

Goodword

Islamic Studies

A Graded Course

Grade 10

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INTRODUCTION

Islam is the religion of the universe. Everything in the universe submits itself to the Will of Allah. Therefore submission to Allah is the only true religion for both man and the universe. Everything or being in the universe, including man, must strictly obey the commands of Allah without any deviation or alteration.

Indeed, the central characteristic of all followers of the Islamic faith is their belief in the one Allah. The word Islam literally means "surrender" or "submission," and those who follow the religion are called Muslims. A Muslim then is one who surrenders or submits completely to the Will of Allah. Submission to Allah, however, is not a passive but a positive act of bringing one's likes and dislikes, attitudes and behaviour into harmony with Allah's Will. Correct belief and action together are absolutely vital. One is worthless without the other. Furthermore, a true Muslim believes that submission and obedience to the Will of Allah is the only way in which an individual can ever achieve real peace of mind and heart. The knowledge he needs to have of the Will of Allah must inevitably be derived from the Quran, the last of the divine books revealed by Allah to His Final Prophet.

Following Islam also means living in harmony with nature. And this in turn means that at all times man must unfailingly do as Allah desires. Moreover, he should lead his life acknowledging the greatness of his Creator and showing appreciation of His favours. He should focus all his attention on Allah alone, who is the Creator of everything on this earth and in the universe. He should entirely subordinate his intention and thinking to the Will of Allah.

Doing as Allah enjoins creates harmony, earns Allah's favour and banishes evil; it follows, therefore, that an Islamic society based on the ideals of the Quran and the teachings of Allah's Last Messenger will necessarily be free of social ills. The root of all evil in this world is the lack of fear of Almighty Allah, while the presence of this fear is the secret of all good. A Muslim should bear it in mind that one day he will die and shall have to give an account of himself to Allah. There can be no better rein upon an individual's actions than the thought that Allah will one day call upon him to account for his deeds.

UNIT

1

Teaching of Islam

(I) JUSTICE

Justice, (*adl* in Arabic), is one of the attributes of God. Justice is a value which has been greatly emphasised in the Quran. According to the teachings of the Quran, it is an imperative which is unconditionally, universally and absolutely binding on everyone, under all circumstances and in all situations. It is binding without consideration of sex, caste, tribe or race. It is binding without regard to the distinction of Muslim and non-Muslim, the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor. Justice is the virtue nearest to the virtue of piety, and, as such, is the basis of Islamic social ethics.

The verses of the Quran tell us that God is the best and the most just of all the judges: He does not do the least injustice to anyone, and loves those who are just.

There are several authentic traditions about the execution of justice in all cases without any regard for rank or status.

According to a saying of the Prophet, the first of the people taken to inhabit paradise, will be "a just king, a doer of good to his people."

One of the very important demands of justice is that we should deal justly with others. In no circumstances should we follow the path of injustice or oppression. That is why Islam has laid great stress on adopting a just attitude.

The Quran states: 'God enjoins justice and kindness' (16:90). At another place the Quran has this to say: 'My Lord enjoins justice.' (7:29) The material symbol of justice is a weighing scale. Just as a balance divides things in proper measure, so should man's acts and deeds tip the scales in favour of justice. In any contentious situation, man ought to act fairly and, when he speaks, his words should be weighed by the measure of reality.

The Quran has repeatedly commanded that social issues should always be resolved with justice. For instance, the Quran says: 'God commands you to pass judgement upon men with fairness' (4:58). Similarly it says, 'Give just weight and full measure...speak for justice, even if it affects your own kinsmen.' (6:153)

Those who have been deprived of their rights in this world and have just claims, will be duly requited on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet of Islam said: 'On the Day of Judgement, rights will be given to those, to whom they are due (and wrongs will be redressed)...'

God is just in all His doings. He gives to each one what he deserves and puts everything in its proper place: 'Surely God shall not wrong anyone by so much as the weight of an ant.' (4:40)

There is nothing God hates more than injustice and transgression. That is why the prophets were sent by God with the divine code of justice. He said: 'O My servants, I have forbidden

oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you. So do not oppress one another.’ (Muslim).

At another place He commands that in controversial matters peace should be made between antagonists ‘in equity and justice.’ (49:9)

It is a general command, for in the family and in society differences will always arise. On such occasions, it is the duty of all the concerned members to settle the matter in accordance with justice without tilting towards any party. The settlement should be made according to the demands of justice and truth.

Then the Quran enjoins:

“O believers, be dutiful to God and bearers of just witness. Do not allow your hatred for other men to turn you away from justice. Deal justly; justice is nearer to true piety.” (5:8)

This shows the great importance of justice. That is why we have to adhere to justice, even when dealing with the enemy. Since the system of the earth and the heavens is established on the basis of perfect justice, man’s code of conduct should likewise be based on justice. In this world of God, there is no place for the path of injustice.

(II) LIBERTY

When Islam came into the world in the seventh century A.D., it was a time when religious persecution was prevalent, but it is noteworthy that it remained uninfluenced by the common practices of the time. Islam, running counter to the age, proclaimed religious freedom. Although a missionary religion, it was against any imposition of restrictions on human thought, which meant that there should be no forced conversion. In his book, *The Preaching of Islam*, Professor T.W. Arnold has gone into considerable detail to show that under Islamic rule, other religions were allowed full freedom. He writes, that the provinces of the Byzantine empire that were rapidly acquired by the prowess of Muslims found themselves enjoying such toleration such as had been unknown to them for centuries. They were allowed the free and undisturbed exercise of their religion. The extent of this toleration - so striking in the history of the seventh century - may be judged from the liberality of the terms granted to the conquered cities.

Compulsion Impermissible

According to the Quran, ‘There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is now distinct from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the firmest handle that will never break.’ (2:256).

The verse of the Quran expresses the fundamental principle of Islam, according to which, if a person believes in the truth of something, he has every right to proclaim it as such, provided that he supports it by logical arguments. His task is complete once he has described his belief in the clearest possible way. But he has no right to compel others to accept it. Whoever accepts the truth does so for his own benefit and whoever denies it does harm only to himself.

Freedom For All

The Quran states:

'Say, the truth is from your Lord. Let him who will believe it, and let him who will reject it.' (18:29)

This also clearly expresses the notion that truth is something which should be accepted or rejected by one's own decision, and not something which should be imposed upon one. The resulting belief is valid only if it is the outcome of one's own conscious decision.

No One Should Assume The Right To Be Another's Keeper

A preacher's mission is to convey the truth to the members of his congregation. And once he has done that, he has fulfilled his religious obligation. It is not part of his task to compel others to accept what he says. It is significant that in the Quran God thus admonishes the Prophet: 'Remind them, for you are only one of the warners. You are not at all a warder over them.' (88:21-22).

Respect For The Religions Of Others

Certain of the companions of the Prophet of Islam, in their zeal to propagate the new faith, began to abuse those who worshipped other gods besides God. But this incurred God's displeasure, and the following verse was revealed in the Quran:

'Do not revile the idols which they invoke besides God, lest in their ignorance they should spitefully revile God.' (6:108).

The freedom of religion advocated in this verse can be explained as a policy of mutual benefit. If we want to have freedom for ourselves, the price we must pay is the granting of the same right of freedom to others. There can be no exclusivity about freedom if there is to be justice in this world. Only if we grant others their legal rights, will they be willing to reciprocate in like manner. But if we abuse or coerce them, we should expect to have the same treatment at their hands. The result would be that there would be no religious freedom whatsoever, regardless of whether society were of only two or of multiple religious persuasions.

Permitting Non-muslims To Worship In Mosques

How far Islam goes along the road to religious freedom is made clear by an event which occurred in the Prophet's lifetime. The famous eighth century biographer, Ibn Ishaq, records how a delegation of Yemenese Christians came to see the Prophet of Islam and had a long dialogue with him in his mosque in Madinah, which went on until the Christian's hour for prayer came. They then expressed a desire to worship there, according to their own rites, in this mosque which is considered by Muslims to be second in importance only to the Masjid-e-Haram in Mecca.

Tradition has it that they were beginning their devotions when one of the Muslims attempted to stop them from praying in the Christian way. But the Prophet intervened, and asked him to refrain from interrupting them, and they were thus permitted to complete their prayers inside the mosque.

On the question of religious tolerance, everyone must be granted the right to present his thoughts, and to be given a quiet hearing. This does not mean, however, that everyone is right, or

-*that Islam believes in the manyness of truth. On the contrary, Islam believes in the oneness of reality. Even so, the truth is not something to be forced upon one, but something, which one is gently assisted to go in quest of as a matter of personal discovery. In this respect, Islam is the greatest upholder of religious freedom.

(III) EQUALITY

According to Islamic tenets, all members of the congregational prayer stand together to pray in the same rows and, on the Hajj pilgrimage, all the believers belonging to different countries gather in white seamless robes for the performance of the obligatory rites. On the occasion of the Final Pilgrimage, it is noteworthy that the Prophet of Islam declared that no Arab was superior to a non-Arab and that no white was superior to a black. All were equally servants of God. In Islamic society, everyone is accorded the same status, there being no higher or lower social strata.

How then can we rationalise what are apparently very great differences in human beings in terms of colour and race, etc., considering that the concept of human equality ranks so high in the value system of Islam? We find the answer in the Quran, which makes it clear that such outward differences are meant to serve as means of identification and were never intended as indicators of superiority (or inferiority). People in different parts of the world may have a diversity of skin texture, complexion and other distinctive racial characteristics, but that is only so that they may be easily distinguished from each other. By Islamic standards, this is designed to facilitate social and national interaction.

The sole basis of superiority in Islam is *taqwa* – the earnestness with which one leads a God-fearing life; as such, it bears no relation to colour, race or status in society. Physical attributes certainly have their effect on the social interaction of this world, but in the Hereafter, no value is attached to them. There, the only things which count are inner qualities, for, upon them depends the essential excellence of man's distinctive character. That is why, according to a hadith, God sees the heart and not the body of the believer. He reserves a place in Paradise only for those found deserving in terms of their inner worth.

Abdullah ibn Masud once asked the Prophet what action was best. "Praying at the proper time," he replied. "What comes next, Messenger of God?" "Not saying things which hurt others," the Prophet said.

According to Islam, all greatness belongs to God. God as the Supreme Being is ineffably superior to all men. While there is this infinitely great difference between God and man, there is no difference whatsoever between man and man.

(IV) TOLERANCE

Tolerance is a virtue which is noble, humanitarian and Islamic. Its practice means making concessions to others. Intolerance, on the other hand, means showing a self-centered unconcern for the needs of others. Tolerance is a worthy, humane virtue, which has been described in different terms in the *shariah*: for instance, gentle behaviour, showing concern for others, being soft-hearted and compassionate.

Only a true God-worshipper is able to look upon people with love and compassion, for his true spirit of religiosity does not allow him to expect anything from anyone. That is why, even when others differ from him or do not behave well towards him, he continues to make concessions to them, and shows them tolerance.

Tolerance implies respect for others, whether in agreement or disagreement. A tolerant person always considers the case of others sympathetically, irrespective of the treatment he is given by them.

Tolerance means, in essence, to give consideration to others. In social life, friction between people does occur in every society. Differences arise from religion, culture, tradition and personal taste. In such a situation the superior course of action is to adopt the ways of concession and large-heartedness.

There is no doubt about it that divergence of views does exist between man and man. Differences are bound to exist everywhere, at the level of the family or society, the community or the country.

In the creation plan of God, roses can be had only by tolerating the existence of thorns. Similarly, a peaceful society can be created by fostering the spirit of tolerance towards diversities. In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences. For removal of all differences is an impossibility.

There is nothing wrong in diversity of opinions. In fact, this is a positive feature which has many advantages. There will be no intellectual development in a society where controversial discussions do not take place, and whose members hold identical views. For in intellectual development an interaction of divergent thinking plays a pivotal role.

Besides this, divergence of views also plays an important role in the development of the human psyche.

The habit of tolerance prevents a man from wasting his time and talent on unnecessary matters. When one is emotionally untouched by negative behaviour, one will be able to continue to perform one's work in the normal way, without wasting a single moment. Thus the policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances our efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

Tolerance is a permanent human requirement. That is why all the great religions of the world have attached great importance to tolerance. Religion aims at making an individual a spiritually developed human being. One who has elevated his spirituality cannot afford intolerance. The behaviour of a truly religious person is always one of tolerance.

The Semitic religions believe in the oneness of reality. The basis of tolerance in Aryan religions that of mutual recognition, while the basis of tolerance in Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is that of mutual respect. The difference is purely philosophic. So far as practical behaviour is concerned, there is no difference in any religion in this respect.

Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life, expressing the noble side of a person's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like the blooming of flowers in a garden.

To sum it up, the spirit of tolerance is the essence of all religions.

QUESTIONS

(i) Justice

1. Which names of God point to the aspect of justice?
2. Why should we deal justly with others?
3. How should social issues be resolved in Islam?
4. Why is it important to adhere to justice even when dealing with an enemy?
5. Why is oppression forbidden in Islam?

(ii) Liberty

1. Why did Islam lay great stress on religious freedom?
2. Why is compulsion not permissible in Islam?
3. Why does Islam preach individual freedom of decision?
4. Why should one respect others' religious beliefs?
5. Are non-Muslims permitted to worship in a mosque?
6. Why is one not allowed to infringe on the rights of others?

(iii) Human equality

1. How are all human beings equal in Islam?
2. What is '*taqwa*'?
3. Why did the Prophet give great importance to not hurting others?

(iv) Tolerance

1. What does the practice of tolerance mean?
2. How should one behave towards men who hold different views?
3. How is toleration a positive principle in life?
5. What is meant by the statement: 'The spirit of tolerance is the essence of all religions'?

UNIT

2

Islamic Character

(I) GREETINGS AND MANNER OF SPEECH

Islam possesses a whole code of correct behaviour to be followed. It teaches its believers how to behave on meeting a person or how to greet him in the proper manner. It lays stress on speaking the truth, being able to take criticism without becoming offended, never raising one's voice while talking to others, keeping one's word and acting with honesty in every situation.

Islam tells Muslims how to greet their brothers when meeting them. They should say *Assalamu alaikum* that is, 'Peace be upon you'. The other person should say in return 'And peace be upon you too.'

There are numerous verses of the Quran and also many traditions that enjoin believers to extend greetings to one another most generously: 'And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it, or return it. Surely God takes account of all things.' (4:86).

This is further elaborated upon in the following verse: 'You who believe, do not enter houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates. This is better for you, so that you may be mindful.' (of what is seemly) (24:27).

Similarly, the traditions of the Prophets attached great importance to greetings.

'Abu Hurayrah recorded the Messenger of God as saying: There are six duties of one believer to another believer: he will visit him when he falls ill: he will be present before him when he dies; he will respond to him when he invites him; he will salute him when he meets him; he will respond to him when he sneezes and he will seek his good whether he is absent or present.' (Nasai)

Another tradition says: 'The best of men of God is he who begins with a greeting.' (Tirmizi, Abu Daud).

The greeting of one Muslim to another is *Assalamu alaikum*. Salam means peace. Therefore a Muslim is a person in whose hands the property of another is safe. The reply *wa alaikum us salam* also means the same, that is, it is a confirmation that he is sure that the other's life, property and honour are safe from him. Greeting is completed by handshaking. Shaking hands, a sign of love and affection, is also a sunnah of the Prophet.

Qatadah, a traditionist and a successor once asked Anas, a Companion of the Prophet: 'Was there any handshaking among the Companions of the Prophet?' He replied: 'Yes.' (Bukhari)

Bar'a ibn Azib reported that the Prophet said: 'There are no Muslims who meet and shake hands but they both forgive each other before parting.' (Tirmizi, Ibn Majah).

The Islamic greeting is a form of prayer. A believer is the well-wisher of all the other believers. He has good feelings in his heart towards others.

The traditions of the Prophet contain many pieces of advice on how to behave towards other human beings and how to conduct oneself in society. The Prophet often said that one who does not control his tongue is evil: 'Shall I tell you who the evil ones are?' asked the Prophet of his Companions one day. They requested him to do so, and he said, 'They are those who spread slander, who sow the seeds of dissension among friends, and who seek to lay blame upon the innocent.' Also, according to Ali ibn Abu Talib, the very worst thing one can do is make a wrongful accusation against an innocent person.

Another tradition states, it is in the tongues of men that Heaven and Hell reside. 'According to Abu Darda, there is no part of a believer's body which is dearer to God than his tongue, for it is with his tongue that he upholds the truth, thereby entering Paradise. And there is no part of a disbeliever's body, which is more hateful to God than his tongue, for it is with his tongue that he denies the truth, thereby entering the Fire.'

The Prophet once said: 'When you speak, do so in a good cause. That will serve your interests. And refrain from harmful speech. In that way, you too will be saved from harm.' (Al-Tabarani). The Prophet also said: 'A true believer does not insult or curse people: neither does he use foul or vulgar language.' (Al-Tirmidhi).

Therefore, neither should one indulge in casting aspersions on one's fellow men, nor should one waste time on idle talk.

The Prophet Muhammad once observed that the most sinful people were those who indulged in the most vain talk. A group of people, who once came to visit a Companion of the Prophet who lay dying, noticed that his face was radiating light, and they asked him how this came to be. 'There are only two aspects of my behaviour which I feel certain will explain this,' he replied. 'One was that I used to avoid vain talk, and the other was that I harboured no ill-feeling in my heart towards other Muslims.' (Jami' Al-Ulum Wa Al-Hikam).

The ability to take criticism was considered to be a positive virtue by the Prophet. In a tradition attributed to Saeed ibn Abu Aroobah, the Prophet said: 'One who does not listen to criticism is not to be counted among the learned.' (Ibn Abdil Barr).

The Prophet also clearly advised against expressing disdain for food. 'Whatever the dish brought before the Prophet, he would never say anything disparaging about it. According to Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet was never in the habit of finding fault with food. If he liked something, he ate it; if not, he left it.' (Al-Bukhari, Muslim).

Good manners in speech and greetings occupy an important part of the Prophet's advice to believers and serve also as a guideline for today.

(II) RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS AND RELATIVES

Neighbours are our nearest companions. After family members, it is neighbours one comes in contact with the most. Developing good relations with neighbours, is therefore, an important aspect of a God-oriented life.

A neighbour, be he a co-religionist or an adherent of another religion, be he of one's own community or of another, must always be taken good care of. He must be given his dues at all times, according to the demands of the shariah and of humanity.

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam once observed, "By God, anyone who is a threat to his neighbour is no believer."

According to this hadith, if a Muslim becomes a source of trouble to his neighbours, his faith itself will become suspect.

The humanity of an individual and his religiosity and spirituality are tested by the way he behaves towards his neighbours. The nature of his relationships with neighbours serves as a test of whether he has human feelings or not, and whether he is sensitive to Islamic teachings or not.

If a person's neighbours are happy with him, that is a proof of his being a good man, but if his neighbours are unhappy with him, that is a proof that his behaviour leaves much to be desired.

The commands in the shariah regarding neighbours indicate that a believer must make concessions to his neighbours unilaterally, that is, by doing good to them even if they are ill-behaved towards him.

Being a good neighbour is the first step towards becoming a good human being. It is the good neighbour who will have a share in God's blessings in the Hereafter.

According to a hadith, "To God the best companion is one who is best for his companion and the best neighbour is one who is best for his neighbour." (At- Tirmizi)

The Quran goes further with the more specific injunction to "show kindness to near and distant neighbours, to fellow travellers and to wayfarers." (4:36)

This means that it is incumbent upon us to behave well towards all kinds of neighbours, whether they are permanent residents of the neighbourhood, or are only living there temporarily for the purposes of education, business or travel, etc. Wherever one is living in close proximity to others, one must feel obliged to observe their rights as human beings. No one should be the cause of trouble to his neighbour. On a separate occasion, the Prophet observed, "One who believes in God should not give trouble to his neighbour" and "One who believes in God should accord due respect to his neighbours." (Al-Bukhari) As an individual, therefore, a Muslim must be a good neighbour, while, on the larger scale of the community, Muslims should also prove to be good neighbours at the national level.

The Prophet, again on two separate occasions, thus defined the essence of good neighbourliness: "By God, a person cannot be a believer (that is, a Muslim) until and unless he likes for his neighbours and for his brother what he likes for himself." "A person from whose evils his neighbour is not safe will not go to heaven." (Sahih Muslim)

(III) RESPECT FOR LIFE

Muslims believe that, whether they are aware of it or not, all human beings are the creations of God, and loved by Him. But it is not only human beings who are endowed with life. There are also animals and plants, which have been given life by God, though they do not possess the kind of intelligence, which is the sole prerogative of man. However, Islam commands respects for all kinds of life. It forbids the killing of other human beings, brutality to animals and even destroying the living environment in which we live.

Life is sacred and is considered a divine gift, which is meant to be preserved, enjoyed and put to use according to the commandments of God. Life should never be ended without justification. No killing is allowed except on the battlefield and that only if the war fought is a defensive one. The taking of life as a punishment is the prerogative of a court of law and has to be subject to very strict rules drawn up by the jurists. This can never be done by an individual on the strength of his own personal decision-making.

Life is not a human being's personal property, to be disposed of as an individual might wish, but a precious gift of God and a trust from Him. Therefore, one should take good care of one's life and health. No true Muslim should ever consider suicide as an option, even in the most difficult of circumstances. One should respect one's own life and trust in God to guide one into a better future.

A Muslim has a duty to protect all forms of life and treat them with respect, for God has created them all. No person, even in a position of greatness or power, has the right to usurp another's right to life. It is said that the first inhabitants of the eternal world will be the just kings.

Every time a Muslim kills an animal for food, it should be done in a lawful method, as prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah. A prayer should accompany it. One should kill only in such quantity as is required for food. Wasteful killing of animals is considered as showing disrespect for the life created by God.

Respect for life includes taking care of the environment and of every living thing in its clean and healthy life can be lead only in a clean and healthy environment. While utilising natural resources, care must be taken not to endanger the environmental balance. Even the cutting down of trees, thus depleting the forests, may be considered as endangering the life of human beings as well as those of animals and plants. All of them require natural resources, which are bounties from God, to function in such a manner that would not create any disruption of the cycle of nature.

(IV) RESPECT FOR FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

To give shelter to those who have nowhere to go in society is an act of worship of the highest excellence. Every human being is liable to fall into need at some time: a mother and father reach the end of their lives; a child becomes an orphan; a traveller falls into difficulties far away from his native land; at times such as these, the individual is completely dependent on others. To come to his or her rescue at such times of crisis is a deed highly pleasing to God. God will not let such action go unrewarded. There are countless verses of the Quran and sayings of the Prophet of Islam, which emphasize the importance of being charitable to those in need.

The reason that offering help to the helpless is so pleasing to God is that it is a practical acknowledgement that every man is inherently helpless before the Lord. It is not only those who are being helped who are helpless. Those who are helping them are in the same position, for everything is in God's hands: He gives and takes as He pleases. To realize this fact is to believe in God, and to express this realization in the form of actions pleasing to God is to worship Him.

But the only way of telling if a person is true in his faith and his worship is to see how he deals with a weak and helpless human being.

A person is brought before us in this world in the same state of helplessness in which we will be brought before God in the next world. If we see no urgent need to help him, so will

likewise see no urgent need to help us out in the next world. We may not feel obliged to help him because he has done nothing for us: but then, by the same token, we will not be deserving of God's reward when we come before Him in the hereafter. But if we are kind to such a person, while praying to God that He should be kind to us when we come before Him in a state of need and destitution, then there is hope that God will look with favour upon our actions and our prayers.

To be kind to those in need is to acknowledge that we are all in need; we all depend on God's mercy. We all stand alone; we are all in need of God's assistance. If we pray for God's mercy and help, then we should also show that we are willing to help others and show them mercy. One who believes in God and sees how helpless he is before the Lord, should, when he sees the helplessness of others, immediately remember his own position; if he really desires God's assistance for himself, he should be quick to run to the assistance of others.

One who really feels his own helplessness before God feels like giving away everything he has to the helpless, so that he in his turn may receive a full share in God's blessings. He feels compelled to do his utmost to give one in need a helping hand, so that God may come to his own rescue in his hour of dire need.

