



**ISLAMIC MORAL EDUCATION:  
AN INTRODUCTION**

**BY**

**DR. BASHEER M. O. HAJALTOM.**

**UMM AL-QURA UNIVERSITY**



In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful







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## FOREWORD

In the recent past a great deal of research has been conducted in the area of moral education. This shows that there is a widespread concern about falling moral standards and an awareness of the significance of moral education in the overall educational process. The Center for Research in Education and Psychology, Umm-Al-Qura University has the honor to publish Dr. Hajaltom's book which is a useful contribution to this field of education.

Since Almighty, through Islam, provided a righteous, comprehensive way of life, Islamic society offers justice and stability which in turn brings about deeper social integration and a more balanced life for the individual. In Islamic society, unlike western pluralistic societies, the question of morally educated individual meeting diverse social conditions hindering him from behaving morally, does not arise. Rather various aspects of Islamic society being mutually consistent and reinforcing facilitate moral behavior. This book by Dr. Hajaltom is a valuable contribution and meets the challenge of presenting moral education from Islamic perspective.

The Center expresses its gratitude to Dr. Rashid al-Rajih al-Sharif, Chancellor, Umm Al-Qura University, for approving the publication of this book and for appreciating and encouraging our continuing project plan to publish such material. Dr. Mahmoud Asadallah, Dean, College of Education, also deserves our thanks for encouraging such works.

May God accept their efforts and bless them with the best of rewards.

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## PREFACE

The need for writing books about different aspects of Islam in English has been felt particularly by those who have come into contact with Muslims who do not speak Arabic, and non-Muslims who would like to have some knowledge of Islam. This book is an attempt to meet part of this need. It is about moral education in Islam. An attempt has been made in the first three chapters to show that for Islamic moral education to be effective three emphases are necessary. The first emphasis is that the Islamic society is characterized by justice, stability and harmony. It has been shown that the Shari'a lays down the foundations of justice and stability by planning social, political and economic institutions, thus bringing about lasting harmony in society and a more balanced life for the individual. The second emphasis is the necessity and the desirability of having moral homogeneity. It has been argued, in the second chapter, that although Islamic morality is derived from the Shari'a, which is binding on all Muslims, intention, reason and moral understanding are indispensable. The third emphasis is the importance of the practical discipline. In addition to the application of rational criteria which enable the individual to judge morally, *al-'ibādāt* contribute by disciplining the individual's feelings into a moral framework.

Then an attempt has been made to define the Islamic concept of moral education; it is not only achieved through the whole process of education, but it also combines both procedures and content. The study goes



on to show the contribution of the family, the school and society at large to moral education — the direct and indirect contribution of the school through the curriculum taken in its widest possible meaning and the contribution of society through the important principle of *bil-ma'rūf wan-nahy 'a al-munkar*.

Now in the Islamic world all institutions — political, social, economic and educational are not exactly corresponding to the Islamic frame of reference. And judging by the past history of Islam, a person may not hesitate to say that the existing institutions are far from being Islamic. They are either influenced by Western or Communist ideals. This is largely because Muslims either misunderstand Islam or are ignorant and do not know much about it. So to formulate a theoretical model of Islamic moral education is of immense importance, not only to remove misunderstanding and ignorance, but also to show that this model can be effectively applied when the opportunity arises.

It might be said that if one draws a theoretical model of Islamic moral education, one will not be able to deal with major problems that arise for moral education and for society. I am not here overlooking any problems at all. What I am doing is simply this. I am calling for the application of Shari'a first to establish a society in which justice, stability and harmony prevail. Second, to maintain Islamic morality through a genuine theoretical understanding accompanied by practical discipline; then to suggest how to achieve Islamic moral education through the whole process of education, in family, school and society at large. When the opportunity arises for such a society to emerge and for Islamic moral education to be achieved in it, any problem which may arise will be dealt with after its nature and scope have been fully realized.

It might also be said that to speak ideally about Islamic moral education is not of much relevance to contemporary Islamic society. My reply will be that what I am saying here can support and improve what is correctly applied in actual situations, but more important it can help to put



right what has already gone wrong in the field of moral education.

I am aware of the fact that the problem for Western moral education is how to deal with a very different situation. I am here analysing and criticizing this different situation so that what is good and acceptable to Shari'a may be incorporated in my planning, and what is bad or inadequate could be rejected. Plato, in his *Republic*, has drawn a model of his ideal state where he makes comparisons and contrasts with different states, it is mainly to support his position and strengthen his argument.







In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

## CHAPTER ONE<sup>(1)</sup>

### THE NATURE OF ISLAMIC SOCIETY

Moral education is a serious task which rests not only with the home and the school but also with society at large. This is particularly so in the Islamic society where there is a unity which sets a lasting harmony between the home, the school and society at large. The outcome of this harmony is that the moral values of the individual are to be the same as those of his society. To educate the individual in the Islamic values without educating his society in the same values makes it very difficult, almost impossible, for the individual to adhere to the values in which he is educated. For this reason Islam has been greatly concerned that the society should be built in such a way as to allow the individual to behave morally without any difficulties or opposition. But for society to clear the ground for the individual to fit in and to behave morally without any opposition, there must be justice and stability in it. Justice and stability usually depend on the nature of the moral social, political and economic institutions of society.

It is only logical, therefore, for Islam to lay down the foundation of a just and stable society where there is a lasting harmony between the individual and society and where the freedom and rights of the individual and of society are equally respected without contradiction. Let us now see very briefly, what is the nature of Islamic society, that is, what kind of society we visualize in which moral education takes place and in which the morally educated individual will be able to play his part effectively without being frustrated by adverse moral and social conditions.



When we speak about the nature of any society, it is of vital importance to know its beliefs as to the nature and purpose of the universe and man's status in it. This has not been overlooked by Islam. Islam has clearly defined the nature of the universe and man's place in it, and this acts as the basis for the treatment of all matters in society; thus no question is dealt with on a merely individual basis, and no problem is treated in isolation from all other problems<sup>(2)</sup>.

Islam requires man to live in a friendly environment and within the potentialities of a friendly universe where every part is in harmony with the other parts. This is so because all creation has a common origin and a common purpose for it is the expression of one and the same Divine Will

Not only that but man is raised to a high position of honour. God asked the angels to bow to Adam and they did. The Qur'ān says: (17:70)

«We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favour, above a great part of Our creation».

Then God taught Adam things that the angels did not know. The Qur'ān asserts: (2:31)

«And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the Angels, and said: 'Tell Me the nature of these if you know.' They said: 'Glory to You; of knowledge we have none, save what You have taught us».

The fact that man was taught by God shows that he has the Divine gift of learning and thinking. Man employs these qualities to enable him to carry out his duties and responsibilities in a manner that suits his status in the universe. What is the nature of these duties and responsibilities and what is the status of man in this universe?

The Qur'ān says: (33:72)

«We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains: but they refused to undertake it, being



afraid thereof: But man undertook it: he was indeed unjust and foolish».

Thus man has undertaken a great responsibility. He was given the power of choice between good and evil, through his will. This raises him to a place above the angels. He is God's vicegerent or God's deputy on earth. The perfect vicegerent of God is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of God. This is because he was chosen by God to make use of the things around him for his own benefit and in this lies the test to man and his trial. In the hereafter, man will be judged by God and this covers both individual and social behaviour.

But God does not leave man alone with this great burden, without giving him help and guidance. God has always helped man by providing him with vast mental and spiritual faculties, whose nature permits the viability of true harmony between spiritual and economic values, between the individual and society and between this life and the life to come. As to guidance, that is evident from what was already revealed to the Prophets who endeavoured to guide the people. In Islam the Shari'a or Islamic law was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad, who had been sent to guide all mankind towards the path of God.

The main sources of the Shari'a are the Qur'an and the Sunna. Other sources like *ijma'* or the consensus of opinion, and *ijtihad* or individual reasoning, should all be subordinated to the authority of the Qur'an and the Sunna and should not be placed above them. This is so because unless our life system is based on Divinely given values, people will be left victims, and at the mercy of their human whims and fallible ideas. Thus the Shari'a forms the unifying force in the Islamic society, and permeates into every fibre of the activities of life. It is not my intention, here, to go into the details of the Shari'a. It is sufficient and indeed more relevant to my purpose to draw attention to the fact that the social, economic, political and educational systems stem from the Shari'a. This is vital because these systems give shape and content to the Islamic society and affect and channel moral education in it.



As far as the social, economic and political systems are concerned, Islam has provided us with general rules and principles, leaving the application in detail of most of these to the process of time and to the emergence of individual problems. When social, economic and political values are called for by the individual out of inner conviction, they will be assured and the rules and principles in connection with them will be readily applied. That is why Islam is greatly concerned with giving the individual proper education so that this inner lucidity is developed and preserved.

Thus the implementation of true brotherhood among Muslims is the greatest social ideal of Islam. The Qur'an says: (49:10).

«The believers are but a single brotherhood».

The Prophet says:

«You will see the faithful in their having mercy for one another and in their love for one another and in their kindness towards one another like the body; when one member of it ails, the entire body (ails), one part calling out the other with sleeplessness and fever»<sup>(4)</sup>.

Brotherhood in Islam, which was wisely and firmly established by the Prophet, promoted close ties between the *Anṣar* and the *Muhajirin*. The enthusiasm and earnestness with which men and women of that time strengthened these ties were a manifestation of an unparalleled social cohesion. The Qur'an describes this by saying: (59:9)

«But those (*Anṣār*) who before, had homes (in Medina) and had adopted the Faith, — show their affection to such as came to them for refuge (*Muhajirin*), and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to (*Muhajirin*), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot).

Islam preserves these ties among Muslims by considering<sup>(5)</sup> defamation and using offensive nicknames that suggest some defect as inconsis-



tent with the serious purpose which Muslims should have in life. At the same time most kinds of suspicion are baseless and may cause injustice to innocent people. Spying and backbiting are mischievous. Muslims are asked to refrain from hurting people's feelings when they are both present and absent. By doing this, Islam creates a sort of social sensitivity among the Muslims in order to be able to preserve the ties of full brotherhood. Muslim brotherhood is so essential in the Islamic society that on it was based the Prophet's speech at his last pilgrimage (*khutbat-alwada'*).

Islam also establishes the principle of equality in the spiritual as well as the social aspects. Many examples can be given to show how equality was rooted firmly in the conscience of Muslims. Omar, the second Caliph, was famous for applying the principle of equality among Muslims. He himself enjoyed no superiority above the ordinary and it was he who said, «*Abū-bakr sayyidu-nā wa-'tūqa Bilal sayyida-nā*»<sup>(6)</sup> which literally means «*Abū Bakr our master, and he freed (Bilal), our master*».

Islam proclaims that there is no virtue except in good deeds and no nobility except in piety. The Qur'ān says: (49:13).

«O mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most virtuous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)».

When the Qur'ān denies that an individual can be intrinsically superior to another, it follows that there can be no race and no class which are superior by reason of their origin or their colour.

So Islam, by establishing the principle of human equality, paves the way for achieving the fullest integration of society. Thus in the Islamic society there will be no frustration, no anxiety and no social unrest resulting from the absence of human equality. In our modern times a great deal of immoral behaviour comes as a result of outstanding human inequality.

As to the Islamic economic system, it is based on the fundamental



principle that the property possessed by an individual is not completely his, although he may suffer great pains to have it. It is neither the possession of society because it is a trust from God, who is the only true owner of everything.

The Qur'an says: (57:7)

«Believe in God and His messenger; and spend out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs (*Mustakhlafin*)».

The word *mustakhlafin* is the plural of *mustakhlaf* which means steward, and so the property which is in the hands of men belongs to God, and that men are its stewards, not its masters. All that is seemingly ours is not our own.

The individual is allowed to own, provided that his individual possession is by legal means. Individual possession is in accordance with human nature; it ensures an equality between effort and recompense. But the right of the owner is limited by the good of the society. Islam says that money must not circulate among a number of individuals who share it between them without allowing others to have a part in it. The Qur'an says: (59:7)

«.....in order that it may not be passed around between the wealthy among you».

According to Islam it is undesirable to have money concentrated in the hands of a few individuals because an excess of wealth on one side and lack of it on the other creates corruption and moral degradation in all its forms. There will arise personal hatreds and individual jealousies by those who feel deprived.

The payment of the poor-tax, *az-zakat*, which is a duty laid on property, is meant to diminish the concentration of money in the hands of a few individuals and to satisfy the needs of the poor. In addition to this Islam believes that wealth belongs by right to the needy members of society. The Qur'an says: (70:24-5)

«And of their wealth a portion belongs by right to the beggar and destitute».



Islam forbids monopolies of the necessities of life as a method of gain. Usury is another method to which Islam is strongly opposed<sup>(7)</sup>. Usury destroys fellow-feeling and sympathy in society, and destroys mutual help which is one of the fundamental principles of the Islamic society. Islam is greatly concerned that the economic system must not be in any way the cause of the decline of moral and spiritual powers.

In the Islamic society religion is closely linked with politics because it is the source of the political principles which govern the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The political system thus stands on two pillars. The first is that Islam is a universal religion, and the second is that Islam embodies the principle of equality of mankind in origin and nature. It follows from this that there is justice on the part of the rulers. The Qur'an says: (4: 61)

«And when you judge between the people, you must do so with justice».

It is justice which is enjoyed by all individuals, without discrimination arising from descent, wealth or influence. It is an impartial justice unlike that form of justice which the white man imposes on the natives of South Africa and Rhodesia.

There is also consultation between the rulers and the ruled. The Qur'an says: (3:159)

«Consult them in affairs (of moment)».

The Prophet used to consult the Muslims in worldly affairs. Many examples from the first period of Islam can be given. At the battle of Badr, for instance, he listened to their opinion and encamped near the well of Badr instead of the place he had chosen at the beginning<sup>(8)</sup>

There is also obedience on the part of those who are ruled. The Qur'an says: (4:59)

«O you who have believed obey God, and obey the Messenger of God and those who hold authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves refer it to God and His Messenger.



The relation between the ruler and the ruled is God's law; and so obedience to those who hold authority is derived from obedience to God and His Messenger. Any ruler who departs from God's law is not entitled to obedience.

Islamic political theory stems from the belief that God is present at every moment alike with the rulers and the ruled, watching over them. Absence of this belief is the cause of corruption and dishonesty associated with rulers and those who hold authority in our modern times. But more important it is the cause of the anxiety of the people, anxiety which arises from their political, economic and social systems. The outcome of this is what we are now witnessing: political unrest, economic chaos, social disintegration and immoral behaviour.

From what I have said above, we can conclude that the Shari'a determines the nature of the universe and the position of man in it; and it is the integrating factor in the Islamic society. The main objective of the Islamic society is to worship God and the means for this is to pave the way for the Sharia to plan all walks of life, social, economic, political and educational. It is because of this planning that the Islamic society can be stable, well-integrated, and can develop in the right direction which brings about a higher degree of social integration and a more balanced life for the individual; and it is here where we can rightly say that the morally educated individual does not meet with diverse social conditions which hinder him from behaving morally. The Islamic society is therefore a serious society because the individual and society can live together in harmony, without any mutual opposition. But more important is that it is a moral society because both the individual and society are to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. For all this, I believe, it is a stable society where moral education which is based on objective morality can function as an effective means for producing good human beings. Let us see, in the next chapters, how Islamic morality can achieve this.



## Notes

(1) A great deal of what is written in this chapter about the social, the economic and the political systems of Islam is taken from *al-'Adalah Al-Ijtimàyyah fil Islam* by Sayyed Qutb.

(2) Qutb, S. *al-'Adalah*

(3) Qur'ān, (2: 30).

(4) Al-Bukhāri.

(5) Qur'ān (49: 11-12).

(6) Ibn Sa'd: *Tabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 165.

(7) Qur'ān (2:275-6)

(8) Ibn Hisham: *Sirāt an-Nabi*, Part 1.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ISLAMIC MORALITY

To the Muslims morality means a law which controls and regulates the entire life of man, and therefore Islamic moral judgments take a wide variety of forms covering all walks of life. Not only social but also economic and political life is bound up in the closest way to religion. The Prophet, in a Hadith which is unanimously held to be authentic, says.<sup>(1)</sup>

«It is but for the perfecting of morals that I have been sent to you».

Here the word 'morals' *al-akhlāq* stands for the entire behaviour of the Muslims in all walks of life. It is not confined to certain virtues to be followed and a few vices to be avoided. The essence of the moral judgements of the religion of Islam is the perfecting of morals in the wide sense of the word. Here are some examples of judgements which are concerned with worship, family and social relationships, political and economic affairs:

«Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents».(Qur'ān 17:23).

We notice that in this verse and other verses of the Qur'ān which speak about parents, to be kind to them is closely connected with the worship of God.

Consider the following:

«And render to the kindred their due rights as (also) to those



in want, and to the wayfarer, and squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. (Qur'añ 17:26).

It is reported that the Prophet spoke out the following words:<sup>(2)</sup>

«By God, he is not a Muslim, by God he is not a believer, by God he is devoid of the wealth of faith. Who ? The Companions inquired. The ill—fated man, the Prophet replied, 'from whose mischief his neighbours are not secure.'».

«Anyone who engages in malicious faultfinding or pries into the secrets of others and gives publicity to them shall not be admitted into Paradise»<sup>(3)</sup>.

The Qur'añ reports that Luqman advised his son to do the following:

«O my son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong; and bear with patient constancy whatever betide you, for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs» (Qur'añ 31:17)

The following verse is a clear warning to Muslims Rulers who refuse to apply the rules of Shari'a to political, social and economic affairs. It runs thus: (Qur'an 5: 48).

«... And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what God has revealed, they are (no better than) wrongdoers».

Consider this: (Qur'añ 42:38)

«Those who listen to their Lord, and establish regular prayer, who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenance.

The Qur'añ refers to consultation between those who are entitled to a voice, e.g. in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household; in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested; and in State affairs, as between rulers and the ruled.

In the economic affairs the Qur'añ says: (9:34-35)

«And there are those who hoard gold and silver and spend it



not in the way of God: announce to them a most grievous penalty. On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks and their backs — this is (treasure) which you hoarded for yourselves. Taste, then, the (treasure) you hoarded».

This judgement calls for circulation and distribution of wealth so that it may not be in the hands of a few rich people.

The above judgements are but a few examples of Islamic moral judgements. The authority of these judgements is in their being revealed; they are either stated in the Qur'ān or found in the Tradition of the Prophet. They are thus believed to be moral truths and so bound with moral duty and obligation.

So far, it may be understood by those who do not believe in authoritarian morality that people in the true Islamic society are to behave in accordance with the rules of the Shari'a. That is, there is a specific set of rules and all they have to do is to follow certain virtues and avoid certain vices. But this way of understanding the Shari'a reduces it to a simple and naive process. Before I proceed to defend Islamic morality, we need, therefore, to elucidate its main features. I want to do this by discussing the views of John Wilson, Director of the Farmington Trust Unit at Oxford for 'research in moral education'. Mr Wilson does not believe in authoritarian morality because he thinks it produces a naive picture of «moral education». He raises certain points against the morality which is drawn from a particular moral code, and takes as a foundation of his «moral education» a liberal concept of morality. He describes the morality which he rejects as follows:

«It appears at least to have the merits of simplicity. We know which actions count as «moral» and «immoral», i.e., which actions keep the rules and which break the rules: all we have to do is to find out how to make people perform actions of the first type and avoid actions of the second type»<sup>(4)</sup>.

According to him it is just a programme to make people do certain virtues



and avoid certain vices. He criticizes it as lacking in certain important points.

The first point is this:

«The essential point to understand here is that such concepts as «telling the truth», «keep a promise», «stealing», «being kind», etc., involve more than just a set of noises or physical movements. They involve also the notions of *intention*, of *understanding*, and *knowing what you are doing*<sup>(5)</sup>.

He means to say that people, unlike animals, speak meaningfully and act intentionally. To act morally, therefore, a person must know what he is doing, and must understand the point behind what he is doing, and must do it freely — that is, it must really be he who does it and not some forms of compulsion. He is here mainly warning us not to be conditioned to do certain things.

The second point he is making is that moral education is tied to the notion of rationality, and goes on to explain what is meant by «rationality»:

«... this implies that (actions) must be done for a (moral) *reason* (not just as a result of cause). But this means more than that the agent must in principle be able to say why he did it»<sup>(5)</sup>

What he is saying here is that if our actions are mere reactions and our beliefs expressed by words which are merely parroted or accepted solely on authority, then we are definitely not acting and thinking as moral agents because they will not be the result of our facing facts and acting for a moral reason.

The third point is this:

«We should want to assess people, not only by the kinds of reasons that motivate them, but by their general attitudes, *feelings* and dispositions: that is, not only by what they *do* (even if we include the reasons they have for doing it), but also by what they *feel*»<sup>(7)</sup>.

He is stressing here the important point that people must have the right sort of disposition and the right state of mind, in addition to the kinds of



reasons that motivate them. He believes that it is from a person's disposition or a state of mind that his reasons, motives and ultimately his behaviour will flow.

What Mr. Wilson has said so far is very clearly illustrated by Aristotle who says,

«The *doer* must be in a certain frame of mind when he does them. Three conditions are involved.(1)The agent must act in full consciousness of what he is doing.(2)He must will his action, and will it for its own sake.(3)The act must proceed from a fixed and unchangeable disposition»<sup>(8)</sup>.

This summarizes what Mr. Wilson has been saying. A truly 'morally educated' man first must act freely – voluntarily and responsibly. Secondly, he must provide moral reasons for his actions. Thirdly, and most important of all, he must have the right sort of disposition or feeling.

The main point in stating Mr. Wilson's conditions for moral behaviour is not only to draw attention to what he rightly emphasizes, but also to show that although the authority of Islamic morality is by revelation from God, these conditions are involved in any moral action performed by a true Muslim, for they are inseparable from Islamic morality. This I shall now try to show.

It may seem very difficult to combine an existence of a Divine Will, which not only orders all things, but which acts directly upon men and addresses the thoughtful aspects of them, with the assertion of a free agency in man and of the liberty of intellect. But a close look at some verses from the Qur'ān will soon resolve this difficulty. The Qur'ān says, (17:15)

« whosoever follows the right course, it is only for the good of his own soul that he does so; and whosoever follows the wrong course does so to his own loss. No responsible soul shall bear another's responsibility».



Again it asserts (4:110)

«And whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility».

The Muslim, within the limited sphere of his existence, is absolute master of his conduct. He is responsible for his actions. He is also to see for himself the consequences of his past actions and to judge the possibilities of his future. This comes in the Qur'ān as follows: (19:93-95)

«Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (God) Most Gracious as a servant. He does take an account of them (all), exactly. And every one of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgement».

And it will be said to him (17:14)

«Read your (own) record: sufficient is your soul this Day to make an account against you».

The belief that man will be judged solely by his work, on the Day of Judgement, drives the Muslim to practise self-denial and makes him responsible for his behaviour in this world.

Islam does not impose totally remote duties on man and ask him to do them. Revelation speaks of duties which can be accepted by man, that is, they are compatible with his nature. Otherwise it is illogical and unjust to ask man to do something he cannot do, for example, to forbid him to exercise sex. The Qur'ān says, (2:386)

«On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear».

God wants us to appreciate that we are responsible for our actions and that He does not force us to bear any burden which is beyond our strength. He wants us also to understand that His Will is not arbitrary; it is an educative Will for what has come to us through revelation is really within the capacity of human understanding. He wants us to accept His commands and at the same time He asks us to use our reason and develop a sense of moral understanding.

The Qur'ān is full of instances where the Muslims are urged to develop moral understanding and furnish arguments in support of moral judge-



ments. Take for example: (Qur'ān 2:219).

«They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit. They ask you how much they are to spend; say: what is beyond your needs. Thus does God make clear to you His signs in order that you may *think (consider)*».

And (2: 179)

«In the Law of retribution there is (saving of) life for you, O you men of *understanding*».

And (6:119)

«And He (God) has explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you — except under compulsion of necessity. But many (men) do mislead the way by their appetites unchecked by *knowledge*. Your Lord knows best those who transgress».

And (2: 184)

«And it is better for you that you fast if you only *knew*».

And (2:241-242)

«For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous. Thus does God make clear His signs to you in order that you may *understand*».

The above verses are just a few examples of the many verses which are there to initiate the Muslims into thinking in order to see and appreciate the wisdom behind the rules of Shari'a. To do this is essential for the following reasons:

First, according to Muslims the ultimate source of the Shari'a is God; but it is people who are subject to its control and regulations. It is human beings who are going to apply it to their affairs in life. But they cannot do that successfully unless they are aware of the point behind the moral judgements of the Shari'a. Muslims are urged by God to provide



reasons and arguments in order to be able to distinguish between good and bad actions and to perceive their remoter consequences.

Secondly, the complexity of the issues involved in life creates many cases which can be brought under moral judgements. But as there is no one rule for every case, people are bound to consider many different cases under some general rules. But if people are not fully conscious of the wisdom behind the laws of the Shari'a, it becomes very difficult for them to deal with practical cases that arise in actual life, and for which there is no specific rule.

Thirdly, the first period of Islam witnessed several examples of genuine moral understanding. An example is when Omar, the second Caliph, did not cut the hands of the two young men who stole the camel of Ibn-Hatib ibn-Abi Balt'a, because he believed that it was a pressing need which forced them to steal.

