

The Facets of Islam



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JAMAAT UL SAHIH AL ISLAM

PREFACE

I have the pleasure to present before the readers a multitude of the facets of Islam, ranging from the basic meaning of Islam, the roles it entails and its vital significance in the life of a Muslim throughout his life. The Muslim is bound by the Quran and the Hadith in that which call him to the well understanding of the message of Allah through His prophets.

The essence of Islam is vast. I pray to Allah that the first volume of this book on Islam entitled: **“The facets of Islam”** will find a way into the hearts of the readers for the comprehension of the essence of purity of heart and soul in *ISLAM* (Submission to Almighty God – Allah Subhanahu Ta’ala)

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WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam literally means peace; surrender of one's will and to be in amity and concord. The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace and eternal happiness through complete surrender to the will of God.

The Quran the Holy book of the Muslims interprets it to be the religion whose teachings are in consonance with human nature.

Islam, as the Quran has stated (5:4), is the completion of the religion inaugurated by God in the beginning of the world, on His sending the Quran through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing of God be upon him. As a child is taught his alphabet, so God taught religion to the world gradually and little by little, by sending His prophets at different times and to different peoples.

When the world reached the stage of understanding that it was ready for the final lesson, He sent the last and complete book through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing of God be upon him. This book not only corrects the errors which had found their way into various religions, but preaches the truths which have not been preached before on account of special circumstances of the society or the early stage of its development. At the same time it gathers together in itself the truths which were contained in any divine revelation granted to any people for the guidance of men (Holy Quran 98:4).

Lastly, it meets all the spiritual and moral requirements of an ever advancing humanity. This is Islam which is wrongly called Mohammedanism.

According to Islam, the object of man's life is its complete enfoldment. Islam teaches that everyone has within himself the seed of perfect development and it rests solely with a person himself to make or mar his fortune.

We created man in the best make, says the Holy Quran. (95:5)

The cardinal doctrine of Islam is the unity of God. There is none worthy of worship but the one and only God, Allah, and Muhammad, peace and blessing of God be upon him, is His prophet. God is free from all defects, holy and transcendent. He is All Good, all Mercy and All power. He has no partner. He neither begets nor is He begotten, because these are the traits of frail and weak humanity. Furthermore, Islam helps us to establish a permanent relationship with God and to realize Him during our earthly life as our Helper in all our affairs and undertakings. This unity of God is the first and fixes most pillars of Islam and every belief hangs upon it.

Islam requires belief in all the prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius and Zoroaster. We regard them all (and many more not mentioned here) as heavenly teachers born to reform and regenerate man and lead him to God.

Adherents of some other religions may consider it an act of piety to use disrespectful words and heap abuse on the prophets of other religions, but if a Muslim were to show the slightest disrespect towards the founder of any other faith, he does so at the cost of his own faith.

He has to utter the respectful benediction *Alayhi-Salam* (peace is on him) after mentioning the name of every prophet. Thus Islam establishes peace between all religions.

ISLAM – ETHICS AND OBSERVANCES

The essential sources are:

1. Primary, the Holy Quran – the word of God.
2. Secondary, the teachings and practical examples of the Holy prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, called *Sunnah*.

The Holy Quran is composed of 114 chapters called Surah. Out of these, 86 were revealed at Makkah and 28 were revealed at Madina; it has a total of 6,350 verses.

The chapters were laid in sequence by the Holy Prophet. This is the only book which itself claim to be the word of God and the only book stating that its text will be protected by God Himself. It is universally agreed that each and every word of the Quran is the same today as it was revealed to be Holy Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him.

It is the uniqueness of the Quran alone, that from the earliest times to the present, thousands of people are available in every generation who memorize the whole book by heart – This is not true of any other religious scripture. Its Arabic is perfect and even the best translations cannot match the beauty, rhythm, and forcefulness of the original text.

The second source of Islam is the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet. Islam is unique among religions by having a Kalima (Shahada) which signifies professing the faith, which is: “*Laa Ilaaha Illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasoolullah*” – There is no God but Allah and Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) is His messenger.

The main articles of faith are:

1. Belief in God (Allah), the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is One, Eternal, Infinite, All-Knowing, Merciful, Almighty and Supreme, Invisible in nature or person, having no partners, no associates and no sons.

He is given in the Holy Quran over 103 names corresponding to His attributes and He governs human affairs according to the parallel laws of Takbir (predetermination) and Tadbir (freedom), the spheres of which lie apart. *Shirk* or polytheism is the gravest sin a man can commit and the dogma of the unity of God is the cornerstone of Islam.

2. Belief in God’s angels created to serve God and operate the forces of nature. Some act as the agents of divine revelation.

3. Belief in revelation, which is divine guidance, brought to man. The former dispensations, such as the Torah of Moses and Gospel of Jesus, were not of universal purport and have suffered interpolation. The Holy Quran is binding on mankind and will not be abrogated or altered till the end of the world.

4. Belief in the prophets who are men receiving direct inspiration from God and entrusted with a heavenly message. There have been thousands of them, of every period, race and tongue and they must all be equally recognized. Muhammad, peace and blessing of God be upon him, is called the seal of the prophets because he brought and ratified the final law, but other apostles can still come under his aegis as warners and reformers.

5. Belief in the Hereafter comprising *Barzk*, the last day, resurrection, judgement, paradise and hell.

The human soul does not lead an existence separate from its body, but immediately after death enters a new spiritual body and in the state of suspension called *Barzk*, becomes aware whether it will deserve paradise or hell on the Day of Judgement. That is why Islam teaches that a form of reward or punishment follows straight after death.

A Muslim has five main religious duties, to wit.

1. Observance of prayer (*Salat*) – Islam’s sole act of public worship. It takes place five times a day and may be recited either alone or in congregation behind a leader.

The midday and afternoon prayers and the dusk and night prayers may be joined in certain cases. Prayer must be said facing the direction of Makkah (*Qibla*) and be preceded by ablution. It is remarkable fact that the body positions taught to the Holy Prophet by the angel Gabriel (on him be peace) combine the poses of worship traditional to every single nation on earth: standing, bowing, prostration and sitting. Prayers in congregation are announced by a call (*Adhan*).

Every Friday, a sermon (*Khutba*) is delivered before the midday prayer and though attendance is enjoined on all who are able to be present, the day itself is not one of compulsory rest.

2. Payment of legal tax (*Zakaat*) which is a capital contribution donated to a central fund for the welfare of the community.

On money, the levy is 2 ½ percent per annum of the total saving or capital, which have lain dormant over a period of not less than twelve months. A different scale applies to certain other non-fixed assets. Fulfilment of this duty does not, of course, absolve one from practising ordinary private charity.

3. Keeping the fast during the month of Ramadan from dawn to sunset. Certain exemptions are provided for the sick, aged, travellers, etc. Fasting brings in its wake many spiritual blessings and physical benefits.

4. Performance of the pilgrimage to Makkah which should be undertaken if possible at least once in a lifetime.

The religion’s rites at the Ka’aba are a replica of those performed by Abraham 4,000 years ago and the gathering is a major stimulus to Islamic brotherhood, for men and women of all nationalities, races and social classes meet yearly in big numbers.

5. Participation in “*Jihaad*” (literally effort), that is striving for the cause of the faith. This entails working for the propagation of Islam or, **if religion is attacked by force**, the taking up of arms is a concerted defence by the whole community under the orders of its head. The Holy Quran forbids compulsion in matters of religion and tales that Islam is spread by the sword are a malicious lie.

As regards ethics, Islam believes every man to be born pure, not in sin. Each of us is responsible before God for our actions and we cannot be saved by any sort of atonement by a third party.

It is up to us to choose good rather than evil and to work out our salvation through faith, prayer and charity. Piety and virtue do not mean forsaking the lawful pleasures of this earth and falling into monastic asceticism. We ought to lead active, healthy and useful lives in which qualities such as kindness, chastity, honesty, meekness, mercy, courage, truthfulness, patience, politeness and cleanliness will be uppermost and faults like cruelty, immorality, deceit, pride, cowardice, avarice, slander and hardness of heart will be avoided.

Islam forbids luxury. Eating pork or blood is forbidden unless life threatening. Likewise, Muslim may not consume alcohol and other intoxicants or practise gambling, betting and usury. Yet how many men know to this day that swine flesh is a source of trichinosis and induces shamelessness! Or that alcohol, apart from its physical dangers, leads to lost of religious faith?

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF ISLAM

Islam desires, above all, that people should commit themselves entirely to God's Truth and that they should serve and worship only one God.

Similarly, it desires that the law of God should become the law by which people lead their lives. It demands, too, that injustice be eradicated, that those evils be wiped out which incur God's anger and that those virtues and social values be fostered which are liked by God.

Only when power in society is in the hands of the believers and the righteous, can the objectives of Islam be realised. It is therefore the primary duty of all those who aspire to please God to launch an organised struggle sparing neither life nor property, for this purpose.

The importance of securing power for the righteous is so fundamental that neglecting this struggle, one has no means left to please God.

Consider why the Quran and the *Hadith* (traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam) put so much emphasis on the necessity to establish a community (*Jamaat*) based on submission to the Divine will, on the duty to hear and obey, so much so that, if any one "rebels" against such a community, it is incumbent on all Muslims to fight him even though he may profess belief in the unity of God and perform prayers etc.

The reason is that the establishment or preservation of a system of life based on divine guidance, the ultimate purpose of Islam requires the good to possess collective organisational power.

You will see in the Holy Quran that each of its chapters (with the exception of one – Chapter 9) opens with: *In the name of God, Most Merciful; Compassionate.*

He overlooks that the divine attributes of mercy and compassion recur frequently on every page of the Quran. He then makes the astounding statement: *But nowhere in the book does there seem to be anything about love.* In the Holy Quran God says:

"It may be that God will create love between you and those with whom you are at enmity."

