the Western world that has not been seen since the days before World War II. Although the language of the revolutions uses words like ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’, what is being left in their wake is anything but. Initial chaos has already given way to a new form of tyranny that will suffer neither freedom nor democracy – in Tunisia, Libya, and soon, in Egypt.

In Egypt: The young men and women who began the revolution with dreams of equality and democratic process have been outmaneuvered by the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's oldest and most well-organized Islamist movement. In fact, the leaders of the Brotherhood have been planning this succession for years, and were therefore able to move in swiftly when the demonstrations first erupted. In the beginning, they said that they had no interest in the political process, claiming that the Brotherhood was simply a community assistance organisation whose primary aim was to support "the people". The Brotherhood engaged in a massive organisational effort once the demonstrations started. They brought Muslims out of the mosques in the hundreds of thousands onto the streets of Egypt's cities to demonstrate for the fall of the Mubarak government. They provided food, water, and portable latrines, to keep the people in the streets once they got there.

Then something not unexpected happened. As we predicted in January, their modest assertions gave way to high political ambition. They formed a new party – the Freedom and Justice Party – and recently announced that they plan to run candidates in just under 50% of the district seats in the November election. Judging by past performance, this 'modest' aim is still likely to change, putting them in line to control the government in Egypt after the elections. Because the Brotherhood draws its support from the mosques, where it has a commanding voice, it is certain to bring out the needed votes for seats in the new parliament that will enable it to take command of the government and begin installing Shariah law, upon which their true ideology is based.

Elsewhere: The fighting still rages in Syria and Yemen, where the ferocity of the conflict is still escalating. In Libya, Gaddafi loyalists continue to stand their ground in key places like Sirte, Gaddafi's birthplace. The rebels have formed a new interim government, and their draft Constitution clearly states that "Islam is the religion of the state, and the principle source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Shariah)" A major cultural shift for this formerly secular country. Jordan's Hashemite monarchy is also on the list of ruling families to be targeted. Picking up the cue from recent events in Turkey and Egypt, a FaceBook page posted last week called for an attack on Israel's embassy in Amman. It hasn't happened yet, and King Abdullah II is not likely to take it lightly, but Jordan is ripe for the unrest among its people to erupt in one form or another, encouraged by the

successes of other revolutions. Finally, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, another target of the Brotherhood, has been on alert against a coup for several years, cleaning up and training his military in such things as urban warfare, and waiting for the other shoe to drop. In his country, where Shariah is already law, the ground-breaking programs which King Abdullah has begun to put in place (e.g. the establishment of the first integrated, co-educational school in Saudi Arabia) make him a prime target for attack.

### **More Crises Brewing**

In the mean time, two additional crises have been added to the mix, preparing to play out in the immediate future: The first will take place in New York City this week. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, has come to New York with plans to seek full membership in the United Nations. The request is unilateral and disregards all efforts to reconvene direct peace talks with Israel. Although 'Palestine' is not, in fact, an established nation, membership would provide the Palestinians with a de facto statehood, albeit one without official boundaries. It will also give the Palestinians a new bully pulpit from which to mount its ongoing and virulent campaign against Israel. America has made clear its position. Just one year ago, the President said, "the rights of the Palestinian people will be won only through peaceful means – including genuine reconciliation with a secure Israel". This means direct negotiations with Israel, something that has failed to bring about peace in the past, despite more than twenty years of trying.

But UN recognition of the Palestinian state will not ensure peace. In fact, should it happen, it may very well provoke a new war by empowering people sworn to the destruction of Israel to take matters into their own hands in an extension of the 'Arab Spring'. If it does not happen, it may still provoke war, justified by the 'frustration' of those supporting the Palestinian cause. The Pandora's box has now been opened. The simple fact of Abbas' appeal to the UN,, whichever way it is decided, is sufficient in itself to start a chain reaction that he will not be able to control. The future impact of his determination to act unilaterally remains to be seen, but it is not likely to be a positive one.

### **A New Mediterranean Threat**

The second crisis point is also in the Middle East, where Turkey is making major waves in a bid for power in the Arab world. Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been travelling to the



newly 'liberated' countries of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Seeking to expand his influence in the region, he addressed audiences who shouted their approval when he told them that the creation of a Palestinian state "is not an option but a necessity." They went wild when he damned Israel for last year's attack on the blockade-busting flotilla in which nine people were killed. His hypocrisy couldn't be more blatant.

Erdogan lamented the death of nine Turks who were challenging a legitimate blockade under international law. He also talked about the 'freedom and democracy' in Turkey where he claimed that all people were treated with respect. "There are Christians, Jews and minorities [in Turkey]," he said, "but the state treats them equally." He failed to mention his country's violent war against the Kurds. According to reports, over the last twenty years Turkey has dispossessed three million Turkish Kurds and killed more than 30,000.

Erdogan's open hostility to Israel and his recent saber rattling has added a new and dangerous dimension to the already crumbling stability in the region. He has recently threatened Israel with a naval confrontation by promising a naval escort for the next blockade-busting flotilla to Gaza. The consequences of such a confrontation are likely to be far beyond his ability to control, embroiling the region (and beyond) in armed conflict greater and more deadly than anything we have seen in recent years. And should Iran, with its new naval presence in Syria's port of Latakiya, also decide to get involved, the conflict will take on broad new dimensions from which the West will not be able to stay aloof.

Ironically, Erdogan (a Turk and non-Arab) seems to be competing with Ahmadinejad (an Iranian and non-Arab) to fill the leadership vacuum in the Arab world and become a pan-Arabic, pan-Islamic leader. His visits to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, are seen as his effort to establish himself as the new leader of the Arab world.

Meanwhile, Back in New York... While Erdogan flexes his muscles in the Middle East, the drama set to unfold in New York City will be worth your attention.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will deliver a speech at the UN on Friday. In a statement to his Cabinet on Monday, Netanyahu said, "I will meet with US President Barack Obama and other world leaders, and afterwards I will address the UN General Assembly. The UN is not a place where Israel wins praise, but I think

that it is important that I go there in order to represent both the State of Israel and the truth – and the truth is that Israel wants peace and the truth is that the Palestinians are doing everything to torpedo direct peace negotiations.”

Mahmoud Abbas will also speak at the UN on Friday when he applies for membership. He will no doubt talk about peace, freedom, and economic development in Palestine. He will no doubt not mention that Palestinian refugees who now live in ‘Palestine’ will not be given citizenship in the new state, or that no Jews will be allowed to live there (despite Palestinian demands that millions of Palestinian ‘refugees’ be ‘repatriated’ in Israel). These are both publicly stated conditions of his new state, but the world is not likely to hear about them on Friday.

The discussion that follows the speeches is unlikely to bring the parties to Middle East conflict any closer together in a quest for peace. Israel will undoubtedly come under attack from other members of the General Assembly, as usual, and the Quartet – the US, the EU, Russia, and the UN – will continue to try getting the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

This will be an historic event, however it turns out. The confluence of events is looking increasingly like the perfect storm. The seeds of war are once again being sown and the laws of unintended consequences have been released in a part of the world already afflicted with a host of unresolved conflicts. Friday is likely to be a significant and irreversible tipping point in the future of the world as we know it.

### Revising the Image of Shariah

Even though the implementation of *shariah* law is not publicly discussed by the activists of PKS, as a political party arisen out of a religious movement, PKS will not stray from its commitment to Islamise society and the state. The struggle of how to implement *shariah* still preoccupies its activists. One member of a PKS committee in East Java said, “Partai Keadilan has never denied the implementation of *shariah* in Indonesia because it would be foolish for an Islamic party to reject *shariah*. In political platform, however, PKS uses the term *dakwah* instead of *shariah*, using *dakwah* as a means of the purification of human beings based on their natural tendencies (*fitrah*). Becoming God’s servants who also serve as good examples and enjoin the good in order to strengthen moral foundations of the nation. Promoting freedom to all citizens to embrace and practise

their religion with mutual respect PKS's position on the implementation of *shariah* can be found in a book written by a PKS activist, entitled *Yang Nyata dari PK Sejahtera*.

The book emphasises that "*shariah* is mercy for all creatures and the proper implementation of *shariah* will not bring discrimination. PKS believes that its implementation in Indonesia will provide the solution for the current multi dimensional-crisis. However, it must be done in a peaceful and constitutional way, not through violence or compulsion. Furthermore, in a different expression, which carries the same meaning, the chairman of PK in East Java has said, "We don't want to use *shariah* as a merely political commodity because it saddens us that many activists of political parties strongly demand the implementation of *shariah* in Indonesia but they themselves do not practise it.

Believing that the lack of a proper understanding of *shariah* is the chief obstacle in promoting its application, the Jemaah Tarbiyah activists who occupy the central leadership within PKS have begun to formulate their strategy for promoting its positive image. Implementing *shariah*, according to PKS, is not merely the need to impose a set of Islamic laws but rather it entails all positive aspects of human values and behaviour. For PKS, universal morality and values must take first priority in solving Indonesian political and economic crises.

In order to gain popular support, the party has worked to make *shariah* more applicable to day-to-day matters. The meaning of *shariah* has been widened in scope to include more substantive and practical issues. *Korupsi* (corruption), *Kolusi* (collusion) and *Nepotisme* (nepotism) known by the acronym "KKN" are new areas to combat, so that clean government, justice and welfare are considered to be the main ideals deriving from *shariah*. The campaign for *shariah* should be directed towards achieving prosperity, security, justice and peace in the world. In its simplest form, preserving public facilities, such transportation, parks, roads and toilets is obligatory for members of the party. In fact, PKS has tried to spiritualise all profane activities within realm of Islamic values and indeed all can be justified by religious doctrine.

In order to provide the religious grounds for these issues, the arguments are based on the Quran and Hadith and as well as on the public interest (*maslahah*). The manual and training materials of



PKS state that preserving individual and public rights is important, since Allah in the Quran (XXVIII: 77) states: "...and desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corruptors.

According to the activists of PKS, most people still have insufficient information about *shariah* and tend to see it from a negative point of view. They understand it merely as a legal system that prescribes the severe punishment of crimes under the *hudud* laws. Hidayat Nurwahid, former president of PKS and currently chairperson speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in 2004-2009 stated:

The problem is that too many people talk about *shariah* and they mean cutting off hands and wearing (head) scarves. Our main programme is how to make people better off, how to get justice. In order to make Indonesians, both Muslims and non-Muslims, comprehend the concept and essence of *shariah*, Dr. Salim Segaf al-Jufri, chairman of the *Shariah* Council of the Central Board of PKS, suggests three steps in socialising *shariah*: educating Muslims, providing good examples and creating dialogue with non-Muslims.

### **Educating Muslims**

PKS believes that educating people to be well informed about the proper meaning of *shariah* is an important step. *Shariah* must be seen as a model that promises prosperity to all human beings. If *shariah* is described by such acts as stoning adulterers and cutting off the hands of thieves, which alarms both Muslims and non-Muslims, according to PKS, this is a wrong understanding. *Shariah* contains aspects that apply not only to the legal system but also to economic progress and social solidarity. Rofi' Munawwar, a chairman of PKS in the province of East Java (1999-2004) explained

It is true that *hudud* is part of *shariah* but a just economic distribution for all people is also Islamic. Unfortunately, the aspects of punishment within *shariah* are more dominant than efforts to encourage wealthy people to help and lift up the poor. If this other aspect of *shariah* is truly implemented and people gain prosperity, there will be no thieves and consequently the cutting off of hands will never be implemented. In this regard, PKS has succeeded in reformulating the meaning of *shariah* into more practical avenues suitable to Indonesian society. Suryadarma, a PKS member of the legislature in the province of South Sulawesi said: I think a Muslim who understands his or her religion well will practise *shariah*. *Shariah* is very wide and not only related to the legal dimensions often exposed

by the mass media in a threatening way, such as the cutting off of hands. We focus on a *shariah* that is related to the achievement of prosperity and the basic needs of the people. In addition, we need to uphold the law in order to ensure the equality of all people before it. Without considering both dimensions, prosperity and law, we think it is difficult to implement *shariah*. How do we practise a *hudud* law if the thieves are poor people? How do we observe *qisas* when we tend to agree with the abuse of politics and power? In short, when we campaign for justice and prosperity, all these are part of implementing *shariah*.

By educating people about the "essence" of *shariah*, it is hoped that they will not hesitate to put it into practice. And when Indonesian society supports the implementation of *shariah*, PKS is ready to bring the aspirations of its constituents into the legislature. PKS attitudes are always determined by the acceptance of the people.

So at this stage, making people familiar with the day-to-day aspects of *shariah* is more important than promoting its formalisation. PKS activists observe that the majority of people are ignorant of the practice of the true *shariah*. West Sumatra, for instance, is widely known as a stronghold of Muslim scholars and religious observance, but one activist from this area has acknowledged that the ordinary people are actually far from *shariah*. The campaign for formalisation in this region will not gain much popular support

PKS raises the issue of *shariah* not as a political commodity or to win votes. Our mission is to uphold *shariah* itself. In West Sumatra, this is not an issue which will win us popular political support. The impact of secularism in West Sumatra is very strong. A campaign to bring the people to live in accordance with *shariah* will face difficulties, since people feel threatened by it. The decline of the Islamic institutions in West Sumatra has made *shariah* uninteresting. We do not need to campaign for *shariah* but it does need to be socialised.

He further stated: The important issues for West Sumatra are the economy, education and public health. What makes West Sumatra's people proud of their region in terms of economy and education? Nothing! We were strong because we had Central Sumatra, including Riau, which is well known for its petroleum. PRRI (Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia) was ready to confront the central government because they knew about the resources. When Central Sumatra was made a new province, we became very weak and poor. What we need is kind of a reformist Islam. Why did Partai Amanat

Nasional (PAN) win success in the general elections in 1999 - because they were not too fanatic or too secular! Those who want to practise Islam rigidly and too radically will not put down roots in this society. The typology of the people is moderate, as represented by Muhammadiyah.

### **Being Exemplars**

Besides educating Muslims about the "true meaning" of *shariah*, PKS activists try to offer themselves as living examples. Every cadre is expected to practise the teachings of *shariah* and to ensure that Indonesians, Muslims and non-Muslims, feel secure and comfortable with its concept. They firmly believe that *shariah* must avoid any possibility of causing discrimination against people, regardless of religion, gender or political aspirations and that *shariah* must be seen as an alternative solution for Indonesians. Since ideas of the implementation of *shariah* are still far from the popular mind in Indonesia, PKS activists have not voiced it during campaigns for the general elections. Even though some districts in Indonesia, such as in some areas of West Sumatra, have issued district policies (*peraturan daerah*, Perda) requiring female students and civil servants to wear head scarves, the most appropriate issue regarding *shariah* is the campaign to combat against corruption. One of the PK legislators in the Province of West Sumatra (DPRD I) emphasised:

PK cadres are persons who are in the very beginning expected to practise *shariah* in their daily activities and to demonstrate it to others around them. They must feel happy and satisfied carrying out *shariah* so that other people will be interested and follow them. *Shariah* must lead to achieve welfare and prosperity for all. For that reason PK now adds the word "*Sejahtera*" (prosperous) into its new name, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera.

PKS has also begun to promote the inclusive nature of *shariah*. As an example of its conviction of the all embracing nature of *shariah*, PKS elected a non-Muslim as branch chairman of PKS in one of the districts in Papua, while another elected Member of a regional parliament in Papua representing PKS, Natalis Kamo is a Christian. This decision to include non-Muslims within PKS was not an easy choice since it drew criticism from some members. For instance, a mailing list of PKS sympathisers, partai-keadilan-sejahtera, on March 2004 was filled with questions and criticism of the party's decision to appoint non-Muslims as members of PKS committees in the Province of Papua and for nomination as legislators as well. The main concern was that this policy did not follow the Traditions of the Prophet and the pious



ancestors (*al-s}alaf al-s}alih*). One argumentation is that “appointing non-Muslims means requiring loyalty to an infidel and it is really against the teachings of the Prophet. The Quran states ‘let not believers take disbelievers as allies (i.e., supporters or protectors) rather than believers. And whoever (of you) doest that has nothing (i.e. no association) with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself, to Allah is the (final) destination.’” However, these objections did not last long, since most members of the mailing list advised those who had criticised the policy of Central Board of PKS to trust their leaders.

In order to persuade its members about the validity of its decision in this regard, the Central Board of PKS issues *bayanat* (explanations) in which it is stated that the prohibition for a Muslim against voting and electing a non-Muslim as a member of parliament is clear. However, the party considers the rights of non-Muslims within the Muslim community the same to observe their religion and to manage their affairs. This is clearly worded in the Medina Charter. The inclusion of non-Muslims within PKS committees and in the parliament reflects the policy of recognising the existence of non-Muslim communities and their representatives in Indonesia.

In the case of the amendment of the 1945 Constitution, particularly chapter 29 regarding religion, the PK, together with Partai Amanat National (PAN) did not support the Jakarta Charter. While other Islamic parties, such as PPP and PBB view the phrase of “with obligation for Muslims to carry out *shariah*” added in the 1945 Constitution to be critical for the legal acknowledgement of implementing *shariah*, for PK such recognition of the privileged status of Islam was not a priority. When the Islamic parties in the 2000 legislature raised the issue of returning to the Jakarta Charter, PK neither supported nor rejected the move. Instead, its representatives preferred to propose what they called Piagam Medina (the Medina Charter), which gives the same freedom to all religions of Indonesia to carry out their teachings. The reason is that the party did not support any effort to impose the implementation of *shariah* because it would be undemocratic. PK preferred to see the government and the Muslim community strongly committed to the upholding of Islamic values first.

The Medina Charter was the first “constitution” regulated by the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) to knit all the inhabitants of his community into a single polity. However, the proposal of PK is not a new issue since Piagam Medina was widely discussed by Nurcholish Madjid in

promoting pluralism within Islam. Even earlier, during the debates in the 1959 constituent assembly on the ideological direction of the state, Islamic parties had pushed for the legalization of the Jakarta Charter and they met the objections of non-Muslims and Muslims who were not members of Islamic parties.

Even though not referring to the Medina Charter as such, Djamaluddin Malik, the Third Chairman of NU's Executive Board, proposed a sentence in addition to the Jakarta Charter that "followers of other religions are under obligation to abide by the doctrines of their respective religions. In fact, the idea of proposing a new sentence by Djamaluddin Malik is similar to the idea brought by members of PKS in order to guarantee the plural religious character of Indonesian state.

PKS has shown a reluctance to promote the position of women in politics but it has started to give recognition to their role. It allows the same opportunities for women to be involved in politics and in the broader arenas of life. PKS has begun the empowerment of women by proposing them as members of the legislature. The Election Law of the 2004 elections stated that parties were required to have at least 30 per cent female legislative candidates, and PKS met this quota in 65 of 69 electoral districts. Even though only four women were actually elected as legislators because most had been put low in the candidate list, their presence is a symbol of the political will of the party in this direction. Compared to PPP, PKS is still higher in terms of female representation in the legislature. Women elected to the 2004 DPR from PKS are 4 of 45 members (8.89%) and from PPP, 3 of 58 members (5.17). Furthermore, it is interesting that in the district of Gayo Luwes in Aceh, a woman named Nurhayati is the head of the district committee of PKS. She is the only woman in the party to reach such a level of leadership. In addition, female members of the party, Nursanita Nasution and Aan Rohanah have also been appointed members of the Consultative Council, which holds the highest authority in determining the direction of the party. However, the role of women in PKS is still far from satisfactory, since most women on committees of the Central Board have been placed in a special department of women's affairs. They have not yet been accommodated in other departments on the basis of their true capacity and expertise.

Opportunities have always been open to women but they have not often been ready to take them up. For instance, the PKS Provincial Board of Central Java in 2006 is open for a woman to be elected as chairperson. Members of PKS in that area are free to choose woman

as a chairperson. "There are many female cadres in PKS. So it is allowable for woman to run as a candidate for PKS chairperson. In responding to the issue of a female president, PKS has revised its objections. Yet however much PKS might prefer a man, the case of Megawati as President of Indonesia, replacing Abdurahman Wahid in 2000, was problematic. PK was actively involved in the campaign to oppose Megawati in 1999. There were two reasons to oppose Megawati's appointment. The first was ideological and political; Megawati's party and its members had an inharmonious relation with the Islamic parties. The second was a normative reason: most Islamic parties, including PK, opposed a woman president on religious grounds.

A large demonstration was held in 2000, involving thousands of PK cadres, in front of the National Parliament in Jakarta to request members of DPR/MPR not to choose Megawati. However, during the presidency of Abdurahman Wahid, cadres of PK also held simultaneous demonstrations to call for the resignation of Wahid, which indirectly gave a constitutional opportunity for Megawati to replace him. Why did PK change its stance in favour of a woman as president? They followed political expediency in the legal clause "that men and women are treated equal under the constitution. Whenever the constitution guaranteed a practice, PK preferred to follow the constitution.

By the good example of its cadres, PKS intends to lead Indonesian Muslims to willingly practise *shariah*. Even though some Islamic movements that campaign for the implementation of Islamic law argue that the Indonesian people already practise the non-legal aspects of *shariah*, PKS still considers that its introduction is urgent. It is true that some parts of *shariah* have been adopted by the state, such as the regulation of marriage and the laws of inheritance and endowment, however, for PKS, the essence of *shariah* is still wanting.

### **Dialogue with Non-Muslims**

PKS activists believe that in order to explain the "true" meaning of *shariah*, a dialogue with non-Muslim organisations and communities needs to be established; as long as non-Muslims are honest about their religion and understand the issue of *shariah* properly they will not oppose its implementation. Through dialogue, common values among the religions in Indonesia will emerge. Salim Segaf al-Jufri, chairman of *shariah* board of PKS said By dialogue a communication is established among different parties, including non-Muslims, if they are fair in dealing with this issue and are not overwhelmed by suspicions. I believe that even though it may raise some dispute and disagreement,



we will find common agreement. For instance, whoever lives in this country must agree on the need to combat corruption and to practise justice for all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. To protect people's rights, property and souls is the basic thing that all people must agree upon. Is not respect for others' rights in worship and the practice of their religions part of Islamic teaching (*shariah*)?

Nonetheless, dialogue has not been an easy task because the elite of PKS have had little experience in initiating dialogue with non-Muslims. Their experiments within Jemaah Tarbiyah activities in the past were confined to their inner groups and rarely did they socialise beyond with the broader society. However, this last step program is still far from applicable for the rank and file of PKS. The PKS has not engaged in the interfaith dialogue that is promoted by the government and other leaders of religious organisations in Indonesia and many PKS activists still hesitate to cooperate with non-Muslims. According to al-Jufri, the socialisation of the concept of *shariah* still faces obstacles, since *shariah* itself is still seen by certain Muslims and non-Muslims as well as something that may threaten sections of society. This is because *shariah* is promoted by certain Muslim groups such as NII, MMI, FPI and many radical groups in unwise ways, tending towards force and violence. It is a real challenge for PKS to reform this image. As many PKS activists have often said, "it is true that *hudud* is part of *shariah* but people often forget that the distribution of wealth is also a significant element of *shariah*. The problem is how to find a balance between promoting welfare and proposing *shariah*, and not to fall into the trap of formalising the sacred whilst abandoning the profane.

PKS's commitment to Islamic teachings has resulted in actions to "Islamise" non-religious issues and to use them as vehicles to promote its ideals. Other Islamic parties often tend to promote Islam from a legal point of view and "top-down" approach, but PKS starts from practical issues to lead people into the essence of *shariah*. The issue of the formalisation of *shariah* guarantees their presence in the political field, among more powerful secular parties, even though they can claim only a small number of votes. The problem is whether or not the party will retain its commitment to gradual steps towards the formalisation of *shariah* if it should gain significantly greater support than before. This question will be analysed by focussing on the issue of the implementation of *shariah* and various opinions on it among PKS activists.

## Sources of Authority in Islam

Each religious tradition has its own authentic sources of authority, which are referred to for authentication of religious practices and traditions. Islam too has its own sources of authority both oral as well as written.

These sources were the mainspring of Islamic law. In fact law in the form of Shariah is most central to Islam. Shariah law holds the centre stage in Islamic tradition except some Islamic sects and Sufi traditions. Shariah law being so fundamental to Islam the sources which the Shariah law is based on, assumes even greater importance.

What are these sources of authority in Islam? Needless to say some of these sources are common to all sects of Islam and some vary from sect to sect. The one which is common to all the sect of course is Holy Quran which is most authentic source for all sects of Islam.

There is no sect which can ignore, let alone reject Quran as the source of authority. Even Batini sects like Qaramita and Isma'ilis and Duruzis, contrary to popular belief, consider the Quran as the most authentic source of authority. However, it does not mean that the Quran is understood in the same way by all these sects.

There are serious differences in interpretations of various verses of the Quran. The Quranic verses, according to the Quranic verse 3:7 are divided into two categories i.e. those belonging to 1) mutashabihat (allegorical) and those belonging to 2) muhkamat (decisive). Also, according to the Quran those who use allegoric verses create disorder and confusion. Thus Muslims should follow the verses which belong to the category of muhkamat i.e. decisive and clear.

Despite this many Islamic sects are based on verses which belong to the other category i.e. mutashabihat i.e. allegorical verse. This same verse above also lays down that ta'wil (original or hidden meaning) is known to Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge (al-Rasikhun fi' al-'ilm) believe in them and say it is all from our Lord.

But the Shiah sects believe that ta'wil is also known to al-rasikhun fi' al'ilm i.e. those firmly rooted in knowledge and they are nothing but imams from the progeny of 'Ali, son-in-law of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his daughter Fatima. Many batini sects like the Qaramita, the Ismailis and Duruzis give central position to ta'wil as far as their beliefs are concerned. They believe that it is absolutely necessary to know ta'wil of the Quranic verses. It is central to their religion. More of it later.

Islam was divided into several sects within a few decades of the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). There is a Hadith (Prophet's saying) that my ummah (community) will be divided into seventy-two sects. Now seventy-two should not be taken literally. What he says is that my ummah will be divided into numerous sects. In the well known work of Baghdadi *Al-farq bayn al-Firaq* we find that there were more than hundred sects in the first century of Islam itself. The Kharijites (Khawarij), a small extremist sect itself had subdivided into more than a dozen sects.

The Shias themselves were subdivided into numerous sects - the Zaidis, the Ithna 'Asharis, the Alavids, the Qaramitas, the Isma'ilis, the Duruzis and so on. The Alavids were themselves subdivided into various sub-sects. The Isma'ilis split into two major sub-sects the Nizaris and Must'aliens. All these Shia sects, as pointed out before, believed into hidden or original meaning of the Quranic verses but no two Shiah sects agreed on common original meaning. All these sects had their own version of the meanings of the Quranic verse. The Sunni Muslims, of course maintained that the real meaning (ta'wil) is known only to Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge only believe in ta'wil but have no knowledge of ta'wil themselves.

Thus though the Quran is most authentic source of authority yet it is interpreted so differently by different sects that one wonders whether the Quran could unify all believers in matters of beliefs. Also, like no two Shiah sects agree on the real meaning of the verses of the Holy Quran, no two Sunni sects agree on meaning of all verses of the Quran. It should be borne in mind that Sunnis and Shias are actually umbrella terms. There are several schools of thought or sects under these two umbrellas.

Among the Sunnis the Asha'irah and the Mu'tazilah differ radically from each other in understanding the Quranic verses. The Mu'tazilah believe who are popularly known as the party of al-'Adl wa al-Tawhid (i.e. party of justice and unity of Godhood) consider 'aql (i.e. reason) as very central to their beliefs. According to them 'aql enables us to understand the Quran and not naql (i.e. oral or written traditions). They differ from Asha'ira who believe in naql as the main source of understanding the Quran. Thus among the Sunnis while the Mu'tazilah (who no more exist as a sect now) stress 'aql the Asha'irah stress naql. The Asha'irah take the Quran literally the Mu'tazilah do not. Besides these two sects the Sunnis are divided into four major Madhahib (schools of law - Hanafi, Shafii, Hanbali and Maliki. All these four



schools of Shariah differ in understanding some crucial Quranic verses, apart from authority of some ahadith. For Sunni Islam the second most important source of authority is Prophet's sunnah. Sunnah means sayings and doings of the Prophet. Both what the Prophet said and did was reported by chain of reporters or narrators. These reports were collected together in six authentic collections known as Sihah Sitta i.e. six authentic collections of Prophet's sayings and doing.

The different schools of law lay stress on different ahadith for deriving the laws of Shariah and formulating 'aqidah (plural 'aqa'id) i.e. dogmas. Though all books of ahadith i.e. Sihah Sittah are acceptable to Sunnis each school of Shariah (madhhab) has its own preferences for the books of ahadith. Thus Malikis would prefer Imam Malik's Muwatta' as the most authentic source after the Holy Quran. Hanafis, on the other hand, would prefer Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Among the Sunnis again there are two other sources of authority i.e. ijma' and qiyas (i.e. consensus and analogical reasoning). Where the Quran does not contain the required answer, the Ulama' would look into ahadith and if ahadith are also silent on some problem, they will resort to qiyas and then try to develop a consensus (ijma').

Thus among the Sunnis these are four recognised sources of authority i.e. the Quran, Hadith, qiyas (analogical reasoning) and consensus (ijma'). However, here too this neat division is more theoretical. The four schools of law in Sunni Islam plays more vital role for the adherents of those respective schools than these four sources. In fact these four sources were of real importance to those who were formulating laws than the lay adherents.

The lay adherents will simply go to the Ulama of their respective schools and ask fatwa (i.e. authentic opinion of the 'alim of his/her school. Among the Sunnis ahl al-hadith or those who adhere to the schools of Hadith do not accept the two other sources of law i.e. qiyas and ijma' i.e. analogy and consensus. For them only two sources are sufficient i.e. the Quran and Hadith. It is for this reason that Ahl al-Hadith do not accept validity of triple divorce in one sitting because the validity of triple divorce is not authenticated by Hadith. It is based more on two other sources i.e. qiyas and ijma'.

● For Shiah Muslims too qiyas and ijma' are not acceptable. Though Hadith is acceptable as source of law but they do not accept ahadith as compiled in The Sihah Sitta i.e. the Six authentic collections recognised by the Sunnis. The Shiah have their own collections of ahadith like the Kulaynis and others. Again what is recognised as

authentic collections of ahadith by Ithna Ashari Shiah is not recognised by the non-Ithna 'Asharis i.e. Zaidis, Isma'ilis, 'Alavids and others. The most authentic source of ahadith or Prophet's sunnah for these Shiah subjects is their respective Imams. For Zaidis it is Zaidi Imams, for Ithna 'Asharis it is twelve Imams or for Isma'ilis, it is their Imams.

Some Imams are of course common for Shiah sects i.e. common up to Imam Zain al-'Abidin as far as the Zaidis are concerned; up to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq as far as Ithna 'Asharis are concerned and up to Imam Hakim as far as Druzis are concerned and up to Imam Mustasir bi' Allah as far as Nizaris are concerned. For the Isma'ilis in general the most authentic source of law is Da'aim al-Islam. All Isma'ili Shiahs up to Musta'lians accept it as the most authentic source of Islamic law. Needless to say the Shiahs too do not accept qiyas and ijma' as valid sources of law.

For the Shiahs the valid sources of law are Quran and the Prophetic sunna as reported by the Imams. In Sunni Islam there is no concept of Imamah, it is Khilafah. But there were only four rightly guided Caliphs who too are authentic sources of Islamic law. After the four Caliphs it is authentic 'Ulama' who are looked up to as sources of authentic religious opinion. Among the Travellers the twelve Imams and among Nizaris the existing Imam (known as Hazir Imam) and among the Musta'lians the twenty one imams and after them their deputies known as Du'at al-Mutlaq.

As far as the Nizaris or popularly known as the Agakhanis are concerned they believe that one of their Imams i.e. Hasan 'Ala dhikrihi al-salam suspended application of Islamic Shariah and now the Hazir Imam is the sole source of law which is more traditional than Islamic. Perhaps this is the only Islamic sect which believes that application of Islamic Shariah has been suspended. All other sects of Islam believe in continuing validity of Islamic Shariah.

Among twelver Shiahs belief is that the 12th Imam has gone into seclusion and that he will reappear one day. But during his concealment the authority to interpret the law and to find Islamic solution to problems arising rests with what is called mujtahids. A mujtahid is a properly qualified Shai'ah 'alim (learned man). Whenever any problem arises the Shiahs consult their mujtahid. He is considered most authentic source of authority for the twelver Shias. As for the Must'alian Isma'ilis the most authentic source of authority is Da'i al-Mutlaq. But, it is important to note that a da'i al-mutlaq is not the final authority. In all Shiah traditions whether twelver or Isma'ili, Imam is considered

as infallible and hence he is supposed to be the final authority in all religious matters after the Prophet. But except Zaidis and Nizaris imam in all other Shiah traditions is in seclusion. While in twelver Shiah tradition it is 12th Imam who went into concealment and will himself reappear one day to set all wrongs right, in the Musta'lian Shiah tradition it is 21st Imam who went into seclusion and the institution of Imamatus continues in his progeny and when conditions are congenial the Imam from his progeny will come out of concealment one day and will provide guidance to entire humanity.