He said,

«Had it not been for the fact that you exploit them and make them hungry to the extent that if anyone of them ate what God forbids (*harām*) it would be allowable (*halal*) for them to do so, I would have cut their hands»<sup>(9)</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Omar's judgement shows full awareness of the philosophy of Shari'a — the philosophy that makes the ruler responsible for looking after the poor and for providing them with the essentials of life<sup>(10)</sup>. This is a clear indication that reason is given scope not only to understand the point behind Divine Legislation but also, in the absence of Qur'anic and Prophetic texts, to legislate within the framework of Shari'a. Consider this Hadith of Mu'adh Ibn Jabal who was appointed by the Prophet as a judge in Yeman. On the eve of his departure to assume his office there, the Prophet asked him «According to what shall you judge»? He replied: «According to the Book of God». «And if you do not find therein»? «According to the Sunna of the Prophet of God». And if you do not find therein?». «Then I will exert myself to form my own judgement. And thereupon the Prophet said: «Praise be to God who has guided the messenger of His Prophet to that which pleases His Prophet»<sup>(11)</sup>



The fact that the Prophet was pleased to hear what Mu'adh had to say shows how Islam exalts reason and understanding and emphasizes that without them the Shari'a will not be fully appreciated.

So far I have tried to show that Islamic morality is based on revelation which urges us to consider highly intention, reason and moral understanding. I want now to consider what Mr. Wilson takes to be the most important condition, namely the right state of mind or the right sort of disposition from which the behaviour flows.

Al-Ghazali says:

«Disposition or character (al-khulq) is an established state of the soul from which actions flow easily and smoothly»<sup>(12)</sup>.

To him disposition is not the action itself, it is neither the ability to perform good or bad actions, nor the ability to distinguish between good and bad actions. But it is an internal state which helps the soul to produce actions with commitment. He believes that a man becomes generous not because he displays generosity, for he may do this in order to show off or have something in return, but because he performs it in the way of a generous man who, through established habits, has developed an unchangeable disposition from which always generosity flows. His disposition will remain fixed as long as it finds proper conditions to sustain it.

Of all proper conditions, belief in God is the most important. This is because it is the primary obligation, without it all we do is in vain. The Qur'an says, (18:105)

«They are those who deny the Signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter): vain will be their works, nor shall We, on the Day of Judgement, give them any weight».

It is also because belief in God in the Qur'an is always, associated with doing good (*aṣ-ṣāliḥāt*) and acts as a source of it. Consider the following verses from the Qur'an



«On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness will, (God) most Gra'cious bestow love» (19:96)

And (103:2-3)

«Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds... ».

And (45:21)

«What! do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal to those who believe and do righteous deeds...?».

And (34:37)

«It is not your wealth nor your sons, that will bring you nearer to Us in degree: but only those who believe and work righteousness — those are the ones for whom there is a multiplied reward».

Strong belief in God leads to truly moral actions and that is why a Muslim must always be in a state of strengthening his belief. A true knowledge of God along with its admonitions and warnings assures the Muslim that for every good action he performs there is palpable reward and for every bad action he performs there is punishment awaiting him in the Hereafter.

This urges the Muslim to manifest the true spirit of sincerity and self-denial, since the ultimate reward he expects comes only from God. Moreover, his reasons, motives and conscience could reach a stage of development in which a feeling of remorse overtakes him in the doing of unrighteous deeds and he becomes keen to perform good ones. This is the stage in which the behaviour of the Muslim can be said to be moral because it flows from a well established disposition. In the next chapter, we shall see how the teachings of Islam contribute to the development of good dispositions in Muslims and to the inculcation of a healthy temper of mind.

It remains to answer two important questions raised by Mr. Wilson in connection with the type of morality which is drawn from a certain moral code. These questions are:<sup>(13)</sup>



- (1) «Would the process be delicate or flexible enough to cover the moral contingencies that the individual meets with?»<sup>(1)</sup>.  
(2) «Would the process be reversible?»<sup>(2)</sup>

My answers to these questions will be, of course, in relation to Islamic morality only. As to the first question although moral judgements of Islam are made with the object of maintaining discipline and uniformity, so necessary in society, they are by no means of inflexible character. They are framed in such a way as to allow for exceptions. This is because.

«God wishes to make things easier for you for man is created weak». (Qur'ān 4:28).

All that the Qur'ān and the Sunna prohibited becomes permissible whenever a pressing necessity arises. This has been reiterated throughout the Qur'ān. Some examples:

«He has only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name has been invoked besides that of God. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is not sin for him. (2: 173)

And (5:4)

«Who so is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin: (for him) surely God is forgiving, merciful».

It is a generally accepted rule among jurists that «necessity renders the forbidden permissible». Intoxicants, for instance, are allowed for the thirsty when water is not available, and for the sick for treatment. Pork is allowed for the hungry who cannot get anything else to eat.

The Qur'ān also says, (2:185)

«... So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month (Ramadan) should spend it in fasting. But if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.



God intends every facility for, He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period».

See also (Qur'ān 31:14-15)

And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the Command), ` show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is (your final) goal. But if they strive to make you join in whorship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration).

Exceptions are allowed for but not by individuals who might be influenced by their own interests. They are all based on what the Qur'ān has clearly stated.

The second question deals with behaviour originally thought good might, as a result of individual reflection or social changes, seem to be undesirable. As to this question, in the true Islamic society, we do not need to reverse the process or change our rules. Rules of the Sharī'a are unchangeable. But this does not mean, as may be said, that they are rigid.

It may be argued that the complexity of the practical issues involved in society, does not allow for fixed rules or standards to be employed for the attainment of a certain end, because rules and standards need perpetual reconstruction and reinterpretation in the light of experience. But rules which deal with the regulation of human behaviour are not similar to those of science and mathematics which are narrow and constant. Rules used in connection with human behaviour, with the complexity that exists in society, should be formulated in a different way from those of science and mathematics.

Some rules do not change with changing circumstances because they deal with the regulation of human impulses and inclinations which are the same everywhere and at all times. Our conception of stealing, dishonesty,



envy, greed and telling lies, as being bad, does not change. But there are social, economic and political principles which are formulated in such a way as to allow for exceptions and modifications in order to meet the complexity of the future.

But perhaps owing to our mental limitation, and to the small amount of limited prediction that we are able to make, I think all of us believe that it is impossible for any human being to put forward such flexible rules and standards — rules which can furnish details to meet new situations arising in the future, all within the general framework of the system from which they are drawn. It is my belief that such rules can only be provided by God. We have them in the true Islamic society and they are there to serve two purposes. First, they guide the society towards a definite goal, showing clearly what ought to be done. Secondly, these broad principles allow the individual to have sufficient personal perception because they are intentionally set to initiate him into what enables him to deal with novel situations.

Such rules, will, I believe, resolve the difficulties which have faced Mr. Wilson and others. In the first place these rules are not formulated by mentally limited human beings, and so they are made with exact prediction of the future, despite the complexity of issues. Secondly, exceptions are accounted for but not by individuals who might follow their own interests. Thirdly, in the case of novel situations, they can be dealt with in the most progressive manner, within the spirit of the main sources of Islam.

It might be objected by those who live in secular democratic societies that religion imposes an authority over the people and does not allow them to choose for themselves. But those who say this over-estimate the ability and intelligence of the vast majority who live in democratic societies. It is very few individuals in these societies who impose, indirectly of course, an influence over the masses. It is done through the mass media and different sources of legislation. The masses just follow thinking that they are free to choose for themselves! This is the danger of

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democracy if it is taken to be an alternative to a religious or a «desirable way of life.

Having outlined, very briefly, the main features of Islamic morality, let us now, in the remaining part of this chapter, see how Islamic morality can be justified by human reason and experience.

### **Justification of Islamic Moral Judgements**

The moral judgements of Islam are not suggestions, proposals or requests put forward to Muslims. They are commands which the Muslims are supposed to execute. This implies that God has already decided that people shall do this or that. It may be argued that if we are allowed to justify and the justification fails to convince us, this contradicts the judgements which we are commanded to follow. This is because giving us the opportunity to justify the moral judgement implies checking it by human judgement which may or may not approve it, and then we shall not be properly commanded and so we shall not be obliged to obey the command. God, without contradiction, wants us surely to do things yet at the same time prefers our doing them not out of blind obedience but with obedience enlightened by insight. He wants our insight-supported obedience because this works out more effectively and surely it is directed towards an educative purpose. Moreover, if we mean by justification explanation of the purpose underlying the moral judgements this will help remove contradiction. If the explanation is not understood or fails to convince us, this may be due to our lack of proper knowledge and sufficient evidence.

No ethical theory all by itself can provide us with a satisfactory basis for the justification of our moral behaviour. The reason for this is that moral philosophers have started their enquiry as far as ethics is concerned from the wrong place. The question what is the criterion of right and wrong for purposes of our conduct, in fact, arises much later. The first thing to do, I believe, is to determine man's status in this universe. Man, according to Islam, is God's deputy or vicegerent. God has appointed him to make use of the things around him for his benefit. Then God in the second life will examine him and this examination will cover man's individual and social,



behaviour. It follows, then, that man is not entirely free to determine his own behaviour, the standards of right and wrong are determined by God.

Having said this, we can rightly turn to the second problem with which ethics deals and that is, what is right and wrong in matters of conduct? Here there are the questions of moral principles and how they are justified, and there are the questions of applying moral rules to particular cases, including the questions of the limitations of and possible exceptions to the general rules. We have seen how Islam provides moral principles and accounts for their exceptions. And, indeed, there is room for moral understanding and for the justification of these moral principles because after all it is a mistake to say that Islam brings completely remote duties to man and asks him to understand and apply them. By enforcing some duties and adding new ones, Islam should have influence on ethics simply because it has included the truth provided by ethical philosophers, in their attempt to justify moral principles, and this can be shown.

Happiness has a place in Islam, but it is consistent with the law laid down by God. There are different types of happiness — material, mental and spiritual. These are not contradictory to one another but mutually coherent and harmonious. As they are clearly defined by the Shari'a they are objective and can be measured, unlike Mill's happiness and Hume's general feeling for humanity<sup>(14)</sup>.

Kant's Categorical Imperative can be interpreted as God's Law. God has determined its form and it is entitled to obedience solely in virtue of being His law. Indeed, moral goodness is nothing other than absolute and willing submission to the law of God. Kant's Categorical Imperative, interpreted in this way, can be based on rational as well as genuine utilitarian grounds<sup>(15)</sup>.

No doubt, human reason is capable, within certain limits, of distinguishing right from wrong, and every individual has been endowed with it in some degree. Similarly the knowledge of good and evil is, to some extent, intuitive because human conscience instinctively feels uneasy in the presence of evil. But all these are not sufficient by themselves to be



taken as an authoritative and reliable source of our knowledge of moral values, because our knowledge will remain imperfect, biased, limited to certain fields, distorted and contradictory, and there will be a variety of interpretations<sup>(16)</sup>. I believe that Islam can provide us with the commonly agreed and objectively accepted standard which has been eluding us.

But more important is that Islam provides the influence as far as moral discipline is concerned. It provides objectivity, integration, and the drive and power to sustain them. This is connected to ethics in the sense that disciplinary problems of education, training and persuasion must be there to enable the individual to know and to induce him to do what is right. The individual thus has to be intellectually and practically disciplined. In other words, the individual has to apply reason to ethics together with an attempt to develop a character which responds to his judgement of right and wrong. In the next chapter, I shall try to show how the teachings of Islam contribute to the development of such a character.



## Notes

- (1) Mālik, Muwattā: Husn al- Khulq.  
Also Mishkat al-Masabih: Vol. 2, Kitabul al-Adab.
- (2) Muslim.
- (3) Al-Bukhari.
- (4) Wilson, John and others: *Introduction to Moral Education*, p.45.
- (5) Ibid., p.45.
- (6) Ibid., p.51.
- (7) Ibid., p.60.
- (8) Nicomachean Ethics., II, IV. (J.A.K. Thomson's translation), p.47.
- (9) Abu Bakr Ibn Abd ar-Razzaq al-Sanani: *Al-Musannaf: Arabic*, Vol. 10, p.230-239. See also *Muwattā Malik: sharah al Zurqani*, Book 4, p.38.
- (10) Qutb, Muhammad. *manhaj at-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah*, p.104-105.
- (11) Ibn Sa'd: *Kitab at-Tabaqat*, Vol.3, part 2, p.121.
- (12) Ghazali: *Ihya*, Vol.3, p.46.
- (13) *op. cit.*, p.54.
- (14) Abul āla Maududi: *Ethical Viewpoint of Islam*, p.29.
- (15) *Ibid.*, p.29.
- (16) *Ibid.*, p.19.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF AL-'IBĀDĀT OR THE PRACTICAL DUTIES OF ISLAM TO MORAL EDUCATION

In the previous chapter I have dealt with Islamic morality, its main features and how it can be justified. This can be considered as a main aspect of intellectual discipline which helps the individual to apply reason to ethics and so enables him to find a convincing justification for moral rules. It also helps the individual to find a solution for a moral situation in which there is no direct rule. But, in addition to this, and perhaps more important, is the practical discipline which helps the individual to develop a character which responds to his judgement of right and wrong. In this chapter, I shall try to assess the contribution of al-'ibadat or the practical duties of Islam to the development of such a character.

#### Importance of Practical Discipline

To say that morality is concerned with what there are reasons for doing or not doing is only the start of the story. The most important part of the story is to stress the importance of practical discipline. Aristotle says:

«It is not, however, a popular line to take, most men preferring theory to practice under the impression that arguing about morals proves them to be philosophers, and that in this way they will turn out to be fine characters.»<sup>(1)</sup>

Aristotle believes that for the acquisition of virtue, theoretical knowledge is of little value; it is the repeated performance of moral actions that produces virtue. He says that those who prefer theory to practice are like those who listen to what the doctor says but they carry out none of his orders and so their bodies will never respond to treatment.



Aristotle was not alone in stressing the importance of moral practice. In modern times, Niblet, the editor of "Moral Education in a Changing Society" says:

«Learning really to act by the spirit of the rules instead of merely learning to act by rule involves insight and intelligence at all stages of growth from infancy upwards. And insight requires practice in feeling into situations; merely learning *about* literature, or religion, or science or morality will provide no nourishment for moral living in this or any other day»<sup>(2)</sup>.

It is true that moral understanding and insight cannot be in a vacuum; they develop when there is involvement in actual situations. These situations may allow the individual to preserve his morals and apply what he already has, but they may also help him to acquire new morals.

John Wilson also has something to say here:

«(Moral arguments) fail (to be effective) because we too often treat them either as arguments about fact and logic, or as excuses to express our own emotions. We fail to create contexts, and to follow general principles, designed to elucidate just what it is that we feel and why: and to elucidate how we see other people, ourselves, and the world in general.... And it is one of the marks of such failure that we often try to pretend that morality is something other than it is, something which is easier to do»<sup>(3)</sup>.

John Wilson's rules of procedure in connection with morality are that we must be logical, know the facts, use words correctly, be aware of our own or other people's feelings, desires and interests, and count other people as our equals. He calls for contexts which enable us to obey these rules of procedure. According to him such contexts are a kind of test to enable us to understand each other, learn from each other, and live in harmony with each other. Although to him the question of what contexts actually enable us best to obey these rules of procedure is an open one, I believe



that the mere recognition of such contexts shows the importance of practical involvement in morality. Without this practical involvement, practical discipline will be of very little or no value at all. Contact with people in different situations helps us to follow general principles, particularly if we believe that morality is a regulative system and that the chief function of a moral principle is to regulate conduct. This is because the human being, unlike the animal, is not only subject to control but also, in suitable circumstances, able to control other human beings and himself, provided he is able to say what it is that controls his conduct.

Al-Ghazali, trying to stress the importance of efforts and exercising discipline in morality, says:

«For example, if anyone wishes to acquire for his mind the virtue of generosity (*al-jūd*), he should take pains to engage in some action that is generous, such as giving away some particular thing that he possesses. And he should not cease to be interested in this giving until he has fully entered into the spirit of it and has actually become generous»<sup>(4)</sup>.

To justify this he says:

«Understand that the purpose of putting forth effort and of exercising discipline in commendable actions is the perfection of the soul (*takmil an-nafs*), to sanctify it and to purify it by the correction of its dispositions...  
....If the soul is perfected and purified it will improve the deeds of the body, so that they too will become commendable. And conversely, if the impressions that are given to the soul by the body are wholesome they will put the soul in a favourable state, and the dispositions will tend to become agreeable. Therefore the way to purify the soul is to make habitual those actions which are completely pure, having in view that when this has become a custom by means of frequent repetition, then the state that has been produced in the soul will become constant. Thus the desired



actions will have become necessary, for the new state of the soul will demand them. They will have become a natural habit, and the good deed that was difficult at first will prove to be a lightsome task»<sup>(5)</sup>.

Al-Ghazali undoubtedly believes that *al-ibadat* are outstanding forms of commendable actions. He calls, therefore, for putting forth genuine effort and exercising discipline in them. He says:

«The longer we live and the more we practise *alibādāt*, reward (from God) becomes more generous, the soul becomes purer and morals stronger and more stable; for the purpose of *al-ibadāt* is to wield an influence over the heart and this influence is manifest whenever *al-ibadāt* are frequently and continuously exercised»<sup>(6)</sup>.

Al-Ghazali therefore calls for the engagement in actions that are good, for this is the way to purify the soul and correct the dispositions. Of all good actions and exercised disciplines *al-ibadat* are the most important because they influence the heart and strengthen belief in God. This consequently forms good dispositions from which good behaviour smoothly flows.

What has been said above supports the argument that it does not follow if a person knows moral rules and theories which justify them that he will act rightly. That is true but first it depends on the meaning we give to ethical statements and how we are going to justify them. If we take them to have no cognitive meaning and that they just express our approval or disapproval, then perhaps it will be difficult to say that right conduct is formed by a knowledge of moral rules and theories which justify them. But if they have cognitive meaning and their justification can go deep into social and religious foundations, then we can say that right conduct can be guided by moral rules and theories which justify them. Moral rules and theories which justify them do not shape right conduct but they can sharpen our sensitivity to moral problems. Right conduct is brought about by a decision formed by the individual himself. Theoretical knowledge, intellectual or moral, is a necessary condition of forming this decision.



Religion, I believe, provides the sufficient condition. That is why knowledge in Socrates' statement «virtue is knowledge» is best interpreted in my view to mean not only theoretical knowledge, but the ability to form a moral decision and carry it out. Islam helps us develop this practical ability to do what is right and avoid what is bad by creating the right sort of disposition. If this disposition is well established, then right actions can easily flow from it.

As I have said in the first part of the second chapter, strong belief in God acts as a source of this disposition; and for this healthy temper of mind to remain fixed and unchangeable, the Muslim must always be working very hard in order to strengthen his belief in God. In Islam *al-ibādāt* or different forms of worshipping God are the foundation of the practical discipline which contributes effectively to moral development. *Al-ibādāt* have a double function. For the good Muslim they are a true manifestation of his strong belief in God and an effective means of preserving the right sort of disposition; and at the same time they help the Muslim to strengthen his belief in God. So when I speak about practical discipline in the Islamic society, I am mainly referring to *al-ibādāt*. These are prayer, *az-zakāt*, or the poor tax, fasting and *Hajj* or pilgrimage to Makkah. They are the pillars of Islam and so they are obligatory on all Muslims. But worship or *ibada* in Islam has a wider meaning which includes everything a Muslim says or does provided what he says or does is preceded by a clear intention of worshipping God. God says: (51:56)

«I have only created *Jinn* and men, that they worship me».

In fact everything we do is *ibadā* in the sense that it is an expression of the serious purpose behind creation, which is to do what pleases God. Prayer, the poor tax or *az-zakāt*, fasting and *Hajj* are only outstanding and defined aspects of *ibadā*.

When a Muslim performs these practical duties enthusiastically and sincerely, the society benefits a great deal from that, for he will be able to perform good actions that flow from the internal state of his soul. In any society envy, telling lies, back-biting, being cruel to parents, etc., are



mischievous and can destroy social life and the ties of human brotherhood; yet those who exercise them are not usually punished by law. It is here that Islam, through its practical duties, can strengthen in the individual a healthy temper of mind that refrains from indulging in such harmful deeds. Moreover, the Arabs, because of the teachings of Islam, underwent a change of values, from killing their young daughters, for instance, they have come to place their highest value on Allah hope, love and trust in life, despite the fact that the economic state remained the same. This change comprises a re-orientation of inner disposition and attitude, it is not a matter only of verbal assent or theoretical opinion but of felt valuation, of deeply held conviction.

The process of moral growth is the process of ordering and checking the many responses, standards, attitudes and values which may come into play at any one moment, but more important it also involves a reinforcement of higher values and weakening of lower ones. The practical duties of Islam cultivate an element of valuation which is intended to represent a disposition towards moral behaviour. This process of valuation is mainly a disposition towards action and it involves feeling, emotion and effort. A man's real values reveal themselves in the persistence, force and time he allows to his various modes of behaviour. Let us now see the nature of the practical duties of Islam and how they can educate the individual's emotions, initiate him into effort and persistence and guide the time he allows to his various forms of behaviour. In other words, how the practical duties of Islam contribute to develop a character which responds to the individual's judgement of right and wrong.

### **Prayer or «aṣ-Ṣalat»**

Prayer is the most important form of worshipping God. It shows very clearly the overlordship, power and sovereignty of God and man's total helplessness. It is the first practical *ibādā* that God has required from His servants to perform. That is why all the Prophets established it and asked



their peoples to perform it. Consider what the Qur'an says about Abraham: (21:72-73).

«And We bestowed on him. (Abraham) Isaac and as an additional gift, Jacob, and We made righteous men of every one (of them). And We made leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds and to establish regular prayers and to practise regular charity; and they constantly worshipped Us (and Us only)».

The Prophet Muhammad had been asked to establish prayer before his message began and that prayer was a preparation for the weighty message that he was going to receive. The Qur'an says: (73:2-5)

«Stand (for prayer) by night — but not all night — half of it, or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones; soon shall We send down to you a weighty message.

In Islam prayer occupies an outstanding place and so it is prescribed five times a day. These prayers are at stated times and God warns those who are lazy and neglectful of their prayers. The Qur'an says: (4:103)

«Prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times».

And it says: (107:4-5)

«Woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers».

Prayer is the first daily work of the Muslim and it is also his last work of the day. There is a prayer in the morning before sunrise (*Fajr*); another just after mid-day (*Zuhr*); a third in the afternoon (*Asr*); a fourth at sunset (*Maghrib*) and a fifth before going to bed (*Ishá*).

### **Congregational Prayer or «Salat al-Jamah»**

The obligatory prayers can be performed at home, in the mosque or anywhere else and it is highly preferable to be in congregation, *Jamā'h*. The Qur'an says: (4:102).



«When you (O Apostle) are with them, standing to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you, taking their arms with them. When they finish their prostration, let them take their position in the rear and let the other party who have not yet prayed come up and let them pray with you... ».

The above verse shows that the importance attached to congregational prayer is so great that even when facing the enemy in the battlefield, Muslims are required to perform their prayer in congregation. The Prophet says:

«I swear by Him, in whose Hands is my soul, I had almost determined that I should order that wood is to be collected, then I should order a man to lead the prayer, then I should go to the people who have absented themselves (from congregational prayer) and burn their houses on them»<sup>(7)</sup>.

Congregational prayer has an important educational purpose. It has, in addition to the development of the spiritual side of the Muslims, some social and moral objectives. The gathering of the people who live in the same vicinity five times daily in the mosque facilitates the growth of healthy social relations; not only to strengthen social relations but also to diminish social differences.

In the congregational prayer, Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder, before God, the rich along with the poor, the white man along with his black brother, and a rich man standing in a back row puts his head, when prostrating himself to God, at the feet of a poor man standing in a front row. Thus congregational prayers enable the Muslims to put into practice the theoretical teachings of equality and human brotherhood for which Islam calls.

In the congregational prayers there is a wide opportunity for the Muslims to discuss matters that concern them, to advise each other and to enjoin together what is good and forbid together what is evil.



Moreover, whenever we respond to the call for the congregational prayers, we are really actively giving response to the call of duty and conscience because between these congregational prayers the Muslims will be spiritually and morally saturated to the extent that they will hurry up to do good, *as-salihah*. This will really give them life in this world for they will be living not merely existing like animals, and it will give them life in the hereafter, where they will live eternally in Paradise. This is exactly the life which God wants for us because He says: (8:24)

«O you who believe, give your response to God and His Apostle when He calls you to that which will give you life».

#### « At-tahajjud » Prayer or Prayer in the Later Part of the Night

Apart from the five obligatory prayers of the day, there are some others known as *sunna* or *nafl* prayers. These prayers are optional and they precede or follow the obligatory prayers. Those who perform them regularly intend to strengthen their belief in God, show gratitude to Him and endeavour to be better moral beings. Of all *nafl* prayers, *at-tahajjud* is the most important. From the Qur'ān and the practice of the Prophet, it is evident that *at-tahajjud* occupies the most vital place among all non-obligatory prayers. The Qur'ān says: (17: 79).

And (73:6)

«Truly the rising by night is the most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the word (of prayer and praise)».