"God has the power; God is Most Forgiving; Ever Merciful." (60:8)

"Tell them: I ask of you no recompense in return for it, except love as between kindred." (42:24).

"Some people adopt objects of worship other than God and love them as they should love God, but those who believe, love God most" (2:168).

"Righteous is not that you turn your faces to the East or the West but truly righteous are those who believe in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and spend their wealth for the love of God, on the kindred, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer and those who ask..." (2: 178)

"Announce, O prophet, if you love God, then follow me, God is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful." (3:32).

"Be benevolent, surely God loves the benevolent." (2: 196).

"God loves those who turn to Him often, and He loves those who are clean and pure." (2: 223).

"God loves the righteous." (3: 77)

“God loves the steadfast.” (3: 47).

“God loves those who put their trust in Him.” (3: 160).

“God loves the just.” (5: 43).

“God loves those who perform their duty to the utmost.” (5: 94)

“God loves those who are mindful of their obligation.” (9:4)

FEAR AND LOVE OF GOD

There are two parts of worship: One, that man should fear God as he ought to. The fear of God takes a man to the fountain of purity and his soul begins to melt and flow to the unity of God; that makes man a real and true worshipper.

Two, that man should love God as He deserves to be loved. God says: **“Wallazeena aamanuu ashadu hubban lillah”** – *those who have believed, love God very strongly*. We should take all the affections transitory and moral and the love of God as real and true.

These are the two rights that belong to God and He demands them from the human beings. So far as these two rights are concerned, almost all the modes of worship display them to some extent but Islam has enjoined two types of worships distinctly for these rights of God.

Apparently, it seems to be impossible to combine fear and love. One begins to think, as to how a man can love the object which frightens him.

But fear of God and His love are of a different nature. The more a man advances in the fear of God, the more he begins to love Him. And the more he loves God, the more the fear of God begins to grip him fast and remove him away from the evil deeds and renders him pure.

In order to fulfil both these things, Islam has enjoined its followers to offer (five daily) prayers and to perform Hajj. The prayers manifest the aspect of fear while the Hajj depicts the love of God. Whatever the fear demands we have it in various postures of the prayers: a man humbles himself and admits his being the servant of God.

Whatever is done during the Hajj shows different ways of love – a special communication between the Beloved and the devoted and loving servant.

In the extreme condition of love, at times one does not feel the need of clothes. Love is also a sort of madness and a lover cannot be looking after his clothes to maintain their finesse.

This condition of the dress is to be met with in the ceremonies of Hajj, one has to shave off his head, one has to run, one has to kiss, this is the kiss of affection (all religions have taken kissing to be sign of affection). Slaughtering of the ram (sacrifice) is also a sign of excellence of love.

LOVE AND HATE

Love demands more
Than you can comprehend
Hatred is nothing
But wrong love without end
Love needs the boarder
To meet the beloved
Hate fights the order
Of one you once loved
Love sees the eyes
Of hatred in disguise
And turns it into cries
To follow the wise
Hatred hears the sound
Of love but unbound
Is the wish of its account
To see it all around
Love bends the heart
Cause it asks not to start
Ebb or tide like moonlight
Which forgets being bride
Hatred work with the will
Of a bodyguard's skill
But it claims to comprise
What the master might advise
Hatred fills the glass
Of a lover's passion
Hatred with compassion
Hatred wishes to drink
Without refreshing end
Love but longs to sink
In the arms of one who went
Without a second thought
Through trials again and again
For the beloved's sake.

ISLAMIC MORALITY: FOUR GRADES

Islamic moralities – Muslims are much confused about it. Very few of them know what it is and how it should be cultivated. What we characterise as Islamic morality contains, according to the Quran and the *Hadith*, four aspects or grades.

- *Iman* (faith in God)
- *Islam* (surrender to God)
- *Taqwa* (God consciousness)
- *Ihsan* (Godliness)

Each of these four concepts is linked in mutual dependence; each grows out of the one on which it rests and simultaneously provides a base for the next to grow.

Iman or faith is the foundation of this edifice. Upon it is built the structure of *Islam* (submission to God), and then *Taqwa* (God consciousness) and *Ihsan* (Godliness).

Without *Iman* (faith in God), none of the other three can exist. Similarly, weak *Iman* (faith in God) means that the upper structure, if even somehow built, will be shaky. And a limited *Iman* (faith of God) means limited *Islam* (submission to God), *Taqwa* (God consciousness) and *Ihsan* (Godliness).

In fact shaky and limited faith cannot sustain any true superstructure at all. The first priority in the development of Islamic morals is, therefore, a firm and deeply rooted *Iman* (faith in God).

No sensible man can build any structure without proper foundation. So it is necessary to strengthen *Islam* before *Taqwa* (God consciousness) and *Taqwa* before *Ihsan* (Godliness). Unfortunately, people often start talking of *Taqwa* (God consciousness) and *Ihsan* (Godliness) before achieving *Iman* (faith of God) and *Islam* (submission to God). Even more regrettable is that people generally have a narrow concept of *Iman* (faith in God) and *Islam* (submission to God). They think that adopting certain styles of dress social etiquette, eating habits and similar outward mannerisms they can attain *Taqwa* (God consciousness). And by incorporating additional prayers in worship they can reach the heights of *Ihsan* (Godliness), although at times one sees such obvious signs in the lives of the people who are supposed to progress in *Taqwa* (God consciousness) and *Ihsan* (Godliness) that it seems clear that even their *Iman* is not correctly and firmly established in their lives.

So long as these misconceptions persist, one can never expect to complete the full course of Islamic morality. It is, therefore, necessary that we correctly understand *Iman*, *Islam*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*, particularly the sequence in which individuals must come to embrace them.

IMAN

Iman implies belief in the unity of God and the prophethood Muhammad, blessing and peace be upon him.

Anyone who testifies to this belief fulfils the legal requirement for entry into the fold of Islam and becomes entitled to be treated as a Muslim. But can this simple testimony be enough? Can it support the edifice of an Islamic morality? Is not understanding the nature and demand of one's commitment of fundamental importance? Some people think verbal profession is enough; hastily they begin to build further.

But, constructing *Islam*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan* on a foundation which has not been fully and firmly laid will lead to the whole edifice being incomplete or collapsing at the first sign of stress. Consider the belief in God, which comes first. It may mean different things to different people. Some know nothing beyond that God is there: that He is the Creator of the universe and He is one. Others may not see God as more than the object of our devotion and to be worshipped. For others again, the concept of God's attributes and His rights and authority may not extend beyond the notion that He has no partner in His claims to be the Knower of the unseen, Hearer of prayers, Provider of man's needs and Object of man's worship and that in matters of religions the final authority is the Book of God (the Quran).

Similarly, the depth of belief in God varies. An individual, although believing in God, may not want to hold God very dear, but hold a few things even dearer. And a third person may be prepared to sacrifice his life, and for God if necessary, while at the same time trying not to give up his ideas and thoughts, or desire or get into a position where he thinks his reputation will suffer.

The edifice of a complete Islamic life can only be built on a belief in God's unity (*Tawhid*) that permeates a man's entire personal and social life, and which is so strong that he considers himself and all that he possesses as belonging to God; he accepts Him as the sole rightful Owner, Object of worship, Receiver of obedience and Law-giver for himself as well as the rest of the world. He considers Him (God) to be the fountainhead of guidance, and is totally aware that disobedience to God, indifference to His guidance or an inclination to associate some other being as a partner with Him in His being, constitute deviation from the right path. That is to say: for the edifice of Islamic life to be firmly founded in an individual implies that, that individual should declare that he and all that he has belongs to God and is at His command.

It also means that he is prepared to subordinate his personal likes and dislikes to the will of God, annihilating his ego and moulding his ideas, desires, passions and ways of thinking according to the knowledge that God has imparted through His book, he will abandon all things which is repugnant in the sight of God, accord the love of God the highest place in his heart and cast away from the recesses of his heart any idol that may demand to be held dearer than God. He will base his loves and hates, friendships and enmities, likings and aversions on what God approves of.

Other beliefs that are part of the faith may be considered in the same way. Belief in prophethood cannot be complete unless one accepts the Holy Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, as one's guide in all the affairs of life and rejects all that is contrary to his guidance. Belief in the Quran remains imperfect until the code of life it lays down is accepted in its entirety.

Moreover, there should be no lack in longing to see one's life or the life of the rest of the world governed by the rules that God has prescribed

Similarly, belief in the Hereafter cannot be complete until one is prepared to attach more importance to it than to the present life and to reject the values of this world for the values of the other world.

It is equally important that the thought of one's accountability on the Day of Judgement should guide one at every step on the road of life.

ISLAM

As we have seen, the edifices of Islam can be built only the deeply embedded and solid foundation of *Iman* (faith in God).

In fact, Islam is the practical demonstration of *Iman*. The relationship between the two is the same as that between seed and plant. *Iman* is the seed and Islam represents its fruition. Examine the tree and you find what the seed contained. *Iman*, if present, will manifest itself in man's practical life, in his morality, in his conduct, in his relations with others, in his choice of activities, in the nature of his struggle, in the use of his time, energies and capabilities, in every aspect of life.

If there is a sphere of a man's life where non-Islam instead of Islam is evident, it is there that *Iman* is absent or at most has only a fragile existence. If an individual's entire life follows an un-Islamic pattern, it is obvious that either *Iman* is lacking altogether or that the soil is too barren for the 'seed' of *Iman* to grow.

The Quran and the *Hadith* show, I am convinced, that it is impossible to have *Iman* in one's heart without it showing through in one's day-to-day life. Let us try to understand it in the light of the Quran. It becomes obvious from the Quran that the inner conviction of faith and the practice of Islam are essentially interdependent.