Thus in the Musta'lian tradition the da'i al-mutlaq is not the final authority but deputises for the Imam in concealment and hence the da'i is not infallible. Thus the da'i is not vested with the final authority to solve the problems arising. The Final authority will be the books like D'a'im al-Islam as far as matter pertaining to jurisprudence are concerned and books of ta'wil written by earlier da'is in consultation with Imam. In those days the da'is were in contact with the Fatimi Imams. However, now the da'is have no contacts with Imams in concealment.

Now we come to the Sunni Islam. In Sunni Islam too there is no unified religious authority. Sunnis are divided not only along the lines of schools of law (madhahib) but also along sectarian lines. As referred to above there are several sects among the Sunni Muslims. And each sect, apart from each school of law (madhhab) has its own authority. It has to be noted that, contrary to popular belief, there is no concept of church in Islam and certainly not in the Sunni Islam.

In fact there is no concept of church in Islam as such. Some sects like the Isma'ilis did develop such concept but for reasons of its own. This is not the place to throw light on it here. The Isma'ili movement being underground movement for long it developed hierarchy of authority of its own which acquired church like structure. Thus both the Nizaris and Musta'lians retained this church like structure of religious authority.

In Islam there is no concept of priesthood, let alone that of church. Each and every Muslim is responsible for all religious rites in the light of the Quran and sunnah. Quran and sunnah are the only authority. In the light of these any Muslim can perform all religious functions. However, in Sunni Islam too the institution of 'ulama developed and they acquired the authority and became pivotal in developing the law. The 'Ulama acquired a unique status of their own among the Muslims. It is these 'ulama who issue fatwas (religious edicts) on different issues.



Since new issues arose from time to time an institution called *ijtihad* (which means exerting oneself utmost) came into being. In fact it is the holy Prophet himself who is reported to have encouraged *ijtihad*. When he appointed one of his companions Ma'adh bin Jabal to the Yemen as governor the Prophet encouraged him to resort to *ijtihad* if he did not find answer to his problems in the Quran and sunnah. He could exert himself utmost to find solution to his problems. Thus *ijtihad* is a very important institution new legislation within framework of Islam.

Technically even *qiyas* and *ijma'* we have talked about above is part of the process of *ijtihad*. The early period of Islamic legislation clearly shows that many problems could not find direct answers in the Quran and sunnah and it was through the process of *ijtihad* that legislation became possible. The first two centuries of Islam witnessed the full fledged functioning of the institution of *ijtihad*.

●The Maliki and Hanbali schools of law were evolved within the confines of Mecca and Medina and hence are much closer to the Prophetic sunnah. Sunnah was naturally influenced by the local customs, traditions, institutions and what is known as the Arab 'adat. Thus these two schools are much closer to the Meccan and Madinese society.●However, the two other schools i.e. the Shafii and Hanafi originated in other parts of Islamic world i.e. in Egypt and Baghdad and hence had to encounter many new problems which were not part of the Prophetic sunnah.

●Thus Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Shafii had to frequently resort to *qiyas* and *ijma'* to evolve new legislation. Thus the history of Islamic legislation is full of instances of *ijtihad*. Once the corpus of Islamic legislation came into existence the effort was to protect that corpus within the framework of those schools. The 'ulama belonging to these respective schools almost closed the gates of *ijtihad* i.e. the process of legislation thinking that all time comprehensive corpus of legislation has been evolved.

And during the medieval ages since socio-economic developments on one hand, and, technological developments, on the other, remained almost stagnant hardly any new problems arose. Thus they were quite content with the laws evolved by the founders of their schools. There is no doubt that the four Imams were not only great scholars of Quran and sunnah but had great insights into human affairs and legislative needs of Muslims. They did, what they could, to fulfil the legal needs of the people of their times and in the light of the problems they were

confronted with. Thus the four Imams became the great source of authority in Sunni Islam. The modern and post-modern period have witnessed breath-taking changes in social, economic and technological fields and new problems have arisen along with new consciousness among different sections of people. And, in the light of these developments new answers are needed to some of the old problems too. The concepts of criminal law have undergone drastic changes. The question of women and their rights have acquired new dimensions and new questions are arising by the day in view of swift technological developments. These questions can no more be answered in old ways nor the laws evolved centuries ago can withstand new social and moral pressures.

Thus *ijtihad* has acquired new urgency. The holy Prophet himself permitted *ijtihad* in order to confront new situations in Yemen. Thus *ijtihad* is, in a way, a part of the Prophet's *sunnah* and it was for this reason that all great imams of the time resorted to it for developing the whole corpus of Islamic legislation. Without *ijtihad* by these learned Imams this corpus of law would not have come into existence at all. In their own way they were facing new social pressures and they exerted themselves to find answers to those questions. The institution of *ijma'* was highly useful for that purpose as they could evolve the consensus among the 'ulama and through them of the community.

There is, as pointed out, an urgent need for *ijtihad*. It cannot be avoided for long on the grounds that there is no one qualified to do *ijtihad*. There may not be any single authority to do so but the new problems being faced are common to Muslims of all sects and schools and hence the prominent 'ulama of all sects and schools of law along with modern social and natural scientists must come together to evolve new corpus of Islamic legislations in these new areas. It is not being proposed that every thing has to change. Certainly not. The various Sunni and Shiah sects and schools can certainly retain much that is valuable in their existing traditions but certainly to re-examine that part which has bearing on new problems and subject to new pressures.

It is also not proper as some orthodox Muslims do that the only law giver is Allah and that no human being can legislate. This is not correct. In fact much that we have in *Shariah* is, as explained above, as a result of human endeavour to understand and seek guidance from the Quran and Prophetic *sunnah* and to use human faculty of reason gifted by Allah to solve problems arising from time to time. Thus *ijtihad* has been an integral part of Islamic legislation in early period of Islam. Today many new problems have arisen and new human

endeavour is needed to frame legislation in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. What was in the context of these times can be rethought in the light of modern and post-modern developments.

It is also not proper to maintain that it is Allah who is sovereign and people have no rights to act. Who can question the doctrine that Allah is sovereign. But people have sovereignty as Allah's khalifah on earth. Allah has designated them to be his 'sovereign deputies' on earth and have also been equipped with the faculty of reason to solve their own problems. In any Islamic countries the source of authority could be parliament for legislation. It comes quite close to the medieval doctrine of *ijma`*. The parliament can, if necessary, consult the *`ulama* in the matter.

Iran has come out with the new doctrine of *Wilayat-i-Faqih* who has the status of guardian of Islamic law and no legislation by the Parliament can become law without his approval. It can be called as council of the guardian. But such council can obstruct legislation if it is vested with final authority. It should have consultative status only. Iran is facing the problem of dual authority because of this doctrine of *Wilayat-I-Faqih*. Dual authority can cause serious problems. Thus the *`ulama* should have consultative rather than approving authority.

In view of fast developments all sects of Islam will have to rethink issues in matters of jurisprudence. New laws in keeping with the value system of Islam are highly necessary. One way is to constitute the joint council of the representatives of all sects of Islam to evolve new body of laws and this will certainly be very helpful for the Muslim ummah as a whole despite sectarian differences. The differences can be ironed out in the joint council. But such a body can help only if there are *`ulama* and experts with liberal and progressive disposition. It has been experienced that the *`ulama* have compulsions of their own, and often, politics of their own. They oppose new legislation, even if it is perfectly in keeping with Islamic values and traditions to retain their own authority. Thus opposition from the *`ulama* is not always 'Islamic'; it is often due to other considerations also. Thus seen from whichever angle it is difficult, if not impossible, to push new legislation and to work out new consensus. It has become all the more difficult in view of the rise of conservative Islam. The irony of the situation is that the rise of conservative Islam is also more political than religious. This situation will continue to create strong impediments in the way of development of new sources of authority in Islam.



## Shariah Law Creates Economic Meltdowns

Shariah law has a nasty habit of melting down the economy of any nation in which it has been implemented. Attacking the economies of western societies is a tenet of radical Islam. And, as we shall see in this article, the progressive/socialist movement in western societies has formed a dangerous partnership with radical Islam – forming a socialistic Jihad to be wielded against democracies throughout the world. David Jonnson, author of *Islamic Economics and the Final Jihad* has this to say as an introduction to Islamic economics:

My goal today is to put you into the mind of an Islamist to think like an Islamist. It is only possible to understand the events occurring by understanding their thinking and what it would mean to live under Shariah law. There is a well-worn Cliché “It’s the economy stupid” that appears around election times. So it is with Islamic Economics and the Clash of Ideologies we are witnessing today.

It should be realized that the goal of the Islamists, following in the footsteps of Muhammad, is not so much to conquer the land but to Islamize the populations. In so doing they seek to have the lands come under Shariah law and that the lands become dar al-Islam, the land of Islam and that all non-Muslims accept the status of Dhimmis subservient to Muslim rule.

The Plan involves the incremental acceptance of basic tenants of Shariah law as applied to all aspects of life—the Islamic “Way of Life”. This implies the desire to incrementally change the laws and ultimately the Constitution of the U.S.

This requires the population to accept the new laws as equally valid and acceptable. Initially this will result in parallel legal systems and progressing from there with laws that may be applied locally and ultimately nationally. Jihad can be with the pen and the tongue, just as it can be the sword and the spear as Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood has said. Knowledge combined with economic control can be wielded with the precision of a sharp sword to effect any desired social/political change necessary for the fulfilment of Islam’s goal. – David J. Jonsson.

Jonsson goes on to explain just how the Muslims intend to create Shariah law within the United States and other western countries: Jihad is considered a required religious duty for Muslims. Jihad is Islam’s normal path to expansion. Islamic Economics is the stealth sword of Islam. It is more powerful than the Weapons of Mass Destruction

and terrorism. It is immune to negotiation. The stealth sword is being applied for the Islamization of the West and the whole world. The goal is to create the "Islamic kingdom of God on earth." The implementation of Shariah law would have a dramatic affect on your life and that of the entire Western Civilization. Understand the nature of the evil and do not be blindsided.

Islamic economics has an impact on your life, whether you are a banker, investing in the stock market, selling a home, buying a car, purchasing food, buying a suit or a dress, or just trying to make sense of the current events. Islamic economics and Islamic banking are primary Islamist strategies to condition the West to accept Shariah law as a basis for all life in all nations.

The Islamic movement is an idea movement; at the present time the leader(s) has not been identified. Many, if not most, of the participants in Islamic Financing may not even be aware that they may be supporting the Islamist agenda.

Our goal is to understand, the genesis of Islamic Economics, what it is, how it is taking place, and how it would affect our lives.

And what is the means by which Shariah law gains a foothold into western societies. Through the machinations of liberal Democrats and RINOs, of course. As Sir Winston Churchill once famously said, "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last." And if there is one thing that the progressives specialize in it is appeasement. The progressive policy of appeasement is allowing Shariah law to slither its way into the United States financial system.

The twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of an economic doctrine that calls itself Islamic economics. The doctrine is significant because it advances the sprawling and headline-grabbing movement known as political Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, or simply Islamism.

The movement is having a profound impact. The Islamic windows of major banks that incorporate the principles of Islamic economics represent the fastest growing sector. The banks, based on the principles of Islamic economics, raise billions of dollars in the form of Islamic bonds (sukuk) annually.

● Banking laws in Islamic and Western countries are changing to accommodate Islamic economic rules. The Dow Jones Islamic Stock Index and in April 2006, Dow Jones and Citigroup announced the launch of the first Islamic Bond Index. The Dow Jones Citigroup Sukuk Index, is the first index that seeks to measure the performance

of global bonds complying with Islamic (Shariah compliant) investment guidelines. – David Jonsson The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) is the main motivator behind setting up experiments in Islamic financing on a global scale. The theory and the practical requirements needed to set up an Islamic banking system come from the ranks of the Ilkwan.

“Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Quran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”— Muslim Brotherhood

Today’s progressive/leftist movement within the United States is increasingly being integrated into Shariah law. Jonsson explains this concept: The people in the West who are trying to construct a new socialism, a de-Marxified alternative to the politics of pure individualism, share the views of Islamist economists. These Westerners also accept the market as the essential driving-force of any economy, but they too wish to set it within a man-made moral framework that will ensure support for the weak through the compassion and self-discipline of the strong.

What communism tried and failed to achieve through the state, one Islamic economist has written, “is to be established through the agency of man himself.” It would be a good slogan for the possible new socialism of the twenty-first century. As we will see, these principles are being promoted broadly in the West. This merging of ideologies is a powerful force in today’s political environment. This merging is taking the form of a Marxist/Leftist – Islamist Alliance.

Thus you see Barack Obama sympathizing with the Islamist Movement. Many people have wondered if Obama is a Muslim. It is certainly a worthy topic of discussion. But more importantly is the fact that Obama is implementing policies that are favourable to this new socialist/Islamist alliance. Professor Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his book, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, clarifies the melding of socialism and Shariah law in the realms of commerce and finance:

●Islamic law on commerce is known as *fiqh al-mu‘amalat*. Much of the laws, rules and interpretations of Shariah takes into consideration issues of social justice, equitability, and fairness, as well as practicality of financial transactions. In general, the Shariah legal maxim in relation to commercial transactions and contracts states: “They are permissible unless there is a clear prohibition.” In a nutshell, prohibited elements of a commercial transaction must first be removed for it to



be Shariah-compliant. The major prohibited elements under Shariah are riba (interest), gharar (uncertainty), maisir (gambling), non-halal (prohibited) food and drinks and immoral activities.

The principles laid out by al-Qaradawi are having profound influence on all daily and commercial activities, not only in the finance sector, but also in the energy, transportation (ports and terminals), construction, and food and drink sector. The goal is to bring all commercial activity into Shariah compliance.

Mawlana Mawdudi, was a Sunni Pakistani journalist, theologian, Muslim revivalist leader and political philosopher, and a major 20th century Islamist thinker. He was also a prominent political figure in his home country (Pakistan) and was the first recipient of King Faisal International Award for his services to Islam in 1979. He was also the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, the Islamic revivalist party.

Mawdudi had a goal of establishing a separate Muslim society. He was against integration or assimilation in to Western Culture. Examples of his philosophy have resulted in the Muslim dominated ghettos such as Clichy-sous-Bois and Bagneux outside Paris and Leicester in the U.K. This concept of a separate Muslim society is now starting to pervade major money centre banks with the concept that Muslim funds may not be comingled with those of non-Muslims.

Mawdudi saw Muslims not as people who followed the religion of Islam, but as everything: "Everything in the universe is 'Muslim' for it obeys God by submission to His laws." The only exception to this universe of Muslims were human beings who failed to follow Islam. In regard to the non-Muslim:

"His very tongue which, on account of his ignorance advocates the denial of God or professes multiple deities, is in its very nature 'Muslim' ... The man who denies God is called Kafir (concealer) because he conceals by his disbelief what is inherent in his nature and embalmed in his own soul.

His whole body functions in obedience to that instinct... Reality becomes estranged from him and he gropes in the dark".

● Mawdudi believed that Islam was a "religion" in a broader sense of the term. He stated: "Islam is not a 'religion' in the sense this term is commonly understood. It is a system encompassing all fields of living. Islam means politics, economics, legislation, science, humanism, health, psychology and sociology. It is a system which makes no discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language or other external

categories. Its appeal is to all mankind. It wants to reach the heart of every human being." Maududi believed that without Shariah law Muslim society could not be Islamic:

That if an Islamic society consciously resolves not to accept the Shariah, and decides to enact its own constitution and laws or borrow them from any other source in disregard of the Shariah, such a society breaks its contract with God and forfeits its right to be called 'Islamic.'

Based on Maududi's doctrine that Islam is all-encompassing, the Muslims seek to extend Islam beyond the historical homeland of Islam unto the entire world. And they use Jihad to accomplish this end. Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam regardless of the country or the Nation which rules it.

The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of its own ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of the standard-bearer of Islam or the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic State. Islam requires the earth—not just a portion, but the whole planet because the entire mankind should benefit from the ideology and welfare programme [of Islam] ... Towards this end, Islam wishes to press into service all forces which can bring about a revolution and a composite term for the use of all these forces is 'Jihad'. The objective of the Islamic 'Jihad' is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. — Mawlana Mawdudi

The teachings of Mawdudi on no integration and/or assimilation into Western culture has far-reaching impact today on many of the issues being addressed in Europe. When immigrants came to America in its formative years, their goal was integration into a unified culture; this is what made America the strong nation it is. In Canada, the Muslim population has sought and has already achieved the separation by the creation of separate civil courts for Muslims. The goal of Islamists is the incremental Islamization of all countries and peoples.

Ummah is an Arabic word that means "community" or "nation." In the context of Islam, the word ummah is used in foreign languages as well as in Arabic to mean the "nation of the believers" (ummatul-muminin), and thus the whole Muslim world. The phrase al-ummatun wahid in the Quran (the "One Community") refers to the entire Muslim world unified. Some modern Islamists use the term Islamic

Ummah or Muslim Ummah to refer to all the people in the lands and countries where predominantly Muslims reside, and which were once under the control of the Islamic caliphate. Jonsson has this to say about Mawdudi: Whatever one thinks of his agenda, he was onto something real: with technological progress, economics was indeed becoming increasingly important to daily life everywhere. In a technologically primitive and static world, where family background determines one's career, where one plants and sells crops in the ways of one's grandparents, where one has little to spend on non-subsistence goods, and where markets offer little variety, economics may be vital to physical survival, but economic decision-making does not absorb much attention.

By contrast, in a technologically advanced world, where job choices must be made, where women pursue and interrupt careers outside the home, where investment choices require monitoring, and where markets offer abundant choice, economic decision-making absorbs considerable time. It follows that if economic choice is considered a secular activity, economic advances will make Muslim existence look increasingly secular. But if economic activity is considered a religious activity, then economic development need not reduce Islam's perceived role in the lives of Muslims.

The declared purpose of Islamic economics is to establish a new world economic order that conforms to Islamic scripture—the Quran—and Muslim tradition. (1) Its core positions took shape in the 1940s, and three decades later, efforts to implement them were under way in dozens of countries. (2) In Pakistan, Malaysia, and elsewhere, governments are now running centralized Islamic redistribution systems known as Zakat.

● More than sixty countries have Islamic banks that claim to offer an interest-free alternative to conventional banking. Invoking religious principles, several countries, among them Pakistan and Iran, have gone so far as to outlaw every form of interest; they are forcing all banks, including foreign subsidiaries, to adopt, at least formally, ostensibly Islamic methods of deposit taking and loan making. Attempts are also under way to disseminate religious norms of price setting, bargaining, and wage determination. And for every such initiative, others are on the drawing board. As seen from an Islamist perspective, Islamic finance provides financial services in accordance with Islamic law or Shariah. Islamists emphasize that Islamic financial services represent the ethical, social, and religious dimension of financial transactions to enhance equity



and fairness for the general good of society. These services are not limited to commercial banking and extend into capital markets, insurance and other channels of non-bank financial intermediation. Adoption of the principles of Islamic Finance by the western institutions is a critical step in the Islamization of the West and the acceptance of Shariah law. It is one step forward in making dar al-harb into dar a-Islam and non-Muslims becoming al-Dhimmis and subservient to Islamic rule.

Just as the proponents of "organic" foods and the Green lobby have promoted their ideologies with catch phrases, the Islamists have promoted their ideology of "Islamic-Safe" and "socially responsible investment" as preferred words for Islamist investing and finance, signifying that the investment products are in compliance with Shariah Law. We have all heard the term "social justice" bandied about by Obama and his ilk.

But now we gain the understanding that this term actually has its roots in Shariah Law. The concept of Social Justice is part of Shariah Law. It does not mean what conservative American citizens take it to mean. Rather, it means law that conforms to the Islamic way of life. "Social Justice" therefore, is an Islamic term and Obama is using it in order to "condition" us to its use.

Obama is not using this term by accident. Obama is merely part of a larger conspiracy to subject the United States to the rule of the socialist/Islamist conspiracy. Economic jihad is a long-term incremental program being waged to Islamize the world. The Medina Charter of 622, the conquests of Muhammad and the early caliphs gave birth for all time (within the Muslim world) of an institution that places the native populations into a permanently handicapped status. The imposition of Shariah law in Iraq and Afghanistan and changing and/or implementing Shariah-compliant laws in the West all contribute to accomplishing the goal of Islamization, as called for by Muhammad. — David Jonsson Mawdudi also largely expanded upon his view of the Islamic State and Shariah in his book *Islamic Way of Life*.

As David Kennedy Houck wrote in the *Middle East Quarterly* for Spring 2006, *The Islamist Challenge to the U.S. Constitution*, "First in Europe and now in the United States, Muslim groups have petitioned to establish enclaves in which they can uphold and enforce greater compliance to Islamic law. While the U.S. Constitution enshrines the right to religious freedom and the prohibition against a state religion,

when it comes to the rights of religious enclaves to impose communal rules, the dividing line is more nebulous. Can U.S. enclaves, homeowner associations, and other groups enforce Islamic law?" The goals of Islamists in establishing an economic system based on Islamic law (the Shariah) are:

- To establish credibility for Islam as a "way of life" equal to all other economic and religious doctrines
- To establish an economic system that allows control of the financial, natural resources and intellectual properties by a totalitarian, non-elected hierarchy justified on the basis of religious law—the Quran
- To bring together the global economic resources of Islamic Ummah to influence the world opinion and provide the funding for proselytizing (Da'wa) of non-believers
- To establish an economic system not based on scientific principles but on religious beliefs.

Economics under Shariah law will result in the redistribution of wealth, the confiscation of private property, the establishment of a mega-Islamic bank with global reach and financing backed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), control of the exportable oil and natural gas worldwide, control of major transportation systems including the Suez Canal and ports, create a new currency based on the gold dinar, establishment of an interlinked merchandise trading system and a trading block with Free Trade Agreements with other blocks. And mandating the contribution of tithes (Zakat) and directing the funds for economic gain, political action and the proselytizing of non-Muslims. If this is the kind of world we wish to live under then we can continue to elect socialists, Marxists, progressives, liberals, and environmentalist whackos who worship trees and assorted flies. Their appeasement of the Islamist radicals ensures our eventual demise. On the other hand we can wake up to the threat that radical Islam presents to us and we can fight for our freedoms. The choice is ours – but not for long. If we do not take action quickly we face the reality that we might be too late to the fight to win it. The time for appeasement is over. The time for action is at hand America.

## Power of Knowledge in Islam

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### Important Allegories

There is another class of Traditions which have an impressive fascination of their own and are awe-inspiring in nature. They have been the precursor of a new class of literature in Arabic and other languages and have inspired the imagination of generations of poets and writers, finally culminating in that graceful specimen of this class of literature, the Javed Nama of Dr. Iqbal. According to Asin, the Comedia Divina of Dante was directly inspired by this class of Traditions.

These Traditions have a fiery grandeur of their own and must have proved a powerful check on the antisocial propensities of the wild Arab whose passions often blazed like the simoom which sweeps across the vast barrenness of the desert. These Traditions have an air of classical restraint and have a deep undercurrent of suppressed sympathy for the condemned. But nevertheless they reveal a fine sense of justice and the closest correlation between sin and punishment. Among a people who had cherished for so long the rule of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", these Traditions must have exercised a considerable moral influence. They are fine examples of the Doctrine of Moral consequences. In the course of the morning assembly he would describe his experiences in a dream and invite others to narrate theirs. Once he told how he saw the liar being tormented by having his mouth ripped open; how the scholar who taught the Quran to others but neglected it himself was punished by having his head crushed. In one of his allegorical dreams, the Prophet saw a man swimming in a river of blood while another stood on the bank with a stone in his hand. When the first person tried to approach the bank,



the person standing on the bank struck him with the stone; his mouth opened and the stone made its way down his throat. He collapsed once again into the current and the same tragedy was repeated again. According to the Prophet the man swimming in the river of blood was an usurer.

The Traditions on the Ascension or the Miraj contain some hair raising details of the punishments meted out to the sinners who were condemned to hell and in all cases, a principle of poetic justice appears to determine the nature and the intensity of punishment. A scholar who did not accost a seeker after knowledge with a reply will have a bridle-bit made of hell fire in his mouth and the man who learning and did not benefit others by his scholarship will burst his belly and carry his entrails like the mule which drives the flour mill.

According to a Tradition the hoard guarded by a person in the world would change into a python on the day of Judgment and would chase the hoarder. And he would munch his head with his jaws like a camel. The interpretation of dreams has transformed itself into a respectable science in the hands of psychologists like Freud who has made a remarkable study of the dreams of the Leonardo da Vinci. But the Freudian School works within very great limitations and it is hoped that the psychologist of the future will present a deeper and more meaningful analysis of the subject in the light of a broader and higher conception of the main springs of human action and thought.

### **Magnificent Method**

The Prophet's style of speech and manner of addressing others profoundly affected the method of work in the schools of the Islamic world. Qadi Abu Jamaa recommends the repetition of a sentence three times after the manner of the Prophet who used to repeat his sentences thrice. He never hurried, but expressed himself always with great deliberation and care. We have it from Aishah how once she was visited by Abu Hurayrah when she was offering the night prayers. Abu Hurayrah seated himself on one side of the room, related to her hurriedly a Tradition and she had hardly finished her prayers before he departed. Upon this Aishah told that if she could catch hold of Abu Hurayrah she would have informed him that the Prophet was never so hurried and indistinct in speech as Abu Hurayrah.

**Tartil, not Tarsil:** According to Bukhari, the Prophet spoke word by word so that one could count them if he desired. Tartil instead of Tarsil was the running note of his speech. He did not approve of

any interruption in the course of his speech and they were not infrequent in a society which was composed of a large section of members living an individual life of their own in the desert.

But such strangers to the ways and life of an organized group life very seldom put him out of temper and he would reply to such intruders after he had finished with the topic on which he was discoursing at that time. Irrelevant queries were positively discouraged by him.

### **Rules for Congregation**

In a chapter on the manner of listening to a Tradition, Tirmidhi gives that the Prophet had enjoined that it should not be listened to in a posture when one is reposing or reclining against a support, implying thereby that the listening posture requires alertness, physical as well mental.

The teacher, of course, had the right to recline against a column or to sit on a raised seat after the usage of the Prophet. The Prophet always had a word of warm welcome for every visitor, and advised his people to extend such cordiality to all. He prophesied a future for his followers when people would flock to them from far and near and he advised them to welcome these seekers after knowledge with a *Marhaba* (welcome). "When people flock to you from the four quarters of the globe, advise them well and receive them with soft and loving words." The time appointed for addressing the people was usually after the morning and the afternoon prayers.

After every prayer in general and the morning prayer in particular, there was always a gathering which had been already motivated for such knowledge. These addresses which were declaimed with moral earnestness moved the hearts to their very foundations and some of the audience would burst into tears on such occasions. He had appointed a special day in the week for addressing women and this arrangement had been made on the express desire of women.

### **Reading Loudly**

Among ancient peoples and old societies, power of forceful expression and declamation was highly prized and among the old Greeks and Romans, oratory formed a prominent feature of the school curriculum. Among the Arabs, political addresses or literary declarations have played an unprecedented role in history and have directed and sometimes diverted the course of historical events.

## How to Begin?

The Divine Education of the Prophet originates with the revelation of the Sura Iqra, "Read in the name of the Lord who has created Man from congealed blood. Read, Great and High is thy Lord in His Beneficence." Reading is to be interpreted here not in the sense of the reading aloud lesson in the classroom but as a piece of inspired recitation expressing the glowing enthusiasm of an entire personality, emotionally and intellectually.

Again and again, the Prophet has enjoined on his people the reading of the Holy Book. "The highest form of prayer for my people is the reading of the Holy Book." Again, "The most virtuous amongst you are those who learn the Quran and teach it and the entire group which comes together for reciting the Holy Book and learning it are blessed with peace and tranquillity." According to a savant, "Every verse of the Quran is a stage of paradise and an illuminant for your houses."

## Method of Recitation

As the recitation of the Quran played such an all pervading part in the social and cultural life of the period, it gave rise to a class of readers (Qura) who later on developed into several specialist schools of reading. It appears that the reading of the Quran formed the main item of education in those days and the Companions often indulged inordinately in their enthusiasm for its recitation.

The Prophet had to issue instructions that the reading of the Holy Book may be stopped for a while when one gets tired of it. The style of expression and pronouncing words was deeply influenced by the Traditions of the Prophet, whose reading is described as Tartil (distinct and deliberate), pronouncing each word clearly and with the proper accent. When a child learnt for the first time to stumble into speech, the Prophet advised that he should be made to repeat '*La Ilaha Illallah*', a combination of sound, rhythmic in cadence and facile to pronounce.

**Ornamenting the Quran:** The Prophet had a keen ear for rhythm and several Traditions reveal the emphasis which he placed on sweet and rhythmic recitation of the Holy Book. According to a Tradition, "God has never enjoined anything so much on the Prophet as the rhythmic recitation of the Quran." "One who does not read the Quran melodiously does not belong to us." "Ornament the Quran by



your voices." Again, "Verily God listens to the Reciter of the Quran better than the master of a singing girl listens to her music." According to Abu Hurayrah, "God has not given any command to the Prophet similar to that which appertains to the melodious voice for reciting the Quran."

The Companions were vividly alive to the aesthetic aspect of Quranic recitation and when the Prophet recited a verse to them, one of them told that it was as refreshing as the rain from within and fruitful from without."

**Gift of David:** The taste for rhythmic recitation was widespread and when once the Prophet overheard a slave reading in a melodious tone, he thanked God who had blessed his people with such a good person.

Abu Musa al-Ashaari was noted for his good voice and the Prophet was often so enchanted by his recitation that he would forget everything else and when the company called out that it was high time for prayers, he would remark, "Are we not already in the midst of our devotions?" He often told that Abu Musa had the gift of David's music.

### Reading the Holy Text

The remarks of the Prophet on the subject of recitation (Qirat) were made with reference to the Quran and he has emphasized its recitation for the blessings which it brings to the individual and to the society. But in all his behests in matters of religion and education he is always inspired more by its social significance than the benefit which it brings to a particular individual. This viewpoint has been brought home by a number of beautiful and expressive similes with specific reference to recitation.

"One who learns the Quran and does not recite it is like a person who has preserved musk in a bag and holds its mouth tightly closed. While the other who recites it has loosened the strings of his bag and its fragrance is wafted all around. In this case, his learning has a social utility, beneficial for himself and for others.

**Orange and the Aloe:** There is another Tradition which has been narrated by Abu Musa al-Ashaari, that melodious reader of the Quran is he whose recitation was so much appreciated by the Prophet. According to Abu Musa, the Prophet had said, "The Believer who recites the Quran is like the orange that has a good taste and a delightful flavour. And the Believer who does not recite is like the date which

is delicious in taste but has no flavour. The Munafiq who recites the Quran is like the Rayhan which has a good fragrance but is bitter in taste and the Munafiq who does not recite it is like the aloe which is bitter in taste as well in flavour." Hence faith in the holy word and its propagation both have equal importance.

The above simile throws light on the social and the individual benefit which accrues from the recitation of the Holy Book and it can be generalised and applied to the educative process as a whole.

The social aspect of the process being so important, the Prophet preferred to hear the recitation in company and would often request one of the company to recite.

Good reciters of the Quran were very much prized in the early days and an emancipated slave (Mawla) was made the head of his tribe among the people of the valley during the period of Umar Ibn Khattab, because he was a Qari (Reciter).

**Style of the Prophet:** The Prophet's style of recitation was that of Tartil. It was neither quick nor hasty. Rather he would pronounce one letter after another separately and distinctly and would introduce pauses after every verse (Ayat). He would enunciate lucidly the long accented sound (Mad) in al-Rahman and al-Rahim)

He would recite the Quran both in a loud (Jahr) or low (Khafi) voice. But the distinguishing feature of his recitation was not so much its pitch, speed or volume; it was lucidity and clear intonation. According to Ibn Abbas when he recited in the courtyard a person sitting indoors could clearly hear his recitation. According to Um Hani she used to hear his recitation clearly when she (had retired for the night and) was on the roof.

