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Chapter 9: The Limits of Attraction and Repulsion (Peace and Violence) in Islam (Part 3)

A Review of the Previous Discussion

In the previous two sessions about the attraction and repulsion in Islam and their limits, we have discussed many subjects. Of course, they served more as an introduction to and a background of our main discussion. The point which we highlighted in the previous session was that man as an evolutionary being faces two groups of elements along the course of his perfection: One consists of useful while the other is constituted by harmful elements, and like any other living creature, he has to attract useful elements and repulse harmful elements. In doing so, the first phase is that he has to identify these two groups of elements and distinguish one from the other.

Thus, the first step is recognition. Since this attraction and repulsion is not deterministic and is undertaken by the will and choice of man himself, the second step is that he has to strengthen his will so as to be able to perform good deeds and abandon the bad. It is not so that whatever is good and useful for man is interesting and pleasant for him and that whatever is bad and harmful is repulsive and unpleasant. In fact, in many cases it is incidentally the contrary and, for example, an element which is so harmful is very attractive for man like the fondness of some individuals to smoking or alcoholic beverage. As such, on the issue of attraction and repulsion, in addition to recognition, willpower of man also plays a pivotal role.

The Reference in Identifying the Useful and Harmful Elements in the Spiritual Perfection of Man

Now, concerning the recognition of useful and harmful elements, the question is: What is the reference that identifies and says which element is useful for our soul and spiritual perfection and to be attracted and which element is harmful and to be repulsed? Similarly, regarding the strengthening of will, which

methods strengthen this will?

We, Muslims and religious ones, believe that it is God Who is supposed to solve this problem because it is He Who created man and is totally cognizant of the laws and properties of his body and soul and their effects on one another, and He knows what is useful and what is harmful for man and which actions strengthen or weaken our will in the affair of spiritual and religious attraction and repulsion. God does it through the Prophet (S) and the fundamental raison d'être of the mission of the prophets ('a) has been this affair, and religion and the aggregate of its precepts are nothing but this thing. That is, if man wants to attain spiritual and religious perfection and growth, and recognize the useful and harmful elements along the way, he must turn to religion and the prophets ('a).

The Overall policy of Islam in the Affair of Propagating Religion

Now, this question is posed: What should be done to attract people to religion? Merely the fact that the prophets ('a) possess the prescription for the spiritual and religious perfection of man and that they know its correct path is not enough. Rather, in addition to it, you have to think of a way people can take and act upon. It is here that the issue of attraction and repulsion is again raised. But it is attraction and repulsion in this sense: To which method should the prophets ('a) resort in inviting people toward religion and convincing them to accept it? Do they use attractive methods and through kindness and gentleness, should they try to attract individuals? Or, should they ask people to act upon their teachings through force and violation? Or, should they employ both methods? In sum, is there any specific law and rule in this context or not?

This is one of the three questions we have previously promised to deal with in this session. Of course, comprehensive and complete discussion of this issue or close examination of it requires many sessions, which are presently not possible in our program. Therefore, we shall try to state the gist of that which is related to this discussion.

1. Using Evidence and Preaching

The first stage of the mission of the prophets ('a) is to invite people to the religion. At the outset, they had to see that people would like to listen to their speeches and see what the prophets say to them. Thereafter, it is the time for bidding and forbidding things. In this stage (i.e. the stage of invitation), there is no doubt that one should approach through the means of logic, proof and argument, and the text of the Qur'an also bears witness to this fact:

Invitation [da'wah] must be accompanied by wisdom, proof and logic in order to be attractive, and in this stage, repulsion is never discussed.

Yet, people are not equal in that they can properly understand signs of wisdom, logical proofs and philosophical evidence. Nevertheless, if we examine ourselves, we will see that from the day we became cognizant of ourselves, we heard that there is a religion called Islam and there is a school of thought known as Shi'ism and we accepted them. Yet, are we really trying to find out their rational proof? The truth is that most of people have accepted Islam and Shi'ism only under the influence of social factors, upbringing of their parents, instructions of their teachers, and the like, and they have never been in pursuit of finding out their proof.

Rather, sometimes they have read or heard something in the pulpit, or school and lecture. But it is very rare that at the beginning they had the motive to conduct research and act upon it. People are influenced more by feelings and emotions, and they move pursuant to some motivations and material and apparent things. They pay less attention to proof and evidence. Regarding human beings in general, the main stimulant is profit and loss as well as hope and fear the same thing which is known in the Islamic terminology as *khawf* [fear] and *raja'* [hope].

That is, man has to fear something or gain something in order to move. Either there must be a talk about money, position and popularity or about starvation, unemployment, lashes, and prison in order to be persuaded to act. A famous maxim says that man lives by means of fear and hope. The usual case is that if someone studies, it is either because he wants to have a job with a high salary and as such, to be rich, or he does not want to lag behind his friends and relatives and not to endure the despises and contempt of his father, mother and others. Since human beings in general are like that, just as stated in a noble verse, the issue of admonition [maw'izah] is raised alongside and after wisdom [hikmah] "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice."

That is, in addition to proof [burhan] and argument [istidlal], the prophets ('a) say, "If you do this, you will receive these rewards and if you don't, you will incur these losses. On the contrary, if you do this, you will suffer from these harms, and if you abandon it, you will acquire these benefits." If you examine closely the descriptions of the prophets ('a) in the Qur'an, you will see in many instances that the prophets ('a) are "givers of glad tidings" [mubashshirin] and "warners" [mundhirin] and that they have come for "giving glad tidings" [basharah] and "warning" [andhar]:

We do not send the apostles except as bearers of good news and warners. (6:48)

In the work of invitation [da'wah], the prophets ('a) do not suffice themselves in merely showing proof and argument (wisdom); rather, because of the reason mentioned above, they say to the people, "If you

accept what we say and act upon it, boundless and eternal blessings of paradise shall be bestowed upon you, and if you do not accept what we say and oppose us, chastisement and hell are waiting for you." It is here that we can see people showing reaction. The impact of this warning becomes greater if practical and real examples which had happened before are brought to the attention of man.

For this reason, you can observe that in many instances the Qur'an narrates the final destiny of the previous communities and the chastisement sent down upon them, giving warning, thus: "Be careful not to meet the same fate of those people!" It is here that man will experience a sense of inner agitation and anxiety, and he will be stimulated. Of course, between hope for profit and fear of loss, perhaps that which induces man more to move is the latter.