God frequently mentions faith and righteous conduct together. All the promises of a blissful future that he has made to Muslims apply to those believers who really do submit to his will.

In fact wherever God castigates hypocrites (in the Quran) He cites the faults of their practices as evidence of imperfection in their faith and declares the practice of Islam as the sign of real faith.

Branding somebody a disbeliever, however and excommunicating him from Islam demand extreme caution. It is not an issue which need concern us here. Our present concern is with the actual, not the legal, *Iman* and *Islam*, which are acceptable in the sight of God and which lead to rewards in the Hereafter.

If we consider the essence of both facts we will find that where there is deficiency in submission to God, where one's desires differ from God's will, where loyalty to others co-exists with loyalty to God, where attention is being devoted to activities other than the struggle for the establishment of God's guidance, where efforts are being made for causes other than the cause of God, *Iman* does necessarily suffer from flaws and blemishes.

Taqwa and *Ihsan* cannot be built on defective *Iman*, no matter how much effort is made to acquire the outward appearance of the God-conscious and imitate some of the deeds of the godly who attain excellence in doing good deeds.

Appearance without reality is a sham, rather in the way a handsome body may be preserved after death. Whatever expectations one may build upon, it can do nothing. Indeed a good-looking but lifeless one.

One can deceive oneself by wearing false appearances, but this will not carry any weight on the Day of Judgement. We must appreciate that real *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*, which are needed to bring glory to Islam in this world and to tilt the balance in favour of goodness on the Day of Judgement, can never be reached unless the foundation of *Iman* is firm and the proof of its strength is provided by a life lived according to Islam.

TAQWA

What is *Taqwa*?

Taqwa consists of man's awe of God, consciousness of his duty towards Him and an awareness of his accountability to Him: that the world is a place of trial where God has sent man for a specified period of times, that God's decisions on the Day of Judgement on an individual's future in the Hereafter will depend on how he makes use of his energies and capabilities in the given period of time at his disposal in this world, how he deals with his fellow beings.

A conscience which is fired by consciousness of God becomes alive. Man's sensitively becomes sharp under this influence and he avoids everything that is against God's will. He starts examining his own thoughts and feelings to see what tendencies are being nurtured within him. He begins to scrutinise his life to find out what activities he is spending his time and energy on.

Not only does he scrupulously avoid things which are explicitly prohibited, he also hesitates from getting involved in affairs which are in any way dubious. His sense of duty makes him fulfil God's commands in a spirit of total submission. His fear of God causes a feeling of faintness whenever there is a possibility that he may be in danger of exceeding limits prescribed by God. Ensuring the discharge of his obligations towards God and towards his fellow-beings becomes his way of life, he shudders at the thought of doing anything unjust.

This state of consciousness does not appear in any one form or in any one particular sphere; instead, it manifests itself in an individual's whole way of thinking and in all his action.

The difference between real and seeming *Taqwa* can be understood by the following example of two different people. One has deep sense of cleanliness and a concern for purity. He will abhor filth in whatever form it may appear, and will be clean in all essential manners, even if not in all outward forms. The other person, who has no innate sense of purity, carries with him a long list of prohibitions under the heading of cleanliness. This man will avoid all the unclean things.

The point I want to emphasize is that the essence of *Taqwa* lies in an attitude of heart and mind rather than its outwards forms. The whole life of a person who develops real *Taqwa* will be consistently Islamic.

Islam with all its comprehensiveness will be increasingly reflected in such a person's thoughts, emotions and inclinations, frame of mind, allocation of time and spending of energies – in short in all aspects of his worldly life. But without sowing the seed of *Taqwa* no artificial measures will be fruitful.

Taqwa requires time and patience, develops gradually and bears fruit after a long time just as a tree takes long to grow from a seed and bloom. That is why people of superficial character avoid it.

The second type of personality can be developed quickly and with as much ease as a stick may be dressed with leaves, blossoms and fruits to give it the appearance of a tree. That is why this method of cultivation *Taqwa* is popular today. But it is obvious that the benefit expected from a real tree cannot be obtained from an artificial one.

IHSAN

Ihsan is the highest stage of Islam. It implies the deep attachment, profound love, genuine faithfulness and sacrifice which make a Muslim completely identify himself with Islam. The essence of *Taqwa* is fear of God which may enable a person to escape God's anger. The essence of *Ihsan* is love of God, which motivates man to try to win God's pleasure. Can one believe that God cannot recognise those who are truly loyal to Him? Can one imagine that He will be taken in by the length of a beard, the distance of the trousers above the ankles, the recitation of rosaries, devotions and prayers, worship and meditation and other outward signs when He comes to judge true loyalty and devotion? It is impossible to find a word in the English language which can express, to any fair degree, the real meaning and import of *Ihsan*.

It means to do a thing well, in the best possible manner, to achieve excellence, to aim at beauty and perfection, and most importantly, to do it as an inner compulsion and urge, and not as a consequence of external prodding and urging, in brief, a labour of love, not merely a duty.

This can result only from an inner sense of presence before Allah and live for Him. That is why one *Hadith* defines it as '*that you serve Allah as if you are seeing Him, for even if you cannot see Him, He is seeing you*' (Muslim reported from Hazrat Umar).

The following Quranic verse explains who is a real *Muhsin*:

"Many a prophet there has been, with whom many God-devoted men have fought, and that fainted not for what they had to suffer in God's way, neither weakened, nor did they abase themselves, and God's loves the patient.

Nothing else they said but: Lord, forgive us our sins, and that we exceeded in our doings and make firm our steps, and help us against the people who are disbelievers. And God granted them the rewards of this world and the fairest rewards of the world to come, and God loves the Muhsin." (Al Imraan: 147- 149).

All these indicate that despite all our efforts, the people have not yet attained real appreciation of Islam. If in the exposition of *Iman*, *Islam*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*, which has just been given, I have gone beyond the Quran and *Hadith* and invented anything, do not hesitate to point it out to me.

Consider again: What was God's purpose in raising prophets on earth? Did He want to make sure that people grew beards? Or uncovered their ankles? Or were the prophets required just to enforce the few much talked-about practices?

It is clear that these were not the real evils the prophets were sent to eradicate. The real evils were the deviation from obedience to the one God, observance of man-made principles and laws and disregard of one's accountability to God.

It was because of these evils that moral degradation took place, misguided principles became popular and the earth was beset with turmoil. All prophets, peace be on them, were sent to the world to generate in human beings consciousness of their position as the slaves of God, owing allegiance to Him and being accountable to Him, and to promote morality and to establish human life on such principles as would generate goodness and peace and ultimate disorder. For this very purpose came the prophet Muhammad, blessing and peace be upon him, too.

Now see in what sequence and by what stages the prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, strove for these ends. First, he called to faith, *Iman*, in order to build a strong structure on solid foundations. Then, in accordance with the demands of this *Iman*, he gradually developed in the believers, through his teaching and training, the qualities of submission and obedience to God, *Islam*, the moral purity, *Taqwa*, and finally he inculcated that deep attachment and profound love for God which makes a Muslim ready to sacrifice everything for Him, *Ihsan*.

With the organised effort and struggle of such sincere Muslims he put an end to the corrupt way of life that had been born of ignorance and in its place established an order based on the moral and social principles of God's law. When people became *Momineen*, *Muslimeen*, *Muttaqi* and *Muhsinuun* in their hearts and minds, will and morality, thoughts and deeds, and committed themselves totally to the message of God, then the Holy Prophet Muhammad, blessing and peace be upon him, start teaching them good manners and etiquette, how to conduct personal and social relations.

In other words, he first turned crude metal into gold and then stamped it with the seal of gold coin; he first trained the soldiers, and then gave them the uniform.

This is the right sequences as is evident from studying the Quran and the *Hadith*. If observing the *Sunnah* means doing as the prophet Muhammad, blessing and peace be upon him, did in accordance with God's guidance in order to fulfil his will, it is certainly not emulation of the prophet's practice, but rather its violation, to try to cast people in the outward mould of a *Muttaqi* and make them copy well-known and popular acts associated with a *Muhsin* without first making them real *Momin*, *Muslim*, *Muttaqi* and *Muhsin*.

To pass counterfeit coins as gold coins, to parade men in uniform with no spirit of loyalty and sacrifice as a fighting army amounts to deceit. Such coins carry no value in the market; such soldiers can win no battle. What is it that God really values?

Let us suppose that a person is endowed with true belief and high morals, is conscious of his duty, is observant of the limits set by God, is faithful to Him, and is ready to sacrifice his life for Him. But this same person's outward appearance is poor, and his sense of etiquette is lacking. At most he would be said to be a good servant who lacks manners. For these reasons he may not rise to a high position in society. But is it that likely that his Master will therefore cast him into hell? Will not his devotion stand him in good stead in the Hereafter?

But the point I want to emphasis is that it is the inner self that must take precedence over the exterior. First let the inner life be genuine and pure, then fashion the exterior in its image. To spread qualities of real values was the main function of the prophets. The improvement of the exterior will automatically occur as these qualities are developed, whatever deficiencies might remain can be taken care of later.

