

Life in the Shade of the Koran

By

Dr. Mohsen A. El-Guindy

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Things and deeds prohibited in Islam	4
Inheritance in Islam	26
Wealth in Islam	31
Women in Islam	34
The veil in Islam	40
Marriage and sex in Islam	44
Polygamy in Islam	51
Jihad in Islam	56
Tolerance in Islam	62
Islam and democracy	72
Human rights in Islam	80
Misconceptions about Islam	108
References cited	119

Introduction

In the shade of the Koran Muslims enjoy a pious life. To Muslims the Koran is the roadmap to paradise. Muslims earn paradise by adhering to the principles of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. They thus forbid what is prohibited and allow what is lawful.

The author explains what is prohibited in Islam and what is lawful.

In order to answer back the false accusations of the west against Islam, the author explains the topics: inheritance, wealth, women, the veil, sex, polygamy, jihad, tolerance, democracy, and human rights in Islam.

The author refutes three main accusations against Islam: Islam is a recent religion invented by Muhammad, Islam is a violent religion and Islam is spread by the sword. The author provides evidences disproving such false accusations.

Chapter 1

Things and deeds prohibited in Islam

In the shade of the Koran Muslims enjoy a pious and honorable life. The one thing that matters to Muslims is avoidance of Hell and attainment of paradise. To Muslims the Koran is the roadmap to paradise. Muslims earn paradise by adhering to the principles of the Koran. They thus forbid what is prohibited and allow what is lawful.

The following are things and deeds prohibited in Islam:

1-Adultery

In the West human rights calls for sexual freedom for both sexes and demand that they get sex education and access to contraceptives! Islam however, is the religion of strong family relationships. Sex in Islam means marriage, and no sex is allowed outside marriage. Spreading debauchery under the pretense of love or modern lifestyle is considered as a big sin in Islam. Islam has imposed a severe penalty on those who commit adultery even before marriage. Unmarried man or woman if they have sex outside marriage, Islam considers their act as a clear fornication. Both are whipped 100 lashes before a gathering witnessing their humiliation. If both were married, they are thrown by stones in a ditch until death. This penalty however requires four witnesses known by piety and credibility to swear in court that they have seen them doing the sexual act. If the four witnesses altogether are not available to the court the penalty is not concluded and the suspected are released and left to their conscious to seek Allah's forgiveness.

Let not any pity overcome you (so as to prevent you) from inflicting the order of Allah, if indeed you believe in Allah and the last day. And, let a group of the believers witness their punishment (An-Nûr, 2).

This punishment was known before Islam in old religions including Judaism. Thus the society Islam tries to establish is a pure and chaste society where men and women are modest and god-fearing. It is not a society that raises the madness of sex or exploits women's bodies under the false claim of freedom. Fornication spreads diseases and mixes lineages and roots and causes corruption. The Islamic society is thus free from AIDS, Herpes, and other evils and epidemics that became rampant in modern free-sex communities.

Allah says in the Koran:

Indeed those who love that obscenity should be spread among the believers, shall have a painful chastisement in this life and in the Hereafter, and Allah knows but you do not know (An Noor 19).

And do not draw near fornication; surely it is an indecency, and an evil which invites evil. (Al Isrâ', 32).

In the Koran the sin of adultery is mentioned alongside polytheism and murder, illustrating its seriousness.

And those who invoke not any other god along with Allah, nor slay the soul Allah has forbidden except by right, neither fornicate, for whosoever does that shall receive the punishment.

Doubled shall be the punishment for him on the Resurrection Day, and he shall dwell therein humbled (Al-Furqân, 68, 69).

The Prophet said about the fornicator:

“His belief leaves his body while he commits the shameful act, and hovers outside it until he finishes the act, at which time he regains it.”

Furthermore, the fornicator in Islam is not allowed to consummate a marriage thereafter with a chaste partner. And there is punishment in the Hereafter.