That is, if he enjoys material and worldly blessings to some extent and he is told, "If you strive and exert efforts, you will acquire more blessings, wealth and fame," since he is not in the mood to strive hard, he will possibly say, "Whatever I have so far is sufficient for me." However, if he is told, "Should you not strive hard, your assets and wealth will be lessened and your position lowered," since it is a question of loss, he will move in a bid to prevent loss. And perhaps it is because of this reason that, although "giving glad tidings" and "warning" are linked together, the Qur'an lays more stress on the element of "warning":

Indeed We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it. (35:24)

Therefore, at the beginning of invitation, attraction and repulsion are used side by side. There are wisdom and argumentation as well as promise of paradise and warning of hell and fire. Particularly in the traditions [ahadith], paradise and hell are sometimes described in a very attractive and stimulating manner while at other times in a very frightening and poignant fashion.

2. Preaching must be "Beautiful"

Now, the other point is that once the term of wisdom is finished and the turn of preaching or admonition comes, it must be "beautiful preaching" or "good advice." That is, although preaching consists of threats and warnings and its content is not pleasant, the manner of expressing it must be good and pleasant even if the addressee is a corrupt person like the Pharaoh. God said to Musa (Moses) and his brother Harun (Aaron) thus:

Let the two of you go to Pharaoh. Indeed he has rebelled. Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe

he will take admonition or fear. (20:43-44)

That is, Pharaoh has rebelled and the substance of your speech must be such that he would be frightened but your threatening word must be expressed in a soft and mild manner. From the beginning, he should not be treated harshly and ruthlessly. In doing the Islamic call, if you shout and behave aggressively at the beginning, the addressee will close his mind and ears and never listen to what you say. But if you convey in a mild and soft manner the same repulsive message with threatening content, it may have an effect on him.

3. Debate and Argumentation

In the same verse, after preaching or admonition, debate has been mentioned:

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best. (16:125)

In order to lead them toward the path of guidance, you debate and discuss with them, but in the debate, argue in the best possible manner. In engaging in disputation also, even if you subdue the other party and defeat him in an academic discussion, it must still not be done beyond the periphery of fairness, proper decorum and courtesy. In defeating him, you should not use any fallacious argument. Try to convince him so that the truth will be made clear to him, and not that you do everything so as to expel him from the scene no matter how.

The Reason behind Refraining from Repulsion in the Islamic Call

It can be said that in all stages of Islamic call, be it in wisdom, preaching or debate, there is no room for violence and repulsion at all, and although the substance of the message may include hellfire and tribulations therein, the way of imparting the message must be pleasant and in such a manner that the addressee would will to listen and be persuaded to think. Once you talk in such a manner that he wills to listen to you, then he will think about it and say to himself, "If this hellfire or its chastisement is true, I will be subjected to eternal damnation. So, it is better for me to research and find out for myself what the truth of the matter is."

This is especially true given the fact that on the issue of profit and loss, the amount of probability alone is not the determinant; rather, it is the outcome of probable harm in the contingent that will determine the final result. That is, in certain cases although the probability of profit or gain seen is possibly so little and the contingent is strong, it stimulates us to move.

For example, if a five-year old child says to you, "In the stair where you are, there is a live wire. Be careful, lest you bumped on it." Here, in terms of probability, its veracity is very weak because how does a five-year old child know about a live wire? Maybe it is just a telephone wire, rope, or something else. How does he know that it is live? Maybe it is just a cutoff wire placed on the middle of the stair. In sum, what this five-year old child is saying is not highly probable in our view. Yet, on the other hand, it is a question of life and death. It is live wire and one cannot take it as a joke. Therefore, although its veracity is probably weak, it is contingently strong. So, upon going up the stair, you are totally careful as to where the wire is located and you pass by cautiously.

In our discussion, it is also contingently very strong. It is beyond the question of life and death. What is at stake is eternal damnation in hellfire as such. If I mention the same hell and fire in a mild language and in a sympathetic and sincere manner, there is a strong probability that the addressee will listen to me and be affected by it.

How Islam Deals with Personal and Private Behaviors

Now, if we go beyond the work of Islamic propagation and talk about the society, government, and behavior of individuals and its impact upon the society, the issue is somewhat different. Here, sometimes it is a clandestine act and its benefit and harm are clearly known and it has no significant impact upon the society. An example is the night supererogatory prayer. At the middle of the night, a person wants to rise up from his bed and without anyone knowing it, he performs the supererogatory prayer.

Or, God forbid, a person finds a bottle of wine and drinks it right there at home. In such cases, to employ attraction is so good. That is, for instance, the rules and effects of night supererogatory prayer are to be mentioned to him so as to motivate him to perform it regularly, or the harms brought by drinking alcoholic beverages are to be explained sympathetically, mildly and friendly to the second person so as to convince him to shun it. Yet, in such cases which are merely personal and totally private, Islam has not given permission to use compulsion, naked force and violent measures.

Even if you incidentally become aware of such an offence, you have no right to tell him, "Yes, I saw and came to know that you committed such an evil act," let alone informing others of it. This is a secret of a Muslim and it must remain secret, and no one has the right to divulge it. If while alone, a person, God forbid, committed a sin and you saw it, you would say, "I saw you doing something evil," chances will make him think thus, "Since my sin is now made public and people have become aware of it, it no longer makes any difference if I do the same in private or in public."

In any case, divulging such a sin and evil deed is not permissible from the viewpoint of Islam, let alone dealing with the offender violently and physically, and punishing him. Yes, if through a certain way you can do something indirectly, while he is not aware that you have witnessed him doing such an abominable act, and admonish him so as for him to abandon it, there is no problem.

The Islamic Approach of Dealing with Social Behaviors

There are also acts whose benefit and harm go beyond the doer and permeate to the society. Of course, this effect is sometimes direct, for instance, when one is harassed and oppressed or his right is trampled upon. At other times, it is indirect. Regarding the manifestations of the indirect impact of an action of individuals upon the society and people around them, there may be disputes and differences (of opinion). Yet, there is no doubt that in certain cases, an action has apparently no effect on other members of the society but through a scrutiny it becomes clear that it is not so.