(V) RESPECT FOR PARENTS AND ELDERS

One of the principal teachings of the Holy Quran is that one should show great respect to one's parents. In Islam, the love of parents and the duty owed to them stand higher than the love of children and the duty owed to them.

The Quran says, "Your Lord commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you show kindness to parents. If one or both of them attain old age in your life-time, never be harsh to them, nor reproach them, but always speak gently to them.

Be humbly tender with them and pray: "My Lord, have mercy on them, even as they nourished me when I was a child." (17: 24, 25)

This shows that, in old age, parents need to be tended as carefully and affectionately as little children are looked after in their childhood by their parents.

The Prophet said: "Paradise lies at the feet of your mother."

Once a man came to him and asked, "Messenger of Allah! Which of my relations has the prior claim to my devotions?"

The Holy Prophet replied, "Your mother."

The man asked, "And after her?"

The Holy Prophet replied, "Your mother."

The man asked a third time, "And after my mother." He still replied, "Your mother."

When he asked for the fourth time, the Prophet replied, "Your father and after him other relations according to their degrees of kinship."

When Makkah fell to the Muslims, and the Prophet entered the city, Abu Bakr brought his father, a very old man, to meet him.

The Prophet said to Abu Bakr, "Why did you put your father to trouble by making him come to me? I would have gladly gone to see him myself."

He has also said, "Most unfortunate is the person who is granted an opportunity to serve his parents, yet he fails to win Paradise through kindness towards them."

QUESTIONS

(i) Greetings and Manner of Speech

1. How should Muslims greet each other?
2. What is the right behaviour on meeting somebody or entering a house?
3. Why is greeting considered a form of prayer?
4. How does greeting symbolize the attitude of peace and goodwill?
5. What is the proper way of speaking for a Muslim?
6. Why is anger to be avoided?
7. Why does God prefer reconciliation to a quarrel?

(ii) Relations with neighbors and relatives.

1. Why are neighbours called our closest companions?
2. Why are good relations with neighbours are considered a part of religion?
3. Why should one make concessions to neighbours?
4. How should one treat one's relatives?
5. Why are duties to neighbours and relatives considered so important in Islam?

(iii) Respect for life

1. Why is life so precious?
2. Why should one never take somebody's life?
3. Why is it not allowed to take one's own life in Islam?
4. Why is God the Master of all life?

(iv) Respect for feelings and emotions

1. Who are the helpless in the society?
2. What does Islam tell us to do for the helpless?
3. Why is it pleasing to God when we are kind to the helpless?
4. How do we all depend on God's mercy?
5. How by helping others do we also help ourselves?
6. How should we show our respect for other people's feelings?

(i) Respect for parents and elders.

1. Why is respect for parents considered one of the principle teachings of the Quran?
2. What did the Prophet say about the status and respect of mothers?
3. How did the Prophet treat the elderly?

UNIT

3

Human Values in Islam

(I) THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN VALUES IN ISLAM

God, who created the human being and put him on the earth, endowed him with inborn, or innate knowledge and values. These innate values form a natural moral sense, which makes a person recognise what is good and beautiful, such as telling the truth, keeping promises and being grateful. This same moral sense also makes a person recognise what is bad and morally ugly such as telling lies, deceit and arrogance.

The natural moral sense is one way in which the Creator has provided for the guidance of human beings. He has granted human beings a conscience, which registers right and wrong, and a mind, which has the ability to reason. He has made the whole universe a natural book full of signs that lead a thinking person to the existence of God, His power and His bounty.

However, to make matters clearer, and to give man a more detailed knowledge of God, He showed him a very well specified way of relating to Him. This God did by sending to His people again and again messages through His prophets. Prophets were persons specially chosen by God to bring to the community practical guidance on how to stay on the right path. The last of the prophets was the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The Quran was revealed to him as sure and clear guidance for all. Muhammad's explanations of the revealed verses and his life itself offered further and more detailed clarification of how we are supposed to act in a way that is pleasing to God. As God abhors all that is not beautiful and true, His guidance served to develop in the believers a very sound system of human values based on the inborn human understanding of what is good and what is evil, given to man by God at the time of creation.

'I was sent to perfect the best in moral characteristics,' said the Prophet describing his mission. While this points to the fact that the message he brought was not a new one, it also shows that the main purpose of this message was to make man live according to the highest moral standards which he is capable of.

This saying of the Prophet may be linked to many verses in the Quran such as: 'Consider the human self and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be. And how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of God. He shall indeed attain to a happy state who causes this self to grow in purity. And truly lost is he who buries it (in darkness).' (91:7-10)

We know that creation is amazingly vast and intricate. Man too is a very intricate being who has been placed on earth to lead a life according to the moral values laid down by God. Only by abiding by them will he pass the trial on earth and attain the eternal life in the Hereafter.

The human being, as mentioned earlier, was created with an inbuilt moral sense, which allows him to recognise what is true and good from what is false and evil. Through the call of the prophets and the revelation he was also offered divine guidance as to how to differentiate between the two. 'Good' may be defined as whatever is pleasing to God and therefore beneficial to man. 'Evil,' on the other hand, is whatever incurs the anger of God and is therefore, harmful to man. Although God created mankind in a state of natural goodness, He also created him with the capacity or power to do both good and evil. He gave him the freedom to choose between doing good and doing evil. However, only by doing good can he pass the divine test and achieve eternal life.

To preserve the pure and sinless state in which man was born and to keep him on the path to God, one has to keep away from and ward off evil. This is why *taqwa* or piety, which is repeatedly stressed in the Quran, is the most important quality a person could develop in relation to good and evil. *Taqwa* means to be conscious of God and to be careful of not overstepping the limits set by Him. It is a defence against evil and temptation.

Therefore, when we speak of cultivating human values in Islam, we simply mean following the guidance of God. Doing things that are pleasing to Him is beneficial to us as this leads to salvation and the eternal life. The Quran does not merely ask people to do good, and refrain from evil. It specifies the ways to achieve these ends. From this one can see that each person has a duty to cultivate good and desirable qualities, which are part of his natural make-up. And he has a duty to strive against bad traits and habits.

Islam's ethical and legal code, or *shari'ah*, is has its basis in the Quran and traditions. Some of the qualities that should be cultivated are truthfulness, honesty, reliability in fulfilling trusts, gentleness, politeness, courtesy, generosity, compassion and readiness to forgive, purity and decency, humility, patience and steadfastness, courage, thankfulness, dignity, honour, self-respect, good temper, perseverance, diligence and willingness to respect others.

And the Quran says:

'Verily, men and women who submit; and men and women who believe; and men and women who are patient; and men and women who are truthful; and men and women who are humble before God; and men and women who give in charity; and men and women who fast; and men and women who guard their chastity; and men and women who remember God much – to them God has promised forgiveness and a great reward.' (23:35)

But lying, dishonesty, deceit, untrustworthiness, hypocrisy, harshness, miserliness, enviousness, hatred, shamelessness, self-conceit, opportunism and laziness are among the traits of human character one should fight against.

In cultivating good qualities, it is important to remember the saying of the Prophet that the best deeds are those done regularly, even if they are small. This stresses the need to develop good habits, so that the practice of goodness becomes easy and natural and a matter of course.

(II) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM IN INCULCATING VALUES

All the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles – the worship of God and the service of mankind. Without putting both of these principles into practice, there can be no true fulfillment of one's religious duties.

In its followers, Islam inculcates the spirit of love and respect for all human beings. On the one hand, by serving human beings, they please their God, and on the other, they achieve spiritual progress for themselves.

According to a *hadith*, you should be merciful to people on earth and God on high will be merciful to you. In this way Islam links personal salvation to serving others. One can receive God's reward in the Hereafter only if one has striven to alleviate the sufferings of mankind.

According to another *hadith*, on Doomsday, God will say to a person, "I was ill, but you did not come to nurse Me." The man will reply, "God, You being the Lord of the universe, how can You be ill?" God will answer, "Such and such servant of Mine was ill. Had you gone there, you would have found Me there with him." Then God will say to another person, "I was hungry, but you did not feed Me." The person will reply, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You go hungry?" God will say, "Such and such of my servants came to you, but you did not feed him. Had you done so, you would have found Me with him." Then God will say to yet another man, "I was thirsty, and you did not give Me water to drink." That person will also say, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You be thirsty?" God will say, "Such and such servant of Mine came to you, but you did not give him water to drink. Had you offered him water, you would have found Me there with him."

From this, we learn the Islamic principle that if someone wants to find God, he shall first have to make himself deserving of this by helping the poor and the needy. This act becomes a means of spiritual progress for him. And there is no doubt about it that it is only those people who have elevated themselves spiritually, who will find God.

This culture of mercy and compassion approved of by God is not limited to human beings, but extends also to the animal world. We must be equally sympathetic to animals. The Hadith gives us many guidelines on how to look after animals and treat them with fairness, there being duties to them laid down by God. One who is cruel to animals risks depriving himself of God's mercy.

Two significant examples have been mentioned in a hadith. One of them concerns a devoutly religious woman, who spent most of her time in worship. But one day she became enraged at a cat and trussed it up with a rope, depriving it of food and water. The cat remained tied up in this state until it died of thirst and hunger. God so strongly disapproved of this that, despite the woman's great devotions, He decreed that she be cast into hell.

The other incident concerns a woman who, a prostitute by profession, was generally despised by people. One day she was going along a path when she found a dog lying on the ground dying of thirst. This woman felt sympathy for it. She looked here and there, but there was no water to be seen anywhere. Then she noticed a well nearby with water deep within it. But there was nothing with which to draw water from it. Then she thought of her shawl to which she tied her shoe and, by lowering this into the well, she was able to bring up water, which she poured into the mouth of the dying dog. She did this several times until the dog's thirst was quenched. Then it revived and walked happily away. According to the Hadith God was so pleased with this human gesture that He decreed that she should enter paradise.

This comparative example shows that over and above being kind to our fellow men, we must be merciful even to animals. Those men and women who have no feelings of mercy and compassion for living things are valueless in the eyes of God. On the other hand, those men and women who do have mercy and compassion for living things will be adjudged God's favoured servants.

Islamic belief softens the hearts of its believers. That is why, when Islamic belief penetrates people's hearts, they will of necessity become kind and compassionate to others. They will see everyone with eyes of 'love and compassion,' they will have this urge within them to serve others, and fulfill others' needs.

If, even after adopting the beliefs of Islam, feelings of love and compassion do not well up in the heart of its adherent, he should rethink whether or not Islamic beliefs have truly found a place in his heart and mind, whether or not he is able to fully practice what he believes and whether or not he has succeeded in moulding himself entirely on the model of Islam.

When Umar Faruq, the second Caliph of Islam, travelled from Madinah to Palestine, he had taken only one camel along with him. He said that, if he continued to ride the camel during the entire journey, it would be cruelty to the animal, so it must be given rest. Therefore, he rode and walked by turns so that the camel should have periods of rest, until he reached his destination.

This shows that if the true spirit of Islam is inculcated in a person, he becomes so compassionate to all living beings that, even at the cost of his own comforts, he extends a helping hand to others.

As it is put in a *hadith*, "By God, he is not a Muslim who eats his fill, while his neighbour goes hungry." This shows that a Muslim is one who is as concerned with others' hunger and thirst as he is with his own; who is concerned not only with his own person but with the whole of humanity.

According to another *hadith*, you should "extend greetings to people, feed them and earn your place in heaven." This shows that according to Islam that person is worthy of heaven whose heart is eager for others' peace and well-being, who is eager to share with everyone, whether it be food, clothes or medical help, etc. In short, one should share in people's pain and suffering.

Islam is a religion of humanity. Islam considers serving others as a great act of worship. According to the teachings of Islam, it is only in serving people that we shall have a share in God's mercy.

(III) UPHOLDING THE RULES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

(a) Faithfulness

One of the marks of true believers is, according to the Quran, that they "faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants" (23:8). Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani has briefly explained it in these words: "They do not commit any breach of trust and do not break promises, neither in the matter of God nor in the matter of men." (p. 443)

Everything man has is given to him in trust by God or by man. In this way everyone is bound by certain promises and obligations. Some obligations are entered into by written or spoken agreement, while others are a matter of tacit understanding. Whatever the form of

agreement, man has to faithfully fulfill all these trusts and obligations. If he fails to do so, he does not come up to the highest standards of humanity. He is proving himself guilty in the eyes of God.

Man's body, heart and mind, are all like trusts bestowed on man by God. It is, therefore, incumbent upon man to make the best use of these endowments within the limits decreed by God. That is, his hands and feet should move only for the cause of justice, and not for tyranny. His mind should be full only of well-wishing and not of ill-will. Similarly all the trusts by which he is bound should be discharged to the trustees, whether these trusts are in written or in verbal form. He should never regard another's possessions as his own.

Everyone is bound by obligations, in relation on the one hand to man and on the other to God. According to the Quran, trust of two kinds stems from God; one is the inherent sense of responsibility man is born with; this form of trust is binding upon all human beings born on this earth. Another form of trust is that which arises from faith in God. Only those are bound by this sense of commitment who have embraced God's religion as brought to them by God's messenger: in this sense, the believers are consciously bound in trust. So far as the matter of trust as regards man is concerned, some obligations are incurred from time to time as they arise in particular and are set down in contracts, while others automatically devolve upon individuals, either as family members, or as citizens of the state, living in society. Discharging all these trusts and obligations is man's duty, in obedience both to his own nature and to the Shariah.

(b) Honesty and Truthfulness

The Quran defines believers as men and women who speak the truth. The noblest quality in a man or woman is honesty and avoidance of falsehood at all times. Indeed, nothing less than absolute truthfulness befits the human character.

Many traditions have been related, which show the importance of honesty and truth. For instance, according to one tradition, the Prophet of Islam observed: 'You should speak the truth, because speaking the truth leads man to a life of virtue. And you should keep your distance from someone who tells lies, because telling lies leads man to a life of evil.'

This hadith commands us to speak the truth and it also tells us the wisdom of speaking the truth. When a man genuinely takes care to speak the truth, he develops a truth-loving personality. The colour of truth dominates his temperament and thinking. A soul is nurtured within him that is free of all the evils of psychological complexes. In this way there is nothing to prevent the basic quality of honesty from shining through on all occasions.

On the contrary, one who whenever speaking, utters falsehoods, is sullyng his inner self. Purity of soul does not develop within him. He becomes more and more immersed in evil. This is why, according to a hadith, the Prophet observed: 'The best utterance to me is that of the truth. The trader who is truthful and trustworthy will be raised on Doomsday along with the Prophets.' (Bukhari)

A believer in God is also necessarily a truth-loving person. He always speaks the truth. In all matters he says just what is in accordance with reality. A true believer cannot afford to tell lies, or hide facts. What does it mean to speak the truth? It means avoiding contradiction between man's knowledge of things and the words he utters. For that matter, whatever he says should be what has come to his knowledge. Falsehood, by contrast, is the utterance of statements, which do not tally with reality. Truth is the highest virtue of a believer's character. A believer is a man of

principle. And, for such a person, telling the truth is most important. For him no other behaviour is even possible, for he finds it impossible to deny the truth.

The world of God is based wholly on truth. Here everything expresses itself in its real form. The sun, the moon, rivers, mountains, stars and planets are all based on truth. They appear just as they really are. In this unfathomably vast universe of God, there is nothing that is based on untruth. There is nothing that shows itself in any other form than its real form.

This is the character of nature, which pervades the entire universe. A believer too has exactly the same character. He is totally free from falsehood or double standards. A believer is all truth. His whole existence is moulded upon truth. From the very first he appears to be a true person both inside and outside.

Speaking the truth is not only a matter of policy for the believer: it is his very religion. Compromising in the matter of truth is not possible for him. He speaks the truth because he knows that not speaking the truth is the negation of his own personality and a commitment to something that is the negation of the self. And this is not possible for any worthy person.

(c) Obedience

Man is free in this world. God has not placed on him any curbs whatsoever. But the purpose of this freedom is merely to put man to the test. It is not meant to encourage him to lead a life of permissiveness, like the animals, and then, one day, just pass away and disappear from this world. Rather its purpose is that man should lead a morally upright life of his own free will, thus demonstrating that he is God's humble servant and that the only way of life that becomes him is a life of obedience.

One who conducts himself in this matter as is expected of him by God, should be reckoned as God's special servant who, without any apparent compulsion, chose to be a man of principle; and who, without being subjected to any external force, of his own free will obeyed his Lord as He would have desired. This liberty accorded to man gives him the opportunity to gain credit for being the most superior of God's creatures.

All the things in this world are God's subjects. The stars and planets rotate in space doing their Lord's bidding. Trees, rivers, mountains, and all other such natural phenomena function according to the unchangeable laws of God laid down by Him at the outset. Similarly, the animals follow exactly the instincts instilled in their species by the Divine Will. Man is the only creature of God who has been given, exceptionally, the gift of power and freedom.

This freedom has opened doors of two kinds for man, one leading to obedience and the other to disobedience. If, on receiving freedom an individual becomes arrogant, insolent and disobedient, it will mean that he has failed to pass the test.

But if on the other hand, he remains modest and humble, obeying his Lord's will on all occasions, he will have made the right use of his God-given freedom: he will, without any compulsion, have bound himself by divine principles. One who chooses this course will succeed in the test of freedom.

A true believer makes himself subservient to God and His Prophet. He obeys God and His Prophet irrespective of whether the command is in accordance with his wishes or not.

In the life Hereafter success is for those who bow down before the commandments of God and His Prophet. Realisation of God seizes his heart to the extent that he fears Him most. To save himself from the displeasure of God becomes the greatest concern of his life. The obedient

servants of God will be held to be God's chosen people and they will remain in an everlasting state of blissfulness and blessedness.

(d) Politeness

After adopting the teachings of Islam, the attitude formed in the believer is that of politeness and gentleness. In Islam man discovers the reality that God is great (*Allahu Akbar*). This discovery brings to him the realization that greatness belongs to God alone; it does not belong to him or to anyone else. As a result, modesty, humility, tolerance and politeness are engendered within him. For, it is a condition necessary for adherence to the path of gentle behaviour to have a temperament marked by the virtues mentioned above, in particular, the maximum degree of tolerance coupled with great politeness.

As a result of the wrong thinking and misdeeds of others, we are repeatedly faced with unpleasant experiences in this present world. Hence only those can firmly tread the path of politeness and gentleness who are able to refrain from the psychology of reaction. That is why true believers are described in the Quran as "those who curb their anger and those who forgive their fellow men." (3: 134)

According to a tradition recorded by Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet once observed: "God is gentle and loves gentleness in every matter." On another occasion, the Prophet thus expressed the same idea: "God is gentle and loves gentleness. He grants to gentleness what he does not grant to harshness or to any other thing." Similarly there is another hadith to this effect: "One who is bereft of gentleness will be bereft of all goodness." (*Sahih*, Muslim)

Muslims should therefore never be short-tempered and should not raise their voice at others. The Quran says: "Be modest in your behaviour and lower your voice: "for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of a donkey." (31: 19)

Muslims should be polite in their interactions and dealings. They should be polite to parents, brothers, sisters, neighbours, teachers, elders, old people, friends and persons in need of help. Even if someone behaves rudely, one should not retaliate in the same manner.

In a contentious situation, if we treat people with haughtiness, it will aggravate the situation, hurt their egos and lead to the escalation of the trouble. If, instead, we opt for gentle behaviour in our dealings, it will awaken peoples' consciences. Now the result will be quite the opposite. If earlier the person concerned was our opponent, he will now be our friend. Gentle behaviour turns even our direst enemies into friends. The Quran has this to say: "The good deed and evil deed cannot be equal. Repel the evil with one which is better, then verily he will become as though he was a close friend." (41: 34)

In fact, the greatest weapon of a believer is to treat people well. Even if people are not good to him, he should be good to them. He should adopt the policy of avoidance in the face of provocation or irritating behaviour and instead exercise patience in all such situations. Every believer has the duty to seek the protection of God from such negative feelings, rather than act upon them.

(e) Mercy

Islamic culture is one of mercy (*rahmat*). Islam teaches its followers that, when they meet one another, they should address one another with such words as "May peace and God's blessings be upon you." Even when one sneezes, one should say, "May God be praised," and the others sitting with him will respond, "May God bless you." When the believer enters the mosque, he

should say: "May God open the gates of mercy to me." Similarly, when worshippers have concluded their prayer, they are to turn their faces sideways and say: "May God's blessings and peace be upon you."

In this way, on all occasions and at every stage, the phrases of peace and mercy come readily to the lips of the believer. Thinking and speaking in terms of mercy become, in fact, the distinguishing features of the believers. Their whole life is moulded by the demands of mercy and compassion.

The Prophet often uttered such phrases as, "May God bless the man, may God bless the woman." This goes to show what type of attitude Islam wants to develop in its adherents. This is the culture of *rahmat* and love. Islam demands that on all occasions human beings should be well-intentioned towards each other; on all occasions man should offer the gifts of love and compassion to others.

God's attributes are given in the Quran as 'The Compassionate', 'The Merciful'. That is, very kind and sympathetic. Similarly, the Prophet of Islam has been called 'A Mercy to the Worlds' (21: 107). That is, the Prophet of Islam has been sent as a blessing to the whole world. The greatest distinguishing feature of the Prophet is his being the instrument of universal mercy.

The Quran, as a matter of divine guidance, urges people to exercise patience and compassion in their dealings with one another. This means that everyone should treat others with sympathy and kindness. Even when one experiences unkindness from others, one should not return unkindness for unkindness, but should continue to behave sympathetically. This Quranic verse, "and they exhort one another to patience and compassion" means that creatures of God (human beings) ought to be dealt with mercifully.

Of all matters which are of great personal importance, the virtue of mercy is ranked as the foremost. That is why the Prophet of Islam observes: "God will not show mercy to one who does not show mercy to others." (*Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Tawhid*).

We learn of 99 names of the attributes of God from the Quran, some of these being:

<i>Rahman</i>	Most Merciful
<i>Rahim</i>	Most Compassionate
<i>Wadud</i>	Most Loving
<i>As-Salam</i>	Most Peace Loving
<i>Rafiq</i>	Most Gentle
<i>Ghafoor</i>	Most Forgiving
<i>Jameel</i>	Most Beautiful

As these names suggest, God's mercy for His servants is boundless. It follows that His servants should in like manner show mercy and compassion for one another. The hadith endorses this by exhorting all human beings to adopt a divine code of ethics based on love and compassion for fellow human beings.

It is certainly incumbent upon all of the faithful to foster a loving, caring attitude towards others and to recognize that, in showing love and compassion to their fellow men, they are following a course of right action. According to a Hadith, God said: "My mercy prevails over My wrath."

He may reward good deeds and punish the wrongdoer, but there is always scope within His scheme of things to have regard for sincere repentance and to show His divine mercy.

Once the Prophet of Islam saw a woman cooking food over a fire, while holding a baby in her arms. The Prophet asked his companions whether they thought it possible for this woman to throw her baby into the fire. They replied that never could such a thing happen. The Prophet replied that God loved His servants more than this woman loved her child.

God's compassion is so great that no sin is beyond forgiveness. However much a servant sins, if at any stage before his death he truly repents and seeks God's pardon, all his sins will be forgiven. However, in God's court, it is sincerity which is of prime value, not lip service.

The first verse of the Qur'an: 'In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful,' has been repeated 114 times throughout the text. This shows that Mercy and Compassion are the most important of God's attributes. Besides these 114 times, these words occur at many other places in the Holy Scriptures.

Islam is thus a religion of love and mercy. The Quran itself is a message of love and mercy from the Most Merciful God to His creatures. God Himself is All-Merciful and He desires His servants to live in this world as merciful creatures.

(f) Intentions

Islam attaches the utmost importance to intentions (*niyyah*). No action is acceptable to God purely on the basis of its outer appearance. He accepts only such actions as are performed with proper intention, and rejects those performed with ill-intention. Right intention is the moral purposiveness which underlies all actions performed solely for God's pleasure. One who acts on such feelings will be rewarded by God in the Hereafter.

Ill-intention, on the other hand, is a negative spur to worldly attainment. Ostensibly religious acts, if performed for worldly gain or public commendation, are in this sense ill-intentioned. Any fame, honour or popularity, which ensues from an ill intentioned act is a hollow triumph and is looked upon by the Almighty with extreme disfavour.

