# Inner Voice

Tomorrow all nations will be observing Labour Day, to remind them-selves that a laborer deserves to be respected because he earns his bread by his sweat. The example set by the religious leaders of Islam have established the dignity of labor beyond any doubt.

Holy Prophet (S.A.) himself worked for Khadija for years. When the Prophet's mosque at Madina was being built, the Holy Prophet participated fully in every work. He carried the stones, mixed the mortar, built the walls. In journeys, the Holy Prophet insisted to share in all the works involved in camping: He pitched the tent, picked wood for fire, carried water etc. In short he never considered any lawful work as beneath his dignity.

People often came to Hazrat Ali (A.S.) to solve their religious problems and found him working as a laborer in farms of other people. He never felt any embarrassment, because dignity of labor was an established way of Muslim life.

And here are two episodes from the life of Fatima, (A.S.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S.A.). Once she was given some wool to spin and some barley as its wages. The work was to be completed in three days; so she divided the wool and the barley in three parts each. First, she spun one-third of the wool, and only then used one-third of the barley for her bread. He same routine was repeated the second and the third days.

The lesson to be learnt here is this Fatima (A.S.) could have reversed the procedure, using barley first, and spinning the wool afterwards, because there was no condition attached; but she did not use the wages before finishing the work of the day. In simple words, looking forward to the unearned wages is not liked in Islam.

This was Fatima's (A.S.) way of life as a worker. Now let me describe her attitude as an employer. Fizza was her servant. When she came to work for Fatima (A.S.) the Holy Prophet (S.A.) told his daughter: "Fatima, (A.S.) one day Fizza shall do all the domestic work while you would rest; next day you will do all the work, while Fizza would rest; because she is as much a human being as you are".

This mutual regard between an employer and his employee is a beacon to guide this troubled world where the employer and the workers both want to exploit and deceive one another.

**Lawful Earning**

"Eat of what is on earth lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan". (Qur'an 2:168).

Using only what is lawful and good, and abstaining from unlawful (Haram) and bad things, are among the basic principles of Islamic code of life.

In Islam, even a lawful thing becomes unlawful if it is obtained by unlawful or foul means. There is no denying that lawful methods, seem sometimes, to be slow; and people, who want to be rich overnight, resort to unlawful means. But, when all is said and done, such tactics do not benefit the offender very much.

Sometime ago a test was held in which one motorist was asked to reach a certain place as soon as possible without any regard to the traffic rules, while another was to reach there after obeying all road signs and traffic signals. The first driver violated red lights twice, nearly knocked down a pedestrian, entered a one-way road from wrong direction, just managing to avoid a serious accident, and reached the destination – 30 seconds before the second motorist. What a gain after all those dangers.

More to the point is the following episode. Hazrat Ali (A.S.) once came to a mosque where he wanted to pray. He asked a man standing nearby to guard his horse. When he came out, he had a dirham in his hand which he wanted to give that man as a reward. But he was nowhere to be seen. Hazrat Ali (A.S.) came to the horse and found that its rein was missing. He gave someone the same dirham to buy another rein.

The man went to the market, saw a man selling a used rein, and bought it for one dirham. When Hazrat Ali (A.S.) looked at it he found that it was his own rein which the supposed "guard" had stolen. He said that he had intended to give the "guard" the same, dirham as a reward, which would have been perfectly lawful for him; but his impatience turned him into a thief, and he got nothing except the same dirham. His dishonesty did not increase his wealth at all, and made him a – criminal into the bargain.

## On Obligations

"O ye who believe! Fulfill all obligations", (Qur'an, Chapter V; Verse 1).

The Verse is admirable for its comprehensiveness and clarity. The word used here is 'Uqud'. Its literal meaning: 'Bondages'. This world is used in the Islamic language, for every kind of obligation. And by using it God has reminded mankind that every promise, agreement and undertaking is a kind of bondage from which man cannot free himself except by its fulfillment. That is why we find in the Islamic traditions that "Man is a slave of his promise".

Obligations can be of various kinds. There are some involuntary obligations: Obligation towards God: obligations towards our fellow human beings, towards our family, towards our neighbors, towards our friends and our enemies. We have no option but to fulfill them. There

are other obligations which we impose upon ourselves – between employer and employee, ruler and ruled. There are obligations between trading partners. A nation concludes a treaty with another nation. All such obligations are self-imposed.

Islam had laid down, in clear words, all the obligations and responsibilities which a man has to face with in his life. And it has put, real emphasis on the spoken word. It knows that written documents are nothing but a symbol to convey the message of the spoken words. If a man cannot be trusted about his spoken agreement, he cannot be trusted at all. It is a sign of decay in our society that the real thing (spoken word) has ceased to have any importance. Everybody insists on writing. And once man reaches this stage, even the written documents and agreements become worthless. In our present society agreements are made to be broken; treaties are concluded with an eye on the loopholes which may provide escape in future. The first victim is not the party wronged; it is the morality of mankind which suffers the mortal blow.