**Musical Rhythm:** There is evidence to prove that the Prophet himself recited the Quran with musical rhythm specially in moments when he was emotionally aroused. When on the day of the Victory (Yawm-ul-Fath) he entered Mecca on a camel, he was reciting according to Abdullah bin Maghfal, the verse, "*Inna Fatahna laka Fathan Mubina*," and he repeated the letter alif three times. According to Ibn al-Qayyam Ibn Jawzi, this Tarje or repetition did not arise out of the movements of the dromedary on which he was seated but it was a voluntary expression. Abdullah continues that had he not feared that the people would gather round to listen (to him, disturbing thereby the order of the victorious march) he would have followed the example of the Prophet.

It has been remarked elsewhere that the Prophet liked immensely the recitation of Abu Musa al-Ashaari and once the Prophet heard him reading the Quran, and when Abu Musa was informed of it he told that he would have made the Quran more beautiful and would have embellished it with his voice had he known it.

**Melancholic and the Ecstatic Note:** Umar Ibn Khattab who was a man of extremely puritanic temperament liked immensely the recitation of the Quran by Abu Musa al-Ashaari and would often exhort him to recite by saying "*Zakkarna Rabbana*" (Make us remember God).

Then Abu Musa would make a recitation and read it with melody (Lahn). Thereupon Umar could say, "One who desires to introduce music (Ghina) in the Quran should do it in the style of Abu Musa al-Ashaari." The chief note of Abu Musa Ashaari's recitation was melancholic (Huzn) and not ecstatic (Tarab). When Aqbah bin Amir who had a beautiful voice was requested by Umar Ibn Khattab to recite, he read a verse with such effect that Umar Ibn Khattab wept profusely and said, "I could never conceive that this verse was of the revealed ones."

It is interesting to note that an authority like Ibn Qayyim Jawzi who was a very close disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah and who is the main exponent of the orthodox school sums up the discussion by saying that although recitation with musical notes is not permissible but it can be done in the style of the ancients who embellished their voices while reading the Quran and read it with the fullest emotional expression, melancholic or ecstatic.

**Symbols of Vocalisation:** The genius of the Arabic language and the great solicitude which the Muslims showed in the preservation of the Word of the Holy Writ and the Traditions gave rise to the need of formulating rules of Grammar and vocalisation. By the time of 'Umar the Muslim armies had crossed the confines of the Arabian Peninsula and had annexed many a non-Arab countries to the Islamic State. The process of political domination went along with that of moral and religious conquest and the need for presenting the sources of Islamic inspiration in a correct form to these people became insistent in the days of the early Caliphs. Even the Beduin who lived a life of his own in the heart of the desert found difficulties in vocalising the text but for the non-Arabs it presented a more formidable problem. It is related on the authority of Abi-al Aswad-ud Dawali that one day he visited Ali. He looked disconsolate and out of spirits. Ali was feeling



very much perturbed because he had heard some one reciting the Quran with wrong vocalisation. He told Abi- al Aswad that he had decided to compose a book on the principles of Arabic grammar. Abi- al Aswad welcomed the idea and told that he would give a fresh lease of life to the language and preserve its vocabulary through this action. When he visited him again after three days, Ali showed him a book wherein he had defined Ism, Fel and Harf (noun, verb and preposition). He instructed Abi-al Aswad to proceed with the work who added Huruf an-Nasb to it. According to another source, Ali was the first scholar to devise the symbols for vocalisation.

***Moderation in Recitation:*** The Quran enjoins upon the Prophet to be moderate in the reading of the Quran. The injunction laid down that the self-imposed rigorous discipline should in no way tax the energies of the Prophet and the Faithful. Whenever he heard of cases where a person kept longsome nightly vigils for recitation, he prohibited him from doing so. A prominent case was that of the young enthusiast, Abdullah bin Amr bin al-Ath.

The Prophet followed the spirit of the Quran by permitting such individual variations in reading which did not interfere with the meaning of the Holy Writ. Once Umar Ibn Khattab heard Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam reciting the Quran which in his opinion was not after the style of the Prophet. He was so much aroused that he was about to pounce upon him for this sacrilege when Hisham finished his prayers, Umar caught hold of his sheet and took him straight to the Prophet. The Prophet heard both of them reciting the same verse and approved both the recitations. He concluded his remarks with the words "Verily Quran was revealed in seven letters. Read out of it which is more feasible for you."

***Place in the Syllabus:*** The Problem of the placement of reading in the syllabus received a good deal of attention on the part of Muslim educators and Ibn Khaldun devoted a chapter to the critical study of the problem in his Prolegomena. His illuminating analysis of the contemporary methods of teaching reading in different countries reveals a thorough grasp of educational principles and the capacity to study problems from a scientific and detached viewpoint; under such genial influences the Islamic institutions developed a noble tradition of the art of oral expression.

Unfortunately, the present schools of the community, whether indigenous or imparting Western education, have lost the art and it is high time to recover once more the spontaneous and joyful expression

of personality through the spoken world which will always maintain a social and political significance peculiarly its own in any democratic society and opens out a channel for the building up of a well integrated personality.

**Implications for the Present Day System:** The Prophet and his Companions have endowed their people with a rich legacy in the form of the Quran, the Traditions and their addresses. They vibrate with an inspired style, simple and direct, illumined with moral fervour and emotional restraint; the present-day textbook writer will discover therein a rich field of literature which is nearer to the elemental make-up of the child than the sophisticated literature of the later times.

For centuries, the Muslim child has opened his school career with a chapter of the Quran but often the veneration in which the Holy Text was held by the Muslims worked adversely against a harmonious education of the child when the Holy Book and specially its last chapter which is a miracle of elegance, brevity and pointedness was chosen as the chief content of education for the earlier years. Educators like Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi boldly criticised the practice on pedagogic grounds and recommended priority to subjects which claimed a direct and closer appeal to the innate interests of the child and which may have a higher utility value for him. The Quran was removed by him to the third stage of Education, the two preliminary stages being devoted mainly to mother tongue and arithmetic.

### Different Tasks

It would be interesting to make a comparative study of our efforts for a more efficient teaching of the Arabic language as compared with the solicitude of the Muslims in the first century of the Islamic era. The problem is beset with peculiar difficulties in this country and is all the more complicated by the variety of cultural and linguistic groups who take to the learning of the Arabic language. When one comes across the pathetic spectacle of the Manipuri or the Bengali Muslims struggling with the Arabic syntax in the Persian-cum-Urdu medium of instruction, he feels that the scholarly class of this country has yet to perform the impossible and write a suitable Grammar of the Arabic language in Urdu and other Provincial languages of the country for the benefit of the learner of the language. We may be legitimately proud of the contributions of our scholarly class to the study of Islamic law, dialectics and literature but we must see whether

we have been successful in making it a spiritual heritage of the masses or how far we have helped the average learner in surmounting the preliminary, yet impregnable difficulties in mastering the language, thereby transforming him into a genuine and effective missionary of its spiritual heritage.

### Secrets of Writing

The art of writing and penmanship has a glorious record in the history of Islamic education. The word 'pen' has a strange fascination for the historian and beautiful legends are related about its origin and the priority of its creation. According to a Tradition, the Pen was one of the earliest of creation; and in the Quran, there occurs a verse which runs as follows: "Read in the name of the Lord who created Man from a drop of congealed blood. Read and thy Lord is highly Benevolent; verily He is thy Lord who taught thee with the Pen and taught man what he did not know." Implying the sanction and approval of the art of writing by the Divine Power and commending its use for Men.

**Pen, a Hallowed Name:** Qalam is a hallowed name in Muslim doxology because it occurs as an oath in the Holy Book and one of the most glorious rhapsodies in the praise of God states that if all the vegetation on the earth's surface provides the quills and water of all the oceans, the ink, they would dry up before the Praise of thy Lord comes to an end. In another place, we come across a verse "By the ink-horn and by all that you write."

The Islamic Tradition traces the significance of the art from primitive times and there is the legend of an Evil Spirit enquiring from Solomon about the nature of speech. He replied that it was like the breath of the wind and when asked how it could be preserved, the reply was, "Through writing."

In the beginning it was considered advisable to preserve only the Quranic text in the form of writing partly on account of the scarcity of parchment and partly from fear that other kind of literature like the Traditions might not be confused with the text of the Quran. But when experience proved all such fears to be baseless, the writing of the Traditions also received the approval of the Prophet. When he delivered his address of victory after the fall of Mecca, he allowed the preparation of a written text for the benefit of a person called Abu Shah, apparently of non-Arab extraction, who hailed from Yemen. The Prophet established the Tradition of teaching the art and encouraged it by all possible means.



**A Tribe with a Single Literate:** Very few persons knew how to read and write in the days of Jahiliyah. The skill of writing was rarer than that of reading and Ibn Saad the author of *Tabaqat* makes a specific mention in case of those who knew the art of writing as a noteworthy qualification that was conspicuous by its rarity. It was more or less the same case with the skill of reading.

When the Prophet sent his epistle to Bakr bin Wail after a deputation from the tribe had visited Medina, it was a problem for them to discover a person who could read it as there was only one man, in the whole of Yamamah who knew the art of reading. The progeny of this man was known henceforth as Banu Qari (the progeny of the Reader) because he had read out the epistle of the Prophet.

**Captives, Turned Teachers:** Medina was a settlement of an agricultural community who were more backward in three R's than the Meccans who were businessmen and had their trade relations with Yemen and Syria. There was a scarcity of persons who knew the art of writing. Hence the Prophet did not like to lose any opportunity for the propagation of this art and when seventy Meccans were made captives in the Battle of Badar they were asked to teach the skill to ten children or adults as a compensation for their ransom money which was forty Awqiyah for each captive. Those who had no ransom money to pay readily agreed to the arrangement and took to the work in right earnest. Zayd bin Thabit was one of those who learnt the art from these captives.

The Prophet was keenly interested in the propagation of the skill of writing among his people. He had once requested Shifa bint Abdullah, a scholarly lady of the period, to teach writing to Hafdhah, the wife of the Prophet who was the daughter of Umer.

**When the Prophet Wrote:** The Prophet had no knowledge of reading or writing and this fact has been advanced in the Quran as a forceful argument in favour of the claim that Quran is a revealed book. "Before this we never made you learn how to read or write," says a verse of the Quran.

The words "The Prophet wrote" which occurs in some Traditions are advanced by some as a proof of the Prophet's knowledge of the art of writing but obviously it does not imply actual writing by the Prophet but only dictation. It appears that once he wrote his name. According to the Tradition of Al-Qaziyyah, the Prophet took the paper and as he could not write well so he wrote in place of Rasul-Lillah'

the word 'Muhammad. It is narrated that he wrote Muhammad in his own hand on the Day of Hudaibiyah. Although the Prophet did not write himself he seems to be acquainted with the form of letters and art of calligraphy. There is a Tradition which according to Muawiyah, throws light on his taste for artistic expression: Something was being written in the presence of the Prophet when he said, "Take care of your ink-pot, mend your pen in a slanting direction, straighten up the 'Ya,' indicate clearly the points of 'Sin,' don't make the 'Mim' blind, write the word 'Allah' well, place a 'mad' on Rahman and write the word 'Rahim' well.

**Correspondence Secretaries:** Literacy was not very common among the Quraish and it is said that no more than seventeen persons knew the art of writing among the Meccans. Some of the more distinguished Companions, knew the art and the Prophet did not find much difficulty for correspondence work. According to Zad al-Maad, the following Companions functioned as correspondence secretaries (Katib) of the Prophet.

They were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali and Zubayr. But finally this office was entrusted to Zayd bin Thabit who received further training during his stay with the Prophet. Zayd bin Thabit did not know Syriac and the Prophet had to depend mostly in this connection on the Jews.

But the Jewish scribes could not be relied on. So he asked Zayd to learn Syriac which he did within a short period of fifteen days. After that the entire correspondence in the language was carried on by Zayd.

**Zayd bin Thabit:** Zayd bin Thabit did a great service in compiling the Quran under Abu Bakr and Uthman. He was highly respected for his skill and learning. Once Ibn Abbas took hold of his stirrup as a mark of honouring the scholar and when Zayd protested and said "Oh Cousin of the Prophet, leave it off," Ibn Abbas replied, "We have been asked to honour our scholars in this way." Thereupon Zayd kissed his hand and replied, "And we have been asked to respect the family of the Prophet like this."

Zayd bin Thabit was entrusted with the duty of compiling the Quran by Abu Bakr when a large number of readers had been killed in the battle of Yamamah. He compiled it from fragments, leaves of date palm, soft stone and from those who knew it by heart. Zayd was selected by Abu Bakr because he used to copy out the Wahi — the

words of God as revealed to the Prophet. The copy prepared by Zayd remained with Abu Bakr and then passed through Umar and Hafdah, his daughter, to Uthman who ordered another copy of it to be made for a fresh compilation. He appointed a committee of three including Zayd bin Thabit for preparing the new compilation.

**Growth of Kitabat:** The Muslim Law provides facilities for the slaves to work for their liberty by earning the ransom money for their masters. The profession of the Scribe was popular with the slaves who desired to work for liberty and we come across the name of a freedman of Aishah who copied the Quran for her mistress.

With the growth of contacts with countries outside Arabia, the drawing up of business deeds became an essential feature of the economic life of the period and all books on Fiqh contain invariably a Chapter on Kitabat. The Deeds of Will were a part of the normal business and we have reliable evidence to prove that the Prophet sent for writing material on his death-bed so that he might leave behind a will in writing for his people. The text of his epistles to some of the contemporary kings and others are extant in the collections of Traditions and treatises on Islamic History.

**Savant's Ink and the Martyr's Blood:** Zarnuji quotes a tradition on the authority of Hilal bin Yasar who once saw the Prophet discoursing on knowledge and wisdom in the presence of his Companions. He approached him with all promptitude and requested that he might also receive the benefit of his wise words. The Prophet asked whether he had pen and ink and receiving a reply in the negative, he advised him not to discard the inkpot because the inkpot comprised all the good which might be done till the Day of Judgment.

Elsewhere we have made a reference to the comparison which is frequently made in the Traditions between a teacher and a martyr, and according to one of them the ink of the savant will be weighed against the Martyr's blood on Doomsday while, according to Hassan Basari, when these two will be weighed together, the ink will outweigh the blood.

### Obtaining Knowledge

The Age of the Prophet was the age of human contacts, the age when the oral word dominated the written; when knowledge originated and was published orally; when word divorced from personal associations of a heated declamation or verbal flourishes lost much of its charm. It is surprising that a tradition of the cult of writing



sprang so abundantly after the advent of Islam in spite of the great paucity of parchment, persons living in much later periods like that of Imam Shafii and Abu Yusuf using bones and potshreds for writing purposes.

This got certainly some impetus from the Tradition enjoining the Faithful to captivate knowledge through writing, and some of the Companions did captivate it in an admirable manner. We learn from the frank avowal of Abu Hurayrah that 'Abdullah bin Umar who preserved the Traditions in writing had a richer knowledge of them than himself who retained them by memory. The Prophet allowed a Companion to take down everything on which he discoursed, a duty more or less similar to a stenographer and he waived off all objections raised by others in this connection. According to a savant one who does not preserve knowledge in writing should not be counted among scholars. Again according to Khalil bin Ahmad, he never heard anything but he put it in black and white; and never wrote anything but he memorised it and he never memorised anything but he got some benefit out of it.

Hisham bin 'Urwah's manuscripts were destroyed on the Day of Conflagration and when he was apprised of the tragedy, he exclaimed, "I wish I had perished with them along with my progeny and property." By the time of 'Umar bin Abdul 'Aziz, the art had become so popular and the material preserved in writing so abundant that whole volumes of religious lore were copied out and manuscripts despatched to the various parts of the Dominions.

There are good many injunctions emphasizing the importance of a clear, bold and graceful style in writing. Ali summarises it in one of his most illuminating aphorisms, "Illumine the pen as it was illumined by God." On another occasion he had told that writing represents symbols and hence the more expressive it is, the more appropriate it would be. He prized grace and beauty in writing because it contributed something additional to its inherent function of expression.

The instructions laid down by Ali on the art of writing not merely reveal his great love for learning but also his passionate desire to propagate the art in a correct and beautiful form. The minutest details which he adds to his instructions would do credit to any modern educationist and would prove as useful to the novice today as thirteen centuries ago. He would like the cut of the pen to be elongated and broadened with its angle inclining towards the right. His instructions

on the writing of the alphabet are a delightful combination of the harmony of form, sound and movement. For instance, it was a delight for him to hear the vibrating note of the pen when the pen completed the finishing stroke of the letter 'Nun', the slower movement in rounding up the 'lam', the firm and steadier hand in writing 'Ba', 'ta' 'tha', and so on.

In the opinion of a savant, writing is that characteristic function of a man by dint of which his innate capacities find channel of expression through activity. This symbolic instrument for business transactions and social life became a medium of expression for that love of beauty and rhythm in form which has contributed to the artistic heritage of humanity, those glorious masterpieces of calligraphy which harmonise so delightfully the utilitarian and the aesthetic aspect of Art.

The Kufic script of the Prophet's time with its straight lines and rigid curves did not provide ample scope for artistic expression but the later masters founded those Great Schools of Calligraphy which supplied a new and comparatively easy outlet of expression for the school child and which later on developed into a preliminary stage for artistic expression in other media.

### **Academic Basis**

The primary aim of this brief study of the Prophet's Traditions is not to justify his claim to the title of a preceptor and to discover in his teachings all the minutemen of classroom pedagogics. It will be a left handed compliment to style a Guild of men as a pedagogue and to read into an architect of life the soul of a crack craftsman who worked out a system of classroom technique.

He does not provide us with a psychoanalytical method of child study but he discovered with all the vigour of his intuitive powers and the largeness of his heart, the principle of love and sympathy, that wondrous spell which helps in opening magic casements into the heart of a child when other methods break down; which not only helps us in understanding the child but is the only secure foundation for the harmonious development of his personality.

He does not posit a theory of discipline but he found out for generations of teachers and savants those genuinely human relations which could be the only bond of moral and intellectual understanding between the teacher and the taught. He did not lay down any laws for curriculum-making but he transformed the entire social life into a school and the environment into a great educative force. He did not

initiate any new fangled system of formal education but he gave a practical demonstration of a method of informal education which vibrated with the spirit of joyous spontaneity, and closest association with the life of the community.

### **Importance of Schools**

One of the imminent dangers of the present-day system of formal education in this country and elsewhere is the gradually widening gulf between school and society and the consequent deadening influence on the educative process as a whole.

Some of the leading thinkers of the educational world, John Dewey and others have already given a timely warning of the menace which threatens the development and growth of educational systems on account of their gradual dissociation from an intimate and intelligent contact with the needs of the community and the living problems of the day. While the rushing currents of Time march on their inexorable course, they tend boundaries of the school, as barren patches of islands in the stagnant backwaters.

The moral and social world is afflicted as relentlessly with the law of inertia as the physical world and our institutions have a tendency to lag behind times unless stimulated by new ideas and hitherto untapped sources of potential energy; some time they flower into a second spring by discovering in their living past, those nascent principles of life and activity which had made them once a dynamic factor of social progress. The new movement in education is making a serious effort to capture once more the spirit of the old informal system of education and introducing it into the formal, straight-jacketed and colourless atmosphere of the present day school.

The system of informal education employs the principle of active sharing of experiences through life-situations and the method of the Prophet as revealed in the Traditions is a shining example of such an education. He participated so joyously and spontaneously in the social life of his people and his contacts with the younger generation of the commonwealth of Islam, including the youngest, were always so rich, abundant and fruitful; therein lies a promise of hope and inspiration for those who are working for the propagation of the new ideals in more than one field of education today.

The method of informal education inherent in the Traditions has an appeal which transcends the educational frontiers of any particular caste, community or race. They are broadbased on such a conception



of human association and social cooperation which has a universal application. They lend a refreshing note to the educative process and place the sharing of life-experience on a personally vital basis. This method of education, which is informal and incidental is not symbolic and abstract as in the case of formal education; it is closely linked with the everyday pursuits of life and is a natural outcome of social needs and requirements.

The greatest danger of the present day education in Indian and Pakistani schools is its tragic dissociation from the social context, both in contents of education, its method of organising those contents and handling them in the classroom. Public opinion has awakened to the graveness of the educational crisis and there is a general demand for some kind of education which may develop better social attitudes in the pupils; create in them a living sense of civic responsibility and foster a mental outlook which may enable them to repose their faith in a cooperative rather than a competitive mode of life on an intellectual and practical basis.

### **Vogues in Society**

Our present system of education is rapidly transforming the average pupil into an egoist, a tendency all the more accentuated by the narrowly individualistic outlook of the society at large; it has awakened in him dangerous propensities, which may minister to his personal advancement and prosperity, but function nevertheless as disintegrating and disruptive forces for the society as a whole.

If we are desirous of discovering some means of counteracting their influence, we will find in the system of Islamic education, as represented in the Traditions of the Prophet, an example of informal education which provides some indispensable elements for the social development of the citizen's personality. It would release the educative process from the darkening shades of the school room and would transform the business of acquiring knowledge into a vital pursuit of sharing life experiences with the adult and the older members of the society.

### **Social Milieus**

If we make a study of the educative value of the social environment today as compared to the period of indigenous system of education in this country, we are convinced that the educative influences in the latter case were more comprehensive, deep and effective. In those

days all the social institutions functioned in one way or the other for the education of the younger generation in its limited sense and every adult member of the society felt in an intensively religious way, his responsibility to function as an agent of informal education for the younger people.

Western educationists and administrators who have studied this system with sympathy and understanding have appreciated this redeeming feature of the system which ensured for the school and the teacher the cooperation of the entire society.

There may be no dearth of socially minded people working for the educational development of the younger generation outside the school these days, but no effective drive for mass education can be initiated through individual efforts. A study of the history of mass education reveals that large scale success has only been achieved either through religion or state. In the case of Islamic education the mainspring of inspiration was religion as represented by the Holy Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet.

The Traditions of the Prophet have been a tremendous formative influence in the growth and development of certain elements of Islamic education. The Prophet was a great builder of men, a radiating centre of influence who constantly moulded and transformed his Companions. Later on he became the inspirer of generations of teachers whose life ideals were illumined by his Teachings and whose classroom methods were coloured by his personal example.

The educational conceptions of the great savants of Islam, their aims and objectives, their classroom etiquette and general behaviour in addressing lecture groups are strongly reminiscent of the chapter on social behaviour (Bab-ul-Adab) in the Books of Traditions. The Sayings of the Prophet on this subject are still a living force in the indigenous schools of this country and elsewhere in the Muslim world although they appear to have lost much of their primal vigour and vitality through the passage of time.

### **Convention Literature**

The Traditions have a special significance as a literary heritage of the Islamic people, an influence which has been constantly moulding the style of generations of scholarly writers whose medium of expression was the Arabic language, the lingua franca of the Islamic world. In certain cases it helped in the growth and development of the local languages by lending them the charm of its racy, genial and human

style. A study of the English and the continental languages reveals how profoundly they have been influenced by the Bible and the author of juvenile literature in Islamiyat and Pakistani languages of Indian Subcontinent would do well in drawing more freely on this perennial source of literary inspiration for the Islamic people.

The educational conceptions implied in the Traditions have a special message for the social worker in the field of adult education.

They determine for him in broad terms the aims and objectives of the educative process and lay down for him in clearly unambiguous terms that all education dissociated from the masses is a travesty; that all teaching divorced from moral values is hardly worth its name; it provides for him in a practical and realistic manner some highly effective means and devices of informal education for the old and the young.

### **Knowledge at Work**

The Prophet was keenly conscious of the importance of wisdom not only for the spiritual but for worldly affairs. In fact there was hardly any quality between the two and wisdom helped in the secular and in the spiritual sphere of life.

On his return journey from the Battle of Uhud, some one started discussing the fortune of battle and praised the chivalry of one and the experience of another. Thereupon the Prophet said, "Verily men fought in accordance with their intelligence and their success was in a measure with it and each one of them attained to different stages of (Divine Grace)."

And when Aishah asked wherein lies precedence for men in worldly affairs the Prophet replied, "in intellect here as well in the next world."

Thereupon Aishah asked whether reward in the next world was to be determined by actions. He replied that men did good and evil in accordance with their intellect and their reward would be commensurate with their actions.

Reason not only directs a person on to the right path; it helps him in reaching the goal and assists in the completion and the final summing up of the whole process. According to the Prophet, "Good morals are not perfected until reason receives perfection, because it is then that a person's faith acquires perfection and he surrenders himself to the Lord and repudiates his enemy, the Satan."



**Reason and Morality:** One of the most illuminating and irresistible inference from a study of the Prophet's Traditions is the undeniable fact that he has emphasized on the perfection of reason and intellectual development of the individual as a means for spiritual edification and not as an end in itself.

According to a Tradition. Wisdom is synonymous with self-surrender to God.

Out of all the Believers, he is the most loved one of the Lord whose wisdom is perfect, who counsels his lower self and acts according to reason throughout his life. And the most perfect in reason is he who has the greatest fear of God and has the greatest insight of positive and negative commandments although he may be less rigorous in prayers.

For the Believer who is a wayfarer on the highway of life, wisdom is the traveller's kit; it is his ride or means of conveyance and the tent which protects him from the inclemencies of weather.

It does not form the essence of Faith but it is the prop and the pillar on which it rests. The pillar determines the strength and the support of a building and according to a Tradition, "All things in the world are supported by another and the support of the Faithful is reason.

His piety will be in accordance with his reason. For verily the unbelievers will say when they are cast in the fire of hell, "If we had listened and understood, we would not have been the inmates of hell."

But when it is said that intellectual development is only a means to an end and not an end in itself, it implies the first three kinds of intelligence. And these in their own turn function as means to an end which lies in the fourth, the ethical or the moral intelligence. When the Prophet said that every group has an end and the aim of humanity is reason, he meant the last kind.

In fact the educative process is an ever-developing, evergrowing unfolding of personality and its enrichment in the knowledge and control of physical, mental and the social aspect of life. The first three kinds of intelligence help in the comprehension and control of these three worlds and they pave the way for a conscious control of the fourth kind of intelligence which serves the spiritual or the moral world. The entire process of educational development as conceived in these terms is not static. It is an evergrowing process both as regards means and ends.

## **Importance of Wisdom**

According to a Tradition, "Reason is a guide. The abundance of reason leads a man towards Hidaya and saves him from perdition."

This negative aspect of reason which ensures man from going astray from the Right Path finds expression in a Tradition where reason is described as the Watchman of the Pious. When a person was being praised in the presence of the Prophet, he enquired about his wisdom. They protested and told that they were discussing his piety and charitable disposition and there was hardly any reason for enquiring about his intelligence. Thereupon the Prophet told that a well intentioned fool may commit more sins than a wicked person through his ignorance.

## **Teacher's Responsibility**

There are good many Traditions which illustrate in figurative language the social and the spiritual significance of the teacher's role in society.

## **How to Goad?**

The teacher is generally compared to a luminous body radiating light and illuminating the darkness of others' souls. They are the "light-houses of the towns and cities" they may be likened to stars and guiding lights in the darkness that covers land and ocean and when they disappear, the guides would certainly lose their way. "The teacher is a light-house for the land and a spring of fresh water for the town."

There is no end to the graceful similes which throw up realistically and forcefully the creative aspect of the teacher's function in society; he is likened to those great forces of nature whose creative efforts refreshen the world and animate it with new life and ideals. The Prophet quoted once the parting counsel of Luqman to his son that he should seek the company of Savants and listen to the words of wisdom because God resurrects the heart of the dead with the Light of Knowledge just as the barren soil begins to throb with vegetable life under the genial influence of rainfall.

Another tradition likens the Assemblies of Teachers to the flower-beds of heaven and the companions are enjoined to browse on so delectable a stuff whenever an opportunity arises. There are teachers and teachers and the fine distinction between the grades among them

is illustrated in another metaphor by Ali, according to whom knowledge may be likened to a melifluous current, while the teacher merely stroll on the banks, the thinker struggles midstream while the Arif (knower) enjoys a ride in the barge of salvation.

### **Saintly Traits**

The spiritual reward for teaching others is great; it is light as the rainbow coloured clouds and genial like the rainfall. In one of his accounts, Abu Hanifa describes the account of an individual whose Good and Evil actions would be weighed in the Balance on Doomsday and the Pan for evil would indicate a downwards tendency but then suddenly from some unknown quarter would appear a cloud which would turn the balance in his favour.

This cloud is the grace of knowledge which he (so profusely) bestowed on the people. We have mentioned elsewhere how the entire universe appears to be involved in the educative process, the aim of which is the social and moral regeneration of this ace of creation man; and for the teacher who is the Divine instrument for working such a transformation in man, "the angels above, the ants in their anthills and the fish in the sea send their blessings."

Such a dynamic element in human life is essential for its existence and continuity and all men are active participants in the sharing of experience either in the capacity of a teacher or a learner because life ceases to be worthy of its respectable name when man degenerates to the level of inert, static existence.

According to Ali, "Men may be classified broadly into three groups, firstly, the goodly teacher, then the pupil traversing the path of salvation, while the rest of humanity are all stupid fools who take their cue from any claimant." (Naiqorerier)

Another tradition urges every man to be a dynamic factor in the educative process which works in the cyclic order of morning and evening and that every man should discover in himself the young Galahad ready to launch on a voyage of moral and intellectual adventure.

There are savants who refuse to recognise such a person as human being who has never been a teacher in his life. Al-Ghazzali quotes Ibn Mubarak according to whom "the only creation which deserves the exalted rank of Man is the teacher because only knowledge distinguishes man from animal."



## Holy Prophet: Great Trainer

The first persons who were entrusted with the duty of teaching under the Prophet were Masaab bin Umayr and Ibn Um Maktum. They had been deputed by the Prophet from Mecca on the request of the Ansar of Medina who desired some teachers of religion and Holy Quran. Masaab used to make house to house visitation and frequented suburban areas also it was through his pioneer efforts that the message of Islam was propagated in this area. Masaab bin Umayr, a great dandy of Mecca was converted in the days when the family of the Prophet was living in exile in the defile of Abi Talib outside Mecca. He had a phenomenal success and was known as Muqarri or the teacher and he stayed in the enclosure of Asad bin Lurarai, one of the earliest Medinites to be converted to Islam.

His teaching activities aroused the suspicion of tribal chiefs like Saad bin Muad and Usayd bin Hudhayr. Usayd actually went to Asad, the host of Masaab and complained how he was maintaining a person who was misleading the people of Medina and ensnaring the weak minded. But when he heard Masaab and his companions reciting the rhythmic verses of the Quran, his naive and sensitive heart was deeply moved. He made an open confession of his faith on the spot.

Saad bin Muad followed suit. He began by abusing the host who was his cousin for lodging suspicious characters but Saad was also struck with the awful grandeur and beauty of the Quranic verses and a spark of enthusiasm for the new faith was kindled within Saad who brought his family of Abdul Shah within the fold of Islam after a direct appeal to their sense of loyalty for their chief.

Teachers were sent to the tribal areas by the Prophet from time to time. They were generally sent on the request of those deputations from the tribal areas which came to visit Medina. Some of the companions had specialised as teachers and they continued their work of propagation of knowledge long after the Prophet. One of them Maadh bin Jabal worked in this capacity in various parts of the Peninsula. These teachers seem to have dedicated their whole life to educational work among the tribes and other distant parts of Arabia.

## Almighty's Service

In the beginning, Maadh bin Jabal worked in this capacity as a judge in Yemen and would receive injunctions from the Prophet in reply to his queries. He worked as a teacher of Quran and Fiqh in Mecca when the Prophet had left for the Battle of Hunayn. Under

Abu Bakr he had offered himself to go on Jihad to Syria and later on Umar I deputed him to Hims as a teacher of Quran and religious knowledge from whence he proceeded to Palestine where he met his end in the plague epidemic during the period of Umar I.

He exercised the authority of issuing legal decrees (Ifta) during the lifetime of the Prophet and Abu Bakr in Medina. Another great teacher, Ibn Masud described him as 'Amat' "Qanit" (a leader faithful to God), the attributes which are used for Ibrahim in the Quran. According to Ibn Masud, Amat is a person who teaches people about 'Good', and 'Qanit is one who is subservient to God.

### **Renewed Teachings**

The most well known scholars of Quranic readings in the days of the Prophet were Uby bin Kaab, Zayd bin Thabit, and Abdullah ibn Masud. Abu Musa-al-Ashaari was more known for his melodious voice than for the Qirat.

Uby bin Kaab was acknowledged as the greatest scholar of the Quran by Umar I and others and he was associated with its study from the earliest days. It is related that the Prophet had told Uby that he had been ordained from above to recite to him the Quran and when Uby asked whether the Lord had named him in particular, the Prophet replied in the affirmative. Upon this, tears of joy ran down the cheeks of Uby whereupon the Prophet recited, "And it is due to the beneficence and grace of God. They should be happy because it (Quran) is better than what they collect".