Islam has not only forbidden adultery and fornication, but has accompanied this prohibition with legislation that seals the avenues to them. Anything which is a precursor of fornication is itself a minor form of fornication. As in the authentic narration, **"The eyes commit fornication, and their fornication is the look."**

Among those things which Islam has prohibited in this light are:

a) Entering houses without permission:

O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your (own) houses until you have asked permission and greeted its occupants (An-Nûr, 27).

b) Hayaa (bashfulness):

According to the Koran the ultimate success in the hereafter depends on Muslims' adherence to the branches of belief. Hayaa (bashfulness) is one of the branches of belief. Islam promotes Hayaa as a basic value in its social structure. Hayaa refers to the suppression of sexual behavior within certain limits and the avoidance of instigating sexual attraction beyond those limits. In Islam, Hayaa is one of the primary values, which besides a few other values provide the basis for not only moral behavior, but also a sound society. According to the Koran, Hayaa was the primary value that induced man to invent clothes to cover his private parts.

In this regard the Koran refers to the incident that took place between Adam and Eve, the Koran says:

And when they had eaten of the prohibited tree, their private parts became apparent to them and they started covering themselves with the leaves of the Garden (Al-Aa'raaf, 7)

The Koran has given the minimum standard for the etiquette that should be observed between man and woman. When sitting in a mixed gathering, both the Muslim men as well as women should not try to lure someone from the opposite sex with their gazes. In other words, they should avoid staring at each other in a suggestive way. In a mixed gathering, both the Muslim men and women should wear dresses that

adequately cover their private parts. Any dress that is revealing or that may in any way arouse sexual thoughts in the minds of any member of the opposite sex is not allowed.

The Koran directs women to turn their eyes away from temptation:

O Prophet, tell these believing women (that when they interact in a mixed gathering) to turn their eyes away from temptation... (Al-Nûr, 31).

Nudity in Western societies seemed to be everywhere. The prevalence of nudity in a society has a negative effect on Muslim's inherent value of Hayaa.

c) Lowering the gaze

Allah instructed the Prophet to say to the believing men and the believing women to restrain their eyes and to guard their sexual morality by refraining from sexual congress.

And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands own, or such men as attend them, not having sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women's private parts; nor let them stamp their feet, so that their hidden ornament may be known. And turn altogether to Allah, O you believers; haply so you will prosper (Al-Nûr 30, 31).

Muslim women are asked to guard their private parts by drawing their gowns when they go out, as a measure to distinguish themselves from others, so that they are not harassed. This applies to all Muslim women including the wives of the Prophet.

O Prophet! Tell your wives, your daughters and the believing women to draw their cloaks (veils) over their bodies (when outdoors). That is more proper so that they may be distinguished and not be harassed. Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful (Al-Ahzâb, 59).

The Koran gives special directives to the wives of the Prophet when dealing with his visitors:

Wives of the Prophet, you are not as other women. If you fear Allah, be not abject, so that he in whose heart is sickness may be lustful; but speak honorable words.

Remain in your houses; and display not your finery, as did the pagans of old. And perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and obey Allah and His Messenger. People of the House, Allah only desires to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you (Al-Ahzâb 32, 33).

The Koran instructs the believers not to enter the Prophet's houses unless they are permitted to do so for a meal, in which case they do not sit waiting for the food until it be ready. But if they are invited then they enter not too early but at the time expected, and after the meal they should not linger to engage in a social discourse, but depart because such behavior causes inconvenience to the Prophet who is ashamed to ask them to leave. And if they wish to ask the Prophet's wives for anything they want, they must ask them from behind a screen, that makes for greater purity for their hearts and theirs. Nor is it right for any person to marry the Prophet's widows after his death at any time, because that would be in Allah's sight an enormity.

O believers, enter not the houses of the Prophet, except leave is given you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, then enter; and when you have had the meal, disperse, neither lingering for idle talk. Verily, such (behavior) annoys the Prophet, and he is shy of (asking) you (to leave); but Allah is not shy of (telling you) the truth. And when you ask his wives for any object, ask them from behind a curtain; that is cleaner for your hearts and theirs. It is not for you to hurt Allah's Messenger, neither to marry his wives after him, ever; surely that would be, in Allah's sight, a monstrous thing (Al-Ahzâb, 53).

Aisha, the Prophet's wife narrated that the Prophet said, "**Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil** (Sunan Abu Dawud 2:641).