To rise from bed in the later part of the night and get prepared for prayer is extremely difficult; but as it is a suitable time for contemplation and a powerful means of controlling the soul, Muslims are urged to do it. The Prophet himself was advised by God to offer *at-tahajjud*, more or less, during the later half of the night. The Qur'ān says: (73 :2 - 5).



«Stand (for prayer) by night, but not all night- half of it, or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur'ān in slow measured rhythmic tones. Soon shall We send down to you a weighty message.

The aim was to impress upon the Prophet the fact that *at-tahajjud* would afford an excellent preparation for the task that lay ahead of him. It had the capacity to impart the rare strength needed for the successful accomplishment of his mission. The Muslim also has a message to give to his people and to the world and so he, too, needs this type of preparation through *at-tahajjud*. The Prophet says:

«Hold fast to the *tahajjud* for such has been the practice of the devoted servants of God before you. It will take you nearer to Him as it did in their case, and serve as an atonement for your sins and guard you against evil»<sup>(8)</sup>.

It was during *at-tahajjud* that the feet of the Prophet and his companions used to swell up because of long stretches of standing while reciting the Qur'ān. But as these teachings are not meant for the Prophet and his companions alone, but for all Muslims and at all times, the habit of *at-tahajjud* needs particularly to be cultivated diligently for its supreme importance among all optional prayers.

To forsake sleep in the later part of the night, to stand for a long time reciting long verses from the Qur'ān and pondering over their deep meaning, all this is an effective contribution to moral development. *At-tahajjud* is characteristically beneficial in the development of moral stamina, as a source of good behaviour and a guard against evil.

The dignified and respectful presence before God, the disciplined falling in line of the Muslims like slaves, and the carrying out by them of fixed movements in an orderly and systematic manner, everyday, provide them



with continuous practical discipline. These movements are not an end in themselves because the Qur'ān says: (2:177).

«It is not righteous that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness — to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practise regular charity; to fulfil the covenant which you have made, and to be firm and patient in hardship and adversity and throughout all period of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing».

If the above description applies to righteous people, it is only because their sincere prayer reflects a genuine understanding of the Qur'ān and a true application of its moral teachings. The Qur'ān says: (7:170).

«As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular praying—never shall We suffer the reward of the righteous to perish».

When God describes the true believers, the description starts and ends by mentioning prayer. Consider this: (23:1-11).

«The believers must (eventually) win through — those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vain talk; who are active in deeds of charity; who abstain from sex except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or the captives whom their right hands possess for (in their case) they are free from blame. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors; those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants, and who strictly **guard** their



prayers — those will be the heirs who will inherit Paradise; they will dwell therein (for ever)».

Sincere prayer is the source of the above moral qualities, but also getting used to such moral behaviour is a help to keep regular prayer. Prayer, therefore, because it encompasses the work of the day, should forbid shameful and immoral deeds.

The Qur'ān says: (29:45)

«Recite what is sent of the Book by revelation to you, and establish prayer; for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds».

The fact that prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds was realised long ago before Islam, by *madyan* people.

The Qur'ān says: (11:45)

«They said: O Shùayb, does your prayer command you that we leave off the worship which our fathers practised, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property».

They did not want religion to interfere with their social and economic affairs and so they did not wish to believe in prayer which would restrain them from their unjust deeds.

The prayer that contributes to moral growth is the prayer which exerts its influence over all the departments of life and transform the entire existence of a person into one of virtue and good behaviour. It is the prayer that is performed with an active awareness of the fact that God is present everywhere and sees everything. If, however, it is argued that this is a difficult thing to do always, the mere effort to keep it permanently as a goal to be striven at with sincerity and determination, will be a most splendid achievement and a most effective contribution to moral growth.



## «Az-Zakāt» or the Poor Tax and Alms

*Az-Zakāt* is an obligatory tax distinct from voluntary charity, taken from the rich and given to the poor. In the Qur'ān *az-zakāt* is often mentioned simultaneously with prayer or *aṣ-ṣalāt*. It is payable at the rate of 2 1/2% on all savings over which a year has passed. This means that it is over and above a man's living expenses and must be also over and above any debt or obligation.

*Az-zakāt* means purification and growth. It elevates the moral sense because it means paying the ordained due; and it purifies the soul from the overwhelming love of wealth which leads to greed and avarice. The Qur'ān says: (9:103)

«Of their property take alms so that you may purify and sanctify them...».

Indeed *az-zakāt* is a strong means for diminishing the lust for wealth by purifying the soul.

It also means spiritual growth and development. The Qur'ān says: (80-3)

«But what would tell you but that perchance he might *yazzakka* or grow (in spiritual understanding)».

When a person gives away his money generously to those who need it, he cannot but be purified and elevated because of continuous spiritual growth.

Moreover, on the individual level, there are alms which are properties given voluntarily for the sake of charity. They are given mainly in two ways. They can take the form of supporting parents and relatives, and helping the needy in general. The Qur'ān says: (17: 26).

«and render the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer. But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift».

They can also take the form of good deeds, saying kind words and refraining from doing evil.



Consider the following tradition:

«*Sadaqa* (charity) is incumbent on every Muslim. They (his companions) said, 'O Prophet of Allah, and what about him who has not got anything to give?' He said, «He should work with his hand and profit himself and give in charity'. They said, 'If he has nothing (in spite of this)' He said, He should help the distressed one who is in need'. They said, If he is unable to do this'. He said, 'He should do good deeds'. They said, 'If he is unable to do this. He said, 'He should refrain from doing evil — this is charity on his part'»<sup>(9)</sup>.

For the Prophet to stress that charity on the part of those who do not find anything to give is to do good deeds and refrain from doing evil, is a clear indication that paying alms has a far more reaching aim than the material welfare of the needy. It is to discipline those who give as well as those who receive and educate them in order to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. Consider this educative purpose which the Qur ān expresses in the following verse: (2: 271)

«If you disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well, but if you conceal them and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you. It will remove from you some of your (stain of) evil. And God is well acquainted with what you do.»

To be able to conceal acts of charity is a discipline which inculcates the meaning of humility and self-denial and removes traces of hypocrisy. Thus to give does not mean that you look down upon those who receive nor make them feel that you are doing them a favour. In fact it is through those who receive that the giver is able to perform his duty towards God willingly, looking forward to God's pleasure and reward.

If «az-zakāt» is paid in the manner and spirit indicated above, its moral and material results can be experienced by the individual as well as the society.



## Fasting

Islam has prescribed the fast of the month of Ramadān. This daily fast begins with the break of dawn and lasts until sunset. It comprises total abstinence from food, drink, perfumes, tobacco and conjugal relations. During the night all these interdictions are raised. During illness, travel and a woman's monthly period, there are temporary dispensations; but the obligation is renewed when the reason for exemption has disappeared. The deficiency must be made up by an equivalent number of fast days. Old people, if it is difficult for them to fast, may feed a needy person every day during the whole month of Ramadan, if they have the money for it.

Besides the fast of Ramadan, which is obligatory, there is fasting which is *nafl* (voluntary). As the Prophet used to offer numerous *nafl* prayers in addition to the obligatory ones and to encourage other Muslims to follow his example so also did he keep the *nafl* fasting regularly and persuade his followers to act similarly. He used to keep the fast for a number of days every month. This will give us moral drive and keep us ready for the month of Ramadan by producing the right spiritual atmosphere in order to make full advantage of its inner richness.

The Qur'ān says: (2: 183)

«O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may *tattaqōn* (guard against evil)».

This verse shows very clearly the point behind fasting. The word *taqwa* means the doing of all the good deeds which please God; and the words *ittiqā'* and *wiqayā* mean protection or guard from evil or immoral deeds which are harmful to the individual and society. This point is also stressed by the Prophet who said: <sup>(10)</sup>

«Fasting is *junna* (protection from immoral actions) so let not him (who fasts) utter immodest or foul speech, nor let him act in an ignorant manner, and if a man quarrels with him or abuses him, he should say twice, 'I am tasting'...».



Fasting, according to Islam, is primarily a spiritual discipline and consequently it inculcates moral discipline. It is the training ground where the Muslim is taught to develop certain moral qualities which enable him to control his physical desires. Fasting also has an immense impact on society, for all the Muslims, irrespective of their status, must observe fasting during the same month. This brings to prominence the essential equality of all Muslims and this goes a long way towards creating in them sentiments of love and brotherhood.

Fasting teaches the Muslim patience and constancy because during the day he gives up all that he used to enjoy — food, drink, and sex, etc., and endures the pain of hunger and thirst. It teaches him also to be truthful because fasting is a private worship, a bond between the worshipper and God alone. As he seeks reward from God alone, there is no room for hypocrisy and cheating. He must always be truthful and sincere. If the morality of the Muslim springs from a well-established disposition, then qualities like patience, power of will, truthfulness and sincerity must be there to preserve this disposition. Consider what the

Qur'an says: (42: 43)

«But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs».

And (2:177)

«Those who fulfil their word which they have made, and those who are firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic — such are the people of truth, the God — fearing».

So fasting is meant, among other things, to teach patience, which is the noblest and highest form of strength of will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.

So for fasting to contribute genuinely to the moral development of the Muslims, it should be performed with all the solemnity of an act of worship, and all the instructions laid down in its context must be sin-



cerely obeyed. All sinful conduct must be given up, particularly that which appertains to the mouth and tongue. If this is not observed, fasting will be empty of all spiritual consequences. This is because the Prophet said:

«He who does not give up uttering falsehood and acting according to it, Allāh has no need for his giving up his food and his drink»<sup>(11)</sup>.

Those who do not control themselves when fasting gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst because it is immaterial to God that they go without food and drink. What really matters is to observe that fasting is *junna* which guards us against evil.

It follows, therefore, that we should aim at obtaining the maximum advantage from fasting as from prayer and *az-zakāt* in terms of our spiritual and moral growth. The endeavour should be to practise greater goodness and pay more attention to the deeds of virtue during the period of fasting so that doing *as — sāiḥāt* becomes an established habit.

#### «HAJJ» or Pilgrimage

*Hajj* or pilgrimage is the fourth basic “*ibada*”. It is obligatory on every Muslim who can afford to undertake it; and it is only once in life. The idea underlying its ordainment is that Muslims should go to Makkah where the experience of the Prophet Abraham’s life of utter dedication and sincere obedience to God has taken place.

«And proclaim the pilgrimage among the people: they come to you on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, through deep and distant mountain highways».

When the pilgrimage was proclaimed, people went to it from every quarter, near and far, on foot and by camel. Now Muslims from all over the world go to it by car, ship and plane. Before they arrive at Makkah, they must make themselves ready and fit spiritually for the great occasion.

The Qur’ān says: (2. 179).

«For *Hajj* is during the months<sup>(12)</sup> well known; if any one undertakes that duty therein, let there be no



obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the *HAJJ*. And what ever good you do (be sure) God knows it. And take provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provision right conduct. So fear Me, O you who are wise».

The real equipment, the refore, lies in getting oneself ready with all the information needed for the carrying out of the duty and in observing right conduct. There will be no obscenity, wickedness and wrangling in *HAJJ*. This is to acquire the inner spiritual fitness which enables one to realise the rich moral benefits coming from it. Without this, *Hajj* will remain a routine and an empty ceremony.

One of the essential features of *Hajj* is the wearing of *al—ihram* which is composed of two unstitched cotton pieces, one to over the lower part of the body the other, the size of a large bath—towel, to cover the upper part of the body, except the head, the face and the right shoulder. The implication of this, besides humility before God, is to remind us that we are all equal. Then there is *at—tawaf* which is circumambulation of *al—ka'ba*, the House of God, for seven times. Then there is the *Sa'y* and that is to walk humbly between the *Safa* and the *Marwa*, two hills, seven times. But the most striking feature is *al—wuquf* or the stay at '*arfāt*', *Muzdalifa* and *Mina*.

The night before the march' *arafāt*, to march is spent at *Mina* where every single pilgrim is present at the same time. The following day, after sunrise, all the pilgrims, in their hundreds of thousands, move off ten miles along the road to Mount *Arafāt* and camp in the plain around it. Here the pilgrims will be exclusively busy performing prayer, reciting the *Qur'ān* and saying *du'ā'* because here are the most important moments of *Hajj* . It was here where the Prophet delivered *Khutbat—al—Wadā'* or Farewell Speech.

Just before sunset, the pilgrims move to *Muzdalife* where they spend the night in the open. In the morning they go straight to *Mina* to stone the «Devil». There are three stone pillars, symbolizing the Devil, which are stoned by the pilgrims in emulation of the Prophet Abraham's putting the Devil to flight when the Devil tried to tempt him here not to sacrifice his son to God. It also implies condemnation of evil and wrongdoing in general. At *Mina* the pilgrims stay for three days, each day



stoning the Devil once. On these days also they sacrifice sheep and cattle to God as a way of paying off for the enjoyment<sup>(13)</sup> they have during *Hajj*.

The Qur'ān says: (22:28)

«And celebrate the name of God, through the days appointed over the cattle which He has provided for them: then eat from it and feed the distressed ones in want»<sup>(14)</sup>.

This celebration is called *īd al-adha* or feast of sacrifice, celebrated on the same day, likewise by sacrifice, throughout the whole of the Muslim world. Such sacrifice is symbolical; it should be a sign of dedication and piety of the heart. This is because: (Qur'ān (2:37)

«It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches God: it is your piety that reaches Him. He has thus made them subject to you, that you may glorify God for His guidance to you; and proclaim the good news to all who do right (*al-muhsinīn*)»..

This is the true purpose of sacrifice, for God does not delight in flesh or blood. It is a symbol of thanksgiving to God by sharing meat with fellow men and it is an indication of complete obedience to God for His guidance to us in all matters of conduct.

So, as in fasting, Islam, in *Hajj* also seeks to increase charity and virtue among us. Our symbolic act is a celebration of the name of God over the sustenance He gave us from animals which are fit for food. So only when we submit our wills to God can our symbolic act find expression in charity and virtue. The Qur'ān says: (22:34-35)

«To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice), that they might celebrate the name of God over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food). But your God is one God: submit then your wills to Him; and give the good news to those who humble themselves, to those whose hearts, when God is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keeps up regular



prayer and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them.

Indeed, in *Hajj*, there is an opportunity for Muslims to experience the moral qualities mentioned in the above verses. Hajj also is a world conference in which Muslims from all over the world meet to know each other, to diminish social differences, to discuss matters that concern them as a nation or *umma* and more important to remind each other of the teachings of Islam in order to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. Perhaps the most important point behind *Hajj* is that it continuously reminds us of Resurrection and the gathering together of all people in the Hereafter, on the Day of Judgement. This comes in the verses that speak about *Hajj*. The Qur'ān says: (22:1-2)

«O mankind, fear your Lord, for the convulsion of the Hour (of judgement) will be a thing terrible. The day you shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her sucking-baby, and every pregnant female shall drop her load (unformed), and you will see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet not drunk; but dreadful will be the Wrath of God».

And also: (22:5)

«O mankind if you have doubt about the Resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm...».

The crowding of the pilgrims, the wearing of *al-ihram*, the fact that every pilgrim is very busy, edging his way trying to perform the rites of *Hajj*, all this gives a true picture of the Resurrection and the gathering of all people in the Last Day.

The time spent in *Hajj* and the amount of reflection made by the pilgrims during it, particularly reflection on the Resurrection and the Hereafter, will surely make a deep effect on them. It provides them, when they return to their homes, with moral stamina and readiness to lead a more genuine moral life.



### Recitation of the Qur'ān or Tilāwa

As Islamic morality originates in the Qur'ān, it follows that what the Qur'ān contains of moral precepts is imperative, final and absolute. It is, therefore, incumbent on every Muslim to conform in his daily behaviour to the moral injunctions, positive, or negative, set for him in the Qur'ān.

To the Muslim the Qur'ān is a manual of prayers, a code for practical way of life — religious, moral, social, economic and political, and it is a reminder of daily conduct. Its impressive style is conducive to reflection in the Muslim; the Muslim concentrates his whole attention on the power of God and His guidance to that which is most right and stable. So those who recite it or listen to it will be greatly moved. Consider the occasion when Omar, the second Caliph, was converted to Islam. Before he became a Muslim, Omar had been one of the greatest enemies of Islam. When he heard that his sister Fatima and her husband, Sa'id Ibn Zayd became Muslims, he went to their house to stop them from being Muslims. When he heard them recite *sura XX*, entitled *Tāha*, from a written copy they had, he was so struck with their sincerity that he asked to see the leaf from which they had been reading. It was given to him and when he read it, his soul was touched and he was greatly moved, to the effect that he came into the faith and became one of its strongest supporters<sup>(15)</sup>.

Again consider what the Qur'ān says about Christians (5:82), that some of them (5: 83).

«When they listen to revelation received by the Apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth. They pray: Our Lord, we believe, write us down among the witnesses..»

It is because of this effect which the Qur'ān has on those who carefully recite it or listen to it that Muslims are urged to recite it and ponder over its deep meaning. Consider what the Qur'ān says: (35:29)

«Those who recite the Book of God, establish regular prayer and spend (in charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a commerce that will never fail».



Some learn the whole Qur'ān by heart and recite it regularly, others learn a great part of it and whenever Muslims perform prayer they recite verses from it.

Recitation of the Qur'ān is both devotional and disciplinary. Reciting it, in a solemn way and with understanding, will arouse in the reader noble feelings towards his fellow-beings, awakening his inner consciousness and his moral sense. It is not the mere utterance of the text that matters. Heart and understanding must work together. The lips utter the words and understanding helps in appreciation of their meaning and the heart obeys the dictation of duty.

Having given an account of the practical duties of Islam and how they could contribute to moral development it remains to say whether in prayer, *az-zakat*, fasting, *Hajj*, recitation of the Qur'ān or any other commendable action, the Muslim is putting forth effort and is exercising discipline. Islam respects this effort and urges the Muslims to preserve it as long as it leads them to do good. So the Qur'ān, first of all, exalts those who exert an effort in order to follow God's guidance. The Qurān says: (29:69)

«And those who strive in Our way, We will certainly guide them to Our path; for verily God is with those who do right.

Guidance towards the way of God comes only after the Muslim has worked hard for it. The Qur'ān calls for such effort to be exerted when performing good actions. It is beautifully expressed like this: (90: 11-17)

«But has made no haste on the path that is steep. And what will explain to you the path that is steep?- (It is) freeing the slave, or the giving of food on a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust. Then will he be of



those who believe and enjoin patience and self-restraint, and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion ».

Here the Muslim is urged to exert an effort and be keen enough to climb the steep and difficult path which leads to the doing of *aṣ-ṣaliḥāt*..

As man, unlike the animals, is endowed with emotions which may lead him to the highest or drag him to the lowest, depending on his power of will, the discipline brought about by the practical duties of Islam is meant to maintain the Muslim's power of will and to provide him with protective as well as creative effort. In his struggle against evil, he finds in *'ibādāt* plenty of protective effort quite enough to bring about fear of God, and

«Those who fear God, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring God to remembrance when lo! they see (aright) (7:201)

In his endeavour to do *as-saliḥāt*, *al-'ibādāt* provide him with creative effort which urges him to do what is morally best and continuously draws his attention to this verse:

«And say: 'Work (righteousness): Soon will God observe your work, and His Apostle, and the believers.'»

So *al-'ibādāt* or the practical duties of Islam contribute quite effectively to moral education by initiating the Muslim into effort and discipline which help him to develop a character that respond practically to his judgement of right and wrong.

It must be pointed out that *al-'ibādāt* are not meant to discipline children in the primary schools, they are designed to discipline parents, relatives, teachers and mature people in the whole society. And because elders wield directly or indirectly an influence over children, they are supposed to be morally disciplined in order to provide good examples for the children. However, children from the age of seven are introduced to practise prayer and by the age of ten they can be trained to fast a few days in *Ramadān*.



## Notes

- (1) Aristotle: *Op. cit.*, p.48.
- (2) Niblet, W.R., *Moral Education in a Changing Society*, p.10.
- (3) Wilson, John, *op.cit.*, p.50.
- (4) Al-Ghazālī, *op.cit.*, p.50.
- (5) Al-Ghazālī, *Mizan alAmal*, p. 70-71.
- (6) Al-Gahzāli, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- (7) Al-Bukhāri.
- (8) Al-Bukhāri.
- (9) Al-Bukhāri.
- (10) Al-Bukhāri.
- (11) Al-Bukhāri.
- (12) They are the months of *Shawwal*, *Dhul-Qa'ida* and *Dhul-Hijja*; but the chief rites begin on the first ten days of *Dhul-Hijja* and especially the 8th, 9th and 10th of this month.
- (13) Those who keep *al-ihram* during the days they spend in Makkah before going to *Mina*, and do not take proper baths, and do not use perfumes, and do not have conjugal relations with their wives, need not sacrifice at *Mina* any sheep or cattle.
- (14) After the sacrifices have been made and after the pilgrims have eaten some of the meat, there still will be plenty of meat which will be waste. If this meat is manufactured and put in tins and sent to the hungry people in the world, this will be morally and socially a good thing to do.
- (15) Ibn Hisham p.210-214.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF MORAL EDUCATION

So far an attempt has been made in the previous chapters to show that for moral education to be effective three emphases are necessary. The first emphasis is the theme of the first chapter. There, very briefly, I have said that the Islamic society is characterized by stability, justice and harmony. I have tried to show how the Shari'a lays down the foundation of justice and stability by planning the social, political and economic institutions, thus bringing about a lasting harmony in the society. The second chapter is about the second emphasis which is the necessity and the desirability of having moral homogeneity. It is true that moral homogeneity is brought about by the fact that Islamic morality is derived from the Shari'a which is binding on all Muslims. But Islamic morality, as we have seen, is not only based on authority but it is also based on intention, reason and moral understanding. The third chapter emphasizes the importance of the practical discipline. There I have said that in addition to the application of rational criteria which enable one to judge morally, *al-'ibādāt* contribute by enriching sympathies for others through the emotions. This is a form of education of the emotions to those rational criteria. *Al-'ibādāt* thus discipline the individual's feelings into a moral framework.

Now before going on to see where and how moral education is taught, it is essential to define the nature of moral education in the Islamic society.

Philip Phenix says:

«The educational decisions about what, how, when,



and to whom instruction will be given inevitably have their effect upon the moral nature of the person taught. For this reason the basis for choice of educational procedures should not be simply technical consideration of the educational specialist but should be the general ideals of human excellence which the procedures ought to subserve».<sup>(1)</sup>

Philip Phenix is right in saying that moral instruction is imparted through the whole process of education, because it is the value implicit in the understanding of education, in the determination of the aim and in the choice of materials and methods of teaching that influence the learner's moral development. This applies to Islamic moral education because as morality in the Islamic society is understood in the wider meaning of the term and as the Shari'a is the main integrating factor in society and the main source of morality, it is consistent to say that Islamic moral education is to be achieved through the whole conduct of education, in the school as well as in the family and in society at large. Since the educational decisions which have their effect upon the moral development of the person taught are formed by the contributions of different disciplines within the educational process and since the Islamic principles and values are to be consistently implicit in the whole educational process, it is essential to see how Islam guides the process of education, and how it defines its aim.

### **How Islam Guides The Process of Education**

Education is a practical activity dependent on the contribution of different kinds of Knowledge, religious, philosophical, sociological, psychological and historical etc. The important issue, as far as the educationist is concerned, is to establish educational principles which explain and justify, for instance, why children learn, schools develop, social education spreads and what the aim of education is. In the Islamic society this can be done by encouraging relevant investigations by philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and historians, based on Islam by trying to make use of them in the formation of educational principles. In other words the educational principles are the outcome of the building



together of elements taken from the different specialist fields, with Islam giving continuous guidance to these specialist fields. Having accepted this, it follows that educational principles cannot be formed by stressing the importance of psychology and sociology, recognized as empirical sciences, at the expense of religious, moral and philosophical issues. This view is usually held by educationists who are greatly influenced by science, and there is a tendency, particularly in this age of great scientific development to build educational theory on the basis of a scientific model. But educational theory cannot be based on a scientific model because it is prescriptive and its function is to guide practice by determining what ought to be done. So Islamic educational judgements which are taken from the Qur'ān and the Sunna are to be combined with empirical elements of psychology and sociology which are important in the field of education. Thus religious and moral elements are considered in the Islamic society as the basis of Islamic education. Therefore, all the specialists who build the Islamic educational theory must possess a good knowledge of the Qur'ān and the Sunna in order to be able to draw philosophical, psychological, sociological, historical and educational judgements which can guide their research.

To understand Islamic education in the way I have just described, prepares the way all through for Islam to guide and influence the process of education in the Islamic society. For it means that the curriculum, including academic subjects and activities, methods of teaching, relationship between teacher and pupil and relation between school and society etc., are continuously and consistently coloured and influenced by Islam. It also means that students in training colleges and university departments of education, who study education as I have defined it, will be guided by the spirit of it, in method as well as content, when they graduate and teach in schools. All this creates a wider moral environment and consequently provides a moral education in which Islamic moral values implicit in the whole process of education are explicitly recognized and rationally defended.

### **The Aim of Islamic Education**

Since the aim of education in any society influences the whole process



of education and consequently determines the nature of moral education in the school as well as in society at large. it is essential to define the aim of Islamic education.

