

Islamic Teachings

Islamic teachings cover the entire human life. On the whole, they are divided into two parts :

1. Man's relation with Allah
2. Man's relation with man

Acts of Worship and Adoration

In acts of worship, man, by turning his mind to Allah and praying to Him with his heart, tries to make his soul transcend the material world. He tries to purge it of the impurities of sin and to cultivate high human qualities within himself.

He seeks the help of Allah, the Majestic and Almighty to overcome the causes of despair and despondency, and keeps remembering Him to maintain his own sense of responsibility towards Him. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And keep up prayer for my remembrance." Hence it is evident that it is the worshipper himself whom the benefit of all acts of worship goes.

Instructional Effect of Worship

Acts of worship are performed with particular attention and certain formalities. Allah does not require our worship. It is we, who through His worship and adoration obtain great moral and instructional benefits.

According to the well-known scientist, Alexis Carrel, when it is not possible to find any logical words to infuse hope, it is worship and prayer which generate a feeling of trust and enable man to face the complex problems of life with confidence. This feeling can manifest itself in everybody.

Worship leaves a definite mark on habits and manners, and for that purpose we must perform acts of worship regularly.

The societies which have killed the spirit of worship, usually are not safe from corruption and decay.

The effects of worship and adoration are so quick and wonderful that their manifestation can be felt physically.

According to the same scientist, the result of adoration can be established scientifically also. Acts of worship affect not only emotional, but also physical conditions and sometimes even heal bodily ailments in a few moments or a few days. Islamic acts of worship are very simple and easy to perform. There are ample facilities for the sick and the weak.

It is worth-noting that Islamic acts of worship, besides their emotional, psychological and moral effects, which have an individual aspect, produce remarkable social effects also.

Prayer

Prayer which is one of the most important Islamic acts of worship and is performed five times every day and night with great simplicity and devotion, produces very significant moral and practical effects in strengthening the spirit of faith and purging worshippers' head and heart of the impurities of sin. As one of its conditions is cleanliness, it enjoins upon every Muslim to keep his body and dress always clean and tidy.

As the dress of the person performing prayer and the place where he is performing it must not have been acquired by unlawful means, it teaches man not to wrongfully encroach upon other's property or to misappropriate it. As prayer is to be performed at the appointed timings, it teaches discipline and punctuality, and accustoms man to early rising which is the secret of the success of many world personalities.

We know that it is preferable to perform prayer in congregation at which all stand in a row without any distinction before Allah and carry out the significant and enthralling ritual in a brotherly manner. Congregational prayer is a lesson in equality, fraternity, harmony and unity.

Fast

Fasting is another Islamic act of worship, which teaches self-control and resistance to passion.

From the social point of view, it induces people to show practical sympathy to the deprived and the starving. Moreover, from the point of view of health and hygiene, its curative and preventive value cannot be denied.

It cleanses the bodily system internally and shakes off the unconsumed food material which usually takes the form of surplus fat and overweight, and become the cause of many diseases and discomforts. Fasting is a good precautionary measure against the incidence of a number of diseases. It has curative

value too.

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The holding of a great conference of world Muslims is another masterpiece of the Islamic teachings in respect of worship. The ceremonies of pilgrimage are so exciting, pure and interwoven with fraternity and equality that they deeply impress everyone without any exception.

This gathering in which even now every year more than a million Muslims from all quarters of the world take part, affords an opportunity to the people of all races, color, languages and nationalities to meet on a common ground without any discrimination. Its ceremonies take a man out of his material shell which is marked with harshness and antagonism, and lifts him to an atmosphere full of devotion and virtue. They soften the emotions and enliven the feelings.

The Hajj gatherings also serve the purpose of a national conference on a world level and contribute to Muslim homogeneity, both political and economic. They serve as a unifying force and a common bond among the Muslims belonging to diverse social segments, and provide them an opportunity to meet together and exchange ideas. A study of all acts of worship and devotion in Islam will show that every one of them has both moral and social aspects. This confirms what we said earlier that the benefit of all our acts of worship goes to ourselves.

Man's Relation with Other Men

This part of Islamic teachings includes all social questions. Islam with its distinctive system teaches its adherents what they should be, how they should live and how they should discharge their duties to society.

