



The Principal Signposts Of The Islamic Message

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Introduction

Praise be to Allah. Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger Muhammad (s.a.w.), his pure progeny and the righteous among his companions.

The opponents of Islam have been continuously trying. to make use of every means of perversion, distortion and obscurity in order to mar the beliefs of Muslims, to smear their divine teachings, to distort their history and to disrupt their unity. This has been especially true since the era when infidel imperialism was occupying the Islamic countries. In their pursuits, these opponents infiltrated into a variety of fields, a wide array of falsification and fabricated slanders, both through pens dipped in the Crusades' hatred, and tongues speaking on behalf of modern day ignorance.

The aim of this cunning and wicked tactic was to prevent the Muslims from knowing the facts of their own religion, and the falsities inherent in their opponents' beliefs. It was, and is a part of a formidable and far-reaching conspiracy aimed at keeping discord and struggle kindled among the Muslims themselves.

Consequently, instead of mobilizing good efforts, utilizing the constructive energies, and concentrating the fighting forces to purify the Islamic countries from the filth of the disbelieving invaders, to nullify the imperialists' exploitation of the Islamic wealth, and to carry the call to the world, the Muslim strugglers had to direct their energies to guide those who had gone astray among the children of the ummah,

those who had been drifted away by the materialistic and infidel currents, and those who had been induced by the Western thought and behaviour, or by the mercenaries of the imperialists, to protect their influential positions of domination and exploitation, so, the Muslims' problems and calamities remained with each other.

Al-Balagh Foundation presents the The Principal Signposts of the Islamic Message, in the series of Islamic Concepts, for our dear readers, and wishes to lift a green light to all those who had slipped into the abyss of injustice and perversion, and to declare that Islam is the only way which leads towards happiness and peace.

Al-Balagh Foundation further assures the front which opposes Allah, Islam and humanity, that if there survived only a single Muslim on the surface of the earth, he would continue fighting, for it was incumbent upon Allah to make Islam victorious through him that it may prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may be averse.

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WHAT DOES ISLAM MEAN?

The word "Islam bears, within its meaning, the following two definitions

1. Linguistic Meaning: This is the general meaning in Arabic usage. implying absolute submission, surrender and obedience that is obeying the injunctions of the ruler without objection. Before Islam came as a formal religion. The word was used to denote the above meaning, without attaching to it any ideological or conventional context.

2. Idiomatic Meaning: The Holy Qur'an defines Islam as the Message of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Although Islam was the theme of all preceding divine messages, the word was chosen as a particular title denoting the Almighty's final revelation to mankind. In fact the Qur'an transformed the word "Islam from its linguistic meaning to the idiomatic meaning.

Still there remains the common implication in both usages - the linguistic and the idiomatic - that is submission and obedience, since Islam is the religion of voluntary submission to Allah's Will, the obeying of His commands and surrendering to His Will without the least objection.

Thus, the religion which Muhammad (s.a.w.) brought to humanity was called Islam'. It has since been used as a proper title for the Message preached by the Seal of Messengers and the word acquired has particular religious, legislative and devotional implications. Formerly the word did not enjoy these dimensions being void of any religious context, except that denoting mere submission, obedience and surrender in a hitherto obscure language, spoken by an insignificant desert people.

WHO IS A MUSLIM?

Whoever utters the two testimonies Shahadatain that is to say: Ashhadu an la ilaha iI-Iallah wa ashhadu an-na Muhammadan Rasoolullah which means "I bear witness that there is no god save Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah is a Muslim ⁽¹⁾.

Those who are born to Muslim parents are regarded Muslims by birth, disregarding whether or not he/she is a faithful believer, is a Muslim. Starting from this general definition of the Muslim, we may divide the belief of a Muslim with respect to one's connection with Islam, as follows: a- The Faith: This is the belief which is based on complete rational and intuitive understanding and conviction, embodied in adherence to, and application of, the decisions and the teaching of the religion in daily life.

This degree of belief and adherence is called "faith", and the Muslim who attains to this high degree of connection with Allah and of adherence to His laws is called "faithful".

Thus, faith is a degree higher than mere "submission", because it is true belief accompanied by complete adherence to, and application of, all the decisions of Islam, including devotions, rites, laws, systems, morals, concepts, commandments, teachings, etc.

The Qur'an distinguishes between these two different degrees of belief - that of being a Muslim and that of being a called Momin the faithful. It denounces those who pretend by proclamation to be Muslims, claiming to be of the believers.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

"The Redouin Arabs said: We believe. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): You believe not, but rather say: We submit', for the faith has not yet entered your hearts. Yet, if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not withhold from you aught (of the reward) your deeds. Surely Allah is All-forgiving All-merciful.

The (true) believers are those who believe in Allah and His messenger said afterward doubt not, and who strive with their wealth and their selves for the cause of Allah. These are they the truthful ones. Holy Qur'an (49:14-15)

Ultimately, one's Islam, will not be true, unless it reaches the stage of faith and complete responsiveness to the Will of Allah, the stage which has been pointed out by the verse describing Abraham's Islam towards Allah, the Exalted:

"When his Lord said to him: submit!' he said: I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds'. And Abraham enjoined on faith to his sons, and (so did) Jacob, (saying): My children, Allah has chosen for you the faith; so die not unless you are Muslims" Holy Qur'an (2:131-132)

This is the true Islam as described by the Glorious Qur'an. It represents the highest degree of faith and commitment, detailing the believer's intellectual and psychological maturity, and describing the response of his conduct and will. This is the Islam which brings about for humanity the good of both this world and the hereafter, and personifies the aims of the message of the Messenger, who said:

"...I have brought you the good of the world and the hereafter".

b- The Ostensible: This is a weak and formal submission which has no firm basis in the human soul. It does not have any effect on daily conduct, is not integrated with practical life and does not govern man's social relations and activities. It is a purely superficial attachment to Islam, rebulous undertaking which has no roots.

This false pretense is dangerous to the society and to the Islamic religion. It is a danger sign foretelling destruction and deviation, because it is the first step on the road to a relapse into the abyss of ignorance. Pretended submission does not make its adherent fit for, or worthy of, being a true follower of faith. It does not enable him to attain to the true degree of Islam, called for by the religion of the Master of Messengers. Muhammad (s.a.w.), which formulates the real nature of man and his goals in life, according to the laws of Allah and the path of the right religion.

If man does not attain to this stage of Islam, there arises a gap between his ideology and practical conduct, and subsequently a great divide rises between him and Islam as a belief and religion, and as a cultural way of life. Such a man remains far from being Muslim, except in outward appearance. He is, however, regarded as subject to the Islamic rules, and is treated as a Muslim.

In studying this group of Muslims, we must distinguish between two sorts which, though they come under the general heading of "Muslim", yet they cannot be described as "believers".

These are:

1. The Hypocrite: is the one who outwardly manifests Islam, while inwardly he is disbeliever. A hypocrite is professing Muslim on whom the rules of Islam are applicable, and who is treated as a Muslim, disregarding the belief which he cherishes in himself.

2. The Corrupt: This is the one who believes in Islam in his heart, but he does not apply it to his life and does not observe its obligations.. The difference between the two is vast. As regarding the hypocrite, the difference is ideological, which, in fact, is equal to plain disbelief, as the Qur'an says:

"Have you not seen those who are hypocrites (who) say to their brothers who disbelieve among the followers of the Scripture: if you are driven out, we surely will go out with you, and we will never obey anyone against you, and if you are attacked we surely will help you. And Allah beares witness that they verily are liars. " Holy Qur'an (59:11)

As to the corrupt, the Qur'an does not treat him in this way, as the difference, in this case, is that which concerns conduct. This corruption does not stand on an equal footing with hypocrisy in its quality and effect, if we take into consideration the inward and the heartfelt conviction. C- The Scheme of the Study: Islam, in its entirety, is a complete unity of thought, legislation and guidance. By understanding it you gain a general intellectual clarity, and by comprehending it you are encouraged to make real advances in the area of human culture.

By contemplating this dynamic religious infrastructure we may discover four basic facts which give Islam its form, and define the identity of man and his society which this religion creates. These four facts are:

- 1. The Basic Principles on Which Islam is Founded.**
- 2. The Content of the Message of Islam.**
- 3. The General Characteristics of the Islamic Message.**
- 4. The Objectives of Islam.**

We shall try in this brief study, to deal with these four facts by way of explanation and definition.