Confusion about the aims of education is not a new thing. Aristotle noted this confusion in the society of his time. He says:

«For mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Nor is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principles we should proceed. Should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training, all these opinions have been entertained»<sup>(2)</sup>.

In an age like ours, of industrial and material complexity, we can only expect more confusion about aims of education and consequently about morality. There are many views about the nature of aims, and such a variety of aims is undoubtedly an outcome of the question whether values are permanent and constant or whether they change with changing circumstances

Some educators have felt the need for resolving this confusion, but to admit the need is not to accept what these educators have offered as a solution. In fact, despite their efforts, confusion still remains. I would like, therefore, to discuss the views of an influential educational philosopher on the aims of education and see how we can arrive at a clear understanding of the nature of aims in education. This philosopher is John Dewey who reacts strongly against permanent values and consequently education, according to him, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. Let us now see what Dewey thinks the aims of education are.

In Chapter VIII of his *Democracy and Education*, Dewey expresses his views about Aims in Education. According to him, «aims» fall within an activity and so it is connected with an «end» and not a «result». An example of a «result» is that when wind blows, it affects the position of the grains. In contrast to this he considers the activities of the bees and the steps taken by them from the time before the queen lays eggs until the eggs are hatched and



the young can take care of themselves. Here, he says, is an «end» because there is a continuation of a process, each event leads to another which builds on what has already been done and utilizes it for the next stage. «Aim», Dewey concludes, implies an order which consists of a «progressive completion of a process, with foresight in advance of the end». The foresight is:

1. To observe the means and discover the difficulties.
2. To suggest the proper sequence in the use of means.
3. To make choice of alternatives possible.

So far the point Dewey is making is this. To act with an aim is to act intelligently and thoughtfully because the aim influences the steps or the means taken to reach the end.

Dewey believes that the above definition of an aim is inevitable if we are living in a democratic society where there is co-operation and free activities. He says that in a democratic society, individuals are allowed to grow and develop, and fixed aims which are derived from permanent values, have no place because these are imposed from outside. This is because

«Our net conclusion is that life is development, and that developing, growing, is life. Translated into its educational equivalents, this means (i) that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that (ii) the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming»<sup>(3)</sup>.

The reason why Dewey believes that education is a continual process of living and not a preparation for the future, is the way he defines knowledge. He says:

«Only that which has been originated into our disposition so as to enable us to adapt our aims and desires to the situation in which we live is really knowledge. Knowledge is not just something which we are conscious of, but consists of dispositions we



consciously use in understanding what now happens»<sup>(4)</sup>

The educator, therefore, is to make contact with the activities of the child and give them every opportunity to grow because education is growth and continual reconstruction of what we experience here and now. If we consider growth as having an end, Dewey goes on to say, it means that we are having a fixed goal and this implies «failure to develop initiative in coping with novel situations» and «an undue emphasis upon drill and other devices which secure automatic skill at the expense of personal perception»<sup>(5)</sup>.

Now the first point made by Dewey in connection with the definition of «aim», is a valid one. No one can object to it because it takes into consideration certain qualities which must be there when we act with an aim. Intelligence, thoughtfulness and foresight are indispensable because they help us to make the right choice and proper use of means, and to overcome difficulties which we meet when we concentrate on a certain aim. But the difficulty arises when we consider the other aspect of Dewey's view on the aim of education. It is mainly his objection to permanent values and consequently to constant aims.

All through his exposition Dewey seems to be exclusively concerned with the present situation. His urgent need to solve present problems shows how he repudiates the past with its rich experience.

«What Dewey fails to make sufficiently clear is the enormous dependence of even the modern scientist on past knowledge before the presence of a problem can be recognized and an hypothesis formulated. For as a scientific investigation implies a well-developed habituation to the modes and procedures of science, and to its characteristic understandings, as well as a close acquaintanceship with the affiliated circumstances of the point of issue, so any «scientific» mode of living, even within Dewey's comprehension of the term, would imply a deep appreciation and comprehension



of the conventions, social mores, and modes of understandings of the society within which it was being lived»<sup>(6)</sup>.

If Dewey ignores the past, then his society will be a rootless one and it lies only in its ability to consider the present social condition. Social convention or social approval, according to him, is the criterion or standard to be followed. Dewey might argue that the soundness of this criterion lies in the fact that education should take the direction promising continued growth. But growth may be good or bad and we would like to know what direction growth is to take.

But Dewey has nothing to do with a constant standard or a main end. He insists that every specific situation must be considered for itself. But it is difficult to confine ourselves by going on deciding cases on their merits, because we cannot speak of a specific good in each specific situation unless a standard by which we can measure what things are good is appealed to. The application of such a constant standard does not mean, as Dewey says it does, failure to develop initiative to cope with new situations and failure to allow personal perception. It is important to apply such standards and principles to the specific case in question because they provide society with a definite criterion of right conduct and give it stability. But it is equally important for society to be able to provide details based on these standards when the specific situation necessitates such details. of course it all depends on the nature of these standards. We have seen how Shari'a provides broad principles which can be interpreted flexibly to suit the present time, without losing their force.

Dewey thinks that the complexity of the practical issues involved in society does not allow for permanent rules or standards to be employed for the attainment of a certain end, because he says that these rules need continuous re-interpretation in the light of experience. Influenced by science, Dewey thinks that the rules used in social life are similar to those of science and mathematics which are narrow and constant. But Dewey is open to criticism here, because rules used in connection with the regulation of human behaviour, with the complexity that exists in society,



should be formulated differently from those of science and mathematics. We have seen how Shari'a provides broad and flexible rules to serve two purposes. First they guide society towards a definite goal, showing clearly what ought to be done. Secondly, these rules save time and save us the trouble of long controversy over issues which otherwise we may have to keep changing our decisions on them from time to time. But all this is not done at the expense of our freedom and rationality. They allow the individual to have personal perception because they are intentionally set to initiate him into what enables him to deal with novel situations.

Take, for instance, the rule «consult them in affairs (of moments)» (Qur'an, 3:159) Here the rule states only the fundamental and the unchangeable principle of consultation. But the form consultation should take is left open. Whether it is a parliament established by normal voting or any other convenient method, or whether it is a council or a congress or any other form, it all depends on the circumstances and the conditions in which we live.

Take also this, «in order that it (money) may not be passed around between the wealthy among you» (Qur'an 59:7). This rule forbids the circulation of money among the few rich people in the society, but it does not state exactly how this distribution takes place. Every generation should decide as they see fit, provided they avoid the two extremes, that of Western capitalism which confines money in the hands of the few, and that of communism which forbids individual ownership.

In education, however, there is more scope for details to be provided by educators, particularly in methods, techniques and procedures. There are only broad principles to guide content as well as procedure. Consider, for example, the relationship between teacher and pupil. The Qur'an says (19:37):

«He has kept strict count of all his creatures, and one by one they shall approach Him on the Day of Resurrection».

This means that on the Day of Resurrection, the individual will be directly responsible for what he has done. One aspect of the relationship



between teacher and pupil, in the Islamic society, is that the teacher must use procedures implicit in their principles which allow the pupil to be independent and highly responsible. Educators in the present time, can provide many principles which determine the relationship between teacher and pupil on similar lines.

When Shari'a provides only the broad principles in matters that change from time to time and does not mention the details for every rule, this is surely done deliberately for an educative purpose. God wants us to be rational, to have personal perception and to exercise some freedom. But Muslims are compensated for the loss of one sense of freedom by being given the opportunity to exercise another sense of freedom which is more suitable to their nature. If we could imagine that Shari'a is a stretch of a river, then although this river is set for Muslims and they have no other alternative or choice, they are urged to deepen the river as far as they can, provided they are still within the framework of the river.

So the aim of education in the Islamic society is to initiate the people into worthwhile activities, but these worthwhile activities are defined by the Islamic moral judgements. In other words, the aim of education in the Islamic society is to strengthen belief in God by carrying out His Shari'a consciously and intelligently. This qualifies Muslims to have good character because good character results from doing *as-salihāt* consistently and persistently. And it shall make the task of Islamic moral education the vivid presentation of high values and continued exposure to the attractions of goodness, truth and honesty until they are woven into the very fabric of personality. The aim is to produce good human beings who can lead a good life. Surely this aim will influence the whole process of education and will thus create favourable conditions for moral education in the Islamic society.

### **The Procedural View of Moral Education**

The procedural view in moral education is held by those who believe that education is initiation into procedural principles, that is, it involves initiating people into various forms of thought and activity in such a way



that they are helped to become better informed, more understanding, more reasonable and critically-minded. Proceduralism in its attempt to avoid moral homogeneity or moral certainty and aware of the dangers of moral subjectivism, tries to teach moral procedures rather than substantive moral values. The result is that it accepts the necessity, even the desirability, of moral pluralism.

According to John Wilson, the word «moral» can be used

«to mark out a particular kind of human thought and action, not on the basis of what the *mores* of a particular society are, but on some other basis»<sup>(7)</sup>.

This basis is that

«We are obviously not thinking just of what the *mores* of a particular society are. We seem rather to be making some logical and conceptual clarification of the area of morality, quite apart from what anyone regards (rightly or wrongly) as that area»<sup>(8)</sup>.

This means that he believes that moral education is not to «hammer home what we already know to be true», and it is not to brainwash or indoctrinate. He wants a moral education which is not wholly committed to a particular creed, which is not indoctrinatory and not interfering. He calls for a type of thinking which can be defined formally rather than in form of content. To him these formal criteria are profitable because they do not force those who believe in them to assign a particular content to morality. So far what he is saying is compatible with the proceduralist view. But consider this :

«These formal criteria may not be sufficient to give us everything we need for the concept of a morally educated person»<sup>(9)</sup>.

As long as these formal criteria are not sufficient for the purpose of moral education, John Wilson has to resort to something else which helps moral education to be achieved. I would like to mention here two sources of moral education in addition to his formal criteria.



First, he admits that there are moral experts who have the right to impart moral knowledge to the young. He says:

«Any thing which is a serious subject of study is likely to have its experts»<sup>(10)</sup>

Again he says:

«This is plain that sex is a religious issue, a moral issue, and a psychological issue; the expertises, whatever their logical nature, are certainly not irrelevant»<sup>(11)</sup>

According to him, these expertises are guides of some kind, who will tell us something useful.

Secondly, he believes that moral education is desirable in schools and colleges in addition to what he calls the non-educational things<sup>(12)</sup> which schools and colleges may be doing. These «non-educational things» are contained in the socialization process to which we are subjected through the conventions of society. The fact that he calls upon education to develop certain forms of rationality, skills and attitudes, does not diminish this socialization process.

So, it seems that John Wilson is mainly concerned with maintaining his definition of the concept of education which is the initiation of students into procedural principles and worthwhile activities of thought. Having made sure that this is achieved, he would not mind to employ other agencies in the field of moral education, provided as he says, we do not muddle them up with education. We have seen that he accepts guidance from experts and that he urges teachers through the socialization process, to introduce moral and social values to children. But this does not show that he is wholly committed to a merely proceduralist view in moral education. In fact what he is doing is that he is paving the way for moral pluralism; whatever morality you believe in will do provided it is rational, not indoctrinatory and not interfering.



It is also interesting to discuss the views of H.L.A. Hart who argues the proceduralist and moral pluralist case in his book *Law, Liberty and Morality*. Hart believes in the plural society which embodies groups with different moral values and standards. These groups, because they do not enforce conformity tolerate each other. He distinguishes<sup>(13)</sup> «positive morality», the morality actually accepted and shared by a given social group, from the general moral principles used in the criticism of actual social institutions including positive morality. He calls such general principles «critical morality» or «critical principles» on which the idea of tolerance in the society is based. He gives the following as an example of a critical principle:

«A utilitarian who insists that the law should only punish activities which are harmful adopts this as a critical principle and, in so doing, he is quite unconcerned with the question whether a utilitarian morality is or is not already accepted as the positive morality of the society to which he applies his critical principles»<sup>(14)</sup>.

Like John Wilson to him the differences of opinion over the content of the morality to be enforced is nothing compared to the differences over a more fundamental and a more interesting issue, namely to allow people to criticize the institutions of their society in the light of general principles. But he differs from Wilson in that his «critical principles» are devoid of any substantive moral guidance except when they are linked to other judgements through the notion of «harm». That is, in a plural society, activities which are not harmful are allowed and the law should not punish them because they are based on the principle of «non-interference». According to him, this principle of «non-interference» has a special status because it is universal and so presides over other moralities. Hart implies that the teaching of such critical morality will be acceptable by those moral educators who do not wish to indoctrinate or abandon reason and enforce conformity.

F.S. McNeilly raises two points against Hart's view. The first point is



that the distinction between «critical morality» and «positive morality» cannot be maintained in connection with the principle of «non-interference». This is because

«the principle of «non-interference» prohibits us from interfering with harmless activities, and it is, indeed, a (very general) practical principle. So also, for that matter, is the principle of legal punishment; it is a practical principle, applying to legislators, prohibiting legislative action against harmless activities»<sup>(15)</sup>

So the principle of «non-interference», like any other moral principle, is an explicitly critical principle which refers to, and can be used, in the criticism of things people do. Thus the principle of «non-interference», as McNeilly says,

«Looks so like a normal specimen of a general moral principle that it is hard to think why it should be segregated in a special class of critical principles which are not part of a morality. There is nothing surprising in the fact that it should be regarded as an explicitly critical principle, because it is an explicitly critical principle. All moral principles are explicitly critical principles because they would be useless if they could not be used in the criticism of actions»<sup>(16)</sup>.

For this reason, McNeilly says that,

«The principle of «non-interference» does not have special status as a principle, of a different order from moral principles, which has special employment in the criticism of positive morality»<sup>(17)</sup>.

McNeilly is right in saying that «critical principles» are similar to other moral principles because they are all employed in the criticism of what people do. But the «critical principles» are so general that they are of little or no help in the consideration of a particular moral issue. This is because a concrete moral situation involves a complexity of issues and so it needs definite moral principles to resolve it.



The second point raised by McNeilly is about Hart's principle of «non-interference» when linked to other judgements through the notion of «harm». He says that what constitutes «harm» raises an immediate difficulty about the words «Harmful» and «harmless». The meaning of «harm» he goes on to say, may be restricted to what more or less everyone would actually regard as harm, for instance, pain distress and frustration, etc. On the other hand, alcohol may be considered as harmful by some and harmless by others. This unrestricted meaning of «harm» causes people with different values to be in disagreement over what constitutes «harm».

On the basis of the above analysis of «harm», McNeilly goes on to criticize the principle of «non-interference».

He says:

«Now the principle of «non-interference» might be accepted by everyone and contribute nothing to the stability of a morally plural society. For we might all give an unrestricted meaning to «harm», and we might also differ sharply in our values. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how a society could comprise a number of *different* moralities and yet agree in its values sufficiently to arrive at a common conception of «harm»<sup>(18)</sup>.

So when we give an unrestricted meaning to «harm», different interpretations of «harm» will be inevitable and the result is moral subjectivism and so the principle of «non-interference» contributes nothing to the stability of a morally plural society. On the other hand, taking «harm» in the restricted sense does not make the principle of «non-interference» as a critical principle which is set above other moral systems, but it will be a special sort of morality defining utilitarian morality. This is because:

«... The conception of harm as limited to pain, distress, frustration and certain other items derived from these, is merely the statement, in a form appropriate to a principle of non-interference, of the



fundamental values of a utilitarian morality. The principle of non-interference then, is not a principle which presides over moralities, but a morality which confronts other moralities.

When we take «harm» in the restricted sense, the principle of «non-interference» will not be a principle which overrides other principles, but it will be a principle justifying utilitarian morality and so it is a morality confronting other moralities.

I believe that McNeilly has succeeded in showing that Hart's «critical principles» are the same as any other moral principles and so they do not have any special status which qualifies them to preside over other moral principles. Even when these «critical principles» are connected with other judgements through the notion of «harm», the result is that they either encourage moral subjectivism when the meaning of «harm» is unrestricted, or act as utilitarian moral principles when the meaning of «harm» is highly restricted. In both cases the distinction between «positive morality» and «critical morality» is replaced by another between one set of moral principles held by one group and another set held by another group. And this shows clearly that those who believe in moral proceduralism cannot have procedures or critical principles without substantive moral values.

Some of them, like John Wilson, consciously or unconsciously, combine critical morality with different forms of substantive values. Others, like Hart, unsuccessfully, as we have seen, call only for critical morality claiming that it presides over moralities.

I believe that it is valid to insist that education must incorporate critical and rational standards and that these standards or procedures should be considered not only in moral education but also in the whole process of education. It is moral pluralism which is an inevitable outcome of moral proceduralism that I object to. It deprives society of harmony and stability so necessary in the process of moral education that without them moral education will be ineffective.



It might be argued that a plural society, despite the fact that there co-exist groups with different moral values, nevertheless there are two things which can guarantee harmony and stability in society. According to McNeilly.

«One thing is the absence of any sharp differences between the moralities of the competing groups, and the other is the massive preponderance of one group over the other».<sup>(19)</sup>

He believes that if these two things can be maintained, the society will be more homogeneous and more stable. But can they be preserved? I do not think so because in a society where there is a tremendous amount of freedom, the emergence of groups with divergent values is inevitable. These groups might be too small at the beginning to cause any trouble or instability, but because the conditions for their growth are potentially there in the free society, they might increase in number and power and threaten the balance in society. McNeilly himself admits that what threatens society is obviously .

«the growth in relative power and (numbers) of one of the competing groups. People in this country enjoy great freedom, for example, to express racial prejudices and advance racialist policies. If their numbers and influences were to start accelerating rapidly, it would be very difficult even for non-interfering utilitarians to continue happily non-interfering»<sup>(20)</sup>.

Now we can see in some societies how groups with divergent and dangerous moral values accelerating rapidly to replace other groups who have been adhering to better moralities. This, in fact, marks the danger of the procedural view of moral education.

### **Procedures and Content in Islamic Moral Education**

I have said that in its attempt to avoid moral homogeneity or moral certainty, moral proceduralism emphasizes the teaching of moral procedures rather than the teaching of definite moral values. This is done with the intention of initiating people into being more reasonable, more



understanding and more capable of justifying any moral rules which they may follow. It is good and necessary to teach people, for instance, to avoid harmful activities, to be kind, tolerant, rational, understanding and reasonable. But this by itself does not help moral education. What is equally important, or perhaps more important, is to emphasize the teaching of substantive moral values in order to state clearly what is to count as harm, kindness, tolerance and reasonableness in actual moral or social situations.

It is my intention, in this section to show that Islamic morality is of much help to moral education because it combines these two emphases without the dangers of indoctrination. Let me make this point clear.

The problem of indoctrination can be approached by answering this important question: Is the process which we call «indoctrination» given that name because of its content, its method, or its aim or intention? Let us take the problem of content first.

R.F.. Atkinson discusses the distinction between instruction and indoctrination and he maintains that the process of instruction, the criteria for validity are public and more or less universally agreed upon; but in the process of indoctrination they are not. He believes that there are no universally agreed upon criteria of truth in morality. This is because,

«... the obstacles to establishing a moral criterion are not problems of formulation. Morality is not unique in that its first principles are not susceptible of proof. What distinguishes morality from the formal and material sciences is that in it different and opposed first principles are readily conceivable, and are in fact accepted by morally serious people»<sup>(21)</sup>.



Atkinson maintains that because there are no agreed upon criteria of truth in morality among moral philosophers, there cannot be instruction in morality. Instead there will be indoctrination. Every moral philosopher is committed, in the last resort, to a process of indoctrination if he wishes to teach a particular set of substantive moral beliefs. Even if the moral proceduralist conducts his teaching according to the criterion of «respect for others» or the principle of «non-interference», there is no good reason to prefer these to other criteria. So far as the content of morality is concerned, indoctrination is inevitable, because there are no universally agreed upon criteria of truth in morality.

I have argued in the second chapter, that no ethical theory all by itself can provide us with a satisfactory basis for the justification of our moral behaviour, and that Islamic ethical theory incorporated the truth provided by moral philosophers. This makes the content of Islamic moral education, in comparison to other contents of moral education, appear to have less or no indoctrination at all.

Let us now turn to the problems of method and intention. To use method as the criterion for deciding what is or is not indoctrination might seem, at first, to be of little help. This is because, particularly in teaching controversial subjects, a teacher may put forward his beliefs emphatically without rational justification. This might be due to his incompetence as a teacher and so he leaves himself open to criticism for not supporting his beliefs with arguments. When we contrast this with another teacher whose sole intention is to suppress rational argument, it becomes clear that to omit rational argument because of «poor» teaching is not the same as indoctrination. So it seems to me that when «bad» or «poor» teaching prevails, it is the intention which decides whether a process is indoctrination or not.

But when «good» teaching prevails, method becomes a good criterion for deciding what is or is not indoctrination. «Good» teaching is concerned with both transmission of facts and communication of beliefs. It seeks to use reason and evidence to achieve its ends more effectively



and more convincingly. It also seeks to produce insight. By contrast, indoctrination suppresses both reason and evidence in order to achieve its aim which is the inculcation of beliefs. It is an inherent characteristic of indoctrination to deny insight deliberately by all possible means. It resorts to methods which are morally objectionable.

In the light of the above analysis, Islamic moral education as far as method and intention are concerned, is free of indoctrination. Islamic morality, as we have seen in the second chapter, cannot be reduced to a simple process containing rules which command us to do this or not to do that. God's intention is not to make us follow His commands blindly, but He wants our obedience to be enlightened by our insight. He appeals to our reason and urges us to develop our sense of moral understanding. Let us take an example to make this point clearer.

Suppose, as a teacher, I want to introduce to my students the judgement that alcohol and gambling are forbidden by the Qur'an. Obviously, it is not sufficient to put forward the rule to the students and make them learn it by heart and then expect them to follow it. It is by far better to initiate them into supporting the judgement with as many arguments as possible. Not only that but also an attempt must be made to develop their insight. This can be done by urging the students to collect facts from countries in which people are allowed to gamble and drink alcohol, look into them, consider their advantages and disadvantages, compare them with countries in which gambling and alcohol are forbidden, and then form a judgement. The Qur'an itself puts forward the rule as follows: (2:219)

«They ask you concerning wine and gambling, Say,  
«In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but  
the sin is greater than the profit».

Is it fair to gain money from gambling without exerting effort to earn it? Is it good for individuals in the society to enjoy drinking alcohol despite the harmful consequences that follow? God's intention is that we can use any possible method to see for ourselves how the harmful consequences of gambling and alcohol can override their usefulness. So intention and



method alike make the judgement more convincing and more effective because they both avoid the dangers of indoctrination.

This educative purpose which God wants us to attain when following Shari'ā necessitates that the execution of His commands is to be connected always with other things of value which guarantee for human beings certain universal virtues. It is these very universal virtues which are embodied in Islamic morality that moral proceduralists insist upon and they are very well summarised by one of them as follows:

«... The spirit or attitude of mind which characterises the practice of a social morality is something of great value and indeed quite vital for men to foster and preserve in any society. For in the practice of any social morality there are necessarily involved what may be called *formal* values as distinct from the *material* values of its particular rules or content. In moral relationships with others the individual sees questions of conduct from an impersonal point of view and applies general rules impartially to himself and to others; he is made aware of and takes account of the wants, expectations and reactions of others; he exerts self-discipline and control in adapting his conduct to a system of reciprocal claims. These are universal virtues and indeed constitute the specifically moral attitude to conduct»<sup>(22)</sup>.

Hart means to say that virtues like safety of life, respect for others, a capacity for understanding their wants, expectations and reactions and the disciplining of individual's feelings into a system of reciprocal claims constitute the specifically moral attitude to conduct. In other words, adherence to these virtues forms our moral attitude to conduct. To be able to perform these virtues people need to exert self-discipline and control and need to offer a great amount of sacrifice until the moral attitude is formed. But unless they are educated in religion they will not be able to offer a great deal of self-sacrifice and self-denial and consequently they will not be able to submerge their own interests in the



interests of others willingly and irrespective of the temptations which lead them to care only for themselves.

This moral attitude which Hart is calling for resembles the disposition or the healthy temper of mind from which always good behaviour flows. I have said earlier that strong belief in God acts as a permanent source of good dispositions and urges the Muslim to manifest the true spirit of sincerity and self-denial, because the ultimate reward he expects comes only from God. We have seen, in the third chapter, how the sincere and conscious performance of *al-'ibadat* enriches the Muslim's sympathies for others and disciplines his feelings into a moral framework. So both strong belief in God and the discipline of *al-'ibadat* are of vital importance in the preservation of these universal virtues. Not only that but the consideration of the following teachings which are but few examples, will add to the enrichment of this moral attitude.

To save human lives in the society is the primary concern of the Muslim. The Qur'an says:(5:35)

«... if any one killed a person-unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in society-it would be as if he killed the whole people; and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people».

The Muslims are urged to respect others. Consider what the Prophet says:

«If there are three people, two of them must not have a private talk, leaving the third alone»<sup>(23)</sup>.

So to show respect for the third one, they have to postpone their private conversation until some other time.

The Qur'an also forbids hurting other people's feelings when they are present and when they are absent too. This goes as follows: (49:12)

«O you who believe avoid suspicion as far (as possible); for suspicion in some cases is a sin and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind



their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would abhor it...» Muslims are also urged to understand the wants, expectations and reactions of each other. Consider what the Qur'ān says about some of those who are in need: (20:272)

«The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want, you will know them by their (unfailing) mark; they beg not importunately...»