HUMAN STATUS IN ISLAM

Humans are created in the best of moulds and shaped in the best of shapes. They are the only creatures endowed by their Creator with the most prominent and highly exalted faculties. There is no other creature with the faculties, abilities and efficiencies similar to humans. Only humans have the ability to rule the world. They have been granted access to all living things. No species may resist their skills, nor may any creatures defy their authority. Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala reveals man's graces in this Quranic revelation: *"It is Allah who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits where with to feed you; it is He who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you. And He hath made subject to you the sun and moon, both diligently pursuing their courses; and the night and the day hath He (also) made subject to you. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude"*. (Ibrahim: 32-34)

In this revelation also, we are told of His favours: *"It is Allah who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that ye may seek of His bounty, and that ye may be grateful. And He has subjected to you as from Him all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect."* (Jathiya: 12-13). Or as we see in this revelation: *"Do ye 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, yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance and without a Book to enlighten them."* (Luqman: 20)

This Ayah of the Holy Quran and other Ayat, indicate the lofty status of humans. These Ayat contain the facts of human efficiencies that their Creator has granted them, the efficiencies that have given them the honour of having the highest status among living things and have caused them to attain the greatest success in quest for a decent prosperous and comfortable life. Humans are the only creatures that have been granted the authority and skill to rule over the world. We have to be thankful to Allah for giving us the ability to gain knowledge and obtain the means for a good and prosperous life.

The first revelation which was then followed by the gradual revelations of the Holy Quran ordains the fact of Allah's power of creation and the form of the initial stage of human evolution and the fact that the knowledge and the power of granting the knowledge is only within the authority of Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala. It similarly indicates the fact that it is Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala who gave humans the power and ability for knowledge at different fields of science. God gave humans the power to think and gave them all they needed for their dignified status. Presented here is the first five Ayat that pronounced Allah's absolute authority of creation and the grant of knowledge: *"Proclaim, (or read) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher Who created – Created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: proclaim and thy Lord is most bountiful; He who taught (the use of) the pen; Taught man that which he knew not."* (Iqra: 1-5)

Humans are created with the faculties and the abilities far above those of other creatures. They have the power of thinking, understanding and analyzing the effects of what they think. Their faculties have given them the ability to dive deeply into the oceans of knowledge and science and realize much of the secrets of the world and to set out on profound researches and discover the facts realizable through their given capacities to the limits of their effectiveness.

These are the distinguished privileges with which they are honoured by Allah Who creates all life and bestows upon it the various capacities.

The honours with which humans are privileged are of three kinds: The first one is the honour with which all human beings without any kind of distinction and preference is privileged. The second is the honour that is conditioned upon belief in Allah and His apostle. The third one is the honour, which is the privilege of those who have distinguished themselves with the excellence of their deeds.

The first one which is the honour of all human beings with no difference is mentioned in this revelation: “We have honoured the sons of Adam, provided them transport on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good and pure and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation” (Bani Israïl: 70). It is an honour to all humanity; there is no exception nor difference and preference of one over another.

The second is revealed in this Ayah: *“But honour belongs to Allah and His apostle and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not.”* (Munafiqun: 8)

The third honour is mentioned in this revelation: *“To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds, for thy Lord is not unmindful of everything that they do.”* (Anaam: 32)

These three categories are in general the elucidation of the honours of humans in which no other living being may share. All these signify the lofty status of humanity, the species that has been best formed among all the species, with the best faculties and abilities.

The Holy Quran tells us of humans’ constitutional excellence in this revelation: *“We have indeed created man in the best of moulds”*. (Tin: 4). ‘The best of moulds’ means the righteous equality of their faculties, indicating their progressive nature. This progressive quality is the distinguishing feature of human faculties, not traceable in other creatures. It is the equality and the balance of their nature that call for a moral and virtuous life. Although all creatures have their adequate balance, only humans are capable of progressing to the highest levels of being and understanding. Moreover, humans are able to control their sensual desires, a prime requirement for developing moral values. Islam advocates the control of sensuality, not its absolute suppression, for it is one of the essential components of human nature. Crossing the permissible limits of morality in pursuit of sensual desires leads humans into corruption and puts them off the righteous track. We are warned of that in this revelation: *“By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it.”* (Shams: 7-8)

The equilibrium of human nature has also been mentioned in this revelation: *“Him who created thee fashioned thee. In due proportion, and gave thee a just bias.”* (Infitar: 7).

They have been given a necessary balance in their desires and other impulses which in their totally refer to that honoured status that Allah Almighty has qualitatively and structurally granted them to be able to take benefit of the things created for their use as we are told in this revelation: *“It is He who created for you all things that are on earth.”* (Baqarah: 29). The humans are granted mastery over the world to rule over it with benevolence and to be obedient to Allah Subhanahu Ta’ala Who has given them this lofty status and these highest qualities.

Those who do not abide by the honoured status of humanity lose the esteem of others and also suffer punishment and The Jew ceases to protect them beyond the extent of their obedience to the rules of law. Allah Subhanahu Ta’ala alone confers on humans their honourable status, the honour granted to them while they are being formed in the womb. It is shield of one’s right of life, liberty, property and the protection of their dignity and honour. Everyone has the right of protection for all the privileges consequential to their honour as long as the person does not disregard it by committing a crime. Those who betray this honour forfeit their right to certain privileges under the law of Islam, but only to the extent of the relative severity of their particular transgression. For Islam determines people’s grade of respectfulness proportional to the grade of their virtue.

This protection extends not only to Muslims and the non-Muslims living with them under the rule of a single legal system, but also to those whose nations are at war with Muslims. Islamic law enjoins a number of moral rules in case of combatants. Enemies on the battlefield may not be plundered, forcefully seized or deceived. If they are killed in battle their bodies may not be mutilated or handled in a disrespectful way. This protection comes from the honoured status of humans.

Allah's given honour belongs to the whole humanity and is the basis of all human relations. It is the protecting shield against one person's claim of superiority over another. It is the advocacy of the natural rights and privileges of humans. It points out that every person should regard himself or herself exalted and prestigious. This would eliminate any feeling of superiority that people may have over each other. This aspect of natural honour gives humanity the rank of master, not of slave. There is no mastery of one neither over the other, nor to others over individuals or groups.

According to Islam, all humans are masters and nobles. Muslims are not allowed to bow or bend themselves to anyone but to their Creator, the Creator of the whole universe.

The general human honour is for men, women, rich, poor weak, powerful scholars, layman, black, white, Westerner, Easterner, Southerner, Northerner, belonging to any race, any nation, any religion, any faith and any belief. It is neither the consequence of the achievements nor the outcome of particular favour. It is an honour for all humanity, for everyone and for each person. It confers upon all of them certain natural rights and privileges among them the natural right of life. Human right of life is stressed in this declaration: *"If anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he spy the whole people and if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them our apostles with clear signs, yet even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land"*. (Maida: 35)

Everything is for human prosperity Humans have all the abilities to strive for attaining the desired means of prosperous life and not to hinder the similar endeavours of others, for we are racing judgment of our deeds as it is said in this revelation: *"It is He who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracks and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes. But unto Him is the resurrection."* (Mulk: 15)

We see additional emphasis on human rights and privileges in that important *Khutba* of the Holy Messenger (blessing and peace be upon him) which was delivered in Arafat on the ninth day of the month of Zulhejja, the twelfth month of the lunar calendar during his last pilgrimage called the farewell pilgrimage. He began the *Khutba*, as usual, with praising Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala and thanking Him then he said to the people: "O men, listen to my words for I do not know whether I shall meet you again on such an occasion in the future. O men, your lives and your property shall be inviolate until you meet your Lord. The safety of your lives and of your property shall be as inviolate as this holy day and holy month. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord and that He reckons your deeds..."

Islam has, with reference to Allah's revelations and the saying of His apostle elaborated the protection of those rights in full detail Islam protects everyone's right of living with peace, security and human dignity. The respect of human rights, honour and dignity is the source of human fraternity in this world Islam insists on preservation of these rights against all forms of prejudices. Islam recognizes no differences between the natural faculties of humans. Prejudices result from subjugation and the surrender of prudence and human virtues to the lust of selfishness and authority, which are totally condemned by Islam and are considered destructive to the natural balance of human impulses. Islam calls for the mutual acknowledgement of others' equal opportunities at different walks of life. No one may be denied the rights that are for all, nor may anyone be subjected to disgraceful treatment. Human honour purports that no one may be subjected to hatred and humiliation because all people have a common origin. Only deeds, not the physical nature, establish one's degree of acceptance and favour. Islam ensures equal rights and privileges that are necessary for a good, decent and honourable life. It ensures everyone's rights" as long as they abide by the obligation of respecting the rights of others. They are respected as long as they accord other people the same respect and honour due to all. The breach of that demand would turn everyone accountable to the degree of that violation. Their deeds are judged by the degree of honesty and righteousness which are the criteria of one's obedience to the established rules of moral conduct which determines one's moral standing in the sight of Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala and among all people. Honesty is the demand of peace and prosperity of life and association with others. Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala destines humans for a harmonious life. Allah's words call: *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily*

the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (Hujurat 1-3).

Those who commit a vicious, criminal act that breaches and disgraces the sanctity of their honour are subject to punishment to the degree of the breach of that sanctity. To be out of the influence of the wrongdoing persons, we are directed to keep away from them. We are enjoined by our Lord not to follow the habits of wrongdoers and not to associate with them as it has been instructed in this Ayah: *“And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant. Who make mischief in the land and mend not (their ways)”*. (Shuaraa 151-152). Or, as we are enjoined in this Ayah: *“And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds”*. (Kahf 28)

Humans are called to follow a course of life that could be beneficial to all, benefiting one’s own person as well as other persons. Allah’s will qualifies everyone with rights in society and charges them with carrying out their obligations for the common good. Humans should treat each other equally. We are directed to like for others what we like for ourselves. Islam calls us to be honest and helpful for the common good. All our good and bad deeds are rewarded suitably. Everyone is accountable before Allah; therefore, everyone is required to go on the righteous path that Allah has determined for us. The rights and obligations require us to help each other to work for the common prosperity through being honest and fearing Allah always.