The Basic Principles On Which Islam Is Founded

PRELIMINARY

To define its understanding of man, the universe and life, to organize man's activities, and to delineate man's behaviour, thinking, social and legal relations, Islam starts from certain general principles. These general bases are the axis around which revolve all its concepts, and are the starting point from which proceed the law, rules, teachings, and on which are founded all human obligations. This has been done in such a way that complete harmony between these principal bases, and the goals of the Islamic religion and its objectives are not in the least compromised.

The principles have been mentioned above and in order to throw more light on these basic ideas, we shall handle them individually and in detail.

1. TO ALLAH BELONGS SERVITUDE AND RULE

"..His are the creation and command. Blessed be Allah, Lord of the worlds! ". Holy Qur'an (7:54)

"...Judgement belongs only to Allah; He has commanded that you worship none but Him. This is the most right religion; but most people know not. " Holy Qur'an (12:40)

From this comprehensive basis springs every legislation. concept and law in Islam. It is the essential starting point expressing the Unity of Allah, the Exalted, and man's servitude to Him and his connection with Him.

His are Creation, Sovereignty, Commandment, Will, and effective Wish. It is not for man in this life to believe, make rules or behave contrary to Allah's Will and Wisdom.

From this concept of submission and adherence there arises in Islam the notion of rejection of human despotism, and the idea of divine authority ruling human beings, as all are subject to Allah's Justice and related to His Will. The Righteousness of the human being's attitude and conduct is dependent on the extent of its coincidence with Allah's Will, represented by the divine religion, heralded by the Envoy of Mercy, Muhammad (s.a.w.).

No one is to legislate laws, nor act according to one's own interests, wishes or desires, in a way as to take oneself as legislator and lawmaker ⁽²⁾. Even the prophets and the messengers who were the best of people, and the examples for humanity, were not given this right. They, as human beings, could not practice it. Thus, the Qur'an addresses the last Prophet, saying:

"And when our clear signs are recited to them, those who hope not in meeting Us say: Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it. Say (O Muhammad): It is not for me to alter it of my own accord. I only follow nothing except what revealed to me. Surely I fear that for disobeying my Lord I shall be punished on the great (Day of Judgement). " Holy Qur'an (10:15)

Thus, this principle - believing in Allah, in man's servitude to Him, and in surrendering commandment, legislation and sovereignty to Allah alone - is regarded as the basic starting point for the structuring of thought, culture and human conduct.

2. COORDINATION BETWEEN CREATION AND LEGISLATION

The second principle essential to Islam in legislating laws, is that of the connection between creation and legislation, and harmonizing these aspects of existence. Islam has fully recognized the creative aspect of man, founding all its rules, duties, obligations and responsibilities on this basis and observing in this formulation that man is a complete subjective unit, comprising a physical body in addition to spiritual and psychological forces. Islam freely admits the requirements and needs of these two sides, legislating the necessary laws to organize and satisfy them.

Islam believes that man, in respect to his bodily construction, is part and parcel of nature, has instinctive, natural material needs, such as food, drink, shelter, clothing, medical treatment, marriage, etc. While Islam has handled this physical side of man with great interest and strict educational and legal care, it has similarly paid keen attention to the spiritual and psychological side of man. It has charted the course of his growth, directing and satisfying him in a way that balances the unity of human advancement and progress:

"Seek through your wealth the gains of the hereafter in that which Allah has given you and neglect not your portion of this life, and be kind to others just as Allah has been Kind to you, and seek not corruption in the land, surely Allah loves not corrupters". Holy Qur'an (28:77)

This verse affords man material welfare and spiritual happiness in life. Additionally, it guarantees the hereafter and eternal happiness in the world of eternity, without separating these two real ties in such a way that may cause a split, or result in a contradiction between the elements of human nature and its intellectual and behavioural aspects.

3. BELIEF IN UNITY OF HUMANKIND

The Islamic message in its dealings with mankind, starts from a practical and creative overview based on believing in the unity of mankind, and in the fact that all people spring from a common origin. Naturally then, they all share the common feature of humanity, and all are equals in their creation and nature as human beings living in this world.

It follows that they share similar feelings, inclinations, and basic needs. Owing to these incontestable features, Islam rejects the discriminatory practices and limits of human interaction instituted by man and inspired by the concepts of ignorance which reflects the human spirit of egoism, ignorance and arrogance.

The Qur'an wages war against these relics and concepts of ignorance, and raises the slogan of the unity of mankind and beckons towards this: ***"O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you in conduct. Allah is All-knowing, All-aware". Holy Qur'an (49:13)***

"O mankind! fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women; and fear Allah by Whom same (kind), you appeal to one

***another and (to) the kinship ties; Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you".
Holy Qur'an (4:1)***

Muhammad (s.a.w.), the final Prophet to mankind, confirmed these lofty principles, and referred to them in his timeless speech in the wake of his farewell pilgrimage. He said:

"O people! Your Lord is One, and your father is one.. .All of you are from Adam, and Adam is from clay, The most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you in conduct', and there is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab, except in' terms of piety"⁽³⁾.

Islam has based its practical criteria for distinguishing and giving respect on these supreme principles. It has fixed the measure of preference and evaluation on a scientific and accurate calculation. This course leads humanity towards progress and perfection, and activates in man the motivation towards good and innovation. Islam has restricted the reasons for preference to faith and piety.

a. Faith and Piety: Islam fixed this principle as a basis of respect. because it is the fountain head of good deeds, a cause for the perfection of man's personality, and a start for setting him on the right path in life:

"...the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you in conduct..." Holy Qur'an (49:13)

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said:

"...and there is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab,except in terms of piety."

b. Knowledge: The second measure of preference in Islam is knowledge. Allah, the Exalted says:

"...Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks..." Holy Qur'an (58:11)

"...say: Are those who know equal with those who know not? But only people of understanding will pay heed." Holy Qur'an (39:9)

c. Jihad (striving seeking Allah's pleasure), and defending the truth and the good values of life which the prophets have proclaimed. Allah, the Most High, says:

"...Allah has excelled those who struggle with their possessions and their selves in degree over those who stay (at home); yet to each Allah has promised good; and Allah has excelled those who struggle (in His way) over those who stay (at home) with great reward..." Holy Qur'an (4:95)

In this way Islam confirms the wisdom of its measures and criteria regarding the preference for piety, so that the benevolent and the offender may not be regarded on the same footing. This stirs in every man the desire for doing good vis a vis humanity.

Accordingly, these Islamic principles are humane ones open to all, and everybody may aspire to reach them. At the same time, they are real criteria expressing man's innate personality and evaluating his efforts and the very quality of his humanity. This runs contrary to the values of ignorance.

based on sex, race, class, wealth, party, power, relations, etc., which do not express, in any way, the beauty of the spirit hidden inside the individual. These criteria are no help in orientating the human towards good and acts of devotion beneficial to mankind. On the contrary, they kill in the individual

the spirit of goodness and creativity. These sentiments suppress in man his sense of being human, of his special importance, and of his ability to exalt his own being through (spiritual) progress.

This is because in their personal judgement, (Such people are subjected to artificial frames of reference) which have nothing to do with man's will, humanity, abilities, and personal disposition. Consequently, they close the doors of social advancement, kill the sense of the feeling of equality, and provoke the spirit of hatred and dissension amongst the different classes of society.

4. MANKIND IS THE BEST OF CREATION ON EARTH

To judge man and to deal with him. Islam uses a major principle, acknowledging the human race as the most advanced being, the most excellent form of creation, dignified creature and the most precious truth on this earth. Everything here is at his service, and was created for his well being. Allah, the Exalted, says:

"It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth, then turned His will to heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens, for He is the Omniscient." Holy Qur'an (2:29)

"And has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and the earth. In this there is an evidence (of truth) for people who ponder." Holy Qur'an (45:13)

"And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea, and provided them with good provisions and preferred them over many of whom We created with preference." Holy Qur'an (17:70)

Thus, wealth, the sun, the moon and stars, the land and water resources, the flora and the fauna, and all things in this world are meant to serve mankind and its interests. Man's very humanity which distinguishes him from other creatures, is the greatest reality on this earth, because of what it represents of intellect, will, knowledge, life, etc.