Aisha also said: "Asma' the daughter of Abu Bakr (the closest companion to the Prophet and the first Caliph after the Prophet), entered upon the Messenger of Allah wearing thin clothes. The Apostle of Allah turned his attention from her. He said: '**O Asma', when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to her face and hands** (Sunnan Abu Dawud 32:4092).

Outwardly in the modern world, women are thought to have equal rights in education, work, and so forth, but in reality women are still oppressed in a different more subtle way. In order to socialize they have to dress in a dissolute way to appear more appealing to men. In these days of the so-called "society of equal rights" girls are expected to have a boyfriend and lose their virginity in order not to be weird! In non-Muslim nations as in the West, free sex is allowed as long as it is agreed upon by the two adult partners so much so that the word 'adultery' has been dropped from their dictionary. This is a sort of oppression to women even though they do not realize it. In the majority of cases women are attacked and molested because of how they are dressed. Islam does not oppress women, but rather liberates them and gives them the respect they deserve. Islam is the religion Allah has chosen for the whole of mankind. Those who accept it are truly liberated from the chains of mankind whose ruling and legislating necessitates nothing but the oppression of one group by another and the exploitation of one sex by the other. This is not the case in Islam, which truly liberated women and gave them individuality and respect not given by any other authority.

2- Homosexuality

Homosexuality in Islam is a big sin and Muslims are not allowed to accept such immoral behavior.

The normal creation of Allah had been changed by giving homosexuals and lesbians the rights to live together and even marry each other and work in the army. These abnormal persons should be reformed and taken back to normality instead of encouraging them to spread debauchery.

In the United States, there are churches led by lesbian preachers. There are marriages performed in many churches between homosexuals of both sexes. Homosexual couples are allowed to adopt children in most states. Teenagers who are homosexual can bring homosexual partners to school dances. There is no discrimination allowed by the U.S. government concerning homosexuals. It is as important as a person's race. Killing a homosexual is worse than killing a heterosexual; it is considered a 'hate crime'.

In the West some believe that homosexuals are not hurting anyone because they do not teach homosexuality to others, and they do not prey on young people. They are not pedophiles as the American Catholic priests. Most are law abiding, tax paying, solid members of society, with only this difference in their sexual persuasion.

These abnormal persons are enormously extending in the Western community thus spreading debauchery everywhere, and threatening man's morals. Estimates of the number of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth in the United States range from 5 to 6 percent of the total population. An estimated two million to eight million parents in the United States are lesbian or gay. Their children are no more likely than any other youth to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, but they are often targeted for harassment and violence because of their parents' sexual orientation or because their peers believe that they share their parents' sexual orientation.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation still permeates many areas of American life. Strange enough, the American Civil Liberties Union has actively supported the struggle for lesbian and gay civil rights. For lesbians and gay men, issues of family and intimate relationships are important. These include parenting, custody, and adoption rights, as well as the recognition of relationships, including marriage and domestic partnership. Since the 1970s the American Civil Liberties Union has supported the right of lesbians and gay men to marry and more recently has vigorously opposed state and federal laws aimed at preventing lesbians and gay men from marrying.

American Academy of Pediatrics has endorsed homosexual adoption, saying gay couples can provide the loving, stable and economically healthy family lives that children need!

The academy's policy statement said, "There is no basis in which to assume that a parental homosexual orientation will increase likelihood of or induce a homosexual orientation in the child. The Canadian province of Quebec is set to recognize civil unions for gays and lesbians. A draft bill, in the Quebec legislature, would give same-

sex couples the same rights and obligations as married heterosexual couples. Gays and lesbians would get most benefits of married couples, including health and insurance benefits, special tax status and rights to benefits after divorce or death.

This bill will produce and promote an unhealthy lifestyle. There is a striking rise in new HIV infections among men who have sex with other men in high-income countries where over 75,000 people became infected with HIV in 2001. Gay men were the first group hit by the AIDS epidemic.