The rights which a Muslim is enjoined upon to respect are very wide and varied. They extend from the rights of the teachers, of parents, of friends and neighbors, of brothers in religion, of fellow human beings, to the rights of the animals etc.

From the Islamic point of view man, being an organ of the social body, has so much importance that nothing can be equal to his life and blood. The Holy Qur'an says: "He who killed any person, unless it be a person guilty of man slaughter or of spreading chaos in the land, should be looked upon as though he had slain all mankind, and he who saved the life of any person, should be regarded as though he had given life to all mankind."

There is no doubt that in view of the homogeneity of all the organs of the body of a human society, the loss of one individual effects the whole society and thus in a way, the individual and the society become identical.

The Holy Prophet has said that all the faithful are the organs of one body. If one organ suffers pain all

other organs feel uneasy.

The celebrated poet, Saadi Shirazi, was inspired by this very Prophetic saying when he said in his well-known couplet that all human beings are the organs of one another.

As we know, in Islam there is no problem of race, color or geographical region. It is possible that all human societies on the basis of adherence to a common ideology (Faith in Allah and the prophets and adherence to good deeds) set up a world government with one law and one policy in which all racial and geographical units may be submerged.

Relations of Muslims with Other People

Here again Islamic teachings have two aspects;

1. To preserve Muslim Identity.
2. To establish peaceful relation with the non- Muslims.

With a view to maintaining the independence and solidarity of the Muslim society, arrangements have been made to save the Muslims from being merged in non-Muslim societies and to protect them against all alien influences in their vital affairs.

Hence instructions have been given that the Muslims must not completely rely on non-Muslims and must not disclose their secrets to them. The Holy Qur'an says:

"O Believers, do not take into your confidence any other than the people of your own community. For they never miss any opportunity for exploiting any weakness of yours." (3: 118).

Islam instructs the Muslims not to make friends with those who are hostile to Islam, unless they change their policy and give up their hostile attitude.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"You will not find people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, making love with those who fight Allah and His Messenger. Even though the latter be their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their relations."

At the same time, with a view to enabling the Muslims to live as a powerful and active world unit and to be benefited by the positive aspects of others in a healthy atmosphere of mutual respect, Islam allows the Muslims to pursue a policy of peaceful co-existence with all people of the book (followers of the previous prophets). It even enjoins upon Muslims to protect them as a minority in Muslim countries and to respect their rights so long as they do not commit a crime.

Such minorities are known in Islamic jurisprudence as Ahl al-Zimmah (people of covenant). Anyhow, there are certain conditions which they have to observe strictly.

If the interests of the Muslims so demand, they can enter into treaties with the non-Muslims provided these treaties do not in any way endanger their self respect, independence and interests. The Muslims are bound to strictly adhere to the treaties concluded by them and are not allowed to violate them unless they are violated first by the other party.

Adherence to treaties and agreements is a general rule of Islam. It is equally applicable in respect of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Violation of a treaty on the pretext that the other party is not Muslim is not allowed.

Islam Enjoins Universal Vigil

Every Muslim has two obligatory duties:

1. To invite others to do the right
2. To combat corruption

These two duties, which are known in Islamic jurisprudence as 'Amr bil-Maruf' (exhortation to do good) and 'Nahy anil-Munkar' (restraint from doing evil) enjoin upon all Muslims to keep a constant watch on the society. If they find anybody deviating from the path of justice and truth, they must invite him to the right path and if they find anybody committing a crime or sin, they must restrain him from doing so.

This rule is considered to be an important law of Islam. In this respect, the Holy Qur'an says:

"You are the best community which has been raised for the guidance of mankind. You exhort the people to do good and restrain them from doing evil."

Imam Sadiq (A) has said :

"He who does not fight corruption, neither with his hand nor with his tongue or heart is pseudo alive."

In fact, the performances of these two important duties is one of the obligations of collective life. In collective living, the happiness and misery of each member of the society is shared by all others and hence they cannot be indifferent to the conduct of fellow members.

Islam asks every Muslim to keep his social spirit fully alive and always have an eye on collective interests. It wants every individual to be responsible to all other members of the society and wants the society to be responsible to all the individuals. All Muslims should criticize and reform each other and play their role in the formation of a healthy society.