Having been given these merits and privileges, mankind has become in the sight of Islam, responsible for maintaining and developing these exalted human attributes, and for carrying out the duty of building a world of thoughtful reflection and good conduct on this earth, parallel in its goodness and benefits to that which fills this planet. The human is obliged to be a luminous word in the book of this big universe, and a being harmonious with the spirit of this beautiful and colourful world. Only in this way can he be the Divine's trustee to and worthy of endearment and honour:

"We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they could not bear this burden and were afraid of it. And man was able to accept this offer but he was unjust to himself and ignorant of the significance of this Trust." Holy Quran (33:72)

If man is to recognize his real value and position on this earth, and if he is to realize the extent of his responsibility, he is obliged to direct his activities and abilities with keen exactitude to serve humanity. He will then proceed on the road of perfection according to the type of life envisaged by Allah's Care and Wisdom, so that he may enhance humanity, honour and dignity. Otherwise he will be turned into merely an insignificant being according to the values of the ignorant,

which view man as a means of production and of execution, regard him as a mechanical device void of human feelings, spirituality and values. In order that man may not neglect this fact, and ignore his own value and merits, the Qur'an imbues in him the spirit of humanity. SOWS in his depths the essence of originality, defines for him his natural position among things, thus, re-balancing in himself the relation between the means and the objective. The Qur'an reminds him that everything in this world is to serve him and provide for his welfare, so that he is not deceived by material attractions, nor enslaved by the tyrants of ignorance and arrogance.

"And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam and carded them on the land and sea, aiIII provided them with good provisions, and preferred them over many of whom We created with preference." Holy Our'an (17:70)

On this basis Islam has established its attitude towards man in relation to his abundant and beneficial natural surroundings. This religion, has formed all its laws and values, so as to personify this fact and stamp it on man's world, brimming, as it is with animation and life.

5. BALANCE AND MODERATION

Islam's point of view towards human activities, and its treatment of material things, is different from the attitude of other social theories, such as communism, capitalism, socioalism. etc. Its outlook also differs from other philosophies, ethic systems, psychology, sociology, etc., represented by diverse schools of thought, cultural inclinations and explanatory theories. These human configurations have pushed the individual and society into a state of disorder and instability in its psychic and behavioural balance, because of the interpretations they offer by way of explaining the concepts of pleasure and pain, and of judging behaviour and freedom.

These variant interpretations have had their effects on man's politics, economics and inter- human relations, both individually and socially, in as much as instances of extravagance and deficiency, lavishness and poverty, have become destructive phenomena of civilization, sporting with man's physical and spiritual health, and despoiling the wealth, the social system and stability of life.

Thus, nothing of the conduct of this materialistic man can be subjected to a measure, or can be weighed in respect to values of good behaviour, since he regards pleasure as a goal, and untrammled freed as the basis for human conduct, expressing his being in the quest for pleasure of different forms and means. Through this type of understanding, all criteria, which systematize human conduct, are lost, and the balance of life is disturbed. Chaos and disorder thus reign, making man's conduct and inclinations too negligible to be measured.

This materialistic culture has produced a superficial man, unbalanced³ with a lusty and restless personality. The historian or social scientist may call this contemporary materialistic civilization, "the civilization of futility and loss . Man, under the sway of this culture, indulges in a variety of activities far from the rules of moderation and uprightness. Such practices may concern his instincts and social conduct, to satisfy needs like food, drink, sex, pleasure, wealth, power, etc. It may also concern the way he

expresses his emotions and feelings, like love, anger, consent, indignation, hatred, etc.

In all these practices he is a rootless and unbalanced creature, since his ability to be spiritually upright has died in his depths. The criteria of morality and spiritual virtue have essentially faded away from his world.

But Islam, in order, to save man from this restless materialistic current, subjects. behaviour, desires, psychological inclinations and social relations to universal and general organization and regulations.

Islam subordinates man's conduct and relations to measured rational calculations, based on a firm psychological and moral infrastructure, as well as on legal discipline, and social guidance represented by Islamic tradition and public Opinion. Many Qur'anic verses, Islamic texts and related concepts confirm this principle, formulating out of it a canon regulating life, that is. a canon for producing a disciplined, balanced and moderate Muslim.

Perhaps the strictest text on this subject are the divine words addressed to the finest exemplar of humanity, Muhammad (s.a.w.). It says: ***"So go straight as you have been commanded, and whoever repents with you, and transgress not. Surely He sees what you do." Holy Qur'an (11:112)***

In other Qur'anic instructions there are clear descriptions and well defined explanations of this basic principle of the heavenly law and its values. For example, we may mention the divine saYing in respect to the conduct of the Islamic personality and how it deals with wealth and possessions and how it utilizes them:

"And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor stingy; and there is ever a firm station between the two. Holy Qur'an (25:67)

"And keep not your hand chained to your neck, nor stretch it wide lest you sit down cringing and weary. Holy Qur'an (17:29)

"O Children of Adam! take your adornment at every mosque (time and place of) worship, and eat and drink, but waste not. Surely He loves not the prodigals. Holy Qur'an (7:31)

The Qur'an's directing man to be moderate and not to be prodigal or miserly. is not confined to material things alone. It also includes guiding man's emotional and psychological states, and controlling the balance of his psychology.

It says:

"And if you punish, then punish with the like of that with which you were punished and if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient." Holy Qur'an (16:126)

"So that you grieve not for what you have lost, nor become too happy about what Allah has given to you. Allah loves not all prideful boasters." Holy Qur'an (57:23)

"And slay not the soul that Allah has forbidden save with justice, and whoever is unjustly slain, then we have appointed to his next of kin authority; but let him not exceed in slaying. Surely he will be helped." Holy Qur'an (17:33)

Examples of invitation to moderation and equilibrium are many in the Scripture, Tradition and the studies compiled on morals and behaviour, and the teachings diffused by Muslim scholars with respect to the bases and

roots of Islam. The idea of moderation and equilibrium is obvious in every Islamic law and concept: it is visible in keeping the balance between the affairs of this world and those of the hereafter, as is in His saying:

"But seek the gains of the hereafter in that which Allah has given you and neglect not your portion of the world, and be you kind even as Allah has been Kind to you,..." Holy Qur'an (28:77)

The need to keep a balance between personal and social interests in order to maintain equilibrium between the interests of the individual and the society is obvious. The necessity simply stated is to suppress man's selfishness, on one band, and to protect individual freedom and will, on the other. Islam's concern is obvious in keeping the equipise between the rights and the duties of the individual, the state and the society.

It is obvious in the balance between the two sexes, male and female. It goes without saying that this principle of moderation and balance has an important effect on the establishment of order and discipline, and in directing the latent potential of man and nature to the benefit and welfare of mankind.

6. THE WORLD AS A TRANSIENT STAGE IN MAN'S EXISTENCE

One of the most important basic principles effective in the steady profession of the Islamic life is believing in the hereafter, the eternal extension of man's life after death, rejecting the idea of a final end and the evanescence of humanity. The idea of an abrupt severance of life, ending by burying a corpse under the surface of the earth, and limiting it to the time frame of the period lived in this world, is a materialistic ignorant one, denying resurrection, the Day of ***"Allah; and those - they are the successful ones. Their Lord proclaims them glad tidings of mercy from Him, and good pleasure; for them await Gardens wherein is lasting bliss."*** Holy Qur'an (9:20-21)

"And those who believe and do good deeds: such are the inhabitants of Paradise; therein dwelling forever." Holy Qur'an (2:82)

"Say: 'In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy in that let them rejoice. That is better than what they gather.'"' Holy Qur'an (10:58)

"O mankind! The promise of Allah is true. So let not the life of the world beguile you, nor let the (avowed) beguiler beguile you about Allah." Holy Qurari (35:5)

These are the most important basic principles promulgated by Islam for building society's intellectual framework, conduct and order of life. This religion pays attention to every facet of life so that these principles and beliefs do not remain merely theoretical ideas in the mind of a Muslim, nor may they be regarded as commandments and teachings which live and die within the frapework of a theory or a thought. Islam tries, in fact, to turn them into the scientific basis on which all aspects of life, activity and conduct may be founded.

The Contents Of The Islamic Message

PRELIMINARY

By studying the Islamic message and analyzing the intrinsic structure of this religion, we come to realize that the questions which Islam deals with - these issues cover all of man's needs - Can be divided into three major categories:

ideology, legislation and, social morals and conduct.