We are called to promote the cause of common prosperity in the light of moral values which are the protecting shield against the development of negative whims, seduction, temptations and irresponsible pleasures that call for indulgence in different types of crimes, violence and the spread of criminal habits. Islam obliges everyone to abstain from wrongdoing. Allah’s apostle (blessing and peace be upon him) has said: *“When one of you saw a wrongdoer he should stop him from the wrongdoing by his hand (which means by applying physical force) and if he cannot block him by it he should prevent him by tongue (by verbal advice). If he is not able of that too then he should prevent him by his heart (keeping a feeling of disapproval of his acts) and it is the weakest degree of belief.”* Prohibiting by physical force is also the prohibition by those to whom the law has delegated the authority of checking and blocking the wrongdoing. It is the power that can be easily carried out by the police. Prevention by tongue is to a large extent a pertinent responsibility for preaching the righteousness and truth that is the responsibility of all Muslims.

The prevention of the wrongdoer by heart means that one should not have friendly relations with the wrongdoer, nor should have any kind of intimate contact with him and to have a feeling of hatred towards his habits. This act of showing dislike of the wrongdoer too has been called a preventive act, but an act that is lower in degree of confronting a vicious act. Further, the Holy Messenger has said: *“Help your brother whether he is oppressor or oppressed.”* He (blessing and peace be upon him) was asked by the listeners that *“We would help him when he is oppressed; how could we help him when he is an oppressor?”* In response, he (blessing and peace be upon him) said that *“You should stop him from committing oppression”*. Stopping the oppressor is in fact a kind of help to him – Crimes and wrongdoing cannot be checked unless each individual of a society does not consider the checking of wrongdoers as his or her necessary obligation. Human life can be peaceful when it is under the sound supervision of thoughts and prudence and when everyone is guided by the judgment of thoughts, instead of emotions. The rebellion against the command of prudence is generally the result of one’s indifference to the calls of values or having no belief in morality. Ignoring the established rules of moral virtues or ignoring the preventive measures by defying moral values creates enormous destructive problems to the peace and health of society. We are informed in many revelations of the Holy Quran of The destruction of many flourishing nations as a result of various deviations. Ignoring the call of morality and defying its requirements deprive the defying person of the dignity with which humans are honoured. In many societies today people do not heed the calls of morality that thereby they pave the way of the spread of more crimes that cause the decline of human dignity. We are the witnesses of heinous crimes such as murder, rapes and robberies. All of these crimes are the consequences of challenging moral values and discarding them in the name of freedom. The negative reaction to the observation of moral values presents the most serious

challenge, not just to a society of a nation, but to almost all human societies, particularly to societies that most reject moral values. Today, the law of morality and the code of virtues and decency safeguarding human honour and dignity against anarchy are in many societies yielding place to the fraudulent definitions of values to accommodate the lust of anarchical passions and thereby rejecting decency, chastity and modesty as the challenges to the freedom of will. Even the nature of the researches about the causes and effects of moral deviations are not immune to that sort of influences. Islam has the highest emphasis on human morality and decency. Under Islamic law, humans have a specific area of freedom. Crossing the boundary of this area of freedom brings many troubles to the violator and to society. Anyone ignoring a moral value and the values of decency or breaching it is considered responsible and is subject to punishment by that Absolute Authoritarian Who has created us and has commanded us to observe honesty and moral values. In this world too, Islamic Shariah that is based on Holy Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Messenger has ordained the most severe types of punishments for those who breach these values.

The virtue of abstinence from indulging in immoral acts has been ordained as the most necessary obligation of Muslim men and women. It safeguards their honour of worthiness in society and brings the mercy of Allah and the happiness of His apostle. The Holy Apostle of Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala, defined his mission as bringing the virtues of morality into perfection. He said, "I have the mission to bring the superiority of virtues into perfection." The rejection of virtuous practices represents a gradual decline into total moral depravity. In general, the social and moral problems arise from changing the definition of morality to accommodate particular whims and caprices in other words they generally arise from leaving the job of defining the boundaries of morality to those who are rebelling against morality. In such cases many social evils grow because the values that govern the harmony of social life are denounced and abrogated.

The looseness of social and moral discipline in the name of freedom in the societies who do not believe in rules of strict moralities has caused the tragedies of mankind's in those societies where there are no standard definitions for values and where the values change within the flux of materialism, many other values such as love, attention, compassion and the feeling of moral obligation towards one another are in a gradually weakening state. Its most serious effects may be seen in family traditions. There are signs that indicate dearly that family ties have already reached critical points of decline since there is no more moral persuasion or encouragement to virtue. There is no strong binding direction for the feeling, so it is no surprise that the strength of these ties gets progressively weaker. The influence of parents over their children is loosening, producing a negative effect on the children.

Islam takes these problems seriously and has made moral education and social guidance and caring for one another an obligation of each one. It has made it a responsibility, as the Holy Messenger (blessing and peace be upon him) said, "*each one of you are guardian and responsible of those under his guardianship. The ruler is guardian and is responsible for those under his guardianship. A person in his family is guardian and is responsible for those under his guardianship. A woman is guardian at the house of her husband and is responsible of those under her guardianship. The servant is guardian of the property of his boss and is responsible for the things under his guardianship. So each one of you is guardian and each one of you is responsible of those under your guardianship.*" These are the directive principles of a responsible life, the life that aims at common prosperity and common welfare. It is each one's obligation to be in service of others, to love others, and to cultivate love and affection. The soundness and harmony of social life depends on one's feeling of responsibility towards others. These words of the Holy Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) direct those in authority to carry out their obligations with honesty and sincerity. These make the parents responsible to raise their children with much concern for their wellbeing and good character as well as good morality to bring them up with the highest qualities of honesty and truthfulness. These are the responsibilities that establish the righteous course of children's lives. In Islam, it is the necessary obligation of children to respect their parents, to help them, to look after them when they are old and to be at their service when they need it.

Parents have the obligation not to spare their affection, advice and moral and financial help from their children. Islam obliges everyone to care for the good of others and not to overlook the concern for others. It has in particular a complete code of family fights and obligations. Human ills cannot be cured by treating the effects and ignoring the

causes. The causes of human ills need crucial attention so that crimes and criminal proclivities may be thwarted. Islam makes the government and parents responsible for the guidance of children. Our first teachers of wisdom and righteousness are our parents. The family is the institution that teaches us the first lessons of responsible life, responsibility to ourselves and to society. If one is able to grasp the crucial lesson in the family bosom, then that person should certainly pass the difficult tests of social manners, honesty, modesty and any moral challenge. Those who do not hear and do not heed the sacred calls of honesty will never have immunity from falling into the snare of crimes or indulgence in immoral acts.

The other step is watchfulness of society which means that everyone has to help others in the path of morality. Islam makes it everyone's responsibility to help others from becoming victim of oppression, as well as forbidding others from committing oppression. Everyone has an obligation to advise wrongdoers, pointing out the bad consequences of wrong acts and pleading with them to change their wrongful ways. The most effective way to do this is to stress programs of moral education with the same zeal that the authorities catch and punish criminals. People need to have more respect for moral values. Children are required to revere and respect their parents and parents have to have necessary consideration of that natural love and affection with which their nature has been gifted by their Creator. A healthy society needs a kind of deep love between the members of each family and an accurate and sound system of help and cooperation between neighbours. Islam insists on these relations and enjoins Muslims to abide by their demands. These are the demands of the order and discipline of human life without which we cannot expect to have a healthy society and we cannot have a peaceful society a society whose people could perfectly enjoy the privileges of human honours.

The moral values that have been mentioned in Holy Quran and in the words of the Holy Messenger of Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala are the values that humans need them permanent and cannot be changed with the change of times. Crimes are nothing but the consequences of the rejection or ignoring the qualities that are recommended by human values.

Islam rejects all kinds of compromises and concessions that are contrary to the values of modesty and decency or the compromises that reject or weaken or change the definition of morality. It has an unalterable stand concerning moral values. Muslims must follow the path that Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala the Lord of the whole universe, the Creator of the whole beings has established, the path to which they are directed by His messenger. Allah's commanded path is the path of obedience to the rules of morality, that is, the path of modesty, decency, honesty and righteousness. Any act that has been prohibited by Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala has certainly a subversive nature. The acts that have been decreed through the revelations as just and admissible are undeniably the acts that safeguard and preserve human honour and dignity. Changing times cannot affect the laws that have been commanded by our Creator. Times and circumstances can never challenge the accuracy of moral values that are provided by Islam.

This religion forbids any act that is contrary to moral values or causes a criminal act or an act that is inimical to an individual or society. Believers must abstain from all criminal acts and all the acts that are against morality or lead to an act that are against morality or any other act that spreads wrong habits. Neither general acceptance nor the change of society's attitude of judgment concerning a habit can have any impact on Islamic law that has an unalterable aim of a sound, peaceful and prosperous life. The values that have been recommended by Islam are the highest guarantors of peaceful, prosperous and healthy social life. To commit a wrong act is a defiance of Islamic laws for which the committing person would be responsible.

Humans with their varieties of impulses, attractions and instigations can only through Allah's obedience remain on the straight path, the path through which the Holy Quran and the words and the deeds of the Holy Messenger are our guide. If there is no guidance from Allah Almighty we will remain in the darkness of our whims. The condition of unbelievers is depicted in this revelation: *“Or (the unbelievers' state) is like the depth of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with the billow, topped by (dark) clouds: Depths of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! For any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!”* (Nur: 40)

The light of which the revelation has told us alerts our feeling of responsibility for our obligation to obey our Creator. They are the commands of Allah Subhanahu Ta'ala and the guidance of His apostle for these directives cover all aspects of human life, They are the aggregate of directions and prohibitions and are the lights fix the path of human life. They are the lights that Muslims are bound to obey. But those who do not obey the guidance are those whose positions are called in the above Ayah to be in complete darkness. It is the light of belief that indicates the path we are called to follow. Keeping on the path is the responsibility of everyone who believes in Allah and His messenger. Having the responsibility for something is an indicator of one's freedom of will. Everyone is responsible for the acts committed intentionally and knowingly. The act indicates freedom, the freedom of choosing to commit the act.