The Prophet had trained a class of Quran Readers or Qaris at Medina. It appears that these persons who belonged in most cases to the people of the Suffa had dedicated themselves entirely to the Great Cause and had placed themselves at the disposal of the Prophet.

They used to recite the Quran and were engaged in teaching and learning the Holy Book at night. In the day-time they were occupied with bringing water for the mosque. They would go into the jungle, bring faggots and with their sale they would provide meals for the people of the Suffa and the needy. Haram, a maternal uncle of Anas bin Malik also belonged to this group. These Quran Readers who lived apparently in the mosque were often sent on teaching missions. Once seventy Ansars, all of whom were Qura were sent to a tribe who slaughtered them to a man. One of the greatest authorities on the readings of the Quran was Abdullah Ibn Masud who had been described as a chest full of knowledge.

He was elder to Zayd bin Thabit, another authority on the Quranic text and according to him he had learnt seventy surats from the Prophet at a time when Zayd bin Thabit was merely a beardless youth. He kept his side tresses and used to frolick about with children. He was one of those few persons of early Islam who have been described as Allama.

The comprehensive scope of his knowledge has been described by Masruq in an impressive simile, "I would compare him to a reservoir. There are reservoirs that would satiate one or two persons. There may be others which may quench the thirst of a hundred people but Abdullah Ibn Masud was like unto a reservoir that could suffice for the whole world."

The Prophet was deeply moved by the recitation of two companions in particular; they were Ibn Masud and Abu Musa-al-Ashaari.

Once he asked Ibn Masud to recite to him the Quran and Ibn Masud replied, "How can I recite to you, O Prophet of Allah, when the Holy Book has been revealed unto you." But the Prophet insisted and Ibn Masud recited to him the Surat-al-Nissa (Women) and when he read the verse, 'And Verily we will bring witnesses out of all these people and appoint you a witness over all of them', he saw that the eyes of the Prophet were overbrimming with tears. Then he said, "If anyone desires to recite the Quran as it was revealed, he should read in the style of Ibn Um Abd (Ibn Masud)".

According to Ibn Abbas, the greatest scholar of Exegesis in early Islam, he preferred the Qirat of Abdullah Ibn Masud over the rest because the Quran was recited twice during the Ramadan in the last year of the Prophet's life. In those day Ibn Masud says the Prophet and he came to know of the verses which had been deleted or changed.

### **Enrichment of Education**

Umar Ibn Khattab had organised a well laid out plan for the propagation of learning in areas that had been recently conquered and for that purpose, he selected important centres like Kufa and Basrah in Iraq, Damascus and Hims in Syria and Jerusalem in Palestine. He selected the most outstanding scholars and teachers for this purpose. It appears that some of them received annual emoluments from the state. Ibn Masud was sent to Kufa by Umar Ibn Khattab and he wrote to the people that he had preferred Ibn Masud to himself and they should acquire knowledge from him. It is said that Ibn Masud used to receive an allowance of 6, 000 dirhams.



The Caliphs used to keep a keen vigilance over the activities of these teachers. Once Umar Ibn Khattab had criticised Ibn Masud for relating too many Traditions to the people of Kufa.

At a later period a group of Kufites who had been students of Ibn Masud came to visit Ali who cross-questioned them so closely about their teacher that they had a suspicion that the Caliph was going to give them a test. Finally Ali expressed a high appreciation of the character and learning of Ibn Masud.

Ibn Abbas and Abu Hurayrah had started their teaching work at Basrah. According to Ibn Saad, Ibn Abbas was the first teacher who acquired a great reputation in that town.

Abu Hurayrah had an extremely busy time as a teacher attending to the large concourse of students who attended his narrations. Once he was reminded of a Tradition of the Prophet when he was surrounded by a throng of pupils that a day would arrive when people would come to him in search of knowledge from distant parts and that he should greet them with a welcome on such occasions.

Abu Musa-al-Ashaari, the golden tongued reciter of the Quran was also at Basrah during the period of Umar Ibn Khattab.

### **Magnificent Choice**

Umar Ibn Khattab had selected a group of three teachers for the propagation of knowledge in Syria and Palestine. They belonged to Ansars who had specialised in the compilation and presentation of Quranic knowledge. The original plan was that three teachers should start their teaching work at Hims, and should train a number of persons who had the talent and capacity to receive such a training. Later on they should proceed to Damascus and Jerusalem.

These three teachers, Maadh bin Jabal, Ubadah bin Al-Samet and Abu-al-Darda by name stayed for some time at Hims and then Abu-al-Darda shifted to Damascus where he continued his teaching work in the Great Friday Mosque of the town till the end. Ubadah stayed at Hims while Maadh went to Palestine. Their main work was the teaching of Quran and the propagation of religious knowledge.

When selecting members of missions the early Caliphs made it a point to include very often some Ansars who were considered to be very faithful keepers of the traditions of the Prophet. Umar Ibn Khattab sent a mission of the Ansars which included Qarzah bin Kaab Ansari to Kufa for the propagation of the Traditions of the Prophet.

Umar did them the signal honour of accompanying the mission upto the mosque of Dharar on the road from Medina to Kufa. In his parting instructions he asked them to emphasize more on Traditions or Sunan and Fraiz rather than on accounts of battles.

### Greatest Scholar

Ali was one of the greatest scholars of Quran in his days and he had great confidence concerning his knowledge about the particular context in which a verse of the Quran had been revealed. According to Ali, "Ask me about the Book of Allah because there is no Ayat (verse) about which I don't know whether it had been revealed at night or in the day, on even ground or on a hill top." He knew the reason, the place and the person about whom it was revealed.

Such an exact knowledge about the chronological sequence of the Quranic verses led him to plan the collection of the Quran on his own initiative and it appears that he was deeply engaged in this work during the period when Abu Bakr was elected to the Caliphate.

He had been late in taking the Bayt with Abu Bakr and when the latter asked him about it he told that he had taken a vow not to put on his sheet for any other purpose except offering prayers until he had compiled the Quran. It is said that he had compiled it according to its chronological order but he did not appear to have made it public.

According to Umar Ibn Khattab, Ali has been recognised as the greatest authority on Qaza (Legal judgement) in Medina. Umar Ibn Khattab would pray to God to save him from a difficult situation where Abu al Hassan (Ali) was not close at hand to give his counsel. He would seek his legal advice in personal matters and preferred it to that of others.

As a young man, the Prophet had appointed Ali once the Qadi for Yemen. It was a great distinction for a young man to be appointed a judge for this part of Arabia.

Yemen had reached a more advanced stage of social and political development because of its intimate relations with Iran and Abysinnia and Hadrat Ali was not very much in the wrong when he felt slightly diffident about the success of his office.

According to Ibn Saad he had said, "O Prophet, you are sending me to a people who are ancient and great. They are old and experienced and I fear that I may not be able to perform my duties efficiently." Thereupon the Prophet prayed for him and said, "May God give strength

to your tongue and guide your heart." According to Amir, among the early Muslims, the office of the Qadi (judge) was held with special distinction by Umar, Ali, Zayd bin Thabit and Abu Mussa-al-Ashaari.

Zaid bin Thabit, the Katib (copyist) of the Prophet was the greatest scholar of Ilm-al-Faraiz (Law of inheritance) and when he died, he was described as the 'scholar for men' i.e., the savant who dealt with the law of human rights.

He had been described as the greatest scholar of Al-Faraiz by the Prophet and Umar Ibn Khattab. He was retained in Medina and continued to hold the *Riyasat* (Headship) in Qaza, Ifta, Faraiz and Qirat till his death in 45 A.H. He was appointed an officer of judiciary by Umar Ibn Khattab and was granted an allowance. One of his distinguished followers in Qaza was Said bin-al-Musayyib, the well known savant and doctor of law who continued the legal traditions of Zaid bin Thabit in Medina.

Abdullah ibn Abbas was undisputedly the greatest scholar of Tafsir and he has been styled as Sultan-al-Mufassirin (the king of Exegesis) or Habr-al-Ummat (the savant of Ummat), and the Prophet had prayed that God may bless him with Hikmat (wisdom) and the Exegesis of Quran.

Ibn Abbas represents the cultured person of the period who had received a broad liberal education and who used his great learning for the clarification of the text of the Quran. With Quran as the basis he would develop his lectures according to a scheme of coordinated studies, wherein Arithmetic, History, Literature and geography all would combine into a united whole, the great integrating principle for this unifying process being the Quranic text.

He would illustrate the use of a particular word or phrase occurring in the Quran by quoting the verse of a poet. He was equally sought after for the study of genealogy, accounts of battles and poetry.

He had his week days divided according to a set time-table. He would lecture one day on Fiqh, the next day on Exegesis, the third day on History of battles. Special days were appointed for the teaching of poetry and the history of Arabia. He has been described as an Ocean of 'Ata' on account of his versatility of genius. And according to another, he overshadowed other savants as a tall date-palm overshadows the smaller ones. He was styled as an Allama by Uby bin Kaab, and it was a signal honour to be designated with this title by one of the greatest authority on Quranic text in the days of the Prophet.



## Master Brain

The educational influence of Aishah worked in favour of the most faithful rendering of Traditions and in several cases her exact knowledge of the context in which a particular comment had been made by the Prophet helped in the clarification of issues. For instance, Abu Hurayrah had related that ill lies in a women, a horse and a house but Aishah explained that he had missed to add the qualifying clause that in this case the Prophet was quoting an article of faith with the Jews.

Her intimate knowledge of the context of a particular Tradition often resolved many a controversial issue.

Once Fatima bint Qays claimed in the days of Dinar Ibn Khattab that the Prophet had abrogated the right of a divorced woman to stay at her husband's house for the period of Iddat. Umar Ibn Khattab refused to credit her statement but the ambiguity was removed only when Aishah described the circumstances under which this exception had been made by the Prophet. The husband's house in this particular case was situated in an out of the way place and the Prophet asked the divorcee to leave the house on account of its isolated situation. Through her close association with the Prophet and her critical attitude she has been recognised as a master of the science of Istidrak, 'or the higher criticism of Traditions. Her critique has been compiled by more than one scholar out of whom the most well known study is by Sayuti under the title of '*Ayn-al-Asabah fi ma istadrak hu Aishah ala Ashabah*'.

She would lose no opportunity for imparting instruction to others and while on the pilgrimage, she had her tent on the slope of mount of Thabir, and she was accosted by a large number of persons seeking after knowledge. Sometime she would hold classes within the Haram and seat herself under the roof of Zamzam. Another medium through which her knowledge of law was being broadcast was through Ifta (legal decrees) as she continued to exercise the authority of issuing legal decrees till the end of her life. Reference on legal points were made to her by Muawiya who would send emissaries for this purpose from Damascus.

Her remarkable eloquence was a great asset to Aishah as a teacher. According to a very reliable and honest witness Iknaf bin Qays, he had the opportunity of listening to the addresses of Hadrat Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali but he never heard a more eloquentness from any one in the world than that of Aishah. Hadrat Aishah held a school for the teaching of Traditions at her residence. The place had

an additional advantage as it adjoined the Prophet's mosque. Women and younger fold sat within while men took their seats in the out. She had more than 200 pupils which included 88 women. She was extremely particular about the language and expression of her pupils. Once she had criticised the language of two young persons who had come to her as pupils.

She was a great teacher of the subject, and her house was the cradle bed of a regular school of Traditions. She would take young children, maintain them out of her own pocket and give them training in this subject. Urwah, Qasim, Abu Salma, Masruq, Amrah and Saffiyah had been apprenticed to her when quite young.

Out of these Amrah acquired great distinction as an authority on Traditions and when Umar bin Abdul Aziz launched on his great task of preserving Traditional literature, he asked Ibn Hazm, the Qadi of Medina to take special care in acquiring Traditions from Amrah. He had written to Amr ibn Hazm, "Copy Traditions from Amrah because I fear the loss of knowledge and the passing away of men of knowledge."

In case of women teachers, an important group among their students always belonged to their own family. In case of Aishah, the family of Abu Bakr benefited of a great deal from her teaching.

Hadrat Abu Hurayrah, the most copious narrator of Traditions was one of the most popular teacher of the subject in his later years. He had continued his pursuit of learning with great devotion and self-sacrifice. His only rival in the field was Aishah, the wife of the Prophet and when she told him once that he narrated such traditions on the authority of the Prophet which she had never heard of, Abu Hurayrah replied, "O Mother of the Faithful, I acquired this information at that time when you were busy with your collyrium and your mirror! Aishah had criticised also the rapid speed at which he used to narrate Traditions.

Abu Hurayrah had pursued his great interest in the preservation of Traditions at great personal sacrifice. While the Ansars were busy with their daily occupations like agriculture and the Muhajirs carried on their trade in the market place, he would stick to the Prophet and acquire knowledge of Traditions. For some time, he lived with the people of the Suffa and had experienced terrible spells of starvation in those days. In his own words, "When I could scarcely move between the mosque and the residences of the Prophet's wives which were very close to the mosque without losing consciousness on the way." But nevertheless he continued his pursuit of learning in an unabated manner.

The people of Suffa used to share their meals with the Prophet or meet their needs through those charitable donations of the community which were brought to the mosque. Abu Hurayrah had an extremely vigilant mind and he used to keep a careful note of the daily activities of the Prophet. He was often accused of being too prolific in his narrations.

But it appears that he had acquired such a capacity of concentrated attention and memory that there was hardly anything which escaped his notice or passed out of his wonderful memory. Once he asked a person what Surah the Prophet had recited in the night prayers day before. The man had attended the prayers but he had no idea of the Surah. Abu Hurayrah remembered the whole of the Surah recited by the Prophet on that occasion.

A psychological treatment which helped Abu Hurayrah considerably in improving his memory was made by the Prophet when he complained of bad memory. The Prophet asked him to spread out his covering sheet. Then he sprinkled a few drops of water on it and asked him to put it on again. According to Abu Hurayrah he never forgot a single Tradition after that. According to another version, the Prophet made a gesture of putting two or three handfuls on the sheet, as if bestowing something on him.

### **Available Allowances**

One of the main traditions which provide a sanction for monetary compensation in case of religious instruction has been related by Kharajah bin Salt, a Kufite whose uncle had visited the Prophet for instruction in the teachings of Islam. On his way back he came across a Beduin who was suffering from an attack of insanity and was bound in chains.

His tribal people asked him to treat the sick person. He recited Surah Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran and the sick person recovered from the attack. He was offered one hundred goats as a compensation which he refused to accept. He visited the Prophet once again, and asked his opinion on the matter.

He said, "It is your right. Others accept compensation for unlawful treatment of the invalid through (sorcery or enchantment) but you have earned it through a lawful treatment." According to a tradition, the Prophet had sanctioned payment of compensation in case of those who were engaged in religious warfare; He had compared them to Moses' mother who received payment for suckling her own child. The



fighters were paid for defending the Faith. The Hanafite school has interpreted payment in case of religious instruction as a parallel case in which the tradition is equally applicable.

Umar and Uthman had granted allowances for Muezzin, Imams and teachers and Umar bin Khattab had sent special instructions to some of his amils that those who learnt the Quran should be granted an allowance.

Umar bin Abdul Aziz had sent Yazid bin Abi Malik and Harith bin Yamjid Ashaari to the countryside for teaching purposes and granted allowances for them. Yazid accepted the grant but Harith refused it.

Great teachers who had specialised in a particular science were despatched to important centres in the dominions not only for the propagation of religious knowledge among the masses but also for the training of a class of scholars who would blaze a new trail in their special field of interest. These great teachers functioned as a great educative force for the common people also but their primary objective was the training of teachers or scholars.

For the education of the common man, Umar Ibn Khattab sent a number of Qasas (story tellers), not story tellers in the literal sense of the term but men who would present great religious truths in the form of stories as illustrated in the lives of the Prophets of old.

They appealed to the imagination of the common people by their simple, direct and forceful style of teaching. The first persons to be selected for this work were Tamim-al- Dari and Ubayd bin Urnayr. They taught traditions and religion. This class grew in popularity and their services were often requisitioned by later rulers for purposes of political propaganda. They sometimes accompanied the army and incited them to fighting on the battle-field.

### **Specialists' Opinion**

Great teachers were inspired by the Divine Command to the Prophet "Say, O Prophet, I don't ask for you any reward for all this."

Ghazzali affirms that the teacher should follow the noble example set by the Prophet and should not expect any compensation in the form of monetary reward, any other form of return or even the gratification of receiving thanks. On the other hand, he believes that it is the taught who lays the teacher under obligation rather than vice versa. According to him, "the pupil is like a landlord who has surrendered to the

teacher the barren wastes of his soul for tilling and cultivating. As a sheer economic proposition, the cultivator of the soil stands to gain more than the proprietor.

Hence the teacher has hardly any justification for making a parade of his beneficence because the teacher could not have earned the grace of God through his teaching if the pupil had not provided him with the opportunity of earning this spiritual merit.

This approach of Ghazzali which might come as a surprise to some of the teachers in our days introduces a fundamental revolution in the pupil-teacher relations, and raises the level of the professional attitude towards work from the economic to the spiritual.

This outlook is indispensable in the teaching profession because the very nature of the efficiency demanded by the educative process demands an approach essentially different from that in other professions. But this does not imply that the economic aspect should be ignored altogether.

## Concept of Scientific Approach to Islam

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### Stages of Creation

#### *Universe its Origin*

Starting from Big Bang the universe created itself for the love of Creator following the principle of attraction and repulsion, which also signifies the free will and God only provided the laws and guidance from within and not from top.

The behaviour of the universe can only be described in the form of movements of celestial bodies with respect to each other. This behaviour can be called stereo-typed and can be expressed in mathematical equations i.e. so many light years, earth take 24 hours to rotate, 365 day in year and so on. Behaviour is an attribute of life no matter how stereotyped; it is still an essence of consciousness. Life at this stage was in an unconscious state or material state of life-the state in which bodies played consciousness under the stimulus of attraction and repulsion caused by external processes.

#### ***The Earth –Higher and Different Kind of Rational order outside the Cosmos***

Earth can be understood on an analogy of living organism. It started its journey from gaseous state and created itself by free choice following the principle of attraction and repulsion. Acting in unified order it harnessed infinite number of substances (minerals). The behaviour of these substances can be expressed in chemical equations. This can also be called acted or played form of consciousness, a degree higher than that of the universe, as evident from the soil of the earth, which is different from the rest of the universe.



### **The Vegetables: Creative Stage (Semi-Conscious Life)**

The vegetable life recast the behaviour of matter processed at the physical Earth in the form of various species of vegetables under higher rational (conscious) plan of the Vegetable Stage. If we take the physical laws as the elementary measurements with which the Planet Earth fashioned itself and developed its atmosphere, we could see these measurements recast with greater intelligence at the higher Vegetable Stage in the form of beautiful flowers, their delightful colours, sizes and shapes of plants, proportion of tender branches and their leaves as well as in the kinds of fruits and their juices. All these artistic manifestations are based on complete mathematical equations in so harmonious proportions that they decorated the Earth like the paradise.

### **The Animals: Creative Stage of Senses (Perceptual Life)**

At this stage life started in an insignificant organism of amoeba and then making its way through uncountable species of animals, it reached its completion at the start of the Human Stage of creation. It is very important to note that it was due to the higher conscious enlightenment of animal with which it differentiated the characteristics of various objects, such as darkness and light, remoteness and vicinity, coldness and heat, solidity and liquidity etc.

In other words, the new conscious values developed by Animal stage were not known to the preceding stages. The Animal as a higher creative stage relevant to its higher conscious enlightenment determined these. The Animal detected only those properties, which were useful and necessary for onward march of life stages. The Animal ultimately perfected its sense perceptions in one of its leading species which appeared immediately before the emergence of Human Stage and which served as the physical organism for Man.

### **Man – The Creative Stage of Self-Conscious or "Self"**

"The creation of Adam is not his physical body but his attaining of the mental state of Self-consciousness, from there on, man exists in a non-material state, call it soul, in his mind and that where all new values will be earned."

The significance of Adam being that he was the first human being to cross the barrier of Self-consciousness. However, in time all similar species achieved Self-consciousness in a universal way. We are informed that Adam had two sons and so we can safely assume that there must

be people around for them to marry and the question of them marrying their sisters as put forward by some groups is preposterous-lying is a sin today as it was yesterday and so is incest, the law of the Creator never changes.

It is because of soul that we developed a language because it retains every image it sees; records every word it hears; and every thought that you might have had remains preserved from within. In short it is a microchip within us. Self-consciousness (soul) being an attribute of the Creator will not die; it already exists beyond the barrier of time and space. The most important point to be noted is that in all the creative stages preceding the Self-conscious Stage of Man, the conscious values were preserved and passed on by each species in kind and not in "Person" or "Self". The values preserved at the human stage are "Personal" as implied in the words "Conscious Self". If we take away the "Conscious Self" no conscious values pertaining to the self or person can exist or survive. Life must protect those hard earned values in its minutest detail, as otherwise the process of creation cannot proceed.

From the day Adam achieved self consciousness we are in a state of mental evolution and the reality of life is constant progressive change — that change in one direction towards higher and higher consciousness. If we analyse the entire creation we discover that rationality prevails in all previous conscious orders that is Universe, Earth Vegetation and Animal Kingdom. Having completed the creative process they have become immutable and just maintain themselves under the procreative process developed by them and the only order where the creative process is still active is the self-conscious man. However, man's direction is also rational but as his intellect is in the "making" (conscious mind is to sole/self what digestive system was to the physical brain) he cannot determine laws, values and direction on his own without prior understanding-that guidance has been provided in the form of law in Quran just as it was provided to every group of people on the face of this earth by various prophets from Adam to Jesus to Muhammad and it was also provided to all previous conscious orders under the principle of "Emergent Evolution".

### **Some Fundamental Laws of Creation**

1. The development had taken place in stages. A stage of development when it had run its course got sealed, immutably fixing the values attained at the stage. Next stage, simultaneously starting at its lowest rung, dominated the earlier stages as it progressed.

If this was not so, the book claims, and had the process of development continued unchecked at each stage (varieties kept coming up) there would have been chaos and higher forms of life would not have emerged.

2. Each higher stage, which succeeds, appears at an infinite higher conscious level over all the preceding stages. The difference is not in degree but in kind as well, had this not been the case we would never been able to classify the stages.

### **Lower Stages can Never give Birth to Higher Stages**

The reason of our failure to understand the universe as a creation is that we think the lower stages are responsible for raising the universe. (A misleading concept). There is always a purpose behind creation and if we do see the purpose working in the creation we could be sure of the Creator of the universe. Just as each soul or life lives in a unit, similarly the purpose lives in a unit. Identical to the surface of the earth which cannot be expressed as from where it starts and where it ends, the purpose also has no beginning or end. It is the purpose, which starts and not the lower stages as such which determine the purpose. The lower stages, independent of the purpose, can lead nowhere. If these stages appear to have proceeded towards the purpose, it proves that the purpose itself is working in these stages.

Let us, therefore, keep in mind, that when we say that on completion of the preceding stage, the higher conscious values of life emerge, we mean that these new values are not determined by the lower conscious stages, but these values appear from above, that is, these follow from the Purpose. These values do not evolve rather these descend from the Purpose, which always lives with the Creator in unit.

The creation of the universe in various stages vis-à-vis the purpose behind creation may perhaps be explained by quoting a simple example of the construction of a building.

Let us suppose that our purpose is to construct a building. At the outset we will dig the foundation and then build it to the desired level. On completion of the foundation, the next stage will be the construction of walls on the foundation. Now for the construction of this new higher stage we cannot say that the foundation had itself known the purpose of this second phase of construction and, therefore, it is the foundation that has evolved the construction of walls. Similarly, in respect of the second phase of walls, we cannot say that the purpose for construction



of the second phase of walls was the preceding stage of foundation. In fact, it is the overall purpose, which is the construction of the building that has brought about this second phase of construction. As the building continues to rise up step by step, the purpose continues to unfold itself. With the completion of the building the purpose stands completely unfolded and realised in the form of the building.

On the analogy of the above example, we can study the various phases of the creation of the universe. Digging up the elements, which are said to be the elementary construction blocks of the universe, completed the first phase of the universe. Aligning the infinite properties of these elements into a complete physical system completed the second phase; we call them the physical laws of the Earth. In this connection the most important thing which needs our attention is that just as each higher phase of construction fully observes and respects the limitations as laid in the preceding constructive phase of the building, similarly in the case of the creation of the universe, each higher creative stage which appears simultaneously on completion of the preceding stage fully observes and respects the values so fixed in the stage and without overthrowing them builds higher and new values as an independent creative stage over it.

Now again if we take the example of the building, we shall note that during the construction of each stage it seems that everything is in disarray. We see heaps of bricks and stones scattered at one place and at another place ditches are dug and the earth is piled along. And still at another place wood, cement and other construction materials are piled up loosely. All this shows that there is no order or discipline and that lawlessness prevails everywhere. But let us not forget that even in this state of lawlessness, the purpose continues to work and whatever the stage of construction it may be, purpose flows in each action. Accordingly, as the building continues to rise up step by step, we can see that lawlessness is replaced by order, in-discipline by discipline, and wear and tear by solid construction. Thus on completion of one phase, the second phase starts and passes through similar state of its construction and, then at the completion of the second phase, the third phase starts and so on. Now if someone takes the material and its constructive process as merely the activity of blind forces, and then as a result, when the construction appears in the shape of a beautiful building, he may consider it a mere chance or a "mechanics", he is mistaken because the lower stages are not even aware of existence of higher conscious order above it and so ignorance can never give

birth to something of higher order. The law of the universe is one — same creative process by free will for the entire creation from particle to self-conscious man. Understand the creative process and you will understand the oneness of God. Observe how from tiny sub atomic particle to gigantic universe all are in submission to the will of God (without God lifting the finger) by free will — those who deviate from the “Purpose” end up on extinction files.

### **Sex Instinct is Carved out of Love and Beauty**

At whatever stage life may be, it must have consciously or unconsciously spiritual love for its Creator. At inorganic and organic stages, life satisfied this love by dividing itself into two complementary units of attraction from within. We call it polarity at inorganic stages and sex at organic stages. We should know that life is the art of the Creator and, therefore, insofar as it was not yet directly aware of its Creator, its love for itself from within through dividing its conscious attributes in two sex attraction, in fact, amounted to loving the attributes of the Creator. It is evident from the fact that it is aesthetic appreciation and love of beauty of its “own kind” which is ultimately replaced by the inferior kind of pleasure derived from the sexual act. This can be seen in the behaviour of birds and insects who are at first attracted by the beauty of colour, song, or plumage of their opposite sex. This indicates that sex instinct has been carved out of spiritual love. Had it not been carved out of spiritual love, life would not have procreated itself at all.

### **Heaven and Hell and Life after Death**

Heaven and Hell are two states of the same soul, you are in hell by your own realisation that you lack the attributes which could have only be attained during your worldly stay by following God's commandments and you missed the boat. Similarly the Human Soul which comes as a clean state continue to preserve all the values and events from within and when the Self-conscious Stage as a whole reaches completion and enters a higher tier of life, every Human Soul would construct its universe under the higher enlightenment vis-à-vis the values earned by it during its worldly life. If a germ cell under the physical laws can act as a physical mind to reproduce values in minutest detail, we can be sure that Human Self or Soul which has inherent reflection of the Creator would not simply reproduce but in fact instantly bring forth events and values it lived and watch them as if played on the screen.

Last but not the least, in whatever society man may live, whatever culture he belongs to, the creative process of the Creator leaves no excuses for him that he has been deprived of the spiritual light, provided he cared to understand.

### **The Origin of the Universe and its Development in Successive Stages**

Where do we come from? The most fundamental question in all of science concerns the ultimate origin of the universe in which we live. As recently as the early 1920, astronomers believed the universe to be constant and unchanging. At that time it was thought that the stars which make up the Milky Way were the universe, and that although individual stars might be born, live and die, the milky way itself continued more or less unchanged, just as a forest may remain more or less unchanged, even though individual trees grow, live their lives and die. The earth had remained the same without alteration from all eternity. The five continents of the present day had always existed, and they had always had the same flora and fauna, except insofar as change or transplantation had taken place at the hand of man. The species of plants and animals had been established once for all when they came into existence. Thus in contrast to the history of mankind, which develops in time, there was ascribed to the history of nature only an unfolding in space. All changes, all development in nature, was denied.

This petrified outlook on nature was soon shattered by a combination of new developments in both theory and observation. The earth and the whole solar system appeared as something that had come into being in the course of time. If the earth was something that had come into being: it must have had a history not only of coexistence in space but also of succession in time. This supported the fact that nature does not just exist but comes into being and passes away. Thus the decision had to be taken to acknowledge that not only earth, its present surface and the plants and animals living on it, but the whole universe as we see it today did not exist as such from eternity; it possessed a history in time.

It was indeed a great discovery made by the natural scientists, which changed the petrified outlook of universe. The scientists view that nature did not just exist but came into being and passed away and that the processes of nature must have had a history not only of coexistence in space but also of succession in time was indeed illuminating.



It, besides unmasking other invaluable mysteries underlying development of the universe, supports the fact that the universe has its start in time. Another most important factor revealed by the discovery was that it was only the history of mankind which at present is passing through its development and that all the development orders preceding the present Human Stage, that is, the Animals, the Vegetables, the Planet Earth and the Cosmos, each of which was active at one time continued to become immutable simultaneously on succession of the higher order.

The scientific view that the universe did not exist as such from eternity, it was born and has since developed has further been strengthened by the Big Bang Theory. According to the astro-physicists, at a certain time in the past, which can be calculated as roughly 15 thousand million years, all of the matter and energy in the universe was concentrated in a mathematical point, a singularity, from which it burst out to create the universe as we know it. The outburst has been dubbed "Big Bang". In 1965, radio astronomers Arno Penzies and Robert Wilson of the Bell Telephone Laboratories detected a baffling radio noise, which came evenly from all directions of the sky.

The Princeton University confirmed that the radio hiss was a distant echo of the cosmos radiation, which originated from the Big Bang and filled all the space. The layman tends to picture the Big Bang in terms of a very dense lump of matter located in an infinite void, suddenly exploding. Einstein, however, has shown that both space and time (which he called space-time) and matters were inseparable.

The Big Bang, therefore, created not just matter but space-time as well. There was nothing, not even empty space, "outside" for the Big Bang to explode into. Besides the above scientific outlook of the universe, these discoveries provide us comprehensive discipline with which we can formulate the development process of the universe. The discoveries that in contrast to the present creative stage of Mankind, where creative activity is still in progress, the processes of the nature must have had a history not only of coexistence in space but also of succession in time reveal that the universe has developed in stages. On succession of each higher stage, the values so earned in the preceding stage became immutable. Since in contrast to the history of mankind, all the preceding stages have become immutable, it establishes that the human being lives at the top of all the creative stages we call them universe. The man lives at the top of all creation

is further strengthened by the fact that when we look into the universe and analyse the laws prevailing in it independently of any reference to nature, we find that the laws of mathematics formulated by us a product of our own minds do not only come completely in accord with the laws prevailing in the universe but it reveals that these laws are its ultimate nature.

Man thus stands conqueror of all the preceding orders of the universe, which simply continue to maintain their values to serve as a basis for the top leading creative stage of Man. Since in the process of development of the universe what real has emerged at the top creative stage of Man, it is attainment of Self-consciousness – highest kind of awareness which has made the man consciousness of himself, we can infer from it that all the creative stages of the universe (both inorganic and organic) preceding the present Self-conscious Stage of Man have the characteristics of consciousness also.

Thus all the development stages right from particle to the present creative stage of Man are living and conscious relative to the conscious level of the stage. It further reveals that the development of universe in successive stages implies development of consciousness in steps or stages. These discoveries support that inorganic matter is not dead. As blood runs through the veins of a living organism so a current of life runs through all matter although it may appear to us to be dead. It is alive because it has properties on account of which it acts and behaves. It responds to outside situations and stimuli as the animal or the human being does. Its activity follows definite laws, which are studied by the physicists and the chemists.

The activity of the animal and of man also proceeds in accordance with definite principles, which are studied by the behaviourists and the psychologists. Matter is life from another point of view as there could have been no organic life without matter and its laws. The laws of matter seem to have been designed in order to make possible the development of higher stages of life on Earth. Matter is primitive life and the laws governing it have fixed tendencies developed by it just as instincts have developed by the animal.

### **Nature of Development of the Universe**

The most important question, which the modern sciences have been unable to solve, is to determine the nature of development of the universe. It is an important question because as discovered by physicists and natural scientists, there does not exist any absolute,



stationary frame of reference with which we may determine the nature and distinguish the succession of development stages of the universe. The universe is a restless place; stars; nebulae; galaxies; and all the vast gravitational systems of outer space are incessantly in motion. But their movements can be described only with respect to each other. The materialists interpret birth and development of universe in one direction as mechanical in nature. It is observed, they say, that the clusters of galaxies move apart from one another as the space between them expands and that the heat energy within the atoms and in outer space is inexorably diffusing like vapour through the insatiable void.