1. IDEOLOGY

It comprises the collection of the ideas and concepts which explain the appearance of the world and the meaning of life. This ideology works as the basis of a starting point for the construction of all the aspects of this great religion.

The Islamic belief centres on monotheism Tawheed, that is. believing in the One and only Creator, to Whom are ascribed all the attributes of Absolute Richness and Perfection. Guided by this belief, a Muslim draws a plan for thought and action, and defines his relation with the Creator to Whom are ascribed the traits of Absolute Perfection, Knowledge and Power, and Who fashioned the universe out of nought.

The Islamic doctrine is based on three important factors:

1. Belief in Allah, the Almighty Who is Just, and never does He leave a people in darkness. Injustice is not one of His traits, and the meeting out of reward and punishment is based on Justice.
2. Belief in Revelation, Prophethood and what is connected to them, such as the message and the Imamah (divinely ordained leadership): follows next.
3. The last but not least is the belief in life of the hereafter, resurrection, judgement day, reward and punishment.

2. LEGISLATION

The second subject which the Islamic message came to treat and organize is law and order. i.e. to show man the correct path in all aspects of life, both social and convictional. In the social field, Islamic legislation manages the affairs of adjudication. economy, finance, trade, ownership, inheritance, marriage, divorce, relations in the workplace, civil service, war and peace, contractual agreements, etc.

As regards organizing the religion's devotional affairs. such as praying, fasting, pilgrimage, purification. etc.. the Islamic legislation defines the necessary rules and regulations required to show the lines of man's relations with Allah the Exalted, and of the method of worship.

The books of jurisprudence and Islamic legal and legislative writings are full of the most mature type of legislation and the widest systematic way of organizing life, reflecting the spirit and the goals of Islam, and explaining the dynamics and dimensions of Islamic legislation in its dealings.

3. SOCIAL MORALS AND CONDUCT

Humanity has never heard a message that attaches such great importance to social morals, conduct and education as that of the Islamic code. Islam regards morality as one of the most essential characteristics of man. and the

truest yardstick for distinguishing humanity from bestiality. The Messenger of mankind says:

"I have been sent to complete the best of morals."

So, Islam's message is an ethical one, and its keen interest in building individuals morally is connected to its general educational method for nurturing the righteous personality and building a virtuous society.

Thus, Islam concentrates on building the personality from within, and concentrates on developing moral inclinations, and strengthening morality and consciousness in the individual, which ultimately benefits society as a whole.

Through this vast, encompassing of all aspects of human life-ideology, legislation, morals, manners, principles of social relations and educational directives - Islam becomes a general way of life, and a message comprehensive of all human activity, quite distinct from other religions and social and political systems.

The General Characteristics Of The Islamic Message

PRELIMINARY

The Islamic religion enjoys certain subjective characteristics and attributes that are inseparable from the nature of its legislation and message; the effects and spirit of which are discernible in every law, idea and concept. In order to cast more light on these general characteristics and attributes, we should now study them with close attention, so as to elucidate the brilliant concepts embodied in these valuable characteristics:

1. EVERLASTING

Islam's eternity is the continuation of its existence and the extension of its message, as long as man continues his life on the surface of this planet.

"Say (O Muhammad): What thing is great est in testimony? Say:

Allah is witness between me and you. And this Qur'an which has been revealed to me to warn you therewith and whomever it may reach..." Holy Quran (6:19)

Islam has to be everlasting, because it is the last of the religions and completes the divine message, as an expression of Allah's kindness and mercy to His creatures.

Throughout history and in every period mankind has not been able to do without religion. It has always been in need of a religion to guide it, and in need of a faith to save it from ignorance, the domination of despots, and deviant ways of life.

Allah the Exalted willed that the religion, which was to accompany mankind in its forward progress and to encompass the aspects of renewal and growth in life, should be Islam, because it is the religion designed to throw light on straightest path. and to guide humanity towards good and righteousness. How wonderfully Imam Au (a.s.) describes this eternal religion and the most practical system that had been revealed to the final messenger, Muhammad (s.a.w.), saying:

"...then He revealed to him the Book, a light whose brilliance never goes out, a glow which never fades away, an ocean that is never fathomed, a path that never goes astray, and a ray whose light never becomes dark." ⁽⁴⁾

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) illustrates this everlasting and ever extending divine law in his saying:

"The Qur'an is not dead; it is alive. It goes on as do the day and the night, and the sun and the moon. It will be with our last as it had been with our first"⁽⁵⁾.

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) further explicitly adds to the horizon of that idea, and fills dimensions with light, by saying:

"The Qur'an is not dead, but alive, and the verse is not dead, but alive. Had it been that if a verse revealed to a people died with the death of those people, the Qur'an would have died too. But the verse flows on with the survivors as it had flowed with the departed." ⁽⁶⁾

Through these firm, expressive words, the leaders of thought and the Imams of the divine law, illustrate the continuity and eternity of the Islamic religion. They made a distinction between the contents and the goals of the religion on one hand, and the elements of time and place, on the other

hand, since the laws and the regulations of the religion are regarded eternally applicable, free of any outside effects.

The Islamic religion deals with man abstractly and objectively, so that it may be applicable in respect to all of mankind in every stage and age, taking into consideration that man, owing to his particular disposition, innate needs, inclinations and instincts, does not change in his essential makeup, though time place and other outer circumstances may vary.

Actually changes and developments occur only in the means, methods and interests which man develops to meet his psychological and physical needs, and through which he may express his ideas and feelings. Through progress in the ways and means of living or what is termed social development, the goods and services which meet man's natural requirements, such as the means of transportation, medical treatment, housing, education, food. etc., all increase.

If we study deeply this phenomenon and discover the basic elements which impart to Islam the quality of being everlasting and continual, we would uncover the following:

a. Scope and universality: One of the factors which maintains Islam amidst mankind, is its scope and universality. Islam is a universal and capacious religion. It handles affairs as diverse and far ranging as belief, worship, ethics and a complete set of laws organizing family affairs, the state. wealth, economy, war and peace, land and relations in the workplace. It also covers man's various individual activities, including hygiene. nourishment. comfort. creativeness, preservation of bodily and psychological health, etc.

The Qur'an says:

"...and We have sent down the Book (the Qur'an) which makes clear everything and a guidance and a mercy and glad tidings to Muslims (those who submit to Allah)." Holy Qur'an (16:89)

"Surely We have sent down to you the Book with the truth to judge between mankind by what Allah has shown you..." Holy Qur'an (4:105)

Thus the Qur'an, with its broad concepts, comprehensive foundation, and the universality of its verses, is a complete constitution for life, a way of governing and of politics, and a call to guidance and salvation. The Prophet's tradition undertakes to explain its meanings, disclose its contents,

defines it where applicable, outlines its details and analyzes its general terms. This legislative unity between the Book and the tradition has produced a general systematic comprehension, and a vast intellectual capacity. This objective fact about the Islamic religion inspired the following legislative rule; "There is not a single occurrence without there being a divine decision about it.

Further confirmation of this fact is seen in the Qur'anic verses and narrations of Ahl al-Bait (The Prophet's progeny). Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

"Allah, the Exalted, left out nothing that the ummah may need without revealing it in this Scripture, and without explaining it to His Messenger (s.a. w.). For everything He ordained a limit and a sign pointing to it, and

ordained apenalty on whosoever transgresses the limit."⁽⁷⁾ Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"Allah the Exalted revealed in the Qur'an the explanation of everything. By Allah, He left out nothing needed by His servants, so that no servant can ever say: I wish this was revealed in the Qur'an! As Allah had revealed this, too, in it."⁽⁸⁾ He (a.s.) adds:

"There is nothing that is not in the Book (Qur'an) or not in the tradition."

The Imam (a.s.) also says:

"There is not an affair about which two persons may dispute, without its having a root in the Book of Allah the Exalted, (the problem is that) only men's minds do not attain to it."⁽⁹⁾

All these texts confirm the enormous scope of Islam and the vast extent of its legal, organizational, intellectual and convictional horizons, enabling a Muslim to know that Islam has a legal viewpoint and an attitude towards every situation, event and topic that may occur or appear in man's life, throughout time and space.

The development of the human in life, the appearance of new financial, political, economic and social institutions, such as banks, companies, different financial and commercial establishments; as well as clubs and societies, organizational and management concerns; and the development of the relations of work and production; the development of the various means of life; all find their legal basis and legislative roots which Islam comprehends and for which it coins relevant laws according to its accepted way.