An example of it is a wicked act done in public and in front of others because doing so is an indirect promotion of the act and gradually its wickedness will become normal in the eyes of people. If father and mother tell a lie in front of their child, it will be indirectly inculcated to him that there is no problem in telling a lie. It is because of this indirect impact upon the society that Islam forbids "feigning debauchery" and in relation to some acts, it does not permit them to be performed publicly and in front of others. That is, if a person does something secretly without anyone knowing about it, he has only committed a sin but legally speaking, he has not done any crime or offence, and the Islamic government will not prosecute him. However, if he wants to do the same in public, it will be regarded as a crime and he will be penalized for it.

Regarding acts that have social repercussions and are considered as violation of the rights of others, in case this repercussion is indirect all the fair–minded people of the world unanimously say that a collective police power called "government" is necessary to check these violations, and this fact is not only confined to Islam and religions of divine origin. In addition to these cases, if an act has spiritual harm for the society, Islam not only permits but in fact obliges the government to intervene and prevent it, and this point is one of the fundamental differences between Islam and liberal–democratic systems. According to the liberal and populist governments, for instance, if someone with indecent dress appears in the public, this is treated as a personal act and no one has the right to complain against him. But Islam forbids this act because of its destructive spiritual and moral effects, and anyone doing so will be treated as an offender.

Penal laws as the Factor in Fostering Social Order

In principle, there is no difference of opinion that actions which are socially destructive and infringing on the rights of others must be prevented, and it is obvious that in undertaking this task the governments are in need of legal backing. The laws existing in society can be divided into two categories, viz. civil and penal laws. The civil laws deal with the rights and liberties of the members of the society such as the laws pertaining to commerce, marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the like. Meanwhile, penal laws deal with the violation of civil laws. That is, after the rights and liberties of individuals are determined in the civil laws, in the penal laws if a person tramples upon these rights and liberties, he must be penalized.

One of the important tasks of every state and government is this implementation of the penal laws. The main factor in fostering social order and maintaining it is these penal laws. If the states merely focus on the civil laws and determining the civil rights of the members of the society and do not take into account the penalties for the violators of these laws, in most cases we will witness violation and disregard for those laws. We will witness that if there are no fines and traffic aides, very few people will pay attention to the red light, 'no parking' sign, and 'one way' traffic sign. What restrains the thieves and killers is fear of prison and execution. Had it not been so, they would easily have robbed the assets of people and killed them. Therefore, one of the most significant and fundamental functions of the states is the implementation of penal laws and without which, social order, state and government will be rendered meaningless.

Repulsion as the Natural Essence of the Penal Laws

It is natural that the implementation of penal laws will entail repulsion, because nobody is pleased with imprisonment, fine and lashes and these acts are essentially harsh even if they are done cheerfully and with a smile. If, because of an offence committed, you smilingly say to the offender in utmost respect, "Please remain in this room for 15 years," or "Please keep your body unclothed in order to receive 100 lashes," or "Please kneel down so that your head be cut off," such smile and respect will not change anything and have no effect on the harshness essentially existing in those acts. Who wants to be behind bars for 15 years away from his wife, children, friends, and relatives?

If a traffic officer who is well–mannered, courteously and with utmost humility and respect fines us with only five thousand *tumans* for not stopping at red light, we will be hurt and even if we do not express it verbally, we actually despise him, let alone if a 500,000 *tumans* fine, languishing in prison, or physical torture such as lashes is involved. At any rate, nobody can deny the intrinsic harshness and repulsion existing in the penal laws, and as we said, the existence of government without the existence of these laws is also impossible. Therefore, every government will essentially and intrinsically entail a series of violence and repulsion.

Of course, we can say that technically speaking, violence is applied to the cases that bring about physical trouble such as if a person is beaten or his hands being amputated. However, when fine, imprisonment and similar punishments are involved, even if we do not regard them as manifestations of violence, at least they cultivate a sort of repulsion and usually the people implementing such punishments are not satisfied or pleased with themselves. Thus, in essence, government without penal laws is not possible and penal laws are in one way or another associated with violence or repulsion.

Government cannot afford to have no power of repulsion. The existence of such a government is nonsense because one of the main philosophies of government is that if there are those who are not willing to submit to the law, it will compel them to obey the law. Of course, force and violence have different forms; sometimes it takes the form of a fine; at times, imprisonment; at other times, exile and

banishment; yet at other times, lashes; and lastly, killing and execution as well.

Assiduousness in Distinguishing between Personal and Social Dimensions of Action

Repulsion is employed in the different cases of social laws, and as long as an evil act has totally personal and private dimension, and has no social dimension whatsoever, the state has the right to exact any punishment and employ repulsion. Of course, it must be noted that if a person, while in isolation and does not want anyone to know about it, committed an offence, which in the legal parlance is regarded as a crime and this offence was proven before a judge in the court, the Islamic punishment will be exacted against him. This is so because this offence was done in private and he did not want anyone else to know it, but since others have come to know of it and the case has been made public, it acquires a social dimension and because of the destructive social impacts it may have, it will be subjected to punishment. Even if a person is be informed of his criminal act, it cannot be a manifestation of "divulging of debauchery", which in the Islamic law is unlawful and forbidden:

Indeed those who want indecency to spread among the faithful there is a painful punishment for them in the world and the Hereafter. (24:19)

Islam's Attitude toward the Non-Muslim Countries and their Citizens

The issue of attraction and repulsion with respect to those who are beyond the frontiers of the Islamic country requires a detailed and relatively long discussion, which cannot be covered in the remaining time, but since we want to start discussing a new issue from the next session, in a bid to complete the discussion we shall concisely deal with some relevant subjects here.

Those who are outside the territory of the Islamic government are of two types; they are either those who intend to render a blow and hatch conspiracy against the Islamic government and to undermine and overthrow it, or those who do not have such an intention. In other words, either those who have evil intentions and want to give trouble to the Islamic country and its people, or those who are not like so. If they do not have a plot to create trouble, and undermine and overthrow the Islamic government, Muslims have no right to commit aggression against them, and justice and kindness must be observed in dealing with them:

Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from you homes that you deal with them with kindness and justice. (60:8)

So long as they are not inimical and have no conspiracy, they must be treated with kindness and magnanimity, and sometimes, they must even be dealt with more kindness compared to individuals inside the country so as for them to be attracted to Islam. One of the individuals to whom the *zakat* may be given are the so-called "those hearts are to be reconciled (*al-mu'allafatu-qulubuhum*)" namely, non-Muslims living in the neighborhood of the Islamic country. In order to foster feelings of friendship and love toward Islam and Muslims in their hearts, they will be offered shares of the *zakat*. So, with respect to this group of non-Muslims, not only should they not be treated harshly and repulsively, but they must also be attracted.