A close look at the nature of responsibility indicates that the responsibility has two stages. The first stage precedes the act itself, while the person is contemplating whether to do it. The second stage occurs after the act has been committed. The responsibility before doing the required obligation is a responsibility for the call of doing it or the responsibility of the fulfilment of the task, while the responsibility after doing it is a liability for what, how and with what intention it has been done.

The first stage is the expression of freedom of will or the expression of human status. A person's responsibility in a duty that has been commended to him is proportional to his ability to do it. Similarly, the degree of the exemption from that too is proportional to one's disability to commit the act. Therefore no one is responsible for an act above one's ability to do it. For example, no one is liable for feeling hungry or thirsty. A person is responsible only for the consequences of an act in which somehow his or her intention is involved and the methods he uses and the purpose of doing it.

Muslims are warned by the Holy Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) who said: "Everyone, on the Day of Judgment would be asked from five things: He would be asked from his life that in what he has passed it; he would be asked from his knowledge that for what achievement he has applied it; he would be asked from his possession that from where he has obtained it, how he has earned it. He would be asked that in which way he has spent his possession. He would be asked from his body that in what works he has applied it."

All of the above responsibilities are concerned with one's own acts. However there are three other kinds of responsibilities directed to a person by another person's acts. They are:

1. When another person commits something with the order or direction of a person, then if the act is beneficial the directing person is qualified for the same reward as the acting person is entitled. If the act is bad, the person is entitled to equal punishment.
2. When a person's good or bad act causes others to act in the same way, then that person is entitled to a similar reward.
3. The responsibility of a person's bad act charges another similarly when the second person watches the bad act but remains silent about it. It is a responsibility for the good of society, the responsibility for which the well-being and security of society calls people to be guardians of each other. Our responsibilities assign us certain concerns for others and charge us with certain obligations.

Everyone has the obligation to be in service of others. Muslims are required to help the needy, to visit the sick and to contribute to their treatment. Islam makes every person responsible for protecting society from the spread of evil acts. It has established three ways of checking the wrong acts which are by applying physical force which is delegated responsibility of governmental authorities who have all the necessary means of enforcement by verbally advising the wrongdoer through advice, preaching or education, and lastly by withholding friendship or expressing a dislike for the wrongdoer.

We must note that the understanding of a wrongful act by a wrongdoer or punishment is not enough for an appropriate result. There must also be a proper training program and a serious upbringing besides all other means at the disposal of concerned government authorities because the human mind is able to respond positively to a sound

and proper program of care. This is the method that Islam enjoins upon Muslims. It is the way of life and belief of all Muslims. Each Muslim has a binding duty to guide others, to lead them to the righteous path and to prevent them from wrongdoing, as we are told in this Ayah: *“Ye are the best of people evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.”* (Al-Imran 110)

Helping and guiding others, showing them the righteous path is an obligation for all Muslims. It is their path, their course of conduct and their virtue. Their character has been depicted in this revelation: *“The believers, men and women are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil; observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His apostle. On them will Allah pour His mercy for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.”* (Tauba: 71)

Muslims have been defined in Holy Quran in this revelation: *“That enjoin good and forbid evil and observe the limits set by Allah: (these do rejoice). So proclaim the glad tidings to the believers.”* (Tauba: 112)

The glad tidings of the Holy Quran is a mercy of Allah Subhanahu Ta’ala with which Muslims are blessed for their call and preaching of good deeds and shunning evils. These qualities and the belief and practice of good deeds present a Muslim’s real nature and deeds and indicate a Muslim’s status in family as well as in society. The most important period for children’s learning is the period when children enter the first stage of grasping. That is the stage when they start imitation and grasping habits, when they have attained the ability to learn. The initial teaching institute for them, at this stage, is the bosom of family where children enter the first stages of childhood. The lessons that a child receives at the initial period of their ability at home in the bosom of their parents or from the initial instructors are the most important lessons of their life. Their instruction starts right from this stage with the elementary habits regarding courtesies and the respect of moral habits. The teachings of this stage for Muslim children also include the instruction of the elementary lessons on Islam. It can be defined as a period when a sense of morality and values may easily be instilled in children. This period is followed by the step when Islam directs parents even to force their children to Islamic practices.

Islam has detailed instructions covering all sorts of responsibilities. It directs us in the whole course of life and points our responsibilities in all walks of life towards the subjects of our contacts – The responsibilities relating of our personal deeds to our families, to our societies, to our nations and to the entire human community. These responsibilities emphasize on observing rules of good deeds and the values that are the sources of honesty, integrity and security. They cultivate an inspiring submission to each of the values and make us exemplary to those who are searching for a righteous moral and beneficial life, beneficial to themselves and to society.

Muslims are prohibited from committing any acts that are against human standards of honest and moral way of life. Muslims cannot go out of the limits of moralities seeking pleasures Islamic ways, behaviour, deeds and acts influence the lives of fellow humans. We are given an accurate constitution of life and deeds, the constitution that stands for the good of Muslims as well as non-Muslims. It covers all aspects of our individual, social, psychological and ethical life. Our deeds should be useful in general not only for Muslims but also for others. Muslims are not allowed to harm damage or annoy other Muslims as well as non-Muslims as long as they have not violated our similar privileges.

VALUES

The future of the next generation depends on education and values that are imparted to them and the quality of such education and values. It is therefore necessary that when we engage ourselves in the process of educating others we should be well versed in and also practice what we teach. Ultimately it is the quality of the teacher, which is reflected by the students. If we trace the development of the education system from generation to generation we find that though several new frontiers and vistas have opened up in the field of education, the system has unfortunately been commercialized and has been relegated to a mere money-making process. It has lost its human touch and remains as mechanized administrative machinery. The only purpose of education seems to be to acquire a good job, and the associated power, status, authority and wealth.

The value of time and money has gained greater prominence over human values and our entire life is spent in time management and determining how to maximize our wealth. It is better to be oriented towards human values rather than materialistic orientation because in the end, only human values can give us satisfaction and contentment. This can be explained through the following story.

There was a fisherman who was an expert in the art of fishing. He however was a simple person and was happy with small catches that was sufficient to sustain himself and his family and enable him to maintain a decent standard of living. A rich man who came to know of the fisherman's ability tried to interest him in the grand plans he had and said that if they could carry on this business of fishing together they could earn millions. He assured him that with his financial backing and the fisherman's expertise in catching fish, their partnership would definitely be a success. The fisherman asked him, "How long would that take?" The rich man replied, "Maybe 5 or 20 years". The fisherman then asked "What happens after that?" The rich man replied, "With that money we can retire and lead a secure and contented life in the future." The fisherman replied "But sir, even now without all the money I am leading a secure and contented life".

Therefore, earning money or acquiring wealth etc. is not important. What is important is – what do we do with it? How much of it do we share? How much do we care for and love others? It is only when our education and activities are intertwined with human values does our life gain a meaning.

Human values can be classified into two types. First category is at the individual level and the second category relates to the society as a whole. The individual values teach us how to hold our self-dignity and help in the process of our evolution. These values are necessary for a healthy body and a healthy mind. If the health of the mind is taken care of, the health of the body is automatically assured. The basic values to be applied to the mind are self-discipline, discrimination and concentration. These three values initiate and develop the power of creativity.

Creativity enhances intelligence and we gradually develop the ability to realize ourselves and the power of universal love. If we fail to achieve this then all education, health, wealth etc, remain mere rituals, which do not seek to serve any purpose.

Therefore humanism is the need of the hour. If we adopt human values in our lives then the entire society can be transformed and ultimately this will result in globalization or will give rise to humanity without any frontiers or boundaries.

THE WORLD CONSISTING OF FIVE ELEMENTS

The entire world is surrounded by or is composed of five basic elements – the sky, wind, fire, water and earth. The sky does not declare itself to be the sky because it is a silent entity. But it speaks through the wind, which is not restricted by any boundaries or frontiers and touches every individual being as the representative of the sky. Communication is possible because of the existence of the space, the wind and the vibrations, which fill the universe. The various physical aids to communication such as radios, televisions etc. transmit sound and images throughout the world by picking up these vibrations in space. Communication is also possible without these physical aids. When we pray to God, the thoughts are reciprocated and communication takes place without any external means of communication because of the vibrations. The sky (and the associated vibrations) is therefore a representation of both sound and silence. Sound owes its creation to the existence of the sky and is called *shabdha* or *shruthi*. The next basic element is the wind or air, which envelops the universe and transcends all boundaries. The third element is the fire or *Agni*, which is the element that has a *roopa* or form. Water is the fourth basic element and the interaction between the elements fire and water or *agni* and *jala* gives rise to the fifth element, the earth.

These five basic elements can be associated with the five senses that an individual possesses. The sky, which represents sound, is related to the sense of hearing. The wind or air is associated with the sense of touch or *sparsha*. Fire, which gives the entire creation form, is associated with the sense of seeing. The element water represents the sense of taste or *rasa*. Finally the fifth element, earth represents the sense of smell or *gandha*.

The entire body is the representative of the earth. The blood, which flows in our body, represents water. *Agni* is present in various forms in our body such as temperature, heat and energy. It is the initiator of various functions of the body without which we cannot exist. The body is composed of the *vaayuspraana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udhana* and *samaana* that represent the wind that regulates the mind. Ultimately the *prana* in our body or the base of our existence is the sky. The sky is represented in the body as *Chidakasha* and *Hridayakasha* thereby encompassing both the mind and the heart.

Therefore the five elements exist both externally as well as internally within us. A continuous, intelligent, objective analysis of these elements, their influence and the extent of their association with our various senses should be examined and realized so that we may evolve into complete and perfect human beings. He who does not restrict himself to frontiers, who has mastered his senses, who like the five elements is a mere witness to the events of this universe, attains knowledge and having had the revelation of truth, he immediately, attains peace in the form of 'Self-Realization'.