Islam prohibits homosexuality. Islam and in fact virtually every other religion have condemned homosexuality as an evil act and abomination. It is one of the sins that the people of Prophet Lot were guilty of. The Koran said in this respect:

And Allah sent Lot who said to his people, “Do you commit such indecency as never any being in all the world has committed before you? Most surely you approach men lustfully instead of women; indeed you are a people who are transgressors” (Al A’raf 80, 81).

And Lot, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and we rescued him from the town that had been committing deeds of abomination, surely they were an evil people, transgressors (Al Anbiya, 74).

**He said: “My Lord, help me against these corrupters.”
And when our messengers came to Abraham with the glad tidings, they said: We are to destroy the people of this town, surely they are evildoers.”
He said: “But Lot is therein”, they said: “We are well aware of who is there, we shall save him and his family, except his wife, she shall be of those who are destroyed.”
We shall bring down upon the people of this town torment from the sky for their wickedness.” (AL Ankabout 30-34).**

The Koran then describes homosexuality as a shameful deed, a transgressing of bounds, and one of the abominations and wickedness that the people of Lot used to practice. It describes them as people of corruption, as evildoers and wrongdoers; as people for whom the friend of Allah Abraham was forbidden from arguing for holding back their punishment,

“O Abraham! Relinquish this, your Lord’s command has been given, and surely the chastisement coming upon them cannot be averted.” (Hood, 76)

The people of Lot were afflicted with such a severe punishment as is not known to have befallen any other nation. Their houses were uprooted from their foundations, and raised into the skies, to the extent that the angels could hear the barking of their dogs and the braying of their donkeys, and then they were thrown back, overturned, only to have a hail of stones rain down upon them, and then left to see their fate.

When our command came to pass, We turned the habitation upside down, and rained on them brimstones, hard as baked clay, continuously piling- Each one assigned from your Lord, and never far from the evildoers (Hood, 82-83)

In this way they were made a sign for all nations, an admonition to the pious, and a dissuasion and precedent for those of the wicked who follow them in their deed. They were seized unawares, in their sleep. Allah's punishment came to them while they were in their distracted drunkenness, and then all that they had earned was of no avail to them. Their delights were transmuted into pains, for they awoke to feel the punishment. Their lusts were brought to an end, and replaced with miseries. They reveled a little, and then moved on to an enduring torment. They regretted when regret was no longer of benefit.

The Prophet is reported to have said,

“Those whom you find doing the deed of the people of Lot, kill the doer (of it) and the one on whom it is done.”

Homosexuality is a perversion, and a rebellion against nature. Some may claim that some persons have homosexual urges or tendencies. But such tendencies may arise either due to some conscious perversion on the part of the person himself, or Satan may whisper such temptations to him. If the person played some part in giving birth to or nurturing such thoughts, then he bears a burden of guilt to that extent. In any case, he should realize that such urges are wrong and unnatural, and hence should strive to rid himself of them with even more determination than one would use to dispel thoughts of fornication, for the latter could be legitimated by a marriage contract, while the former, being an unnatural perversion, can never be legitimated. Often, such a tendency will be largely psychological. Satan manages to convince the person, or the person convinces himself, that he cannot help this.

Therefore, homosexuality is not something uncontrollable, over which the person has no choice. Yes, it may reach the stage where the person becomes unable to keep himself from it, but here Allah may punish him by leaving him in his misguidance such that he is unable to extricate himself from it.

And whoever diverges from the Messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the path of the believers, We shall turn him over to that to which he (himself) has turned, and We shall burn him in hell. How evil an outcome! (An Nisa, 115)

But what is even more spiritually debilitating to the person is if he goes still further, to claim that the act is legitimate, for at that point he has committed polytheism by placing himself in the role of legislator, a role which is the sole prerogative of Allah.

3- Abortion

In the West and in America in particular, there is already a terribly high rate of unmarried college young girls having babies. Abortion is an often-prescribed course of action if the college age woman becomes pregnant.

Islam considers life as a sacred gift from Allah. No one is allowed to stop or take the life of anyone else except by way of justice and according to the Islamic law.

Allah Almighty says:

Say: Come, I will rehearse what Allah has really prohibited you from; join not anything as equal with Him, be good to your parents; kill not your children on plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not to shameful deeds, whether open or secret; take not life which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus does he command you, haply you will understand (AL-An'âm, 151).