It is the duty of those who are well-to-do and of the Government to find them out and satisfy their wants.

When a Muslim visits his neighbours or friends, he must learn to have a capacity for understanding their reactions and feelings.

The Qur'ān says: (24:28)

«If you find no one in the home enter not until permission is given to you; if you are asked to go back, go back, that is better for you, and God knows well all that you do».

The above judgements, and many others, are there to build up the moral attitude of the Muslim, showing clearly that although Islamic moral education is a «positive moral education» it makes considerable provision for universal virtues and secures for human beings the opportunity of exercising their reason, intention and moral understanding; thus combining the two emphases, that of procedures and that of moral content.

In this chapter, I have tried to define the nature of Islamic moral education. I have said that it is achieved through the whole process of education; and to make this clear, I have examined, very briefly, the concept of education and its aim, to show that Islamic values colour and influence the whole system of education in society. Then through a discussion of moral proceduralism, I have arrived at the conclusion that Islamic morality combines both procedures and contents, thus producing an effective moral education.

In the following chapters an attempt shall be made to show how Islamic moral education is taught at home, at school and in society at large.



## Notes

- (1) Phenix, Philip H., *Philosophy of Education*, PP 290-91
- (2) Aristotle : *Politics*, Book VIII, Chapter II, p.. 301
- (3) Dewey, John: *Democracy and Education* , p. 59
- (4) Ibid., p. 400
- (5) Dewey, john: *Democracy and Education*, p. 60
- (6) Bantock, G.H.: *Education in an Industrial Society*, p. 33
- (7) Op. cit., p. 44
- (8) Op. cit., p. 45
- (9) Op. cit., P. 76.
- (10) Wilson, John: *Logic and Sexual Morality*, p.19.
- (11) Ibid., p.19.
- (12) Wilson, John: *Practical Methods of Moral Education*
- (13) Hart, H.L., *Law, Liberty and Morality*, p. 20
- (14) McNeilly. F.S.: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*:  
Vol. LXVI, 1965 — 66, p. 173.
- (15) Ibid., P. 173.
- (16) Ibid., P. 173.



(17) Ibid., P. 175.

(18) Ibid., P. 176.(19) Ibid., P. 181.

(20) Ibid., P. 181.

(21) Ibid., p. 181.

(22) Atkinson, R.F.: *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, P. 176.

(23) Al-Bukhari and Muslim.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FAMILY TO MORAL EDUCATION

We have seen how Shari'a acts as the main integrating factor in Islamic society, by planning the economic, political, social and moral aspects. As it plans the social life and its bases and values, and as the family is the fundamental unit of social life, so the family is also founded on principles drawn from Shari'a. These principles determine, for example, how the family is formed, define the relationship between husband and wife, between parents and children and between members of the nuclear family and their relatives. Not only that, but they guide parents in their attempt to bring up their children morally. Adherence to these principles preserves the family and keeps it united, helps to produce harmony and stability in society and so makes the contribution of the family to moral education of immense value. In the Islamic society, providing children with love and security and correct upbringing is a way of worshipping God and fulfilling one's duty to society. Let us now, in this chapter see the nature of family life in the Islamic society and how it contributes to the moral education of children.

#### **The Family in the Islamic Society**

In its attempt to encourage the Muslim to have a family of his own, the Qur'an has drawn attention to the fact that the necessity and the desirability of family life are not a new thing. The Prophets who are to be taken as examples, desired the family and were deeply connected with it. Zakariyya asked his Lord to grant him a family: (3:38)

«... Zakariyya prayed to his Lord, saying: O my Lord, grant me from you a progeny that is pure, for you are He who hears prayers .



Abraham prayed: (14:4)

«O my Lord, make me one who establishes regular prayer and also (raise such) among my offspring; O our Lord, and accept my prayer».

God accepted of them and provided them with wives and children: (13:38)

«We did send apostles before you and provided them with wives and children».

The believers also prayed to God to give them the opportunity of enjoying living in families of their own: (25:74)

«And those who pray, Our Lord, grant us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous».

The Prophets and the believers did not want to take their wives and children as mere accidents and playthings, but they wanted them to be a real comfort and fulfillment of their spiritual and moral aspirations. They wanted, through them and through themselves, by God's help, to be able to give a lead for truth and righteousness.

Having encouraged the Muslims to form families of their own, Islam has called strongly for marriage, The Qur'ān says: (25:54)

«And it is He who has created man from the water and he has made for him blood relationship and marriage relationship».

«marry those among you who are single». (24:32)

### **The Relationship Between Husband and Wife**

Islam requires that every Muslim must live in a married state; for marriage has a double function. It is the means of the multiplication of the human race and it is the means of the moral uplift of man. What brings about the moral uplift of men and women is the fact that Islam encourages people to get married. Marriage, according to Islam, is not merely for the satisfaction of the sexual instinct. It has also spiritual, moral and social functions, which must be taken into consideration. For this reason Islam has ensured that the man must choose his wife carefully



and that the woman must be consulted before she is married. The Prophet says:

«When one of you asks a woman in marriage, then if he is able that he should look into what invited him to have her in marriage, he should do it».<sup>(1)</sup>

Al-Mughira reported that he made a proposal of marriage to a woman, and the Prophet said:

«See her, for this is more likely to bring about agreement between you».<sup>(2)</sup>

As to the woman, the Prophet says:

«The widow shall not be married until she is consulted, and the virgin shall not be married until her consent is obtained».<sup>(3)</sup>

To bring about the moral uplift of both the husband and the wife, Islam draws attention to the fundamental qualities which qualify men and women for marriage. The Prophet states the fundamental things on account of which a woman is married by saying:

«A woman is married on account of four things: on account of her wealth, and on account of the nobility of her family, and her beauty, and on account of her character (which results from close adherence to religious teachings). So attain success with the one possessing nobility of character»<sup>(4)</sup>

To choose a wife for her nobility of character is to guarantee that she will pass her noble character to her children and that she will provide them with a good example.

The Prophet also draws attention to the qualities which qualify a man for marriage. He says:

«If a man comes to you asking to marry one of your daughters, and you know that he is pious and is of noble character, then pave the way for him to marry her»<sup>(5)</sup>.

Here also the stress is laid on piety and nobility of character, for these are the qualities which a woman must expect in her husband.



So both husband and wife are to be selected on the basis of piety and nobility of character, and the most honoured of them in the sight of God is the one who is most righteous.

The relationship between the husband and the wife is, therefore, maintained by marriage which is a sacred contract entered into by both of them by mutual agreement, for life. The Qur'ān describes this relationship as follows: (30:21)

«And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with; and He has put love and mercy between your(hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect».

The husband is to dwell in tranquility with his wife and find quietness of mind in her. All this should cause him to exhibit towards her qualities such as chivalry, kindness, tenderness and understanding. These qualities undoubtedly have their effect on the moral upbringing of children; for it means that there is stability in the family and there is harmony and understanding between the husband and the wife. It means also that there will be less or no broken families and less or no illegitimate children in society.

The Qur'ān says: (4:1)

«Reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for God ever watches over you».

The wife must be respected, for it is through her that family relationships arise. Sex, which governs so much of our physical life, and has so much influence on our emotions, deserves not our contempt or our pleasant indulgence, but our respect. With this in mind, the relationship between the husband and the wife must be considered. That is why the Prophet said in his Farewell Speech,

«Be good to your wives, for you have married them on a sacred contract based on honour and honesty guarded by the watchful presence of God»<sup>(6)</sup>.

So the relationship which the husband maintains with his wife is to be preserved and continuously strengthened by him because it is basically a



fulfillment of a covenant between God and himself. The Prophet says:

«The most perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral excellence, and the best of you are the kindest of you to their wives»<sup>(7)</sup>.

When a husband fulfils his duties and responsibilities towards his wife, it is fair to expect the wife to fulfil her duties and responsibilities towards him; and this is summarized by the Qur'ān as follows: (2:228)

«And women shall have rights similar to their duties towards their husband, according to what is equitable».

The ideal relationship between husband and wife, which I have just described, provides for children a healthy and stable environment in which they can be properly brought up. But this ideal relationship between husband and wife may not continue; things may not go right always, they may have sharp differences which may cause divorce. In these circumstances, Islam tries hard to provide the best possible environment for children whose parents are divorced, so that they can be socially and morally well looked after. Let us see how Islam does that.

The husband and the wife must try hard to restore love and comfort for each other. If they fail, the Qur'ān says: (4:35)

«If you fear a breach between them (husband and wife), appoint two arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, God will cause their reconciliation: for God has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things».

Bearing in mind that God is acquainted with all things and that He will help them in their attempt to reconcile the differences, the arbiters must approach the task objectively. If they fail, it means that the husband and wife are not likely to live together in harmony. In this case it is wise to leave each other, and the Qur'ān says (4:130)

«But if they disagree (and must part) God will provide abundance for all from his all-reaching bounty: for God is He who cares for all and is wise».

To fail to live together in love and comfort does not mean that you are destined to suffer and live a miserable life; perhaps you look for another



partner in order to achieve love and comfort.

Divorce, if it is inevitable, should not be followed by vengeance and evil intentions. The Qur'an says: (65:2)

«Either take them (wives) back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms».

Everything should be done fairly and all interests should be safeguarded.

For example: (65:6-7)

«Let the women live (*in'idda*) in the same style as you live, according to your means. Annoy them not, and do not make her life miserable. And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their (children); and if they suckle you (offspring), give them their recompense; and take mutual counsel together according to what is just and reasonable. And if you find yourselves in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the father's behalf. Let the man of means spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what God has given him. God puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, God will soon grant relief».

All this is done for the sake of the children who are to be provided, particularly in these circumstances, with every possible care. Consider also what the Qur'an says: (2:233)

«The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child; no father on account of his child».

The mother, provided her moral behaviour is satisfactory, has the right to bear the child until he is seven years old. After, according to what is good for him. If the moral behaviour of the mother is not satisfactory, then the



child will be taken from her even before he reaches seven years of age. This is to protect the child and to guarantee that his moral behaviour is not affected.

So Islam puts forward sound principles for an ideal relationship between husbands and wives, and educate people to maintain that relationship. At the same time, it makes every necessary precaution, in case that relationship is broken, that children must be looked after in the best possible way.

### **The Relationship between Parents and Children**

The Qur'ān says: (18:46)

«Wealth and children are allurements of the life of this world».

Although children are a comfort of their parents' eyes and the charm of the life of this world, they are also considered by their parents as a fulfillment of their spiritual and moral aspirations. This is because parents will have a wider opportunity of thanking God and of showing gratitude to him, for providing them with children, and because they hope that their children after they have been properly brought up, will be able to lead a righteous life and ask God to be kind to their parents and reward them.

### **The Rights of the Children**

The Qur'ān says: (17:31)

«Kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin».

Here the Qur'ān commands us not to kill our children for fear of want; but this also implies that we must not kill our children because of carelessness or lack of proper care. It is their right to live and the state should see to it they are properly cared for.

It follows from this that the child must be met, when he is born, with tenderness and love, and be given a good name, a name which he will like



when he grows up. It is his right to be properly brought up. The Prophet says,

«Be good to your children and teach them good morals»<sup>(8)</sup>

It is the right of the children that their father must support them; the Prophet says:

«Start by those whom you support... the child says to his father, support me, on whom do you want me to depend?»<sup>(9)</sup>

The children also have the right to inherit their parents. the Qur'an says: (4:11)

«God (thus) directs you as regards you children's (inheritance) : to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half».

A male gets double the share of the female in an inheritance and the reason for this is to be found in the responsibility which a man shoulders in life. He undertakes to maintain his wife and provide for her and their children, and he has to bear the responsibility of the whole structure of the family. In this way every member of the family gets a share, and so the unity of the family is preserved and the possibility of envy or jealousy among members of the family is removed.

### **The Rights of Parents**

Islam has ensured the rights of parents by defining these rights clearly. Parents are the source of the family and they exert a great effort in bringing up the children, and so they deserve to be respected and honoured by being given certain rights.

The Qur'an urges the Muslims to be kind and considerate to parents, even if they are not Muslims: (13:15)

«But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice and consideration».

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More attention should be paid to them when they grow old. The Qur'aan says: (17:23)

«Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour».

It is obvious that when parents grow old and become weak, they need more care and they expect it, and their children must be willing to give it to them, because they have exerted a great effort in bringing them up. They have to be supported and well looked after. Even after the parents' death, Islam has urged their sons and their daughters to continue their duties towards them. The Prophet says:

«When a parent dies, all his work stops except for three things: a running *sadaqa* (charity), knowledge to be made use of and a righteous son or a righteous daughter to continue to pray for him»<sup>(10)</sup>.

This strong relationship between parents and children is of immense value to moral education. When parents love their children, take them as a fulfillment of their spiritual and moral ambition, spend considerable time with them and do their best to bring them up properly, and when children respect their parents, obey them and be close and kind to them, all this will create a favourable environment for moral education to be achieved.

### **The Extended Family**

The family in its wider meaning includes relatives and Islam urges members of the nuclear family to maintain strong relations with their relatives. The Qur'aan says: (2:83)

«Worship none but God, treat with **kindness** your parents and kindred».

To be concerned with relatives and to maintain good relations with them is to ensure that family ties are to be strong and united. The Qur'aan warns against neglecting family ties and breaking the unity of the family: (47:22-23)

«Then is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are men whom



God has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight».

So, according to the Qur'añ, to break the ties of kith and kin is similar to the doing of mischief in the land, and he who does that is cursed by God.

The Prophet also urges us to keep close to our relatives. He says:

« Kindred complained to God' O God, I have received injustice, I have been deserted, God said, »Would you like Me to bless those who strengthen your ties, and sever those who sever you?» Kindred said, Yes then God said `As you wish' »<sup>(11)</sup>.

Even when some relatives fail to maintain good relations with one, one must be tolerant and forgiving, and one must not take that as an excuse for deserting them. In one of the traditions, a man said to the Prophet,

«There are certain relatives of mine, I always visit them but they do not come to me; I try to be kind to them but they insult me; I tolerate and forgive them but they treat me badly». The Prophet said, If this is so, then you are feeding them sins, and if you continue to be good to them, God will back you and help you (to be good to them) »<sup>(12)</sup>.

The Prophet did not ask him to treat them equally, on the contrary, he urged him to continue to be good to them because

«The man who is good to his relatives, *al-wasil*, is not the man who treats them equally, but it is he who, when his relatives desert him, continues to be good to them»<sup>(13)</sup>.

Besides the self-discipline that a person finds in keeping up his responsibilities towards his relatives, despite their attitude towards him, society will benefit a great deal when good relations are maintained in the extended family. As the Islamic society is a collection of extended families, there will be good relations between its members and this will add to its integration. Moreover, in the case of a child who loses his parents, or whose parents may be lacking in some necessary things which are of vital importance to his upbringing, this may be compensated for by



some of the relatives who can provide love and security, financial help or moral guidance.

What I have said so far is a very brief introduction about family relationships. I have said that the family is the basic unit on which society is built. The value of responsibility within the family circle is that it is the basis on which the family stands. It rests on the fundamental characteristics of human nature, on the emotions of pity and love and on the necessity of material needs and welfare. Thus it is the nest in which and around which are produced all the morals and the manners of society. In other words, the family is the nest which produces for the society morally educated children. The stability and the harmony which are brought about by good and close relations between all members of the family—between husband and wife, parents and children and between all members of the extended family, all this acts as a necessary condition of achieving moral education in the family. The sufficient condition is provided by the direct contribution that the family makes to moral education. Let us now assess how the family contributes directly to the moral education of children.

### **Moral Education in the Family**

It is undoubtedly true that home background is highly relevant in understanding the behaviour of children. This is clearest in the extreme cases. Take, on the one hand, the young trouble-maker whose parents bring him up looking untidy, careless, inconsiderate to his parents and teachers and irresponsible, whose father is often out of home and whose mother cannot cope, or whose parents always quarrel with each other. On the other hand, take the well-behaved and responsible child whose parents bring him up looking clean and tidy, take close interest in what he does at school and provide him with a good example. For this reason Islam has paid greater attention to the family or home background and considered it to be the most important element in the moral upbringing of children.

In the Islamic society, the role of the family is to uphold the spiritual values and safeguard cultural traditions influencing the moral outlook of each family member, particularly those of the young generation. The development of personality begins at a very early age. Therefore, the



family becomes the first source of influencing its growth. But this growth should take the direction which brings about a more balanced life for the child when he grows up. That is why Islam has emphasized the necessary unity of the spiritual and physical, the intellectual and the emotional in the development of personality. Parents are obliged to provide the child with love and security and guard his conduct by educating him in the Islamic values.

The Qur'añ says: (66:6)

«O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones....»

We are commanded not only to guard our conduct but also that of our children by trying our best to give them a proper Islamic moral education. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall attempt to show how this can be achieved.

### **The Effect of Heredity**

We have seen how Islam urges men and women to choose very carefully each other as husbands and wives. One of the reasons for this careful choice is to obtain the good effects of heredity and avoid the bad ones. The Prophet says:

«Select (fit) women (in respect of character) for your seed, and marry (your) equals or *akfa*' and give your daughters in marriage to them»<sup>(14)</sup>.

Here the word 'equals' or *akfa*' refers mainly to equality in religion or character. That is why the Prophet has laid stress on nobility of character as a criterion for marriage, «attain success with the one possessing nobility of character». So right from the start, before marriage, the would-be parents must be conscious of the fact that their future children are to possess good hereditary traits which facilitate their moral upbringing.

It is true that what is being transferred by heredity is not ready-made abilities or qualities, but only the pre-requisites for their development. These pre-requisites may develop or wilt, depending on prevailing conditions, the nature of the educational influence, and the whole system of upbringing to which a given child is exposed. In other words,



hereditary inclinations are always potentially there, and it is the duty of the parents, through proper upbringing, to actualize the good ones and shutter the bad ones. As it is much easier to develop good inclinations and characteristics than to weaken the bad ones, this must be borne in mind when considering hereditary factors before marriage. In this way the family contributes effectively to the moral education of children by trying to equip them with good inborn moral characteristics.

### **Parents as Good Examples**

Any moral system, however good it might be, becomes mere theory if it is not put into genuine practice. God revealed His messages to mankind through Prophets who were human beings, to show them that what has been revealed can be successfully put into practice.

God did confer a great favour on the Muslims when He sent to them the Prophet Mohammad to rehearse to them the signs of God and to sanctify them and teach them the Qur'ān and wisdom. But the Prophet did not only convey the message theoretically, he also succeeded in giving a living example of how to abide by it. The Qur'ān says: (21:21)

«You have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day; and who engages much in the praise of God».

As the Prophet's pattern of conduct is to be taken by Muslims as an example to be followed in all the institutions of society, and as the Prophet himself has set a practical example for the Muslims, so also parents, teachers and all members of society who are in authority must themselves be good examples.

There is a close relationship between the general atmosphere in the family and character of the children. It is very difficult for a child to tell the truth if he discovers that his parents themselves tell lies. It is equally difficult for him to be honest if he knows that his mother, for example, is in the habit of cheating him or his brother or his father.

It is also true that the child whose parents treat him with cruelty cannot learn to be kind and tolerant. When parents provide bad examples for their children we cannot expect them to be well brought up.



The general atmosphere of the family cannot be artificially invented or sustained. Only the parents' personal life and their actual behaviour creates and upholds it. This is because their behaviour is the most decisive factor. They must not think that they can bring up their children only when they talk with them or teach them or direct them. They actually bring them up during every moment of their life, even if they are not present. How sincere they are in their prayers, how close they are to each other, the way they dress, the way they talk with other people and about others, how kind they are to relatives and to others and how they react to happiness and sorrow, etc.

Even when parents advise their children repeatedly to be honest, kind, tolerant and well disciplined, etc., they must not expect their children to listen to their advice if what they themselves practise contradicts what they say. They must know that when practice contradicts theory, righteousness is frustrated. Al-Ghazali says:

Whenever a person partakes of something and warns others not to touch it because it is a deadly poison, he makes himself a laughing stock to man and lays himself open to their accusation and, what is still worse, he makes them more anxious to try what they have been forbidden to do, saying that had it not been the sweetest and the most delicious of all things, he would not have kept it exclusively for himself»<sup>(15)</sup>.

This is particularly true with young children who are always keen to try what they have been forbidden to do. Parents should feel ashamed when they enjoin what is right upon their children and forget themselves. The Qur'an says: (2:44)

«Do you enjoin right conduct on people, and forget (to practise it) yourselves, and yet you recite the Qur'an, will you not understand?»

Besides the fact that it is shameful for parents to preach what they do not practise, children will be disappointed when what they see contradicts what they are told. Childhood and adolescence are not only times of great hopes but also periods of great doubts which may frustrate them and may result in lack of self—assurance. When a child loses faith in his parents, he be-



gins to distrust others too, and often falls in trouble.

As the family in the Islamic society is the basic unit on which the society is built, and as it is the nest in which the morals and the manners of society, are produced, parents must be well educated in the Islamic values and must have strict moral discipline in order to exhibit good personal and moral qualities. According to children, what is right and wrong is related to what parents or teachers say and do. So a vitally important contribution by parents to moral education is to practise *al-ibadat* properly. This will provide them with moral discipline, moral stamina and readiness to lead a genuine moral life all through their lives.

They must not only recite the Qur'ān regularly and teach it to their children, but they must also conform in their daily behaviour to the moral injunctions, positive or negative, set for them in it. They must perform prayers punctually and teach their children who have reached seven years of age to do that also; and it is good if they take their children to the mosque. As children's character depends on socially conscious behaviour traits such as honesty, straightforwardness, upholding of Islamic principles, responsiveness, respect and kindness towards others etc., parents must not only preach these qualities, but they must practise them genuinely. Only when there is a stable family which has high Islamic morals prevailing within it as well as in relationship to society, can it be rightly said that parents have succeeded in establishing good habits in their children by providing them with living examples.

### **Habits in Moral Education**

Although it is desirable, in the Islamic society, to develop rationality and moral understanding in people, facts about child development reveal that at the most formative years of a child's development he is inaccessible to rationality and moral understanding and impervious to the proper manner of passing them on. As the very young child's idea of right and wrong is determined, in most cases, by his parents and teachers, it is logical to say that at this stage of moral education emphasis is to be on habit, tradition and being properly brought up. This, however, does not mean that reason and intellectual training have no place at all at this stage. In spite of the fact that rationality and moral understanding are



beyond the grasp of young children, I believe that they can and must be gradually introduced to them. Children, particularly when they become adolescents, imitate not only their parents' habits and attitudes towards fulfilling their duty towards God and society, but also their ways of thinking and their reasoning. This by itself is a good reason to urge parents to maintain moral maturity and a certain intellectual level which help them to articulate with their children. (I shall expand this in the next section). So it is the duty of parents and teachers to introduce children to rationality and moral understanding; and the minimum effort at which they must aim is to discipline the children and initiate them into the necessary habits of behaviour in a way that does not stultify the development of rationality and moral understanding at a later stage. Indeed, at a later stage, the child must be strongly urged to use reason and moral understanding. This is because, as I have said earlier, Islamic morality, in addition to revelation, is based on intention, reason and moral understanding. So if parents do well in establishing the love of reason and moral understanding in their children, they will be carrying out an extremely important Islamic educational task.

The duty of the family in the Islamic society is mainly to transmit the Islamic moral and cultural traditions to the children. But as the very young child is limited in rationality and moral understanding, the transmission of the Islamic moral and cultural traditions can be achieved, to a very large extent, by initiating the children into constant performance of activities which uphold these moral and cultural values.

Al-Ghazali says that the joy and the enjoyment which a gambler finds in gambling may be equal to or greater than the joy and the enjoyment of other people who do not gamble; bearing in mind that gambling may have taken away all his money and may have destroyed his home. But in spite of this he continues to love gambling and enjoy it. The only explanation for this, according to Al-Ghazali, is that gambling has become a habit. He goes on to say that this example and others show that actions are greatly governed by the habits we form. He says that:

«since, through the formation of bad habits, the soul can be led into the way of enjoying vice, it can



similarly be trained to delight in virtue by being disciplined in the constant performance of what is good»<sup>(16)</sup>.

It might be argued that the good act through which our children learn to be good or learn to apply Islamic moral traditions is an act which they may perform reluctantly. They may find no pleasure in it. I do not think this reluctance will continue for a long time, especially if the child is approached in the right way. Take, for instance, a child of seven, who is repeatedly asked by his parents to perform the five prayers of the day punctually, recite some verses from the Qur'ān and learn them by heart, to be clean, tidy and responsible, to accompany his parents or one of them when they visit their relatives or neighbours, etc. He may find all this, at first, difficult to do, but in the course of time and after a continuous repetition of the 'good act', they become good in the sense that they have developed the habit or the disposition of goodness. Such habits flow naturally and the children no longer perform the 'good act' reluctantly or painfully, but easily and pleasantly.