Intention is rooted in man's inner thinking and feelings. A common man is unable to penetrate the inner recesses of a person's mind, but God knows full well what a man's thought processes and feelings are. People can be deluded by appearances, but God has complete knowledge of everything. He will deal with people according to His knowledge and will reward everyone exactly as he or she deserves.

Intention has to do with the inner reality. A thing which loses its reality or its meaningfulness is valueless. Similarly, an act which is performed with ill intention or with no good intention, has no value – neither in the eyes of man, nor of God.

Things are of value only when they are pure, without any adulteration. An act done with right intention is a pure act, and an act performed without right intention is an impure act.

(g) Purity and Cleanliness

According to the Quran: 'Allah loves those who turn to him in repentance and purify themselves.' (2:222).

According to a Hadith, 'purity is half of faith.' Similarly, the Prophet of Islam once observed: 'God is pure and loves purity.'" (Ibn Majah)

Man is a creature who has been specially granted the quality of sensitivity. That is why man naturally likes cleanliness, and since Islam is a religion of nature, it lays great stress on cleanliness. Man's body, his clothing and his home, should all be pictures of cleanliness.

It was due to the importance given to cleanliness that the companions of the Prophet used to bathe daily. According to *Al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik, Abdullah ibn Umar spoke of how his father used to take a bath before each prayer. In this way he used to bathe five times a day. The third caliph, Hazrat Usman ibn Affan, used to bathe daily. (*Musnad Ahmad*)

The cleanliness of body and soul is one of the basic demands of Islam. Islam, as we learn from the Quran and Hadith, is a religion of nature. Islam and nature are indeed each other's counterparts. Nature loves cleanliness and abhors pollution: that is why this highly desirable feature of human existence – cleanliness – is one of the basic tenets of the Islamic faith.

What is the nature of that faith? It is to lead a life in total consonance with the will of God, and such a life can have its beginnings only in a condition of exemplary personal hygiene. According to a Hadith, the keeping of oneself clean is one half of faith; this indicates the amount of emphasis laid upon hygiene in Islamic practice. The concept of cleanliness is thus an important ingredient of the very essence of Islam.

This is clearly in evidence at the appointed times of worship. The most sublime form of worship is *salat* (*namaz*), which is performed five times a day. Each time the hour of prayer arrives, the first thing a good Muslim must do is perform his ablutions. Ablution (*wudu*) entails the washing of all the exposed parts of the body. As a cleansing process, *wudu* is an equivalent of a semi-bath. In this way, the devout Muslim takes a semi-bath five times daily.

In the first phase of Islam, it was common practice for Muslims to take a bath daily before the Fajr (dawn) prayers. Bathing thus became a regular daily feature of every Muslim's life. The servant of Uthman, the third caliph, tells of how the caliph used unfailingly to take a bath once or twice daily. If Muslims have always attached great importance to cleanliness, it is because of the explicit commands on this subject in the Quran. When the Quran began to be revealed, one of its signal injunctions was:

“Cleanse your garments and keep away from all pollution.” (74:4).

The cleanliness of clothes is a necessary concomitant of the purity of the body. Without that, the body is not one hundred per cent clean. Indeed, as much stress is laid on cleanliness as on the avoidance of wearing showy apparel. In Islam, ideally, the devotee is required, to worship in clothes which are simple, and above all, clean.

In the realm of spiritual development, one of the principal elements is purification through penitence. As the Quran says; “God loves those who turn to Him in repentance and purify themselves.” (2:222) Just as repentance frees the body and soul of worldly moral dross, so does water remove impurities from body and clothing. Accordingly, Islam exhorts every Muslim, on the one hand, to keep his clothes and body clean with water, and, on the other, to turn in remembrance to God, thus purifying the soul. That is why at the moment of washing himself clean, he utters these words in prayer: “Oh God, purify my inner self along with my outer body. In this way, the earnest prayer makes his soul clean too, like his body.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The concept of human values
 1. What do we call human values?
 2. Why should we respect basic human values?

3. Why are the basic human values similar in all the religions?
 4. Which values are emphasized in Islam?
- (ii) The significance of the fundamentals of Islam in inculcating values.
1. What are the two fundamental principles on which all the teachings of Islam are based?
 2. Why should we be merciful to others?
 3. Why is service to other human beings as important as worship?
 4. How is Islam a religion of humanity?
 5. Why should we share things with others?
- (iii) The upholding of the rules of human behaviour.
1. What is meant by the virtue of faithfulness?
 2. Why should we practice honesty?
 3. What is meant by obedience in Islam?
 4. Why is it important to be obedient to God and those in authority?
 5. Why is forgiveness important for the proper functioning of human society?
 6. What is the concept of mercy in Islam?
 7. Why does God always refer to Himself as Merciful and Compassionate?
 8. Why should we always speak the truth?
 9. Why does Islam attach importance to purity and cleanliness?
 10. Why does God judge intentions as more important than actions?
 11. Why should every deed be preceded by a good intention?
 12. What is meant by the statement: 'Man's life on earth is a trial'?

UNIT

4

Human Rights in Islam

(I) THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM

“O people! Behold, we have created you from a male and a female; and we have made you into tribes and sub-tribes, so that you may recognise one another. The most honourable among you, in the sight of God, is he who is the most righteous among you. God is All-Knowing, and wise.” (49:13)

Rights in Islam are divided into two categories. One concerns divine rights (*Huququllah*) and the other, human rights (*Huququl Ibad*). Though divine rights are superior to human rights, this difference is a matter of belief or doctrine and not a matter of action or practice.

In the practical sense, both the rights divine and human, are so interrelated that sometimes it becomes impossible to separate one from the other.

In fact, it is the observance of divine rights that paves the way for the observance of human rights in the true sense of the word. For instance, the first and foremost divine right is *Tawhid*, that is, to declare the oneness of God, without associating anything with Him. As the Quran says:

*Say, “He is God, the One.
He is self-sufficient
He begets not, nor was He begotten.” (112:1-3)*

This belief in *Tawhid* helps man realise the fact that there is nothing superior to or greater than God. All creatures, including human beings, irrespective of their external differences, are equal in dignity as well as in responsibility before the one and only God. Anyone who abuses or humiliates or ridicules others indirectly abuses the Creator. Such commandments abound in the Quran and Hadith as show that divine rights and human rights are so interdependent that they become complementary to one another.

It is as if God will not accept our obeisance to Him if we do not honour the human rights prescribed in the Quran and Hadith.

For instance, the Prophet is reported to have said:

“By God, he is not a believer, by God, he is not a believer, by God, he is not a believer.” When asked by the companions, ‘Who is he?’, The Prophet replied, “He whose neighbour is not safe from his mischievous deeds.” (Abu Dawud)

The differences between human beings seen as justifications for discrimination resulting in the violation of basic human rights are considered in the Quran as signs of God:

“And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely there are signs for those who possess knowledge.” (30:22)

All the differences of race, community or tribe (49:13) are just for mutual introduction (*ra'arruf*) and not for discrimination. The differences of race, community or tribe are not meant to lead to discrimination against one another. They exist rather for the purpose of knowing and appreciating one another.

It is astonishing to note that the Quran had declared fifteen hundred years ago the biological unity of human beings, a fact which was scientifically established only during the sixties of the 20th century.

The fifth chapter of the Quran begins with this declaration:

'O mankind, be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of a single living soul and out of it created its mate. And out of the two spread on the earth a multitude of men and women...' (4:1)

It was the realisation of this biological unity of the whole of mankind that made the Prophet say in his night prayers:

"O God, I bear witness that all human beings are brothers." (Nasai)

In illustration of this fact, it was recorded that one day the Prophet saw a funeral procession passing through a street in Madinah. He stood up in deference. When he was told by his companions that the deceased person was a Jew, not a Muslim, the Prophet said: 'Was he not a human being?' (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Human life in Islam is held in such high esteem that the killing of a single human being is considered equivalent to the slaughter of the whole of mankind. And the protection of a single human life is equivalent to the protection of the whole of mankind. It is so stated in the Quran with reference to the murder of Abel by his elder brother Cain, this being the first violation of human rights in human history. (5:27-32)

Justice and equality before the Law:

According to the Quran and Hadith, the establishment of justice is one of the most essential goals in the sending of the prophets to mankind and in revealing the divine scriptures (57:25). The just are loved by God (60:8) while the unjust will face the fire of Hell (72:15).

The Prophet once observed:

"God does not bless a community in which the weak cannot take from the strong what is rightfully theirs without fear of reprisal." (Sunan, Ibn Majah)

Deviation from the path of justice is not allowed, even when it concerns one's opponent or enemy (5:8). The ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, black and white, should be treated equally before the law, without any discrimination or distinction on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political affiliation, birth or other status. The following two incidents illustrate how strictly this ideal was religiously maintained in the early phase of Islam in accordance with Islamic doctrines and commandments.

One of the major problems facing mankind today is racism. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop men from hating and fighting their fellow men. Ever since the days of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended.

The life, property and honour of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred, whether a person is Muslim or not. So, in Islam, insulting others or ridiculing them is not

allowed. The Prophet Muhammad said: 'Truly, your blood, your property, and your honour are inviolable.'

Racism is not allowed in Islam, for the Quran speaks of human equality in the following terms:

'O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes for you to know one another. Truly, the noblest of you in God's sight is the most pious. Truly, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)

The annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about two million Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage.

God created human beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other solely on the basis of their faith and piety.

(II) A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF CERTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS

(a) The Right to Life

The first and foremost basic right is the right to life. The Quran says:

'We decreed for the children of Israel that whoever killed a human being, except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the earth, would be as if he killed all mankind; and whosoever saved the life of one, it is as if he had saved the life of all mankind.' (5:35)

Life is sacred and regarded in Islam as a divine gift, which we are meant to preserve and utilize fully. Life should never be ended without justification, and Islam does not allow a believer to attempt to commit suicide or expose himself or herself foolishly to unnecessary danger. Life is not a human being's personal property, to be disposed of as an individual might wish, but a precious gift from God. The Muslim therefore has the duty to protect all forms of life and treat them with respect. No person, no matter how great or powerful, has the right to usurp another's right to life.

The propriety of taking life in retaliation for murder or for spreading corruption can be decided only by a competent court of law. During a war it can be decided only by a properly established government. Besides, killing on the battlefield can be condoned only under certain conditions, the chief of which would be that the war is defensive.

Killing as legal execution is also condoned only under certain stringent conditions. In any event, no individual has the right to decide such questions by himself. It is clearly stated:

'Do not kill a soul which God has made sacred, except through the due process of law.' (6:151)

Homicide, or the killing of a man is thus distinguished from an execution carried out in the pursuit of justice. The Prophet has declared homicide as the greatest sin after polytheism. A tradition of the Prophet reads: 'The greatest sins are to associate some partner with God and to kill human beings.'

Thus, not once, but many times the Quran establishes the sacredness of life. This applies to the whole of humankind and is not restricted only to Muslims. The unjustifiable killing of human beings is clearly forbidden by God:

'You shall not kill any man whom God has forbidden (you to kill) except for a just cause.' (17:32)

It is, therefore, more than obvious that human beings, whether believers or non-believers, have a right to live and no one is allowed to take the life of a man without a legally acceptable reason.

(b) The Right to Property

God is the Creator and Sustainer of whole universe. Everything belongs to God and He is the only real possessor of everything. The Quran says:

"To God belongs the kingdom of Heaven and Earth."

*Yes, unto Allah belong
All things in the heavens
And on earth, and enough
Is Allah to carry through
All affairs. (4:132)*

Thus the ultimate owner of all things is God while man has been placed on this earth solely for the purpose of trial and testing. Man is certainly given the right to possess things but this is subject to a regular code of conduct in Islam: God is the absolute owner of all things and man has to earn his living as His obedient servant. There are certain rules and regulations that man has to follow while utilizing the resources that he possesses as a "trust" from God.

"O you people, eat of what is on earth lawful from God. And do not follow the steps of the evil one." (2:168)

"After one dies there is share for man and also for woman: be that small or large, the share is there." (4:7)

The individual acquires the right to private ownership on the basis of his efforts.

'That man can have nothing but what he strives for'

The other deserving members of the community have a right to share with him.

The worldly things that a man possesses or acquires are Allah's blessings. Therefore, less fortunate people also have a share in his wealth. Wealth may be accumulated but without violating the Islamic norms of welfare.

Islam along with the security of life, confers the security of property ownership upon each and every human being. This right is only with respect to property which has been acquired by lawful means. The Quran says:

"And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities."

The Prophet in his address on the occasion of the Farewell Hajj said:

“Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Judgement.”

(c) The Right to Self-Respect

Honour is the most precious thing a person possesses.

During his Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet told his followers:

‘Your lives, your honour, and your property are as sacred to each other as the sacredness of this day, in this your month, and in this your city.’ (Muslim)

The honour of a man involves the protection of those in his care. No Muslim man should oppress the women, children, old people, the sick or the wounded, or indeed, any human beings who are in his care or under his protection.

Abu Hurayrah recorded: ‘Everything of a Muslim is sacred to a Muslim; his property, honour and blood. It is enough evil for any person to despise his (or her) fellow Muslim.’ (Abu Dawud)

‘If anyone defends his brother’s honour in this world, Allah will shield his face from the fire on the Day of Resurrection.’ (Tirmidhi)

The honour and chastity of all women are to be respected. Muslims believe that every child should be born wanted, within the security of a family.

No man has the right to harass or abuse a woman. However, Muslim men are not responsible or accountable for the failings of those in their care. It is a fundamental teaching of Islam that each individual is judged on his or her account alone, and not for the sins of others (6: 164). Therefore, although the feeling of purging a family’s stained honour is very strong in many Islamic societies, it does not give any individual the right to punish any other individual.

In practice, this means that no father, uncle or brother (or anyone else) has the right to execute a family member who has sinned and no Muslim father has the right to force a daughter to marry a man she does not want to, or does not feel she could form a successful relationship with.

(d) The Right to Freedom of Speech and Thought

The revolution set in motion by Islam on the basis of monotheism brought into existence for the first time in human history a truly egalitarian social structure. It paved the way for a society in which everyone enjoyed freedom of speech with no constraints whatsoever.

Not only did Islam advocate freedom of thought and speech with unmistakable earnestness, but it also brought about social changes that emboldened the people to break with ancient practices, thus enabling them to openly express their differences with and criticism of their chiefs and rulers.

Though the Prophet Muhammad had acquired the status of a ruler in Arabia, he still lived like any other ordinary man, and everyone was free to express himself in his presence. One such instance occurred on the occasion of the Badr expedition. During the journey, the Prophet decided to encamp at a particular place. At that point a young man by the name of Khabbab ibn al-Mundhir approached him and asked: “Have you chosen to halt here because you were guided by divine revelation, or is this choice of halting place purely a matter of your own private opinion?” The Prophet replied, “I have chosen this place myself.” At this, Khabbab ibn al-

Mundhir said, "This is no place to halt. Move from here with all your companions." The Prophet, far from rebuking the man for this audacity, simply asked him why he thought they should camp elsewhere. When he had heard his reasons, he immediately agreed with him, and he and his companions then set off to find another halting place. The fact that neither the Prophet nor his companions took exception to Khabbab ibn al-Mundhir's behaviour is a clear illustration of the degree to which egalitarianism was encouraged by Islam.

This revolution, imbued as it was with the spirit of Islamic monotheism, was so powerful that its effects continued to be felt throughout Islamic history. After the Prophet, during the period of the pious caliphs, anyone, irrespective of his social status, could freely criticize the caliphs. The history of this period abounds in such instances.

This Islamic revolution had such far-reaching effects that, even in the later period of Islam, when a form of monarchy had replaced the Caliphate, and throughout the entire fourteen-hundred-year span of Islamic history, there was never again a ruler who succeeded in placing curbs on the right to expression.

Some Instances of Religious Tolerance

The Islamic revolution brought about by the Prophet and his companions did not remain simply a matter of religion for the followers of Islam. It established powerful states far beyond the boundaries of Arabia—a process which continued for a thousand years and affected the whole inhabited world of that time. But never once, throughout that period, was there any attempt to impose censorship on human thinking. In all these new Islamic states, the people enjoyed total freedom of thought. Here we shall quote some instances to this effect from Professor Arnold's book, titled, *The Preaching of Islam*. First, there is an excerpt from a full statement made by one of the Spanish Muslims who had been driven out of his native country. Protesting against the persecution of the Inquisition, he stresses, in contrast, the toleration of his co-religionists: "... Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion, but we are not allowed by our sacred Quran to tyrannise over consciences..."

Giving many further instances of the freedom of thought and expression during the Muslim period, Arnold has written that those Roman provinces which were rapidly conquered by Muslims suddenly found themselves in such an atmosphere of tolerance as had been unknown to them for centuries. Such tolerance was quite striking in the history of the seventh century.

Under Islam there is freedom for every thought as well as respect for every thinking man, irrespective of the fact that his thinking may be different from ours. Islam not only grants freedom of thought, but also respects the upholders of all schools of thought.

The Modern Age and Islam

Freedom of thought is held to be the *summum bonum* in the modern age, and is generally thought to be the result of the western scientific revolution. It is true that this is its immediate cause, but the scientific revolution itself was the result of the Islamic revolution based upon monotheism.

The revolution to bring freedom and democracy to the people, which began in Europe, later spreading to the rest of the world in modern times, is but the second stage of that revolutionary process which was set in motion in the seventh century by Islam.

(e) The Right of Asylum

'The right to asylum' in modern usage means the right of one state to receive, shelter, and protect those accused of offenses in another.

In modern times the right to asylum is considered to be a part of what we collectively call 'human rights'. If anyone is being oppressed in his own country or fears oppression, then to grant him protection, so that he may lead a life of peace and security is regarded as a moral duty of the other country where he seeks asylum.

The right to asylum has been accepted in the Islamic system too. We find a clear injunction in this regard in the Quran: 'If one amongst the non-Muslims asks you for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God, and then escort him (when he wants) to where he can be secure.' (9:6)

All the teachings of Islam are based on the principle of morality or ethics. Without doubt it is one of the high principles of morality that, when an oppressed person seeks refuge, it becomes our duty to grant him shelter.

This is the theoretical teaching of Islam. But to support this theory, we find a number of practical examples in the history of Islam.

During the final days of the Prophet's life in Makkah, when his uncle and guardian Abu Talib had died, people began to persecute him. Therefore, the Prophet undertook a journey to Taif. On reaching the town, the Prophet requested Abd Yalil, the chief of his tribe, to grant him protection, that is asylum, as it is known today. But Abd Yalil refused to do so, with the result that the Prophet had to leave Taif.

Another example is that of the emigration to Abyssinia. During the early days of Islam, the Makkans targeted the Prophet's followers, who were small in number, for persecution. At that time some of them emigrated, with the permission of the Prophet, to a neighbouring country - Abyssinia. The king of Abyssinia was a just king, so they stayed in his country for several months. This was a clear case of finding asylum.

The Quran has commanded us to adopt a high standard of ethics, (sublime character) (68:5). The Prophet of Islam enjoined everyone to help the oppressed, this being an act meriting a great reward from God. Fulfilling the need of an oppressed person is in itself deserving of divine succour. And granting asylum without doubt falls into this category. Therefore, it will be no exaggeration to say that asylum is an important part of the Islamic system.

According to Islam, granting asylum is not just the duty of the state is also the duty of the individual. Anyone who enjoys a position whereby he can grant asylum to the oppressed, is expected to rescue a person in distress. In the Makkan period those who were economically strong extended protection to a number of slaves who were being persecuted on account of their faith. This kind of protection was called '*mana'a*' in Arabia. This is also a form of asylum

The verse of the Quran mentioned above shows that asylum serves a double purpose in the Islamic scheme of things. On the one hand, it is meant to provide a secure life to the oppressed and, on the other hand, the protected person is given an opportunity to hear the word of God. The message of the divine call should be communicated to him. In this way, the granting of asylum is not just the offer of a safe haven: it is a highly moral act with the very positive status of a divine mission.

(f) The Right to Privacy and Personal Freedom

To any Muslim, the home is a private refuge. No person should enter another's home, or spy on it, without the consent of the occupant. It should be a safe haven for all who live in it.

'O believers! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have received permission, and greeted those within; this is the best form of politeness. If you find no one in the house, do not enter it without permission; and then, if you are asked to go away, go away.' (24:27-28)

The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential to Muslim life. No person has the right to 'catch another out' by surprise, or enter his home against his wishes. It is sometimes the case that when a visitor knocks, there is no answer because the people within do not wish at that time to be disturbed. The fact that the visitor did not receive a reply to his knock does not give him the right to poke his head in, or go inside. The polite thing to do is to knock a few times, and if no reply is given, to withdraw for the time being. A Muslim should be discreet. He is not expected to go into someone's house unasked.

Abu Sa'id Khudri recorded this piece of advice: 'Permission should be sought three times, and if permission is granted to you then go in, otherwise go away.' (Muslim)

The atmosphere of the home should be private and loving, and should reflect the compassion and generosity of Allah. It should be a place in which every child or old person feels secure.

It should be place of welcome, able to give refuge and protection, consolation, and encouragement. If a stranger or any visitor comes, he should feel welcomed.

Muslims believe that no one accused of a crime should ever be sentenced to imprisonment unless he is proved guilty in an open and unbiased court. No one should be deprived of liberty on the basis of suspicion only, or not be given a reasonable opportunity to provide a defence. No individual should ever be arrested or imprisoned for the offences of others.

'No bearer of burdens shall be made to bear the burden of another.' (6:164)

Abu Malik reported: 'A ruler who, having gained control over the Muslims, does not strive for their betterment and who does not serve them sincerely, shall not enter Paradise with them.' (Muslim)

People should not be kept locked away or in waiting before they come to trial. Kidnapping or hijacking people, not allowing condemned people the right to appeal properly, and torturing or abusing prisoners are not allowed in Islam.

Personal animosity should never interfere with proper justice:

'O believers, be dutiful to Allah and bearers of just witness. Do not allow your hatred for other men to turn you away from Justice. Deal justly; justice is nearer to true piety. Have fear of Allah; He is well acquainted with all that you do.' (5:9).

(g) The Right to Seek Knowledge

"My Lord! Increase me in Knowledge." (20:114)

The mission of the Prophet of Islam has been introduced in the Quran at more than one place as an Instructor of the Book and giver of wisdom. Here is a verse from the Quran:

"He it is who has raised among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves who recites to them His signs and purifies them, and to instruct them in the Book and wisdom." (62:2)

Similarly, on another occasion the Prophet of Islam presented himself before the people saying, "I have been sent only as a teacher."

Then the first word of the Quran to be revealed was '*Iqra'* (96:1). The fourth verse of the first revelation, forming part of the chapter *Al-Qalam*, has this to say:

"God has taught man by the pen." (96:4)

We find more than 1500 derivatives and synonyms of the word *ilm*, that is, knowledge. It becomes easy to understand in the light of this how the revelation of the Quran in this almost illiterate nation of Arabia set off such a wave of receiving and imparting education as can rightly be called a learning explosion.

The revolution brought about by this learning explosion ushered in a new age of highly developed culture and civilization, not only in Arabia but all over the world. This is a fact that has been acknowledged by historians. For instance, the Indian historian, T. Rama Rao begins his biography of the Prophet of Islam with these words:

'When he appeared, Arabia was a desert – a nothing. Out of nothing of the desert a new world was fashioned by the mighty spirit of Muhammad. A new life, a new culture, a new civilization, a new kingdom, which extended from Morocco to India and influenced the thought and life of three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe.' (Life of Muhammad).

(h) The Rights of Relations

The Muslim family is not just a small, nuclear family consisting of a husband, a wife and their children, but is extended to include relatives as well. Therefore, as a Muslim, one has maintain a close and caring relationship with relatives. According to a saying of the Prophet, one is required to visit relatives, enquire about their circumstances in life, spend on them, invite them to one's homes and if poor, give *sadaqa* to them.