The implication is that at a certain time in the past the universe was concentrated in a mathematical point – a singularity – from which it burst out to create the universe, as we know it. Regarding development of universe in one direction and its ultimate fate, they claim that in the very beginning the nucleus of the universe was very hot. It was at unimaginable temperatures such as no longer exist even in the interior of stars. There was no element in such heat, no molecules, no atom – nothing but free neutrons and other sub-atomic particles in a state of chaotic agitation.

As the temperature continued to drop, the cosmic mass continued to develop into aggregate proportions. Ultimately the development of the universe would cease when the heat processes cool down and reach a state of maximum entropy, that is, when the heat is uniformly spread in the cosmos. When the universe reaches that state, no energy can be used because all of it will be uniformly distributed in the Cosmos.

And there is no way of avoiding this destiny, as according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics we cannot convert the heat into work unless we have difference of temperatures. The materialists conclude, therefore, that the developmental processes of nature are irreversible. Nature moves just in one way. A cursory glance at the interpretation given above in regard to the birth of the universe, its development in one direction and its ultimate fate will show that it is laid on mechanical grounds. The materialists relate the phenomenon of birth of the universe with the concentration of mass energy at a certain point in space-time from where it burst out. Regarding development of universe, they claim that as the temperature continued to fall along with expansion of the nucleus mass, the free neutrons and other sub-atomic particles continued to develop into aggregate proportions in



the form of galaxies, nebulae etc. Similarly they explain the rational development of universe in one direction on the plea that since energy tends to cool and spread in one direction hence the developmental processes of universe proceed in one direction only; they cannot be reversed!

The material outlook does not explain development of universe; it rather explains dissolution of energy from its chaotic state to the state of normalisation in the wake of expansion.

The modern scientific discoveries reject mechanical interpretation of the birth and development of the universe. Among other factors we shall discuss in the next pages, the following discoveries to support the creation of the universe:

- 1) Einstein discarded the view that matter and energy were concentrated at a mathematical point – a singularity – in space from where it erupted. According to him, there did not exist any space nor any point where the matter and energy were concentrated. Both space-time and matter were inseparable. The Big Bang, therefore, created not just matter but space-time as well. There was nothing, not even empty space “outside” for the Big Bang to explode into. It was not, therefore, a lump of matter located in an infinite void which exploded suddenly. The universe did not exist; it was born at one time.
- 2) The scientific discovery that there does not exist any absolute, stationary frame of reference with which we could distinguish the succession of various developmental stages or explain the nature of development of the universe supports that the universe was born and it is being developed under the creative process.
- 3) It is established by the physical sciences that the universe in spite of its development in successive stages behaves as a complete rational order. These sciences have further established that matter moves under law only and that as a result of processing of matter from high energy to low energy processes, the values earned at the low energy process besides stubbornly sticking with their laws dominate the laws developed in the high-energy processes. It reveals that high energy processes in the wake of development of universe continued to yield to the low energy processes by transforming into higher and higher rational orders.

- 4) The research into the developmental processes of the universe has shown that they are irreversible, that is, they proceed in one direction only – the direction towards higher and higher rational orders. That the developmental processes of universe are rational and irreversible support that the universe has developed from lower to higher conscious orders which turned into mental processes at the biological stages of development.

Processing of matter in higher rational orders implies processing of matter-motion and also space-time as a unified higher order. Einstein has shown that space-time, matter and motion cannot be separated. Processing of matter in higher rational orders, therefore, implies processing of all values, that is, matter-motion and space-time as a unified higher order laid under different and higher kind of rational discipline. It shows, therefore, that at each higher rational order, the space-time, matter and motion have been “pressed” and “squeezed” from simple outward motion established at the preceding rational order to complicated “inward motions” (mental) at higher rational orders. Hence absolute space or absolute time does not exist; they continue to change into different sense at each higher rational order. We can witness this fact more vividly at the biological stages developed on the completion of physical order of the Earth where the physical processes further squeezed from their “outward motion” and turned into “inward mental processes” in the form of receipts and precepts at Vegetable and Animal Stages of development. That at the top creative stage of Man, consciousness or life has become aware of itself as a Self-conscious entity and determines the whole universe relevant to its conscious enlightenment establishes beyond doubt that the development of Universe implies development of consciousness or life in higher stages. Development of universe in conscious stages shows that the universe is a creation and that the gradual reflection of creation is in fact the reflection of the attributes of that part of the Creator, which he wants to manifest in the creation.

These facts establish that the nature of development of universe is not mechanical; the universe is a creation and its creation in successive rational order implies appearance of greater and greater cognition and appreciation in creation of the possibilities, attributes and beauty of its Creator as it develops from stages to stages and comes near the desire and Will of the Creator. The unimaginable heat temperatures caused by great chaotic agitation visualised by the physicists in the nucleus mass of the universe within fractions of its

birth and then settling down the heat temperatures as the universe developed in higher and higher rational orders in one direction establishes that the nucleus mass was a living substance and that its chaotic agitation was nothing but its inherent "feeling" of its separation from its source. In the next chapter we shall discuss classification of the developmental stages of the universe in the light of physical and natural sciences as well as in the light of revelations made in the Holy Quran and determine concrete laws and principles underlying the development of the universe.

### **Fundamental Laws Underlying Creation of the Universe in Stages**

Our purpose of describing different developmental stages of the universe is to find out a rational system or what may be called a creative process underlying development of the universe in successive stages. Based on our notes laid in the light of modern scientific discoveries underneath the description of each creative stage, the following fundamental laws establish that the creation of the universe is not a continuous process; it has been created in successive rational stages or closed systems – one upon the other. The difference between the rational values of the preceding and the succeeding stages is not in degree but it is in kind. Had the development of universe been in degrees only that is, it would have simply evolved as a continuous unit order, we could never describe its development.

### **Each Higher Stage Starts from Insignificant Values of the Stage**

The processing of matter at Phase I of the Cosmos, known as the High Energy Process, started from insignificant units of highly charged particles. After passing through a long process of its processing in the form of various kinds of galaxies laid in succession and through the Low Energy Phase of processing which involved processing of matter in planets and interstellar medium, the Cosmos wound up by organising the matter into basic elements we call them the building blocks of the universe. On completion of Cosmic Order in two successive phases, the Planet earth took its start as an independent higher stage from insignificant gaseous state and continued to discover, harness and synthesise the behaviour of elements in a unified order we call them the physical laws. On completion of physical laws in a unified order, the Vegetable stage took its start as an independent creative stage from an insignificant state in the form of a plastic cell and continued to build values in the form of millions of vegetable species. Having accomplished values of the stage to affinity, the Vegetable stage closed



on it. Simultaneously on completion of Vegetables, the Animal stage took its start from insignificant values of the stage in the form of an amoebic cell and after accomplishing rational values of the stage through the creation of millions of animal species, further development of the Animal stage stopped.

Simultaneously on completion of animal stage, the next higher creative stage took its start in the Human Self in which life for the first time became conscious of itself. In the beginning, the Human Self was conscious of itself only as if it were something unique and distinct in the world around him. In other words, the Human Self – consciousness stage also took its start from humble state of Self-knowledge as an individuality outside the universe. The fact that each stage on accomplishment of the preceding stage took its start from insignificant values of the stage establishes that:

1. The values of the new and higher stage were not different in degree but these were different in kind from the preceding stage; and
2. The creation of the universe is not a continuous (evolutionary) process; it has been created in successive stages.

### **On Succession of Higher State, the Values Earned in the Preceding Stage Become Fixed**

#### **The Succession of Higher Stage and Closing of the Preceding Stage is Always Simultaneous**

The higher creative stage always starts simultaneously on closing of the preceding stage, the words "closing of the stage" imply that the values earned in the stage become fixed; hence no new values are created in the stage. As a matter of fact, each stage is allowed to earn full values of the stage to its affinity; it is closed on it only when it could proceed no further. Nevertheless, the stage as a whole continues to live for serving as a base for the higher stage by preserving its values through the procreative process developed by it. That on succession of higher creative stage, the values earned by the preceding stage become immutable is supported by the fact that if on appearance of higher stage, the values in the preceding stage will continue to change and develop, the higher stage which starts from insignificant values of the stage could neither stand on it nor develop its values as an independent stage. Besides, had these values continued to change and develop as a single continuous stage, we could never understand the universe

and its creation in successive stages nor the universe would ever have developed as it has. Hence here we have the following basic laws which underlie creation of the universe in successive stages:

1. The higher creative stage starts only on closing of the preceding stage;
2. The act of closing of the preceding stage and starting of the new or higher stage is always simultaneous;
3. The values earned in the preceding stage become immutable, that is, no new values, laws or changes can occur in it; and
4. For creative development, the presence of infinite gulf between the preceding and the successive stages is a necessity.

The law that simultaneously on succession of the higher creative stage, the values in the preceding stage become immutable reveals that the universe is not a mechanics; it is purposive. Its creative processes are living processes. The wonderful thing-no doubt an ingenious one – is that simultaneously on fixation of values in the preceding stage and start of higher on it, the higher stage because of its higher and different kind of intellect and conscious awareness continues to witness the beauty and attributes of the Creator manifested in the creation living beneath it and through that remains spiritually attached with it. Thus the whole creation seems to grow in successive stages as if a child witnesses and preserves its past as he grows in years. We shall dwell on this ingenious process of creation in the next pages.

### **Each Successive Stage Appears more than the Aggregate Values of all the Preceding Stages**

Each higher stage, which succeeds, appears at an infinite higher conscious level over all the preceding stages. It is established by the fact the values earned in the preceding stage cannot be applied to the higher creative stage. The laws governing processing of matter in Phase I – High Energy Process cannot be applied to the laws earned by Phase II – Low Energy Process and the laws of the processing of matter in Phase II cannot be applied to the laws established on the Earth – we call them the physical laws. On the other hand, as against the physical laws of cosmic matter, the laws of physics and chemistry established on the Earth, without overthrowing the laws fixed in the Cosmos hold good throughout the universe. In other words, the physical laws established in a unified order on Earth dominate the whole nature. Similar is the case with successive organic stages developed

simultaneously on completion of physical laws. The Vegetable life stage, which started as a separate independent order, without overthrowing the physical laws, dominates the whole nature. The Animal stage, which succeeded the Vegetable stage, dominates the Vegetables, the unified physical laws of Earth as well as the whole Cosmos! The Human being who appeared as a Self-conscious entity over the Animal stage dominates both organic and inorganic creative stages – we call it the universe. It is because each higher creative stage which succeeds is not higher as a mere aggregate of whole nature but it appears with infinite higher kind of intellect and conscious enlightenment over the whole creation living beneath it. Had the new stage appeared with mere aggregate values of the preceding stages, it could neither maintain itself as an independent stage outside the preceding stages nor could it earn higher values of the stage. In such an event no development would have been possible and the creation would have stopped. These facts established that the universe had developed in higher and higher rational orders.

### **Creative Processes Proceed in One Direction Only: They are Irreversible**

Both the classic physics and the natural science have established that the developmental processes of the universe have proceeded in one direction only and that the succession is irreversible. These discoveries support that the nature of the development of universe is not mechanical; it has developed from low to higher rational order, which continued to emerge in higher and higher forms of intellect, and conscious enlightenment, which ultimately appears in Human Self in the form of Self-consciousness. These facts establish that the nature of rational orders being intellectual and mental – the fundamental attributes of consciousness or life – the creative processes of universe proceed in one direction only – the direction towards higher and higher conscious enlightenment. Hence the whole universe is a living universe.

### **Each Higher Stage Dominates all the Preceding Stages Without Overthrowing the Values Fixed in Them**

#### **The Domination is Essentially of Intellect and Consciousness in Nature**

The fact that each creative stage appears with infinite higher kind of intellect and consciousness over all the preceding stages which become fixed simultaneously on start of higher creative stage establishes



that each higher stage dominates all the preceding stages without overthrowing the values fixed in them. It further establishes that the nature of domination is not due to physical or mechanical causes; it is essentially of the nature of higher and different kind of intellect and consciousness which emerged at each successive rational order. Accordingly what the physicists call "energy" is acted form of consciousness in the form of bodies and motion in space-time field relevant to the creative stage.

### **Each Higher Creative Stage Lives Outside the Preceding Stages as an Independent Stage**

The study of the developmental processes of universe has shown that what we know as universe, is the form of rational orders built in succession.

The fact that matter moves under law only; the whole universe despite its development in different kind of rational orders behaves as a perfect rational order and that the nature of rational orders is essentially mental, intellectual, volitional and emotional – the fundamental attributes of life appeared at the top creative stage of man – establishes that each higher creative stage which appeared with infinite higher conscious enlightenment lives outside all preceding stages. The fundamental laws described above are based on the modern scientific discoveries. These laws reveal the wonderful process the universe has followed in its development. Nevertheless we have more laws and principles underlying development of universe which will be discussed in the following pages.

With a view to make our work simple we summarise these laws, which have their import from the classic physics and natural sciences established under the modern scientific research. Needless to say this whole work is made possible in the light of the Divine guidance as laid in the Holy Quran:

1. The universe came into being as a result of great illumination dubbed as "Big Bang" by the astro-physicists, "Allah-ho-noorussamawat-e-wal-ard".
2. There was nothing outside for the Big Bang to explode into Space-time and matter are inseparable; these appeared simultaneously with the explosion.
3. The universe took its start from insignificant rational state. Its unimaginable temperatures, chaos and agitation reveal an equally unimaginable charge or innate pressure for finding out

- and setting down to rational orders as is witnessed by the course of its development in successive rational stages and as established by the facts revealed by the classic; physics that:
- a. matter moves under laws only; and
  - b. the universe despite its development in successive orders behaves as a perfect rational order.
4. There does not exist any absolute, stationary frame of reference with which to identify development of the universe. It establishes that the universe is a creation.
  5. The creative processes of the universe proceed in one direction only; they are irreversible. It establishes that the universe is nothing but a series of rational orders raised in succession of higher and higher conscious enlightenment as it is the characteristics of consciousness only that it proceeds in one direction and can never be reversed.
  6. What has emerged as a result of one-way rational development of universe at the top creative stage of Man, is essentially mental, intellectual, volitional and emotional in nature – the fundamental attributes of life or consciousness. Hence the nature of rational development is mental and not mechanical.
  7. Along with absolute space, Einstein discarded the concept of absolute time also. Space-time are relative terms and cannot be separated from matter and motion (energy). Accordingly along with the processing of the forms of matter and motion (energy) at every successive rational stage, space-time also continued to change their sense, as did the matter which continued to shed mass. The Cosmos space-time, matter and motion which physicists call simple forms of matter and motion involving change of place, continued to be squeezed from external to inward rational processes until we find them settled in a unified physical system of the Earth. These processes further shifted towards mental processes at the biological stages. The space-time world determined by the animal is limited relative to its material sense perceptions. As against it, space-time world determined by Human Self knows no bounds. Human Self, which exists as the only stable entity outside the material universe already lives in the universe beyond which, can be witnessed by the fact that Human sense of time without overthrowing the sense of perceptual time remains changeless

and overrides all the physical times. It is supported by the fact that the man has not only measured the lifetime of the universe but he has also determined the phases of its development. Unless the Human Self is stable, it lives outside the physical space-time as a non-material entity and has the sense of eternal time; man could never measure the lifetime of the universe and classify the phases of its development.

8. The fundamental law of the creative process that each stage simultaneously on start of the higher stage becomes immutable establishes that the creative activity can proceed only at the top-creative stage of the universe, which lives outside all the preceding stages. Hence it is the present Self-conscious Stage of Man only in the whole universe where creative process is active. That man lives at the top of all creation is revealed in the Holy Quran at many a places. It is thus revealed in verse: "And (Allah) made of service unto you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth."
9. The fact that high-energy processes active in the very early universe continued to develop into rational orders establishes that the developmental processes of the universe are creative.
10. The higher rational order appears only when the values earned in the preceding stage becomes fixed. The act of succession and closing of the preceding stage is always simultaneous. This law establishes that there exists certain overall Entity that strictly lays discipline under the urge of achieving certain overall purpose.
11. That no higher creative stage can start until the values of the preceding stage are simultaneously fixed establishes that
  - a. the universe has been created in successive stages; and
  - b. the values of each higher stage emerge in different kinds of intellect and conscious enlightenment.
12. Each higher creative stage which appears simultaneously on closing of the preceding stage being higher and different in the scale of conscious enlightenment lives outside all the preceding stages which become fixed and continue to live as a base for serving the higher creative stage. Man who is presently under active creative process lives outside the whole universe.
13. Each creative stage sticks with its own values as an independent stage and being a different kind of rational order can neither



- come down to the preceding stages nor jump to the higher creative order which appears at a different kind of conscious plan.
14. Since there does not exist any absolute, stationary frame of reference with which to identify the creation of the universe in one way direction, the nature of the development of universe and its processes can be described with reference to the top creative stage only which outlives the whole creation because of appearing at the highest plan of consciousness. It is man only who could determine the nature of universe he outlives.
  15. Each higher creative stage which appears simultaneously on closing of the preceding stage comes with conscious enlightenment more than whole of the creation living beneath it. Hence the higher creative stage dominates the whole creation. The nature of development being rational and intellectual, the domination is by no means mechanical; it is mental and intellectual.
  16. That the higher stage, which appears simultaneously on fixation of values in the preceding stage, cannot overthrow those values establishes that the whole creation has developed as a unit-whole under a unit purpose and that these stages descend from the overall purpose. These stages do not evolve from lower to higher values without prior understanding on their own.
  17. That the universe despite its development in different orders behaves as a perfect rational order establishes that certain overall Absolute Self-conscious Entity prevails the whole creation and that since in one-way direction what real has emerged at the top creative order of man, is his Self-consciousness, which establishes that future creation must build on the Human Self in the form of higher and higher Self-enlightenment. In other words the higher creative process must be mental and not physical in nature.
  18. That the nature of rational orders created in succession is essentially of intellect and consciousness is established by the fact that while each higher creative stage which appears on the preceding stage dominates all the creation living beneath it, the preceding stage is never aware of the values and the kind of conscious enlightenment of the higher stage. The preceding stage, therefore, simply continues to live by maintaining itself under the procreative process established by the stage.

We can understand the ecology system as developed on the Earth under this law which envisages that only higher creative stage influences the lower stages and not the lower stages, which remain ignorant of the stages, created on them.

Note: These laws kill all the theories laid on material evolution or mechanical interpretation of the universe. God summons humanity to investigate and reflect upon the heavens, the earth, mountains, stars, plants, seeds, animals, the alternation of the night and the day, the creation of man, the rain and many other created things. Examining these, man comes to recognize the artistry of God's creation in the world around him, and ultimately, to know our Creator, Who created the entire universe and everything in it from nothing.

"Science" offers a method by which the universe, and all the beings therein, may be examined to discover the artistry in God's creation, thereby communicating it to mankind. Religion, therefore, encourages science, adopting it as a tool by which to study the subtleties of God's creation.

Religion not only encourages scientific study, but also permits that, supported by the truths revealed through Islam, scientific research be conclusive and expeditious. The reason being, that religion provides accurate and definitive answers as to how life and the universe came into being. As such, if initiated upon a proper foundation, research will reveal the truths regarding the origin of the universe and the organization of life, in the shortest time, and with minimum effort and energy. As stated by Albert Einstein, considered one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century, "science without religion is lame", which is to say, that science, unguided by religion, cannot proceed correctly, but rather, wastes much time in achieving certain results, and worse, is often inconclusive.

Scientific studies pursued by materialist scientists unable to see the truth has, particularly in the last two hundred years, certainly caused a considerable amount of time to be squandered, a great deal of research to be pursued in vain and millions of dollars to have been poured down the drain to no effect.

There is one fact that must be recognized clearly: science can achieve reliable results only if it adopts as its main objective the investigation of the signs of creation in the universe, and strives solely towards this end. Science may reach its ultimate goal in the shortest possible time only if it is pointed in the right direction, that is, if it is rightly guided.

## Religion Encourages Science

Islam is the religion of reason and conscience. A person recognizes the truth proclaimed by God through the use of his wisdom, but derives conclusions from the truth he has seen by following his conscience. A person using the faculty of his reason and conscience, upon examining the features of any given object in the universe, even though he be not an expert in such matters, would understand that it was created by a Possessor of great Wisdom, Knowledge and Might. And, while perhaps only discovering a few of the thousands of factors that render life possible on the earth, it is sufficient for him to understand that the world was designed to sustain life in it. Therefore, one who makes use of his reason and follows his conscience quickly apprehends the absurdity of the claim that the world came into being by chance. In brief, one who applies his mind by using these faculties recognizes God's signs in their full clarity. A verse refers to such people in the following manner:

Those who remember God, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.

In the Quran, God calls on people to reflect upon and examine the signs of creation around them. The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), God's Messenger, Pbuh, also enjoined people to acquire knowledge. He even stressed that it is our obligation to search for knowledge. We read the following authentic *Ahadith*:

*Seeking of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim*

*Acquire the knowledge and impart it to the people.*

Everyone who probes the inner-workings of the universe, living and non-living things, and considers and investigates what he sees around him, will come to know God's superior wisdom, knowledge, and eternal power. Some of the issues God invites man to ponder are pointed out in the following verses from the Quran:

Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it? And the earth-We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)-To be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to God). And We send down from the sky rain charged with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and grain for harvests; And tall (and stately) palm-trees, with



shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another. He Who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion will you see in the Creation of (God) Most Gracious. So turn your vision again: do you see any flaw?

Now let man but think from what he is created!

Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at the Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out?

As the above verses make clear, God summons mankind to study and examine various aspects of the world, such as the heavens, rain, plants, animals, birth and geographical landmarks. One way to explore these is, as we previously mentioned, through science. Scientific observation introduces man to the mysteries of creation, and ultimately, to God's eternal knowledge, wisdom and power. Science is a way to achieve a just estimate of God, for which reason, throughout history, a great number of the scientists who have been of great service to humanity were devout believers in God.

### **Belief in God makes Scientists Enthusiastic and Motivated**

As we mentioned above, religion encourages science, and those who use their reason and follow their conscience in the pursuit of scientific research acquire a strong faith because they apprehend God's signs at close hand. They are confronted with a flawless system and a perfect subtlety created by God in every avenue of research they follow, and in every discovery they make. As Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), God's Messenger, Pbuh, said, they act by knowing that "One who goes out to search for knowledge is (devoted) to the cause of God till he returns."

A scientist conducting research into the eye, for instance, discovers, even upon recognizing its complex system, that it could never have come into being through a gradual process of coincidences. Further examination will lead him to realize that every detail in the structure of the eye is a miraculous creation. He sees that the eye is made up of dozens of components working together in harmony, thus increasing his wonder in God Who created it.

Similarly, a scientist investigating the cosmos will find himself immediately confronted with thousands of remarkable equilibria. He further gains a great thirst for knowledge upon discovering that billions of galaxies, and billions of stars within these galaxies, continue to exist in a grand harmony, in a vastness of space that has no limits.

As such, a man of faith becomes greatly enthralled and inspired to conduct scientific studies to uncover the mysteries of the universe. In one of his articles, Albert Einstein, considered the greatest genius of the previous era, referred to the inspiration scientists derive from religion:

I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research. Only those who realize the immense efforts and, above all, the devotion without which pioneer work in theoretical science cannot be achieved are able to grasp the strength of the emotion out of which alone such work, remote as it is from the immediate realities of life, can issue. What a deep conviction of the rationality of the universe and what a yearning to understand, were it but a feeble reflection of the mind revealed in this world, Kepler and Newton must have had to enable them to spend years of solitary labour in disentangling the principles of celestial mechanics! Those whose acquaintance with scientific research is derived chiefly from its practical results easily develop a completely false notion of the mentality of the men who, surrounded by a skeptical world, have shown the way to kindred spirits scattered wide through the world and the centuries.

Only one who has devoted his life to similar ends can have a vivid realization of what has inspired these men and given them the strength to remain true to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is cosmic religious feeling that gives a man such strength. A contemporary has said, not unjustly, that in this materialistic age of ours the serious workers are the only profoundly religious people.

Johannes Kepler related that he engaged in science to delve the Creator's works, while Isaac Newton, another great scientist, stated that the main thrust behind his interest in science was his wish to have a better sense and knowledge of God.

These were the remarks of only a few of the most eminent scientists in history. These, and hundreds of other scientists that we will consider in the pages ahead, came to believe in the existence of God by exploring the universe, and, impressed by the laws and phenomena God has gloriously created, craved to discover more.

As we will see, the desire to learn the manner in which God created the universe has served as the greatest motivating factor for many scientists in history. That is essentially because, someone who perceives that the universe and all living things are created also perceives that

this creation has a purpose. Purpose then leads one to meaning. It is the aspiration to grasp this meaning, to uncover its signs, and discover its details, that can greatly expedite scientific studies.

If, however, the fact that the universe and living things are created is denied, this meaning escapes too. A scientist believing in the materialist philosophy and in Darwinism will suppose that the universe is purposeless, and that everything is the work of blind chance. Therefore, investigation of the universe and living things would be without a pursuit for meaning. Addressing this fact, Einstein stated, "I have found no better expression than 'religious' for confidence in the rational nature of reality, insofar as it is accessible to human reason. Whenever this feeling is absent, science degenerates into uninspired empiricism."

In such a case, the sole purpose of a scientist would either be to achieve fame through a groundbreaking discovery, to be remembered in history, or to become wealthy. Such aims may easily divert him from his sincerity and scientific integrity. For instance, in the event that a conclusion he had reached through scientific research was in contradiction with the conventional view of the scientific community, he may be forced to keep it as a secret, so as not to be robbed of his fame, or be vilified, or degraded.

The long-held acceptance of the theory of evolution in the scientific world is an example of this type of lack of sincerity. Basically, many scientists, in the face of scientific fact, are aware that the evolutionary theory is far from being able to explain the origin of life, but they cannot state it openly, simply out of the fear of encountering a negative reaction. In that line of thought, British physicist H.S. Lipson makes the following confession:

We now know a great deal more about living matter than Darwin knew. We know how nerves work and I regard each nerve as a masterpiece of electrical engineering. And we have thousands of millions of them in our body... "Design" is the word that springs to mind, on this subject. My biologist colleagues do not like it.

The word "design" is cast aside in the scientific literature merely because it is disliked, with many scientists succumbing to such dogmatism. In addressing the issue, Lipson says:

In fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to 'bend' their observations to fit in with it.



This undesirable situation is the result of the deception of "ungodly science" that held sway over the scientific community beginning in the mid of the 19th century. However, as Einstein stated, "science without religion is lame". The delusion has not only directed the scientific community towards mistaken goals, but has also created scientists who, despite recognizing the error, remain indifferent to it.

We will deal with the former matter in detail in the pages ahead.

### **Believing Scientists' "Eagerness to Serve"**

Because scientists who believe in God's oneness and omnipotence have no desire for worldly gain, such as status, rank, reputation, or money, their efforts in scientific research are sincere. They know that every mystery of the universe they unravel will increase mankind's understanding of God, helping to reveal God's infinite power and knowledge. Confirming God's existence for humanity, demonstrating to it the reality of creation, is a truly important act of worship for a believer. Driven by such sincere concerns, believing scientists conduct important extensive research with a great enthusiasm, to discover the laws of the universe, the miraculous systems in nature, and the perfect mechanisms and intelligent behaviors in living things. They achieve great results and make tremendous progress. They never falter in the face of the problems they encounter, nor do they lose heart when they fail to be appreciated by others. They only seek to gain God's approval for the work they do.

They strive to serve other believers purely for God's good pleasure. And, they recognize no limits to their endeavor. They do their best to be of utmost use to people, and to serve them in the best way. Furthermore, their sincere efforts make them highly productive, and their studies lead to positive results. Those who assume that science must be distinguished from religion certainly fall into great error. First of all, those who do not believe in God cannot experience the spiritual upliftment of faith. The scientific projects they initiate with great zeal soon turn out to be monotonous and uninspiring. Their motivation, in such a mindset, becomes solely to reap short-lived worldly profit. Pursuing the fulfilment of worldly desires, such as wealth, rank, reputation, or prestige, they are only committed to conducting research that will directly contribute to such personal benefits. For instance, a scientist with such a mindset and motivated by career interests would pursue research only in those fields that will lead to a promotion. He would not be willing to conduct research

in a subject he believes to be useful to mankind unless it served his best interest. Or, if he were in a position to make a choice between two research topics, he would choose the one that would earn him more material gain, prestige, or rank, while discarding the one that might be more beneficial to mankind. In short, scientists of this sort are rarely of benefit to humanity, failing to serve the greater good unless there is some promised gratification in return. When the opportunity for personal gain fades, so wanes their eagerness to serve humanity.

Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), God's Messenger, Pbuh, also referred to the harms of this mentality. He said:

Do not acquire knowledge in order to fall into polemics with other scholars and prove his superiority over them, or to dispute with the ignorant or to attract the attention of the people.

On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) praised the dissipation of beneficial knowledge. A hadith reads:

God calls down blessings on those who instruct people in beneficial knowledge.

Aware of the blessings he will receive, the enthusiasm and sincere motivation experienced by a person who believes in God opens up new vistas for him, not only in the field of science, but also in many other spheres of life, such as art, culture, and so on. These high spirits never fade, but rather, become increasingly intense.

### **Magnificence Everywhere**

He is Allah-the Creator, the Maker, the Giver of Form. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Him. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

For a moment, think about the things you do when you wake up in the morning. You open your eyes, breathe, straighten up, stand up and walk, eat and put on your clothes. You talk to your loved ones and hear what they say to you. Then, you go out or look outside through the window and see the deep blue sky. You might even hear the singing of birds flying outside the window. Watching a leaf falling down, you notice ripe apples on the tree. You feel the warmth of the sun and the wind on your face. There are people in the street, walking or trying to go somewhere in their cars. In short, another ordinary day has begun for you. What you see and hear are all ordinary things,



so you don't feel it necessary to think consciously about them. Now, try thinking another way. Assume that you have lived in one room since you were born. This room is completely bare without even a small window through which you could see outside. It is furnished with only a few pieces of plain furniture for your basic needs. Suppose that, in this room where you lead your life, you are provided with just a few kinds of food and drink necessary for you to survive. Let's assume that there is no communications equipment in the room, such as a telephone, radio or television, which would enable you to receive information from the outside. Therefore, you will be ignorant of all but a handful of things.

Then imagine that you are taken out of this room where you have lived all your life and you see the outside world for the first time. In such a situation, what would you think of the world?

The broadness of the vista reaching your eyes, the existence of light, the warmth of the sun striking your face, the deep blue colour of the sky and the pure white clouds—all of this will certainly dazzle you.

Twinkling stars appearing in the sky at night; mountains reaching to the sky in all their magnificence; rivers, beautiful to all mankind; lakes and seas; the heavy rain which brings life to the Earth; green trees, colourful violets, daisies, carnations, lilacs and roses, with their pleasant aromas; oranges, watermelons, plums and peaches, each of them providing a distinctive taste; cats, dogs, rabbits and gazelles, which arouse our feelings of compassion; butterflies with their dazzling colours and aesthetic appeal; birds and undersea creatures...

When you see all these things, you become dazzled and wonder who has put such wondrous phenomena together. Seeing the colour of the fruits and breathing in their scents, you wonder who has dyed them so alluringly and given them such pleasant perfumes. Tasting a melon or taking a bite out of an apple, you observe how exquisite and varied their flavours are and wonder how this sugary substance is placed within an object wrapped in such a firm skin. Seeing the fruits' seeds arranged in a definite order, you want to know who has fashioned their design.

Every new thing you see and every piece of information you learn arouses new excitement in you. You try to learn the reason and origin of everything. You learn that melons need their seeds in order to reproduce, birds have to have their feathers for flight, light is emitted from the sun, and oxygen and water are needed for the survival of



all living things. You learn the importance of the existence of the seas and the oceans, the fact that all sorts of information about plants is encoded in their seeds, as well as many other fascinating details. Every piece of information you learn enables you to comprehend this magnificence even more.

In addition, when you become aware that what you've begun to learn constitutes only a tiny portion of the characteristics of the living things which exist on Earth, that in fact everything works interdependently, that there are creatures you cannot see and voices you cannot hear, and that magnificent systems in the universe exist, your astonishment will grow even further.

As you learn these detailed pieces of information one-by-one, your mind will pose the same questions repeatedly: How have all these magnificent living things come into existence? How have I myself come into being? Since everything has a purpose, then why am I here?