Islamic Economy

As the prosperity and moral and material well-being of the community is not possible without a rich and healthy economy, Islam, as a progressive religious system, has included this question in its program.

Zakat

Islam, in order to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, has legislated the law of zakat, and ordered the rich to pay a just share of their money and individual income as zakat to the public treasury.

The money, so collected, constitutes a very large amount which can play an important role in combating poverty, narrowing class gap and ensuring an over-all development. The leaders of Islam have said that the amount of zakat has been so precisely determined that if all those on whom zakat is due, pay it honestly, poverty can be totally uprooted.

Poverty exists only because a large number of people evade the obligation of this vital duty of theirs. The eight categories prescribed for the expenditure of the zakat money fully illustrate the aim and importance of this Islamic Law and throw light on its role in the formation of a healthy society.

The details of these eight categories have been given in the Holy Qur'an.

"Zakat is only for the poor, the needy and the officials appointed over them, those whose hearts are made to include (to truth) and the ransoming of the captives and those in debt and in the way of Allah, and the way farers; an ordinance from Allah and Allah is All knowing and All wise."

It is to be noted that the term, in the way of Allah is very wide and covers all development projects as well as such items as education, health and construction of bridges, roads, hospitals and schools.

Khums

"Khums" means payment of 20 percent of surplus income in a year, i.e. 20 per cent of what is left of the total annual income after meeting all expenses of that year. It is an Islamic tax which is levied to meet the requirements of collective life such as help to the needy, eradication of poverty, propagation of Islam and all other material and moral needs of the Muslim society.

Khums is due only on the surplus and not the entire income. Hence, those whose expenditure is more than or equal to their income do not have to pay anything on this account. Only those whose income exceeds their expenditure should pay 20 per cent of the surplus to the public treasury. The money so realized comes to a considerable amount and enables the Muslims to solve many of their religious, social and material problems.

Khums is not confined to the earned income only. It is also levied on what is obtained from mines, what

is extracted from the sea by means of diving and on buried treasure dug out of the earth and not owned by anybody. It is also due on spoils of war. In all these cases it is levied on the total income. Only production expenses are deducted.

The details of the way how income derived from khums is to be distributed and the categories of its expenditure are given in the Islamic jurisprudence and are beyond the scope of this book.

Charity

Spending in the way of Allah is not obligatory, but Islam has attached much importance to it. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an on this subject.

Charity is one of the factors which help in the equitable distribution of wealth and eradication of poverty. Alms may be given for individuals or charitable objects. Distribution of alms through charitable institutions according to a well-laid out program and under the supervision of God-fearing people is an effective way of helping the poor.

Wakf (Endowment)

Creation of endowments helps in the equitable distribution of wealth and prevents its concentration in the hands of a few. There are two kinds of endowments:

1. Public
2. Private

In the case of private endowments, the beneficiaries are only a few individuals or a limited class such as the children or descendants of the grantor.

In the case of public endowments, which are far more common, the corpus of the donated property is transferred to the public or a large class of society and becomes a part of public property. Islam has encouraged the creation of endowments and the Imams themselves have set an example in this respect.

Through endowments a large portion of Private property is turned into public property and thus it becomes available for the service of the masses. This in itself is a big step towards just and even distribution of wealth.

How Wealth is Created?

From the Islamic point of view the true and absolute ownership of all things belongs to Allah alone.

He owns everything that exists in the universe. His ownership is real and has creative aspect, because

He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything. "Whatever exists in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him."

Hence others can become owners only with His permission and in accordance with His laws and commands.

Private Ownership

Islam respects private ownership and considers that everybody is the owner of the fruits of his own labor. It recognizes labor as the basis of ownership. This is a natural law which has been endorsed by Islam. Everybody is the natural owner of his self and his mental and physical faculties. As his products are in reality only a crystallization of his existing faculties, he is the owner of the products of his labor.

Rehabilitation and Acquisition

"He, who brings barren land under cultivation, is the owner of it." This is a saying of the Holy Prophet.