This intellectual and legislative capacity is the reason of the everlastingness of Islam and of the continuation of its existence. This characteristic is the major factor and basic cause for Islam's ability to meet every new development that may take place in man's world. b. Flexibility: If we give a close look to man's life for the purpose of defining his needs for sustenance and advancement, to development and perfection, we realize that these can be divided into two categories.

Firstly, a constant and unchanging one, related to the fixed needs of man. These are the natural and instinctive needs for nourishment, do thing, marriage, medical treatment, learning, security, etc. All these human needs are invariables and are innate in man, connected to his disposition and inborn instincts. These drives do not change, and the need for them remains constant, disregarding the changing circumstances and ways and means of life.

Secondly, the means and methods which enable man to respond to these fixed needs and to try and satisfy them. These instruments continually change and develop. That is, the means of producing food, clothing, transportation, housing, medical treatment; the means of acquiring knowledge, the means of defence and security and the means of managing and organizing political, social and economic activities. All of these continually develop, and become continuously more complicated as life is growing and being enriched through science, increased experience and human discoveries.

Islam organizes the fixed aspects of life through broadly defined rules and regulations as these particulars are not subject to change. It leaves the changing aspects of life to move according to general rules and concepts which embody Islam's flexibility, a dimension frequently misunderstood. It should be made clear that the flexibility afforded in Islam does not mean changing its spirit, or changing its principles and concepts. This dynamism is meant to reflect that Islam is well equipped to accommodate different methods of implementation, within the general framework of faith.

In a nutshell. Islamic flexibility translates as a constancy of contents, with the possibility of changing external forms in every case for which Islam has defined no specific quality or model.

C. Ijtihad (Reasoning): The third basic factor that eternalizes Islam and gives it its ability to absorb the constantly changing circumstances in man's life, is Islam's acceptance of ijthad, or reasoning by a qualified Jurist and the procreative and extendable nature of its rules and concepts. Ijtihad is a scholarly endeavor practiced by the learned jurists, the specialists of Islamic legislation, with the purpose of deriving laws, making decisions and defining concepts from the original Islamic sources. However, an important point of note is, ijthad is not conjecture as some have misunderstood.

The Glorious Qur'an and the noble traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) are the basic sources for the process of ijthad, which is exclusively practiced by experts specialized in delineating the Islamic legislation. comprehending its concepts, digesting its contents, and understanding its goals and purposes.

Historically there have always been jurists qualified to contrive decisions. rules and concepts needed by the society, the individual, and the state, in respect to the diverse affairs of life. These legal specialists depend on the basic source ⁽¹⁰⁾. to uncover the massive intellectual and legislative content from the texts and the light of the concepts of the Qur'an and the traditions.

Thus, ijthad is a scientific effort that depends on certain legislative sources, and follows a specified inductive method. Ijthad, without these sources and void of this scientific method, would be a futile and harmful deviation. injuring the spirit and the goals of religion. Clearly not all sources or methods are capable of arriving at sound religious decisions or of fulfilling the goals of religion and its legislative aims.

This is why ijthad is an effective means of maintaining the originality, capaciousness and eternity of the Islamic religion. Ijthad, for this reason, allows basic Islamic sources, the Qur'an and the tradition to remain flowing like a swift river that feeds the brooks, streams and canals and continues in its path even watering far away areas.

If we consider the river in this parable to represent the Scripture and the tradition, and the far away areas to be the unexpected new topics and issues which appear in man's life, and the network of canals and streamlets branched from it as the derived decisions and rules, then the jurist or the Mujtahid, represents the clever engineer who designs the intricate network of canals to water those far away areas.

To stop ijthad from functioning is like blocking the flow of a mighty river and preventing the construction of the canals which are the keys to

fertility, thus, causing potentially good soil to remain a wasteland as a result of depriving the sub-waterways of the flow of the life-giving river.

Since Islam represents life's fertility and humanity's path of growth, no one has the right to stop the course of this great current which was meant to penetrate the limits of time and place and enrich all areas of life:

"O you who believe! respond to Allah and the Messenger, when he calls to that which will give you life, and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, and that to Him you will be gathered." Holy Qur'an (8:24)

Muslims are ordered to refer to the experts and to seek their advice whenever a new situation arises, and not to rely on their personal, or others' conjecture, which may spell some disaster in this world and the hereafter. Allah, the Most High, says:

"When there comes to them a news of security or fear, they immediately spread abroad; but if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those responsible among you, those of them who investigate it, would have known it. And were it not for Allah's bounty upon you and His mercy, you would surely have followed Satan, save a few (of you)." Holy Qur'an (4:83)

In this Qur'anic text there is a plain command to refer to the trusted notables, after the Prophet (s.a.w.) who know the rules and circumstances and thus are able to derive from them practical decisions for whatever happens in the world. Here we must make clear that *ijtihad* does not mean to changing the edicts of Islam and its fixed principles, or to falsify them, as these principles and texts are fixed and unchanging. The process of *ijtihadis* designed to understand and interpret the texts.

It is a scientific method employed by the jurisprudent the *faqeeh* to comprehend the texts and to induce their meaning for the purpose of forming general rules and derive the needed laws and decisions therefrom. If the *mujtahid* the *faqeeh* does not understand correctly and errs in his induction, the Qur'anic principle, or the Prophet's tradition, would remain intact and preserve its spirit and originality, without being damaged by the *mujtahid's* mistake.

Thus, there appears the rule that no *ijtihad* (induction) is permissible where there is a definite text. That is, no *mujtahid* has the right to coin a law, twist a rule or issue a decree concerning an event, if there is already a relevant decision covering that event in the Qur'an or in the tradition.

2. EASE AND FACILITY

Islam is a divine revelation, in whose entire structure and goals reflects the perfect attributes of Allah the Exalted, Law-Maker, Who is Just, Kind, Merciful and Wise. These sacred attributes are clearly discernible in all the Islamic laws, obligations and recommended codes of behaviour.

They are also manifest in the ease and tolerance of Islamic teachings, which recognize man's abilities and personal capabilities. They are seen in every law and every obligation prescribed by Islam for the humankind in order to define relations between the Creator and the created, as well as among fellow-humans themselves.

Divine wisdom willed that the laws should be based on a real and practical principle of correlation between the specified obligation and man's

ability to respond to it and enact it. Thus, obligations and responsibilities all come within man's power and ability to carry them out. This fact is necessitated by divine justice. and to apply justice, man is not burdened with what he cannot fulfill, nor must he exceed the lowest limit of his endurance.

Had man been ordered to do what was beyond his ability and power, and had he been asked to submit and respond to laws which could not be carried out, nor tolerated, the Lawmaker would have been unjust and trifling, and deemed unwise at adjusting the relation between man's natural disposition and laws.

Consequently, the purpose of having a law would have been lost. But in Islam the Law-maker is Allah. the Just and the Wise. and certainly injustice is not His attribute and neither does He trifle. It was He Who created man and universe from nought, and it was He Who placed everything on the footing of wisdom and exactitude in perfect harmony with human disposition and the laws of nature. That is why Islam is also called the Natural Religion.

"Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him. And (so do) the angels and the possessors of knowledge - upholding justices. There is no god but Him, the All-mighty, the All-wise." Holy Qur'an (3:18)

The Glorious Qur'an refers to this wonderful attribute of ease and facility in Islam, and discloses the unique Wisdom of the Almighty:

"Allah wants to lighten your burden for man was created weak." Holy Qur'an (4:28)

"...Allah desires not to make any uneasiness on you; but He desires to purify you and to complete His blessings upon you, that you may be thankful." Holy Qur'an (5:6)

"Allah does not charge a soul but according to its ability for it (soul) what it has earned, and against it what it wrought." Holy Qur'an (2:286)

"...Allah does not impose on any soul that which he cannot afford. Allah will bring ease, after hardship." Holy Qur'an (65:7)

If we turn to the traditions, we will find them a perfect reflection close shadow of the great spirit of the Qur'an, calling to what the holy Book calls to.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) says:

"I have brought to you the facile and easy religion . He (s.a.w.) also said:

"My people are exempted (from punishment) in nine cases: when mistaken, forgetting, compelled, unknowing, unable, forced to, envious, when jealous, and when whispering evil about people (before leaving the lips, nor uttered by a tongue."⁽¹¹⁾

Imam Au (a.s.) also referred to this by saying:

"Praised be Allah Who revealed divine laws through Islam. For its follower He made its codes easy..."⁽¹²⁾

Talking about the hajj (pilgrimage) as an obligatory act, in circumstances of easy accomplishment. Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) says: " People are ordered to perform it only once, no more, because Allah imposed the obligations in accordance with the weakest ability,' he added, together with whatever accessible sheep of sacrifice',

which is available to both the rich and the poor. Similar are the other religious duties; they are imposed according to the abilities of the weakest of the people, like the hajj (pilgrimage) which is imposed just once, while those who are capable, are urged to repeat it if possible .⁽¹³⁾ .