There is a hadith which tells us about the noble behaviour of Abu Talhah, one of the wealthiest men in Madinah. He had many orchards and numerous groves of date palms. His favourite possession was an orchard called Bayr Haa. It was near the Prophet's mosque and the Prophet often went to this orchard to drink cool water and refresh himself. Anas, a companion of the Prophet, said that, when the following verse of the Quran was revealed: 'You will not attain to righteousness until you spend in charity out of what you love' (3:92), Abu Talhah came to the Prophet and addressing him as Messenger of God, recited the above revelation to him. Then he said, "In fact the most beloved of my possessions is Bayr Haa. It is now a *sadaqah* for the sake of God Almighty. I desire the righteousness that would come from giving it... do with it, Messenger of God, whatever God shows you." "What a lovely piece of property that is! How fruitful and profitable it is! I have heard what you said. I think that you should give it to your relatives," said the noble Prophet. 'I shall do so, Messenger of God', replied Abu Talhah, and he divided it up among his his cousins and other relatives.

From the above one can see that the institution of the family is maintained by feelings of love and tenderness and by practical measures of mutual assistance and support.

Thus we are commanded to do good and show kindness and liberality to our kinsfolk. In the Quran this command comes immediately after the command to do good to our parents: 'Show kindness to your parents, to your kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to the destitute' (2:83) and 'Show kindness to your parents and your kindred, to the orphans and to the needy, to your near and distant neighbours, to your fellow-travellers, to wayfarers, and to the slaves whom you own.' (4:36). Our parents and our relatives have a prior claim on us: "They will ask you about alms-giving. Say: 'Whatever you bestow in charity must go to your parents and to your kinsfolk, to the orphan and to the poor man and to the wayfarer. Allah is aware of whatever good you do.'" (2:215)

The next of kin are to be remembered at the time of making a bequest: 'It is decreed that when death approaches, those of you that leave wealth shall bequeath it equitably to parents and kindred. This is a duty incumbent on the righteous.' (2:180). Relatives have a share in the property left by the deceased: 'To everyone We have appointed heirs who will inherit part of what parents and kinsmen leave.' (4:33) Besides including them in bequests and wills, one should never break the ties of kinship: 'If you (Muhammad) turn away (from the faith) you would surely do evil in the land and violate the ties of kinship. Such are those on whom Allah has laid His curse, leaving them bereft of sight and hearing.' (47:22) At the same time, we are expected to stand firmly for justice and give true evidence, even if against relatives. 'Believers, conduct yourselves with justice and bear true witness to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk.' (4:135) Nor should one do injustice to others for the sake of one's relatives 'Speak for justice, even if it affects your own kinsmen.' (6:152).

There are a number of authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet about relatives and kindred. According to one of these, the giving of alms to kindred carries two rewards. Another saying is: 'He is not a perfect practitioner of closeness (to God) who does to his relatives as they do to him; but he is perfect who does good to them when they do not do him good'.

The teachings of Islam always stress the importance of society and the family in the life of the individual, and that is why so many of the verses of the Quran as well as the traditions of the Prophet give very clear guidelines for the treatment of the different members of the extended family.

(i) The Rights of Children in Islam

Children are important and cherished members of any Muslim family and the family is a very important social institution in Islam. This is attested to by many verses of the Quran and also numerous traditions of the Prophet, which deal with the duties of parents towards children and the rights of children over their parents, siblings, relatives and guardians.

Parents have the obligation to cherish and sustain their children, educate them and train them. These duties begin even before the child is born. The Prophet advised that the married couple should pray for their offspring to be *saalih* (righteous). Once the child is born, its mother has to take great care of it and see to its every comfort, especially when it is very small and helpless, while the father is expected to provide for its material needs.

All children have the right to parental care and in case they are orphans, their legal guardians should provide this. As the Prophet Muhammad himself was an orphan, he gave a great deal of advice on how orphans should be treated in Islam. Many of the verses of the Quran deal specifically with the rights of orphans. Those who do not look after the orphans in their care

as directed by the Quran and the traditions, and especially those who usurp orphans' property are condemned in direct and unequivocal terms.

The child has a very vast range of rights, which are mainly the responsibility of its parents. Some of these primary responsibilities, above and beyond satisfying the very basic needs of food and shelter, deal with the whole process of upbringing called in Arabic '*tarbiyah*'. This includes, besides teaching the child proper manners, formal education. Both the parents are responsible for it. The very crucial role of both parents in the formative education and development of a child is stressed in the famous saying of the Prophet: 'Every child is born in a natural state of goodness. It is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.'

A tradition says: 'A man once came to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, the second Khalifah of Islam, complaining of his son's disobedience. 'Umar summoned the boy and spoke of his disobedience to his father and his neglect of his duty to him. The boy replied: "O Amir al-Mu'minin! Hasn't a child rights over his father?" "Certainly", replied Umar. "What are they, Amir al-Mu'minin?" "That he should choose his mother, give him a good name, teach him the Book (the Quran)." "Amir al-Muminin! My father did nothing like this. My mother was a fire-worshipper. He gave me the name of Ju'alaan (meaning a dung beetle) and he did not teach me a single letter of the Quran." Turning to the father, 'Umar said: 'You have come to me to complain about the disobedience of your son. You have failed in your duty to him before he has failed in his duty to you; you have done wrong to him before he has wronged you.'"

Another hadith says: 'No father has ever given his child anything better than good manners.'

These particular traditions not only sum up the rights of the child over the parents but also stress the logical reason for such rights: it is the duty of the parents to bring up the child as a believer and no child can be blamed, if in his childhood his parents did not take care to see to his Islamic upbringing. How important a role in upbringing is played by love and tender care is illustrated best by the following tradition describing the love lavished by the Prophet on his little grandsons, Hasan and Husayn.

'A man named Al-Aqra ibn Habis visited the Prophet and was surprised to see him kiss his grandsons, Hasan and Husayn. "Do you kiss your children?" he asked, adding that he had ten children and never kissed one of them. "That shows you have no mercy and tenderness at all. Those who do not show mercy to others will not have God's mercy shown to them," commented the noble Prophet.'

Yet another tradition says: 'He who is not affectionate to God's creatures and to his own children, will not find God affectionate to him.'

The killing of children, prevalent in the period before Islam, is totally forbidden. 'Kill not your children on a plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and for them.' (6:151) We are told that there is no difference between having a daughter or a son for God 'bestows (children) male and female, according to His will.' (42:49). Therefore one should not discriminate between one's children, treating them all equally. Children also have a right of to inherit the property of their parents and other relatives, in proportions prescribed by the Quran and the traditions and developed further by *fiqh*, usually sons having a share double that of daughters. No child, even if a minor, can be deprived of his inheritance, which is managed by a guardian till the time the child attains maturity.

Islam thus deals with the rights of children in every field of life, starting with their right to live, their right to be brought up well, their right to parental love and tenderness, and their right to own property and inherit property from their parents.

(j) The Right to Belief

Religious freedom is the basic human right whose violation has caused conflicts, wars and bloodshed in both ancient and modern societies. The Quran, therefore, declared for the first time in human history, that 'there shall be no coercion in matters of religion.' (2:256). In view of this prohibition of coercion (ikrah), all Islamic jurists (fuqaha) without any exception, hold that forcible conversion, whatever the circumstances, null and void. 'Any attempt to coerce a non-believer to accept Islam is a grievous sin.' (*Ahkam al-Quran*, al-Jassas). According to this principle of 'non-coercion', it is not permissible to exploit or manipulate personal weaknesses or calamities (e.g. poverty, sickness, famine, etc.) for religious conversion. That is why old and downtrodden non-Muslims were exempted from taxes and given all monetary support by the Islamic state, without ever being asked to embrace Islam just for the advantages it would give them.

Once a Jewish widow came to the Caliph Umar asking for some financial aid. Umar tried to persuade her to accept Islam. He promised to take care of all her needs if she embraced Islam. But the lady refused. Umar then gave her more than she had asked for. When she departed, Umar raised his hands towards heaven and said:

"O God, bear witness that I have not exercised any coercion on this lady."
(*Tarikh Umar ibn Khattab, Ibn al-Jawzi*)

(k) Freedom of Expression and Dissent

The principle of non-coercion has not been confined to religious freedom alone. Rather, it has been extensively elaborated upon and widely applied to all social, cultural, and political spheres of society. This has led to the development of a new culture in which individuals enjoy freedom of expression, dissent and criticism without any fear of restriction. Two examples will suffice to explain to what extent this essential human right was observed in earlier Muslim societies.

Once the Caliph Umar came to a well of the Banu Harithah where he met an outspoken person named Muhammad ibn Maslama. "How do you find me?" he asked Muhammad, "By God, I find you just as I would like you to be and just as it would please any well-wisher to see you. You are good at accumulating money, I see, but you keep your hands clean of it yourself, distributing it equitably to others." "But," went on Muhammad ibn Maslama, "If you adopt a crooked course, we will straighten you out, just as we straighten swords by placing them in a vice." At these aggressively critical words, Umar, the second Muslim Caliph, exclaimed:

"Praise be to God, who has put me among people who will straighten me out when I become crooked." (Kanz al-Ummal)

When Muslims at Madinah, with their increasing affluence, began to settle huge dowers (*mahr*) on their daughters, Umar, in his capacity as caliph, ordered that no one should demand or pay a dower that exceeded four hundred dirhams, and that anything in excess of this amount would be confiscated and deposited in the public treasury (*Baitul-Mal*).

After the proclamation of this ordinance, when he came down from the pulpit, a tall, flat-nosed old woman stood up and, speaking with confidence, said:

"The Quran has set no restrictions on this matter: Umar has no right to set an upper limit to the dowers."

To back up her contention, she loudly recited this verse of the Quran:

"If you decide to take one wife in place of another, do not take back from her the dower you have given her, even if it be a talent of gold." (4:20).

Umar's immediate reaction on hearing this was to say:

"A woman has argued with Umar and has bested him."

According to another account, Umar said:

"May God, forgive me, everyone knows better than Umar., even this old lady." (Tirmidhi/Ahmad)

QUESTIONS

(i) The importance of human rights in Islam

1. What are the human rights and what are the divine rights called?
2. How is the concept of '*tawhid*' related to the concept of human rights in Islam?
3. Name some of the human rights.
4. Are all human beings equal in the eyes of the law?
5. Why should we never leave the path of justice?

(ii) Some human rights

1. What does the right to life mean?
2. What does the right to property imply?
3. Why does one have a right to protect one's honour?
4. What is the meaning of each human being having a right to freedom of speech and thought?
5. Why can it be said that the right to religious belief is bound up with tolerance?
6. What does the right to asylum mean?
7. How are all human beings entitled to privacy?
8. What is the meaning of one having the right to seek knowledge?
9. What are the rights relatives have over a Muslim?
10. What are the rights of children in Islam?
11. How does respect for human rights lead to peace?

UNIT

5

The Status of Women

(I) THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-QURANIC TIMES

The period before the revelation of the Quran is usually called the '*jahilyiah*' period, or the 'period of ignorance', as people led their lives without the revealed guidance of Allah. Society, nomadic and patriarchal, consisted of many tribes each with a sheikh as the head. All the importance was given to men and women were treated merely as commodities or property to be disposed of at the whims of men.

Women were married or divorced at the will of the menfolk, without there being any restriction on the number of wives a man could have. It was not unusual for a son to marry the widows of his dead father. Women were not valued at all and female infanticide was also practiced. Little girls were buried in the sands of the desert and left to die.

Women had no legal right to the property of their fathers and husbands. There were some exceptional and enterprising women like Khadija, but society in general was completely male-dominated.

The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet offer the best description of the women's status and the instructions and guidelines to reform society through the revealed guidance. Quranic law banned infanticide and strictly put a full stop to men marrying more than four wives at a time, and that too under special conditions. Definite laws were formulated to regulate marriage contracts, the property of women, rights to inheritance, equality in status and protection from any form of exploitation and abuse.

The reform brought about by Islam radically changed the position of women in society, making them partners and helpmates of men.

(II) THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

(a) Equality in Status

A study of the Quran and Hadith tells us that in Islam a woman enjoys the same status as that of a man. The Quran says:

"You are members, one of another." (3:195)

There is no difference between the two as regards status, rights and blessings, both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The first verse that we find in the Quran on this subject is as follows: 'Mankind, fear your Lord who created you from one soul and created man's mate from the same soul, from these two scattering on earth many men and women. Fear God, in whose name you entreat one another, and be careful not to sever your ties of kinship. God is watching over what you do.' (4:1)

This verse of the Quran tells us that God created man and woman from the same soul, that is, from the same substance. The entire human race came from Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman. Looked at in this way, human beings on this earth are blood brothers and blood sisters.

Another verse of the Quran reads:

'It is He who created you from a single soul and made from him his mate so that he might find comfort in her.' (7:89)

This verse stresses what man and woman have in common, that is, both are a source of comfort to one another.

The word 'comfort' relates to all the activities of life, meaning thereby that God created men and women in such a way that they assist one another in all matters of life, in order to go on life's journey peacefully and successfully.

There is another verse in the Quran which tells us that men and women have equal status in the eyes of God. Neither is superior to the other.

"I will not let the deeds of any doer among you go to waste, be he male or female. You are members, one of another." (3:195)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the well known commentator on the Quran, remarks in his commentary on this verse:

"In Islam the equal status of the sexes is not only recognised but insisted on. If sex distinction, which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters, artificial distinctions, such as rank, wealth, position, race, colour, birth, etc., would count even less."

Thus it will be the very same virtues in thought, word and deed which will be prerequisites for both sexes to enter Paradise. If the qualities of piety, humility, honesty, patience and compassion are demanded of men, they will in like measure be demanded of women.

There is a hadith which also explains that "women are the other half of men." That is, they are equal halves of one another.

The Quran says that men are in charge of, that is, 'maintainers' of women (4:34). This does not mean that men have a distinctive status over women. Their being maintainers of women has never been intended as a form of discriminatory treatment. It rather concerns the practical management of the home, for which the man is held responsible. However, this does not mean that a woman will never be allowed to shoulder these responsibilities. If she finds that she can bear this burden, no objection will be raised from any quarter. One example of this can be found in the Quran with reference to the people of Sheba. They lived in Yemen. The famous dam of Marib made their country very prosperous and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilization. The Quran tells us that they were ruled by a woman (27:23) without disapproving of her rule. Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba was very wise and sagacious, even more so than the men in her court. She did not want to embroil her country in war, while the men advised her to confront her enemies, namely, Solomon's army. Abdullah Yusuf Ali writes: "In Bilqis we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wilder passions of her subjects."

It is an accepted principle with the commentators of the Quran that when the Quran reports something without any disapproval, that means that it has divine approval.

So when we look at this incident in the light of the Quran, we find the status of woman even higher than that of men. A woman is in charge of men and she has been highly effectual in shouldering this responsibility.

Thus the example of the Queen of Sheba having been mentioned in the Quran shows that rulership is not man's monopoly. A woman can be a '*qawwam*' over a man and the Quran has itself testified to it.

(b) A Woman's Inheritance

Islam recognizes the equal status of man and woman in the eyes of God. Therefore, women have their own legal standing under Muslim law. They are given the right to own property, dispose of it, inherit from their relatives and keep to themselves their own earnings, which they can spend in any way they wish.

Women play many roles in society: they are daughters, sisters, mothers and wives to men. In their different capacities they are allowed a share in the properties of their relatives in proportions fixed by the Quran and explained in the traditions or legal literature.

Most of the guidance relating to the inheritance of women is contained in the fourth chapter entitled 'Woman'. The Quran says: 'Allah (thus) directs you as regards your 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 half...' (4:11).

The next verse of the same chapter deals with the shares of husband and wife: 'In what your wives leave, your share is half, if they leave no child; But if they leave a child, you receive a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what you leave, their share is a fourth, if you leave no child; but if you leave a child, they receive an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts. If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question has left neither ascendants nor descendants, but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth; but if more than two, they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused (to any one). Thus is it ordained by Allah: And Allah is All-knowing, Most Forbearing.'

Women also have a right to make a will in the same way men are given this right and on the very same condition as men: that not more than one-third of the property shall be bequeathed and that those who will inherit as heirs shall not be entitled to take under the bequest.

It is a grave sin to usurp the property of an orphan and even more so if the orphan is a helpless girl. To protect the weaker sections of society, Islamic revelation has given special emphasis to points that bring out the importance of giving due rights to these sections, including women.

(c) Freedom in Marriage

In Islam, marriage is a contract between two parties: a man and a woman. An essential condition is the willing consent of the contracting parties. To safeguard the interests of the parties, especially the weaker sex, the woman is allowed to have a husband of her own choice and cannot be united in marriage without her consent. The Prophet said, 'No widow should be married without consulting her and no virgin without consent and consent is her silence.' The marriage is dissolved if she declares that it was without her consent.

The dower (*mahr*) must be mentioned in the *nikah* contract and a woman is entitled to her dower. Though a man is allowed to marry four women, he is instructed to give equal love and affection to, as well as make financial provision for all the wives. A wife, however, can have the right to divorce inserted as a proviso in her marriage contract. In case of divorce initiated by her husband, the wife keeps her *mahr* and also if the children are small, receives a stipend for their upbringing from the father.

Under no condition can the wife be treated as a commodity. The husband must be kind and caring and see to her economic needs. However, a woman's personal earnings are her own,

which she can use as she chooses. Similarly, any property bestowed on or inherited by her, is hers by law and she can dispose of it as she pleases.

(d) Mutual Rights Between Man and Woman

The Quran and the law derived from it, give detailed guidance on the mutual rights of man and woman. A woman has rights over a man as a wife, daughter and mother and the man, while claiming his rights over a woman, should offer her such protection as is commensurate her status within the family.

The fundamental principle with regard to women is that they should be held in honour ; the mother that bore us must be revered; the wife who is our best companion should be treated well. Men and women are quite equal to each other in their origin : 'O you mankind! Fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and He created thereof its spouse and from the pair of them spread across the earth many men and women' (4:1)

The fourth chapter of the Quran deals with women. It begins with an appeal to the solidarity of mankind, the rights of women and orphans and the complexity of family relationships. It recognizes the rights of women pertaining to marriage, property and inheritance. Women as human beings are entitled to similar rights to life, honour and property as men. Sex distinction, which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters. The reward for both sexes for their good deeds is similar. Both men and women are considered members of a family.

Says Quran, 'I will not let go waste the deed of a worker amongst you male or female, one of you being from the other' (3:195)

The equal status of the sexes is thus recognized in spiritual matters and they are also equal in their rights to live an honourable life. The position of a woman as a mother is highly exalted and, according to the Prophet, 'Paradise lies underneath the feet of mothers.' And man is enjoined to be kind to his parents and particularly to the mother who bore him in pain (46:15). So far as wives are concerned the Quran says: "Live with them on a footing of kindness." (4:19) According to a saying of the Prophet: 'Best amongst you is one who is good to his wife.'

In short, man and woman are so closely attached to each other that they are treated as each other's garments.(2:187) In other words they are for mutual support and mutual protection, fitting each other as a garment fits the body.

(e) The Significance of *Mahr* (Dower)

Islam has successfully maintained an even balance in society between men and women by endorsing a practical division of labour, whereby women are placed in charge of the internal arrangement of the household, while men are responsible for its financing. The home is thus organized on the pattern of a microcosmic estate, with the man in a position of authority. The Quran is specific on this issue: 'Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has made some of them to excell others and because they support them from their means. All the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has (ordained to be) guarded.'(4:34)

Mahr Mu'ajjal

At the time of the marriage, the groom hands over to the bride a sum of money called *mahr* (dower) which is a token of his willing acceptance of the responsibility of bearing all the

necessary expenses of his wife. There are two ways of presenting *mahr* to the bride. One is to hand it over at the time of the marriage, in which case it is known as *mahr mu 'ajjal*, or promptly given dower. (The word *mu 'ajjal* is derived from *'ajilah*, meaning "without delay.") During the time of the Prophet and his Companions, *mahr mu 'ajjal* was the accepted practice and the amount fixed was generally quite minimal. The giving of *mahr* by 'Ali to Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, is an illustration of how this custom was respected. After the marriage had been arranged, the Prophet asked 'Ali if he had anything he could give as dower in order to make Fatimah his lawfully wedded wife. Ali replied, "By God, I have nothing, O Messenger of God." The Prophet then asked, "Where is the coat of armour I once gave you?" 'Ali replied that it was still in his possession (although he later admitted "by the Master of his soul" that it was in a dilapidated condition and, as such, was not even worth four *dirhams*). The Prophet then instructed him "since I have married you to Fatimah" - to send the coat of armour to Fatimah, thereby making his union lawful. This then was the sum total of Fatimah's dower.

Another way of giving dower, according to the *shari 'ah*, is to hand it over, not on the occasion of the marriage, but after a certain period of time, the duration of which is fixed by the man. This has to be settled at the time of the marriage if *mahr* is not to be handed over immediately. This form of dower is called *mahr mu'ajjal*, "a period of time." This has often been wilfully misinterpreted as implying an indefinite postponement of the giving of dower. But this is quite erroneous, for a definite date has always to be fixed for the discharging of this responsibility.

Mahr mu'ajjal, however, can take the form of some service performed by the husband, one notable example of which was the grazing of cattle by the Prophet Moses. When Moses left Egypt for Madyan, he married Safoora, the daughter of the Prophet Shu 'ayb. His *mahr mu'ajjal* was settled and paid off by binding himself to grazing the cattle of his elderly father-in-law for a period of eight to ten years. Only after performing this service for a full ten years did he leave Madyan for Egypt.

The Opinions of Jurists

The system of dower favoured by the *shari'ah* entails the immediate handing over of *mahr*. This was the practice followed by all of the Prophet's Companions. Deferred dower is an alternative, but is not ranked equal in merit with a prompt discharging of this responsibility. It is simply a form of concession made to those who are unable to meet the requirements of *mahr* at the time of marriage.

No Heavy Burden

The dower, which may be in cash or in kind, has to be fixed taking into account the bridegroom's position in life. That is, it should never be more than he is easily able to afford, whether it be a lump sum in cash or some article of value. The jurists have different views to offer on what the minimum amount should be, but they are agreed that it should be substantial enough for something to be bought against it. Any amount which is sufficient for a purchase is acceptable as dower.

There are no traditions which encourage an increase in the dower, whereas there are many traditions which enjoin the fixing of smaller dowries. In all such cases, Islam lays down guidelines rather than issue strict commandments. That is why Islam has not totally forbidden any increase in the dowry, and it is left to tradition to carry on the principle of fixing smaller

sums. There is a well known saying of the Prophet Muhammad, according to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, that "the best woman is one whose dower is the easiest to pay."

'Aishah was once asked how much dower the Prophet gave his wives. She replied that it was 12 *auqiyah* and 1 *nash* (one *nash* being equal to half an *auqiyah*, that is, about 500 *dirhams*). This was the only dower of the Prophet Muhammad for his wives. "But," she added, 'Umm Habiba's dower consisted of 4000 *dirhams*, this sum having been fixed by the Christian King of Abyssinia, Najashi, who had performed this marriage by proxy."

The Companions and their Marriages

In the first era of Islam, marriage was a simple affair, without pomp or ceremony. Any expenditure incurred in its performance being quite minimal, it did not become a burden on either family. In keeping with this principle, the wedding celebrations of the Companions were quite free of any ostentation. There is a saying of the Prophet that "the most blessed marriage is one in which the marriage partners place the least burden on each other."

The simplicity which marked the occasion of marriage in the days of the Prophet is well illustrated by 'Abdur Rahman ibn 'Auf, one of the foremost of the Prophet's Companions, who was married in Madinah with as little ceremony as possible, not even thinking it necessary to invite the Prophet or any of the Companions. Imam Ahmad tells of how the Prophet came to know that 'Abdur Rahman was married: 'Abdur Rahman ibn 'Auf came to the Prophet with the scent of saffron upon him, and when the Prophet asked him about this, he said, "I have married." The Prophet then enquired as to how much dower he had given his bride. "Gold equal in weight to one date stone," he replied.

As mentioned above, there are only two lawful forms of dower in Islam, one being *mahr mu'ajjal*, which is handed over at the time of the marriage, and the other being *mahr mu'ajjal*, which is to be given after, but at a definite point in time. That is, the man must fix a date for its payment, and must abide by it. The third custom, according to which a dower is to be given, without any time being appointed for the fulfillment of this due, is not in accordance with the Islamic shari'ah. Whatever is done on this basis is certainly unlawful.