When you emerge from the room you've spent so many years in, since you will discover a varied and magnificent vista of creation upon the Earth, you will ponder and look for answers to your questions. Every answer to your questions will contain this statement: "Certainly, there is a Being making all these things." As you are not hobbled by an indolent mind and do not observe your surroundings from behind a curtain of habit, you will surely come to the conclusion that everything has been created by a Creator. Indeed, what man needs to do is exactly this: look at things not from habit, but through asking questions...

Just as there is a designer who made the steel bridges we cross every day, there is a designer who designed our bones whose strength has been compared to steel. No one can claim that raw iron and coal can be mixed with each other to form steel by chance, and again that steel can be combined with cement to build bridges in the same way. Everyone knows that the judgment of a man claiming such things is to be doubted. However, in spite of this fact, there are people who dare to claim that all living things on Earth, the sky, the stars and in short, everything, has come into existence by chance. But it is evident to an intelligent person who stops and contemplates such things that these claims of random emergence are utterly irrational.

### ***The Absurdity of Chance***

The people who invent and support theories of chance are products of a materialist and evolutionist mentality. Claiming that the universe has no beginning or end and that it is not the creation of a creator,

these people state that billions of galaxies, consisting of billions of stars, and all the celestial bodies, planets, stars and perfect systems which enable them to maintain their existence, that all these emerged as the result of uncontrolled chance happenings. In a similar manner, they claim that, in spite of the magnificent order in the universe, living creatures also came into being by chance.

In light of this information, it appears that they consider "chance" to be a creative power. However, considering a being other than Allah to be a creative power is nothing but idolatry. In other words, evolutionists have an idol which is called "chance." This will be evident to anyone who takes a look at Darwinist works.

Examples of things being that evolutionists believe the "idol of chance" created are countless. For example, evolutionists believe that the very first cell that was the origin of all living things was the work of this idol. According to this belief, one day as a result of thunderbolts, rain and various other natural phenomena, a bunch of atoms came together without any previous plan in order to form amino acids. Then these amino acids combined to form proteins, the basis for the cells of all living creatures. This process was implemented by means of the power of chance. Then, in this way, the proteins immediately formed the first living cell again by chance. However, the job of "chance" wasn't over yet.

According to the evolutionist sophistries, the "idol of chance" was, by itself, also the impetus behind the emergence of millions of species on Earth. It first brought a fish into being and then, thinking a single type of fish would not be sufficient, it formed hundreds of thousands of fish species. Since hundreds of thousands of fish species were not enough, it brought other sea creatures alongside them into being and created an environment of breathtaking magnificence under the sea. Then, this very "idol of chance" thought that undersea life was not enough so it prepared certain structural changes in the body of a fish which would enable it to live on land. By means of random, gradual changes, the fins of the fish happened to be transformed into feet, and the gills happened to become lungs so the fish could breathe in the air. Yet, still they had not reached the diversity of the species we see today, so "chance" allegedly continued to work its magic...

As we will come to see in many examples, living things can survive only if their organs are complete and fully developed. Dysfunction of some organs can cause a creature to die within a couple of minutes or a couple of days at the most. However, according to the evolutionists'

assertions, this "idol of chance" has pondered, designed and formed all the details of living things in a very conscious, careful, flawless and perfect manner for millions of years.

As we can see from these examples, for evolutionists, "chance" is the sort of idol that can make whatever it wants, form anything it wishes immediately, and transform one animal into another. In addition to doing all this, it can arrange the colours, appearance and taste of all living and non-living things in the most aesthetic way possible.

The "idol of chance" seasonally allocates vitamins to fruits and makes them juicy and nourishing. It makes sure that their odors and tastes are similar everywhere. It also possesses the knowledge of how to put all the information a plant will ever need inside a tiny seed. What we have mentioned so far constitutes a general rationale for the assertions of the materialist and evolutionist mentality. Certainly, it is an evident fact for any person with wisdom and conscience that all these examples cannot be realized by "chance," which is the only reason offered by evolutionists. Now think about this: can coincidences come together and form motorways or establish transportation companies and make sure that they operate smoothly? Undoubtedly, it is impossible for such things to occur by chance. Just as it is not possible for a transportation company to be established by chance, it is also not possible for a circulatory system in the body to come into being by chance either.

In the same manner as a group of people manufactured all the steel parts of the Eiffel Tower one-by-one, cut them into specific sizes, designed the tower, assembled the parts in accordance with the blueprint and made them strong, there is a Power Who created the bones of human beings. These bones, all having the required sizes, were placed in the most appropriate locations, in compliance with the design of the human body, and a strong skeleton was created through the joining of these bones. This is a power that is above everything in nature, encompassing everything. It cannot be compared to anything. The owner of this power is Allah, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the Earth and everything in between.

All this provides concrete evidence for the existence of Allah. Allah encompasses all things in His knowledge and anybody who understands this will immediately see the magnificence present in creation. Every man will comprehend the greatness of Allah, according to the degree of his own wisdom and conscience. Also, the most



important duty of a person who has begun to comprehend the might and endless artistry of Allah is to turn towards the real Creator of the beauties he sees and to lead such a life as to gain the approval of Allah only. In the Quran, Allah informs us of His might as follows:

That is Allah, your Lord. There is no god but Him, the Creator of everything. So worship Him. He is responsible for everything.

### **The Big Bang Echoes through the Map of the Galaxy**

In the two widest-ranging exercises on mapping the galaxies carried out to date, scientists have made findings that offer serious support for the Big Bang theory. The results of the research were presented at the winter conference of the American Astronomical Society. The wide extent of the distribution of galaxies is evaluated by astrophysicists as one of the most important legacies from the first phases of the universe to have come down to the present day. It is therefore possible to refer to the information on the distribution and location of the galaxies as "a window opening onto the history of the universe."

In their research that lasted several years, two independent teams, composed of British, Australian and American scientists, produced a three-dimensional map of some 266,000 galaxies. The scientists compared the data they collected on the distribution of the galaxies with the data for the Cosmic Background Radiation emitted everywhere in the universe, and made important discoveries regarding the origin of galaxies. Researchers analysing the data concluded that the galaxies formed where matter that formed 350,000 years after the Big Bang relatively clustered together, and then assumed their shape under the influence of the force of gravity.

The findings in question confirmed the Big Bang theory, which states that the universe began from the explosion of a single point of zero volume and infinite density some 14 billion years ago. This theory has constantly been confirmed by tests consisting of decades of astronomical observations, and stands unrivalled on the most solid of foundations.

The Big Bang is accepted by the great majority of present-day astrophysicists, and constitutes scientific verification of the fact that God created the universe from nothing. In its ten-year-long research, the Anglo-Australian Observatory in the Australian state of New South Wales determined the positions in space of 221,000 galaxies by means of a three-dimensional mapping technique.

The survey, which was performed with a 3.9 metre diameter telescope at the observation post, was almost ten times larger than any previous such study. Under the leadership of Dr. Matthew Colless, director of the observatory, the team of scientists first determined the position of galaxies relative to one another and the distances between them. Then they modelled the distribution of the galaxies and studied the minute variations in that model in great detail.

The scientists offered their research for publication in the journal *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*. In a similar study carried out by the Apache Point Observatory in New Mexico, USA, the positions of some 46,000 galaxies in another region of space were similarly mapped and their distribution was investigated. The study, involving the use of a 2.5 metre diameter Sloan telescope, was carried out under the leadership of Daniel Eisenstein of the University of Arizona, and is to be published in the *Astrophysical Journal*.

### **An Important Confirmation**

The data obtained as the result of long and careful work confirmed estimates made decades ago in the field of astronomy regarding the origin of the galaxies. In the 1960s, theoreticians estimated that galaxies may have seeded in regions where matter massed in a slightly higher concentration shortly after the Big Bang. If that estimate is correct, then the seeds of the galaxies should be capable of being observed in the form of tiny fluctuations in heat levels in the remains of radiation left over from the Big Bang and known as Cosmic Background Radiation.

Cosmic Background Radiation is heat radiation that only began being emitted 350,000 years after the Big Bang. This radiation, emitted everywhere in the universe, represents a snapshot of the 350,000-year-old universe, and can be observed rather like a fossil in the present day. This radiation, first discovered in 1965, was recognised as definitive proof of the Big Bang with various studies and observations, and was investigated in great detail. Data obtained from the COBE (Cosmic Background Explorer) satellite in 1992 confirmed the estimates made in the 1960s and revealed that there were ripples in the Cosmic Background Radiation. Although at that time a partial link had been determined between these and the formation of the galaxies, that link could not be definitely shown until now. However, that important link was constructed in the latest studies. Colless and Eisenstein's teams determined a match between the ripples seen in Cosmic Background Radiation and those in the distances between galaxies. It was thus

established that the galaxies seeded in places where matter that emerged 350,000 years after the Big Bang concentrated in slightly higher densities. At a press conference on the subject, Dr. Eisenstein said that the way galaxies are scattered across the sky now corresponds to the sound waves that gave rise to that distribution. Researchers think that gravity affected the waves and shaped the galaxies.

Eisenstein made the following comment:

*"We regard this as smoking-gun evidence that gravity has played the major role in growing from the initial seeds in the microwave background into the galaxies and clusters of galaxies that we see around us."*

In a statement to the AAP news agency, Russell Cannon, from the other research team, noted that the findings were of the greatest importance, and summarised the significance of the research in these terms:

*"What we've done is show the pattern of the galaxies, the distribution of the galaxies which we see here and now, is completely consistent with this other pattern that's seen in remnants of the big bang..."*

Findings were also obtained from the study regarding the levels of matter and energy that constitute the universe, and the universe's geometrical form. According to these, the universe consists of 4% normal matter, 25% dark matter (matter that cannot be observed but that is calculated to exist), and the rest of dark energy (mysterious energy that leads to the universe expanding faster than expected). As for the geometrical shape of the universe-it is flat.

### **Support for the Big Bang**

The findings made in these studies have further strengthened the Big Bang theory. Dr. Cannon said that the research added serious weight to the Big Bang theory about the origin of the universe and emphasized that support in these words:

*"We've known for a long time that the best theory for the universe is the Big Bang — that it started in some enormous explosion in a tiny space and it expanded ever since."*

In a comment regarding the studies, Sir Martin Rees, the well-known Cambridge University astronomer, noted that despite using different statistical techniques and observations, the teams had arrived



at the same conclusion, and that he regarded this as an indication of the results' accuracy. Physicsweb.org, one of the most important physical sciences portals on the Internet, commented that the studies "provide further evidence for the standard big bang plus inflation model of cosmology."

Scientists learned that the universe had a beginning (Big Bang) and was expanding (Inflation) by reading the radiation and heavenly bodies in space thanks to the possibilities of modern science. However, these fundamental data are not at all new to mankind. Mankind has been reading these two facts, which scientists were only able to read in the depths of space in the 20th century, in the Quran for the last 1,400 years.

Two Basic Pieces of Information about the Standard Cosmological Model Are Provided in the Quran. In the Quran, and in the Torah and the Bible that were corrupted after their revelation, God has revealed that the universe and all matter were created out of nothing; in the Quran, the only text that has not been corrupted, He reveals one other miraculous secret that the universe is expanding.

The way the universe came into "being" from "non-being" is reported thus in the Quran: He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. The expansion of the universe, one of the main areas of research of modern science, is revealed in this verse:

And it is We Who have constructed the heaven with might, and it is We Who are steadily expanding it. As we have seen, two elements of the standard cosmological model, the Big Bang and Inflation, were reported in the Quran at a time when the means of astronomical observation were very limited. This represents clear proof that the Quran was revealed by God. The findings of modern science are in complete agreement with what is related in the Quran, and these latest studies once again draw attention to that close compatibility.

### **Co-Ordination in Human Body**

In the human body, all the systems simultaneously work in a co-ordinated way and in full harmony for a definite purpose, namely, to keep the body alive. Even the smallest movements we do everyday, such as breathing or smiling, are outcomes of perfect co-ordination in the human body. Inside us is an incredibly complicated and comprehensively co-ordinated network that operates without stopping at all. The purpose is the continuance of living. This co-ordination is particularly visible in the locomotive system of the body, because, for

even the smallest movement, skeletal system, muscles and nervous system must work in perfect collaboration. In order to perform a co-ordinated act, first, the organs involved in this act and their inter-relations should be known. This information comes from the eyes, the balance mechanism in the internal ear, muscles, joints and skin.

Every second, billions of pieces of information are processed, evaluated and new decisions are taken accordingly. Man is not even aware of the processes accomplished in his body at dizzying speed. He just moves, laughs, cries, runs, eats and thinks.

He spends no effort in performing these acts. Even for a faint smile, seventeen muscles have to work together at the same time. In order to be able to walk, fifty-four different muscles in the feet, legs, hips and back must work in co-operation.

The perfection of the co-ordination of the body will be better understood with the following example. In order just to lift the hand, the shoulder has to be bent, the front and rear arm muscles-called "triceps" and "biceps"-should be contracted and relaxed, and the muscles between elbow and wrist have to twist the wrist.

In every part of the act, millions of receptors in the muscles pass on information immediately to the central nervous system about the position of the muscles. In return, the central nervous system tells the muscles what to do in the next step. Of course one is not aware of any of these processes, but just wishes to lift one's hand, and does it right away. What happens in case of a problem in this co-ordination? Different expressions might appear on our faces when we want to smile, or we might not manage to talk or walk when we want to. However, we can smile, talk, walk anytime we want and no problems occur, because everything mentioned here is accomplished as a result of the fact of Creation which logically requires "infinite intelligence and power".

For this reason, man should always remember that he owes his being and life to his Creator, God. There is nothing for man to be arrogant or boastful about. His health, beauty or strength is not his own work, and it is not given to him eternally. He certainly will become old and lose his health and beauty. In the Quran, this is stated as:

*Anything you have been given is only the enjoyment of the life of this world and its finery. What is with God is better and longer lasting. So will you not use your intellect?"*

## Islamization of Knowledge

Islamization of knowledge is a term which describes a variety of attempts and approaches to synthesize the ethics of Islam with various fields of modern thought. Its end product would be a new ijma ("consensus") among Muslims on an appropriate fiqh ("jurisprudence") and a scientific method that did not violate Islamic ethical norms. However, some Muslims both liberal and traditional are skeptical of the approach, viewing the construction of fields such as Islamic science and Islamic economics largely as propaganda created to further the Islamist view that Islam is an all-encompassing social system. The phrase "Islamization of knowledge" was first used and proposed by the Malaysian scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in his book "Islam and Secularism".

It was also proposed by the Palestinian philosopher Ismail Al-Faruqi, in 1982, in response to what he called "the malaise of the ummah" (faithful). He argued that by using tools, categories, concepts and modes of analysis that originated wholly in the secular West (like Marxism), there was a disconnect between the ecological and social reality of Muslim nations, and worse, a total inability to respect or even notice the violations of ethics of Islam itself. In his view, clashes between traditionalist ulema and reformers seeking to revive Muslim society with modern science and professional categories, were inevitable without the strong ethical constraints that applied to methods of early Muslim philosophy. He proposed therefore to revive those methods, restore ijihad and integrate scientific method within Islamic limits.

A body of modern knowledge that had been so 'Islamized' would not offend the traditionalists, since it would place ethics before knowledge or curiosity or power, and provide for curtailment of scientific or professional activities that offended those ethics. However, if it were sufficiently broad and integrative to support inquiry across all vital fields including medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology, it would provide ample opportunity for a modern professional class to mentally and economically liberate the Muslim societies. They would ally with, not fight with, the ulema.

Al-Faruqi died in 1986, but his program has already had a profound effect, especially on Islamic economics, which operates under traditional zero-interest, participatory labour-capital structures, and supports stronger community control of land (as in the traditional practices of haram and hima, the equivalent of the modern watershed protection and wilderness reserve laws). These practices were already well on



the way to revival before Al-Faruqi's work, however. Islamic banks remain a relatively minor force in world finance. There are also debates on Islamic science and what it would mean to do science in a way that reflects the ethical teachings of Islam, and accept direction from the ijma on the priorities of such research. Al-Faruqi's analysis, called the "Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan" remains the primary source for this program.

Nasr's work on the congruence between classical Islam and the modern ecology movement is thought by some to be even more fundamental, and to suggest parallels between the ethical constraints that secular activists seek to place on science and technology, and the ethical constraints that Islam sought to place on philosophy and politics.

An Islamic ecology would then converge with economics and put Islamic pillars under a form of ecological economics, with religious authority backing up sustainable development. This would be a significant first step towards Al-Faruqi's overall program. Critics argue that there are vast differences between the kind of ethics that are applied in, say, the modern labour movement or the anti-globalization movement, and those that would be applied by any believer in the literal interpretation of the Quran.

Thus, any cooperation of modern ethical reformers and those seeking guidance from classical Islam would be doomed from the start. There are, however, lively debates regarding Islamic feminism and ethics of technology wherein secular concerns (like vanity, consumerism, competing for attention, technological one-upmanship, runaway technologies) seem to often echo the terms of reference of a classical critique:

Catholic theology was well integrated with scientific knowledge from the time of Aquinas to the time of Galileo, and that too was a deliberate program. Critics suggest that this also demonstrates the futility of trying to inhibit scientific research with reference to any religious fundamentalism.

But that doesn't stop clerics from trying. In modern times, Pope John Paul II called at times for restraining the sciences to work strictly within a Christian ethical framework, and respect the boundaries between what is known by faith versus reason-his "Fides et Ratio" and "Gospel of Life" make some points in common with Al-Faruqi, calling likewise for strong ethical limits and a curtailment of curiosity or "knowledge for knowledge's sake".

### Modern Islamic Philosophy of Science

Modern Islamic philosophy has, in response to challenges of secular science and concerns that secular society is unwilling or unable to limit its uses of "dangerous technology", especially nuclear weapon or biotechnology, begun to look at the origins of science to determine what ethics or limits can or should be imposed, and what goals or visions are appropriate for science. Key figures in these debates are:

- Ismail al-Faruqi who proposed an Islamization of knowledge.
- Seyyed Hossein Nasr who focuses on interpretations of "khalifa".
- Ziauddin Sardar who advocates the creation of a modern Islamic science to tackle problems facing Muslims today.
- Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas who first coined the phrase "Islamization of knowledge".
- Muhammad Nijatullah Siddiqui who focuses more specifically on Islamic economics.
- F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, explored the central importance of knowledge in Muslim civilization and explains how it generated "science". It is more a work of history. Also of some note in these debates have been
  - Nasim Butt, *Science and Muslim Societies*, an introduction
  - Ahmad Y. al-Hassan and Donald Routledge Hill, *Islamic Technology: An Illustrated History*.

### Islamic Bioethics

Islamic bioethics, or Islamic medical ethics, refers to Islamic guidance on ethical or moral issues relating to medical and scientific fields, in particular, those dealing with human life. In Islam, human life is regarded as an invaluable gift from God, and should therefore be both respected and protected. This is evident in many Quranic verses or ayat, one of the most important being:

*"if anyone slays a human being, unless it be [in punishment] for murder or spreading corruption on earth, it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind."*

It is this verse which has ultimately fuelled the interest in Islamic bioethics and within it exist two basic principles which ensure that the sanctity of human life is preserved:

1. Saving a life is obligatory.
2. Unjustified taking of a life is classified as murder and, thus, forbidden.

Though Muslims recognize and maintain that Allah is the ultimate source of life, the Quran illustrates that God has instilled in them reason, free will, the ability to distinguish between what is morally acceptable and what is unacceptable (Quran 91:8) while also supplying the provisions of nature. With these things, Muslims are held responsible for maintaining health and preventing illness. In the event that illness occurs, Muslims are obliged to seek medical treatment in a manner which is Islamically appropriate and permissible.

### Sources

The fundamental basis of Islamic bioethics is that all rulings and actions must fall into accordance with Islamic law (Shariah) and Islamic ethics. By evaluating bioethical issues from an ethical and legal standpoint, jurists can issue decrees or fatwas regarding the permissibility of the pertaining subject. Any rule that has not been explicitly outlined in the religious texts or formulated from them by jurists is referred to as bid'ah (innovation) and, therefore, is haram (impermissible). For this reason, all medical procedures and treatments, as well as conduct between patient and medical professional must be legitimized by the sources of Islamic law,

- Quran,
- Hadith or Sunnah
- Ijtihad
  - In Sunni Islam, ijti had includes qiyas (analogy), ijma (consensus), maslaha (public welfare) and 'urf (customary practice)
  - In Shi'a Islam it is comprised solely of al-'aql (reason).

### Principles

Principles of bioethics in the Western world were first developed and outlined by two American philosophers and bioethicists, Tom Beauchamp and James F. Childress, in their book, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. The concept of bioethical principles has since been regarded as a purely "Western" innovation which is absent in the Islamic health care system. These bioethical principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice have been legitimized by Muslims jurists as falling into the sphere of Islamic law and have also been supported



by Quranic verses. They have subsequently become the foundational spirit underlying the Oath of the Muslim Doctor and, thus, dictate the conduct between a Muslim physician and his or her patient.

### **Authority**

Formulations of rulings on bioethical issues in the Islamic context generally arise due to some form of deliberation between medical professionals and religious authority whom have been recognized as most qualified individuals of location or time period. After being approached by health care officials, a member of the religious authority (mufti) may then consult the religious texts and determine whether or not a specific issue is obligatory (wajib/fard), recommended (mustahabb), neutral (mubah), discouraged (makruh) or forbidden (haram).

### **Modernity**

As health care and science have progressed over time, and the Muslim population has also increased to over one billion adherents over every continent on the globe, there have been increasingly prevalent circumstances for the evaluation of technological applications and bioethical issues to determine how they fit into the Islamic sphere. As a result, larger bodies of Islamic committees have been formed to address issues at hand. National Committees of Medical Ethics/Bioethics have been formed in many Islamic countries which work together with ulema to issue fatwas ensuring that neither the progress of medical science is hindered, nor the Islamic code of bioethics is jeopardized. The importance of Islamic law (sharia) is so heavily valued that each issue is looked at independently and subsequently deemed permissible or impermissible. Specific issues addressed in the modern scientific era include abortion, fertility treatments, family planning, euthanasia, genetic research, cloning, stem cell research among many other issues.

## Approaches to Shariah in Islam

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### Marriage and Family in Islam

**Family:** In Islamic culture, the family is one of the core values, being the basic element and foundation stone of the community of Muslims ("umma" in Arabic). For this reason, questions related to family, marriage, divorce, inheritance rights, etc. are given a lot of space in the normative sources of Islam, i.e. in the Quran (the revelation of the founder of Islam, Muhammad, by means of the angel Gabriel), in hadises (collected traditions on the activities, fates and statements of the Prophet Mohammed), and in legal science ("fikh" in Arabic), i.e. in the interpretation and application of the norms of the Quran and hadises in individual life situations.

**Man and woman in Islam:** The social and cultural environment from which Islam was born (pre-Islamic Arabia) were organised along strongly patriarchal lines. The women were seen more or less as the property of the men, i.e. first of the father, later of the husband. For this reason, the "laying aside of girls" was practiced: the birth of a girl represented an economic burden for the family, and so the family would sometimes get rid of them by leaving them in solitude and allowing them to die. In light of this cultural context, Mohammed's conception of the status and dignity of women was very revolutionary. He forbade the laying aside of girls, and banned unrestricted polygamy. It is known of him that he urged Muslim men to be kind and considerate to their wives, and himself behaved with the highest respect for his first wife Khalida and his daughter Fatima. In the Quran, woman is placed on the same level as man, as being created by God. She is also highly honoured as a mother, the person who raises children, and the

person who watches over the family hearth. Nevertheless, relationships between woman and men in traditional Islamic societies are not equal from a modern European perspective.

**Social status of a woman:** In traditional Islamic societies, the woman is associated above all with the domestic family environment. (In extreme cases, this means that she is prevented from receiving education and undertaking civil employment; however, this is very isolated.) The public space is traditionally understood as being the male domain. However, this cannot be explained as an attempt to keep women locked at home, but as a prudent distribution of labour and social roles on the basis of the various skills and dispositions of men and women.

A woman is to be protected but not restricted. Chaste and abstemious attire is also interpreted above all as protecting the women (the Quran does not speak of the veil or of clothes, this is a later interpretation; the Quran speaks only more generally of chaste and inexpressive clothing and covering up the sensitive parts of the body). Woman is perceived as a delicate, more vulnerable and easily impressionable being. This explains the rule, for instance, that the testimony of two women in court has the same weight as the testimony of one man. Likewise, the woman in inheritance proceedings has half of the share of a man in the same relationship to the deceased. Because they can be more easily influenced, the punishments derived from God's law (Shariah law) are milder for women than for men, e.g. apostasy in the case of men is punishable by death, whereas a disciplinary punishment is recommended in the case of women. A man therefore has the dominant status from the point of view of authority, and therefore has greater responsibility.

**Marriage:** Traditional Islam allows men the institution of tetragamy, i.e. a Muslim can have up to four wives. However, in the Quran it says that the man must love all his wives equally, which is, as the Quran says at one point, basically impossible. This forms the content of the 4th sura (a sura is a chapter of the Quran, which has a total of 114 sura, with the 4th sura concerned in detail with the status of woman), which some have taken to imply that the Quran actually commands monogamy.

Tetragamy in Islamic societies is basically a marginal and infrequent phenomenon, and the vast majority of Muslims cannot permit themselves it for economic reasons. However, a woman may only have one man. Given that their function includes motherhood,



Islam does not approve of long-term bachelorhood or celibacy (this goes for both men and women). In traditional Islamic societies, marriage is to this day understood as a contract between two families. The parents provide the initiative in this regard, not two young people in love. The blessing of the families is in any case of crucial importance, and marriage is not a private matter between two young people. In traditional Islam, the family is to this very day regarded as an expanded family, i.e. as a multi-generational group of relatives (including uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.).

Even when the young people themselves take the initiative, the groom discusses the conditions of the marriage with the parents of the bride. Since authority within the family belongs clearly to the man, a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim (as long as they belong to the "people of the book", i.e. they are Jewish or Christian). In this case, the wife does not have to convert to Islam. The same is not true the other way around – a Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim. The condition of such a marriage would be that the groom must convert to Islam.

The situation of women in the Islamic family and society is therefore not desperate or hopeless. However, the status of men can easily be abused if they do not behave towards women as their religion commands.

**Divorce:** The right to divorce is enjoyed above all by the husband, although in justified instances divorce proceedings may be initiated by the wife. In principle, it suffices that the man express the divorce formula three times consecutively. Nevertheless, in Islamic society divorce is perceived very negatively. It is said of Mohammed that he was very critical of divorce, which is why it does not happen as frequently as it might seem. In reality, Western society has a divorce rate many times higher than that of Islamic countries. The husband is recommended to leave at least a month in between each of his three expressions of the divorce formula, in order to ensure that the divorce is not the result of recklessness. A wife can turn to a judge (in the case of domestic violence, madness or infidelity) who may declare the marriage null and void, though overall the possibilities for a woman to initiate divorce are considerably fewer than a man's.

**The current situation:** The situation in modern Islamic societies is very varied. Traditional religious legislation (Shariah) is interfused with local common-law, which is not derived from Islam, and also with the legislation of the governing political regime, which supports or

combats common-law and Islamic law to various degrees. Countries with a secular constitution (e.g. Turkey) restrict and correct both religious and cultural customs and norms, while countries attempting to apply Shariah as their constitution do not recognise the principles of liberal democracy and endeavour to apply strict norms derived directly from the Quran and the hadises.

In every country with a majority Muslim population, there is a constellation of cultural and custom-based law, law derived from religious norms, and the general rule of law of the governing regime, and these are often in a state of mutual tension. In many countries, for instance, the police will prosecute crimes using law based either on culture or custom or law derived from the Quran. This relates, for instance, to the cruel traditional punishments of women found guilty of infidelity, etc.

### **Topic**

In the conversation, Jami says: "But it's not easy for me". (i.e. if he wanted to marry Magda). And he's right. Not because as a Muslim he could not marry a non-Muslim. As has been said, a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim woman because as head of the family he will have the decisive authority and will designate the religious identity of the entire family, including the children. Given that traditional Islamic societies are patrilineal (as opposed to Jewish families which are matrilineal), this means that as far as the religious, ethnic and cultural identity of the children is concerned, the father is decisive. A Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim and she does not have to convert to Islam. This is not possible the other way around (c.f. above).

Nevertheless, because in the traditional Islamic conception of the family the voice of the parents in the choice or designation of a life partner is extremely important, Jami could come up against not a religious ban, but the intransigence of his parents. From the point of view of Islam, the ethnic origin of the married couple is completely irrelevant, though the parents might want for their child a partner from the same ethnic origin. However, for the Quran, ethnic differences do not exist, or are negligible in comparison with the question of religion. In immigrant communities, the traditional family links are weaker, and the young people are sometimes more emancipated and more independent (and deracinated). However, sometimes the opposite is the case: in Europe, face to face with majority society, there is sometimes a strengthening of family and religious links as protection



against the dissipation of a culture's own identity. And so Jami really is not going to have it easy if he falls in love with Magda or Olga. But maybe he will.

Speaking of the status of women in traditional Islamic families, Olga says "They lock them up in the home, they throw a scarf over their heads and don't let them work." As has been said, restricting women to the space of the home is typical only for an extreme form of Islamic fundamentalism, and in most Islamic countries is unthinkable and illegal. Nevertheless, in traditional societies there is still a certain restriction on mutual contact between men and women in public: schools are divided by gender (unmixed), during medical examinations it is preferable that women examine women (if this is not possible, then a third person must be present, etc.), and social, sports and leisure activities (e.g. swimming) are restricted (as they were until recently in traditional European societies). However, in many Islamic countries women are these days involved in politics, the media, etc. "They throw a scarf over her head." As has been said above, in the Quran it says that a woman should dress soberly and non-provocatively. They should not tease men with tight-fitting clothes. Of the scarf, not to speak of the "veil", there is no mention, this is a later interpretation. These days, disputes over the headscarf tend to be more symbolic in their significance, and some Muslims (e.g. in Turkey) fight for the right to wear clothes as an expression of their religious beliefs. The veil (in Arabic the hijab, in Persian the chador, in Turkish the turban) is supposed to swathe the hair and neck, and in Europe's past it was fairly customary as a mark of married, virtuous women. There is a mention of this in the New Testament (1. Corinthians 11).

Jami says of Olga (on the topic of cosmetics): "I don't even know what she looks like under all that make-up." It should be pointed out that women do not wear the veil at home, a woman should be beautiful and attractive to her husband, she may and should adorn herself, use perfumes, jewellery, etc. However, the beauty and attractiveness of woman in the Islamic concept belongs to the private and intimate life of the married couple, and not to public life.

### **The 'Shariah Law Debate' in Ontario**

The normative figure in Western feminism remains the liberal autonomous individual of modernity. 'Other' women are those who have their freedom to choose restricted. Typically, 'other' women are those burdened by culture and hindered by their communities from



entering modernity. If we remain in the terrain of thinking about women as vulnerable or imperilled, and some women as particularly imperilled, as we generally do of Muslim women, we remain squarely within the framework of patriarchy understood as abstracted from all other systems.

A modernity/premodernity distinction will continue to invade any projects intending to help Muslim women. This chapter shows the persistence of the modernity/premodernity distinction in contemporary debates around applying Shariah law to the settlement of family law disputes under the Arbitration Act in Ontario, Canada. I argue below that in their concern to curtail conservative and patriarchal forces within the Muslim community, Canadian feminists (both Muslim and Non-Muslim) utilized frameworks that installed a secular/religious divide that functions as a colour line, marking the difference between the modern, enlightened West, and tribal, religious Muslims.

I suggest that feminist responses might have helped to sustain a new form of governmentality, one in which the productive power of the imperilled Muslim woman functions to keep in line Muslim communities at the same time that it defuses more radical feminist and anti-racist critique of conservative religious forces. I end by exploring how this effect could have been restricted.”

### **Violence and Shariah: A Comparative Study of Muslim Societies in the Middle East, Africa and Asia**

In this study, the central question concerns the relationship between domestic violence and *shariah*. This relationship is of critical importance because *shariah* provides both the legal framework for administering family relations and a religio-cultural framework for social norms and values in Muslim societies.

This study seeks to provide an analytical framework and a comparative assessment of domestic violence in Muslim societies in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The approach is socio-legal, probing the functions and uses of religious and other bodies of law, and tracing struggles over the rights of women in the context of domestic relations. Given the importance and attention devoted to the relationship between women's rights and Islam, to date surprisingly little comparative analysis has been generated about the relationship between domestic violence and *shariah*. This study is an effort to redress this lacuna.