SOCIAL VALUES IN ISLAM

Every aspect of human relationship is governed by social values. In Islam all values affecting man are based upon the Quranic concept that each human being is endowed by the Almighty God with the highest potential for doing good to himself and to his society, and so he is capable of achieving the highest level of moral and spiritual development and that his personality must be respected. The Quran takes note of diversities of race, colour, language, wealth etc., which serve their own useful purposes in the social scheme, and describes them as signs of Allah for those who hear and possess knowledge. The Quran states that Allah has divided mankind into tribes and nations for greater facility of intercourse. Neither membership in a tribe nor citizenship in a state confers any privilege nor are they source of honour. The true source of honour in the sight of Allah (God) is a righteous life. In his Farewell Address, Prophet Muhammad (blessing and peace be upon him) said, "You are all brothers, and are all equal. None of you can claim any privilege or any superiority over any other."

Islam has established a universal brotherhood. It is stressed that a true brotherhood can be established only by virtue of mankind's relationship with one another through Allah. Other factors e.g. common interests, common pursuits, common occupations may help to foster friendship and brotherhood.

Islam considers the family as the basic unit of human society. The foundation of a family is laid through marriage. The relationship between husband, wife and children should be strong and everlasting. Prophet Muhammad (blessing and peace be upon him) noted once, "The best among you is he who treats the members of his family best." In order to maintain harmony within the family, Islam looked down upon divorce and considered it as the most obnoxious in the sight of Allah but if the relationship between the husband and wife is no longer enduring, it can be resorted to divorce with the object to provide the opportunity for a better and decent life.

Great stress is laid on the proper upbringing and training of children. Infanticide, which was a common practice during certain periods of human history, is prohibited. Special concern was given to proper upbringing of girls. Prophet Muhammad (blessing and peace be upon him) said, "A person who is blessed with a daughter or daughters and makes no discrimination between them and his sons and brings them up with kindness and affection will be as close to paradise as my forefinger and middle finger are to each other." While stressing kindness and affection toward children and uniformly treating all children tenderly, he did not approve of undue indulgence.

The Quran lays great stress on kindness toward neighbours, and in the same way the treatment of the needy and the wayfarer. Orphans have been made the objects of particular care. Their proper upbringing and the due administration of their property must be ensured. Detailed directions are laid down with regard to the guardianship of minors.

Another feature of Islam is that it aims at merging all sections of society into a single community so that all persons may feel themselves to be members of the same family. Islam encourages simple ways of life and to dispense with artificial ceremonial and superficial standards of living. Islam recognized that there must be diversity of all kinds in a healthy society, and that it is not only futile but also harmful to covet that in which others excel. "Each must exercise his or her own capacities and talents and strives to promote both individual and common good. Begging is prohibited except in case of extreme need. Various aspects of good manners are insisted upon. In Surah Luqman 31, Verse 18 Allah says: *"Turn not thy face away from people in pride, nor walk in the earth haughtily; surely Allah loves not any arrogant boaster. Moderate thy pace when walking and soften thy voice when speaking"*.

As for group activities Islam recognizes three types of public associations; first, those formed for the purpose of promoting the general welfare, in other words, charitable associations and the like. Second, the object of which is to promote the spread and propagation of knowledge and investigation and research into the sciences, arts, philosophies etc., third, those established for the purpose of peaceful settlement of disputes and for removing causes of friction, whether in domestic, national, political or international spheres, and thereby promoting peace among mankind. When people are gathered together for a common purpose, they should behave in an orderly manner, and should not leave or disperse without permission. All people should behave with dignity and particular attention must be paid to

maintenance of order in public places. Persons using public places must take care that no undue inconvenience is occasioned to others using the same, nor should any person be exposed to risk or injury.

The obligation is laid upon everyone to urge others toward goodness and to seek to restrain them from evil, but with kindness and affection. Spying, backbiting and undue suspicion must be avoided. It is a duty of every Muslim constantly to seek increase of knowledge. Prophet Muhammad (blessing and peace be upon him) went so far as to add, "A word of wisdom is the lost property of a Muslim. He should seize it wherever he finds it."

The Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) was very insistent upon kindness towards animals. On one occasion he noticed a dove in anguish flying around agitatedly and discovered that somebody had caught its offspring. He was very annoyed and asked the person to restore the offspring to the mother immediately. Perhaps the most comprehensive directive within the domain of social values is: "Help one another in righteousness and virtue but help not one another in transgression." When Prophet Muhammad (blessing and peace be upon him) said on one occasion, "Help your brother whether oppressor or oppressed", he was asked "We understand what you mean by going to the help of a brother who is oppressed, but how shall we help a brother who is an oppressor?" The Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) replied, "By restraining him from oppressing others."

Regarding the moral and spiritual values, an essential element in the effort toward achievement of moral and spiritual excellence is the certainty that however low a person may have fallen, it is always possible for him to rise. Islam teaches that Allah has created mankind in accord with the nature designed by him. It is true that each person is subject to influences of heredity, upbringing, and environment, but these can, where necessary, be corrected or eliminated. Evil comes from outside and can be kept out or having entered, can be discarded.

As for vice and virtue, Islam considers the lowest grade of vice that conduct which causes injury to others; for instance, all aggression against the person, property, interests or honour of fellow being. Most of these are crimes; the rest are civil wrongs and are punishable. All of them are moral offenses. As for virtue, there are three grades of virtues prescribed by Islam: The first (lowest) is described as equity or equitable dealing. This means to do good equal to the good one receives from others. Furthermore, it means that when one suffers a wrong, one should not impose or insist upon the imposition of a penalty in excess of the wrong suffered. The second is that of conscious beneficence, the doing of greater good in return for good and the doing of good without expectation of any return, and forgiveness of wrong if in the circumstances, may reasonably be expected that forgiveness would help the wrongdoer reform himself. The third is the instinctive beneficence that flows out from one as love and affection flow out toward one's kindred. Cultivation to having been acquired deliberately – it would be the highest moral quality; it would manifest itself toward a wrongdoer not only in forgiveness, but also in benevolence.

Social customs may constitute a hindrance in the way of moral development. In the scale of values, moral progress must be placed higher than conformity to social customs and habits, which have no value beyond the fact that they have been observed over a long period of time. Such customs become burdensome impositions and should be discarded. All avenues from which evil might should be watched and guarded.

Islam inspires faith in vivid realization of the existence of a Beneficent Creator, without partners, associates or equals. Islam teaches that each human being can and should establish direct communion with Allah through faith, through acceptance of Divine Guidance and through righteous conduct. On the basis of man's relationship to his fellow beings through God, the Creator of all, it lays the foundations of a true universal brotherhood, excluding the privilege and discrimination based on colour, race, nationality or an office, status or wealth.

In short, Islam sets forth and places at man's disposal a most effective means of achieving the purpose of life. Of all Allah's numberless bounties bestowed upon mankind it is one of the greatest and most precious, and it is indispensable for the beneficent growth of man in the epoch now unfolding before him.

The social values in the Islamic community ensure strong and lasting relationship and interaction of people based on equality, doing what is right, and giving consideration to the rights and privileges of others. We can see that the social, moral and spiritual values propagated by Islam, the essence of which was observed during the rise and expansion in the early history of Islam is applicable to the present and future for all mankind.

ISLAM & HUMAN RIGHTS

The concept of human rights in Islam is rooted in the concept of divinity. Muslims believe that man was created by a transcendental God who favours no human over another except in terms of piety and good conduct. In a bid to defend Islam or to promote it, several contemporary Islamic scholars and thinkers have sought to show that Islam has from the outset laid the foundations for human rights by asserting the supremacy of the value of justice and of the principle of human dignity. Some of the effort made in this regard has been aimed at developing an Islamic, as compared to secular, discourse on human rights.

Both in the Quran and the *Sunnah*, the value of justice is considered the highest of all values, for it derives from one of God's main attributes, The Just. Hence is the emphasis on 'equity' rather than equality in Islamic thought. This is one of the areas where the Islamic conception of human rights differs from the secular conception. The principle of human dignity derives from the belief that *al-insan* (the human being) is the vicegerent of Allah on earth. *Al-insan*, who is honoured and preferred to all other creatures, is expected to lead a life guided by Allah's law, or the *Shariah*. This is another area where disagreement exists. The word *al-insan*, in the Islamic terminology, refers to the human being irrespective of gender, colour or race.

Three Quranic verses, which are crucial to determining a Muslim's identity, summarise the concept of human dignity:

1. *"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth" (2: 30)*
2. *"We have honoured the children of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation." (17:70)*
3. *"O mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you." (49:13)*

In spite of Islam's assertion of the value and dignity of humanity, violations of basic human rights in the Muslim countries are very common. Although repression and persecution go back to the colonial era, more subtle methods have been devised by post-independence regimes in the modern territorial states that inherited power from the colonial authorities.

The Muslim world is one of very few remaining regions in the world where local culture is being systematically eroded through the persistent violation of fundamental human rights. Mosques have been placed under direct government control, freedom of the press is non-existent, opponents are silenced or liquidated, women are punished for choosing to be modest, men are persecuted for choosing to follow the *Sunnah* (way of the Prophet), and prisons host more prisoners of conscience than criminals.

There is a need today for the establishment of an Islamic human rights movement to defend human rights without compromising Islam. One of the objectives of such a movement would be to introduce Islam's compassionate image to the world through the defence and promotion of human rights. At the same time, the movement would be expected to search for a common ground on which all the defendants of human rights, irrespective of their ideological

convictions, may stand. The value of Human Rights is indeed a universal value and the cause of defending these rights is a universal cause.