However, if they are inimical and they hatch a plot, they must be confronted decisively:

Allah forbids you only in regard to those who made war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you make friends with them. (60:9)

You should have attraction with respect to the first group, but with regards to this group which is inimical to Islam and Muslims, you should have total repulsion, and suppress and not give them any chance.

We again emphasize that the use of repulsion is only related to those who officially and openly act against Islam and Muslims, and there is no such ruling in relation to other than this group. The Qur'an even says that if it is the scene of battle and the army of infidels and polytheists is on one side while that of Muslims is on the other busy fighting in battle array, if one of the polytheists, for example, raises a white flag or through any other way conveys to you thus, "I have an academic question and the issue has become ambiguous for me is Islam the truth or not? Is my war against your rightful and justified, or wrong and false?"

In this case, Islam says that Muslims are duty-bound to go and bring this person to the camp of Islam while providing him with escorts and guards, and to engage him in a conversation. They must answer his questions and try to convince him through proof and argumentation. And then if he wants to return, while providing him with escorts and guards and without the least annoyance committed against him, again he must be sent to his original station and place away from the danger of being attacked by the

army of Islam. Thereafter, if he decides to fight, they have to fight with him, and if not, he must be released so that he can go wherever he wants:

If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of Allah. Then convey him to his place of safety. (9:6)

In which legal system you know there is such a thing? Islam says that Muslim student has his own place even if an inimical infidel, who has a sword in his hand and in a state of war against you, has a question, you have to answer him. We are followers of that school. Who says that the Islamic government and system cannot tolerate a questioner and gives the reply at the point of a sword? Islam which behaves in such a manner to an infidel with a sword in his hand will never be such (as alleged) in dealing with the "insiders" and Muslims. The initial policy of Islam is anchored in proof (wisdom), good advice, and polite argumentation, but if it ends up in animosity and conspiracy and the one who cannot argue in an academic dispute is busy undermining and plotting against the Islamic system, he should not be given mercy and the least chance. Rather, he should be faced with utmost force and decisiveness.

The View of Islam on Violent Actions and the Power of Repulsion

Hence, Islam has given the order to act violently and to employ the power of repulsion in two instances; one is when a Muslim or a non–Muslim within the Islamic society has violated the rights of others and committed oppression and treachery against them, and the other is when a person outside the jurisdiction of the Islamic government engages in opposition and conspiracy against Islam and the Islamic countries. Of course, in many cases, penalties and types of punishment to be implemented with respect to the violators of law and the infringers of the rights of others cannot be discerned by reason and they have been directly specified by God the Exalted Himself, the Legislator of Law. Yet, after determining the punishment, it must be implemented as decisive as possible against the violators. Regarding those who have spread corruption and committed debauchery, the Holy Qur'an says:

As for the fornicatress and the fornicator, strike each of them a hundred lashes, and let not pity for them overcome you in Allah's law, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, and let their punishment be witnessed by a group of the faithful. (24:2)

Such a violator must be suppressed as forcefully as possible and no Muslim, if he really believes in God and the Day of Resurrection, should have even an iota of pity and compassion toward him. The severity

and hardness of such a punishment is enhanced once we realize that these lashes should be made in the presence of people who witness the punishment to be meted out by the two fornicators. Naturally, in such a condition, apart from enduring the heavy punishment, their reputation will also be tarnished. They must be punished in such a manner that no one would dare to commit the same act.

Summary of the Discussion on Attraction and Repulsion in Islam

The limitation of attraction and repulsion in Islam means that in case a person in the Islamic society directly or indirectly violates the spiritual and material rights of others or a person outside the jurisdiction of the Islamic state rises up in opposition to Islam and the Islamic country and hatches conspiracy, in both cases force must be utilized while in other cases, either only attraction is to be employed, or repulsion accompanied by attraction and mild and kind expression which at least reduces the degree of repulsion. In the case where there is force and repulsion, God has explicitly defined its limit and boundary in many cases or stated its general ruling. In whatever situation, we should not go beyond the limit and boundary at the time of resorting to force and violence:

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانِ ۚ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفَ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانِ ۚ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا ﴿ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ ﴾ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۞ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولُئكَ هُمُ الظَّالمُونَ

These are Allah's bounds, so do not transgress them, and whoever transgresses the bounds of Allah it is they who are the wrongdoers. (2:229)

In conclusion, let us review again the subjects of the previous meeting. If you remember, I said that the topic of attraction and repulsion in Islam can be approached in three dimensions and forms:

- (1) Does the set of Islamic teachings and laws attract some elements for the followers, or does it only repulse some elements, or both the two?
- (2) Is the set of Islamic teachings and laws attractive to all human beings, or is it repulsive to all of them?
- (3) In attracting non–Muslims to Islam as well as in relation to its followers, does Islam employ attractive methods only, or repulsive methods only, or both the two kinds of methods?

On this topic, we focused more on answering the third question and dealing with that aspect, and with respect to the other two questions, a considerable discussion was not made, and since in view of the importance of other topics, we decide to deal with a new subject, we conclude here the topic on attraction and repulsion, and I hope that in the future programs we can complete this discussion.

Question and Answer

Question: Indisputably, in Islam there is both attraction and repulsion, but regarding the word "harshness," the question is that the use of this concept can be examined from two perspectives. The first perspective is this: Is this concept a religious terminology and has it been mentioned in the Qur'an and traditions? The answer is seemingly negative, because in the Qur'an this word is never used and more or less, we do not have it in the traditions. That is, it has been used very rarely. In sum, it is not the case that in the parlance of the Qur'an and traditions, harshness has been advanced as a virtue. In Persian also, this concept is not positively value–laden, used as the equivalent of ruthlessness and is different from "hardship" and "decisiveness". And it should not be regarded as synonymous with decisiveness, which is positively value–laden. A war commander may sometimes be "decisive" and may also be "harsh", and these two are not identical. Man may also perform harshly even an emotional act (such as kissing).