QUESTIONS

(i) The status of women in pre-quranic times.

1. How did men treat the women in pre-quranic times?
2. Did the women have any right over their own person or property?
3. What was the fate of girls and women in that period?
4. Did the women have any social or economic security in those days?
5. How were the women exploited and abused?

(ii) The rights of women in Islam

1. 'In Islam the status of women and men is equal.' Explain.
2. What changes in the status of women did Islam bring about?
3. Write on a woman's right to inheritance in Islam.
4. Is a woman allowed to inherit or make bequests in Islam?
5. 'A Woman's earnings are her own to dispose of.' Elaborate.

6. How does Islam provide women with the right to freedom in consent to marriage?
7. What are the mutual rights between man and woman?
8. How do the men have to look after women and offer them protection?
9. What is '*mehr*'?
10. Is '*mehr*' integral to the validity of the marriage contract (*nikah*)?

UNIT

6

An Introduction to the Quran

(I) WHAT IS REVELATION?

The Quran is composed of verbal revelations made to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam over a period of twenty three years at Makkah (610-622) and Madinah (622-632). (The arrangement of the Quran is not in accordance with the chronological order of the revelation. The first revelation was verses 2-6 of Chapter 96. The last chapter revealed was chapter 110.)

The word used for Islamic revelation is *wahy*. The literal meanings of *wahy* are to intimate or indicate; to communicate; to inspire; to instil in somebody's heart or to converse secretly. The basic sense, however, of the word *wahy* is to talk to others privately or to communicate silently.

The word *wahy* has been used in the Quran with different meanings, for example, to convey some message to the heart:

'We infused this into the (mind of) Musa's mother.' (28:7);

in the assignment of duties to both living and non-living things:

'And thy Lord commanded the Bee to build its cells in the hills.' (16:68)

'And He assigned to each heaven its duty and command.' (41:12);

and in silent converse:

'Then (Zakariyya) came out from the shrine and told them by signs to give glory to their Lord morning and evening.' (19:11)

In the instances mentioned above, the word *wahy* is used in its literal sense. But the word *wahy* has been used more often in the Quran for the divine revelation made to the prophets:

"Surely we have revealed (awhaina) to thee as we revealed to Noah and the Prophet after him.....". (4:163)

"Then we revealed to Musa to strike the Sea with his staff." (7:31)

"And we revealed to Noah." (11:36)

Forms of Revelation

The Quran is composed of *wahy matlu*, the recited words, and the traditions (*ahadith*) are composed of *wahy ghair matlu*, i.e. divine communication with the heart.

The Quran states:

'He (Muhammad) does not speak out of his own fancy. This is no other than an inspired revelation. He is taught by one who is powerful and mighty.' (53:1)

The external inspiration or *wahy matlu* has been divided into three categories.

1. *Wahy Quran*, that which was given by word of mouth by the angel Gabriel and which reached the ear of the Prophet after he knew it that it was Gabriel who spoke to him.

2. *Isharatul Malik*: that which was received from Gabriel, but not by word of mouth. On such occasions the Prophet said: 'The Holy Ghost has breathed into my heart.'

3. *Ilham*, or *Wahi Qalbi*: That which was made known to the Prophet by the light of prophecy.

Ilham, or the inspiration of the *sufis*, should not be confused with the *ilham* of the Prophets. *Wahy matlu* is to be recited and forms part of the Quran, while *wahy ghair matlu* is the *wahy* which is meant to be read rather than recited. This is preserved in the form of the authentic traditions.

So far as *wahy matlu* is concerned, it has reached us without the slightest possible error. The whole of it is preserved in the form of the Quran. But so far as *wahy ghair matlu*, or the traditions, is concerned, the actual wordings of the sayings have not been preserved intact in every case.

The following are the different ways by which, according to the Quran, God has communicated with His messengers, including the holy Prophet:

'It is not vouchsafed to any man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or through a messenger sent and authorized by Him to reveal His will.' (42:51)

Other differences between *wahy matlu* and *wahy ghair matlu* is are as follows:

Wahy ghair matlu is the suggestion instilled by Allah into the heart or mind of His messengers. The Prophet understands the substance of the message. It may be a command or prohibition or an explanation of a truth.

(a) *Wahy matlu* may be a verbal or literal revelation by which the actual words of God are conveyed to man in human language. This is also known as *wahy jali* (the apparent revelation); (b) the second way Allah communicates with a man who is a prophet, is by speaking from behind a veil; (c) the third way is through a messenger, i.e. the angel Gabriel brings the revelations to the Holy Prophet.

The Hadith mentions following ways of revelations being made:

1. *Al-Ruya al Sadiqa* (true dreams)

According to a hadith, the true dreams are a 46th part of prophethood. Aisha, the Prophet's wife, observed that the commencement of the divine revelation to the Messenger of Allah was in the form of a true dream, which came true as the day dawned.

2. '*From behind a veil*' - The second way of communication from God to man is 'from behind a veil.' (38:51) Some scholars say that this refers to dreams and visions, because a certain light is shown in this case which has a deeper meaning than that which appears on the surface. The dreams mentioned in chapter 12 of the Quran are an illustration of this. It is through dreams or visions that God reveals certain truths.

This also refers to the case of Musa with whom God spoke while He remained invisible to him. (20:13)

3. *Through a messenger* - An angel used to make suggestions directly to the heart of the Prophet, while remaining invisible to him. As the Prophet said:

‘The angel Gabriel has suggested to my heart that no living being would pass away until he had lived out the life destined for him in the world.’

According to a Hadith the Prophet observed: ‘Sometimes the revelation comes like the ringing of a bell (*salsalatul jars*). This type of revelation is the hardest of all and when I have grasped what is revealed, this condition passes away.’

Commenting upon this type of revelation, Aisha says: ‘I saw the Prophet receiving a revelation on a very cold day and noticed that the sweat was dropping from his forehead. This condition lasted till the revelation was over.’

According to the *Sahaba*, the Prophet’s body used to become very weighty during such a revelation, to the extent that the camel on which he was riding used to sit down due to the increased load.

The Prophet would hang his head and his companions would do the same, and when that condition was over, he would raise up his head. Sometimes the Angel came in the form of a man. The Angel also visited the Prophet at times in the shape of the Prophet’s companion, Dahiya Kalbi.

(II) THE CHAIN OF REVELATIONS

(a) The *Towrah*

The term *Towrah* is simply the Arabic equivalent for the Hebrew Torah, and normally understood as ‘The Law’ given by God to the Prophet Musa. The Quran gives abundant testimony to the *Towrah*, and it is mentioned more than any other revealed book. Sometimes it is simply called ‘The Law’.

‘We have revealed the Torah having guidance and light. By it, the prophets who surrendered themselves to Allah judged the Jews, and so did the rabbis and the divines, by what they were required to guard of Allah’s books, and to what they are witnesses.

‘Have no fear of people: fear Me, and do not take a small price for My revelations. Unbelievers are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations.

‘(In the Torah) we decreed for them a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds punishment. But if a man charitably forbears from retaliation, his remission shall atone for him. Transgressors are those that do not judge in accordance with Allah’s revelations.’ (5:44-46).

From this quotation it can be seen that the Quran calling the *Towrah* a book of ‘guidance and light’ testifies that God had revealed it as the Law for the Jews.

Sometimes in the Quran, the name *Towrah* refers not only to the books of the Prophet Musa, but to the entire Hebrew scripture of the Jews, especially in the verses, which mention the *Towrah* and *Injil* together. ‘He has revealed unto you (Muhammad) the scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the *Injil*.’ (3:3).

When the Quran uses the expression ‘People of the Book’, it always means all the three communities: the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims: ‘You People of the Book! Why dispute you about Abraham, when the law (*Towrah*) and the *Injil* were not revealed till after him? Have you no understanding?’ (3:65).

According to the Quran, the Towrah, the book that God revealed to Musa for the guidance of the Bani Isra'il, did in fact contain guidance and God's commands, admonition and a clear explanation of many things of the world, and of God's mercy. There are many verses regarding the granting of a book to Musa in which the Towrah is mentioned although not by name. The tablets (*alwah*) are also mentioned and they mean the same scripture:

'And We ordained for him in the Tablets in all the matters, admonition and explanation of all things, (and said): 'Take and hold these with firmness and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best of the percepts...' (7:145).

But when Musa went back to his people with the Law inscribed on the Tablets (7:150) they had meanwhile turned away from God and the Truth and he became very angry. He prayed for them and they repented. 'When the anger of Moses was appeased, he took up the tablets: in the writing thereon was Guidance and Mercy for such that fear their Lord' (7:154).

The Towrah, as originally revealed to Musa, must have been in the Hebrew language. But there is no copy of the original Book given to Musa extant today. As a matter of fact, during their long turbulent history, the Jews repeatedly lost their revealed books. According to the Quran, they also failed to maintain the standards prescribed by their scriptures. They made it 'into (separate) sheets for show' and concealed much of its content. Therefore differences have arisen among them, as they have distorted and changed God's word and its meaning. The Old Testament is considered by today's Jews as the Book revealed by God. But it cannot simply be equated with the Towrah mentioned in the Quran. The reason for this is that the Old Testament contains also the Zabur, the book of guidance given to the Prophet Daud. The Zabur is mentioned in the Quran as a revelation separate from the Towrah.

(b) The Zabur

The term *Zabur* is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew word '*zimir*', which is usually translated into English as '*psalm*'. It was the book of revelation given to the Prophet Daud. In the Hebrew and Christian scriptures it is a part of the Old Testament. Daud was a prophet, but he was also a great ruler and singer of the divinely inspired hymns praising God and His creation, which form the *Zabur*.

In the Quran, the *Zabur* is mentioned by name only three times:

'...And to Daud We gave the Psalms.' (4:163)

'And it is your Lord that knows best all beings that are in the heavens and on earth: We did bestow on some prophets more (and other) gifts than on others: and We gave Daud (the gift of) the Psalms.' (17:55)

'Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth.' (21:105)

Thus the Quran, and also the traditions, very clearly confirms the Muslim belief in four heavenly books. The Quran mentions no other such heavenly books, though it mentions many prophets, some of them by name, and attributes many divine revelations to them.

David, to whom God revealed the *Zabur*, was gifted with great eloquence and a beautiful voice. All gifts were given to the prophets according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived. The Psalms were intended to be sung for the worship of God and the celebration of God's greatness.

The Psalms are still extant and have been incorporated into the Bible. However, their present form may possibly be different from the original. Nonetheless, to a great extent, the Psalms retain their original state.

(c) The Injil

The *Injil* is the revelation given to prophet Isa. The term *Injil* is derived from a Greek word, which, when translated into English means 'gospel' and it occurs twelve times in the Quran.

In Muslim belief Isa, the son of Mary, is considered to be the prophet immediately preceding the Prophet of Islam. His birth was miraculous and by the grace of God he was endowed with a life-giving spirit. Both he and his pious mother, Mary, are mentioned in the Quran many times.

'We sent after them Jesus, the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy.'
(57:27)

This particular verse of the Quran very clearly states that the Prophet Isa was given the real *Injil*, which stressed the compassion and mercy of God. Most of the time, whenever mentioned in the Quran, *Injil* is coupled with the Towrah or the law given to Moses. But there is always emphasis on the continuity of revelation and its culmination with the final revelation that is the Quran.

'It is He Who sent down to you (step by step), the truth, the Book (the Quran), confirming what went before it: and He sent down the Towrah (of Moses) and the Injil (of Isa),' (3:3)

'And God will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Towrah and the Gospel.'
(3:48)

The *Injil* mentioned in the Quran is not exactly what the Christians today consider their scripture, the Gospel of the Bible. The *Injil* in fact was the book revealed to the Prophet Isa himself and it is that book, which is mentioned in the Quran. The Gospel of the Christians is a compilation made one hundred years after the prophethood of Isa and was written down in Greek. Besides the Gospels attributed to the four apostles (John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew), it contains letters of Paul and Peter to the early Christian communities, as well as other written material. That is why the Quran and the traditions often refer to the corruption of the original scriptures. All heavenly books were sent by God for the guidance of mankind and to enable their adherents to judge all issues according to the divine laws as set forth in these Books.

(d) The Quran

The Quran, the Book of God, enshrines teachings, which were basically the same as were to be found in previously revealed scriptures. But these ancient scriptures are no longer preserved in their original state. Later additions and deletions have rendered them unreliable, whereas the Quran, preserved in its original state, is totally reliable.

The Quran has 114 chapters. Its contents in a nutshell are: belief in one God, and considering oneself answerable to Him; firm belief that the guidance sent by God through the Prophet Muhammad is the truth and that man's eternal salvation rests thereon.

The position of the Quran is not just that it is one of the many revealed scriptures but that it is the only authentic divine Book. All the other Books, due to human additions and deletions, have been rendered historically unreliable. When a believer in the previous revealed scripture turns to the Quran, it does not mean that he is rejecting his own belief, but rather amounts to his having re-discovered his own faith in an authentic form.

The Quran is a sacred book sent by the Lord of all creation. It is a book for all human beings, because it has been sent by that Divine Being who is the God of all of us.

The Quran is no new heavenly scripture. It is only an authentic edition of the previous heavenly scriptures. In this respect, the Quran is a book for all human beings, of all nations. It is the expression of God's mercy for one and for all. It is a complete message sent by God for every one of us. The Quran is a light of guidance for all the world just as the sun is the source of light and heat for all the world.

According to the Quran, Islam means submission. The religion of Islam is so named because it is based on obedience to God. A true believer in Islam is one who subordinates his thinking to God, who follows God's dictates in all aspects of his life.

Islam is the religion of the entire universe, for the entire universe and all its parts are functioning in accordance with the law laid down by God.

Such behaviour is also desired of man. Man should also lead his life as God's obedient servant just as the rest of the universe is fully subservient to God. The only difference is that the universe has submitted to God compulsorily, while man is required to submit to the will of God by his own choice.

When man adopts Islam, first of all it is his thinking which is affected by Islam, then his desires, his feelings, his interests, his relations, his love and his hatred. All are coloured by his obedience to God's will.

When man, in his daily life comes under God's command, his behaviour with people and his dealings are all moulded by the demands of Islam. From inside to outside he becomes a person devoted to God.

Man, as the Quran tells us, is God's servant. Indeed, the only proper way for man to live in this world is to live as the servant of God. Islam, in fact, is another name for this life of servitude to God. Where the Islamic life is devoted to the service of God, the un-Islamic life unashamedly flouts the will of God. Islam teaches man to lead an obedient life and surrender himself completely to the will of God. It is people who do so who will share God's blessings in the next world. This is the essence of the teachings of the Quran.

(III) THE QURANIC VIEW OF REVELATION

It is a matter of Islamic belief that God, in His mercy, has sent prophet after prophet to lead people forth from darkness to light. The belief in God's revealed books forms an integral part of Islamic faith.

However, for a variety of reasons, most of these revealed books sent by God could not be preserved. For instance, the Quran mentions the scriptures given to Ibrahim (87:14-19). but these are no longer in existence.

These divine books commanded justice in everything and exhorted invited men to repent.

The Quran describes *Torah* as *Furqan* (the Discriminator between right and wrong). It says "We gave Musa and Harun the Discriminator, and gave them a light (*Dhia*) and a Reminder for the Books (21:48). *Furqan* means that ideological standard which enables man to distinguish between Truth and falsehood. *Dhia* means divine guidance, which leads a man out of the darkness of the wrong path and puts him in the light of the straight path. In this way God has arranged for the guidance of man through His messenger.

But it is possible for God's guide book to provide guidance in the real sense only when a man is anxious about his fate in the Hereafter. This anxiety makes him so serious that he attaches more importance to Truth and righteousness than to any other thing.

However, even those ancient scriptures, which still exist today, have not been preserved from human interpolations. They have been tampered with at will by their adherents, who have retained the portions they wanted to and deleted the portions they disliked. Therefore, these scriptures have lost their veracity.

The Quran, the last of the divine books, is the only revealed scripture which has been preserved from human interpolation.

The Quran enshrines these teachings, which were basically the same as were to be found in previous revealed scriptures. But these scriptures are no longer preserved in their original state. The Quran has been preserved in its original state, therefore, it is an eternal guidebook which will never lose its relevance.

(IV) THE PROPHET RECEIVES HIS FIRST REVELATION

Even before his prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad used to lead a moral life. Ibn Hisham, his biographer, writes: "The Messenger of God entered his adulthood as if God was protecting and watching over him. And He kept him safe from the evils of the time because, He wanted to confer on him honour and prophethood. Thus he reached a position of supremacy over all the men of his tribe. Of all of them, he was the best behaved. He was the noblest among them by his lineage and was the best neighbour. He was unparalleled in forbearance. He was honest in what he said, and the most trustworthy. He refrained from misconduct. Ultimately, he began to be called Al-Amin (the trustworthy) in Makkah." (Sirat Ibn Hisham)

After his marriage to Khadija and the expansion of business, he had an even better opportunity to live a life of comfort and success.

But with the passing of the years he became less and less interested in business and devoted more and more of his time to the search for truth by means of reflection and meditation. Instead of trying to establish himself in his society, he took to the desert. He would often go to mount Hira, three miles from Makkah.

He sought answers to the mysteries of life. What is man's true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, as His servants? From where has man come and where will he go after death? It was to find answers to these perplexing questions that he betook himself to the stillness of the desert. With all these questions in mind, worldly gain and loss, comfort and distress did not concern him. He urgently wanted the answer to these important questions about the truth. For nothing less than the truth could satisfy his soul. This phase of Muhammad's life is referred to in the Quran in this verse:

"Did He not find you wandering and guide you?" (93:7).

He spent the whole of the month of Ramadan in the Cave of Hira. Finally, after his spending six long months in the cave, God turned in mercy to His Prophet, to guide him to the path of truth. At the age of 40, on February 12, 610 A.D., the Prophet was sitting all alone in his cave. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, bringing the first message from God. These words form part of the beginning of the ninety sixth chapter of the Quran. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded. God granted him guidance and chose him as His Prophet.

The angel said to him "Read."

The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."

Then Muhammad felt that his body was being squeezed hard. Then the angel released him and repeated the same command. Again Muhammad replied that he did not know how to recite. Then the angel again squeezed him and then released him for the third time and said: Read!"

Then a change came over him and he was able to repeat the divine words. Then Gabriel revealed to him the chapter Al-Alaq.

"Recite in the name of your Lord, who created; who created man from a clot of blood; Recite, and your Lord is the most Gracious. It is He who has taught man by the pen that which he did not know." (96:1-5)

Muhammad recited these verses repeating them after the angel. Then he found that these words were written on his heart (Ibn Ishaq).

These verses, the first ever revealed to the Prophet, become part of the Quran as did other verses, which were revealed later. They have tremendous significance. They command the Prophet to stand up and to be ready to proclaim the name of the One God, the One Creator – of the Prophet and of all others – who has created man and sowed in his nature the seed of His own love and that of his fellowmen. The Prophet was commanded to proclaim this Message of God, and was promised by Him help and protection in its proclamation. The verses foretold a time when the world would be taught all manner of knowledge through the instrumentality of the pen, and would be taught things never heard of before.

These verses constitute an epitome of the Quran. The foundation was laid in them of a great and till then unknown advance in the spiritual progress of man. When the Prophet received this revelation, he was full of fear of the responsibility, which God had decided to place on his shoulders. Any other person in his place would have been filled with pride. But the Prophet was humbled by the greatness of responsibility. He reached home greatly agitated. On Khadija's enquiry, he narrated the whole experience to her and summed up his fears, sayings, "How difficult it is to carry the responsibility, which God proposes to put on my shoulders." Khadija replied at once:

'How can God do such a thing, while you are kind and considerate to your relations, help the poor and the forlorn and bear their burden? You are restoring the virtues, which had disappeared from our country. You treat guests with honours and help those who are in distress. Can you be subjected by God to any trial?' (Bukhari).

Having said this, Khadija took the Prophet to her cousin, Waraqa bin Naufal, a Christian. When he heard the account, Waraqa said:

"The angel who descended on Moses, I am sure, has descended on you." (Bukhari).

QUESTIONS

(i) What is revelation?

1. What does '*wahy*' mean?
2. What was the name of the revealed book given to the Prophet Muhammad?
3. Was the revelation verbal or written?
4. What are the forms of revelation?
5. What is the difference between '*wahy matlu*' and '*wahy ghair matlu*'?
6. In what ways were the revelations conveyed to the prophets?

(ii) The chain of revelations.

1. What are the names of the revealed books mentioned in the Quran?
2. What is the '*Torah*' and to which prophet was it given?
3. Write a note on '*Zaboor*'.
4. Which prophet was given the '*Injeel*' and what were its teachings?
5. Why do we say that all the prophets and all the revealed scriptures carry the same message of God?

(iii) The Quranic view of the revelation.

1. Why is the Quran more perfect than the earlier revelations?
2. Why did God finally send the Prophet Muhammad?
3. Why did the former prophets' followers corrupt the earlier scriptures?

(iv) The first revelation of the Quran.

1. In what year did the first revelation of the Quran take place?
2. What were the circumstances of the first revelation?
3. What were the words of the first revelation?
4. What was the Prophet Muhammad's reaction to the words of the angel Jibril?

UNIT

7

Knowledge and the Quranic Teachings

(I) THE QURANIC CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

(a) The Importance attached to Knowledge in the Quran

Islam attaches great importance to knowledge and education. When the Quran began to be revealed, the first word of its first verse was '*iqra'*', that is, read. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity.

A scholar (*alim*) is accorded great respect in the Hadith. According to a Hadith, the ink of the pen of a scholar is more precious than the blood of a martyr. The reason being that a martyr is engaged in the task of defence, while an *alim* (scholar) builds up individuals and nations along positive lines. In this way he bestows a real life upon the world.

The Quran repeatedly asks us to observe the earth and the heavens. This instils in man a desire to learn natural science. All the books of Hadith have a chapter on knowledge (*ilm*). In *Sahih* Bukhari there is a chapter entitled, "The virtue of one who acquires *ilm* (learning) and imparts it to others."

For instance, there is a tradition that one who treads a path in search of knowledge has his way paved to paradise by God as a reward for this noble deed. (Bukhari, Muslim)

In a tradition recorded by Tirmidhi, angels in heaven, fish in the water and ants in their dwellings pray for the well-being of a seeker of knowledge.

In another hadith the Prophet of Islam observed that those who learned virtue and taught it to others were the best among humankind. (Al-Bayhaqi).

How great is the importance attached to learning in Islam can be understood from an event in the life of the Prophet. At the battle of Badr, in which the Prophet gained a victory over his opponents, seventy men from the enemy ranks were taken prisoner. These prisoners of war were literate people. In order to benefit from their education, the Prophet declared that if each prisoner taught ten Medinan children how to read and write, it would serve as his ransom and he would be set free.

This was the first school in the history of Islam established by the Prophet himself with all non-Muslim teachers. Furthermore, they were all war prisoners. There was the risk that after their release they would again create problems for Islam and Muslims. This Sunnah of the Prophet shows that education is to be received whatever the risk involved.

Women were not kept away from educational activities. Starting with the Prophet's own household, Muslim families provided equal opportunities to the female members of the family to learn to grow and play a constructive role in the progress and development of society at large. A large number of learned women are mentioned in history as authorities on various Islamic sciences such as hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, *seerah* of the Prophet, commentary on the Quran,

etc. The Prophet's own wife, Aishah, imparted the knowledge and wisdom she received from the first educator, the Prophet himself, for almost half a century. She narrated more than two thousand traditions of the Prophet, and according to the Muslim jurists, these are the source of two thirds of the Islamic laws relating to social, political and cultural issues.

Islam attaches such great importance to learning that the Quran has this to say:

"It is the men of knowledge who can truly realise God." (35:28)

Scholars are considered to be like angels (3:18), in view of their potential for discovering the oneness and the glory of the Creator. To inculcate this importance of knowledge in the minds of the believers, the Prophet once observed that "the worship of a learned man is a thousand times better than that of the ignorant worshipper." By way of encouraging reflection on the universe and nature in order to explore divine glories, the Prophet is reported to have said: "An hour of reflection is better than a hundred years of worship without reflection." (Al-Bayhaqi).