Aristotle also stressed the importance of habits in moral education. He says:

«But the moral virtues we do acquire by first exercising them. The same is true of the arts and crafts in general. The craftsman has to learn how to make things, but he learns in the process of making them. So we become builders by building, harp players by playing the harp. By a similar process we become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave action.... So with our desires and passions. Some men are made temperate and gentle, others profligate and passionate, the former by conducting themselves in one way, the latter by conducting themselves in another, in situations in which their feelings are involved. We may sum it all in the generalization, 'like activities produce like dispositions'. This makes it our duty that our activities



have the right character since the differences of quality in them are repeated in the dispositions that follow in their train. So it is a matter of real importance whether our early education confirms us in one set of habits or another. It would be nearer the truth to say that it makes a very great difference indeed, in fact all the difference in the world»<sup>(17)</sup>.

In the light of what Aristotle is saying, parents must see to it that the activities of their children must have the right character, because it is their actions that determine their dispositions. But I believe that from the point of view of moral education, it does not only make all the difference whether we form habits of one kind or another from our childhood, but it makes all the difference too, in what manner such habits are formed.

In the previous section, I have said that the most effective manner of helping children to acquire good habits is that parents themselves must always provide the good example. In other words they must continuously provide the best pattern of conduct for their children to imitate, they must consciously direct all their activities towards the right character which they want their children to have.

Another effective means of persuading children to form good habits is to be found in the amount of obedience that the children display. Obedience in children is an effective expression of their love, trust and respect towards their parents and other adult family members; it also expresses a conscious desire to acknowledge their experience and wisdom. The development of obedience can be fostered by the close relationship that the parents succeed in maintaining between themselves and their children. This strong relationship has to start from the very early days of childhood. Breast feeding, close physical and emotional contact and understanding are the pillars of this relationship. The development of obedience can also be fostered by the brief and simple explanation to the child of the reason why he should behave himself in the given fashion and not otherwise.

Parents should also try the use of encouragement and praise. Children respond to praise and they appreciate it particularly when their accom-



plishment and their self-improvement are noticed and acknowledged by their parents. Encouragement develops in children a belief in their worthiness and in their abilities. This encouragement can foster sensitivity and enthusiasm as well as discipline. Parents may use a gift as a prize for something very special, such as improvement in behaviour, or as a reward for a socially or a morally significant deed. Al-Ghazali draws attention to the importance of using reward and praise in the upbringing of children. He says:

«Whenever a child displays commendable behaviour or performs a significant moral deed, he must be rewarded in a way that pleases him and must be praised openly»<sup>(18)</sup>.

If parents want to achieve desirable results during the upbringing of their children, they must not lose patience too soon. Of course, it is easier to get angry and to reprimand them than to use psychological insight and find a way to make the child think and reconsider. By paying attention to the daily experiences of the child as well as to his feelings, parents may discover the reason for any unusual behaviour. To achieve this, parents, especially the mother, need not only patience and self-control but also a certain amount of sensitivity. The development of a child's personality is a complex and delicate matter. It demands a lot of attention, thoughtful reflection and constant searching for the proper approach. It is for this reason that Islam retains for mothers the primary duty of bringing up their children. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall try to assess the role of the mother in the family.

### **The Mother and the Upbringing of Children**

Islam looks at life from many sides and envisages for individuals duties which differ one from the other, but which are all mutually connected and harmonized. So it envisages the respective duties of men and women and it lays on each of them the responsibility of fulfilling a duty primarily towards the development of life as a whole, and it ordains for each of them guaranteed privileges, in order to endure this universal and human aim.



The father undertakes to support his wife and provide for her and their children. He shoulders the responsibility of the whole structure of the family. The reason for this is physical endowment, because he is free from the domestic cares of the family, he can attend the affairs of society over considerable periods, and can apply to these all his physical and intellectual powers. This does not, in any way, belittle the role of the mother in society.

Islam has raised women to a position of equality with men; whenever the physical endowments and the responsibilities are identical, men and women are equal; whenever there is some difference, in these respects, the discrimination follows that difference, for example a man gets double the share of a woman in an inheritance because his responsibilities are greater. But in the spiritual and religious field men and women are equal. The Qur'añ says: (4:124)

«If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith, they will enter Paradise, and not the least injustice will be done to them».

This equality is also stated in verses (3:195) and (16:97). In the sphere of possessing and administering money, they are equal. The Qur'añ says: (4:7)

«From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,- a determinable share».

Besides the right of the spiritual faith and that of material independence, Islam grants women the right of intellectual achievement; it is obligatory upon them to search for knowledge. The Prophet says:

«The search for knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim (man and woman) »<sup>(19)</sup>.

But Islam retains for women the primary duty of upholding the family circle, above all, the upbringing of children. This is because in the Islamic society, life is more than merely economic or physical. There are other



religious, moral, social and educational objectives. Without the deep involvement of the mother in the upbringing of her children, it becomes very difficult to consider all these objectives which provide the child with a more balanced life.

It might be argued that the advance of industrialism has had, as one of its most important consequences, the progressive removal from the family of its educational function. Formal educational institutions, it might be said, can take over from the family not only the teaching of specific skills, but much normative training as well. The school, that is to say, can become the focal socializing agency. But this cannot be accepted. Even in the most advanced industrial economy the school cannot and does not take over completely from the family.

The first five years of life are crucial foundation years, and even after starting at school the child normally continues to live with his parents and to be deeply influenced by their behaviour and attitudes. Moreover, the family does not only share in the socialization process alongside the school, and indeed, other agencies as well, but it exerts a profound influence on the response of the child to commendable moral behaviour and to the school. It is for this reason that Islam has laid emphasis on the consideration of this influence and has retained for the mother the primary duty of upholding this influence. Indeed, she must be occupied with this, for the development of her child demands a lot of attention, thoughtful reflection and a continuous searching for the right approach. Let us take one aspect of the mother's role in the upbringing of her children, and examine it, to show how important she is in exerting a considerable influence on the response of her child to desirable moral behaviour and to a good academic performance. This aspect is the language she uses when she communicates with her child.

Conscious tension to verbalize moral guidance and make it explicit, strengthens the relationship between the child and his parents, his mother in particular. Bernard Mayo says:

«It is the language, the monopoly of human beings, that provides the common link between the controller and the controlled and what characterizes human



conduct is that it is controlled by methods involving the use of **language**»<sup>(20)</sup>.

Basil Bernstein says:

«that certain linguistic forms involve for the speaker a loss or an acquisition of skills—both cognitive and social—which are strategic for educational and occupational **success**»<sup>(21)</sup>.

He distinguishes between two types of language, formal and public. Formal language is one

«where the structure and syntax are relatively difficult to predict for any one individual and where the formal possibilities or sentence organisation are used to **develop meaning** and make it **explicit**»<sup>(22)</sup>.

An example of formal language is when a mother articulates with her child in this way: «I would rather you make less noise, darling.

By contrast, public language is one which is

«distinguished by the rigidity of the syntax and the limited and restricted use of structural possibilities for sentence organisation. Thus these speech elements are highly predictable for any one speaker. It is a form of relatively condensed speech in which certain meanings are restricted and the possibility of their elaboration is **reduced**»<sup>(23)</sup>

An example of a public language will be when another mother, instead of articulating with her child, directs him abruptly by saying, «Shut up»

Bernstein goes on to say that,

«the child learns his social structure and interjects it from the very beginnings of speech. This process of subordinating behaviour to verbally elaborated meanings will progressively become the major instrument by which the child growing becomes self-regulating»<sup>(24)</sup>.



So for mothers

«a way is open for the control of behaviour through verbal means which maximises the possibility of rational ordering and manipulation.<sup>(25)</sup>»

In the Islamic society where behaviour is consciously oriented towards an explicit set of goals and values, the child should be brought up in an articulated structure. The child should grow up in a moral structure backed by a simple form of rationality where his life is organized from early age. An educated and a devoted mother should address her children by using a language which relates the expression of her feelings to her approved moral and social recognition. In this way, her influence on her children's response to approved moral and social behaviour will be remarkably effective. At the same time when a child is used to formal language, he will find communication with the teacher easier, and so in this way his response to school can bring about a high academic standard.

But the mother who exerts a lot of attention and exercises thoughtful reflection and tries consciously to verbalize her intent when she communicates with her children, is the mother whose sole occupation is the proper upbringing of her children. It is no wonder, therefore, if Islam keeps for mothers the upholding of the family circle and gives them the important responsibility of producing to society well-behaved human beings.

In this chapter I have tried to show how the family in the Islamic society contributes to the moral education of children. The family in the Islamic society contributes indirectly to moral education by providing the home in which parents can live in tranquility with each other and find quiet of mind, and where children find love and stability and the right environment for their upbringing. Even in case of divorce, Islam provides for the children the best possible environment in which they can be socially and morally well brought up. The family contributes directly to the moral education of children by transmitting the Islamic moral and cultural traditions mainly through the cultivation of good habits in their children. This task can be successfully achieved if parents themselves are well



disciplined and able to provide good examples for their children, and mothers must be prepared to be exclusively occupied with the upbringing of their children.

In the next chapter we shall see how in the Islamic society the school is an important social institution which contributes effectively to the moral education of children.



## Notes

(1) Abū Dāwūd

(2) Muslim

(3) Al Bukhāri.

(4) Al Bukhāri

(5) Al Tirmidhi

(6) Ibn Hishām: op. cit. part II, p. 390.

(7) Al Tirmidhi

(8) Ibn Mājah

(9) Al-Bukhāri

(10) Muslim

(11) Al-Bukhāri

(12) Muslim

(13) Al-Bukhāri

(14) Al-Tirmidhi

(15) Op. cit., Part I, p. 51.

(16) Al-Ghazāli: op. cit., p. 51.

(17) Op. cit., Book II, p. 42-43

(18) Op. cit., p. 63.

(19) Ibn Mājah

(20) Mayo, Bernard: *Ethics and the Moral life*, p.21

(21) Bernstein, Basil: *Social Class and linguistic Development: A Theory of Social Learning, in Education, Economy and Society* p. 288.

(22) Ibid., p.291.

(23) Ibid., p.291.

(24) Ibid., p.294.

(25) Ibid., p.294.



## CHAPTER SIX

### MORAL EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

#### INTRODUCTION

The Mosque was the first and the only educational institution in the early Islamic society. It meant much more than a mere place of Divine worship. It was a cultural centre, a place to which one should go to learn or teach some good. The Prophet says:

«Whoever comes to this mosque of mine, and he does not come but for some good which he would learn or teach, he is like one who is engaged in *jihād* in the way of God..»<sup>(1)</sup>.

The Mosque, being the essential meeting place of the Muslims five times a day, became also a centre where all important matters relating to the welfare of the Muslim community were discussed and where Muslims gathered together on all important occasions. The Mosque was thus not only the spiritual center of Muslims but also their educational, social and political centre. But, despite all this the sacredness of the Mosque as the house of Divine worship was fully observed.

Although, from the early years of Islam right up to the present day, the Mosque has played an important role in the life of people, the idea of school as the proper educational institution in the Islamic society is commonly accepted.

But although school differs in buildings, surroundings and organization from the Mosque, it is supposed to be concerned with the essential message of the Mosque. It may be said that it is difficult to see



how the message of school can be the same as that of the Mosque; the message of the Mosque is religious while that of school is not. This is true in secular societies, but in the Islamic society the dichotomy between the school, knowledge or learning in general and the Mosque cannot be maintained because it indicates or implies a dichotomy between religion and life. Islam is a practical religion in which Shari'a guides all walks of life. Learning, for instance, is obligatory upon every Muslim, be he a man or a woman. The first verse revealed to the Prophet encourages learning. It says: (96: 1-5)

«Read, in the name of your Lord, the Creator, who created man from clots of blood. Read! Your Lord is the most Bounteous One, who taught by the pen, taught mankind things they did not know».

This verse repeatedly asked the Prophet to read and to praise knowledge and learning. This shows not only that Islam is a religion in which revelation and reason can go side by side, but also shows how learning is encouraged and revered by Islam, and indeed for the purpose of cultivating rationality and individual responsibility in every member of society. But, most important of all, it shows that knowledge and learning must be directed towards activities which are compatible with Shari'a

Consider also this: (Qur'aan 3: 18)

«God bears witness and so do the angels and those endowed with knowledge, that there is no God but He and that He is standing firm on justice. There is no God but He, the Exalted, the Wise».

This is the noblest witness on the most important issue in Islam, the oneness of God; and this witness is given by God, the angels and those endowed with knowledge. So those who learn at school and those who teach them, and all other learned people in the society must reveal, continuously and persistently, through knowledge and learning, the oneness and greatness of God.



Consider also this: (25:27-28)

«Do not you see that God sends down rain from the sky? With it we then bring out produce of various colours. And in the mountains shades of colour, and black rocks. And so among men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours. Those who truly fear God, among His servants, are those who possess knowledge».

In the above verses there are only hints for the study of certain subjects like agriculture, geology, anthropology, sociology and zoology, etc. What is interesting is that the study of these subjects is closely connected with the fear of God. This means that learning in the Islamic society leads us to know God and fear Him. If the Muslims do not direct their knowledge and learning towards a deeper knowledge of God, they will be like those who are described by the Qur'ān in the following verse: (30:6-7)

«But most people do not understand. They know but some of the outer (things) in life of this world, but of the other life, they are heedless».

Those who confine themselves to the outward show of things will ultimately mislead the way because they are ignorant of the inner realities of things.

What I have said so far is sufficient to throw light on the Islamic picture of school. School is a small society which acts as a link between the family and the outside world. Its aim is to produce good human beings. It builds on the academic and moral abilities of children who come from good homes, and exerts an effort to allow children who come from comparatively poorer homes to acquire better academic and moral standards. It provides for the pupil a secure framework in which he can feel that he can participate in such a way that makes the educational situation more lively. Like the mosque, school transmits the Islamic culture to the children and so moral education is achieved along with the acquisition of knowledge. Not only that, but also because the aims of the Islamic society are clearly established, school can intelligently and



consciously teach those values which are necessary for the achievement of those goals which are generally approved.

Before we turn to see how moral education is taught at school, it would be necessary to remind ourselves of the main elements of Islamic moral education, because it is these elements which I shall apply to the function of school. These elements are:

- a) The teaching of substantive moral judgements which are taken from Shari'a and which are binding on all Muslims.
- b) The cultivation of rationality, awareness and moral understanding, because to refuse to help children, particularly in the secondary school, develop these, is to condemn them to an inferior and incomplete morality.
- c) The creation of a healthy environment in society to allow people to discipline themselves practically into a moral framework. This can be done by creating contexts and activities through which moral education can be achieved.

I want also, before going on to assess how moral education is taught at school, to define the authority of the Muslim teacher. I shall do this not only because the Muslim teacher represents the authority of Shari'a, but also because the application of the above elements of Islamic moral education to the function of the school depends to a very large extent on him. Since these elements are to be achieved through the whole process of education, and the teacher is the most important element in that process, it becomes, therefore, necessary to speak about the authority of the Muslim teacher. By analysing the authority of the Muslim teacher, what I have said about the role of the school will be clearer and will pave the way for an understanding of how the elements of Islamic moral education can be effectively applied to the function of school.



### **The Authority of the Muslim Teacher**

The Muslim teacher is an authority in the de jure sense, that is, he is put «in authority» because, according to agreed criteria, he can teach a subject and is able to maintain social control in the school and to initiate the pupils into good behaviour. His task is a difficult one, and it is made more difficult by the fact that he is appointed as teacher without the consent of the pupils, and he may teach them things which do not appeal to them. For this reason, though he is in authority over a class, he may or may not be effective as far as moral education is concerned. For him to be successful in the field of moral education, his official authority needs to be supported by society. If he is respected and highly exalted by the community, and his authority stems from an accepted tradition, this will help him a great deal to carry out his task. The pupils will also exalt him and look at him with respect and take him as an example. But if he is ignored by the community, it means that his authority is not backed by a tradition and this will have a bad psychological effect on him and will deprive society of an authority which undoubtedly has a tremendous effect on the bringing up of children. So the social status of the teacher is important in initiating the teacher into his task and it usually reflects the seriousness or otherwise of society as far as moral education is concerned. Before I assess the social status of the Muslim teacher let us consider, very briefly, the social status of the American teacher and that of the Soviet teacher.

### **The American Teacher**

In America, schooling started as a local responsibility, due to difficulty in communication in colonial times and due to determination to check the privileged class from popular control. Thus the educational provision has been the result of efforts made by local communities to meet the needs of a highly diverse population.

«This has meant that the teacher has been seen as the instrument of the popular will, rather than as the interpreter of knowledge and ways of thinking outside the range of sympathy and understanding of the common man» (2).



The teacher in America cannot claim professional status responsible to a body of knowledge and tradition built up by previous generations. He is regarded only as the local community agent, employed to serve the community.

The influence of business in America is great.

«The businessman, by which term is meant any owner or leading executive of a firm of any type or size, feels himself to be a natural leader in his local community and is not inclined to share his position as such with workers or intellectuals. He thus takes the keenest interest in what is being taught in the schools, especially when, in social studies, it might conceivably shape critical activities towards current business ideology»<sup>(3)</sup>.

It is not surprising, therefore, due to the pressures to which they are subjected, that teachers in America try to satisfy the immediate needs of a critical public, rather than design courses and carry out tasks that emerge, in the first place, from their authorities as teachers. They are, therefore, passive because they neither take a leading role in designing the curriculum nor in bringing about a change in the behaviour of the children. They are not expected, for instance, to initiate the pupils into modifying the dominating materialistic outlook or to draw their attention to the injustices caused by race discrimination. They are only to follow the current social and economic trends, In the final analysis they are without a respectable social status, and consequently ineffective as far as moral education is concerned.

### **The Soviet Teacher**

The Communist ideology, despite its serious defects, has succeeded in producing the teacher who is keen and enthusiastic about his work. After 1971, the authorities have realised the importance of education and teachers as elements bringing about a social and moral change based on Communist values. One way of maintaining the high social status of the Soviet teacher is by doing this.



«Throughout the U.S.S.R., school opens on the same day, September 1, which is a day of national celebration. Through the last half of August, the press, radio and television hail the coming event all emphasizing the importance of education (and) paying tribute to teachers. When the day arrives, the children proceed to school, accompanied by their parents, brothers, sisters, and friends of the family. Everyone carries flowers. In front of the school doors, there is a ceremony with short speeches by the school director, the president of the parents organisation, leading citizens and distinguished visitors. After the speeches, ... youngsters enter the building to present bouquets to their teachers. The gesture is not without general significance, for it reflects the generally positive attitude of children, and indeed the entire society, towards teachers of the young. This positive orientation is maintained throughout the school years»<sup>(4)</sup>.

Another way, in the Soviet Union, of recognizing the importance of the authority of teachers, is by awarding them honours and decorations.

«On the other hand, the social prestige of the teacher has arisen. Politically, they (teachers) are supported at all levels: socially they play a part in local and national affairs out of all proportion to their numbers»<sup>(5)</sup>

This social support has made the teacher in the Soviet Union an important link between the school, the home and society at large. He visits the home regularly to ensure that there is moral and social harmony in these institutions.

It might be argued that the authority of the teacher in the Soviet Union is backed by power and dictatorship. This is true. I do not believe in the Communist ideology; I am only drawing attention to the fact that the existence of an ideology, whatever it might be, is very important in producing teachers with effective authority. Societies which lack a definite ideology and in which teachers are free to determine their own



relationship with the pupils, I fear may produce lazy, passive and indifferent citizens.

### **The Social Status of the Muslim Teacher**

In the Islamic society, teachers or *'ulama'* enjoy a high social status. We have seen how the first verse in the Qur'*ān* encouraged learning and teaching. Those who possess knowledge and teach it to others are exalted and respected by Islam. The Qur'*ān* says: (58:11)

«God will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to high degrees».

The Prophet says:

«The learned ones are the heirs of the prophets— they leave knowledge as their inheritance; he who inherits it inherits a great fortune»<sup>(6)</sup>.

In this saying the *'ulama'* or teachers are exalted by being described as the heirs of the prophets. To show the importance of teachers, the stress in the saying is also on conveying or teaching knowledge to others and this knowledge is described as great fortune, indicating the worthwhile activities of the teachers.

The Prophet also says:

«There shall be no envy except in two cases: the person whom God has given wealth and power and are directed towards the service of truth; and the person whom God has granted knowledge of things to judge by it and teach it to others»<sup>(7)</sup>.

Here, the acquisition of knowledge is as important as that of wealth. The desire to possess either is made subject to a further condition: the possessor of wealth spends it in the cause of truth, and the possessor of knowledge teaches it to others, so the benefit of humanity is the real end in view.

It is reported in a tradition<sup>(8)</sup> that the Prophet saw two groups of Muslims. One group were saying *du'ā* the others were learning something. He sat for a while with the first group and said



«As to these, they are asking God, so He may or may not give them. But the other group are teaching something».

and he sat with them and said,

«I have been sent as a teacher».

Teaching is encouraged and respected by Islam, and indeed for cultivating rationality and individual responsibility in every member of the society. The Muslim teacher is to initiate the pupils into a message which they will give to their society and to the world. He can, because of the high social status which he enjoys, be an important link between the school, the home and society at large. He can visit the home regularly to ensure that there is moral harmony in the home and the school.

### **The Authority of the Subject**

In addition to the high social status which the Muslim teacher enjoys, he must be an authority on the subject he teaches. By this I mean he must master his subject by learning to be knowledgeable and thoughtful and able to direct his knowledge and thoughts to what pleases God. This mastery of the subject can be achieved by following the fundamental elements of research contained in the following verse: (Qur'ān, 16:78)

«It is He who brought you forth from the wombs of you mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and heart, that you may give thanks».

«Hearing» means using all possible means for gathering knowledge already known; «sight» means to clarify, relate, add to and increase what is already there by employing research and observation; «heart» means to be able to distinguish between what is good and bad in order to cultivate goodness which pleases God. So when I say that the Muslim teacher should master his subject, I mean that he must use all these three faculties which God has created for us, so that he can have depth and insight to help him to impart moral education to pupils.



### **Charismatic Authority**

For the authority of the Muslim teacher to continue with success, as far as moral education is concerned, it must be rooted in personal and moral qualities, that is, he must have charismatic authority. His faith in his mission and his ability to communicate his mission, are more reliable guarantees for continuing success in the field of moral education than the mere authority of the office. What I mean by saying that the Muslim teacher has charismatic authority or strong character can be shown in the light of this verse: (Our'ān, 9: 128)

«Now has come to you an Apostle from among yourselves: it grieves him that you should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the believers is he most kind and merciful».

It is very difficult for the Muslim teacher, if he has a strong character, to see any of his pupils mislead the way. But,

«In dissuading the pupil from his evil ways, (the teacher) should do so by suggestion rather than openly, and with sympathy rather than with odious upbraiding. Open discussion destroys the veil of awe, invites defiance and encourages stubbornness»<sup>(9)</sup>.

He must always be ardently anxious over them and whenever any of them shows signs of improvement, his kindness and mercy surround them and rejoice over them. He must neither be passive and indifferent nor inclined to inflict severe pain on them, because these are signs of weak character.

### **The Authority of Pupils**

However, the most important of all is the authority which the Muslim teacher inculcated in his pupils with the purpose of being authoritative in society. This means that he must prepare them for conscious participation in all rule-governed activities in society and that is for two reasons. First, to possess knowledge as such and to be able to understand the rules that govern the Islamic society, is a matter which is con-



a stronger belief in God. The Qur'an says: (39: 9)

«Say: Are those who know and those who know not alike? Truly, none will take heed but men of understandings».

Secondly, as I have stated earlier, that Islamic rules and principles are unchangeable because they have been formulated with exact prediction to be compatible with future circumstances, and because they are laid down by God for all Muslims, it follows that there is a general agreement about them. To bring about this general agreement about these rules that govern society and to ensure that God's laws are applied, it is obligatory on all Muslims to get prepared to criticize and correct all those put «in authority» in case they misinterpret the rules or mislead the way. They are commanded by the Qur'an to do so: (3: 104).

«Thus God makes plain to you His revelations, so that you may be rightly guided; and that you may grow into a nation that will speak of righteousness, enjoin justice and forbid evil. Such men shall surely triumph».

The Qur'an also says: (9:71)

«The true believers, both men and women are responsible for each other. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil».

This means that all Muslims must call for what is good and must forbid what is evil. They do this not only by criticizing and correcting those «in authority», but also advise and counsel each other within the Islamic rules which show what is right and what is wrong. So, as it is essential for Muslims to be authoritative in society, to acquire intellectual and moral qualities, Islam has encouraged learning and called for strict moral discipline. All this is for cultivating rationality and moral responsibility in every member of the society.

So the Muslim teacher has a message to communicate, to his pupils. This is directed by the Islamic attitude to morals and its picture of the teacher, and it must be seen in these, the influence of a highly developed conscience which continuously considers the watchful presence of God.



If the Muslim teacher is enthusiastic about the subject he teaches and shows depth and insight in it, and is able to exhibit good personal and moral qualities that can be taken as an example by the pupils, then his authority will be continuously successful. But if his authority is rooted de jure without mastery of the subject and devoid of qualities like kindness, fairness, honesty and integrity, then his authority is ineffective. In this case he will either follow a rigid policy to the extent of imposing his ideas on pupils, or be indifferent and passive.

Islamic education is not a limited process of teaching and learning, which goes on, in most cases, mechanically within school. The initiation of the pupil into the moral life and into a message which he will give to the world must be of the greatest interest to the Muslim teacher. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall try to show how the Muslim teacher performs this task by teaching moral education directly as moral rules, by imparting it through academic subjects and by teaching it practically through a discipline maintained by religious and social activities within the school.