In Islam it is a great sin to take the life of children for fear of want as was the habit during the pre-Islamic era. Neither is it allowed to do so for any other reason unless a great evil is caused by the presence of an unhealthy fetus that may cause the death of the mother.

Kill not your children for fear of want: we shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: verily the killing of them is a great sin.” (Al-Isrâ', 31)

The point that abortion can be considered as one of the solutions for population stabilization is totally forbidden since Allah provides sustenance to all His servants.

Surely your Lord provides provision, to whom he pleases, and he provides it in just measure, surely He is All-Aware, All-Seeing. (Al Isrâ', 30).

Losers are they who slay their children in folly and ignorance, and have forbidden what Allah has provided them, forging against Allah, they have gone astray and are not rightly guided (Al Anâ'm, 140).

Prophet Muhammad said:

“This is the envoy of the Lord of the universe, Jibril (Gabriel), who has inspired into my heart that no soul would die before it fulfils its provision.”

The logic of the modern materialistic way of life is that the fetus is part of the woman's body and she is free to do what she likes with it. Islam however has something else to offer. Islam does not agree with the view that a woman has full control over her body. This does not mean that Islam subjugates women and puts them under men's control. Islam considers human bodies as a trust from Allah which must be preserved and maintained. It also confirms that the fetus is the creation of Allah, and no one, not even the mother, has the right to get rid of it unless its presence threatens her life. Islam then allows abortion within those limits only.

Islam does not look at sex as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. The end of sex according to Islam is to have children. So, it is not allowed in Islam that a woman can have abortion simply because it is her wish to do so, under the pretext of keeping her beauty and to avoid responsibility. This is considered as selfishness. Should a pregnant woman make abortion without any justified reason such as the expectation of a risk threatening her life, then this act amounts to murder according to Islam.

Islam encourages procreation but leaves the door open for birth control. Some companions of the Prophet used a method of birth control during the time of

revelation. The Prophet knew about it and yet he never asked them to stop using it. In Islam it is basic to believe that having children is not decided by parents but is part and parcel of Allah's will and sole action. All that people do is to try their human means leaving the decision to Allah (1).

4- Pork

Pork is prohibited in Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that it is the divine will of Allah that pig should not be eaten.

Say: "I do not find, in what is revealed to me, anything forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, except it be carrion, or blood outpoured, or the flesh of swine; for that surely is an abomination – or, what is impious (meat), on which a name has been invoked, other than Allah's". Yet whoso is constrained, not desiring nor transgressing, surely thy Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (Al-An'âm, 145).

The swine do not stop eating until it is sick and has to lie down, but as soon as it finds a vacancy in its stomach, it eats more food. It doesn't matter what kind of food it may be; the swine eats anything. The swine's life is very short, because it eats itself to death, and death soon takes its life away.

The pig is a mass of worms. Each mouthful eaten is a mass of small worms the naked eye cannot see. Worms thrive in the hog. When these worms are digested into human's system, they cause a high birth rate to hundreds of new worms, which travels the blood stream of human's system and lodge in his muscles. These worms even enter man's brain, lungs or his spinal fluid. They cause muscular aches, fever and many other symptoms of sickness. The worm has an amazing ability to go undetected in human's system for many years. There are two harmful worms harbored by pigs, one is *Taenia solium* which on ingestion passes to the brain and causes epilepsy, and the other is *Trichinella spiralis* which passes to the muscles and brain causing muscular swelling and pain as well as epilepsy and trichinosis. The parasite toxoplasma may be also present. In Malaysia the lethal Nipah virus infected pigs and killed more than one hundred persons. Thorough and slow cooking of pork does not remove the danger of worms found in all pork. Inspection and governmental seals on pork do not remove such danger. Pork has more fat and cholesterol than any other meat. Over eating pork increases blood cholesterol levels. Birds and fish however have the least amount of cholesterol.

Pork is not forbidden to Muslims only? The Jews are also forbidden from eating pork. The following is a quote from the Old Testament to that effect:

“And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: Ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcas.”
(Deuteronomy 14:8).