The other point regarding this word is that assuming that such a terminology exists in the Qur'an, traditions and Islamic lexicography and that we accept that it is equivalent to the concept of decisiveness which has a positive connotation, yet by observing the existing conditions and issues, both in the rational and textual terms with respect to the use of this terminology, there is a hindrance and one must use a different term. But the rational perspective, reason dictates that once it is spoken in a society and place that this word has a negative connotation and it is understood to mean ruthlessness, by using this word, it is not without reason that repulsion is fostered. This is while by using a different word which connotes the same concept, the problem can easily be solved. From the textual perspective, however, the Qur'an says:

O you who have faith, do not say ra'ina, but say unzurna. (2:104)1

Since the enemy is misusing the meaning of *ra'ina*, shatter the same implication within the framework of other terms and say, *unzurna* so as to put a stop to this misuse by the enemy.

In other words, it can be said that the discussion on harshness is applied to the goodness or badness of an act while at other times, it is applied to the goodness or badness of the actor or doer. For example, sometimes there is talk about killing. Killing is an action which is essentially harsh. Slaughtering a chicken or a lamb is essentially a harsh action. Meanwhile, there are times when the discussion is related to the actor or doer, viz. the one who wants to slaughter the chicken or lamb. The actor or doer

can perform this act harshly and ruthlessly. He can also do the same without such harshness.

The discussion is about the harshness of the actor and not the harshness of the action. That is, in implementing the laws of Islam, we should not associate the harshness to ourselves. It is like the Prophet (S) who is "the mercy to the worlds" and has an excellent moral conduct. It is true that in facing the infidels he was hard and decisive, but harshness could not be seen in his action.

In a nutshell, the question is: Why although in all dictionaries the word *khushunat* is synonymous with ruthlessness which has a negative connotation, without any reason we persist in using this word and thus foster repulsion and pave the way to the misuse of the enemy while by changing the term the problem can be easily solved?

Answer: Of course, I have already mentioned some of the subjects which must be raised in reply to this question in a television debate about the topic of *khushunat*, and the colleagues may refer to the subjects published in the *Partu* Weekly. Nevertheless, what I can explain here is this: Sometimes, the discussion is about the meaning of *khushunat* in our culture and at times, the discussion is about the meaning of the word in the different customs and cultures.

If someone says, "In our culture, the word *harshness* is used to mean *mercilessness*," we first of all have to clarify the meaning of "mercy" so as to make clear its opposite word which is *mercilessness* or *harshness*. Of course, we have to say that although in our culture the concept of harshness may be associated with mercilessness, it is not so in other customs and cultures. For example, in the legal and political parlance, harshness does not have such a meaning. This word is basically Arabic, and in no Arabic dictionary has this word been defined as *mercilessness*. The adjective of this word; i.e. *khashin*, rather means *rough* or *coarse* and the noun means roughness or coarseness while its antonym is *layyin* which means *soft*, and the noun *linah* means *softness*.

Therefore, according to Arabic lexicography, *khushunah* is not the antonym of *rahmah* [mercy] let alone to mean *mercilessness*; rather, it means roughness and coarseness while its opposite is softness. Of course, it is such that when a concept from the realm of natural and physical sciences is transferred to the realm of social sciences and humanities, it will acquire a new manifestation, but the root of the lexicographic meaning is preserved.

Regarding the point mentioned in the question that this word has never been mentioned in the Qur'an, also mentioned very rarely in traditions and is not treated as a virtue in our current culture, we have to say that this claim is not correct. Of course, in the Qur'an the root–word "kh-sh-n" and the word khushunah do not appear but its synonym is mentioned. And according to the grammatical and literary rules, we have also the right to put one of two synonymous words in place of the other or vice versa. Hence, if the synonym of the word khushunah really appears in the Qur'an, this claim that the concept of khushunah is not used in the Qur'an will not be correct. Its synonym which is mentioned in the Qur'an is the word *qhilzah* from the root–word "*qh-l-z*":

.. And let them find severity [ghilzah] in you. .. (9: 123)

In another place, it says:

Wage jihad against the faithless and the hypocrites, and be severe [wa'ghluz] with them. Their refuge shall be hell. (66:9)

This verse is repeated two times in the Qur'an in *Surah at–Tahrim* and *Surah at–Tawbah* (or, *Baraʻah*). Elsewhere, it also says thus:

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. (3:159)

There is also this verse:

Over which are [assigned] angels, severe and mighty. (66:6)

All in all, the root–word "*gh-l-z*" has been repeated eleven times in the Qur'an and as I have said, *ghilzah* and *khushunah* are synonymous and have basically identical meanings. Therefore, given the use of the word *ghilzah* in the Qur'an, it cannot be said that the concept of *khushunah* has not been mentioned therein. Similarly, in one instance the concept of *rahmah* "mercy" has also been mentioned in opposition to the concept of "hardness" or "severity" [*shiddah*]:

Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful among themselves. (48:29)

Talking about the traditions, we have to say that the root–word *kh–sh–n* has appeared in the traditions

and in some cases it has been treated as a virtue. For example, the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali ('a) has been reported to have said:

"He was severe for the sake of Allah."3

All this is according to the lexical examination and that of the Qur'an and traditions through which it became clear that what had been claimed in the question related to this section does not hold war.

Now, concerning the lexical discussion and the uses of the term, does *khushunah* really mean *birahmi*? I am asking you: If, as existing in the penal laws of Islam, because of committing of sin and crime, the right hand and left foot of a person are to be amputated while the community ostracize him and nobody respect him, is it mercy or mercilessness? If, as also existing in the penal laws of Islam, a fire is kindled and a person is to be thrown there, or his hands and feet are tied and he is to be thrown down from the top of a mountain, or because of stealing a golden coin, his four fingers are to be amputated before the people, are these acts a sign of mercy or ruthlessness?

In the question, there had been a correct distinction between harshness of the action and harshness of the actor, and the goodness or badness of the act and the goodness or badness of the actor. Also, decisiveness had been correctly distinguished from harshness. If a person passes by the red light and the traffic officer asks him to stop and after greeting and salutation, tells him cheerfully and politely, "Since you made a violation, you shall have a fine of five thousand *tumans*," there is decisiveness here while there is no harshness. But the discussion is that *harshness* in Islam we are referring to is not solely decisiveness.