## Islamic Banking and the Credit Crunch

The Islamic Banking model has developed on principles which, theoretically at least, are inherently less risky than the prevailing western alternatives. The current global economic crisis stemming from subprime mortgage debt write-downs is attributable to two main factors. The first was the relaxation of mortgage credit criteria in developed economies, such as the US, on the assumption that rising house prices would offer sufficient collateral against the lending risk. The second was the use of securitisation to repackage these mortgage-based obligations into tradable financial products which diluted the underlying asset-backing. Once house prices began to stall, these financial securities became "toxic", dragging down in their wake the banks with the greatest exposure to them. Banking instability and failure, in turn, led to a failure in confidence and a reluctance of banks to lend to each other, causing money markets to dry-up.

An Islamic Bank, theoretically at least, is less exposed to the type of lending and financing practices which are at the root of the present crisis. Because of the principle of Riba, Islamic banks do not borrow or lend on international money markets because interest is not allowed; traditionally they have a larger proportion of their assets in reserve accounts with central banks. Islamic banking is based on the principles of risk-sharing between depositor and investor – in theory, meaning that customers practice greater oversight of an Islamic bank's lending performance than their Western banking counterparts. Shariah-law stipulates that Islamic securities should be asset-based, which means that a trader must own the asset being traded as opposed to the complex derivative products which have had such an adverse impact on Western banks. This, in turn, proscribes most forms of futures trading, as goods that the seller does not own or will not deliver cannot be the subject of an Islamic contract. Practices such as short-selling, consequently, are not a feature of Islamic Banking.

A note of caution, however, may be introduced at this point. Whilst the underlying precepts of Islamic Banking prohibit many of the practices which have imperiled Western banks, the efforts to offer an expanded range of Shariah-compliant offerings have led to the development of financial products which closely resemble more conventional financial instruments, such as Tawarruq and Sukuk, with exposure to the same type of risks, albeit not to the same degree. News may yet emerge in the coming months of an Islamic Bank suffering losses because of these new products.

### **The Saudi Market**

The Saudi banking system is by far the largest in the Middle East, with Saudi banks accounting for nearly 50% of all private sector deposits held by GCC, and 25% of all private sector deposits in Middle Eastern banks. Traditionally, the Saudi market was dominated by local banks offering the traditional range of Consumer and Investment banking products. However, the market for Islamic finance has taken off to the extent that now 64% of Saudi banking transactions are Islamic in nature.

In a parallel development, the Saudi government was forced to open up the banking and insurance sectors to foreign investors as a condition of WTO (World Trade Organisation) membership. Traditional Islamic banks, which had historically prospered due to the highly protected local market, now find themselves having to compete with new market entrants, hybrid banks offering a mixture of Islamic and conventional products. Generally more nimble, these banks tend to offer superior marketing and customer service skills. At the same time, banks such as HSBC and NCB (National Commercial Bank) have created Islamic-branded subsidiaries and networks in response to customer needs. As a result, customers no longer have to choose between Shariah-compliant banks and western levels of service. Faced with increasingly knowledgeable and demanding customers, a generic positioning as an Islamic bank is no longer sufficient.

Islamic Banking is increasingly starting to dominate the industry. Al Rajhi Bank, headquartered in Riyadh, for example, is not only vying with NCB to be the largest bank in the Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, but is the biggest Islamic bank in the world, with 100% of its products totally Shariah-compliant. It consciously promotes itself as an Islamic bank and, for the majority of its customers, this is a strong component of their loyalty and attachment to the bank. Not to be outdone, most of the other banks in Saudi Arabia now emphasise the Islamic nature of much of their products, even when conventional services are offered alongside the Shariah-compliant ones.

From a research perspective, financial institutions need to conduct the appropriate studies to evaluate the appeal of existing and new Islamic products in comparison with conventional products, and how best to communicate the functional as well as more emotive and intangible benefits of such products. This is emerging as one of the key research topics in the Gulf region, and is likely to become even stronger in the future.



For the research to be at its most effective, the researcher-consultant needs to combine in-depth knowledge of appropriate methodologies with a fundamental understanding of both the conventional banking sector and its Islamic variants.

### Islam's Doctrines of Deception

To better understand Islam, one must appreciate the thoroughly legalistic nature of the religion. According to Shariah (Islamic law) every conceivable human act is categorised as being either forbidden, discouraged, permissible, recommended, or obligatory.

“Common sense” or “universal opinion” has little to do with Islam’s notions of right and wrong. Only what Allah (through the Quran) and his prophet Muhammad (through the Hadith) have to say about any given issue matters; and how Islam’s greatest theologians and jurists – collectively known as the ulema, literally, “they who know” – have articulated it.

According to Shariah, in certain situations, deception – also known as ‘taqiyya’, based on Quranic terminology, – is not only permitted but sometimes obligatory. For instance, contrary to early Christian history, Muslims who must choose between either recanting Islam or being put to death are not only permitted to lie by pretending to have apostatised, but many jurists have decreed that, according to Quran 4:29, Muslims are obligated to lie in such instances.

### Origins of Taqiyya

As a doctrine, taqiyya was first codified by Shia Muslims, primarily as a result of their historical experience. Long insisting that the caliphate rightly belonged to the prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, Ali (and subsequently his descendents), the Shia were a vocal and powerful branch of Islam that emerged following Muhammad’s death. After the internal Islamic Fitna wars from the years 656 AD to 661 AD, however, the Shia became a minority branch, persecuted by mainstream Muslims or Sunnis – so-called because they follow the example or ‘sunna’ of Muhammad and his companions. Taqiyya became pivotal to Shia survival.

Interspersed among the much more numerous Sunnis, who currently make up approximately 90 per cent of the Islamic world, the Shia often performed taqiyya by pretending to be Sunnis externally, while maintaining Shia beliefs internally, as permitted by Quranic verse 16:106. Even today, especially in those Muslim states where

there is little religious freedom, the Shia still practice taqiyya. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, Shias are deemed by many of the Sunni majority to be heretics, traitors and infidels and like other non-Sunni Muslims they are often persecuted.

Several of Saudi Arabia's highest clerics have even issued fatwas sanctioning the killing of Shias. As a result, figures on the Arabian kingdom's Shia population vary wildly from as low as 1 per cent to nearly 20 per cent. Many Shias living there obviously choose to conceal their religious identity. As a result of some 1,400 years of Shia taqiyya, the Sunnis often accuse the Shias of being habitual liars, insisting that taqiyya is ingrained in Shia culture.

Conversely, the Sunnis have historically had little reason to dissemble or conceal any aspect of their faith, which would have been deemed dishonourable, especially when dealing with their historic competitors and enemies, the Christians. From the start, Islam burst out of Arabia subjugating much of the known world, and, throughout the Middle Ages, threatened to engulf all of Christendom. In a world where might made right, the Sunnis had nothing to apologise for, much less to hide from the 'infidel'.

Paradoxically, however, today many Sunnis are finding themselves in the Shias' place: living as minorities in Western countries surrounded and governed by their traditional foes. The primary difference is that, extremist Sunnis and Shia tend to reject each other outright, as evidenced by the ongoing Sunni-Shia struggle in Iraq, whereas, in the West, where freedom of religion is guaranteed, Sunnis need only dissemble over a few aspects of their faith.

### ***Articulation of Taqiyya***

According to the authoritative Arabic text, *Al-Taqiyya Fi Al-Islam*: "Taqiyya [deception] is of fundamental importance in Islam. Practically every Islamic sect agrees to it and practices it. We can go so far as to say that the practice of taqiyya is mainstream in Islam, and that those few sects not practicing it diverge from the mainstream. Taqiyya is very prevalent in Islamic politics, especially in the modern era."

The primary Quranic verse sanctioning deception with respect to non-Muslims states: "Let believers not take for friends and allies infidels instead of believers. Whoever does this shall have no relationship left with Allah – unless you but guard yourselves against them, taking precautions." (Quran 3:28)



Al-Tabari's (838-923 AD) Tafsir, or Quranic exegeses, is essentially a standard reference in the entire Muslim world. Regarding 3:28, he wrote: "If you [Muslims] are under their [infidels'] authority, fearing for yourselves, behave loyally to them, with your tongue, while harbouring inner animosity for them... Allah has forbidden believers from being friendly or on intimate terms with the infidels in place of believers – except when infidels are above them [in authority]. In such a scenario, let them act friendly towards them."

Regarding 3:28, the Islamic scholar Ibn Kathir (1301-1373) wrote: "Whoever at any time or place fears their [infidels'] evil, may protect himself through outward show."

As proof of this, he quotes Muhammad's companions. Abu Darda said: "Let us smile to the face of some people while our hearts curse them." Al-Hassan said: "Doing taqiyya is acceptable till the day of judgment [in perpetuity]." Other prominent ulema, such as al-Qurtubi, al-Razi, and al-Arabi have extended taqiyya to cover deeds. Muslims can behave like infidels – from bowing down and worshipping idols and crosses to even exposing fellow Muslims' "weak spots" to the infidel enemy – anything short of actually killing a fellow Muslim.

### **War is Deceit**

None of this should be surprising considering that Muhammad himself, whose example as the "most perfect human" is to be tenaciously followed, took an expedient view on the issue of deception. For instance, Muhammad permitted deceit in three situations: to reconcile two or more quarreling parties; husband to wife and vice-versa; and in war.

During the Battle of the Trench (627 AD), which pitted Muhammad and his followers against several non-Muslim tribes collectively known as "the Confederates", a Confederate called Naim bin Masud went to the Muslim camp and converted to Islam. When Muhammad discovered the Confederates were unaware of Masud's conversion, he counseled him to return and try somehow to get his tribesmen to abandon the siege. "For war is deceit," Muhammad assured him.

Masud returned to the Confederates without their knowledge that he had switched sides and began giving his former kin and allies bad advice. He also went to great lengths to instigate quarrels between the various tribes until, thoroughly distrusting each other, they disbanded and lifted the siege. According to this account, deceit saved Islam during its embryonic stage. More demonstrative of the legitimacy of deception with respect to non-Muslims is the following account. A



poet, Kab bin al-Ashruf, had offended Muhammad by making derogatory verse about Muslim women. Muhammad exclaimed in front of his followers: "Who will kill this man who has hurt Allah and his prophet?"

A young Muslim named Muhammad bin Maslama volunteered, but with the caveat that, in order to get close enough to Kab to assassinate him, he be allowed to lie to the poet. Muhammad agreed.

Maslama travelled to Kab and began denigrating Islam and Muhammad, carrying on this way till his disaffection became convincing enough for Kab to take him into his confidences. Soon thereafter, Maslama appeared with another Muslim and, while Kab's guard was down, they assaulted and killed him. They ran to Muhammad with Kab's head, to which the latter cried: "Allahu akbar" or "God is great".

The entire sequence of Quranic revelations are a testimony to taqiyya and, since Allah is believed to be the revealer of these verses, he ultimately is seen as the perpetrator of deceit. This is not surprising since Allah himself is often described in the Quran as the "best deceiver" or "schemer." This phenomenon revolves around the fact that the Quran contains both peaceful and tolerant verses, as well as violent and intolerant ones.

The ulema were uncertain which verses to codify into sharia's worldview. For instance, should they use the one that states there is no coercion in religion (2:256), or the ones that command believers to fight all non-Muslims until they either convert or at least submit to Islam (9:5, 9:29)? To solve this quandary, they developed the doctrine of abrogation – naskh, supported by Quran 2:105. This essentially states that verses "revealed" later in Muhammad's career take precedence over those revealed earlier whenever there is a discrepancy.

Why the contradiction in the first place? The standard answer has been that, because Muhammad and his community were far outnumbered by the infidels in the early years of Islam, a message of peace and co-existence was in order. However, after Muhammad migrated to Medina and grew in military strength and numbers, the militant or intolerant verses were revealed, urging Muslims to go on the offensive. According to this standard view, circumstance dictates which verses are to be implemented. When Muslims are weak, they should preach and behave according to the Meccan verses; when strong, they should go on the offensive, according to the Medinan verses. Many Islamic books extensively deal with the doctrine of abrogation, or Al-Nasikh Wa Al-Mansukh.

### War is Eternal

The fact that Islam legitimises deceit during war cannot be all that surprising; strategist Sun Tzu 722-Italian political philosopher Machiavelli (1469-1527) and English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) all justified deceit in war.

However, according to all four recognised schools of Sunni jurisprudence, war against the infidel goes on in perpetuity, until "all chaos ceases, and all religion belongs to Allah" (Quran 8:39). According to the definitive Encyclopaedia of Islam (Brill Online edition): "The duty of the jihad exists as long as the universal domination of Islam has not been attained. Peace with non-Muslim nations is, therefore, a provisional state of affairs only; the chance of circumstances alone can justify it temporarily. Furthermore there can be no question of genuine peace treaties with these nations; only truces, whose duration ought not, in principle, to exceed ten years, are authorised. But even such truces are precarious, inasmuch as they can, before they expire, be repudiated unilaterally should it appear more profitable for Islam to resume the conflict."

The concept of obligatory jihad is best expressed by Islam's dichotomised worldview that pits Dar al Islam (House of Islam) against Dar al Harb (House of War or non-Muslims) until the former subsumes the latter. Muslim historian and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), articulated this division by saying: "In the Muslim community, holy war [jihad] is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the holy war was not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defence. But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations."

This concept is highlighted by the fact that, based on the ten-year treaty of Hudaibiya, ratified between Muhammad and his Quraish opponents in Mecca (628), ten years is theoretically the maximum amount of time Muslims can be at peace with infidels (as indicated earlier by the Encyclopaedia of Islam). Based on Muhammad's example of breaking the treaty after two years, by citing a Quraish infraction, the sole function of the "peace-treaty" (hudna) is to buy weakened Muslims time to regroup for a renewed offensive. Muhammad is quoted in the Hadith saying: "If I take an oath and later find something else better, I do what is better and break my oath. This might be what former PLO leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Yasser Arafat meant

when, after negotiating a peace treaty criticised by his opponents as conceding too much to Israel, he said in a mosque: "I see this agreement as being no more than the agreement signed between our Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and the Quraish in Mecca."

On several occasions Hamas has made it clear that its ultimate aspiration is to see Israel destroyed. Under what context would it want to initiate a "temporary" peace with the Jewish state? When Osama bin Laden offered the US a truce, stressing that "we [Muslims] are a people that Allah has forbidden from double-crossing and lying." what was his ultimate intention? Based on the above, these are instances of Muslim extremists feigning openness to the idea of peace simply in order to bide time.

If Islam must be in a constant state of war with the non-Muslim world – which need not be physical, as radicals among the ulema have classified several non-literal forms of jihad, such as "jihad-of-the-pen" (propaganda), and "money-jihad" (economic) – and if Muslims are permitted to lie and feign loyalty to the infidel to further their war efforts, offers of peace, tolerance or dialogue from extremist Muslim corners are called into question.

### Religious Obligation?

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, a group of prominent Muslims wrote a letter to Americans saying that Islam is a tolerant religion that seeks to coexist with others.

Bin Laden castigated them, saying: "As to the relationship between Muslims and infidels, this is summarised by the Most High's Word: 'We renounce you. Enmity and hate shall forever reign between us – till you believe in Allah alone' [Quran 60:4]. So there is an enmity, evidenced by fierce hostility from the heart. And this fierce hostility – that is battle – ceases only if the infidel submits to the authority of Islam, or if his blood is forbidden from being shed [a dhimmi – a non-Muslim subject living as a "second-class" citizen in an Islamic state in accordance to Quran 9:29], or if Muslims are at that point in time weak and incapable [a circumstance under which taqiyya applies]. But if the hate at any time extinguishes from the heart, this is great apostasy! Such, then, is the basis and foundation of the relationship between the infidel and the Muslim. Battle, animosity and hatred, directed from the Muslim to the infidel, is the foundation of our religion. And we consider this a justice and kindness to them."



This hostile world view is traceable to Islam's schools of jurisprudence. When addressing Western audiences, however, Bin Laden's tone significantly changes. He lists any number of grievances as reasons for fighting the West – from Israeli policies towards Palestinians to the Western exploitation of women and US failure to sign the Kyoto protocol – never alluding to fighting the US simply because it is an infidel entity that must be subjugated. He often initiates his messages to the West by saying: "Reciprocal treatment is part of justice." This is a clear instance of taqiyya, as Bin Laden is not only waging a physical jihad, but one of propaganda. Convincing the West that the current conflict is entirely its fault garners him and his cause more sympathy. Conversely, he also knows that if his Western audiences were to realise that, all real or imagined political grievances aside, according to the Islamic worldview delineated earlier, which bin Laden does accept, nothing short of their submission to Islam can ever bring peace, his propaganda campaign would be compromised. As a result there is constant lying, "for war is deceit".

If Bin Laden's words and actions represent an individual case of taqiyya, they raise questions about Saudi Arabia's recent initiatives for "dialogue". Saudi Arabia closely follows Shariah. For instance, the Saudi government will not allow the construction of churches or synagogues on its land; Bibles are banned and burned. Christians engaged in any kind of missionary activity are arrested, tortured, and sometimes killed. Muslim converts to Christianity can be put to death in the kingdom.

Despite such limitations on religious freedom, the Saudis have been pushing for more dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims. At the most recent interfaith conference in Madrid in July 2008, King Abdullah asserted: "Islam is a religion of moderation and tolerance, a message that calls for constructive dialogue among followers of all religions."

Days later, it was revealed that Saudi children's textbooks still call Christians and Jews "infidels", "hated enemies" and "pigs and swine". A multiple-choice test in a book for fourth-graders asks: "Who is a 'true' Muslim?" The correct answer is not the man who prays and fasts, but rather: "A man who worships God alone, loves the believers and hates the infidels". These infidels are the same people the Saudis want dialogue with. This raises the question of whether, when Saudis call for dialogue, they are merely following Muhammad's companion Abu Darda's advice: "Let us smile to the face of some people while

our hearts curse them”? There is also a philosophical – more particularly, epistemological – problem with taqiyya. Anyone who truly believes that no less an authority than God justifies and, through his prophet’s example, sometimes even encourages deception, will not experience any ethical qualms or dilemmas about lying. This is especially true if the human mind is indeed a tabula rasa shaped by environment and education. Deception becomes second nature. Consider the case of former Al-Qaeda operative, Ali Mohammad. Despite being entrenched in the highest echelons of the terrorism network, Mohammed’s confidence at dissembling enabled him to become a CIA agent and FBI informant for years. People who knew him regarded him “with fear and awe for his incredible self-confidence, his inability to be intimidated, absolute ruthless determination to destroy the enemies of Islam, and his zealous belief in the tenets of militant Islamic fundamentalism”, according to Steven Emerson. Indeed, this sentiment sums it all up: for a zealous belief in Islam’s tenets, which, as has been described above, legitimises deception, will certainly go a long way in creating incredible self-confidence when deceiving one’s enemies.

### ***Exposing a Doctrine***

All of the above is an exposition on doctrine and its various manifestations, not an assertion on the actual practices of the average Muslim. The deciding question is how literally any given Muslim follows Shariah and its worldview.

So-called “moderate” Muslims – or, more specifically, secularised Muslims – do not closely adhere to Shariah, and therefore have little to dissemble about. On the other hand, “radical” Muslims who closely observe Shariah law, which splits the world into two perpetually warring halves, will always have a “divinely sanctioned” right to deceive, until “all chaos ceases, and all religion belongs to Allah

### **Evolution of the Idea of Human Rights and Duties in Islam**

The contemporary notion of human rights— embodied in theory, practice and law— does not have a parallel provenance in pre-modern Islamic thought and practice.

There are no similar “moments” in Islamic history comparable to Magna Carta, the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man, or the framing of the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. Neither does Islam have a tradition of theorising about individual rights and freedoms, in the vein of Locke, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Paine



and JS Mill in pre-modern times. Therefore, in as much as the modern principles of human rights can be related, in part, to an accumulation of systematic thinking on the rights of individuals, groups and communities, then Islamic thought does not exhibit the same or similar progression of the set of ideas and principles that underpin modern human rights. However, there is little doubt that Islamic thought and jurisprudence, in the pre-modern era, did deal with many aspects of the rights and duties of various categories of human beings; but in a framework that was conceptually and methodologically different from the western tradition.

“*Huqooq al-Insan*” in Arabic are the contemporary rendering of “human rights”. However, they cannot be located as such in pre-modern Islamic literature. But *Huqooq* itself is a word derived from the root word *Haqq*— a word which can mean equally truth or right or rights over others, or share. (*Al-Haqq* or the Truth, is one of Allah’s attributes).

It is in this form that the equivalent principle of human rights and duties in Islam is found in a huge array of original Islamic sources. Such sources can include documents on the principles and maxims of government; sayings of rulers and judges; actions of the *muhtassib*, (a type of ombudsman); treatises on justice, equality, ethics, political and moral philosophy, accountability, toleration, treatment of minorities, property rights, freedom of conscience and expression, and so on.

## Human Rights in the Classical Islamic Period

### The Quran

For the mass of believing Muslims throughout history, the Qur’an has always been the key text upon which Islamic life and civilization has been built. Muslims have found in the Qur’an numerous verses from which an understanding of human being’s position in the cosmos has been derived; as well as the enumeration and exposition of the rights and duties of human beings to their Creator, to each other and to themselves. Such verses cover the dignity and moral perfectibility of human beings; mankind as God’s vice-regents on earth; the inherent equality of human beings; elevated status of human beings in the cosmic order; as well as the obligation to consult others in governing; the toleration of non-Muslims and the rejection of compunction in matters of faith and religion. Human beings (*insan*) and *Haqq* are mentioned over 70 and 250 times respectively.



However, the pre-modern reading and interpretation of the Qur'anic text was not done with the specific intent of developing a human rights doctrine. This only emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly in response to the challenge of the modern human rights movement.

### **The Early Medinan 'Constitution'**

This document reports the heads of agreement between the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and his followers after the hegira to Medina and the people of Medina and the surrounding tribes—both pagan Arabs, Christian Arabs and Jews. It is narrated by Ibn Ishaq, the earliest of the Prophet Muhammad's biographers.

The document regulates the relationship between the various components of the Medinan society and confirms the principles of toleration, freedom of religion and rights granted to the tribes and to non-Muslims, in the context of building a civic order.

### **Instructions and Decisions of the Rightly Guided Caliphs**

Instructions from the Caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar on the treatment of non combatants and non-Muslims in conquered territories; and on the dispensation of justice. Discourses, Orders and Sermons of the 4<sup>th</sup> caliph, Imam Ali<sup>2</sup>The key document here is the detailed letter written by Imam Ali to Malik al-Ashtar, the governor of Egypt, where Imam Ali sets out the rights and duties of the ruler and the ruled, and guidelines on the proper and appropriate conduct of the state towards its subjects. (This document surfaces later in the design of the Iranian constitutions of 1906 and 1979).

The discourses of Imam Ali that were collected in a compilation called *Nahj ul-Balagha* (the Peaks of Eloquence), are an important source for the evolution of Shia Muslim ethical doctrines, some of which relate to the idea of human rights and duties.

### **Jurisprudential Treatises and the Idea of Human Rights**

These sources fall into a number of categories including: treatises on government and power, emphasising humanistic principles such as equality, access to justice, provision of personal security and public order, and enhancing social and economic welfare. Such treatises include the writings of Al-'Amir (d. 991), al-Ghazali (d.1111), al-Tartoushi (d.1126), Abi Asiba'a (d.1269), Al-Taqtaqi (d.1309), Ibn Jama'a (d.1332), al-Zayani (d.1388). Al-Tartoushi's book, *Siraj al-Muluk* (The Lamp of Kings) in particular comes close to discussing issues of equality before the law, and the rights of subjects not to be oppressed by state power

in ways that approximate contemporary human rights discourse. Human rights were also implicit in the writings of Islamic political philosophers such as al-Farabi in his *Virtuous City*; philosophers of history such as Ibn Khaldun and moralists and ethicists such as Ibn Hazm of Andalusia and ibn Muskawayh.

### **The Epistle of Rights by Imam Ali Zain al-Abidin**

This is a document that has been authoritatively attributed to Imam Ali Zain al-Abidin (d.714), the fourth Imam of the Shia Muslims. It sets out eight categories of rights, mainly expressed in terms of the classical understanding of rights that others have over the individual. These include: individual rights and obligations couched in religious terms; spiritual and religious rights; the rights and obligations of the ruler and ruled; the rights of parents and children; social rights (such as the rights of neighbours); economic and financial rights; the rights of those seeking reform (a uniquely Islamic category); ethical and moral rights.

### **The Rights of 'Adamic Creatures' of al-Mawardi**

Al-Mawardi (d.1058) is a key political philosopher in Islam and the author of the famous treatise on government *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* ('The Principles of Government'). His treatise on the rights of man (Adamic Creatures) is less well known but nevertheless a significant document. It is written mainly as a manual for rulers to curb their excesses in the exercise of power and not to trample on the rights of human beings as ordained by religion.

In summary, the classical period did not treat human rights as a separate category of inquiry but included aspects of them in treatises on government, power and authority. In general, rights arose as a correlative of duties and obligations, and this was so expressed in the jurisprudential terms of the Shariah. It is the human being as an obligor (*Mukallaf*) rather than one with inherent rights that is the foundation of Shariah rulings that have a bearing on human rights and duties.

## Empowerment of Social Backwards

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### Modesty in Islam

Modesty and shyness play a special part between the affairs of the Creator and the created. All prophets and Messengers encouraged modesty, as the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

*“Indeed from the teachings of the first prophets which has reached you is, ‘If you do not have shyness, then do as you please.’” (Al-Bukhari)*

Modesty as a sense of shame or shyness in human beings is a shrinking of the soul from foul conduct, a quality that prevents one from behaving badly towards others or encouraging others to behave badly towards you. Islamic ethics considers modesty as more than just a question of how a person dresses, and more than just modesty in front of people; rather it is reflected in a Muslim’s speech, dress, and conduct: in public in regards to people, and in private in regards to God. Any talk of modesty, therefore, must begin with the heart, not the hemline, as the Prophet of Mercy said, ‘Modesty is part of faith,’ and that part of faith must lie in the heart.

Take reservation in speech. As with everything in Islam, speech should be moderate. Raising one’s voice in venting anger simply shows one lacks the ability to contain it, and only damage will ensue from it. Uncontrolled anger, for example, can lead one to verbally abuse and physically assault another, both of which take off the veil of bashfulness one is endowed with, exposing the shameful ego within. The Prophet said:



*"A strong person is not the person who throws his adversaries to the ground. A strong person is the person who contains himself when he is angry." (Saheeh al-Bukhari)*

A strong person who believes feels shy in front of God and His creation, since God knows and sees everything. He feels shy to disobey his Lord and feels shame if he sins or acts inappropriately, whether in private or public. This type of modesty is acquired and is directly related to one's faith, where one's awareness of God increases one's "shyness" in front of Him.

Islamic morality divides modesty into natural and acquired. Modesty is a quality inherent in girls and boys, a certain type of modesty that is natural in human beings. It manifests itself, for instance, in a natural human urge to cover one's private parts. According to the Quran, when Adam and Eve ate from the fruit of the forbidden tree, they became aware that their private parts were exposed, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise, a natural result of their modesty.

Islamic scholars consider modesty to be a quality that distinguishes human beings from animals. Animals follow their instincts without feeling any shame or a sense of right or wrong. Hence, the less modesty a person has, the more he resembles animals. The more modesty a person has, the closer he is to being human. Islam has mandated certain legislations which induce this sense of modesty within humans. These legislations range from seeking permission before entering any room and distancing one from others while relieving oneself, to mandating certain manners of dress for men and women alike. Another way that modesty may be attained is by associating with modest people - people in whose presence a person feels embarrassed to do anything shameful - as the Prophet said:

*"I advise you to be shy toward God, the Exalted, in the same way that you are shy toward a pious man from your people."*

Being shy of a stranger's gaze is one of the driving forces behind modesty in dress. This can be seen in children, who naturally shy away from strangers, sometimes hiding from them in their mother's skirts or behind their father's legs. In Islam, screening most of your body off from the gaze of a stranger, especially of the opposite sex, is actually mandated as a means to avoid falling into conduct that may lead to extramarital or premarital sex. God says,

*“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! God is Aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment.” (Quran 24:30)*

The verse then mentions the people before whom one is exempted from veiling; the ones who cannot be called ‘strangers’. Also, the command is relaxed as one matures: an aged woman who has no hope of marriage can discard the overcoats that screen what they are wearing underneath. As seen from this verse, Islamic ethics view modesty not as a virtue for women only, but for men as well. Thus, men must also dress modestly, being careful to wear loose flowing and opaque clothes through which the area between their waist and knees be totally covered. Tight pants or translucent clothing is prohibited. This modesty is reflected upon Muslim male clothing throughout the world, long shirts reaching below the thighs, and loose flowing trousers.

It may still seem, however, that women bear the main brunt of ‘dressing modestly’. When one reflects, however, about the predator and the prey in illegal relations between the sexes; the prey which is hidden escapes being a victim. Besides, another verse says modesty in dress actually identifies one as being a believing woman, a ‘target’ which the devout Muslim, or any decent man, would be motivated to protect rather than abuse.

The way to develop modesty is to think about whether he or she would do the sin they are contemplating in front of their parents. A person with a shred of shame in their heart will not commit any lewd act in front of their parents. So what about doing so in front of God? Is not God much worthier that such acts not be done in His sight? Thus, Islam considers that the modesty of a believer in front of God must be greater than in front of people. This is manifest in the saying of the Prophet when a man asked him about remaining naked in the house while alone. The Prophet responded:

*“God is more deserving than other people of shyness.”*  
(Abu Dawood)

Early Muslims used to say, “Be shy toward God when you are in private in the same way you are shy in front of people when you are in public.” Another one of their sayings is, “Do not be a devoted slave of God in your public behaviour while you are an enemy to Him

in your private affairs." Modesty can therefore be seen as the means by which morals and ethics in society are maintained and pursued. Shyness from people and society may be a reason to be modest, but this modesty will not remain due to the fact that what is immodest one day in a secular society may be totally acceptable in another. Thus, the key to modesty is knowing that God is aware of what you do and shying away from that which He forbids. God only desires what is best for us. So to seek what is best for us is to submit to what He has in mind for us. The only way to properly know what that is, to believe in what he sent down to us through His Prophet, Muhammad, and to embrace the religion (Islam) that His Messenger brought us.

### **Muhammad and Modesty before God**

The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

*"Every religion has its characteristic, and the characteristic of Islam is modesty." (al-Muwatta)*

Modesty, in the sense of shyly protecting oneself with propriety from the lustful or envious gaze, means one takes care about how to express oneself in word and deed. One does not want others to look at one strangely or as if one is blameworthy. It encourages one to be proper in behaviour and thought with other people, and with one's relationship with God. The Prophet once said to his companions:

*"Be bashful before God according to His right to modesty before Him".*

They said: "O Messenger of God, verily we are shy, praise be to God."

He said: "That is not it. Modesty before God according to His right to modesty is that you protect your mind in what it learns; your stomach in what it ingests. And remember death and the tribulations attached to it; and whoever wishes for the Hereafter, leaves the adornments of this life.

So whoever does all that is truly bashful before God according to His Right to modesty".

Modesty and shame apply to every aspect of one's life, and awareness of God's presence helps one to be bashful and seemly in the way we comport ourselves in every activity we are engaged in. It crowns the moral ethics of behaviour and practice, for it inspires him to do all that is beautiful and prevents him from doing all that



is wicked.

It is a shield of chastity for the body and of purity for the soul, as private shame concerning one's wickedness stems from being aware that God is watching.

The Prophet said:

*"Modesty is from the faith, and the faith is in Paradise."*  
(Ahmed)

### **Muhammad and the Wedding Feast**

On the occasion of his marriage in Medina with Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh, the Prophet invited the people to his wedding feast. This was a late morning invitation, and most people simply rose and left after eating, as was the custom. The bridegroom, however, remained sitting and some people, perhaps thinking that this was a signal that they, too, should remain with him, stayed behind after the other guests had left. Out of propriety, the Messenger of God did not like to tell the people to go away, so he got up and left the room with his ward, ibn Abbas. He went as far as the room of Aisha, another of his wives, before returning back to Zaynab's room, expecting the guests to have taken the hint. However, they were still there, sitting in their places, so he turned away once again and went back to Aisha's room, still accompanied by his ward.

The second time they returned the people had left, so the Messenger of God went in. Ibn Abbas was going to follow him, but Muhammad took the dividing curtain and drew it across the doorway, blocking the egress. One of the story's lessons is that a person's home is private and one should be shy of abusing an invitation to it. Moreover, because Muhammad was too nice to ask people to leave, his actions provide an example of how to teach a lesson without being offensive. He used a nonverbal means to show the people they should leave and, once his private space was vacated, he used another nonverbal gesture to drive home the fact that the invitation was over.