It was this interrelatedness of knowledge and worship that made the early Muslims seek and impart knowledge wholeheartedly and religiously.

According to Islamic ideology, a Muslim is supposed on the one hand, to seek knowledge for the pleasure of his Lord and for on the other. The better promotion of the welfare of humankind. In other words, the motto of education in Islam would be acquisition of knowledge for the sake of serving God and His creatures. That is why from the very beginning almost equal attention has been paid to the learning of both the religious sciences and the worldly or secular sciences.

On the one hand, Islam places great emphasis on learning, and on the other, all those factors which are necessary to make progress in learning have been provided by God. One of these special factors is the freedom to conduct research.

For example, once the Prophet passed by an oasis where he found the farmers, who were date planters at work. When he asked what they were doing, he was told that they were pollinating the clusters of dates in order to produce a better yield. The Prophet expressed his disapproval of this process. Knowing this, the farmers immediately stopped it. But later on the Prophet was told that due to lack of proper pollination the yield had been very low as compared to the previous years. On hearing this, the Prophet replied. "You know your worldly matters better." (Sahih Bukhari) In other words, experiment and observation should be the final criteria in such worldly matters.

In this way, the Prophet of Islam separated scientific research from religion. This meant that in the world of nature man must enjoy full opportunities to conduct free research and adopt the conclusions arrived at. Placing such great emphasis on knowledge resulted in the awakening of a great desire for knowledge among the Muslims. This process began in Makkah, then it reached Madinah and Damascus, later finding its centre in Baghdad. Ultimately, it entered Spain. Spain flourished, making extraordinary progress in various academic and scientific disciplines. This flood of scientific progress entered Europe and ultimately resulted in the modern scientific age.

(b) Universality

A study of the Quran shows that its aim is to produce a universal approach in human beings. Universality means high thinking and an unbiased and unconditioned approach. We find an example of this quality in the Quran. It addresses us thus: 'O man, O mankind.' This shows that the approach of the Quran is based on universality. The very first chapter of the Quran

begins with these words: 'Praise be to God, the Lord and Sustainer of all mankind.' Similarly, the Quran introduces God as the "Lord of the worlds", and not just the Lord of the Muslims or the Lord of the Arabs. He is also called 'the Lord of the East and the West.' (70:40)

Similarly, the Quran cites the Prophet of Islam as a messenger sent for all mankind and not just for the Arabs. The Quran says: "We have sent you as a mercy to mankind." (21:107)

This universality of Quranic revelation brings about universal approach in its believers. In another place Quran says: "Blessed be He who has revealed Al-Furqan (the Criterion) to His servant, so that he may be a warner to all mankind." (25:1)

This universal approach can be seen in all the teachings of Islam. For instance, at the end of *namaz* the faithful turn their heads towards the right and left and utter these words of greeting: 'Assalam-o-Alaikum wa rahmatullah' which means: 'May peace and blessings be upon you.' This is meant for all mankind inhabiting the lands towards the east and the west, the north and the south. This is, in fact, a universal greeting.

In this way one of the aims of *namaz* is to instill in believers feelings of well-wishing for the whole world. The whole world should share in one's prayers. This is a lesson in universal thinking, which is daily given to the believers. Similarly, Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam takes the form of a universal gathering. Muslims belonging to all the nations of the world meet one another on this occasion. It is in fact an annual attempt to produce universality in believers.

Conveying this universal divine message to all the nations of the world (*dawah*) is another important teaching of the Prophet. As a requirement of Islam this turns every believer into a universal ambassador for *dawah* activity is that of universal interaction. Coming out of the limited sphere of one's self, one is made to think at the level of all humanity. As a result, an activity like that of *dawah* produces universal thinking among the faithful. The responsibility of *dawah* takes the believer out of the local sphere and turns him into a global personality.

The truth is that universality is an inseparable part of Quranic thinking. One who adopts the Quranic way will start thinking at the universal level. His personality will be linked with the entire human brotherhood. In spite of being located in a particular region, he becomes a citizen of the universe as far as his thinking is concerned. In this respect, it can rightly be said that Islam or the Quran promotes universal citizenship.

(c) The Scientific Approach

A study of the Quran shows that the Quranic approach is based neither on mythology nor on superstition, but on scientific principles. When we use the term 'scientific approach' to describe a way of thinking, it always means that such thinking that is in accordance with reality. One with such a bent of mind will be scientific in all his dealings in the world. His thinking is totally in accordance with external realities.

According to traditions, the Prophet of Islam used to pray: 'O God, show us the truth in the form of truth and grant us the wisdom to follow it, and show us falsehood as falsehood and grant us the strength to keep ourselves away from it. Show us things as they are.'

This prayer of the Prophet of Islam is a fine example of the scientific approach. The Quran wants to inculcate this spirit in every believer. When a believer becomes eager to be granted this spirit to guide his thoughts, he begins praying for it.

On a number of occasions we find this teaching expressed in different ways in the Quran. The Quran enjoins believers to 'fear God and speak the truth. He will bless your works and forgive you your sins. He who obeys God and His apostle shall win a greater victory.' (33:70-71).

This Quranic verse commands mankind to say what is fair. *Qaul-e-Sadid* means saying the truth in exact accordance with the facts. Just as the arrow reaches its target by being shot in precisely the right direction, similarly *qaul-e-sadid* hits the mark by making one's words correspond in every detail with reality.

There are two kinds of human utterances: realistic and unrealistic. Realistic or *sadid* utterances are those that tally exactly with reality. Conversely, unrealistic utterances are those that do not take the actual state of affairs into account and are based on suppositions, conjectures, or mere opinion, rather than on fact. God approves of only the former types of utterances.

There are a number of verses in the Quran that aim at inculcating this scientific spirit of thought in the believers. In all matters believers are to be guided by reason and logical thinking.

According to the Quran, there are two kinds of thinking – sincere thinking and insincere thinking. That may be called double standard thinking. The scientific approach is characteristic of a sincere thinker. A sincere thinker cannot envision an approach which is not based on realism. He bases his life on sound and true foundations. On the contrary, it is the insincere thinker or a hypocrite that has no principles or scruples. His approach is based on opportunism and he changes his point of view and way of thinking to serve his own interests. That is why there is not even a grain of the scientific approach in him. His thoughts and deeds are totally unpredictable.

A sincere person, with a scientific approach and a scientific way of looking at the world, is one who comes up to the standard set by the Quran. At the same time, the insincere person is completely unaffected by and in fact free of the scientific approach. Therefore, he fails in life's test, as he is so obsessed with his egocentric thinking that he refuses to adopt scientific or realistic approach.

The Quran is not a book of science in the technical sense, but there is no denying the truth that the Quranic approach is nothing other than the scientific approach.

(II) QURANIC COMMANDMENTS

(a) Lawful

Life, according to Islam, is an indivisible whole. All its areas, social and religious, are to be governed and controlled by Divine Law as revealed in the Quran and enshrined in the Hadith. For this reason, certain things have been held lawful (*halal*) while others are unlawful (*haram*) and thus prohibited to human kind.

Halal (lawful) means that which is allowed and wholesome for humanity; *haram* (unlawful) that which is forbidden, and harmful. Before the coming of Islam, there were numerous opinions as to what things or sorts of behaviour were *haram* or *halal*. Islam established certain legal principles which were to become the determining criteria on which all future decisions as to what was *haram* or *halal* could be based. The Ummah was to follow a Middle Path. Muslims should constitute:

'You are the noblest nation that has ever been raised up for mankind. You are enjoined (to do) justice and forbid evil. You believe in God.' (3:110).

As the first principle, humans should consider all the things that Allah has created and bestowed upon humanity:

'Do you not see that Allah has subjected to your use all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen?' (31:20)

The Messenger of Allah has said:

'The lawful is plain and the unlawful is plain, and between the two are doubtful things that most people do not know of. So, whosoever avoids doubtful matters, secures acquittal for his faith and his honour, and whosoever falls into doubtful matters, falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary and is therefore apt to fall into it. Beware, every king has a sanctuary and the sanctuary of Allah are matters forbidden by Him. Beware, in the body there is a morsel of flesh. If it is well, the entire body is well, but if it becomes diseased, the whole body becomes diseased. Beware, it is the heart.' (Muslim)

The tradition of the Holy Prophet quoted above gives us a golden principle and an unflinching touchstone for identifying the lawful from the unlawful.

It is a well-known fact that permissibility is the rule in Islam. Things only become unlawful through an express injunction of the Quran or *Sunnah*.

Allowing things or disallowing them is the sole prerogative of Allah:

It is not within the competence of any mortal to prohibit the allowed or allow the prohibited without any clear proof or authority contained in the Book of Allah or the Traditions of the Holy Prophet. Anyone who seeks to assume this right is guilty of calumny against Allah, because sovereignty from beginning to end belongs solely to Allah. Says the Quran:

"And speak not concerning matters that your tongues lie about: "This is lawful and this is unlawful", in order that you invent falsehood against Allah. (16:116)"

Allah intends ease, not hardship for man. He, therefore, makes him liable only for those things that are within his power. So, if one is driven by necessity, even things otherwise disallowed become allowed for him. For instance, eating swine-flesh becomes permissible for a man dying of hunger. Allah says:

"But if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience or seeking to transgress the due limits, then no sin devolves on him (in eating the prohibited things)." (2:173)

The law of necessity, however, applies only to that quantity which is just enough for the purpose, and no more.

Whether one realizes it or not, it is a fact that Allah, as a rule, has allowed all those things that are good, clean and beneficial to us and disallowed only those things that are evil, unclean and harmful.

Man, therefore, is advised to submit to the will of Allah and restrict himself only to those acts and things that are plainly lawful or allowable in Islam.

In certain cases there are clear injunctions, while in others *halal* is that which has not been pronounced *haram* (unlawful) in the Quran.

All the food and good things of the earth are lawful for men with the exception of those prohibited. But while gold ornaments and silk garments are lawful for women, there are

unlawful for men. But, on the whole, as the aim of the Quran is to make life easier for the believers, there are innumerable things which are lawful while the unlawful things are negligible in number.

(b) Unlawful

Prohibitions in Islam are quite limited in number but elaborate in detail. They comprise the following topics:

1. Prohibited food and drink
2. Prohibited clothes and ornaments
3. Prohibited matters in sex
4. Prohibited matters in financial practices
5. Prohibited matters in social relations

Things leading to prohibited matters are also prohibited

If Allah prohibits a thing, He prohibits its preliminaries as well. Similarly, in the case of usury, God's curse has been pronounced on its direct beneficiary as well as on the scribe and the witness to this abominable transaction.

1. Prohibited food and drink

God says:

'O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and good.' (2:168)

The Qur'anic verse means that God has permitted mankind to eat all that is clean and lawful with the utmost pleasure.

Islam has proscribed only those items of food or drink that are harmful for man.

'He has forbidden to you the 'dead' (meat).' (2:173)

The 'dead meat' would mean the flesh of any bird or animal that has died of natural causes, without being formally slaughtered or hunted down in an Islamic way.

Forbidden too is anything slaughtered without mentioning Allah's name.

In the case of the People of the Book, however, only that food is lawful which conforms to the principle of *halal* and *haram* set forth in their own religions and which has been slaughtered in accordance with the dictates of their own faith.

Intoxicants and narcotics are also haram

The Messenger of Allah has said: Every intoxicating drink is *khamr* (wine) and every wine is prohibited.

'O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling and idols and divining arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork. Leave them aside so that you may prosper. Verily, Satan seeks to excite enmity and hatred between you by means of intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from remembrance of Allah and from (His) worship. Will you then (not) abstain?' (5:90-91)

Narcotics, as we know them today, had no existence in the days of the Holy Prophet. There are, therefore, no clear-cut injunctions about them by name. We may however, easily conclude

that they are equally unlawful and therefore prohibited; for Allah has proscribed all impurities for His servants. Their case, moreover, is the same as that of alcohol for, like alcohol, narcotics also take away man's reason and intellect. They destroy the addict's health and have a negative effect on his moral behaviour. They weaken his will, empty his pocket, disrupt the harmony of his family life and drive him to ruin and perdition. God says in the Quran: '...and do not kill yourselves (or one another). Verily, Allah is ever Merciful to you.' (4:29)

He also says: '...and be not cast by your own hands to ruin.' (2:195)

2. Prohibited clothes and ornaments

Allah says in the Quran:

'O children of Adam! We have bestowed upon you raiment to cover your shame as well as to be an adornment, but the raiment of piety is the best.' (7:26)

There can be no doubt that clothes are meant primarily to cover man's nakedness and beautify his body. It is, therefore, not permissible for a man to expose what is meant to be covered.

'Awwrah (coverable part of the body) for a man, according to Islamic law, is between the navel and the knee. *'Awwrah* for the woman is, however, her entire body except the face and the palms of the two hands. And the nakedness should be so covered as not to reveal the shape of the covered parts.

3. Prohibited matters in sex

Islam has never been inimical to man's legitimate aspirations nor has it ever sought to suppress his natural instincts or ignored his natural desires. It is rather a creed that is in perfect harmony with human nature. It is for this reason that Islam has legitimized marriage, but taken care to regulate the relations between the two sexes and proscribed adultery and other forms of deviation from right conduct, and thus slammed the door on all that leads to disharmony and anarchy in society.

The Quran, also, declares in no uncertain terms that a Muslim is forbidden to marry a *mahram* (close blood-relation). This interdiction is in perfect harmony with human nature. It is meant to remove unnecessary constraints in social relations and preserve harmony and dignity in family relations.

4. Prohibited matters in financial practices

All financial activities and transactions in Islam are based on twofold principles: elimination of injustice and ensuring willing consent of all concerned parties within the framework of the Divine Law. It is for this reason that the following practices are declared unlawful in Islam:

Usury (riba):

On the question of usury the Quran says:

'...Allah has declared buying and selling lawful and usury unlawful.' (2:275)

'O you who believe! Fear Allah and give up all outstanding dues of usury if you are (true believers). But if you do it not, then be warned that you are at war with

Allah and His Messenger. If, however, you repent, then you are entitled to (get back) your principal (without interest). Do no wrong and you shall not be wronged.' (2:278-279)

It is clear from the above verses that practising usury is strictly and absolutely forbidden in Islam.

Selling forbidden goods is haram

The Messenger of Allah said: 'If Allah declared a thing unlawful, He also declared the taking of its price unlawful.' (Abu Dawud)

'Verily, Allah and His Messenger declared unlawful the selling of alcoholic liquor, (the eating) of carrion and swine and (the making of) idols.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

It is also unlawful to circumvent the commandments of Allah on these matters in any way.

The Prophet of Allah has declared himself clear of all responsibility with regard to a person indulging in fraudulent practices in his dealings and activities. Cheating could take many forms. For example: it may be that a trader sells a defective commodity without pointing out the defect to the buyer. Or else, he sells goods at exorbitant prices to an unsuspecting newcomer or stranger to the town, taking advantage of his ignorance of the prevailing market rates.

5. Prohibited matters in social relations:

Islam regulates man's relations with his Creator, with himself and with others in society. It does not make it lawful for anyone to encroach upon the rights of others or snatch away their freedom. It is also not allowed in Islam that the freedom accorded to an individual should become a licence for creating anarchy in society or serve as a tool for usurping the rights and freedoms of others.

Sanctity of life:

The Quran states: 'And slay not that life which Allah has made secure, save with due right.' (17:33)

The Messenger of Allah also said: "Your blood and your property are sacred and inviolable for all of you." (Al-Bukhari)

This tradition means that nobody is allowed to kill anyone without a legal right. This right is not meant to be an open licence to anyone to kill any other. Islam has clearly laid down the conditions under which one could be executed as a punishment.

Lying, dishonesty, betrayal and slander

The Messenger of Allah said:

'Verily, truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise; and if a person continues to speak the truth and remains in quest of the truth, he is enrolled with Allah as veracious. And falsehood leads to sinfulness and sinfulness leads to (hell) fire. A man who continuously lies and remains in quest of falsehood is recorded with Allah as a great liar.' (Al-Bukhari)

Kidhb (lying) means saying something other than the truth, be it out of deceit or fraud or just for amusement. All forms of lying are prohibited in Islam.

Social relations between man and man should be based on a clear conscience and mutual trust. Lack of trust leads to false suspicion and spying on one another. It is for this reason that Islam has prohibited harbouring evil suspicions. The Messenger of Allah said:

'Shun suspicion, because suspicion is the biggest lie.' (Al-Bukhari).

QUESTIONS

(i) The Quranic Concept of Knowledge

- (a) The importance Attached to Knowledge in the Quran.
 - 1. Why does the Quran attach such importance to knowledge?
 - 2. What is the highest form of knowledge according to the Quran?
 - 3. How is the realization of God dependent on acquiring knowledge?
 - 4. Why should one revere the learned and the scholars?
 - 5. Why does the Quran emphasize the acquisition of knowledge and the education of children?
- (b) Universality
 - 1. How is Islam the universal religion?
 - 2. How is Islam the religion that can bring peace to the world?
 - 3. Write on the concept of brotherhood and fraternity taught by the Quran.
 - 4. Why can it be said that Islam is an eternal and pure religion?
 - 5. How does research into nature bring us nearer to God?
- (c) The Scientific Approach
 - 1. Why is the Islamic approach to the acquisition of knowledge scientific?
 - 2. In what does the Quran teach us a scientific approach to life?
 - 3. What is the role of reason and intellect in the scientific way of seeing things, according to the Quran?
 - 4. Why should we see reality as it really is?
 - 5. Why should we not put our trust in imagination and conjecture rather than adopt the scientific approach?

(ii) Quranic commandments

- 1. What is the meaning of '*halal*' and '*haram*'?
- 2. What are the prohibited foods and drinks?
- 3. What types of garment are not allowed for men?
- 4. Why are certain professions prohibited in Islam?
- 5. Why is taking interest not allowed in Islam?
- 5. With what aspects of social life do the Quranic commandments deal in detail?

UNIT

8

The Economic Teachings of the Quran

(I) THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF MAN

Islam not only allows but encourages honest trade and commerce. The holy Prophet is reported to have said that a truthful and trustworthy trader shall (in the Hereafter) be among the company of the Prophets, the truthful and the martyrs. Another Hadith is to the effect that his followers should carry on trade, as this has nine-tenths of the sustenance (*rizq*). There are a large number of verses of the Quran relating to trade and commerce, buying and selling. We are reminded that the beasts of burden created by Allah for carrying men and merchandise, and boats and ships which sail by His command through the rivers, seas and oceans, carrying merchandise and men, are among Allah's bounties (16:7; 23:22).

Legitimate trade is allowed even during the Hajj (2:198). Men whose business activities do not divert them from prayers and charity are praised (24:37); while those who leave off prayers when they see some bargain or means of amusement are reprimanded (62:11); and we are told that the love of Allah and the Holy Prophet and the struggle for God's cause must have preference over trade.

All illicit ways of making money have been forbidden. For instance, gambling and games of chance; bribery and corruption; hoarding and profiteering; giving short measure or short weight; and usury.

The Prophet of Islam advised traders not to sell the grain purchased by them until they had weighed it. Another saying is that it is open to the buyer and the seller till they part either to keep the bargain or cancel it; and that traders must tell the truth and spell out the good and bad points of the goods offered for sale. If they do so, their trade shall be blessed; but if they tell lies and conceal defects, they shall not receive God's blessings. The Holy Prophet severely warned shopkeepers against selling their goods on false oaths.

Economic activity in Islam is governed by what is economically, socially and morally good. Economic activity that is destructive of man's innate goodness and harmful to the individual and society has been declared unlawful or *haram*.

Labour and economic risk:

Gains from economic activity should be based on two factors: on labour and economic risk. Income from betting or gambling, for example, is therefore unlawful because it is not acquired through work or labour. Such income is called "unearned income". Income from lending money at a guaranteed rate of interest is unlawful because it is not earned through labour or economic risk. Income from such activities as usury, gambling, monopolistic trade practices, hoarding and speculation is therefore regarded as unlawful or *haram*. All the practices that are not based on

productive work can be shown to create hardship and may even lead to social strain and upheaval.

What is most severely condemned in particular is *riba* which is interest or usury. This involves lending money on condition that you get back not only the sum lent but an additional guaranteed sum—without any work on your part and without any economic risk. *Riba* exploits the need of the borrower and may cause him economic hardship. The lender thus becomes a parasite feeding on the needs of the borrower. As such, *riba* lies at the root of much of the economic and political instability in the world.

(II) PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISE

Public finance as practiced in the early Islamic period was based on the ethical and social philosophy of Islam. It did not depend on the discretion of the ruler; rather it was based on the guidance from Islamic *shariah* and aimed at public interest. The general principles of public finance in Islam are derived from the verses of the Quran. Although certain economic teachings are to be found in the scriptures, the exact details of fiscal policies are not given. These were however elaborated upon by the Prophet of Islam, and so the Sunnah is the second most important authority on public finance in Islam.

The Quran says: ‘...of their wealth take alms’ (9:103) and the tradition of the Prophet clarifies how the dues, collected from the wealthy are to be distributed amongst the poor. The aim was to achieve a healthy circulation of wealth in society. This task was entrusted to the state: this may be considered an example of the earliest public enterprise in Islam.

The system of public financial enterprise at the time of the Prophet was very simple as the Prophet himself did not own anything of any great value, nor did the community give much importance to wealth.

At the time of the first four caliphs, who were also companions of the Prophet, the public money collected consisted of alms (*zakat*) or war booty or certain taxes. All the funds were collected in the public treasury (*bait ul maal*).

The money was used for very specific purposes like the running of the government and the welfare of society. However, a major part was reserved for the support for orphans, widows, and travellers, for assistance in the marriage of orphan girls, and for the sick and destitute.

The second caliph Umar said: ‘Taxes are justified only when they are collected in a just and legal way and they are spent justly and legally.’

Since Islam kept in view the totality of human activities, the state assumed an active role in looking after the welfare of its members. Public works and care for the subjects of the states were always considered to be religious and moral obligations of the ruler. Abu Yusuf, a famous jurist always maintained the need for such state policies as secure the wellbeing of the people and increase the welfare of the subjects. Abu Musa al-Ash’ari says: ‘The best of men in authority are those under whom people prosper and the worst of them are those under whom people encounter hardship.’

Al-Ghazali too includes fulfillment of the basic needs of members of society as one of the socially obligatory duties carried out by the state. He states: ‘It is incumbent on the ruler to help the people when they are facing scarcity, starvation and sufferings especially during a famine or when prices are high, and people fail to earn a living in these circumstances and it becomes

difficult for them to make both ends meet. The ruler should, in these circumstances feed the people and give them financial assistance from their treasury in order to improve their lot.'

To sum up, the fulfillment of basic economic needs, the defence of society from the enemy, support in times of famine and similar disasters are the social obligations of the state. In Islam the state enterprise is thus the public enterprise established with the sole aim of serving humanity. It is achieved through collection of dues and taxes by the state and then the utilization of these public funds, collected in the state treasury, for the good of the whole of society and all its members, on an equal basis and according to their needs. Islam does not lose sight of the whole human community in any of its commandments as revealed in the Quran and expounded in the traditions.

(III) THE CONCEPT OF ZAKAAT AND SADAQAH AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

Zakaat is the fourth 'pillar' of Islam. *Zakaat* means setting apart for God every year a certain portion of one's savings and wealth (generally 2.5 percent) and spending it upon religious duties and on needy members of the community. The fulfilment of this duty is, in fact, a kind of reminder that all one has is in trust from God. Man should, therefore, hold nothing back from God. To whatever one may amass in one's lifetime, one's own personal contribution is insignificant. If the Supreme Being, who is at work in the heavens and on the earth, refused to co-operate with man, there would be nothing that the latter could accomplish single-handedly. He would not be able to plant so much as a single seed to make things grow. Nor could he set up any industry, or carry out any other such enterprise. If God were to withdraw from us His material blessings, all our plans would go awry, and all our efforts would be brought to naught.