Some acts are essentially harsh and the decisiveness in doing so is always accompanied by a kind of harshness. When the executioner comes, beheads someone with a sword, the nature of this act cannot be done with a smile and cheerfulness. Many people have no endurance to witness such a scene; their faces will get pale; and they will even forget to smile. Even some of them will become unconscious in witnessing it. As such, how can it be said that the agent of such an act performs the beheading only "decisively" but with kindness and a smile?! This act is essentially harsh and, naturally, the one doing so is also harsh and is regarded as a proponent of harshness. To distinguish between harshness of the action and harshness of the actor has no room in such actions.

Furthermore, in essence, those who raise this criticism to us do not refer to the harshness of the actor; rather, their criticism exactly pertains to the harshness of the act. They say, "These things you are doing are harsh and they should not be done." Even if we do these acts with kindness and a smile, the problem will not be solved. The discussion is not on our decisiveness but non-harshness; rather, all criticisms are related to the punishments themselves.

The origin of this issue can be traced from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One of its articles states that all harsh punishments should be absolutely abolished. The very obvious manifestations of such punishments which they highlight are execution and some others like amputation of hands, lashes, and any punishment which is accompanied by physical torture. Today, whenever there is a speech about human rights, and the countries in the world, America at the head of which, condemn us for alleged human rights violations, their criticism is not "Why do you frown and not smile at the time of executing or giving lashes to the criminals?" Instead, the focus is on the very existence of such punishments: "Why such punishments are implemented?"

They say, "These punishments are related to the age when the human race did not have such a level of culture and civilization, and the people of the different tribes and countries were in constant war, killing and pillaging each other. But now, the human race has become civilized and all become polite, respecting one another, and even if they, for example, want to drop an atomic bomb on a city, they will drop their bomb politely, calmly and silently, and go!! In such a period, the harsh punishments in the form of execution and lashing should no longer exist." The wave of this propaganda is so strong and effective that unfortunately, even some clerics and turbaned men are influenced by it and are explicitly writing in their newspapers that these punishments are inhuman and cruel and must be abolished.

Of course, this expression of opinions is not new, for I can also remember that during the first years of the Revolution, the lawyers of the National Front issued a declaration that the Islamic law of retaliation is inhuman and cruel and must be removed. At the time, the eminent Imam (may Allah the Exalted be pleased with him) stood firmly in facing them and issued a decree on their apostasy. As they were browbeaten by the Imam, for many years they crawled toward their hiding places, but today they again openly and freely raise their impudent and presumptuous voices in the public gatherings and newspapers.

Thus, it is not a talk about the person and actor as to why he does not smile and is not polite. The criticism is on the actions and punishments themselves, which, they say, are cruel and inhuman. The question is this: Should these acts which they regard as harsh be there or not? They say, "There should be no harshness" and by *harshness* they refer to such punishments like execution, lashes and retaliation. We also want to negate their contention; therefore, we have no option but to use the same word and say, "In our opinion, *harshness* should be there and of course, what we mean by *harshness* is the decree on execution and lashing."

We do not have any motive to use this word, but since it is mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that we also want to refute the Declaration's contention and confront it, we have no option but to put forth the word *khushunat*. We say, "These acts that are harsh according to you must be there. The reason for this is that they have been categorically stated in the text of the Qur'an, and we either have to reject the Qur'an God forbid or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and a Muslim will never condemn and discard the Qur'an merely for the sake of the Declaration.

The Qur'an states:

As for the fornicatress and the fornicator, strike each of them a hundred lashes, and let not pity for them overcome you in Allah's law, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, and let their punishment be witnessed by a group of the faithful. (24:2)

The explicit manifestation of this noble verse, the true faith in God and the Last Day, is that not a speck of pity should be found in the heart of a person for the fornicating man and woman who are receiving lashes. It is natural that once there is no mercy, there will be ruthlessness. The Qur'an says that the faithful is he who shall have no pity in this context. Of course, it should not be an unjust ruthlessness. In any case, a Muslim should either accept the Qur'an and this verse and act upon it, or follow the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and defend it.

Again, the Qur'an states:

As for the thief, man and woman, cut off their hands as a requital for what they have earned. (5:38)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that this decree is cruel and inhuman. At this juncture, a Muslim should choose either the Qur'an or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the same vein, the view of the Qur'an is this:

There is life for you in retribution, O you who possess intellects! Maybe you will be God-wary! (2:179)

According to the Qur'an, the life and wellbeing of society will be ensured when the punishment of murder is execution, but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that execution as a punishment is inhuman and it must be abolished.

This is a cultural conspiracy. Through this hullabaloo and widespread propaganda, they want to put us in a passive position that our religious authorities will not dare to say, "We have such laws." On the

contrary, we have to stand firmly and decisively and say, "Yes, there are execution, amputation of hands and burning in fire in Islam, and if you call them harsh, we say: Of course, there is harshness in Islam and we are not afraid of being accused of harshness." We do not show ceremonial courtesies to anyone and we do not like to play with words. If we really follow the Qur'an, then it has permitted these things which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regards as cruel. In fact, the Qur'an has considered them necessary and obligatory. While addressing the Muslims, the Qur'an says that they should be like this with respect to the infidels:

And let them find severity in you. (9: 123)

It does not say, "And let them find severity in *your action*." It rather says, "...in you." That is, the violators should feel severity in your beings, and your behavior with them should make them realize that we will not be affected by our feelings and emotions "If I do something wrong, they will not pity me." But if we really accept the Qur'an and that we are Muslims, we have to say that these things exist in Islam and the Qur'an, and with respect to them, we are not afraid of anybody:

Such as deliver the messages of Allah and fear Him, and fear no one except Allah. (33:39)

Even if we are afraid of stating the decree of God and the Qur'an, at least we should not affirm their statements, write articles and deliver speeches here and there in negating it. Of course, not everybody has the courage to engage in this venture. Those who can take a step along this way are the ones who are not afraid of the reproaches and censures of both the friends and foes:

They wage jihad in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer. (5:54)

For us to say that there is decisiveness in Islam does not answer in any way the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration says, "The punishments of Islam are harsh and they must be abolished." In reply, we have to say, "These harsh punishments exist in Islam and they must remain in force." Just for the sake of pleasing others, we cannot accept some of the laws and decrees of Islam and the Qur'an and reject some others. To have faith in some while denying some others is true unbelief:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَوِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُوَّمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَوِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُوَّمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ اللَّهَ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نَوْجُولُ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا أُولُئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقَّا ﴿ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهينًا

Those who... say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some' and seek to take a way in between it is they who are truly faithless. (4:150–151)

A true Muslim who believes in the Qur'an must not be heedless of the unambiguous decree of God just because of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sacrifice his religion before the altar of the Declaration. If an act which people are not pleased with was not supposed to be done, the Holy Prophet (S) would neither abuse Lat and 'Uzza5 nor break the idols of people. The order of the Qur'an is for you to categorically declare disavowal of the enemies of God and His religion, and also to be repulsive of them both in words and deeds. In this regard, the Qur'an says that the action of Prophet Abraham ('a) should be a pattern of behavior:

There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Abraham and those who are with him. (60:4)

What is the act of Ibrahim ('a) and his followers because of which we have to cling to them? The reply is mentioned in the continuation of the verse:

When they said to their people, 'Indeed we repudiate you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We disavow you. (60:4)

The Qur'an says, "You have to emulate Ibrahim for standing in front of people and saying very explicitly, 'I repudiate you as well as that which you worship'." This is the order of the Qur'an, and not for us to say, "We should have tolerance, respect the traditions of people, and go in front of their idol and pay homage to it because it is venerable for them!" The Qur'an does not permit such a thing to anybody. A true Muslim should decisively say, "No way for the idol!" The verse continues to say that you should not suffice yourselves with it; rather, you should enhance your reaction and the severity of your statement and say thus:

And between you and us there has appeared enmity and hate forever, unless you come to have faith in Allah alone. (60:4)

You have to say, "So long as you have such practices and ideas, we are inimical to you and our enmity will never come to an end." You have to say, "Death to you and your idols!" "Fie on you and what you worship. (21:67)" These words and views are not mine; this is the categorical word of the Qur'an which commands, "Tell them, 'We are inimical to you forever and have rancor and spite in our hearts unless you return to God'." The issue will become more interesting if we pay attention to the continuation of the verse. It states that you have to follow Ibrahim and emulate his works with one exemption. Ibrahim did something that you are not supposed to emulate:

Except for Abraham's saying to his [step]father, 'I will surely plead forgiveness for you. (60:4)

Ibrahim ('a), with all the decisiveness he had, in his statement to Azar, who was his stepfather, showed a bit of courtesy, saying, "I will plead forgiveness for you." The Qur'an says, "Do not imitate this act from Ibrahim and do not promise any polytheist to pray to God for his forgiveness." If we really accept the Qur'an, so be it! This is the order of the Qur'an and a teaching it gives to its followers.

The meaning of the verse is completely explicit and clear, and it has no other interpretation. Its only alternative interpretation is that either we have to distort the Qur'an, or thrust it aside and trample it down for the sake of pleasing the world and the international community. We have to clarify our stance are we followers of the Qur'an or proponents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? We have to accept whatever is stated in the Qur'an, and not only the cases which are consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There are verses in the Qur'an about amputation of the thief's hand, lashing of the fornicator and execution of the murderer.

Thus, notwithstanding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we have to accept those verses. If there is this verse in the Qur'an,

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, (16:125)"

There is also this verse in the Qur'an:

"Fight them until faithlessness is no more (8:39)"

And we have to act upon both these injunctions. If a person recognizes God to be "the Most Merciful of

all the merciful," he should also recognize Him to be "severe in punishment." We cannot say, "Approve!" where the Qur'an says that God is the Most merciful of all the merciful, while we say, "This is harshness and I do not accept it," where it says,

"He is severe in punishment. (5:2)"

God is "the Most Merciful in disposition of forgiveness and mercy" and "very exacting at the time of giving exemplary punishment and chastisement." 7

One of the points of our weaknesses is that we conceal the truths of Islam and do not have the courage to state them as they are mentioned in the text of the Qur'an. Why are we afraid of expressing these truths? When the late Imam said, "Do not be afraid of being accused of harshness and retrogression," he was referring to these cases. Islam to which we want to invite people is a totality in which everything is knitted together, among which are these punishments which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights negates, and we cannot invite people to ten verses, hundred verses, or six thousand verses minus one verse of the Qur'an.

Another Question and Answer

We know that the Qur'an and [the precepts of] Islam were not revealed overnight. Instead, they were sent down gradually and consistent with the understanding and progress of the people and society who were the Prophet's addressees. Similarly, there is no dispute that in view of the fact that we live in an Islamic country and that more than ninety or so percent of our people are Muslims, we are obliged to accept the totality of Islam without any omission and not to believe in some and deny some others.

The issue at stake is that we have today staged a revolution and as the impact of our revolution, Islam which was then about to be obliterated, has been revived again and now, we want to present it to the world and invite people toward it. On one hand, we know that through the propaganda campaign they launched, the Western and imperialist media have presented Islam as a cruel and retrogressive religion and Muslims of Iran in particular as terrorists, illogical and harsh people.

Under this condition, if we implement such laws like the amputation of the thief's hand and stoning to death of the adulterer, it will definitely have a very negative impact on the world's public opinion, and by taking a film footage of those scenes and showing the same, the Western media will portray a very hideous and repulsive image of Islam and Muslims. It is obvious that if Islam is presented to the world in such a manner, we will never succeed in conveying the message of Islam and the Qur'an to the people of the world, and nobody will be inclined to Islam.

The question is: Will this issue being expressed not prompt us to bring about a change in some of the laws of Islam for the sake of keeping loftier interests such as the preservation, propagation and spread of Islam? For example, in the case of murder, the initial decree is to give a hundred camels as blood—money, but now we have made an equivalent and we say that seven million *tumans* worth of money should be given. By coining some equivalents, can't we do anything to prevent the hideous image of Islam and let people turn toward Islam?

Of course, the answer to this question requires us to discuss each of the phrases of the question. Anyway, to the extent which is possible here, we shall discuss some issues.

Now, in our own country, we have conveyed (the message of) Islam that more than ninety or so percent of our people have also accepted it, and that there is no deviation and cause for concern, I have to say that unfortunately, the truth is something else. Today, while nothing has already passed from the Revolution and the speeches of the Imam are broadcast daily over the radio and television, yet we can witness by ourselves that in some writings and speeches, the words of the Imam are distorted and quoted out of context. Today, you can observe in a newspaper whose proprietor is also a cleric that subjects which are against the explicit text of the Qur'an are published. In sum, through different factors, they influence the youth and create doubts and skepticisms in their hearts. Therefore, even in our country, there are serious concerns with respect to the presentation of Islam.

