Islamic Generosity

Be generous as Allah is generous to thee" (Qur'an:Chapter 28 Verse 77)"

It is the foundation of Islamic generosity. Allah gave us every thing, right from our very existence up to the highest place of honor in His presence in the life hereafter. Our natural instinct demands that we should express our gratitude towards Him – in words as well as in actions. Prayers prescribed by religion serve the purpose of saying 'Thank you' to Him? The verse of Qur'an quoted above shows us the way. It is by services of humanity that we can show our gratitude towards Allah.

Naturally, it follows that, when we help any person, we should not do it in expectation of any return or any thanks from the beneficiary. On the contrary, we must be thankful to him that by accepting our help, he gave us a chance to demonstrate our gratitude to our Creator. Virtue is its own reward because it satisfies our natural urge to manifest our thankfulness towards Allah.

This, according to Islam, must be our attitude when we are helping others. But what is our obligation when we are on the receiving end of the aid? Islam teaches us that we must be thankful, in the first place, to Allah; because He is the actual source of help. And then we should be thankful to that man whom Allah made His agent in that help. Thus all persons who were instrumental in that help must be thanked sincerely. The Holy Prophet has said: "He who did not thank people, did not thank Allah."

A recent incident has reminded me how far the world is vet from real religion tenets. In last few days, there was much hue and cry about National Service. Had our society been based upon above mentioned mutual respect and co-operation, as taught by religion, such things would have been impossible. The nation would have helped the students without any expectation of repayment in any form. But the students, on the other hand, would have insisted that they should be given a chance to prove their appreciation of, and gratitude towards, nation for the help given in time of need. How inspiring would have it been to see the nation, poor as it is, giving education to its youth, without feeling the necessity of reminding him of his obligations; and then to see that youth, not shouting against the representatives of nation, but insisting that he, on his own accord, would serve the nation on a nominal pay and donate the balance to nation, not for two years only but so long as the full expenses incurred during his education are not reimbursed.

Let us pray a time comes when this vision remains a vision no longer; when not the conflict of

interests, as taught by materialism, but sincere co-operation, as taught by religion, becomes .the basis of society

True Charity

"And whatever you give, verify God knows it well". (Qur'an: 3:92).

Charity is no just doling out some cash or material to a needy person. It involves far deeper feeling and far more subtle psychological attitude. Sincerity of purpose is the soul of charity. Unfortunately charity has become one of the most misunderstood virtues in our time. Industrial progress and commercial environment of modern society has degraded charity into a medium of business propaganda. How many times do we see an advertisement for a charitable cause which ends with line "space kindly donated by M/s. xyz"?

According to Islam, a charity must be only for the sake of God, without any shade of worldly motive. Islam condemns

"those who spend their wealth to show to the people" (Qur'an, 2:264)!

Such baseless charity has been described to be

"like a hard barren rook on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy rain and leaves it just a bare stone" (Qur'an, 2:264)!

The second condition to remember is that a charity must be of such a thing which we have earned lawfully. Qur'an says: "Give of the good things which you have honorably earned". Mass psychology may have an awe for the tactics of Robin Hood: but religion cannot glorify or endorse such methods. It follows that only such charity is real charity in Islamic language. A handful of rice given with our own free will for God is more valuable in Islam than a shipload given under compulsion or for worldly motives.

And what can be given in charity. Qur'an says: "Never shall you attain righteousness unless you give freely of that which you love". (Qur'an, 3: 92).

So this is the test of the real charity: Do you give something that you value greatly? If you give you life for a cause, that is the greatest gift you can offer. Next in degree are your personal efforts, your talents, your skill, and your learning. Then come the charities involving your earnings, your property and your possessions. There are other aspects of charity in which you sacrifice the well-being of your near and dear ones, or your near and dear ones, or your position, or reputation.

Whatever the form of your charity, it is the unselfishness which God demands; and whatever .you give verily God knows it well

Both Worlds

"Our Lord! Give us good in this world, and good in the hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the fire". (Qur'an 11:20).

Our life in this world has a direct bearing upon our life hereafter (Akherat). The Holy Prophet (S.A.) has said: "This world is the farm field of the life hereafter". The ultimate purpose of farming is the harvest. Any nobody can expect any harvest if he has neglected the farming. Like-wise the main aim of our life in this world is to be prepared for the blessings, in the life hereafter. There may be toils and hard times during the period when a farmer is engaged in cultivation. But, the joyful expectation of the golden harvest overcomes every sorrow. Likewise, there may be afflictions and hardships in our life in this world; but the pleasant waiting for the life hereafter helps a Muslim to bear all difficulties with content.

We are not encouraged to put aside the responsibilities of this world if we are to obtain the benefits of the life hereafter. It will be just like neglecting the farm and hoping that the harvests will be good. In fact, our worth cannot be put to test if we leave this world and its complications. The Holly Prophet (S.A.) has said: "He is not from me who leaves this world for Akherat, nor he who leaves Akherat for this world". Both should be given due attention. That is why Allah commands those who seek the blessings of Allah in this world as well as in the life here after.

Good neighbors, faithful family, obedient children, just livelihood – these are some examples of the blessings of the God in this world. These blessings help us to perform our duties towards Allah, towards His creatures, and towards ourselves. Thus these blessing become instrumental in seeking the blessing of Allah in Akherat (life hereafter). Paradise is just one of the blessing of Akherat. The most important thing, in the eyes of Islam, is 'the pleasure of God'. Qur'an says: "And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest (bliss)" (Qur'an 9:72).