### **Moses and Zaphorah**

After waiting for a long time in the queue, being only two females among all the males, someone finally helped them, and they were able to take their flock of sheep and goats home. Their father was old, and they had no brother to do their outside chores. Being one of the most onerous of tasks, drawing water from the well in order to water one's livestock was one performed by men; a lucky day for them to

come home early with the drove freshly watered. The father was surprised about their early return, and when he inquired into the occurrence, his daughters told him that a man who seemed a traveller had helped them.

The father asked one of them to seek the man out and invite him home. Upon returning to the well, the lady approached him shyly.

When she was in earshot, she gave him her father's invitation so that he might recompense him for his help. He kept his gaze low to the ground as he replied to her, saying that he had done it for the sake of God alone, and required no compensation. However, realising that this was God sent help, he accepted the invitation. As she was walking ahead of him, the wind blew her dress, which revealed part of her lower legs, so he asked her to walk behind him and point out the way he should follow when he reached a fork in the foot path.

Once they arrived at the house, the father presented him with a meal and asked where he was from. The man told him that he was a fugitive from Egypt. The daughter who had brought him home whispered to her father: "O Father, hire him, because the best of the workers is one who is strong and trustworthy." He asked her: "How do you know he is strong?" She said: "He lifted the stone lid of the well that cannot be removed except by many together."

He asked her: "How do you know that he is trustworthy?" She said: "He asked me to walk behind him so that he couldn't see me as I walked, and when I conversed with him, he kept his gaze low with shyness and respect." This was Prophet Moses, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, who had run away from Egypt after killing someone by mistake, and the father of the girls was a God fearing man from the tribes of Midian; a man who was sonless, but had these two daughters.

The verse in the Quran that tells us this story stresses upon the manner of her approaching Moses:

*"So one of the two (daughters) came to him walking modestly..." (Quran 28:25)*

Both the way Zaphorah approached Moses and his care about not seeing more of her than was needful at the time describe acute senses of propriety. Neither had a chaperone, nor could people see what they did, yet both conducted themselves with the utmost decorum. This was done out of fear of the One who sees everything. The outcome was that when her father proposed to Moses that he marry one of his daughters, Moses considered them a suitable marriage prospect. He

and his daughters also saw in him all the virtues a man needs as a mate for a woman to consent to his guidance and nurture through life. Moses accepted, and also ten years hire as a shepherd.

### **Muhammad and the Rebuilding of the Kaaba**

The modesty of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was the most prominent trait of his personality. Even from an early age, his sense of shame in an open society of the Arabs prior to Islam was remarkable. In one instance, after the treasures had been stolen from inside, the people were rebuilding the Kaaba with a roof in order to prevent thieves from entering it again. Muhammad, while, still a young man, took part. He went with his uncle, al-Abbas, to carry blocks of stone. His uncle told him to put his sarong around his neck to protect himself from the sharp edges of the heavy rocks.

As he moved to comply with this sensible advice, he was overcome with dizziness, and he collapsed in a dead faint. His eyes gazed fixedly skywards as he lay on his back on the ground, his sarong loosened but still covering his privates. A few moments later, he came round, yelling, "My clothing - my clothing!" Hastily, he wrapped his sarong securely around himself again. Never again in his life would anyone outside the family ever even catch a glimpse of his loins.

The story above was told by one of the Prophet's companions, Jabir bin Abdullah, and shows Mohammad's strong sense of shame and propriety about his body was ingrained, even before prophethood. *He was known to be more modest than a cloistered virgin both before and after receiving revelation from God.*

### **Moses and the Mockers**

Another story about Moses, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, demonstrates that he was as equally bashful and shy about his own body as young Muhammad.

He never appeared in front of anyone without fully covering himself, which led some of his people (the Children of Israel) to disparage him hurtfully. They said, "He covers his body in this way only because of some defect in his skin, either leprosy or scrotal hernia, or he has some other defect." God wished to clear Moses of what they said about him. One day, when Moses had taken off his clothes and put them on a stone while in seclusion, he started taking a bath. When he had finished the bath, he moved towards his clothes in order to take them and put them on again, but the stone took off



with his clothes and fled. Despite his nakedness, Moses picked up his stick and ran after the stone saying, "O stone! Give me my clothes!" But the stone continued to flee until it reached a group of Israelites, where it stopped. That is how they were able to see him naked, finding in his form the best of what God had created.

Thus God cleared him of what they had accused him of. Moses, however, was rather upset. He took his clothes and hastily put them on, and then started hitting the stone with his stick. The Prophet of Islam, the one who narrated the story, swore that the stone still had some traces of the hitting, even today; three, four or five marks. That was what God refers to in His Saying:

*"O you who believe! Be not like those who annoyed Moses, but God proved his innocence about that which they alleged. And he was honourable in God's Sight."  
(Quran 33:69)*

This story shows how shy Moses was about letting his body be seen in public. In fact, only his anger at being deprived of the barrier between his body and the world led him to allow the whole of his body to be seen, the exposure of which was by God's Will in order to clear him of the slander applied by his detractors. Of course, he could not hold that exposure against God, so he took it out on the rock – the means by which his exposure was engineered, and hence his innocence was established from what his slanderers alleged.

### **Muhammad and the Garden Well**

What is respectable to view between people of course varies. How much of a woman's body can be exposed to a husband is different from what she can expose to her brother, which in turn differs from what can be seen by a complete stranger, and vice-versa. This is true concerning what is permissible to see between people of the same sex, too. What a father, brother or son can respectably view of each other is different from what a man outside the family circle is permitted to see, as what a mother, daughter or sister can of each other in contrast to a strange woman. Once, when the Prophet went into a garden, he asked his companion, Abu Musa al-Asharee, to guard its gate. In the garden was a well, and he sat upon its wall dangling his legs inside it. After a while, Abu Bakr came by, wanting to enter the garden. Abu Musa went to tell the Prophet that his father-in-law wanted to share the garden with him, so the Prophet said, "Tell him the good news that the gardens of Paradise await him, and let him in." So Abu Bakr, Aisha's father, went into the garden and sat beside the prophet,

whose sarong was pulled up to just above his knees, and dangled his legs in the well with him. A little later, Umar al-Khattab turned up. He wanted to relax in the garden, too. Again Abu Musa sought the Prophet's permission for him, informing him of another of his father-in-law's presence at the gate. He said, "Tell him the good news that the gardens of Paradise await him, and let him in."

Umar, Hafsa's father, took the free place beside the Prophet, and dangled his legs in the water next to him. Both of these men had the sensitivity to sit next to the prophet, and thus the prophet was able to preserve propriety without having to pull his lower garment over his knees. Some time after that, his son-in-law, Uthman al-Affan, whom his daughter Ruqayyah had married, also sought entrance to the garden. When Abu Musa transmitted the Prophet's message by saying, 'The gardens of Paradise await you after some trials,' and let him in, Uthman observed that the only free spaces on the wall were on one of the three walls that the Prophet and his fathers-in-law were not occupying, which meant he might see more of the Prophet's legs than they. As he hesitated, the Prophet pulled his sarong down over his knees, so Uthman took the place opposite him. Islam teaches that there are some parts of the body that should not be revealed in public, and the closer these parts are to one's privates, the more they are prohibited to reveal. Although all three men who sat with him had close family ties with him, which is why he let his knees be seen, when the Prophet's thighs were threatened by exposure, he took steps to hide them.

### **The Rules of Modesty According to Five Islamic Schools of Law**

This issue is one of those from which numerous bylaws are derived, such as those specifying the parts of one's body that must be covered ('awrah) and the parts of another person's body which it is haram to look at, those relating to the difference between maharim (relatives through lineage or marriage with whom marriage is prohibited) and non-maharim persons in this regard, the difference in this regard due to sameness or difference of sex, the difference between looking and touching and similar rules which are discussed below.

**Looking at One's Own Body:** The schools differ concerning covering of one's 'awrah (private parts) from one's own view and whether it is haram for one to uncover one's 'awrah in privacy.

**The Hanafis and the Hanbalis observe:** In the same way that it is not permissible for a person to expose his 'awrah in the presence of anyone for whom it is not permissible to look at it, it is not permissible



for him to expose it when alone without necessity, as arises at the time of bathing or answering the call of nature. The Malikis and Shafi'is say: It is not unlawful but reprehensible (makruh) to be bare without necessity. The Imamis, state: It is neither haram nor makruh when no one else is looking at.

**Woman and Her Maharim:** The schools differ concerning the parts of the body a woman must cover in the presence of her maharim (except the husband) and Muslim women. In other words, what constitutes the 'awrah of a woman in the presence of Muslim women as well as her maharim, both through lineage and marriage?

The Hanafis and the Shafi'is say: It is wajib for her to cover the area between the navel and the knees in their presence.

**The Malikis and the Hanbalis observe:** She must cover the area between the navel and the knees in front of women, and in the presence of her maharim, her whole body except the head and the arms.

**Most Imamis state:** It is wajib for her to cover her rear and private parts in the presence of women and her maharim; to cover other parts as well is better though not wajib, except where there is a fear of sin.

**Women and 'stranger':** About the extent of the body to be covered by a woman in the presence of a 'stranger' (any male apart from the mahrim), the schools concur that it is wajib for her to cover her whole body except the face and hands (up to the wrists) in accordance with the verse 31 of Surat al-Nur: And reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms (24:31) considering that 'outward adornment' (al-zeenah) implies the face and hands. The word 'al-khimar' (whose plural 'khumur' occurs in the verse) means the veil which covers the head, not the face, and the word 'al-jayb' (whose plural 'juyub' occurs in the verse) means the chest. The women have been commanded to put a covering on their heads and to lower it over their chests. As to verse 59 of Surat 'Ahzab: 'Prophet, say to your wives and daughters and the believing women that they draw their veils close to them..., (33:59) The word 'al-jilbab' (whose plural jalabib occurs in the verse) means a veil covering the head; rather it is a shirt or garment.

**Man's 'Awrah:** The schools differ concerning the parts of man's body which it is haram for others to see and for him to expose. The hanafis and the Hanbalis state: It is wajib for a male to cover the area between the navel and the knees before all except his wife. It is



permissible for others, irrespective of their being men or women maharim or strangers, to look at the rest of his body when there is no fear of sin. The Malikis and the Shafi'is say: There are two different situations for a male with respect to the extent he can expose his body: the first, in the presence of men or those women who are his maharim; the second, in the presence of women who are not his maharim. In the former instance he is only supposed to cover the area between the waist and the knees, while in the latter it is, haram for a woman stranger to look at any part of a man's body. Though the Malikis exclude the face and the arms if looked at without any sensual motive, the Shafi'is do not permit any exception (al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al'arba'ah, vol. mabhath satr al-'awrah).

The Imamis differentiate between the parts of other person body which can be looked at and those parts of one's own body which ought to be covered. They observe: It is wajib for a male to cover only his rear and private parts, though it is wajib for women who are not his maharim to abstain from looking at any part of his body except his head and hands (up to the wrist). To summarize the Imami opinion, it is permissible for a male to view the body of other men and his female maharim except the rear and private parts provided no sensual motive is involved. Similarly, a woman can view the body of other woman and her male maharim excepting the rear and private parts provided no sensual motive is involved.

**Children:** Concerning the body of a child, the Hanbalis say: It is not prohibited to touch or look at the body of a child below seven years. It is not permissible to look at the rear and private parts of a male child between the age of 7 to 9 years, and for 'strangers' the whole body of a female child above the age of seven.

**The Hanafis observe:** No part of the body of a boy of four years and below is prohibited from being looked at. Above this age only his rear and private parts are prohibited from being looked at as long as sexual desire has not awakened in him. If he reaches the age of sexual desire, the rule applicable to adults will be applicable to him with respect to both the sexes.

**The Malikis state:** It is permissible for a woman to look at and touch the body of a boy below the age of eight years, and only look at it till the age of twelve. A boy above the age of twelve is considered similar to an adult. It is permissible for a man to look at and touch the body of girl below two years and eight months, and to look at, though not touch, till she reaches the age of four years. According to the Shafi'is, the rules applicable to an adult apply to an adolescent

male child. But if a child is below that age and is also incapable of describing what he sees, all parts of his body can be looked at. But if he can describe what he sees with a sexual interest, he will be considered similar to an adult. As to a girl below the age of adolescence, only if she has developed sexual appeal will she be considered similar to a full-grown woman, not otherwise, though it will be haram for anyone except someone who looks after her to look at her parts.

**The Imamiyyah observe:** It is wajib to cover one's 'awrah in front of a child of discriminating age, who can describe what he sees, though it is not wajib before the one who is incapable of doing so. That was regarding the covering of the body in the presence of a child, but with respect to looking at a child's 'awrah, al-Shaykh Ja'far in his book *Kashf al-ghita'* states: It is not unwise to abstain from looking at the parts of a child below five years, though it is absolutely impermissible to look at them with a sexual interest. From what I have been able to ascertain from the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt, the age limit for the permissibility of looking at the child's 'awrah is six years, not five.

**Woman's Voice:** All the schools concur that listening to the voice of a woman is not prohibited, except where pleasure is involved or when there is a fear of sin. The (Imami) author of *al-Jawahir*, at the beginning of the chapter on marriage, has mentioned as his proof the continuing practice of Muslims belonging to different periods and regions, the sermons of Fatimah (AS) and her daughters, the innumerable instances of conversations of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams, and also the holding of mourning and wedding ceremonies by women in the presence of men from early times, the conversations between opposite sexes while conducting transactions, as well as the Quranic verse (Be not complaisant (attractive) with your speech, 33:32), in which not speech itself but its complaisant manner has been prohibited.

**The difference Between Looking and Touching:** Every part that is permissible to touch, may be looked at, and every part that is haram to be looked at may not be touched. Here there is a general consent among the schools because touching involves greater pleasure than looking, and no leggiest of any school claims concomitance between the permissibility of looking and the permissibility of touching. Hence though it is permissible for a man to look at a female stranger's face or hands, it is not permissible for him to touch her except in an emergency such as for medical treatment or for rescuing her from drowning. The following tradition has been narrated from al-'Imam

al-Sadiq (AS) (Al-'Imam al-Sadiq [A] was asked:) "Can a man shake hands with a woman who is not his mahrim?" The Imam (A) replied: "No, unless there is cloth in between.." The Hanafis exclude shaking hands with an old woman from prohibition. In the book of Ibn 'Abidin it is stated: It is not permissible to touch the hands or face of a young woman even with the assurance of absence of any sexual motive. As to an old woman who has no sexual appeal, there is nothing wrong in shaking hands with her with the assurance of absence of a sexual motive. The Imamis and the Hanafis allow touching the body mahrim provided no sexual motive or pleasure is involved.

The Shafi'is prohibit touching even those parts of a mahram's body which it is permissible to look at. It is even not permissible in their opinion for a person to touch the belly or back of his mother, pinch her ankles or beet or kiss her face. Similarly, it is not permissible for a person to ask his daughter or sister to press his legs.

The Difference Between Exposing and Looking at: The Imamis observe: There is no concomitance between the permissibility of exposing the body and the permissibility of looking at it. Hence it is permissible in their opinion for a man to expose the whole of his body except his rear and private parts, while it is not permissible for a non-mahram woman to look at it. I have not found anyone expressing this opinion in the numerous books of the four Sunni schools.

**Old Women:** God Almighty says in the Quran: "And such women as are past childbearing and have no hope of marriage, it is no sin for them if they put off their clothes, so be it that they flaunt no ornament; but to abstain is better for them, and God is All-hearing, All-knowing." (24:60) This noble verse indicates that it is permissible for old women who have no desire for marriage due to their old age "to expose their face and a part of their hair and arms, and such other parts which aged women usually keep exposed. The traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) also point to the same, on condition that such exposure is not with the intent of display. Rather, it is to allow them to come out for fulfilling their needs, though it is better for them to keep themselves covered."

This permission is with the assumption that it is not permissible to expose any of the above-mentioned parts of the body if there is fear of its leading to something haram, because a woman, regardless of her elderly age, may remain sexually attractive. Therefore, if there is any likelihood of that kind, the rule applicable to her will be the rule applicable to young women.



Islam is lenient with respect to elderly women and strict regarding young women. But in practice we observe the opposite of what the Quran has ordered. We see shamelessness and display of charms among some young women, while elderly women keep themselves covered and are reserved. So where God is strict, they are lenient, and where He is lenient, they are strict.

### **Women's Empowerment and Islam**

Men have always assumed some superiority over women and have sought to dominate the world and relegate women to the background. Cultures and civilization have sought to confer legitimacy to this male superiority and have accordingly developed myths and conventions that tend to perpetuate them. Through time women have consistently, if grudgingly, borne the brunt of this male domination. Such inequities have been a feature of all human societies, from antiquity to our contemporary times.

Religions, especially revealed ones, often intervene to redress such intrinsic imbalance in human relations. Christianity, at least in the form we know it today, rather unfortunately, did not help matters, for by blaming a woman (Eve) as the source of the downfall of man, it in fact compounded this inequity, and unwittingly gave men a new impetus to relegate women to the background. It accordingly denied women even their independent identity, having to dissolve in to that of their husbands on marriage.

Islam, however, dealt with the issue decisively, but ignorance and enduring male arrogance have always connived to deny women what Islam has given them.

This was further compounded by the incorporation of the Muslim world in to the contemporary world, shaped as it had been by Western liberalism which is rooted in a rebellion against a Christian God. With both Christianity and Islam marginalised in our contemporary world, the job of intervention and the restoration of equity in this gender relationship has now been taken over by the United Nation and chains of NGO's.

The idea of women empowerment is a concept created by the UN, championed by UNIFEM and supported by the various NGO's. Is Empowerment of women the answer to the problem? Can the UN, supported by the host of, admittedly good intentioned agencies, redress the imbalance and restore equity in gender relations? Does Islam offer a better hope and if it does, will our contemporary Muslims allow it? These are some of the questions that this paper seeks to address.

***But first some caution :*** Foremost, the relation between men and women, which this paper is obliged to touch, is too often clouded by emotion. This may have to do with the nature of the relationship between men and women which is essentially emotive. For it is difficult to explain rationally why we love the people we love or why we marry the spouses we marry.

Emotions, we hardly need say, cloud vision, obstruct rationality and make it difficult to fathom issues. Second, Muslims scholars have remained decades (some would say centuries) behind the very societies they are supposed to guide. Many of them appear to be oblivious of the age in which they live and seem unwilling to exert themselves as their predecessors had done in developing rulings (fatawi) which takes into account the dynamics of society and address their immediate context.

This not only stultifies the Shariah, especially in the eyes of the uninformed, but, it also holds the Muslim community hostage to the imbecility and ineptitude of those who are supposed to lead it. Many followers are consequently left to wallow in increasing confusion as to the position of the Shari'a on many issues, especially the issue of women.

Third, the prevailing intellectual decadence of the Muslim community has over several decades forged a timid mind which had been keen on conformity and weary of creativity. Thus the average Muslim mind has lost its analytical capacity and has become mechanical in its thinking, content with whatever is passed to it as knowledge.

The mind has been particularly intimidated into conformity by a clergy who have masked their incompetence by curtailing the kind of questions that can be raised and by raising the qualification of the jurist who could answer these questions to such humanly unattainable heights, that we are left to helplessly and endlessly wait for some imaginary mujtahid to emerge from only God knows where.

Thus the average Muslim mind fears raising questions and finds it easier to evade rather than face issues, leaving many topical questions unanswered.

Far from deterring us, these problems ought to in fact motivate us the more, they are raised here mainly to help explain some of the questions to be raised and put in context some of the liberties the author may wish to take. But it seems necessary to first appreciate the features and contours of our contemporary world, the terrain within which we shall be applying what ever ideas we may come up with.

## **Our Contemporary World**

Our contemporary world is nothing but the extension and perfection of a culture which took its roots from the European renaissance which itself started in 15th century Europe. This is a culture which rebelled against God as symbolised by the Christian Churches and sought to create a civilization which is man-centred and where the pursuit of pleasure becomes the overriding objective in life. The Renaissance Movement thought that man's craving for pleasure and material progress has been blocked or at least delayed by the idea of a god and sought, therefore, to wean off man from god and release him from all inhibitions so that man can, for once, be free to explore his full potentials uninhibited. This new man, also called the 'renaissance man' or the 'universal man', limitless in his capabilities to acquire knowledge and in his capabilities for development, was deemed to be the centre, nay the master of the universe. The vision of the new man was to be found in the motto of the renaissance, captured in the famous remark of one of its chief prophets, Leon Battista Alberti (d. 1472) that "a man can do all things if he will". This was to form the foundations of renaissance humanism and the modern world it gave birth to.

By the 19th century, renaissance had acquired sufficient momentum and its new man, enough audacity to declare God dead. Soon books were being written about the history of God and Karl Marx was reported to have said that God never created man, but it was man who created God, in other words, God was nothing but a figment of man's imagination. By the middle of this century, however, some of the promises of the renaissance were still to be realised. The illusive search for happiness has only produced sadness and misery as evidenced by the dramatic rise of suicide cases, mental illnesses and violent crimes. The El Dorado promised by communism remained a mirage until the whole edifice collapsed like the proverbial house of cards. The glitter of science and technology had by the second half of this century began to fade in the face of the destruction it had wrought not only on the physical environment but also on man's social environment. Social and economic inequality, weakening of the family unit and the crisis of values, were to unleash series of unprecedented consequences that continue to suffocate the life of the modern man. In the words of a prominent Western scholar, "the modern era had put its enthusiastic hopes in the mastery of nature and society. For more than two centuries man believed that the continued perfecting of rationality would have as a result the unceasing growth of his



power and, consequently, an increase in well-being and happiness, freedom and equality among people. Now, not only has he experienced the limits of his power, but he has discovered that the rational and technological civilization creates new problems and that it endangers the balance between man and nature, individual and society. The deception", he added, "is all the more painful because the progressivist had exalted people's desires and confidence."

Such was the tragic end of modernism. In the eloquent words of Erich Fromm, "in the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead, in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead." Our contemporary world is a post modern world in which the variety of the problems created by modernism are being addressed. Admittedly many of these problems have not been sufficiently diagnosed or sufficiently comprehended. Even in the physical environment, which lends itself to easy enquiry, when we thought we have learnt enough of the global warming and ozone layer, the problems of EL-NINO is surfacing out of the blue.

The emergence of a new brand of tuberculosis that defies all known remedies, may well be the tip of an iceberg. The Social environment which is certainly more complex, is even more difficult to fathom. The crisis of values triggered by renaissance and championed by modernism, the confusion of roles and the consequent identity crisis and the rising domestic violence and the breakdown of the family, are only aspects of a complex situation in a constant state of flux. Though Europe and the rest of the Western world provided the main theatre for this drama, the Muslims world in particular and the non-western world in general, have increasingly been drawn and incorporated in to this contemporary world, initially through imperialism, subsequently through education and recently, but, perhaps more effectively, through satellite communication.

The relationship between men and women, which is the concern of this paper, has been dramatically changed and shaped by the social crisis which has become the trademark of our contemporary world. This is what makes it necessary to first appreciate the features and contours of this contemporary world before delving in to this issue.

### **The Problem**

The plight of women in the middle ages, when Europe was in the full grips of Christianity, is fairly explicable, for the Bible seem to have placed the entire blame for the descent of man at the door of the woman. In the popular literature of the middle ages, the woman

was likened to the Satan who worked day and night for the destruction of the man. The Church in Europe remained stuck with its misogyny up through the 18th century when it presided over the famous debate in France on whether a woman had a soul or not. What appeared inexplicable was the continuation of these prejudices well after the renaissance and the weakening of the grip of the Church and the liberalisation of thoughts and ideas.

It was even more surprising that a whole century after the French revolution of 1789, with its promise for people's rights and democracy, women in the West remain suppressed. Writing in 1866, George Eliot observed, "A woman can hardly ever choose... she is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach." One can feel the sense of frustration in this remark. What is news, however, is not the remark, but the fact that George Eliot is a pseudonym of an English woman novelist Mary Ann Evans (1819-80), who apparently dared not use her proper feminine name in a society so dominated by men that works like hers could only be taken seriously if they were to come from men. She had six years earlier written that, "the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history", in her book, 'The Mill on the Floss', where she "portrayed rural Victorian society, particularly its intellectual hypocrisy".

This situation seemed to have continued unabated well in to the second half of this century and seem to have given impetus to what is commonly referred to as feminism. The lives and works of three prominent Western feminists summarises the situation. Virginia Woolf, (1882-1941) a British novelist, philosopher and critic took the themes of the tensions for combining marriage and career in her book *The Voyage Out* and pursued the issue of economic independence for women in her book *The Years* 1928. That she tragically ended her life through suicide by drowning herself may not be unconnected with the tensions of her times. Gloria Steinem, (1943- ) an American journalist and liberal feminist emerged as a leading figure in American new women's movement in the late 1960's, co-founded the women's action alliance in 1970 and also co-founded the *Ms Magazine*. She was one of those who gave feminism a concrete shape, betraying the cumulative oppression and frustration of women behind the thin veneer, or as we may prefer in Nigeria, behind the smoke screen of freedom and equality. Her perception of feminism is captured in her oft quoted statement "We are becoming the men we wanted to marry" and another attributed to her, "a woman without a man is like a fish

without a bicycle". Yet another woman in this class is Juliet Mitchell, a British psychoanalyst and writer. She took feminism further first by her article titled *The Longest Revolution*, in 1966 and later her books titled, *Women's Estate* (1971) and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). She seemed to have been the first to combine socialism and feminism and to use Marxist theory to explain some of the reasons behind women oppression in the West. Juliet Mitchell has had tremendous influence on feminist thinking and one could see her hands in to a lot of the women struggles against oppression in the West.

The influences of these and other feminists writers can easily be detected in the current debate on gender equity. We must not make the mistake that many pious Muslims make of dismissing feminism. One does not have to like feminism to appreciate the situational problems that brought it about. Dismissing it, as many Muslims are apt to doing, is ignoring the circumstances, which is neither fair nor panacea. If nothing else, in feminism we have a lesson to learn and that is: if we are not prepared to allow equity, then we should be prepared to live with anarchy. And one should quickly add, single parent family, which had been a phenomenon restricted to non-Muslim communities is slowly creeping in to the Muslim community. This is only one form of anarchy. Lesbianism is another. And one could go on.

In the Muslim world the literature on this subject, especially authored by women, may not be as rich, but that is not to say the oppression was any less. Here in pre-Jihad Hausaland, presently Northern States of Nigeria, reading the works of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, particularly his *Nurul-al-Bab* one can see a lot parallel with the misogyny of the Victorian days in Europe, in spite of the equitable and humane provisions made by the Shariah. The presence of the Shariah, undoubtedly, made the difference. Even as the provisions of the Shariah did not stop the oppression, they made Shehu Usman's case easier, for all he needed do was to enlighten the society and draw attentions to these provisions. Of course, even then it was far from easy, not only because of the opposition he faced from nor other than scholars themselves, but also because no sooner had the tempo of the jihad began to wane and ignorance started to creep, the situation reverted, gradually, back to the pre-Jihad periods. Today the situation of Muslim women, in terms of rights and equity is very much close to the pre-Sokoto Jihad period. It may at first sound like an exaggeration until we visit the Area Courts in the North and perhaps the customary courts in the South. Or better still until we allow the women to tell their tales. Many Muslim women will today find the offer of the UN and the host



of NGO's quite attractive, not so much because Islam has not given her something better, but rather because they are either not sufficiently aware or the men, better still, Muslim scholars, are not quite ready to concede to them what Islam has given them. But coming from the West, such offers of emancipation are, rather naturally, rooted in the rebellion of the renaissance, imbued with a consuming hedonism and embellished in a rhetoric that is designed, like a bait, to capture a prey.

The social context of the offer itself presents some problems for Muslims, for our contemporary modern world, having made the search for pleasure a major, some would say, the major, objective in life, has predicated gender relationship on sheer lust. Modelling, fashion and advertising agencies are up and about exciting our base desires and making lust a major consideration in our decisions in life including the important institution of marriage.

The institution of marriage itself has lost its sacredness in the West, it is, in fact, fast losing its meaning, so such offers tend not only to ignore Muslim sensibility, invert Muslim scale of priority, but may actually find no place to accommodate religion, having completely dispensed with it a long time ago. It is worth recalling that the globalisation of gender equity started quite recently, with the United Nation declaring 1975 as the International Women's Year. Sequel to this the decade 1976-1985, was declared the Decade for Women, during which international agencies as well as some governments focused attention on what came to be popularly referred to as 'women issues'. This decade was crowned by the Nairobi conference on women in 1985 in which forward-looking strategies for women to be implemented by the year 2000, were adopted. Then came the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 which seemed to focus on the independence and autonomy of women even with a family context.

Indeed several conferences, conventions and activities of a host of international agencies took place during the 1985-1994 period to prepare the grounds and minds for the famous Beijing Conference in 1995. It was in Beijing more than anywhere the issue of empowerment was focused and made such an indispensable condition for world progress and development.

These two decades, during which the UN championed the globalisation of the women issues, happened to be the two decades during which the UN became increasingly a tool in the hands of a few Western nations who were using it to achieve their selfish political goals. The role of the UN in the Palestinian Crisis, its role in the Gulf

War and its performance, or lack of it, in Bosnia, left many in no doubt that someone was using the UN to subvert Islam and Muslim body politic. This left many Muslims unsure about the role of the UN in respect of the women issues.

### ***Is Empowerment the Solution?***

The word 'empowerment', seems to be of very recent etymology, it became widely used and popularised by the 'Draft Platform of Action' of the Beijing conference of 1995. Though the etymology appear recent, the morphology of the word betrays a deep root in the psyche of a civilization which had been born out of conflict and remains ridden with conflict. For empowerment suggests the giving of power to someone who has been deprived of it, someone who will remain vulnerable without that power, someone whose hope for justice and fairness seem to hinge on the possession of that power. This power, which is held to be the solution to all the problems, has to be wrested from some despot, presumably, in this case, man. This power also holds a promise for a panacea. All these features underscore the origin of this word in Western conflict embedded psyche. This conflict which began with renaissance and continue to date, appears to be one thread which runs through Western social and intellectual development. First it was a conflict between man and God, then between the state and Church, then science and nature, then Proletariat and the bourgeoisie, then women and man and young and old.

There is therefore the fear that empowerment conceived in this context may only aggravate this perceived conflict rather than solve it. In the same way that the empowerment of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie led to the crumbling of the communist edifice leaving hardly any pieces to pick. The difference being that while we can happily do without communism, one is not sure if the same can be said of the institution of the family. Empowerment, at least in the way it has been conceived in Beijing, may only aggravate the war of the sexes which had been triggered earlier. Empowerment, if and when it succeeds, may be the cost of complementarity of the sexes which again is essential for the health and function of the human family. One is not sure from where empowerment will drive its power of implementation. So far it looks like it will be the UN and its Member states, which undoubtedly have immense coercive powers, but can coercive power alone impose a code of behaviour between such intimate partners as husband and wives, brothers and daughters, ect.? Granted the UN and its members states will be wise enough to appreciate the folly, will they then appeal to the minds and hearts

of their citizens? But does the UN and its member states and even the NGO's have a real place in people's heart? To put it bluntly does UN and others in the business of empowerment believe that people will abandon what their religions stipulate in favour of some resolution from Beijing? The UN has immense power, they can send troops anywhere in the world and these troops can wreck all manners of havoc, but unfortunately for the UN or any of its members state, it has no heavens or hell to reward or punish people after death.

### ***What has Islam to offer?***

It must first be appreciated that Islam is a religion of balance; balance between the mundane and the spiritual; balance between work and worship; balance between self-preservation and selflessness. This balance or 'ADL, as the Quran calls it, is the very essence of the human creation, in which the body and spirit are united and balanced and on whose shoulders consequently lies the responsibility of the maintenance of the balance in nature, both societal balance as well as the eco-system. Islam as a religion seeks first to maintain that balance in man and then guides man to maintain that balance in society and the eco-system which plays host to the human society. The disruption of this balance is what Islam calls injustice, DHULM. A man who violates the balance between his spirit and his body is called unjust in the Quran. Similarly the violation of the balance in human society or the eco-system is seen as injustice.

This special position of the mother had been preceded by verses of the Quran and supplemented by other statements of the Prophet. In the words of the Quran, "And we have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), 'Show gratitude to Me and thy parents: to Me is thy final Goal.'" (Q.31:14) It is not difficult, therefore to understand why the prophet said that, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers." (Muslim) So, as a child, as a wife and as a mother, Islam has given a woman such special and distinguished position that no other culture or civilization has given her and that ought to be the envy of men. But let us still go a little further and see in what other ways has Islam empowered women, so that we can be intelligible to our contemporaries who live in this age of empowerment.



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# A MODERN APPROACH TO ISLAM



Baqir Sattar