Acquiring minerals and other natural resources before anybody else discovers them is another cause of ownership. According to Islamic law, he who acquires it, is the owner. As bringing barren land under cultivation and acquiring natural resources involve labor, it is clear that labor is the main factor in creating wealth.

Of course, the Islamic government has a right to arrange the cultivation of barren land and the excavation of mineral resources on its own and to utilize the return for the benefit of the general public.

Islam attaches great importance to the right of the workers. According to Islamic traditions, ignoring the rights of a worker is an unpardonable sin. A well-known tradition says that the Holy Prophet raised a worker's hand which had swollen as the result of hard work and said: "This is the hand which is liked by Allah and His Prophet."

Circulation of Wealth

Islam has imposed special taxes on the stagnant wealth, which is not in circulation (such as Zakat on coined gold and silver after the completion of one year), and thus has taken a practical step to encourage circulation of wealth. The Holy Qur'an has condemned the hoarders and those who keep their wealth stagnant and do not utilize it for the benefit of the people.

Further, the Islamic traditions much encourage commerce, agriculture, cattle breeding and setting up of industries. In authentic books of Hadith, many traditions are found which clearly show that Islam aims at the maximum mobilization of all human and financial resources for the benefit of the people on the whole.

Usury and Interest- Free Loan

To stimulate productivity, Islam strictly forbids usury so that no body may live on interest without doing any productive work.

Usury upsets the balance of wealth and widens the gap between the haves and have-nots. It makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Islam says that usury is a mortal sin, and nobody and become the owner of the money earned through practicing it. The money thus earned must be returned to its rightful owner.

There are two kinds of usury and both of them are forbidden.

1. Loan Usury
2. Trade Usury

Lending money on the condition that it will be aid back with something added to it, is called usury. It is immaterial whether the rate of Interest is large or small, or whether it is paid in cash or in kind. Anyhow, there is no harm if the debtor willingly pays anything out of goodwill without any prior condition.

Trade means selling of a thing in exchange for another of the same kind, but with a difference in quantity. For example to sell 10 kilograms of good quality wheat in exchange for 12 kilograms of medium quality wheat will constitute usury. Detailed conditions of such forbidden deals are given in books of Islamic law.

Interest -Free Loan

Islam exhorts people to give as much interest free Loan as is possible. According to certain traditions, this is such an act of virtue that its reward will be more than that of alms (free aid in the way of Allah). Probably the reason is that many of those who seek loans are respectable people who.

Even when they are badly in need of money, do not condescend to accept free aid or alm, because they consider doing that, below their dignity and position, whereas the persons who accept do not have such scruples. For this reason, giving interest-free loan is considered more rewarding.

At the same time, Islam allows the creditors to require the deposit of adequate security with them up to the full value of the loan. In case a debtor fails to pay up the loan, the creditor is allowed to deduct an equal amount from the security and return the remainder to its owner.

Giving interest-free loans is effective in the cultivation of friendship and love and in removing complexes which often exist between high income and low-income individuals. This is the simplest form of service which the well- off people can render to the less fortunate.

Jihad and Defence in Islam

The question of Jihad occupies a special place in the Muslim law. In fact, a progressive and compact system cannot be complete without such provisions.

Owing to its misinterpretation by ill-informed persons, the inclusion of the question of Jihad in Islamic teachings has given rise to much hostile propaganda and has provided a pretext to its opponents to say that Islam is a religion of sword and force. Even well-known writers have been misled. Macdonald in his encyclopedia asserts that the propagation of Islam by sword and force is one of the religious duties of every Muslim.

As the nature and aim of Jihad become clear, not only the hollowness of such criticism becomes obvious, but also the depth, purity and dynamism of the teachings of Islam and their capacity to serve human society in varying circumstances becomes evident. To prove this truth, we draw the attention of the readers to the follow-points.

Pacifist Spirit of Islam is not Apposed to Fighting Imposed Wars

Jihad literally means effort and striving. In Islamic sources also, this word has been used in the sense of every kind of intellectual, physical. Financial and moral effort for the promotion of divine and human objectives.

But technically it means an armed struggle for the protection and progress of the Islamic system .

Now let us see what are the occasions on which such struggles become unavoidable.