### **Primary and Secondary Schools**

Teachers in the primary and secondary schools are concerned with the application of the three elements of Islamic moral education, which are the inculcation of moral rules taken from Shari'a, the cultivation of rationality which makes the rules appear as the fruits of genuine understanding, and practical discipline. Although all these elements are applied in these schools, more emphasis is laid on one or two of them to suit the developmental task within these types of school. I shall deal briefly with moral education in the primary stage, but in some detail with moral education in the secondary school where there is supreme developmental task in adolescence. It is here where the teacher can help the adolescent to acquire a mature moral education which crowns his school education and guides his conduct in life.

### **The Primary Stage**

The very young child who is limited in understanding can only act according to strict rules, what is right and wrong is closely related to what his parents say. When the child comes to the nursery or the infant school, the child learns how to adjust to a wider variety of persons and



situations, The child here learns to show consideration and take some responsibilities in the every day activities of the school. Most of the time the child's idea of right and wrong is determined for him by the parents or the teacher. Here, because children cannot engage in moral discussion, to teach moral education may involve indoctrination. What can we do to avoid the dangers of indoctrination?

John Wilson solves this problem by saying that the essence of indoctrination does not lie in certain methods of education. According to him, this is due to the fact that since young children and infants cannot discuss, the methods we employ to educate them will look like brain-washing

«But having seen that the criterion depends on the rationality of the *content* of what is taught, rather than the methods, we have now an equally useful principle for early education. This principle consists in only educating children to adopt behaviour-patterns and to have feelings which are seen by every sane and sensible person to be agreeable and necessary»<sup>(10)</sup>.

Wilson does not believe that the essence of indoctrination consists in method, and he eliminates altogether intention from being a criterion for deciding what is or is not indoctrination. He depends only on the rationality of the content as a criterion of indoctrination. But this is not enough because his content is only justified by the fact that it is seen «by every sane and sensible person as agreeable and necessary». But, we would like to know, who are to count as sane and sensible? Moreover, this might not be accepted by others who think that they are more sensible, and so it could be considered by them as indoctrination.

It is true that very young children and infants cannot engage in moral discussion and the methods we use to educate them do not involve rational justification and moral understanding. But these methods do not resemble brain-washing and hypnosis, particularly in the Islamic society for two reasons. First, the content of Islamic moral education is determined by God, and so as we have seen, it embodies all the truths arrived at by moral philosophers, and so it is for the Muslim, the ideal moral content. For this reason the teaching of this content to young chil-



dren and infants involves less or no indoctrination at all. Secondly, in this stage of early education, intention is the best criterion for deciding whether we are not indoctrinating. As long as our intention is not to indoctrinate, the methods we use in educating young children and infants will not be harmful, and at any rate they will just be for a time until the children reach a stage in which they are able to discuss and rationalize. However, the teacher can start by initiating the children, particularly in the last two years of junior school, into a form of moral discussion using simple arguments which the children can understand.

The very young child and the infant, at this stage, particularly if they have been brought up in a good Islamic environment at home, in school and society at large, do not separate between religion and the problems of morality and life. This helps to make the curriculum-academic subjects and activities in the school to be introduced to the children with belief in God to permeate all the work. Belief in God, as I have said earlier, is a primary obligation without which all the Muslims do is in vain, and it is associated always with doing good *assalihah* and acts as a source of it.

Belief in God can be inculcated by employing various means within the activities of the curriculum. It can be inculcated, for instance, by encouraging the children to produce simple and expressive paintings showing different parts of nature as a beautiful creation of God. Examples can be taken from the Qur'an where there is a great deal of picture painting. Take for example: (16: 5-6).

«And cattle He has created for you: from them you derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their meat you eat. And you have a sense of pride and beauty in them...».

And (16:10-11)

«It is He Who sends down rain from the sky: from it you drink, and out of it grows the vegetation on which you feed your cattle. With it He produces for



you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought».

And (16:14)

«It is He Who has made the sea subject, that you may eat there of flesh that is fresh and tender, and that you extract there from ornaments to wear. And you see the ships there in that plough the waves, that you may seek (thus) of the bounty of God and that you may be grateful».

Through the pictures and by the help of the teacher, the children can see that everything in Creation proclaims the glory of God. Now the supreme majesty of God having been set out in His favours of all kinds, the children can be initiated into seeing that the worship of any other than God is meaningless, and so the obedience of God in matters of conduct in this life is obligatory and important.

Short and simple poems can be prepared, in which different moral themes are implicit. These poems are to be learnt by heart and recited in congregation in beautiful tunes by the children. Teachings like respect and love of parents, teachers, neighbours, etc., can be the theme of these poems, preferably with simple arguments and reasons to support, these teachings.

Stories based on certain moral attitudes can be written. This has immense advantage as a method of teaching. The stories in the Qur'ān can be put in a simple language to suit the children. Stress should be laid on the particular moral attitude that the children must take. Take, for instance, the story of Moses. Stress can be laid on this (28:25-26)

«Afterwards one of the girls came back to him, walking *bashfully*. She said: «My father invites you so that he may reward you for having watered our flocks for us». . . . Said one of the girls: 'O my (dear) father! engage him on wages: truly the best of men for you to employ is the (man) who is strong and *trusty*'».



Here one of the girls came walking with bashful grace. This is a quality which must be pointed out by the teacher so that little girls can follow the example when they talk to men. At the same time Moses showed his chivalry and proved to be both strong and trusty, and these are the qualities which a woman most admires in the man she loves.

The story of Jesus is also of moral significance to children, and a stress is to be laid on this: (49: 29-32).

«But she pointed to the baby. They said: 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?' He said: 'I am indeed a servant of God; He has given me revelation and made me a prophet; and He has made me blessed wheresoever I be; and has *enjoined* on me *prayer* and *charity* as long as I live; He has made me *kind* to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable'».

The teacher can also point out these qualities so that the children are impressed by them.

Other stories are to be written and films to be shown in which good moral attitudes can be drawn, and contexts are to be created in which qualities like truthfulness, honesty, kindness etc., are practised.

Young children must learn to exercise self-discipline. They must sit properly, stand up when spoken to by the teacher, be tidy and clean, be trained to have good manners of eating, etc., In the junior school, children from the age of seven onwards must be urged to begin prayer in the school, in congregation with their teachers. The Prophet says:

«Command your children at the age of seven to pray, and lash them for it at the age of ten»<sup>(11)</sup>.

### **The Secondary School**

Here the adolescent are in the most critical stage of their development and so they have to be given a mature moral education to help them pass this stage successfully and be of much help to them later in life. At this stage they demand to be convinced of what they are supposed to do, and so moral education is to be given to them in a way which is compatible with this demand. They also need to have strict moral discipline which helps them to resist physical and emotional temptations.



They need also to be given the right sort of sex education. Let us start by teaching moral education Theoretically and through the academic subjects of the curriculum.

### **Moral Education as a Separate Subject**

Morality can be taught directly by encouraging reflective analysis of moral judgements, along the lines indicated in the earlier discussion of Islamic morality, in chapter two. To have moral judgements explicitly recognized and rationally defended will help to produce effective moral education, particularly in the secondary school where adolescents are prepared to argue and demand to be convinced. Or, as al-Ghazali said, «When children reach puberty, it is time to know the philosophy behind these things»<sup>(12)</sup>.

Although the power of employing the rules belongs to the person himself, the role of the teacher is not to be confined to the activity of passing on rules. The teacher is to bring the pupils to a position where they can exercise judgement. This can be done by:

- a) encouraging the pupils to look for all the factors or features in a given situation in order to avoid the danger of overlooking a relevant factor or a feature,
- b) confronting the pupils with a wider variety of other cases which resemble in one way or another the case under consideration, and encouraging them to consider exception for the rule,
- c) training them to exert a creative effort to think what to do in the absence of a rule and in explaining, clarifying or substantiating a rule.

So, in teaching moral judgements directly to pupils, the teacher shall be encouraging in them a certain attitude towards these moral judgements. He wants to increase the pupil's sensitivity towards moral behaviour. He wants to develop their rationality and moral understanding in order to be able to reason and form judgement. Of course it all depends on the nature of the rules we want to teach. Do Islamic moral judgements allow us to teach them successfully with the above aims in mind? We have seen how Islamic moral judgements encourage rational justification



and moral understanding, and how they allow for exceptions, and more important how they need creative effort on the part of individuals to think what to do, particularly in the absence of a rule and in clarifying and substantiating rule. Let us take some examples to show how the teacher can achieve all this.

Suppose the teacher wants to teach the moral rules in connection with parents, that is, the rules that urge us to respect them, obey them and be kind and considerate to them, The first step will be to analyse some rules in connection with parents in order to show the importance of maintaining good relationships with them. The Qur'an says: (17:23)

«Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents».

The Prophet says:

«Do I tell you of the biggest sin? Taking partners with God and being cruel and inconsiderate to parents»<sup>(13)</sup>.

In the first instance, to be kind to parents is closely associated with the worship of God. In the second instance, to be cruel and inconsiderate to parents is similar to the worst thing in the eyes of God and that is to take partners with Him.

The Qur'an urges the Muslims to respect parents and be kind and considerate to them even if they are *Mushrikin*. (31: 15).

«But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice and consideration».

It is reported<sup>(14)</sup> that Asma', the daughter of Abu Bakr; told the Prophet that her mother visited her willingly, and asked if she could visit her (her mother was a Mushrikah). The Prophet said «visit your mother».

One of the rules stresses that extra care should be taken of parents when they grow old. (17: 23)

«Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour».



When parents grow old, they need more care, and they deserve it because this is the time they expect to reap the fruit of their effort which they exerted in bringing up their children.

The above analysis is meant to point out the main features of the rules connected with parents. The second step is to initiate the pupils into providing as many reasons and arguments in order to justify the rules. The Qur'ān and the Sunna only hint on the reasons behind these rules; the teacher and the pupils can together go deeper into the rational justification of the rules. The Qur'ān says: (31: 14)

«And we have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents; in *travail upon travail* did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning; (bear the command) 'Show gratitude to Me and to your parents, to me is (the final) goal'». And (46:15)

«We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; *in pain* did she give him birth. The *carrying* of the (child) to his weaning is a (period of) *thirty months*. At length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years he says, 'O my Lord, grant me that I may work righteousness such as You may approve, and be gracious to me in my *children* ».

The pain which the mother suffers and the sleeplessness which she undergoes, during pregnancy and during the period of weaning, are a good reason to show respect and kindness to her. Moreover, to be kind to parents is to show gratitude both to God and to them. The second verse hits on another reason and that is when you ask God to be gracious to you in your children, it is an indication that you would like your children to be good to you; and this should be a good incentive to drive you to be yourself good to your parent.

A man came to the Prophet and asked him, O Prophet, who is most worthy of my good company?» The Prophet said, «Your mother». The man said, «Who else?» The Prophet said, «Your mother,» The man said, «Who else?» The Prophet said, «Your father»<sup>(15)</sup>.

The above tradition can be explained by the fact that when the child grows up, he can see and appreciate the effort exerted by his father in



supporting him and looking after him, together with his mother. But the emphasis is laid on the mother perhaps because the child was not aware of the pain and the sleeplessness which the mother suffered during pregnancy and during the period of weaning. So the mother needs this emphasis in order to be assured that she also has a right to be loved and treated kindly.

In the above example, I have tried to show how the teacher and the pupils can analyse a moral rule in order to look for the main features of the rule and then consider the rational justification of the rule. All this is to increase and sharpen the sensitivity of the pupils towards moral behaviour, in this case, to be kind and considerate to Parents.

Let us now take examples to show how the teacher can train the pupils to exercise judgements, and that is by helping them to exert creative effort when they clarify or substantiate a rule. It might be argued that there is no room in the Islamic society, in the field of morals, for the human conscience to exercise judgement, because the rules are laid down by Shari'a and Muslims are only there to follow these rules. But, as I have said earlier, there is plenty of effort for the human conscience to exert in exercising judgement. As there is no one rule for every case, individuals must exercise judgements in order to provide the necessary details, or substantiate the broad rule by forming a particular judgement in a specific situation.

The Prophet says:

«What is lawful (al-halal) is manifest and what is unlawful (al-haram) is manifest and between these two are doubtful things. So whoever guards himself against doubtful things, he keeps his religion and his honour unsullied»<sup>(16)</sup>.

Again when the Prophet was asked to define «good» and «evil», he said:

«Consult your conscience and consult your soul, good is that which the soul and the conscience readily accept, and evil is that which makes the soul and the conscience feel hesitant, uneasy and restless, even if people advise you and advise you»<sup>(17)</sup>.



This is a clear indication that the individual conscience can exercise judgement. But it has to be pointed out that the conscience of the Muslim is not open to false voices because it is always guided by a stable Shari'a and it is directly responsible to God and so when it exercises a judgement, it does so in the watchful presence of God.

So the teacher must prepare pupils for exercising judgement, when the need for such judgement arises. This can be done by initiating the pupils into consideration of the following rules as examples.

The Qur'an says: (65:2)

-and take for witness two persons from among you with justice».

Here there is plenty of room for the human conscience to exercise judgement, for the selection of two persons endowed with justice is a difficult one. Therefore, individual judgement is inevitable.

Consider also this: (Qur'an, 4:58)

«And when you judge between man and man (do) that with justice).

The same thing applies here also because the judge is to consider every case separately, with different factors and circumstances, and so individual judgement is likewise inevitable.

Consider also this (Qur'an 2:220)

«They ask you, concerning the orphans, say, the best thing to do is what is for good».

Here the rule is not dealing with a particular case, but with all the orphans irrespective of the different cases that we meet with. The human conscience should exercise judgement in order to settle every case individually according to the present circumstances.

Take also this example: (Qur'an 2:173)

«But if one is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then is he



guiltless, for God is often forgiving, most merciful».

This rule does not speak of a particular necessity, and so suppose some Muslims who live in a non-Muslim country want to eat meat, and there is beef and lamb but not prepared in the Islamic way. Some of them according to the above rule may eat, others may take some time before they do so, perhaps in the hope of finding a Muslim butcher. But other may refuse to eat it at all and live on other meat substitutes, fish, for example. Here we find different judgements exercised by different Muslims, all in the right track.

As long as the conscience of the individual is deeply educated in religion and generally guided by Shari'a and closely watched by God, it is harmless to exercise judgement when the need for a judgement arises. If the individual succeeds, then he must thank God for that, and if he makes a mistake as a result of his judgement, as long as his intention is good, he will be forgiven by God because the Qur'an says: (33: 5)

«But there is no blame if you make a mistake therein (what counts is) the intention of your heart and God is often forgiving most merciful».

What helps theoretical teachings of Islamic moral rules to be effective in the secondary school can be summarised in the following sentences. Islamic moral rules have cognitive meaning and their justification rests on deep social and religious grounds. In addition to the fact that they derive their authority from God they allow, if they are taught properly, for rationality to be respected and cultivated, and for individual judgement to be exercised in order to resolve moral problems. All this appeals to the secondary school adolescents and helps them to be sensitive to moral behaviour.

### **Moral Education Through Academic Subjects**

Moral education can be imparted as a fundamental element of almost every school lesson. There is the intellectual aim which guides the purely academic work of the teacher; but in addition to this there is the moral element which refers to values, beliefs and attitudes. The acquisition of morals and beliefs in every school lesson depends entirely on how



competent the teacher is. We have seen, earlier in this chapter, that the Muslim teacher is connected with different types of authority. His personality, mastery of the subjects he teaches, respect and consideration shown to him by society at large, and the pupils' readiness to be authoritative in society, all this, accompanied by competent teaching, helps to have the moral element permeate every school lesson.

The concern of the Muslim teacher with the moral element in every school lesson can be supported by the following result of result of research:

«Studies in the role of the teacher suggest that most teachers place first in importance moral training with instruction in subject a close second. This tends to be true whether they are teachers of sixth formers or of infants»<sup>(18)</sup>.

The aspiration of the Muslim teacher to give moral education an integral place in school lessons necessitated that the curriculum subjects, teaching methods and activities in the school be brought together for a clear purpose. Al-Ghazali makes clear this purpose by saying:

«The teacher surely is of service for the eternal life in the next world. By teacher I mean the teacher of the sciences of the hereafter of the sciences of this world, whose goal, in all his work is the hereafter and not only success in this world»<sup>(19)</sup>.

In the light of what Al-Ghazali is saying the purpose will clearly be the revival of the Islamic cultural heritage, and the Muslim teacher must continuously show consideration for the pupils' beliefs and morals which are the beliefs and the morals of the Islamic society.

Moreover, the Muslim teacher must show considerable regard to the pupils as human beings who are responsible and thoughtful; otherwise they may be reduced to the position of objects to be manipulated and so be open to influences from immoral persons in society. As the relationship between the teacher and the pupils is to be considered, mainly, in teaching, the Muslim teacher, besides the revival of the Islamic culture, can attempt to achieve, through academic subjects, other objec-



tives of immense importance to moral behaviour. These objectives are implicit in the meaning of teaching itself. Israel Scheffler says:

«Teaching may be characterized as an activity aimed at the achievement of learning, and practise in such manner as to respect the students' intellectual integrity and capacity for independent judgement»<sup>(20)</sup>.

Teaching is not only to transfer information, but also to develop the insight of the pupil and to inculcate in him principled judgement and conduct. In other words, teaching is to help to build up a rational as well as a moral character. Another way of putting this is to be found in what Oakeshott describes as:

« The distinction between a 'language' (by which I mean a manner of thinking) and a 'literature' or a text (by which I mean what has been said from time to time in a 'language'). It is the distinction, for example, between the 'language' of poetic imagination of a poem or a novel; or between the 'language' or manner of thinking of a scientist and a text-book of geology or what may be called the current state of our geological knowledge»<sup>(21)</sup>.

Thus the task of the Muslim teacher is not only to offer academic material to the pupils but also to be concerned with the 'language' of the material he offers, because this 'language' develops understanding, awareness and insight. These qualities are inseparable from any Islamic moral rule. If the teacher cannot offer the 'language' of the 'literature', it will be wrong to expect much of him in the field of moral education. So when I emphasize the teacher's competence, integrity and character, it is only because he is inevitably responsible for this task because the material he offers and the manner in which he conducts his lesson are inseparable from his personality.

«The 'material' he offers is not really separable from *him*. It is not just objective 'stuff': it is material mixed with the teacher's mind, and not with his intellect only, but with his will and character»<sup>(22)</sup>.



In teaching history, for example, it is important to ask this question: what do we mean when we say that we are teaching history? We mean to say that the teacher helps the pupils to know information and thus develop independence and skill in using source materials; it is also to help them understand this information and develop insight into the nature of historical judgement. History is also taught to exercise general influence on the pupils' character, for example, to develop freedom from prejudice. It is also taught to develop a sense of cultural heritage<sup>(23)</sup>. Let us now take an example and show how the Muslim teacher, by teaching history, can cultivate in his pupils qualities like understanding, awareness, integrity and insight.

At Badr, the Muslims, one third of their enemies, fought against a well-armed and well-equipped army and won a brilliant victory. The teacher can help the pupils to collect information about Badr and thus develop in them independence and skill in using reliable sources. He then must initiate them into objective analysis of the facts with the purpose of arriving at a judgement which helps to explain Badr and other historical events. Insight into the fact that virtue, exemplified in the moral qualities of the early Muslims, can win against difficulties, must be developed. Moral qualities like gratitude to God, steadfastness, obedience, zeal, courage and patience were behind the victory at Badr, and because of this the Qur'an says: (8: 65).

«O Apostle, rouse the believers to the fight. If there are twenty among you, patient and persevering, they vanquish two hundred; if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the unbelievers»....

Lack of these qualities in the Muslims of the present time is the cause of their poor material, spiritual and moral conditions. So perhaps in two or three lessons about Badr, the pupils will be sufficiently illuminated as far as their Islamic culture is concerned, and equipped with insight which will be used to better the moral state of society.



In fact, not only history, but most subjects of the curriculum have objectives which go far beyond subject matter and over to the realms of morals and values. The study of literature, in particular, can foster an adherence to the noblest Islamic values and can act as a source of good example and integrity. Complementary to teaching moral education through academic subjects, a method of study which is based mainly on discussion and so can bite into the adolescent's mind and provoke strong views and judgements of his own, can also be tried. The material of such a study, among other things, can be found in good films to be shown to pupils. Films sharpen the insight of the pupil and refine his emotion and help him to respond to important human situations; and if these films derive their material from Islamic culture, they will continuously provide the pupil with Islamic values. The discussion which follows the film gives the pupil an opportunity to subject the way he interprets other people's motives and behaviour to the comment of his colleagues and his teacher. In doing so he has to be precise and sensitive when he evaluates other people's actions. This is a discipline which is of immense value because it develops insight into other people's feeling. So when we turn to films and literature and arts, we must use material which cultivates, among other things, qualities of sympathy and interest in the affairs of others.

### **Practical Discipline at School**

In addition to the theoretical teaching of moral education, there must be practical discipline in the school. Practical discipline helps to foster moral growth and thus it is a process of ordering and checking the responses, standards, attitudes and values of the pupils. It also helps to strengthen higher values and weaken lower ones. Practical discipline, therefore, educates the pupils' emotions, initiates them into effort and persistence and guides the time they allow to their various forms of behaviour.

The school also provides the pupils with the opportunity of learning their role in group life, that is they must be able to think and act together with others. This can only be learnt by practice, by being members of a group in action. Therefore, in addition to the strict moral discipline which educates and refines the emotions and fosters the moral growth of the



pupils, there must be an active school environment in which the pupils gain an affection for social life.

If the secondary schools in the Islamic society are boarding schools, the moral education provided in them, particularly through practical activities, will be more effective in influencing the pupils than that provided in day schools. This is not to insulate the pupils from the distracting and the antagonist effects of the outside world, because there is supposed to be social and moral harmony in the Islamic society; but it is only to give the pupils enough time and opportunity to have a mature moral education which helps them to be more useful in society.

In a boarding school, the pupils and their teachers can perform prayer five times a day in congregation, putting into practice the educative purposes of prayer, which I have elaborated in the third chapter. Pupils can also be encouraged and urged to fast at least once a week, preferably on Thursdays. In addition to the spiritual and moral enrichment which fasting brings about in the pupils, it helps to mitigate temporarily the increasing sexual desire of the adolescent. The Prophet says:

«He who is able to marry should do so, for it keeps the eye cast down and keeps a man chaste; and he who cannot, should take to fasting, for it will have a castrating effect (temporarily) upon him»<sup>(24)</sup>.

So fasting is an effective means of helping the adolescents to curb their sexual force temporarily until they are married. When those who can afford to fast meet on the evening of every Thursday to break the fast together in a warm spiritual atmosphere, this I am sure, will have a deep moral effect on them. In addition to all this, recitation of the Qur'ān in small groups will not only train the pupils to recite it correctly, but also add to their spiritual and moral forces.

Physical education and games must occupy a considerable room in the school activities. This must not be taken as an end in itself or as a means to show off, but must be taken as a form of *ibada*, a means to build up the bodies of the pupils, help them to pass their leisure time usefully and teach them qualities like zeal, co-operation and tolerance. They can compete



internally among themselves, and it is good to play against different sports clubs in the community because this widens their social awareness.

The pupils must be encouraged to be members of different societies within the school, for example, History society, Drama society, Agricultural society, etc. This gives them the opportunity of participating in these activities, of being members of a group in action, so that when they leave school, they can participate effectively in actual life outside the school. The school can provide many other activities which all should aim to foster moral growth.

### Sex Education

From the very outset, it must be pointed out that Islam as a religion cannot be accused of repressing the sexual instinct of the human being. Repression does not occur as a result of abstention from exercising sex; it is the result of believing that sex is dirty and of refusing to admit that it can come to one's mind or engage one's thinking. This definition is given by Freud who spent his time criticizing religion for repressing people's activities. He says that repression.

«cannot occur until a sharp distinction has been established between what is conscious and what is unconscious: *that the essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness*»<sup>(25)</sup>.

This means that a distinction should be made between conscious repression and the temporary abstention from performing the instinctive act, which is a mere suspension of the act.

Islam does not repress the sexual instinct, but it asks men and women to suspend sex until they are married. Islam is very frank in recognizing the sexual instinct. The Qur'ān says: (3: 14)

«Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons...».

Here the Qur'ān admits that sex is a desirable thing. Consider also how frank the Qur'ān is (86:5-7)



«Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted-proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs».

Consider also this. (Qur'ān, 22:5)

«O mankind, if you have a doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We manifest (Our power) to you. And We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for a certain time, then do We bring you out as babies, then (foster you) that you may reach your age of full strength...».

For children not to be surprised by sex before they know about it, the Qur'ān advises parents to train their children to take permission before they enter their bedrooms (24:58)

«O you who believe, let those whom your hands possess, and the (children) among you who have not attained puberty, ask permission (before they enter your bedrooms) on three occasions, before morning prayer, when you take off your clothes for the noonday heat, and after the late-night prayer; these may be your three times of undress and relaxation...

And to avoid the danger of trying sex out of curiosity, Islam advises parents to separate between children when they go to sleep. The Prophet says:

«Command your children at the age of seven to pray, and lash them for it at the age of ten, and separate between them when they go to sleep»<sup>(26)</sup>.