Through these principles, Islam has strengthened the rule of ease and facility, extending it to all religious obligations and duties. This serves to emphasize that all Islamic legislations are practical. Allah is the Law-Maker. He knows man's real scope and the limits of his ability. Allah the Exalted wants man to be obedient in accordance with the principles and rules which he is to follow. Therefore, He made all the duties and obligations within the limits of man's scope and endurance.

For example, Islam exempts the sick, the weak and the traveller from fasting, lightens these situations by accepting fasts at some other time, or by feeding the needy, or by asking Allah's forgiveness. A sick person compensates for lapsed fasts by fasting after recovering from sickness and becoming able to fast, otherwise must pay a specified expiation. In case if he/she is too poor to pay that, then should pray for Allah's forgiveness.

Whoever is unable to go to hajj, or to fight in the way of Allah, jibad, is completely be exempted from that duty. Whoever is in debt and cannot settle it, is entitled to receive from the public treasury as much as he owes. Whoever is disobedient, the doors of repentance and forgiveness are open to him, and so on. All these injunctions are to assist in adhering to his obligations and practically apply them.

3. HUMANITY

The prime goal of Islam is the deliverance and salvation of humanity. Its only aim is to save humanity from tyranny, evil, incorrect beliefs, corrupt creeds, and debased morals and values, so that justice, harmony, while peace and security prevail all over the world.

In this way humanity would enjoy divine blessings, free from all concepts and theories of ignorance. Such ignorance dissects unity and rends asunder human brotherhood with the claws of racism and class-discrimination, or with the talons of sectarianism, power, wealth, etc. Therefore, the Qur'an speech is addressed to humanity as a whole so as to deliver them all and guide them to their best interests without making any distinction between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the high and the low, the fair-skinned and the coloured.

"O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you in conduct. Allah is All-knowing, All-aware." Holy Qur'an (49:13)

The Almighty describes Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) by stressing:

"We sent you not save as a mercy for the peoples." Holy Qur'an (21:107)

"And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) save as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner to all mankind; but most of people know not." Holy Qur'an (34:28)

This human attribute is embodied in two major principles of Islam. On one hand it promotes love and kindness among the children of Adam,

dismantling the barriers of the days of ignorance, which divided mankind into race, region, class, and other distasteful forms of discrimination and classification. On the other hand, Islam is a universal message noted for its magnanimity and for its noble and humane tendency, exempting none from its bounties, and treating none with injustice.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was the highest ideal personifying these lofty values and ideals. History is a witness to the splendid examples of the saviour of humanity, the advocate of peace, Muhammad, displaying the spirit of his message and testifying to the truth of his call. When he was gravely wounded in the battle of Uhud, one of his companions asked, "What, if you cursed them? He coolly replied, with his inimitable kindness, "I have been sent not to curse, but to be a mercy: O my Allah! Convert my people, as they do not know."

4. PRACTICALITY

Islam is a religion of endeavor and a way of life, which helps the human being towards the shores of salvation.

Such being the status and goals of the message, it cannot but be a practical one, far from illusion, rigidity and irrationality. Thus, in each and every law, idea and concept it takes into consideration man's personal scope, his social requirements and his natural disposition. This is unlike the laws coined by man and planned by his short-sighted, superficial, and in perfect power of thinking - laws which he determined without thinking of the possibility of their applicability and without taking into consideration their responsiveness to nature and to the spiritual, intellectual and physical realities which interact and impact upon legislation and theory.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the positive theories and schools of thought lacking practicality is the Marxist theory. Marx derived his theory of communism under the pressure of a personal reaction against the social circumstances surrounding his age and himself. He was a correspondent for a London newspaper. He was denied his due wage increase. This incident kindled in him the fire of hatred against the prevalent economic and social conditions, and he began imagining a new form of society based on abolishing individual possessions and religion, and proclaiming common possession of the means of production and the equal distribution of goods.

His vision called for a common nihilistic society, similar to the primitive one which he imagined in his analysis and explanation of history. But those who came after him and tried to apply his theory, like Lenin and Stalin, had to enact a substitute which they termed "socialism". Millions of peoples have been sacrificed at the altar of this failing communist experience, by the Leninist and Stalinist dictatorship throughout Russia and her satellites.

This system continued to be changed, amended and reformed, and a gradual withdrawal from these imaginary structures began, since this theory was far from being practically applicable, as it did not take human nature into consideration.

Communism is not the only theory lacking practicality; capitalism is also void of it in its general viewpoint, and even its general proliferation does not guarantee its applicability.

For example, capitalist democracy advocates political and economic freedom through its literature, ideas and theories and hails such freedom as everybody's right. Yet, it does not offer any practical guarantee to the individual enabling him to practice them. In reality this freedom has become a door open only to a certain elite, and is exclusively for the interest of the influential classes which control wealth and political power, enabling them to dominate and exploit.

In this way, the idea of freedom in the capitalist world has become a form of enslavement, and political and economic exploitation of the deprived. It has degenerated into an excuse to colonize people and suck their blood.

Islam, on the other hand, is realistic in its steps, and practical in its course. This practicality is best shown in the biography of the Almighty's final Messenger amidst his struggle to build the Islamic society on the basis of the eternal principles and laws embodied in the Holy Qur'an. Uthman ibn Madh'oon, ibn Mas'ood and others are quoted to have said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to teach ten (of verses), and he would not move to other ones until we had learnt how to practice them. In this way he taught the Qur'an together with how to put it into practice."⁽¹⁴⁾

If we reflect on the Islamic message and try to penetrate its depths, we will find that the causes of Islam's practicality can be ascribed to the following:

a. Islam's consideration of man's innate disposition and its methodology of responding to his natural instincts and inclinations, balancing the obligations, responsibilities and diverse laws with man's range of abilities and scope of activities.

b. Islam's recognition of the principle of repentance and keeping the door of divine forgiveness open to all the rebels and the violators of the justice of the law: This enables man to be responsive and return to the best norms of human behaviour, taking into consideration psychological resolve and will. Everybody may commit some mistakes or sins, except those whom Allah has immunized. Man may strive to follow a straight path in his life, but he will not always be able to traverse it. Hence, the principle of repentance as a legislative means enabling man to set his attitudes aright, to correct the line of his progress, and to ease his conscience from the pricks of sin and the feelings of remorse which the sinners and the disobedient are afflicted with.

c. The principle of facility and ease.

d. Imposing legal penalties: This principle expresses Islam's realistic evaluation of the nature of human motives and behaviour, as a vehicle guaranteeing the application of divine law and protecting the order of life. Allah, the Wise Legislator Who wants man to respond to the words of truth and good, and to be guided by the divine law, is the One Who knows the reality of man and his inclinations:

"Does He not know Who created? And He is Subtle, All-aware." Holy Qur'an (67:14)

He does know that man will certainly commit sins and will disobey, and so, He has opened to him the door of forgiveness for mistakes and offences committed. The first step on the road of guidance, is man's returning back to

Allah, and his treading the path of light and righteousness. Allah also knows that many people will not listen to the word of truth, nor would they harmonize themselves with the laws of good and justice. It happens that certain men do not think of retreating from sin or changing their evil course in life. Thus, He has ordained penalties to treat such deviants ones, who endanger the order of life and try to destroy the pillars of good and peace, and spread corruption in the earth. The repentance of such people is not accepted, because of the nature of the crimes they have committed. They must be punished:

"And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation, o men of understanding, that you will be godfearing. Holy Qur'an (2:179)

"Certainly We sent Our apostles with dear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that people may conduct themselves with equity; and We sent iron, in which there is strong power and benefit for people so that Allah would know who helps Him and His apostles in secret; Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty." Holy Qur'an (57:25)

One honourable tradition notes:

"Verily Allah may amend by force what He does not do by the Qur'an."

e. Gradualness and Ijtihad: One of the systematic factors of its legislation which gives Islam its attribute of being practical is its method of gradually imposing the divine laws at the outset of its mission. The law had been communicated to the people by stages over a period of twenty three years.