Zakaat is the practical recognition of this fact through the expenditure of money for the cause of God. Islam requires man to consider his personal wealth as belonging to God and, therefore, to set apart a portion for Him. No maximum limit has been prescribed, but a minimum limit has definitely been fixed. According to statutory *zakaat*, each individual must abide by this and spend a fixed minimum percentage of his wealth every year in the way prescribed by God. While spending from his wealth, he is permitted neither to belittle the recipient nor to make him feel obliged or grateful to himself. His wealth must be given to the needy in the spirit of it being a trust from God, which he is making over to the genuine titleholders. He should feed others so that he himself is fed in the Hereafter, and he should give to others so that he himself is not denied succour by God in the next world.

Zakaat is a symbol of one's duty to recognize the rights of others and have sympathy with them in pain or sorrow. These sentiments should become so deep-rooted that one should begin to regard one's own wealth as belonging, in part, to others. Moreover, one should render service to others without expecting either recognition or recompense. Each individual should protect the honour of others without hope of any gain in return. He should be the well-wisher of not just friends and relations, but of all members of society. *Zakaat*, first and foremost, makes it plain to people that their entire 'possessions' are gifts of God, and, secondly, dissuades the servants of God from living in society as unfeeling and selfish creatures. Indeed, throughout their entire lives, they must set aside some portion for others.

We must serve our fellow human beings only in the hope of receiving a reward from God. We must give to others with the divine assurance that we will be repaid in full in the next world. In a society where there is no exploitation, feelings of mutual hatred and unconcern cannot flourish. A climate of mutual distrust and disorder is simply not allowed to come into being; each person lives in peace with another, and society becomes a model of harmony and prosperity.

On the legal plane, *zakaat* is an annual tax, or duty; in essence and spirit, it is recognition on the part of man of the share which God, and other men, have in his wealth.

There are two forms of charity in Islam—obligatory and voluntary. In addition to *zakaat* there is *sadaqah*. *Zakaat*, derived from the word *zakaah*, means to purify. By giving up a portion of the wealth in one's possession, the remainder, to be used by the alms-giver, is purified or legalised.

According to the teachings of Islam, the giving of *sadaqa* serves a number of functions. *Sadaqa*, first and foremost acts as expiation for sins. Believers are asked to give *sadaqa* immediately following any transgression. Voluntary alms-giving can also compensate for any shortcoming in the past payment of *zakaat*. *Sadaqa* also gives protection against all kinds of evils, wards off affliction in this world, questioning in the grave, and punishment on Judgement Day. It is, therefore, recommended that one give *sadaqa*, 'by night and by day, in secret and in public' in order to seek God's pleasure (2:274). The constant giving of a little is said to please God more than the occasional giving of much. *Sadaqa* is also a means of moral edification. It purifies the soul of the evil of avarice, and is a reflection of the generosity of God the All-Giving.

Inspired by the verses of the Quran and the traditions and practices of the Prophet and his companions, the giving of *sadaqa* to individuals or institutions remains a widespread practice among Muslims. The Prophet, the most generous of men, used to make personal donations. When asked for anything, he never refused. If he had nothing to give, he would borrow from one of his companions and repay him later.

Zakaat is God's due portion of what we own and what we produce. There are many ways of making a living in this world: one can work on the land, in a factory, a shop or in an office. But what part do we actually play in all this? Our role is, in fact, minimal. Multiple forces are at work in the universe and within ourselves. All these forces come together to enable us to earn a livelihood. All this has been ordained by the Lord of the Universe. That is why, once a year, one should calculate one's earnings, and put aside a portion for God. By doing so, one acknowledges the fact that it is all from God.

Without His help, one could earn nothing. To spend for the cause of God is to express a sublime attachment to the Lord. It shows a yearning to empty oneself before Him. One should feel as one gives that one is offering everything to God and seeking nothing for oneself. The following verse shows the spirit in which a Muslim should help others:

'We feed you for God's sake only; we seek of you neither recompense nor thanks.'
(Quran, 76:9)

There are eight categories of people, eligible to receive *Zakaat* which have been specified in this verse of the Quran:

"Alms shall be used only for the advancement of God's cause, for the ransom of captives and debtors, and for distribution among the poor, the destitute, wayfarers, those that are employed in collecting alms, and those that are converted to the faith. This is a duty enjoined by God. He is Wise and All-Knowing." (9:60)

Zakaat funds are to be spent, according to the Quran, on the poor and the destitute, the wayfarer, the bankrupt, the needy, converts, captives, collectors of *zakaat* and in the cause of God. The last category allows *Zakaat* funds to be used for the general welfare of the community – education, social work, etc. *Zakaat* in spirit is an act of worship, while in its external form, it is the carrying out of a social service.

Zakaat is thus not merely the payment of a tax, as it is generally understood, but rather a matter of great religious significance. Its importance is underscored by the fact that the Quran treats it on a par with (*salat*) prayer. The Quran frequently enjoins the believers, 'to say prayers and pay the *zakaat*' and goes to the extent of saying that one cannot attain righteousness unless one spends out of one's wealth for the love of God:

"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give of that which you love." (3:92)

Moreover, the Quran disapproves of people who make a show of their alms-giving. (2:271)

Zakaat is a test of the sincerity and unselfishness of the believer. For there is no authority to force any Muslim to pay it. It is entirely up to the conscience of the individual whether or not he or she pays it. The willingness to pay, shows that one's heart is free of the love of money. It shows that one is prepared to use one's money for the service of humanity.

The Prophet of Islam was always very concerned for the poor and the needy. He went so far as to say:

'He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbour remains hungry by his side.' (Muslim).

(IV) THE UTILIZATION OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Agriculture is essential and should be given priority in any community. God, according to the Quran, has spread out the earth and made it fertile and therefore fit for cultivation. He sends the "fertilizing winds" to drive the clouds and scatter the seeds and He sends down rain to bring forth vegetation of all kinds. The many verses in which these bounties and favours of God are mentioned all serve to encourage people not only to thank God but to engage in farming.

There are many sayings of the Prophet which commend agricultural production. The Prophet of Islam once said:

"When a Muslim plants a tree or cultivates a crop, no bird or human being eats from it without its being accounted as a (rewardable) charity for him."

Stressing the importance of irrigation and land reclamation for agricultural purposes, the Prophet also said:

"Whoever brings dead land to life, for him there is a reward in it, and whatever any creature seeking food eats of it, shall be considered as charity from him."

Agriculture is a vital activity which has benefits in this world and rewards in the Hereafter. This was one occupation, which the Prophet considered very dignified. Although many people do not look upon farmers and shepherds with respect, the Prophet gave dignity to this occupation when he said:

"God did not send a prophet without his having tended sheep."

“You too, O Messenger of Allah?” asked his companions.

“Yes, I tended sheep for wages for the people of Makkah.”

One should observe all the Islamic advice and regulations about the proper care and treatment of animals: to provide for them all that their kind require, not to burden them beyond what they can bear, not to injure them and if they are used for food, to slaughter them in the most calm, kind and efficient manner.

Industrial production

While agriculture is essential and highly encouraged as an occupation, the Prophet saw that it was undesirable that people should confine their economic efforts solely to agriculture and pastoral pursuits.

Muslims needed to develop in addition to agriculture the industries, crafts and skills which were needed to build a strong community.

The Quran mentions the opportunities and the needs for various types of industrial production involving the use of iron, copper and other minerals—resources which God has placed at the disposal of man.

“And We provided and revealed the use of iron, in which there is great power and benefits for mankind...” (57: 25)

It speaks, for example, of the value of shipbuilding and the vast expanses of ocean, which can be explored in various ways for the benefit of mankind.

In engaging in industrial production and the manufacture of goods, the benefit of mankind and the environment in general and the needs of the Muslim community in particular must be given high priority. Whatever is harmful, or is intended for a harmful purpose, should not be manufactured or produced. Whatever is harmful to the beliefs, good morals and life style of a society should likewise not be produced.

Trade

The Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet, urge Muslims to engage in trade and commerce, and to undertake journeys for what the Quran refers to as “seeking the bounty of God”.

All trade in Islam is allowed unless it involves injustice, cheating, making exorbitant profits, or the promotion or selling of something which is haram.

It is *haram* to do business in alcoholic drinks, intoxicants, harmful drugs, or anything, the consumption and use of which Islam has prohibited. Selling or trading implies promoting them among people and thus encouraging them to do what is *haram*. The Prophet, peace be on him, said:

“When God prohibits a thing, He prohibits (giving and receiving) the price as well.”

Any healthy community or society needs a variety of professions to meet its needs. Professions relating to man’s basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, defence—are given priority.

Professions involving the use or propagation of harmful knowledge are not allowed.

Under this category come astrology and the occult arts, etc.

QUESTIONS

(i) Economic activity

1. What economic activities are encouraged in the Quran?
2. What economic practices are forbidden in the Quran?
3. Why is it said in the Quran that all economic activity should be based on two factors: labour and economic risk?
4. Why are trade and commerce considered to be proper ways of earning a living in Islam?
5. Why should one always abstain from unlawful gains?

(ii) Public and private enterprise.

1. What was public finance based on in early Islamic times?
2. What is '*bait ul mal*'?
3. How did the state look after the weaker sections of the population in early Islamic times?
4. 'Islam keeps the economic life of the whole of society in view.' Explain.
5. How should the richer members of society help those in need?

(iii) The Concept of *zakat* and *sadaqah*.

1. What is '*zakat*'?
2. What is '*zakat*' spent on according to Islamic commandments?
3. What is '*sadaqah*'?
4. What function does '*sadaqah*' serve?
5. Why is the giving of alms so important in Islam?

(iv) The Utilization of Economic resources.

1. What do we call 'economic Resources'?
2. Why did God entrust man with the right to use the economic resources of nature?
3. What are the roles of trade and agriculture in Islam?
4. What is the Islamic view of industrial production?
5. What type of economic activity and utilization of resources are not allowed in Islam?

UNIT

9

Introduction to Hadith

(I) THE MEANING OF HADITH

Hadith meaning a 'statement' or 'report' is used as an Islamic term for the records kept of the words, deeds and sanctions of the Prophet Muhammad. Some scholars have also included in hadith the sayings and doings of the companions of the Prophet. In English very often in place of 'hadith' the term 'traditions of the Prophet' or simply 'traditions' is used.

The necessity of hadith

The hadith gives a full account of the life of the Prophet, and serves as the commentary to the Quran. The Islamic jurisprudence or law (called *fiqh*) considers hadith to be the second fundamental source in all legal rulings.

The Quran principally deals with basics. It is the hadith that gives the details and necessary explanations of the Quranic injunctions. For instance, the Quran says: 'Regularly say your prayers.' But it does not specify how this form of worship has to be performed. Not even the timings and *raka'a* (units of prayers) are clearly mentioned. We need the traditions to have full information on this.

Even after knowing the details, it may not be possible to follow the divine injunctions contained in the Quran, for not everything can be properly understood by words alone. Therefore God's Prophet demonstrated before the faithful how the practice of worship was to be performed. He said to the believers: 'Look at me, see how I worship, and follow me.'

Thus the Prophet, besides teaching the believers about the divine commandments in a theoretical way, also put these teachings into practice in all matters pertaining to religion. He himself practiced the divine injunctions scrupulously. His practice was not a private matter; it had the status of a detailed interpretation and application of the Quran. Once a companion asked the Prophet's wife Aisha about the character of the Prophet. Aisha replied: 'He was an embodiment of the Quran.'

The Quran repeatedly reminds us of the importance of hadith, enjoining us to strictly follow the Prophet:

'...Obey God and obey the messenger...' (4:58)

'Whatever the messenger gives you, take it and whatever he forbids, abstain from it...' (59:7)

'And, truly, in the messenger of God you have a good example for him who looks to God and the Last Day and remembers God always.' (33:21)

The Quran thus provides the fundamentals of religion. It is the hadith, which furnishes us with the necessary details and explanations. It is as if the Quran was the text and the hadith its commentary: the Quran being the theory and the hadith being the practice. Thus the Quran and hadith cannot be separated from one another. They are complementary to each other. Both are equally essential for the establishment of religion.

(II) THE COMPILATION OF *HADITH*

A Brief History

The history of the compilation of Hadith may be broadly divided into four stages:

1. The first stage relates to the period of the Prophet till 10 A.H.
2. The second stage is approximately from 11 A.H. to 100 A.H. This is the period of *Sahaba*, the companions of the Prophet.
3. The third stage is from about 101 to nearly 200 A.H. This is the period of the *Tabiun*, the disciples of the companions of the Prophet.
4. The fourth stage is roughly from 200 A.H. to 300 A.H. This is the period of *Taba Tabiun*, the disciples of the disciples.

Compilation During the Period of the Prophet

During the life of the Prophet there was no regular compilation of the traditions, for they were not generally recorded in writing. However, they were orally transmitted, with great accuracy of detail, thanks to the Arabs' exceptionally retentive memories.

1. Some companions had, however, prepared written collections of traditions for their own personal use. Those companions, in particular, who had weaker memories used to write them down for memorizing and preservation. These were also dictated to their disciples.
2. Then there were those companions who had administrative offices arranged for written copies of traditions, so that they might carry out their duties in the true spirit of Islam. For instance, while appointing Amr ibn Hazm as the governor of Yaman, the Prophet himself gave him a letter containing the times of prayer, methods of prayer, details of ablution, booty, taxation, *zakat*, etc.
3. Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As, a young Makkan, also used to write down all that he heard from the Prophet. He had even asked the Prophet if he could make notes of all that he said. The Prophet replied in the affirmative. Abdullah called this compilation *Sahifah Sadiqa* (The Book of the Truth). It was later incorporated into the larger collection of Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal.
4. Anas, a young Madinan, was the Prophet's personal attendant. Since Anas remained with the Prophet day and night, he had greater opportunities than the other companions to listen to his words. Anas had written down the tradition on scrolls. He used to unroll these documents and say: "These are the sayings of the Prophet, which I have noted and then also read out to him to have any mistakes corrected."
5. Ali ibn Abi Talib was one of the scribes of the Prophet. The Prophet once dictated to him and he wrote on a large piece of parchment on both sides. He also had a *sahifa* (pamphlet) from the Prophet which was on *zakat* (the poor due) and taxes.

Besides these there were some other documents dictated by the Prophet himself – official letters, missionary letters, treaties of peace and alliance addressed to different tribes – all these were later incorporated into larger collections of Hadith.

Compilations of the Time of the Companions of the Prophet.

After the death of the Prophet, interest in Hadith literature increased greatly on two accounts. Firstly, the Companions who knew the Hadith at first hand were gradually passing away. Their number continued to diminish day by day. Therefore, people became more keen to preserve the precious Hadith literature that had been stored in their memories. Secondly, the number of converts was growing and they showed great eagerness to learn as much about the traditions as possible.

This was the age of the rightly guided Caliphs. In this age the Companions had settled in almost all the countries conquered by the Muslims. People flocked to them to hear traditions from them. Thus a number of centres for the learning of traditions came into existence with these Companions as the focus. When a disciple had learned all the traditions he could from one Companion, he would go to the next Companion and so on, collecting as many traditions as possible. The zeal of these disciples was so great that they undertook long journeys to collect traditions from different Companions.

In this period, there were not many regular compilations. This was rather the period of collecting traditions. The work of compilation took place on a large scale during the age of *Tabiun*, the disciples of the disciples.

The Age of Tabiun from 101 to nearly 200 A.H.

This is the age of the followers of the companions of the Prophet. They devoted their entire lives to collecting traditions from different centres of learning, with the result that a large number of traditions were preserved. Now it became possible to collect several memoirs in larger volumes.

Mohd ibn Shihab Al Zuhri, the first regular compiler, was one of the most distinguished traditionists. Ibn Shihab Zuhri and Abu Bakr Al-Hazm were asked by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, the Umayyad caliph, to prepare a collection of all available traditions. Umar bin Abul Aziz wrote to Abu Bakr Al Hazm: "Whatever sayings of the Prophet can be found, write them down, for I fear the loss of knowledge and disappearance of learned men, and do not accept anything but the Hadith of the Holy Prophet, and people should make knowledge public."

The compilations made in this period do not exist today independently, having been incorporated into the larger collections of the later period. These collections were not exhaustive works on Hadith. Their nature was that of individual collections.

After the individual compilations of this period, comes the *Al Muwatta* of Imam Malik (716-795), the first regular work which contained a well-arranged collection of traditions. The number of the traditions collected by him is put at 1700. This came to be accepted as a standard work.

In this period the traditions respectively of the Prophet and his companions, and the decisions / edicts of the *Tabiun* were collected together in the same volume. However, it was mentioned with each narration whether it was that of the Prophet, his companions or of the followers.

The Third Age of *Taba Tabiun* (Followers of the Successors)

This age of the followers of the companions' successors from 200 to 300 A.H., is the golden age in Hadith literature.

1. In this age the Prophet's traditions were separated from the reports of the companions and their successors.
2. The authentic traditions were very carefully and painstakingly sifted from the "weak" traditions and then these were compiled in book-form.
3. Elaborate rules were framed, canons were devised to distinguish the true from the false traditions in accordance with clear principles.

The main attention of scholars who engaged themselves in the critical scrutiny of Hadith was given to the recorded chains of witnesses (*isnad*); whether the dates of birth and death and places of residence of witnesses in different generations were such as to have made it possible for them to meet, and whether they were trustworthy. This activity, to be properly carried out, involved some feeling for the authenticity of the text itself; an experienced traditionist would develop a sense of discrimination.

All traditions therefore fall into three general categories: (*sahih*) sound, having a reliable and uninterrupted *isnad* and a (*matn*) text that does not contradict orthodox belief; (*hasan*) good those with an incomplete *isnad* or with transmitters of questionable authority. (*dhaif*) weak those whose *matn* or transmitters are subject to serious criticism.

By the use of these criteria the Hadith scholars were able to classify the traditions according to their degrees of reliability.

This is the period in which six authentic collections of traditions were compiled. These works are considered standard works on Hadith, and are known as the six correct books (*sihah-e-sittah*). The authors' names and book titles are as follows:

1. Muhammad b. Ismail al Bukhari, (194 A.H.-256 A.H.): *Sahih*. This work is next to the Quran in authenticity.
2. Muslim bin Qushairi (204 A.H.-261 A.H.): *Sahih*. This is the next most important work on Hadith.
3. Ibn Majah (202 A.H.-275 A.H.): *Sunan*
4. Abu Isa al Tirmizi (209 A.H.-279 A.H.): *Jame*
5. Abu Abdur Rahman an Nasai (214 A.H.-303 A.H.): *Sunan*
6. Abu Da'ud (202 A.H.-275 A.H.): *Sunan*

(III) TYPES OF HADITH

The early writers on the subject of the hadith evolved certain rules to classify the hadith. There are two main types of classification in use. One deals with the degree of the authenticity of the tradition, while the other takes as its base the way the tradition was transmitted.

As far as the first classification is concerned, the traditionists have divided the traditions into three classes, according to the degree of reliability based on the perfection or imperfection of the chain of their transmitters. Also, they saw whether the texts had any hidden defects. The acceptance or rejection of the particular hadith by the Companions, the Followers and their Successors was also taken into consideration.

These three classes are:

- a) Genuine (*Sahih*) – this name is given to a faultless hadith, in which there is no weakness either in regard to the chain of transmission (*isnad*) or in regard to the text (*matn*), and in which there is no contradiction of any kind of any of the established beliefs of Islam.
- b) Fair (*Hasan*) – this hadith is similar to Sahih hadith only some of its narrators might have to be found to have weaker or defective memory as compared to the narrator of Sahih hadith.
- c) Weak (*dhaiif*) or – this is a tradition, in respect of which some serious doubts can be raised. These doubts might be in respect to its content or the text, or because one or more of its transmitters are considered unreliable.
- d) Forged (*Maudu*) – this is a totally forged hadith.

The writers on the Science of Hadith as well as the jurists, have also divided the traditions according to the number of their transmitters during the first three generations of the Muslims, into three types: *mutawatir*, *mashhur* and *ahad*.

1. *Mutawatir* – these are the traditions which have been transmitted throughout the first three generations of the Muslims by such a large number of transmitters that there is no doubt that the hadith is genuine.
2. *Mashhur* – these are the traditions, which, having been originally transmitted in the first generation by two, three or four transmitters, were later on transmitted on their authority, by a large number of transmitters in the next two generations.
3. *Ahad* – There are the traditions, which were transmitted during the first three generations of the Muslims by one to four transmitters only.

(IV) SOME IMPORTANT HADITH COLLECTIONS (SIHIH AL SITTAH)

Sihah al Sitta or the 'six correct books' is the name given to six collections of Hadith, which are considered standard and most authentic by all Muslims. These are:

1. *Sahih* of Muhammad bin Ismail al Bukhari (d.236 A.H.) His *Sahih* is considered to be next to the Quran in authenticity.
2. *Sahih* of Muslim bin Qushairi (d.261 A.H.). His *Sahih* is the next most important collection of hadith.
3. *Sunan* of Ibn Majah (d.275 A.H.).
4. *Jame* of Abu Isa al Tirmizi (d.279 A.H.)
5. *Sunan* of Abu Abdur Rahman al Nasai (d.303 A.H.)
6. *Sunan* of Abu Da'ud (d.275 A.H.)

The most important work of hadith literature is the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari, who Questioned more than one thousand masters of hadith, even those living in very far- away parts of the Muslim world. Another *Sahih* was compiled almost simultaneously with it. This was the collection of hadith of Muslim bin Qushairi.

These two collections are the ones, which are used most widely by all Muslims.

Ibn Majah travelled widely to collect traditions from the well-known Traditionists of his time. He compiled several works of Hadith of which the most important is the *Sunan*. In this work, Ibn Majah collected together 4000 traditions in 32 books divided into 1500 chapters. The number of weak (*dhaif*) traditions it contains is not very large, just about 30. But it does contain some traditions, which are considered by the authorities on the subject to be forged (*maudu'*).

Abu Isa al Tirmizi was a student of Abu Da'ud and his collection follows and improves upon the techniques of classifying the hadith as proposed by his master. *Jame* of Tirmizi contains all the traditions – legal, dogmatic and historical – that had been accepted by the Muslim jurists of one school or another, as the basis of Islamic law.

Al Nasai' collected hadith in his work *Sunan*. He entirely ignored the point of view of his senior contemporary, al-Tirmizi on the question of the application of traditions to various problems that might have been made by different schools of the Muslim jurisprudence. His main object was to establish the text of traditions and the differences between their various versions, which he quotes extensively. In many places, he gives headings to the differences between the various narrators.

Abu Da'ud was another important compiler of hadith. Before writing his *Sunan* he examined five lakhs of traditions, and selected from them only 4800 to be put in his book. The whole task took him 20 years to complete. He kept up the scrupulous exactitude of his predecessors in reproducing the traditions, which he had collected. But he differed from them in the standard of his choice. He included in his *Sunan* not only the 'genuine' traditions (as al-Bukhari and Muslim had done), but also such traditions as had been pronounced by some traditionists to be weak and doubtful.

Imam Bukhari (810-870 A.D.)

Muhammad ibn Ismail al Bukhari was born in Bukhara. Bukhari's grandfather Mughira was the first in his family to have converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism. Bukhari's father was a traditionist, but he died when Bukhari was just an infant. After his father's death, Bukhari's mother brought him to Makkah from Bukhara.

Bukhari, although physically weak, had been endowed by God with great intelligence and a sharp, retentive memory. He was very fond of acquiring knowledge. Being a very devout and religious person, he began to study the hadith at the early age of eleven. He had very soon gathered all the traditions available in Hijaz. Then he undertook journeys for the collection of hadith. He continued to travel for about forty years throughout the Muslim world in the pursuit of knowledge. He went to all the traditionists to gather traditions from them. After having gathered a large number of them, he returned to Nishapur. By this time his fame as a traditionist had spread far and wide. He was therefore given a grand reception by the local residents. Imam Bukhari began teaching the traditions to the people. He wanted to settle down here. But he could not do so, as he had incurred the displeasure of the governor, over the question of his coming to his palace to give lessons to his sons. Imam Bukhari had refused to do so, for he considered this a degradation of hadith knowledge. Then the governor told Imam Bukhari that his children could go to him, but only if there were no other students present at that time. But Imam Bukhari did not accept even this condition. This enraged the governor, so he gave orders for his extradition from the city. Then Imam Bukhari went to Khartank, a village at Samarkand. He settled there and died in the year 256 A.H.