Love of This World

"It has been made to seem attractively fair in the eyes of men the love of desire for women, and sons and the hoarded treasures of gold and silver, and horses branded (for blood and excellence) and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land; such are the possession of this world's life; while in nearness to God is the best of the goals". (Qur'an, 3:14).

The word, used in this verse are to be carefully noted. Mark the words 'love of desire', which refers to the mad passion to own things for the sake of owning them.

Things necessary for life must be owned, and it has never been condemned in Islam. As another verse of the Qur'an says: "Say, Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God which

He hath produced for His servants, and the things clean and pure for sustenance?"

In fact what is undesirable is the mad attachment of human beings to the material things which makes them slaves of luxury and which makes parting with them painful. When a man reaches that stage, his whole being revolves around materialism and he forgets God and His love. Islam does not demand total annihilation of emotions in man; it demands that the man should keep the emotions duly subjugated to the higher aims of the moral and ethical perfection.

Actually it is far more difficult to control passion rather than annihilate it. One has to own the good things which are necessary and comforting for his life; but at the same time, he should be free from unnecessary attachment to them; so that when a demand is made to part with them in, the higher causes of religion or human compassion, he parts with them without any hesitation.

As a Muslim saint said to one of his disciple, "Son, if you want to be a fly, be a fly which sits on sugar; but, for God's sake, don't by a fly which sits on honey. Because, a fly sitting on sugar leaves it the moment it wants; but a fly which sits on honey becomes imprisoned in it, unable to leave it and dies miserably."

Humility

"And the servants of Most Gracious God are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant people address them, they say: 'Peace'. (Qur'an; 25:63).

This verse of the Holy Book shows the best way to deal with such stubborn fools who thrive on their ignorance. The true believers are to ignore them.

The same idea has been stressed upon in another verse: "And when they hear vain talk, they turn away there from and say 'To us our deeds, and to you your deeds; peace be to you, we seek not the ignorants" (28:55).

The men of low society can never forgive any slight – real or imaginary. But a really big man can afford to ignore his detractors. In fact, it is not weakness; it is the sign of great strength. And as the true faith is the greatest power, the believer can easily ignore the invective of unbelievers.

The ignorant unbelievers want to involve the believers in their illogical arguments; the believers should refuse to be dragged in such vain talks, saying that we do not want to have any connection with ignorant persons. After all, it is not possible to rectify each and every absurdity in this vast world.

The ideal discussion is that which is held with an intention to reach at the truth, without

prejudice and without conceit. Such a dialogue is welcome in Islam. But if a stubborn ignorant tries to drag a believer in baseless arguments, not to seek the truth, but to show how wise he .is, the Qur'an advises to ignore him completely

Amr-Bil-Maaroof

"And from among you there should be a group who invite good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong; and they only shall be successful. (Qur'an; 3:103).

Exhorting others to be virtuous is one of the most important duties of a Muslim. A society can progress in right direction so long as there are people in it who know the right path and who are willing to show it to others. Otherwise, the whole caravan may perish in a beastly jungle of anarchy and infidelity.

But before enjoining others to do good and resist from evil, one should himself adhere to the tenets of religion faithfully. Otherwise, the Qur'an will ask: "Why do you speak of a thing which you yourself do it not" So this duty of inviting others to righteousness compels a man to be righteous himself.

And how that exhortation is to be carried out Allah says in the Qur'an: "Call unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and kind preaching; and argue with them in the best manner". (16:25).

This was the method used by the Holy Prophet of Islam and his true followers to spread the message of Islam and to teach people the real significance of religion.

An interesting story is told of an old man in Medina who was engaged in ablution (Wudhu) for his prayer. Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (A.S.) (the grandsons of the Holy Prophet, (S.A) and of tender age at that time) realized that the man does not know the correct method of ablution. They wanted to correct him; but at the same time did not like to offend his feelings. So they approached him and told: "We are two brothers and we want you to be the judge between us as whose ablution is correct". When the old man agreed, the children proceeded to perform their ablution, in the most perfect way. The old man was watching them intently. He had to: he was to judge. Soon it dawned upon him that the children, in their kind and gentle manner, were teaching him. He exclaimed: "You both are correct. It was I who was wrong".

The old man learnt his lesson. But this episode will continue to show the preachers also how to .preach

The Best 'Jihad'

"The best 'Jihad' (religious war) is to say the truth in the presence of a tyrant ruler". (The Holy

Prophet)

The condition of a society can easily be judged by the attitude of its members towards each other. If the members care enough for each other to exhort each other to act righteously, the society is healthy. When the attitude changes to that of “Why should I bother?” the society begins its funeral march. As the society shuts its eyes from the individual’s behavior, the bad elements gradually become bold. Then comes a time when they start glorifying their evil action. For this purpose, high-sounding phrases are coined. Nakedness is called ‘natural condition’. Lie becomes ‘political talk’, brothels are labeled ‘night dubs’, gambling dens are named, ‘recreation centers, fornication becomes ‘indiscretion’, and hijacking and kidnapping political necessities.

Was is waged to ‘stop the wars’, bombs are dropped on civilians to ‘save their lives’. Countries are attacked to ‘save their freedom’, hateful methods are used to ‘create a harmonious society” It was to avoid this type of situation that “enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong” has been emphasized in Islam. It is the corner stone of Shariah which strengthens the whole .structure of religion