For both the value and the cause to remain universal and in order to prevent their monopoly by one particular culture, cultural specificity has to be recognised and respected. In fact, cultural specificity is an indispensable feature of universality.

Issues related to the Concept of Human Rights in Islam

1. Vicegerency

In Islam, man is God's vicegerent on earth. Humans have been honoured by the Creator and gifted with the faculties of the mind and will-power. Everything else in the universe has been created for the purpose of serving them and achieving their happiness. The Divine honour bestowed on them confers upon them rights that no one else has the right to deny or violate. Humans, in their capacity as vicegerents of their Creator, are expected to defend their God-given rights and struggle for preserving them.

A fundamental difference between the Islamic vision and that of the Western civilisation – It is the difference of maintaining, as opposed to severing, ties with God. The Islamic vision is based on the belief that Divine Revelation has been intended to serve the interest of humanity, and that the most pertinent interest is the administration of justice.

The subject matter of *Shariah*-based policy is justice, although no provision in respect of it was revealed. This is so because God has sent His Messengers and revealed His Books in order to administer fairly the affairs of the people. This is the justice on which the heavens and earth are based and according to which if the signs of truth become apparent and its face is revealed, in whatever way possible, then it is there that God's law and religion are to be found.

Shariah-based policy is defined as every measure that directs people nearest to rightness and furthest from corruption, even if such policy was not prescribed by the *Shariah* nor was a revelation made in respect of it.

The way that leads to justice is the way of religion. In contrast Western political thought is the fruit of rationalist philosophy and the principles of natural law. It is also the product of the grinding wars which took place in the West between reason and religion; between, on the one hand, the struggle for freedom, self-determination and the right to enjoy the goodness of this world on the basis of the centrality of man in the universe and the absolute ability of reason to understand and explain the universe and to organise life, and, on the other, the church and its despotic authority which it exercised for many centuries of darkness, backwardness and oppression. The battle in this conflict was won by reason and science, and as a result the people recovered their rights and rid themselves of the church's control over man's mind and conscience and over the organisation of life. In the end, natural law replaced God's revelation as the philosophical basis for legislation.

2. Freedom

Classical Islamic scholars deduced from the Quran the golden rule of 'no responsibility without freedom and sanity'.

Freedom contributed in the past to the progress of Muslims who built a great civilisation. It had a considerable impact on the Western civilisation as well. It is believed that through direct contact with the Muslims in the Arab East during the days of the Crusaders, as well as in Spain and in southern Italy, the Europeans were fascinated by the life style of the Muslims. Compared to their own lifestyle, the Muslims had freedom, dignity and motivation. This influence

contributed to the revival of the spirit of rebellion against the theocratic shackles imposed on the mind, conscience and social conduct of Europeans, and thus was the starting point of the Renaissance.

Freedom of faith, and what it entails in terms of freedom of thought and expression, is the basis of freedoms and rights in Islam, because of the great influence belief has on all aspects of individual and collective behaviour. If man does really have the freedom of faith and if compulsion is forbidden, even unimaginable in this zone because of its importance, then compulsion in everything below that is forbidden *a fortiori*, such as compulsion to marry, to take up a certain profession, to join a group or a party, or to live in a particular country or to leave it. The fundamental element is that man is free and constricting his freedom is an exception which requires a just law.

God-given freedom to man is not supposed to be absolute permissiveness nor is it supposed to be a heedless and spontaneous thrust to fulfil desires. It is primarily a responsibility and a realisation. It is one's responsibility towards one's conscience, Creator and fellow humans; for in addition to bearing within him an aspect of the spirit of God, man has inherent within him desires and ambitions that could lead him to misery and hardship in this life and in the Hereafter if he did not subdue them by means of a Divine guidance. While Islam clearly affirms man's status, freedom and enormous abilities, it underlines his weaknesses. For this purpose, God sent Messengers who urged humans to respond to their Lord's call and who warned them against the repercussions of being tempted to rebel against their Creator under the pretext of asserting their independence. A free man, who is truly God's vicegerent, is he who worships God by contemplating the wonders of His creation in the heavens and the earth and in himself, and who exploits the resources made available to him in this universe, enjoys its bounties and meets the needs of his body, soul and society in a balanced manner without excessiveness.

The legislative implications of the Islamic concept of freedom have been addressed by Islamic jurists throughout the history of jurisprudence to the effect of establishing and refining a legal framework for man's freedom, or 'for his duties.'

3. Justice

Justice in Arabic is '*adalah*' from the root '*adala*', which means to be balanced, to engage in acts that are framed by an awareness, born of the pursuit of reason over passion, The opposite of '*adalah*' is *zulm* (injustice) from the root *zalama*, which means to do wrong or evil, to ill-treat or oppress, to harm or commit an outrage. An Islamic political order is supposed to prohibit all forms of injustice. Not only is injustice considered a grave sin, an atrocious crime and a cause for decline and destruction, but is considered to be an aggression against God Himself. After all Islam's main mission is the administration of justice and the elimination of all forms of oppression. One of the main tasks of the community of believers is to deter injustice and support the wronged.

Elaboration on the freedom of belief

When the term *dar-ul-Islam* is used it connotes one nationality for those residing in it, Muslims and non-Muslims, and for all of whom the fundamental rights are guaranteed by the Quran, the *Sunnah* and Islamic jurisprudence. These are: equality, which is positive and all comprehensive, regardless of race, ethnic origin, colour, social status or creed; freedom, which encompasses freedom of thought and freedom of belief including the right of non-Muslims in a Muslim state to build churches, temples, monasteries, synagogues, etc.; and freedom of movement and the right to establish schools and religious centres.

Today, when the resurgence of Islam is increasingly becoming a global phenomenon, it is imperative for Muslim leaders to face the rather complex problem of the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims within the Islamic states and in the world at large. He claims that this issue is loaded with fallacies and baseless arguments which have projected Islam as a menace that denies people their basic human rights of freedom, justice and the pursuit of happiness. Two categories of citizenship in the Islamic state; one is *muwatana 'amma*, unqualified citizenship, and the second *muwatana khassa*, qualified citizenship.

Although a person who resides in an Islamic state has, irrespective of his or her religion or race, what he calls 'absolute rights to a decent living,' he or she has the freedom to choose between embracing or rejecting the objectives and principles underpinning the state. When a person chooses to embrace Islam, he or she becomes a Muslim citizen not discriminated from the rest of the Muslim members of the society save for distinctions of personal talent or qualifications. When a person chooses not to embrace Islam, then he or she would have – in order to acquire the right to citizenship – to express loyalty to the state and recognise its legitimacy so that he or she does not engage in any activity that may be construed as threatening to its order.

In the latter case, citizenship is qualified, and such qualification is only lifted when the concerned person embraces Islam. While enjoying full freedom in personal matters, that is matters pertaining to faith, food, drink and marriage, a non-Muslim citizen may still be denied a right enjoyed by a Muslim citizen, that is, the right to occupy senior positions in the state – such as the Presidency – that may be considered of significant bearing on the identity of the state. Scholars and thinkers, both classical and modern, continue to disagree, except with regard to the position of head of state, on which senior positions, or which functions, are denied to non-Muslim citizens in an Islamic state.

Most modern thinkers are of the opinion that *dhimmi*s have the right to participate in elections at all levels and may be nominated for any position apart from that of the head of state, and may therefore be members of nationally or locally elected councils.

Riddah

Any discussion of the freedom of faith in Islam must raise the question of *riddah* (apostasy). The classical definition of *riddah* is 'the voluntary and conscious reversion to *kufr* (disbelief) after having embraced Islam by denying any of its fundamentals in matters of 'aqidah (faith), *Shariah* (law) or *sha'irah* (rite), such as the denial of Deity or Prophethood, or the licensing of prohibitions or the negation of obligations.'

There are two Muslim schools of jurisprudence on the matter. The first school, to which most classical jurists belonged, considers *riddah* a religious offence punishable by death. The second considers *riddah* a political offence that has nothing to do with 'the Islamic guarantee of a person's right to freedom of faith.' So, *riddah* in this case is not apostasy but sedition, an act of mutiny or treason that is punishable within the framework of the authority's responsibility for preserving the community and maintaining law and order.

Elaboration on Economic and Social Rights

While the right of an individual to own property is guaranteed in Islam, this is not considered a natural right, as in international conventions or declarations, because in the end everything belongs to God. Therefore, all that pertains to ownership, such as the methods of acquiring and disposing of property, should take place in accordance with the rules of *Shariah*.

Not only is an individual's right to ownership guaranteed, but it has an important role to play. Power is distributed among the members of society by virtue of their shared ownership of the resources. This imparts on political freedom and *Shura*, which he discusses later in the book, a social import. So, in the Islamic model the aim is to make ownership accessible to almost every member of the community.

Islam provides broad guidelines to guarantee the equitable distribution of wealth. These include the prohibition of usury, monopoly, extravagance, etc. and the imposition of *Zakaat*. However, the challenge facing the Muslims in modern times is to envisage how such principles can be translated into modern Islamic economics.

Social rights are taken to mean the needs of an individual in his livelihood of social and health-care. The most important social rights stipulated by modern constitutions in the West are the right to work, the right for medical-care,

and the fight to social security. Some contemporary Islamic thinkers have sought to root these fights in the teachings of Islam. Some have even claimed that whereas such rights have not been of interest to Western constitutions and human rights declarations until 'recently', and only as a reaction to pressure from 'socialist theories' and trade unions and to banish the ghost of the Marxist revolution, they are well-established in the Islamic conception. Examples are usually quoted from the era of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

O mankind, I have written this first volume of this book with the help of Almighty God, only to explain the truth to you as a humble servant of Allah.

May God bless all of us with a correct understanding of His religion, and may He grant us the ability to fulfil its demands.