Throughout his life Imam Bukhari was strictly pious, honest and generous to the poor and to students. He did not bear any ill-will towards anybody, not even his enemies.

His entire life and all of his wealth were devoted to the collection of hadith. The greater part of his life was spent in travelling for this purpose. Bukhari began writing very early, compiling his first book at the age of 18, when he was in Madinah. Afterwards he wrote a number of books. But the most famous and important of all of his books is *Sahih* Bukhari. It is considered by almost all the traditionists to be the most authentic book in hadith literature. The author himself read it out to 90,000 students. It made his name immortal.

Imam Bukhari devoted the greatest care and attention to this great work. He is said to have been inspired to compile the *Sahih* after hearing a remark made by his teacher, Ishaq ibn Rahwayh (782-852) that he wished that some of the traditionists would compile short but comprehensive books containing only genuine traditions. Al-Bukhari thereupon resolved to work at this great task, and indeed, he devoted his entire life to it. He explored all the traditions known to him and selected only those which were entirely authentic. He collected 600,000 traditions from 1000 shaikhs over a period of sixteen years of hard work. From this collection he selected only 7275 traditions.

The sincerity of his endeavours was underscored by his practice of invariably performing ablutions and saying a two rakah prayer before recording tradition. The selection was done with great care, each tradition being subjected to the closest scrutiny. He accepted a tradition only when he was fully satisfied that all the narrators were completely reliable. He also made it a point to see that all these reporters had met one another. That is, there was proof that one narrator had heard the hadith from another narrator.

Another feature of his collection is that his chapters are arranged according to their subject matter under separate headings. These headings are mostly taken from some verse from the Quran. Sometimes he finds the wording of his heading in the traditions themselves.

As we have seen, the main purpose of Bukhari's quest was to collect only genuine traditions. That is, he wanted to collect only those traditions, which were handed down to him on the authority of reliable companions, who were unanimously accepted to be honest and trustworthy. His next most important task was to be certain that these narrators possessed retentive memories. The third point he had to ensure was that the accounts they gave did not contradict those of other reliable narrators.

He classified these traditions according to subject matter, such as prayer, pilgrimage, jihad, etc., dividing his work into more than 100 books, which were again subdivided into 3450 chapters. Every chapter has a heading. This heading provides the key to the contents of the traditions in that chapter. This has made his *Sahih* very easy to consult, even for beginners.

Because of all these positive features, the *Sahih* Al Bukhari has been rightly considered to be an authority next only to the Quran. Many commentaries have appeared, in which every aspect of the book has been thoroughly discussed.

"His collection," writes Philip K. Hitti, in his book *History of the Arabs* "has acquired a quasi-sacred character. An oath taken on it is valid, as if taken on the Quran itself. Next to the Quran this is the book that has exerted the greatest influence over the Muslim mind."

Imam Muslim (204-261)

Imam Muslim ibn al Hajjaj of Nishapuri belonged to the Qushayri tribe of Arabia, which played an important part in Islamic history. Many of his clan members had been the Prophet's companions.

After the Muslim conquests, a large number of Arab families migrated and settled in the newly conquered provinces, where many of his tribesmen held important posts, e.g. Kulthum b. Iyaz was governor of Africa. His forefathers too occupied important positions during the time of the four Caliphs. Imam Muslim inherited a large fortune from his father, who was also a well-known traditionist of his time.

Imam Muslim was gifted with great intelligence and a sharp memory. First of all, he studied Arabic literature and other sciences taught in his times. Later on he developed a keen interest in the study of hadith. He began by learning hadith from the great scholars, including Imam Bukhari, who were at that time in Nishapur. This town, situated in a central place enjoyed great prestige at that time. Afterwards, he undertook long journeys to collect traditions from other scholars of repute. He went to most of the important centres of learning in Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt, where he attended the lectures of most of the important traditionists of his time, including Ishaq ibn Rahwayh and Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal.

After finishing his studies, he came back to Nishapur and devoted his life to the service of hadith. He died in 261/874 on account of having consumed too many dates. One day he was so engrossed in investigating a particular hadith, that he just did not notice that he had eaten all the dates in the container one by one. Consequently, he took ill and died in 874.

Imam Muslim was of an excellent character—honest, truthful and peace-loving. He wrote many books and treatises on hadith, and other related subjects. The most important of his works is his *Sahih*. Some scholars have regarded it as the best work on the subject. Imam Muslim examined 300,000 traditions before the completion of this book. Out of his large collection he included only 4000 traditions. One great feature of his book is that he selected only those traditions which were free of all defects and were unanimously accepted by the great hadith scholars.

Imam Muslim strictly observed the principles of the science of hadith. He was even stricter than Imam Bukhari in pointing out the differences between the accounts of various narrators, their character and other details. He shows greater ability in the arrangement of traditions.

Moreover, he wrote a long introduction to his book explaining the principles followed by him as regards the choice of the material for his book.

Thanks to the utmost care having been taken in its completion, the *Sahih* of Imam Muslim has been acknowledged as one of the most authentic collections of traditions after that of *Sahih* al Bukhari. So far as the beauty of its arrangement is concerned, it is held superior to *Sahih* al Bukhari. Although some scholars, including Imam Nasai, held the *Sahih* of Al Muslim superior to that of al Bukhari, the majority of the scholars have held the latter superior, the main reason being that when Imam Bukhari started working, he had no example before him for such a project. His contribution is very great by the virtue of fact that he managed to save all the authentic traditions by collecting them so painstakingly. On the contrary, Imam Muslim had *Sahih* al-Bukhari as an example. He had every opportunity to learn from both its salient features as well as its defects. Imam Muslim himself recognized the superiority of his predecessor.

The *Sahih* of Imam Muslim is regarded as next to Al-Bukhari in accuracy and authenticity. Any tradition which is accepted by both Al-Bukhari and Muslim has been termed as 'agreed upon'. And these 'agreed upon' traditions are considered to be the most reliable.

Imam Muslim has added to his work an introduction to the science of tradition. His work consists of 52 chapters dealing with the common subjects of hadith, such as the five pillars of Islam, marriage, the laws of heredity, war, sacrifice, manners and customs, etc. The book closes with a short chapter on the tafsir (exegesis) of the Quran. The longest chapter, the opening chapter of Sahih Muslim is on *Iman* (Belief).

QUESTIONS

- (i) The Meaning of Hadith.
1. What is the meaning of the term 'hadith'?
 2. Why did the early Muslims feel the need for the Prophet to explain the verses of the Quran dealing with social practices?
 3. Why is the hadith important for the proper functioning of Islamic society?
- (ii) Compilation of Hadith.
1. What were the reasons for making compilations of the hadith?
 2. How were the hadith compiled and preserved during the life of the Prophet?
 3. How were the hadith compiled during the times of the Companions?
 4. Write on the compilation of hadith during the times of the Successors.
 5. What work on hadith was done at the time of the Followers of the Successors?
 6. What were the names of the earliest compilations?
- (iii) Types of Hadith
1. What is '*isnad*' and what is '*matn*'?
 2. What was the need to classify hadith?
 3. Give definitions of the following hadith: *sahih*, *hasan*, *dhaif*, *maudu'*, *mutawatir*, *mashhur*, *ahad*.
- (iv) Some important hadith collections
1. What are the six works collectively known as '*Sahih al sittah*'?
 2. How were the hadith evaluated before being given a name (ex. *Sahih*)?
 3. Write a note on the writers, who compiled the six canonical books of hadith.
 4. Write a note on the contribution of Imam Bukhari.
 5. Write a note on the contribution of Imam Muslim.

UNIT

10

Introduction To Fiqh

(I) THE MEANING OF FIQH

Fiqh literally means an understanding and knowledge of something. In more than one place, the Quran has used the word *fiqh* in its general sense of 'understanding.' In the early days of Islam the terms *ilm* (knowledge) and *fiqh* were frequently used interchangeably to denote an understanding of Islam in general. This shows that in the Prophet's time the term *fiqh* was not understood in the legal sense alone i.e, synonymous with law. The Prophet once blessed ibn Abbas (d. 68 A.H.) in these words: '*Allahumma faqqih ho fiddin*', that is, 'O God, give him understanding in religion'. By these words the Prophet did not mean exclusively knowledge of law. He meant a deeper understanding of religion.

Technically, *fiqh* refers to the science of deducing Islamic laws from evidence found in the sources of Islamic jurisprudence. The sources of law are four and are explained in detail below: the Quran, the *Sunnah*, *ijma* and *qiyas*. But by extension of meaning, *fiqh* also means the body of Islamic law deduced in this way.

Shariah literally means a 'route to the watering place' or a 'visible and well marked- out trail'. Hence, in Islam it means a 'clear path' or a 'highway' to be followed by all the believers. The Quran uses the term *shariah* with the meaning of *din* (religion), that is a way, ordained by God for man to travel on in the course of his life. The word *shariah* was used in the Prophet's time for the essentials of Islam, that is, the sum total of Islamic laws that were revealed to the Prophet of Islam in the form of the Quran.

The Prophet, besides conveying the revelation, gave orders as well. These orders and exhortations of the Prophet were firmly based on revelation, but did not form part of the Quran. They are called the *Sunnah*, which is the second source of Islamic law, the first being the Quran.

Fiqh is thus the name given to jurisprudence in Islam. In other words, *fiqh* or the science of Islamic law, is the study of one's rights and obligations, derived from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, the consensus of opinion among the learned (*ijma*), and analogical deduction (*qiyas*).

(II) THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF FIQH

Fiqh is the name given to jurisprudence in Islam. In its widest sense, it covers all aspects of religious, political and civil life. In addition to the laws regulating ritual and religious observances (*ibadaat*), it includes also the whole field of family law, the law of inheritance, of property and of contract. In other words it makes provisions for all the legal questions that arise in social life (*muamalat*). It also includes criminal law and its procedure as well as constitutional

law and laws regulating the administration of the state and the conduct of war. Laws recognized by religion should regulate all aspects of public and private life; the science of these laws is *fiqh*.

During the time of the Prophet there was no such well-defined science as that which later came to be known as *fiqh* or jurisprudence. The only ideal for the early Muslims was the conduct of the Prophet. They learnt ablutions, saying prayers, performing Hajj, etc., under the instructions of the Prophet and by observing his actions. On certain occasions, cases were brought to the Prophet for arbitration. The Prophet's decisions were taken as models for in other similar cases.

The Companions occasionally asked him questions relating to certain serious problems and the Prophet gave suitable replies to them. People in his lifetime were not interested in unnecessary philosophical discussions or in hairsplitting details. The Companions generally asked the Prophet very few questions. On one occasion when some one put unnecessary questions to him, the Quran asked the Companions to desist from doing so. The result was that the Sunnah remained mostly a general directive, interpreted by the early Muslims in different ways. People did not know the details of many a problem, even in the lifetime of the Prophet.

What the Prophet had done was lay down certain regulations, but the jurists elaborated them with many more details. The reason for these further additions to the laws by interpretation is that the Prophet himself had made allowances in his commands. He left many things to the discretion of the community to be decided according to a given situation.

In the early days of Islam the law was neither inflexible nor very rigidly applied. Different and even contradictory laws relating to many problems could be found acceptable on the basis of argument. It seems that the Prophet provided a wide scope for differences by giving instructions of a general nature, or by validating two diverse actions in the same situation depending on the circumstances. The Prophet aimed at providing opportunities for the application of his guidelines a variety of circumstances in the future. Had the Prophet laid down specific and rigid rules for each problem the coming generations would have been prevented from exercising reason and framing laws according to the need of the hour.

After the death of the Prophet the companions were spread out in different parts of the Muslim world. Most of them came to occupy positions of intellectual and religious leadership. The people of their regions approached them for decisions regarding various problems. They gave their decisions sometimes according to what they had learnt and retained in their memories from the commandments of the Prophet and at other times according to what they understood from the Quran and the Sunnah.

The interpretation of the Quran also caused differences of opinion among the Companions. The points on which the Quranic injunctions were silent or those points not dealt with in detail in the Quran were to be explained. The result was that these verses were sometimes interpreted in the light of the traditions of the Prophet, and sometimes on the basis of the jurists' opinions. Moreover since the traditions themselves were diverse, it was natural that there were differences.

In some cases, a Companion did not know a particular hadith; hence he decided the problem on the basis of his own opinion. When the relevant hadith was brought to his notice, he withdrew his personal judgement. On this account, Umar, the second caliph, changed his opinion several times.

On certain occasions it so happened that the relevant hadith was available but the reporter himself could not understand its real meaning. Ibn Umar is reported to have narrated a hadith from the Prophet that a deceased person is punished on account of the mourning of his relatives. When this tradition came to the attention of Aisha, she rejected it saying that Ibn Umar might have been mistaken, or might have forgotten some relevant part of the tradition. She also

observed that the hadith reported by Ibn Umar goes against the Quranic verse: 'No soul bears the burden of another.'

The Companions, however, tried their best to base their decisions on the Quran and Sunnah. They aspired to keep their decisions and personal judgements as much close to those of the Prophet as possible. Despite their differences, they did not deviate from the spirit of the Quran and Hadith.

The Successors took their stand on the opinions expressed by the Companions. They retained in their memory the hadith of the Prophet and the opinions of the Companions and made attempts to reconcile opposite opinions. The Successors exercised *ijtihad*¹ in two ways. First of all, they were not afraid of giving preference to the opinions of one Companion over another, and sometimes, even to the opinions of a Successor over those of a Companion. Secondly, they engaged in original thinking themselves. In fact, the real formation of Islamic law starts in a more or less professional manner with the Successors.

With the Successors, Islamic law began to take its formal shape and develop into an independent subject of study. In this age the principles that governed *fiqh* were the Quran, Sunnah and Qiyas (deductive reasoning). The Prophet himself introduced these principles.

As we have seen above, the practice of Islamic jurisprudence came into existence with the advent of Islam, but it developed into a regular discipline in the second century A.H. Abu Hanifa played the leading role in this gigantic task of compilation and systematization of Islamic Law. By Abu Hanifa's time the accepted rules of *fiqh* had not been collected and had not yet been systematized into a regular discipline, if they were perpetuated, it was by being passed on verbally. There were no strict methods of reasoning, no rules for derivation of orders, no grading of Traditions, and no principles of analogical deduction. *Fiqh* had a long way to go before becoming a system.

At the time of the Successors, Islamic law began to take its formal shape and develop into an independent subject of study. Finally, four orthodox schools of legal thought emerged. These are called *madhhab* in Arabic. The *madhhabs* were named after the famous jurists of the time: Abu Hanifa (699-767 A.D.), Malik ibn Anas (719-795 A.D.) al-Shafii (767- 819 A.D.) and ibn Hambal (d. 855 A.D.)

Abu Hanifa is considered the founder of the Hanafi school of law (*madhhab*) and his thinking was committed to writing by his disciple, Abu Yusuf (d. 768) in his work "Kitab al-Kharaj". Of all the founders of schools of Islamic Law, Abu Hanifa was the most open- minded, trying to use the sources of law in such a manner that future generations could make use of his rulings, even in very changed circumstances. The adherents of the Hanafi school are most numerous and live in the countries previously forming part of the Ottoman Empire, in Central Asia and on the Indian subcontinent.

Imam Malik ibn Abas (d. 795) was the leader of the Medinan school and his work 'Al-Muwatta' is the oldest surviving corpus of Muslim law. 'Al-Muwatta' (*The Path Made Smooth*) is the chief work of Imam Malik and the Malikite school of jurisprudence is based on this book. It deals not only with the sayings of the Prophet, but also with the opinions of several famous jurists of Madinah. It also contains Imam Malik's personal views on various matters of Islamic law. To Imam Malik the practice of Madinah, the city of the Prophet, is the primary source of law, and the *ijma* (consensus) and *ra'y* (opinion) is the secondary source. His followers comprise Malik, school of thought and are found in northern and eastern Africa with the exception of Lower Egypt as well as in Maghreb and Andalusia.

The founder of the Shafi'i school, al-Shafi'i studied under Imam Malik in Madinah but lived and taught mostly in Baghdad and Cairo. His followers can be found in areas of Lower Egypt, Palestine, Syria, western and southern Arabia, and the East Indies.

Imam Hambal (d. 855) was the most orthodox of the jurists of his times. The Hambali school has the fewest adherents and in the modern world it is centered in Saudi Arabia, The Wahabis were his followers.

The Shias have their own legal school, based on the concept of the infallible imam, tracing his spiritual descent from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Every Muslim has to follow one of the four orthodox schools of thought (*madhhab*) in all matters pertaining to religion and social life.

(III) THE SOURCES OF FIQH

There are four sources of fiqh or Islamic law: a) Quran; b) Hadith; c) Ijma; b) Qiyas.

a) The Quran

The Quran is the fundamental and main source of Islamic jurisprudence from which all other sources derive their authority. It consists of the very word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years (608-632 A.D.). That is why law in Islam is divine in origin.

The texts of the Quran connected with the rules of Islamic law occur in the following chapters: *Al Baqara, An-Nisa, Al-Imran, Al-Maidah, An-Nur, and Banu Israil.*

These rules pertain to:

- i. Reform in unlawful heathen customs, such as gambling, drinking of intoxicants, usury, etc.
- ii. Social reforms dealing with matters such as marriage, the position of women, divorce, the chastity of men and women, etc.
- iii. Criminal laws relating to punishment for theft, slander, murder etc.
- iv. International law of war and peace, and directions relating to the treatment of non-Muslims and the protection of their rights, etc.

b) The Hadith

The Quran is the fundamental basic source of Islamic jurisprudence. Next in importance and authority comes the hadith. The hadith itself derives its authority and legal validity from the Quran.

Hadith means 'narration' of the sayings, deeds and approval of the Prophet. The Quran generally deals with the broad principles or essentials of religion, going into details in rare cases. The Prophet himself usually supplied the details, either by showing in his conduct how an injunction should be carried out, or by giving verbal explanation.

The Quran says,

"Obey God and obey the messenger." (4:58)

“Whatever the messenger gives you, take it... and whatever he forbids, abstain from it...” (59: 7)

“And truly, in the messenger of God you have a good example for those who look to God and the Last Day and remembers God always.” (33: 21)

In the light of these verses one can infer that following of the hadith is binding on us. The hadith provides us with guidance in matters of legislation. It does not deviate from the Quran: it is in compliance with it.

The Quran and the the hadith are the main sources, to which all other sources are secondary. The Book, however, is the first source and the structure on which the hadith is based, and from which it does not deviate.

The importance of the hadith is increased by the fact that the Prophet Muhammad not only theorised, but also had the opportunity to put its teachings into practice in all affairs of life, both spiritual and temporal.

c) Ijma (consensus of Juristic opinion)

Ijma is the third source of Islamic jurisprudence. It is derived from the Arabic word *jama* (to add) and in Islamic legal terminology, *ijma* signifies consensus of opinion among the jurists of a particular age on a question of law. Jurists have defined *ijma* as an “agreement of the Muslim jurists of a particular period on any matter or point of Islamic law.”

Ijma derives its authority or legal validity from the Quran and hadith. The Quran says: “Obey God and obey the Prophet and those amongst you who have authority” (4:57); and also, “If you yourself do not know, then question those who do.” (16: 57).

The Prophet Muhammad says: “My followers will never agree upon what is wrong.”

Ijma may be based on the Quran, hadith or analogy. This is the view of all the Sunni schools. That *ijma* is an essential principle of Sunni jurisprudence, was proven by its use immediately after the death of the Prophet. The Muslim community acted upon it as soon as they were called upon to solve the first and most important constitutional problem that arose on the Prophet’s death. That is, the selection of the head of the community. The election of Abu Bakr to the caliphate by the votes of the people was based, as is well known, on the principle of *ijma*. All the Sunnis accept it as a source of Islamic jurisprudence. The Shafi’is and the Malikis recognize the authority of *ijma* not merely in religious matters but also in temporal affairs

Ijma is responsible for the further development of Islamic law after the completion of the Prophet’s mission to humanity. Islam is a preserved religion and its Prophet is the last one. In the Quran only fundamental principles of legislation are given and in the matters on which there is no explicit order, God has permitted the exercise of *ra’y* or ‘individual opinion’. But a consensus of opinions of jurists, or *ijma*, is superior to individual opinions of experts on Islamic legal science.

The Quran is the main source of jurisprudence. All the other sources derive their authority from it. It contains all the fundamental principles required for the further development of legal ruling. In spiritual matters, it is conclusive, but in temporal matters it merely lays down the basic principles. The details are to be filled in from the hadith. In the absence of any Qur’anic instruction, or because of the lack of hadith on any point of law, one is permitted to use one’s discretion, provided it is in conform with the spirit of the Quran and the hadith. This is not only lawful but also laudable. Opinion may take various shapes. When it is individual, it is called

ijtihad or *ra'y*, and when there is a concurrence of the opinion of a number of jurists, it is called *ijma*. In other words, *ijma* is a collective opinion of jurists. Thus it is quite evident that *ijma* is a superior type of opinion. In the absence of any relevant order of the Quran or Hadith, *ijma* assumes the status of law.

d) Qiyas (analogical deduction)

Qiyas is an important source of Islamic jurisprudence and is regarded as an instrument in solving legal issues on the basis of reasoning based on original texts. All four schools of Sunni jurisprudence accepted that in matters, which have not been provided for by the Quran or precepts of the Prophet and *ijma*, the law might be deduced from what has been laid down by any of these three authorities through the use of *qiyas*, which is generally translated as 'analogy'.

Qiyas literally means 'to weigh' or 'to measure' but, as a term of Islamic jurisprudence, it denotes the process by which a rule of law is deduced from the original text in view of a common cause (*illat*).

As a source of law, *qiyas* is defined by the Hanafis in the following manner "an extension of law from the original text. In this process analogical deduction or *qiyas* is applied to a particular case by means of a common *illat* or effective cause."

Qiyas is a process of deduction by which the law of a text is applied to cases, which, though not covered by the literal language of the text, are governed by the reasoning given in the text. The reason of the text, or *illat*, or effective cause, is the *sukn*¹, i.e., a constituent of analogy and the extension of the law of the text. This process is applied in such cases, with legal effect (*hukum*), which are not directly covered by the text. Analogy is a subsidiary source of law and derives its authority from the Quran, hadith and *ijma*, which are its bases (*asl*) or texts (*nass*).

Qiyas in the light of the Quran and hadith

In deciding legal issues, the Prophet Muhammad himself always relied on the Quran and on *qiyas*. Instructions to Mu'adh bin Jabal clearly show how he approved of *qiyas* in deciding questions of law. In the 10th year of Hijra, Mu'adh was appointed governor of Yemen. Before he proceeded there, he met the Prophet, who asked him: "How shall you decide cases?" Mu'adh bin Jabal replied, "According to the Book of God (Quran)". The Prophet said, "And if it is not (to be found) in the Book of God?" Mu'adh replied, "I will decide them according to the Hadith." The Prophet remarked, "Even if you don't find it in the Hadith?" Mu'adh said, "Then I will use my discretion", The Prophet appreciated this reply. This indicated the approval of the Prophet Muhammad of *qiyas* as a source of *fiqh*.

All the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence accepted *qiyas* as a valid source of law. But *qiyas* may be used only in the light of the Quran and hadith, otherwise it will be invalid.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The Meaning of *Fiqh*
 1. What is meant by *fiqh*?
 2. What is the scope of jurisprudence in Islam?
 3. What are the sources of *fiqh*?

(ii) The Origin and development of *fiqh*.

1. How did *fiqh* develop?
2. Who was the first person to give an interpretation of the Quran and its commandments?
3. How did the traditions of the Prophet supplement the Quranic commandments?
4. What is meant by the term '*madhhab*'?
5. What are the four basic schools of Islamic law?
6. Who is considered the founder of the Hanafi school?
7. Who is the founder of the Maliki school of thought?
8. Who is considered the founder of the Shafi'i school of thought?
9. Who is the founder of the Hanabali school of law?
10. In what parts of the Islamic world is each of the schools prevalent?

(iii) Sources of *fiqh*

1. Write on the Quran as a source of *fiqh*.
2. Write on hadith as a source of *fiqh*.
3. What is meant by '*ijma*' and in what sense is it considered a source of *fiqh*?
4. What is the meaning of the term '*qiyas*' and how is it used in *fiqh*?