Fight against the mischievous elements that consider the spread of a system of justice and truth a threat to their interests and take a stand to exterminate it, is unavoidable. So long as such elements exist in the world, supporters of truth and justice have no alternative but to defend their objectives and their own existence.

In fact, war, in this case, is forced upon the believers in Allah and in social justice against their will, Islam cannot avoid such situations.

Nevertheless, the pacifist spirit of Islam and its abstinence from using force in dealing with those who do not resort to aggression, antagonism and injustice, are evident from many passages of the Holy Qur'an.

"Allah does not prohibit you, in respect of those who have not fought you on account of the faith and who have not turned you out of your homes from showing them goodness and being just towards them. Surely Allah loves the just. He only orders you as against those who have fought you on account of the faith and who have turned you out of your homes and who have assisted others in your being turned out that you should be friendly towards them. And whoever be friend

them, they are people who are unjust."

At another place, the Holy Qur'an expressly says that if the enemy lays down arms and shows peaceful intention, the Muslims have no right to be hostile to them.

"If they leave you alone and desist from fighting against you and make overtures for peace to you, in that case Allah has left you no cause for aggression against them."

In another verse, the Holy Prophet is told:

"If enemies incline to peace, you should also incline to it."

Perhaps no other religion has expressed its peaceful disposition in such clear terms. But Islam's pacifism must not be interpreted to mean that the Muslims are allowed not to take action against those who force large sections of the world people to live under colonial conditions or a state of idolatry, or to watch aggression against their country as idle spectators.

Jihad in the Way of Allah and its Aims

In Islamic sources, the word, 'Jihad' has mostly been used in association with the phrase, in the way of Allah. This means that Jihad cannot be waged for base desires, territorial expansion, imperialistic aims, for obtaining spoils of war and the like. The aim of Jihad must always be divine with no personal, material or selfish interest being involved. On the whole, the aims of Islamic Jihad can be summarized in the following few points, while dealing with them we will also try to refute the objections of the opponents.

Defending the Existence of the True System

The most important aim of Islamic jihad is the defense of the divine system of truth and justice and the preservation of its outstanding features. During the time of the Prophet, most of the battles were fought for this very purpose. The Holy Qur'an expressly says:

"Permission to fight is given to those against whom war has been declared, because they have been wronged and surely Allah is competent of helping them; those who have been expelled from their homes without just cause, but because they say that our Lord is Allah. And were not Allah to repel some men by means of the others surely, the monasteries, the synagogues, the temples of the Magians and the masjids in which Allah's name is frequently mentioned, would have been ruined."

Thus whenever the national sovereignty of the Muslims and their independence and integrity are endangered, it is their duty to stand up to the enemies and defend themselves to the last. It is interesting that in this verse the defense of all places of worship has been given equal importance, which is another

sign of the peaceable spirit of Islam.

Anyhow, it should be noted that Islam shows neither tolerance towards idol-worship, nor does it recognize idolatry as neither a religion, nor the temples of idol-worshippers as place of worship. It regards idolatry as a sort of superstition, falsehood, intellectual decadence and a disease which must be remedied. That is why Islam has allowed the destruction of the temples of idol-worshippers.

Fight With the Opposing Elements

A heavenly system, as a new ideology, has a right to enjoy freedom of propagation and be able to spread in a normal manner through preaching. If certain elements such as idolaters, finding their unlawful interests in danger, in order to prevent the spread of the new system, oppose it and try to keep the people in ignorance and no peaceful solution of the problem is found possible. Islam allows a fight against such elements.

Some of the early battles of Islam were of this nature, to which there is a reference in the Qur'anic verse quoted above. Freedom of preaching and logical spread of the true system is another aim of Islamic jihad.

Combating Injustice and Corruption

Owing to the uncompromising hostility of Islam to injustice and corruption, if no peaceful way is left, Jihad is allowed to put an end to injustice and tyranny and to rescue the weak and the helpless from the clutches of the tyrants such as were the usurers of Mecca.

Certain early battles of Islam were of this nature also. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Why should you not fight in the way of Allah for the sake of those helpless men, women, and children, who being weak have been oppressed and are crying out, "Our Lord, deliver us from this habitation whose inhabitants are unjust oppressors and raise a protector for us by Your grace and a helper from Yourself."