It not imposed on the people all at once, nor were they burdened with its entirety on the very first day. This gradualness is an expression of Islam's practicality, taking, as it does, into consideration the intrinsic nature of man, and the social environment which it wants to change. Ijtihad expresses the same thing. It is an admission of the advancement of human life and the development of its requirements. Ijtihad allows continual expansion of the Islamic decision making process.

which runs parallel with the growth and extension of the variety of affairs and questions of life concerning individual and social conduct, and related to politics, finance, jurisdiction, economy, organization, administration, etc.

5. RESPECTING THE INTELLECT

The Islamic religion is known for its being a religion of intellect and sound reasoning. It is a message addressed to an inquisitive mind, and it coincides with the mind's logic based on clear evidence and proof. Thus, the Qur'an conducts an open and continual argument with the intellect. It ceaselessly calls upon man to think about himself and to contemplate his world and the message addressed to him, as this builds man's relation with his Creator and his world, on the basis of an intellectual understanding and scientific method, devoid of falsehood, deceit, and misguidance. Allah, the Almighty, says:

"As for these similitudes, We coin them for mankind, but none will grasp their meanings save the Wise." Holy Qur'an (29:43)

"And thereby He brings forth for you crops and olives and palms and vines and all the fruit. Surely in that is a sign for people who reflect. And He has made the night and the day and the sun and the moon subservient

to you; and the stars are subservient by His command. Surely in that are signs for a people who understand." Holy Qur'an (16:11-12)

"Surely the worst of animals in Allah's sight are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand." Holy Qur'an (8:22)

Starting with this orderly basis of Islamic thought, the Qur'an rejects wavering attachment to Islamic beliefs that wander through the labyrinths of ignorance, doubt and instability, It confines faith to the stage of firm belief and adherence: Allah, the Exalted, says:

"The (true) believers are those who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, and who strive with their wealth and their selves for the cause of Allah. These are they who are the truthful ones." Holy Qur'an (49:15)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.), explaining the value and importance of the mind in Islam and life, said, "On creating the mind, Allah made it talk and said to it: Come! It came. Then He said to it: Go! it went. So, He said: By My Might and Magnificence, I created no creature more amicable to Me than you, and I will not bring you to perfection except in those whom I love. Verily it is you to whom I issue My commands and My prohibitions; and it is you whom I punish and reward!"⁽¹⁵⁾

On this understanding and evaluation of the mind is based the fundamental rule declaring: "Whatever is acceptable to the mind is acceptable to Islam".⁽¹⁶⁾

6. HARMONY AND NON-CONTRADICTION

The Islamic rules, concepts, systems, laws and beliefs are distinguished by their following a unified and cogent argument.. Some aspects of Islam have become the means and the force for implementing others, or as preliminary ones assisting the others in being enacted, without contradiction or conflict among them Believing in Allah and adhering to good conduct are vital in the application of the Islamic laws of politics, jurisdiction and economy. Observing the devotional commitments, and performing the divine duties, are necessary for self-purification, righteousness of conduct and keeping healthy.

Thus, all the concepts, values, rules, rites, etc. support one another, within the framework of believing in Allah. forming a religious and intellectual unity, supporting one another towards implementation, each aspect smoothing the way for the other to carry out its task.

Let us take zakat (religious tax) as an example. Zakat is an economic, devotional and moral principle. Its goal is to protect the balance of the means of living, to efface class discrimination within the Islamic society, and to purify the self from selfish and covetous drives. In order to guarantee the success of this prescription in attaining its goals, many ideas, concepts and other rules should work together. Believing in Allah. in the hereafter, in moral education and in the authority of the divine law, are all forces that play an effective role in successfully enacting this rule.

A Muslim's faith in the hereafter's reward, his fear of divine punishment, his growing moral motivation, such as generosity and self-denial, are all nurtured in the conscience of the individual and the society by Islam.

The presence of the element of abiding by the law and the state's right to use force against the disobedient i.e. the greedy and these enslaved by wealth, to pay their due zakat for the purpose of fulfilling this rule's economic and moral objectives. are all factors which exert their influence in strengthening the possibility of enactment. These elements also help coordinate the practical results of the rules and concepts aimed at fulfilling economic equity, reviving the society with material resources and non-material noble humane values, and raising the Muslim's spiritual and devotional level.

7. NURTURING INTENTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Islam attached great importance to intentions and objectives. It regards them to be the spirit of the deed and the basis of its value, because a doer, in the eyes of Islam, expresses his intention and objective through his deed, whether good or bad. Therefore, Islam takes care to enlighten the intention, and to correct man's direction and goal in life, as a part of its educational method which is keen on amending man's inner self, and building the inner feelings on the bases of morality and good behaviour.

Since man's intention plays an effective role in the formation of his personality and has an important impact on society, Islam has based both the rewards and the consequences on intentions and the objectives, according to which Allah's reward and punishment are deserved.

Muhammad (s.a.w.) has said, "Verily deeds are as their intentions are, and everybody gets according to his intention. So, whoever advances to Allah and His Messenger, his advance will be to Allah and His Messenger; and whoever advances to worldly possession, or to marry a woman, his advance will be to what he has in his intention ."⁽¹⁷⁾

The Prophet's grandson, the Imam Au bin al-Hussain (a.s.), said, "There is no deed without an intention ."

Islam, however, distinguishes between two kinds of deeds:

a. Deeds whose correctness depends on their intentions (the intention of reaching the proximity of Allah the Exalted). These are devotional and charitable deeds.

b. Deeds whose correctness does not depend on intending them to be for gaining Allah's proximity. such as commercial transactions, trading, legal commitments, marriage, and the likes of such social relations.

But this classification does not deprive the intention from its central role, if we are to take into consideration the moral and spiritual aspects connected to the legal aspect of these deeds.

For example: Whoever engages in commerce and is lenient in his transactions according to the Islamic laws and regulations, intending, by this, to be obedient to Allah's commands, has given his deed the attribute of being "a devotional deed . He thus converts a business deal into a moral and spiritual endeavor that deserves Allah's reward. The effect of the intention upon the deed and the changing of its value is a natural result of Islam's being more attentive to the realities of the self, which does the deed, than of the deed itself. It is the doer who is, in Islam, the principal factor, while the deed is but an effect and a phenomenon denoting the movement of the doer.

Therefore, Islam attaches great importance and care to the cultivation of good intentions and directs man toward them, so as to tie him to Allah the Exalted and to serve Him alone.

The Objectives Of Islam

PRELIMINARY

Islam, as an everlasting divine message, aims in its call at reforming humanity and preserving life's order through understanding the central message of the religion i.e., the unity of Allah and man's servitude to Him. Islam has undertaken the responsibility of cultural construction, the building of the order of life, beginning with the principle of liberating man from servitude to tyranny and instinctual desires, and realizing his servitude to Allah.

A student of the intentions and goals of Islam in life would summarize its most important and major intentions and goals as follows:

1. Strengthening The Connection Between Man And His Creator

The Islamic message aims at strengthening the connection between man and his Creator, informing him of his Lord and of his responsibility before Him. It goes without saying that man's knowing his Creator and arranging his relations with Him are the most serious needs in man's life, and have the deepest effect on his fate. This is because man's recognition of Allah the Exalted and his being connected to Him entail recognition of truth, good and peace, and building life and organizing it under the guidance of those clear and luminous principles.

This enables man to cleave to the road of safety in reaching Allah, and insures his fate on the day of returning to the world of eternity and lasting existence.

2. Preserving Life's Order

The Islamic message aims at preserving the order of life. to realize man's humanity, and to protect him against any danger that may destroy or injure it:

"Those who follow the messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them. He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul; and He will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear..." Holy Qur'an (7:157)

These are the aims of the message of Islam, summarized by the Qur'an, in respect to fighting against corruption and vice, and defining the method of legislation which manifests the way of life. maintains security and order, frees man from worshipping human beings, and delivers him from the darkness of sin and crime.