Not only that, but to have sexual intercourse with your wife is an act for which God rewards you. This comes like this:



«A man is recompensed for the sexual act he performs with his wife. When some of the surprised listeners ask the Prophet, 'Is the person rewarded for satisfying his sexual desire? The Prophet answered, 'Do you not see that if he were to satisfy it in a prohibited manner, he would be committing a sin? So if he satisfies it in a lawful manner, he will be recompensed' »<sup>(27)</sup>.

The Qur'añ says: (2:223)

«You wives are as a tilth to you, so approach your tilth when or how you will ».

The simile here is to show that every kind of mutual consideration between husband and wife is required in sexual intercourse. The Qur'an also says: (2:22)

«They ask you concerning women's monthly periods. Say: they are a hurt and a pollution, so keep away from women (in sexual intercourse only) until they are clean. But when they purified themselves, you may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by God. For God loves those who turn to Him constantly, and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean».

So Islam recognizes the sexual instinct and gives the basic information about sex in a very clear and frank way. But this is not the end of the matter. Islam teaches young people how to control and restrain their sexual impulses until they are married. If adolescents feel the urge of the sexual instinct there is no harm in that, and they need not regard the sexual desire as a dirty and repulsive feeling. What Islam requires of adolescents in this respect is to control their passions without repressing them, to control them willingly and consciously, that is, to suspend their satisfaction until the suitable time. It must not be understood that Islam forbids only sexual intercourse before marriage, every other form of sex is also forbidden because it may ultimately lead to sexual intercourse. There is, therefore, no mixed dancing, no holding by the hands, no kissing, etc.



It might be objected that the temporary suspension of the performance of sex may lead to complexes and psychological disorders. Freud says:

«The function of education, therefore, is to inhibit, forbid and suppress and it has at all times carried out this function to admiration. But we have learnt from analysis that it is this very suppression of instincts that involves the danger of neurotic illness»<sup>(28)</sup>.

How can Freud understand the function of education in this way and he admits that he has not done much work in the application of psycho-analysis to education? He says:

«On the contrary I have hardly ever occupied myself with it... I refer to the application of psycho—analysis to education»<sup>(29)</sup>.

Islam does not believe that the freedom of the human being springs from unrestricted indulgence of desires and impulses. The human being, unlike the animal, must learn to control and restrain himself. The activities which I have described in the previous section, prayer five times a day, fasting once a week, regular recitation of the Qur ān, vigorous physical exercises, etc., all this acts as strict moral discipline which elevates the emotions of the adolescent and helps him to have some measure of restraint. As long as the adolescents willingly and consciously suspend their sexual acts temporarily and use effective means to help them do that, there will be no danger of neurotic illness. Obscene literature and films and indecent shows are not allowed in the Islamic society. Both men and women are to dress properly in the sense that they must not be sexually attractive to each other. Both men and women are not allowed to cast looks of temptation to each other. The Qur ān says: (24: 30-31)

«Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them... And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear there of,... that they should not display their



beauty except to their husbands their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, of small children who have no sense of sex yet» .

All this is to safeguard against sexual attraction, not only among men and women, but also among married men and women, when they meet or talk to each other.

Sex education in the Islamic society is closely associated with religion; it is part of religious teachings. It is therefore at home, at school and in society at large. As the authority of the Muslim teacher is accepted by society, both parents and teachers can tackle the problems of the adolescents' sexual morality enthusiastically and harmoniously. This helps adolescents not to be frightened and ashamed of their feelings because there will be the right sort of communication between the adults and the young. At the same time, parents, teachers and society will work together to raise the young to a dignified place in the human society.

In this chapter I have tried to show how moral education can be achieved at school. I have said that the message of the school in the Islamic society is the same as that of the mosque, and so learning at school must be compatible with Shari'a and must be directed to what pleases God. Moral education at school is thus imparted through the whole process of education. Then I have said whether moral education is achieved directly as moral rules to be taught to pupils, or taught through academic subjects or through practical discipline at school; it is strongly backed by the authority of the Muslim teacher whose main aim is to produce authoritative individuals in society. It is in the secondary school where the pupils can be prepared for active participation in society. This is done by strict moral discipline together with the cultivation of qualities like awareness, moral understanding and insight. In the last section, I have dealt very briefly with sex education in the



**Islamic society.** In addition to the clear and frank information which Islam gives about sex, there is strict discipline which helps people to control and refine their sexual desires.



## Notes

- (1) *Mishkat al-Masabih*.
- (2) Baron, G.O *The Social Background to Teaching in the United States: An English Assessment*. (British Journal) of Educational Studies, Vol. IV, November 1955-May 1956) p.130.
- (3) *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- (4) Bronfenbrenner, Urie: *Two Worlds of Childhood U.S.A and U.D.S.R.*, p.23.
- (5) Grant, Nigel; *Soviet Education*, p.150.
- (6) Al-Bukhari.
- (7) Al-Bukhari.
- (8) Ibn-Majah.
- (9) Al-Ghazali: *Ihyá*, Part I, p.50.
- (10) Wilson, John: *Aims in Education*, p.34.
- (11) Abu Dawud.
- (12) Al-Ghazali: *Ihyá*, part III, p.63.
- (13) Al-Bukhari.
- (14) Al-Bukhari.
- (15) Al-Bukhari.



**Al-Bukhari.**

(17)

(18) Taylor, p.: *Purpose and Structure in the Curriculum, Educational Review*, p.166.

(19) Al -Ghazali: *Ihya*, part I, p.49.

(20) Scheffler, Israel: *Philosophy and Educauon*, p.99.

(21) Oakeshott, M.: *Rationalism in Politics*, p.308.

(22) Reid, L.A.: *Philosophy and Education*, p.132.

(23) Hirst, p.,

(24) Al-Bukhari.

(25) Freud, Sigmund: *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*, p.90.

(26) Abu Dawud.

(27) Muslim.

(28) Freud, Sigmund: *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p.191.

(29) Ibid., p.188.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MORAL EDUCATION IN SOCIETY

Moral education in the Islamic society rests not only with the home and the school, but also with society at large. We have seen in chapter five how the whole structure of the family is based on Islamic principles. How the family is formed, the relationship between husband and wife, the relationship between parents and children, the relationship between the nuclear members of the family and their relatives, and how the parents consciously transmit the Islamic cultural and moral values to their children; all this is clearly guided and directed by Islamic values. We have also seen in chapter six how the message of the school is the same as that of the mosque. Like the mosque, the school transmits Islamic morality to the children and so moral education is achieved along with the acquisition of knowledge. Not only that but the knowledge which is taught to the children, the relationship between teacher and pupil and the whole atmosphere of the school, all this is closely influenced by Islamic principles. We have also seen in chapter one how the social, the economic and the political institutions are carefully planned and integrated by Shari'a and how they provide the society with justice and stability. It is clear, therefore, that all institutions in society are well integrated by Shari'a and as the aims of the Islamic society are clearly defined, the home, the school and the society at large can consciously teach those values which are essential for the achievement of those goals which are commonly accepted. Thus what goes on in the home, as far as moral education is concerned, is in harmony with what goes on in the school, and all this is supported and continued by what goes on in society as a whole.



What brings about a lasting harmony between the home, the school and the society is the fact that in the Islamic society the two meanings of education, the narrow meaning and the broad meaning, are consciously considered. The narrow meaning is understood to be dealing with what goes on in schools and other formal institutions. The broad meaning involves the Islamic values and principles which influence directly or indirectly what goes on in all the social institutions including the proper educational institutions. Whether in the family, the school, the village, the city, the nation, we are educated by standards and principles prevailing within the society, which are the standards and the principles of Islam. The political life, the economic life, the social relationships—relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, relationship between teacher and pupil, mass media, social manners etc., whole these are examples of the way in which we are educated by society. If a child at the age of seven is urged to perform prayer regularly, or is trained to wash his hands before meals, or is brought up to be kind to his parents and to show respect to the elders, etc., the parents are conveying to him from the start what are the acceptable ways of behaving, they are introducing him to the Islamic morality and how he should respond to it.

We should, therefore, distinguish between formal, institutionalized aspects of education such as are to be found in the schools, and the broader more generalized notion of social education which arises from the influence of the educative society where we are educating through using community influences. In other words, as the relationship between the narrow meaning of education and the broad one is to be found in the Islamic values and principles, we shall not only be dealing with the school in society, but with the school, home and society at large. This means that Shari'a should not only plan what goes on in schools — the setting up of the curriculum, writing of text-books, relationship between teacher and pupil etc., but also the mass media and the other social institutions, because of their power and importance in producing considerable effects on character and human faculties.



To preserve this relationship between the two meanings of education, that is, to preserve harmony between all the social institutions of the Islamic society, Islam has introduced the principle of *al-amr bil-ma'ruf wan-nahy'an al-munkar*, which literally means the enjoining of what is good or moral and the restraining of what is bad or immoral. Each individual is held personally responsible for urging to virtue and is charged with the duty of putting an end to any evil-doing which he sees. It means that every individual is charged with the care of society, as if he is a watchman over it.

Before I turn to consider this principle which is of fundamental importance to the Islamic society, I would like, very briefly, to examine two forms of censorship. The first one is to be found in Plato's Republic and the other is now exercised in the Soviet Union.

#### **Plato's Censorship**

The aim of education in the Republic of Plato is not only to impart information but it is in the first place to produce a moral character. Plato therefore puts forward standards to which what is taught to children, music, poetry, stories, gymnastics drama etc., must conform. All that is taught to children must convey such beliefs concerning gods and men as will produce honest, brave and steadfast characters.

Plato says:

«And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be framed by casual persons, and to receive into their minds notions which are the very opposite of those which are to be held by them when they are grown up?»<sup>(1)</sup>.

Plato categorically answers this question by saying that we must not allow children to hear any casual tales which may be written by any casual persons.

«For the young man cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his



mind at that age is apt to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore the tales which they first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts»<sup>(2)</sup>.

To preserve these models of virtuous thoughts,

«The first thing will be to have a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we shall desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only»<sup>(3)</sup>.

Plato, therefore, permits only tales and stories which help inculcate qualities like truth, courage, self-control etc., in the minds of children.

As for poetry<sup>(4)</sup>, not only its content but also its form and style must conform to the same ethical purpose. Strict regulations must be enforced with reference to songs and musical instruments. No soft or enervating music is to be allowed in Plato's state. The object of all these regulations concerning music is to develop in the minds of the pupils a sense of beauty and harmony which will influence their whole character. He says:

«Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul graceful of him who is rightly educated, or ungraceful of him who is ill-educated»<sup>(5)</sup>.

Plato exercises his censorship on all forms of activities in society. He says:

«But shall our supervision go no further, and are the poets only to be required by us to express the image of the good in their works as the condition of producing in our State? Or is the same control to be exercised over artists, and are they also to be prohibited from exhibiting the opposite forms of vice and intemperance and meanness and indecency in



sculpture and building and the other creative arts; and is he who does not conform to this rule of ours to be prevented from practising his art in our State, lest the taste of our citizens be corrupted by him?»<sup>(6)</sup>.

The aim of Plato's censorship, therefore, is to ensure that what goes on in the community as a whole must conform to the Platonic values and standards. If it is argued that this form of censorship seems to be only compatible with the ideal State of Plato, which has never been put into practice, it can be shown that a similar type of censorship is exercised by the communist world and all the countries which are influenced more or less by it. Let us take the Soviet Union as an example and see the nature of the censorship exercised within it.

### **The Soviet Censorship**

Education in the Soviet Union is mainly a political tool for the building up of a communist society. There are, obviously, other purposes, but these are of a secondary importance. That is why the main aim of education is to shape the communistic world outlook of the children as well as adults and guide them towards communist morality. It seeks to put over the political attitudes of the Communist Party and the philosophy of Marx and Lenin. The Soviet authorities openly declare the political aims of their educational system and they emphatically insist that it should not be otherwise.

«directly and indirectly, the communist viewpoint is put over at every stage of schooling, and reinforced by the other media of communication outside the schools, such as the theatre, films, radio television, and the Press, while the youth organisations act as a link between the schools and the outside world»<sup>(7)</sup>.

To reinforce the communist viewpoint by the media of communication outside the school, shows that the system is aiming at a lasting harmony between all the social institutions. This harmony guards against the conflict between the influences of the school and the outside agencies. Thus there is no such conflict.



«Since the media of mass communication are just as subject as the schools to control by government and Party, they reinforce what is taught in the classroom instead of clashing with it»<sup>(8)</sup>.

Now, to maintain this lasting harmony between all the social institutions, and to ensure that the communist values and principles are closely adhered to, the Soviet authorities exercise a rigid censorship on all the social institutions.

«The working of the plans, though some of the details are delegated to local bodies, is watched over by the Union and Republican Ministries of Education. Organisation as well as policy is also under the eye of the Communist Party, locally and nationally. Thus the working of the system is controlled every step of the way»<sup>(9)</sup>.

Soviet censorship is entirely in the hands of the Communist Party which is the only legal body that plans the society and sees to it that the communist values are closely adhered to. Those who are not members of the Communist Party may not be interested in such censorship, and they may not even be in a position to exercise any form of censorship in the society. They may even suffer from censorship when it is exercised over them.

At the same time it must be pointed out that Plato's education and discipline are not meant for all members of the society; they are specifically for the class of Guardians, and for the leaders, who are to be selected from that class. Plato's censorship, therefore, guards the education and the discipline of the Guardians who will then ensure that Plato's standards are preserved.

The main point in mentioning the above two forms of censorship, that of Plato and that of the Soviet Union, is not only to draw attention to the fact that censorship can be exercised in one form or another for the protection of a definite ideology, but also to show how the Islamic principle of *al-amr bil-ma'rūf wan-nahy 'an al-munkar* can be disting-



uished from such forms of censorship. Let us now examine this important Islamic principle.

### **Al-ma'ruf bil-ma'ruf wan-nahy 'an al-munkar**

*Al-ma'rūf* is what ought to be said or done according to Shari'a; *al-munkar* is what is said or done contrary to Shari'a. *Al-amr bil-ma'rūf* which means enjoining what is good or compatible with Shari'a can be by preaching or advising others to do what is good, or by action like helping the poor or by both. *Al-munkar* can be changed by the hand, or restrained by preaching, or at least rejected by heart. The Prophet says:

«Whoever among you sees any evildoing, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot do that, let him change it with his tongue; and if he cannot do that, let him change it with his heart and that shows the weakest faith.»<sup>(10)</sup>

Every Muslim in the Islamic society is charged with the care of society, as if he is a watchman over it. No individual can be exempt from this care for the general interest, and so every individual must have a constant care for the community, It must be argued that there is a verse in the Qur'an, which exempts people from being charged with the care of society. This verse is:

«O you who believe, look after yourselves, he who goes astray will not harm you, so long as you let yourselves be guided». (5: 183)

Some, in the light of this verse, have argued that it is justifiable to abstain from combatting wrong-going and from changing it. But Abū Bakr says that this is a wrong interpretation. He said,

«O people, you read this verse and you put a wrong interpretation on it.. I myself have heard the Messenger of Allah say: 'Verily people who see wrong-doing and do not change it, Allah will speedily bring punishment upon all of them'»<sup>(11)</sup>.



What the Prophet has said is compatible with the aims of Islam. In fact this verse contains only a statement of individual responsibility. Wickedness which is negative, which has no compulsive force on others is a matter which concerns only him who indulges in it. The duty of others is to seek guidance, if the sinner does not seek guidance, then the responsibility is on himself, and he has to be reminded of his sins and has to be corrected under the principle of *al-amr bil-ma'rūf wan nahy 'an al-munkar*.

The Qur'ān says: (5:3)

«Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in crime and hostility»

The Qur'ān also says: (9:71)

«The believers, men and women are protectors, one of another; they enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil».

Also (5:81-82)

«Curses were pronounced on those among the children of Israel who rejected faith, by the tongue of David and of Jesus the son of Mary, because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses, Nor did they (usually) forbid one another the inequities of the wrong which they committed; evil indeed were the deeds which they did».

The curses which were pronounced on the children of Israel are justified by the fact that they did not restrain each other from the wrong which they committed.

Consider also this: (3: 113-114)

«Not all of them are alike; of the people of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of God all night long and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in God and the



last Day, they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works; they are in the ranks of the righteous».

Consider also this (3: 105)

«Let be a community of you exhorting to good, urging to virtue, and restraining from evil-doing».

This verse and the previous two indicate very clearly that although *Al-amr bil-ma'rūf wan-nahy'an al-munkar* is obligatory on every Muslim, it is, like *jiḥād, fard kifāya* <sup>(12)</sup> *Fard al-kifāya* means that if some carry it out satisfactorily, the others can be exempt from it. But it also means that if those who are capable of doing it fail to carry it out, curses will be pronounced on all members of society. Indeed, the whole community is to blame and deserves punishment in this world and in the next world if it passively accepts evil-doing carried out by some of its members. Thus it is charged with the duty of watching over everyone of its members. There is no injustice here because the society in which there is immoral element and in which evil-doing flourishes unchecked is a society which is exhausted and decayed, on the way to its end.

#### **The Condition for al-Amr bil-Ma'rūf Wan-Nahy 'an al-Munkar**

The first condition is full knowledge of what is to be enjoined and what is to be forbidden, because ignorance may lead to bad consequences<sup>(13)</sup>. To say this is to support the view that urging to virtue and restraining from evil-doing is *fard-kifāya*, because if those who have full knowledge of *al-ma'rūf* and *al-munkar*, that is the '*Ulamā*' carry it out, then the others can be exempt from it. But it might be rightly argued that there are obvious things which do not require deeper knowledge, any Muslim, for example, knows that drinking alcohol and stealing are *harām*, and so if he restrains and forbids this evil-doing, his action will not bring about any bad consequences at all. On the contrary, it shows that even those with less knowledge can participate by enjoining what they know to be right and by forbidding what they know to be wrong. Life in the Islamic society is full of competition as far as doing *as-sāliḥat* is concerned. Even those who, for any reason, cannot do anything worthwhile, feel restless and



sorry, like those who came to the Prophet during *jihād*, anxious to serve, but left behind because they lacked provision and means of transport.

They are not to blame and the Qur'ān says: (9:92)

«Nor (is there blame) on those who came to you to be provided with mounts, and when you said, 'I can find no mounts for you', they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses».

As the responsibility is upon all members of the society, everyone in society must exert an effort in order to attain a certain level of knowledge that enables him to carry out this fundamental Islamic principle in the right manner, particularly when the *'ulamā'* fail to carry out their duties. This shows clearly that in the Islamic society, unlike Plato's Republic and the Communist society, all members of society are charged with the care of the community as if they are watchmen over it. The Prophet says:

«Every one of you is a watchman, and everyone will be held responsible for his ward»<sup>(14)</sup>.

The second condition is that urging to virtue and restraining from evil-doing must be done in a gentle and considerate manner. Our preaching must not be dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle and considerate. The Prophet says:

«Whenever gentleness is employed to settle a matter, it beautifies it, and whenever violence is used to settle a matter, it spoils it»<sup>(15)</sup>

The third condition is that when one enjoins what is right and forbids what is evil, one must be tolerant and forbearing of faults and patient. Those who persistently exhort to virtue and restrain from wrong-doing, are faced, in most cases with obstacles, insults and injustice. But they must endure all that. Luqman advised his son, as the Qur'ān says: (31:17)

«O my son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong, and bear with patience



constancy whatever betide you, for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs».

The fourth condition is that restraining from evil-doing must not be done through spying. The Qur'añ says: (49: 12)

«O you who believe avoid suspicion (as far as possible), for suspicion in some cases is a sin, and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs».

Spying, or enquiring too curiously into other people's affairs means suspicion carried a step further, and all this does not suit the dignity of the human being.

The above analysis of *al-amr bil-ma'ruf wan-nahy 'an al-munkar* shows that it is obligatory on all Muslims in society. Every individual is held responsible for every evil-doing in society, even if he had no part in it. For society is a unity which is harmed by any evil-doing, and the duty of every individual is to guard and protect it. If the Islamic community gives up this fundamental duty, then all its members will be punished either in this world or in the world to come. If it preserves this fundamental principle, then it will indeed be as described by the Qur'añ: (3:110)

«You are the best of peoples evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong».

What makes the members of the Islamic society the best of peoples evolved for mankind is the fact that they persistently exhort to virtue and restrain from wrong—doing. But when they give this up, they will be exhausted and forgotten, on the way to their end.

Accepting the view that *al-amr bil-ma'ruf wan-nahy 'an al-munkar* is *isfard kifaya*, then it will be more convenient if it is carried out by the Islamic government, for it will be well organised and more effective. Mass media, for instance, can be successfully employed in this respect.

#### **Mass Media and Moral Education**

In the light of the above analysis of *al-amr bil-ma'ruf wan-nahy 'an al-munkar*, moral education in the Islamic society is indeed



life in which every member of the family, and all people in society, whatever their age, must be active. With this level of involvement, the audience in the Islamic society expect the mass media to transmit Islamic cultural and moral education effectively. Both children and parents benefit from this. As far as children are concerned, early life is very impressionable and so children must not be allowed to learn what will not help in building up their Islamic character. Parents, on the other hand, shall have the opportunity to learn more about the care and upbringing of children.

Radio, as a medium, because of its lack of visual stimulation, can be regarded as lacking impact on children. Television and cinema because of their visual stimulation, have greater impact. But planning for television and cinema production in the Islamic society must be done by people of good character and integrity and with full knowledge of *al-ma'ruf* and *al-munkar*. This is because character or moral education requires the vivid presentation of high values and the continued exposure to attractions of goodness, truth and righteousness until they are woven into the fabric of the personalities of children and adults alike.

Television and cinema in the Islamic society are required to educate, inform and entertain. All three of these activities can take place in the same programme. In planning programmes which are specifically for moral education, the approach must be based on the elements of Islamic morality mentioned earlier in this book. In planning programmes for information and entertainment, moral education must always be in mind. This is mainly to safeguard that there is accumulation of good influences from many programmes.

As values are taken over from the main themes of plays, films, programmes and also from the approach used in presenting them, and as mass media personalities mean quite a lot to children, it is wise to encourage the recognition of the good qualities of those who one lives with and of those who have actually lived in this world. The *Sir* is full of personalities and qualities that can be exposed through plays, films and other programmes. Otherwise, the relevant question raised long ago by Plato needs to be readily considered by us and that is:

«Shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be framed by casual persons



and to receive into their minds notions which are the opposite of those which are to be held by them when they are grown up»<sup>(16)</sup>.

In addition to mass media, there are institutions through which moral education can be achieved. Take, for instance, the Mosque which means much more than a mere place of Divine Worship. Being the meeting place of the Muslims five times a day and once every Friday prayer, the mosque can be an important centre where moral education can be achieved. It all depends on the *Imam* if he is efficient and well qualified, then his two speeches on Friday prayers can be very effective in depicting the wrong conduct of the Muslims and in criticizing it and in indicating the righteous way which they should follow. Not only that but he can turn the mosque into a real meeting-place where Islamic morality can be learnt and appreciated.

Consider also the neighbourhood. The child's neighbours, particularly the adults and older children who are looked up to and admired by the young, can be very effective in influencing the child's behaviour. Close contact with good people in the neighbourhood exposes the child to successful and righteous examples in his own locality—people from his own neighbourhood who are good members of society. These people can associate with the children through regular visits between families, and not only provide good examples for the children but also restrain them from *evil-doing* and urge them to virtue, wherever they see them. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons why Muslims are urged to maintain good relations with their neighbours. The Qur'añ says: (4063)

«Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers».

The Prophet says:

«Gabriel continued to enjoin me with good treatment towards the neighbour until I thought he would make



him heir of the property (of the deceased neighbour) »<sup>(17)</sup>.

When neighbours co-operate in the moral upbringing of their children, they do that mainly because as individuals they are charged with the care of society, in the general interest, as if they are watchmen over it. In the same way, the contribution of the total community to moral education is analogous to that of the neighbourhood.

In the Islamic society, in addition to the continuous contribution of all the social institutions to moral education, every individual is held personally responsible for achieving moral education in the whole society. Only when all this is successfully achieved, can we say that there is harmony between the home, the school and society at large as far as moral education is concerned.



## Notes

- (1) Plato: *The Republic*, Book II, p.377-378.
- (2) Ibid., p. 377-378.
- (3) Ibid., p. 377-378.
- (4) Ibid., Book II, p.378-380.
- (5) Ibid., Book III, p.401.
- (6) Ibid., Book III, p.401.
- (7) Grant, Nigel: *Soviet Education*, p.24.
- (8) Grant, Nigel: Ibid., p.27.
- (9) Ibid., p.30.
- (10) Muslim.
- (11) Ibn Taymiyah: *Majmu'at al-Fatwa*, Book 28, p. 127.  
See also: Razi; *Mafatih al- Ghaib*, vol. 3, p.19.  
See also: Al- Ghazali: *Ihya*, vol. II, p.270
- (12) Ibn Taymiyah: Ibid., p. 121-189. See also Razi: Ibid., p.19.
- (13) Ibn Taymiyah: Ibid., p.136.
- (14) Al-Bukhari.
- (15) Muslim.
- (16) Plato: Ibid. p. 377-378.
- (17) Al-Bukhari.



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