Preparedness for Jihad

So long as might and force rule over international relations and a possibility of the Muslim society being subjected to aggression exists, Islam enjoins up on the Muslims to maintain a state of complete preparedness to be able to defend themselves.

The Holy Qur'an has given clear instructions in this respect and in a short sentence has expressed all that was required, ***"And to encounter them (the enemies) provide whatever force you can afford."***

Though expenditure on armaments is considered least desirable and most unproductive, Islam has

considered it not only essential in the case of need, but also has named it financial Jihad. Anyhow, it is not possible to eradicate aggression and war in the world simply by strengthening military organization and acquiring armaments.

Though to do so is also essential and has a security aspect, yet it sometimes enhances the possibility of the out-break of war. Therefore; Islam proposes that the basic way of securing permanent peace should be to strengthen faith and morality, ***“O Believers, enter all of you into peace.”***

This means that the only way to enjoy peace and security is that all enter into the domain of faith, virtue and acknowledgement of Allah. It is in this domain alone that every one regards the others as his brethren respects them and believes that all are slaves of Allah and all are loved by Him.

It is in this domain that everybody should look at others' interests as his own. Everybody should like for others what he likes for himself and dislike for others what he dislikes for himself. It is here that toleration and sacrifice in the way of Allah and for the sake of Allah are considered to be the most distinguished and prominent human qualities.

Observance of Human Rules While Dealing With the Enemy

While many people think that the very word enemy is enough justification for all kinds of excessive violence and inhuman acts, Islam with its detailed fair and firm teachings leaves no doubt that even conflict with the enemy must not go beyond the framework of the rules of human morality, for every kind of violation of these rules amounts to exceeding the limits prescribed by Allah.

The following precise instructions which the Prophet used to give to the soldiers ,and mujahids before they proceeded to the battle field, fully show Islam's peaceful disposition and the Prophet's deep insight.

"March in the name of Allah and seek His help. Fight for His sake and in accordance with His commands."

"Don't practice deceit or fraud. Don't embezzle the spoils of war. Don't mutilate the body of an enemy after he is killed. Don't harm the woman, the children and the aged. Don't interfere with the monks and hermits who live in monasteries and caves."

"Don't unnecessarily cut down trees. Don't burn the date-palm groves of the enemy and don't submerge them in water. Don't destroy fruit-bearing trees and don't put the enemy crops to fire. Don't kill the useful animals except for your food. Don't poison the enemy water. Don't resort to trickery and don't launch a surprise night assault."

Islam forbids every resort to inhuman means of fighting such as night assault, microbial warfare, incineration of cattle, crops and gardens and killing and injuring unarmed personnel. In the Islamic rules of warfare, instruction has been repeatedly given that the Muslims must not shoot the first arrow and

they must not launch the first attack. This means that they should not attack unless they are attacked. Their war should be defensive and not offensive.

We find that the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (A) used to give instructions that every effort should be made that fighting did not start before noon and if possible it was delayed till late afternoon so that the sunset, the time when fighting normally stops, might not be long in coming, and there be less bloodshed.

The directions given by the leaders of Islam (Imams) with regard to the treatment to be meted out to the prisoners of war is yet another proof of the necessity of the observance of rules of human morality even while dealing with the enemy. The prisoners of war are to be treated with kindness and are to be provided with the same food and drink as are partaken of by the Muslims.

It is true that correct training and existence of the living spirit of faith and human morality in any society forestalls many excesses and vices. Nevertheless, the establishment and consolidation of social justice is not possible without a strong judiciary. In every society there exist some such miscreants and unruly persons that the light of faith and morality alone cannot remove the darkness of their spirit. They are not subdued without the existence of a strong and fair judiciary.

That is why Islam, in order to enforce its program of social justice, has not limited itself to moral counsels and spiritual training only but has visualized the formation of a strong judiciary to back its teachings.

Judicial System of Islam

Among the qualities of a judge, two points are most important:

1. He should have complete knowledge of all the details of law.
2. He should possess the qualities of justice, virtue and honesty.

As for the equality of all before the court, Islam directs the Qazi (judge or magistrate) to treat both the parties of a law suit equally. The Qazi must observe complete equality even in acts of ordinary courtesy such as speaking to the parties, looking at them or making them sit or stand.