The Qur'an wonderfully illustrates this fact, while addressing the Muslims: *"O you who believe! respond to Allah, and the Messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life, and know that Allah invents between a man and his heart, and that to Him you will be gathered."* Holy Qur'an (8:24)

There is in this Qur'anic text a beautiful remark to which we refer here: The Qur'an does not see life as a number of physical activities and actions,

performed by the body's organs and limbs. In fact, the Qur'an regards life to be a form comprised of a series of human attitudes and goals which raise man to the level of human perfection, and help him complete his own humanity, manifesting his innate humanitarian being. Thus, the call of Islam and the method it addresses to mankind undertakes to define the legislative lines and complete system which draws the picture of life and its dimensions based on the concepts of equity and what is good for man. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"No one had brought to his people better than what I have brought to mine. I have brought you the Lie of this world and the hereafter."

It is according to these divine concepts that the great principles of law-making are established by Islam, concentrating its high aims in life. It had been said that, "Islam has come to bring the good and to ward off the bad". And. "Islam has come to preserve rights.

3. Developing Knowledge And Connection With The Universe

Islam aims at producing harmony and accord between man and the world around him, making him feel that he is part of this existence and has his natural place in it. Thus, he may develop in himself a general awareness of the universe, and discover the wisdom and greater purpose of his existence, to which he may be better connected and through which he may better understand life. He will thus discover the unity of the general logic which runs through nature, society and life, and by which he realizes that his existence is a part of this uniform and precise world, in which there is nothing futile nor useless. Every type of existence is connected to a supreme objective.. .turning toward Allah, the Great Creator of the universe.

By means of this feeling, anger, discontent, alienation and destructive loss disappear from man's life: "Did you think that We had created you for naught, and that you would not be returned to Us? Allah is the most exalted Kind, the Supreme Truth! There is no god save Him, Lord of the Gracious Throne." Holy Qur'an (23:115-116)

4. Cultural Construction

Islam's aim is to enable man to perform his mission of cultivating and reclaiming the land, and of constructing human civilization, and developing life through knowledge, and work.

Man has been created on this earth to personify the Will of Allah and His Wisdom as displayed in His creatures - the wisdom of reforming, cultivating and creating a world of good and blessings on this earth. The Wise Qur'an explains man's task through the Prophet Salih (a.s.).

"And to Thamood (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! worship Allah, you have no god other than Him. He brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein. So, ask forgiveness of Him, then repent to Him. Surely, my Lord is Nigh, Responsive. Holy Qur'an (11:61)

Allah, the Most High, says:

"It is He Who has made you successors in the earth and raised some of you above others in grades, that He may try you in what He has given you.

Surely your Lord is swift in retribution, and surely He is All-forgiving, All-Merciful." Holy Qur'an (6:165)

"And corrupt not in the earth, after reformation; and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely Allah's mercy is nigh to the beneficent." Holy Qur'an (7:56)

To protect these agricultural and reformative tasks which man has been called to perform, the Qur'an severely attacks the mischief-makers and the corrupt, and promises them punishment and torture. *"And when he prevails, he strives to do corruption on the earth, to destroy the crop and the progeny, and Allah love.c not corruption." Holy Qur'an (2:205)*

Such is the explanation of the Quran concerning man's progressive cultural role, defining his vital responsibility on this earth - the cultivation of the earth, exploiting its wealth, improving it via knowledge and good work, and using man's energies in the field of good deeds and constructive activity.

Conclusion

Mankind, in the bitterness of historical struggle, and because of the violence of despotic political injustice, which enslaved him and deprived him of his natural right to live, began to grope about through the dark maze of loss for a rescuer or a way out. This oppressed and lost man started expressing his feelings of bitterness towards reality and of his sufferings, through different political theories and ideas, such as democracy, socialism, communism, etc. These theories in turn raised the slogans of freedom, equity, and social and economic justice, etc.

Mankind, under the shadow of political terrorism, had to offer sacrifices to support these and similar ideas, hoping to break the siege around them, or pull down the walls of the prison in which they lived. Yet, when those theories and principles were put to practice, they turned out to be no better than those of the preceding regimes. They did not match the image that had been envisioned by the oppressed and the exploited. In practice, those theories were disappointing and incurred even more suffering for humanity.

Nevertheless and despite this horrible failure and its tragic results, some of those ideas and slogans remained respected in their theoretical concepts, amicable in their verbal expressions. Ideas such as freedom, equity, justice, etc., are understood by the abstract human mind to be good and sound during all ages and for all generations. Actually, they are not the inventions of those theories and ideas, nor are they adopted by them alone, as they allege.

In fact, although they are the discoveries of human thinking which recognized the soundness of their significance, yet they remained as general concepts with loosely defined meanings. Their interpretation requires a practical definition of their laws and values which they can transform into a way of life. Practical reality has proved that these theories and political principles presented by man - democracy, socialism, communism - are by their nature ⁽¹⁸⁾ incapable of changing general human understanding - although they allege them to be of their own invention - into applicable laws and a way of life.

But man, disregarding the darkness of aberration, and the absence of a pioneering course, continued clinging to these systems in different parts of

the world, deceived by their slogans and allegations. It was also natural that this political current should creep toward the Islamic world, following the deterioration of the political consciousness of the Muslims. As a consequence their own ignorance of their message had spread among their ranks, and they also suffered the calamities of injustice.

oppression and enslavement, when they fell under the military and cultural invasion of other countries. After all that, it was natural that a good number of the Muslims should be influenced by this political current, unaware of the dangers of these concepts, nor realizing their falsity and earlier failure.

Most of them do not even know that concepts, such as democracy, socialism and communism, contradict the Islamic belief. Some of the Muslims who had been deceived by these currents, including some men of letters, thought that Islam was a democratic system. Others pictured it as a socialist regime. Still others even went to the extreme of saying that Islam and Marxism meet, deceived by their calls for freedom, justice, equality, economical and social welfare, abolishing monopolism and exploitation, etc. which were advocated by these theories; these concepts had already been raised by Islam.

Discerning this coincidence concerning these general concepts. they mistakenly thought that the coincident was a complete one, applicable to all Islam's teachings. Those who saw Islam calling for freedom, justice and equality, regarded Islam a democratic system, as democracy also called for the same slogans. And those who knew about Islam's theories of economics and the way it confronted capitalist inflation, called it "socialism", because socialism advocated the same slogans.

Thus, the concepts mixed and became obscure, and the vision was confused. Therefore, this grave mental case was in need of being uprooted and its cultural consequences were to be successfully treated.

By returning to Islam and by analytically studying it, we realize - as has already been said - that Islam has its own principles and starting points. It has its own laws, regulations, values and moralities. It has its merits and goals distinguishing its own personality and identity. In the fields of politics and economy it differs from other systems. So, its meeting with some other general mental concepts and understandings, does not mean a unity of nature and disposition.

The Islamic system cannot be democratic, socialist or anything else. It can only be Islamic and nothing else. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Footnotes

- 1-Those who are born to Muslim parents are regarded Muslims by birth.
- 2-See our book 'Who is the Law-Maker'
- 3-Al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-Uqool an Aal al-Rasool, p.30, ed. 1394 H.
- 4-Imam All, Nahj al-Balaghah, p.3 15, by Dr. Subhi al-Salih, ed. 1387 H.
- 5- Sayid Abut al-Qasim al-Khu'i, al-Bayan S Tafsir al-Qur'an.
- 6-Ibid.
- 7-Ai--Kulaini, al-Usool min al-Kafi, vol.1, p.59.
- 8-Ibid.
- 9-Ibid, p.60
- 10- The Imamah Jurisprudents mentioned four basic sources for the Islamic Legislation: Holy Qur'an, Sunnah (the Prophetic Traditions), Consensus and Reasoning.
- 11-AI-Harrani, Tuhaf al-Uqool, p.41.
- 12- Nahj al-Balaghah, p.153, Dr. Subhi al-Salih.
- 13-AI-Hural-Amil,, Wasa'ilaJ-Shi'a, vol.8, p.12.
- 14- Sayid Abu al-Qasim al-Khui, al-Bayan Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, vol. 1, p.39
- 15-AI-Kulaini, al-Usool min al-Kafi, vol. 1, p.10.
- 16- Sayid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, al-Ma'alim al-Jadidah, p.148.
- 17-Muhammad Mahdi al-Narraqi, Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol.3, p.113.
- 18- See our book 'Who is the Law-Maker'

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