As to what has been said that the West has not yet heard and does not know anything about Islam and we have been trying to introduce Islam to the world, we have to say that this claim is not correct. Today, the Qur'an has been translated into almost all the living and important languages of the world and given the extent of the mass media, radio, television, satellite, and the Internet, actually everything is at the disposal of everyone, and we cannot say that the people of the world are not aware of Islam, especially given the widespread propaganda launched today by the news media particularly by the International Zionism against Islam.

Today, wherever you go around the world, Islam is known as a religion that does not recognize the rights of women and discriminates between the two sexes. I personally have visited many countries of the world and gone as far as the southern part of Chile and the same issues I have mentioned were raised, and I had live radio and television interviews regarding those issues. In short, for us to say that today there are people in the world who do not know anything about Islam and that we are just trying to introduce Islam is not true.

Anyway, even if there are such people, it is obvious that in introducing Islam to them, at the outset we will not come to state the fact that Islam amputates the thief's hand, gives lashes to the fornicator and sometimes stones him to death, and the like. Instead, one has to begin with the fundamentals and principles of the religion of Islam such as monotheism, prophethood and the Day of Resurrection so that the foundation of their faith will little by little be strengthened and gradually the other issues will be explained to them. In the beginning, we should content ourselves in making them ready to recite the

testimony of faith [shahadatayn] and become Muslims, and of all the laws of Islam, to be willing to perform the daily obligatory prayers.

In sum, at the beginning we have to try to make them closer to Islam only to that extent and thereafter, to gradually inform them of other issues to such an extent that they can act upon. Of course, the policy of gradual conveyance, which is related to every community and country, is definitely not for the people of Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz.

Concisely, given such hypothetical manifestations, the general ruling is that if under a certain condition of time and place to implement a decree has irreparable great blows to Islam and the Islamic society, the Supreme Religious Authority has the right to exercise his guardianship authority [wilayah], and in accordance with the secondary authorities, which also exist in the text of Islamic laws, to order for the temporary suspension of the decree's implementation.

Of course, such a thing is among the prerogatives of the jurist–guardian [wali al-faqih] only and nobody else has the right to do so. But the other point which must be noted is that there is difference between temporarily postponement of the implementation of a law in accordance with certain greater interests, and denial of the basis of the law and say that such a law does not exist in Islam or to say that in spite of the existence of this law in Islam, we do hereby declare that from now on, it is no longer part of Islam.

These two are very different from each other. To temporarily postpone the implementation of a decree is not confined to the penal laws of Islam. For instance, we ourselves witnessed that the eminent Imam (*r*), in accordance with greater interests, postponed the going to *Hajj* pilgrimage, which is one of the important forms of worship in Islam, of the Iranians for some years. To temporarily suspend the implementation of a decree is one thing and to deny the same is another story. In accordance with greater interests, it can be said that this decree is not to be implemented for the meantime, but to say, for example, that Islam has no decree on stoning to death and that the decree was only for the uncivilized and barbaric people at the time in the Arabian Peninsula is denial and abrogation of a definitive decree of Islam, something which nobody, not even the Holy Prophet (S), had the right to do.

In order to better clarify this fact, let us cite a historical example. During the early period of Islam when Muslims lived in extreme hardship, the people of Ta'if8 came and gave a proposal to the Prophet (S), saying, "We are willing to become Muslims and forge alliance with you, but we have one condition. We are willing to recite the formula of faith [shahadatayn], not to worship the idols, and even to pay the zakat. Exempt us from only one thing and that is to perform prostration [sajdah]. We cannot do what you are doing—to prostrate down on earth. If you exempt us from doing prostration, we are ready to set aside the practice of idol—worship, to abandon other practices which you deemed abominable and to conclude treaty of alliance of siding with you in times of war."

Imagine the circumstances. The Muslims then had a small population and were in need of forces. Their economic power was weak and they were in need of financial assistance while the people of Ta'if were

relatively wealthy. In sum, a group of people were willing, out of their own volition, to take not a single step, but a hundred steps closer to Islam, and they did not like to accept only one thing which was apparently simple. In this regard, the Qur'an says that the Prophet (S) of Islam, notwithstanding all excellences he had, was about to have a bit of doubt in declining their proposal; not that he would accept it, rather he wanted to decline it but in the bottom of his heart a very small amount of inclination was about to appear:

Had We not fortified you, certainly you might have inclined toward them a bit. (17:74)

Had he inclined toward them, what would have happened? The reply is very severe in tone:

Then We would have surely made you taste a double [punishment] in this life and a double [punishment] after death, and then you would not have found for yourself any helper against Us. (17:75)

That is to say, "Had you inclined toward them even a bit, We would have punished you twice that of others in this world and the Hereafter and no one could have helped you."

You and I have our own respective stations. The issue of denial of religion and not acting faithfully upon its laws is something impossible even for the Prophet (S) himself, and even assuming that it is possible for him to do so, he would definitely be called to account, and God the Exalted is not joking with anyone in this case.

Meanwhile, concerning the issue of paying blood-money mentioned in the question, we have to say that it is not something that we ourselves have to coin. In fact, this issue has been mentioned in the traditions and existed from the very beginning, and even during that time, not only camels (as blood-money) were specified; rather, instead of camels, gold and silver which were monetary units at that time could also be given as blood-money.

- 1. The Jews in ridiculing the Prophet (S) would say ra'ina [meaning, 'have regard for us'] with a change of accent turning it into another word which made it a term of reproach. The Muslims are told to say unzurna [meaning, 'give us a little respite] instead while addressing the Prophet (S), as there is no room in this term for such a distortion. [Qara'i]
- 2. The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) is supposed to print and publish soon this debate in the form of a book.
- 3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 21, p. 385, section [bab] 36, hadith 10.
- 4. 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." [Trans.]
- 5. Lat and 'Uzza: idols mentioned in Serah an-Najm 53:19. [Trans.]

- 6. Mafatih al-Jinan, DI'a al-Iftitah.
- <u>7.</u> Ibid.
- 8. Ta'if: a city in the southern part of Hijaz (modern Saudi Arabia), 40 miles east of Mecca. [Trans.]

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