There must be no discrimination between the litigants on account of their social status.

The leaders of Islam (Imam) have described the office of a Qazi as of great importance and responsibility but at the same time, very risky. Even the slightest lapse on his part is enough to degrade him from his high position.

The Prophet of Islam has said that the tongue of a Qazi is between two flames. This means that if he shows any bias towards one or the other party, he will be burnt.

In Islam accepting a bribe and perverting judgment in favor of a briber are deadly sins. The Holy Prophet has said: "He who gives bribe, he who takes it and he who goes between them, all will go to hell."

The judicial system of Islam is very exact and detailed and occupies a special position among judicial systems of the world today.

In the books of Islamic jurisprudence, there exists a special chapter on judicature, which deals with all the principles and details of administration of justice. and describes the qualifications of a Qazi, qualifications of witnesses, the way to file a suit, the arguments which the parties can advance in their favor and the like.

The instructions issued by Imam 'Ali (A) and contained in his famous letter addressed to Malik Ashtar, Governor of Egypt, throw light on some of the above points and show the importance which Islam attaches to the high office of the Qazi. This subject has been fully elucidated in chapter VII of this book.

Criminal Laws

Punishment to be meted out to offenders must be just as well as deterrent. At the same time, there should be a scope for reducing the punishment in the case of repentant and those induced to commit crime in ignorance or through inexperience. Punishments prescribed in Islam satisfy all the three aspects.

For example, in the case of willful murder, the prescribed punishment is a death sentence. The Holy Qur'an says: "O men of the understanding, there is security of life for you in the law of retribution." But at the same time, the Holy Qur'an allows the heirs of the murdered person to forgive the murderer and accept blood money (diyat).

Similarly in the case of certain crimes against chastity, if the offender before being sentenced by the court genuinely repents and is prepared to pay damages, he can be forgiven. According to Islamic teachings, the best way to eradicate crimes is to concentrate efforts on moral training so that the people may always be conscious of recompense and retribution on the Day of Resurrection.

But, if in spite of such efforts, a crime is committed, then it should severely dealt with. Islam is against those who succumb to false emotions, and hesitate to accept the justification of death sentence in the case of willful murderers and other punishment in the case of other transgressors, such people practically give preference to the interests of criminal over the interest of the society.

Experience shows that any leniency towards hard baked criminals helps in spreading corruption, and is certainly detrimental to the security of the society

Some people may criticize certain parts of Islamic criminal law and regard them as unduly harsh, but fact is not so. Severe action is taken only in the case of very serious crimes and only in cases where moral

and social security of the nation is endangered. Such instances are found in other legal systems also.

At the most, some societies may not regard such questions as combating unchastity as vital, whereas, Islam, with its subtle insight, attaches to them utmost importance.

Other systems may consider some other questions vital.

Though some of the Islamic punishments sometimes look very harsh, the proof of the connected crimes is so difficult and depends upon such conditions that more than one or two convictions are hardly possible in a year.

Thus though, the deterrent nature of these punishments produces good moral effect and strikes terror among potential transgressors, yet practically very few are affected by them.

It must be fully realized that Islamic laws and other Islamic teachings which aim at protecting human rights and relations and preventing corruption and aggression, form one homogenous unit and can be fully effective only if they are all enforced simultaneously.

First of all an atmosphere should be created where Islamic teachings concerning moral training and social welfare are implemented. In such an atmosphere, the incidence of crimes and offences will be greatly diminished and consequently there will be fewer occasions when it will be necessary to inflict any punishment.

As is well-known, most of the crimes are the result of incorrect upbringing and various material and social privations. With the elimination of such factors, incidence of crimes will certainly be reduced.

The result will be that the number of those, whom punishment is meted out, will gradually go down, and with that the disgust which some people feel at the idea of harsh punishment being inflicted on an apparently large number of persons will also disappear.

But, of course, this does not mean that if in any particular atmosphere, a part of Islamic program in the fields of moral training or eradication of poverty is not being implemented, the rest should be totally ignored. All we mean is to emphasize that all items of Islamic program are closely interlinked, and if they are enforced simultaneously, they will produce the best result.

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