Many Christians believe that this verse was directed only to the Jews. But Jesus himself said during a Sermon on the Mount, “Think not that I have come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

In this regard the Koran says:

O believers, eat of the good things wherewith We have bestowed on you, and be grateful to Allah, if it be Him that you worship. But certainly what Allah has forbidden to you are dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, what has been hallowed to other than Allah, but whoever is constrained by necessity, not out of insolence, nor of the intention of repeating it, then no sin is on him. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful (Al Baqara, 172,173).

5- Wine

Islam prohibits intoxicants because of the potential effect they have on the human intellect, the human faculty of reasoning and the human conscious. Medically speaking, numerous diseases have been attributed to alcohol like dyspeptic trouble, peptic ulceration, cancer stomach, pancreatitis, cirrhosis liver, vitamin deficiency and coronary heart disease.

Once addicted, people are pushed into all forms of corruption and violence among themselves. Intoxicants certainly bar people from the right path and cause them to forget the remembrance of their Lord.

The menaces and tragedies of intoxication are too obvious to be elaborated. Many lives are being lost everyday on this account. Many families break up because of this menace. In the United States many billions of dollars are swallowed in the drinking channel every year. Countless doors are closed on misery and unhappiness arising from the drinking habits. Drunkenness causes the destruction of health, the depression of mind, the dullness of soul, the absorption of wealth, the disintegration of families, the abuse of human dignity, and the sabotage of morality. Every one of the so-called social drinkers is a highly potential alcoholic.

Islam cannot tolerate these menaces or let man abuse the very sense of life in this tragic way. That is the reason why Islam has banned drinking once and for all.

Jimmy Swaggart the televangelist records in his book "Alcohol" that the United States has 11 million alcoholics and 44 million heavy drinkers. He goes on to say that he sees no difference between the two. To him they are all drunkards.

Christendom winks at drunkenness on three flimsy pretences based on the Holy Bible:

- a) **Give strong drink (hard liquor) to him who is perishing (one who is dying). And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty. And remember his misery no more.**

(Holy Bible) Proverbs 31:7-7

- b) Jesus saith unto them, "**Fill the water pots with water.**" And they filled them up to the brim.

And he saith unto them, "**Draw out now...**

When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine...

And saith... "**Why thou hast kept the good wine until now.**"

(Holy Bible) John 2: 7-10.

Since this alleged miracle, wine continues to flow like water in Christendom.

- c) Saint Paul the thirteenth self-appointed disciple of Christ, the real founder of Christianity, advises his new convert protégé – Timothy, born of a Greek father and a Jewish mother:

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities (Holy Bible) 1 Timothy 5: 23.

Rev. Dummelow seems to have some qualms about this verse. He says:

"It teaches us that if the body needs the stimulant of wine, it is right to take it in moderation."

There are thousands of Christian priests who have been lured into alcoholism by sipping the so - called mild wine in the Church rite of the Holy Communion.

The Koran says about wine:

O you who believe! Most certainly intoxicants and gambling and idol worship and fortune telling are an abomination of Satan's handiwork, so shun it, that you may prosper.

Satan desires only to cause enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer, will you then desist? (Al Maidah, 91-92).

The Prophet of Allah commanded mankind: **"Do not drink wine (liquor), for it is the root of all evil"**

He said of other intoxicants: **"If a substance, when consumed in large quantity, induces intoxication, it is also forbidden to you in smaller quantity."**

Allah through Divine Law, prohibited intoxicants, gambling, fortune telling and idol worship with just a single stroke:

O believers, wine and arrow-shuffling, idols and divining arrows are an abomination, some of Satan's work; so avoid it; haply so you will prosper. Satan only desires to precipitate enmity and hatred between you in regard to wine and arrow-shuffling, and to bar you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer.

Will you then desist? And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and beware; but if you turn your backs, then know that it is only for Our Messenger to deliver the Message Manifest (Al-Maidah 90-93).

When these verses were revealed, wine barrels were emptied in the streets of Medina, never to be refilled. This simple straightforward directive has created of the Muslim Nation (Ummah) the biggest society of teetotaler in the world.

Muslims live on earth only to serve Allah. Their road to this is by applying the something worth living for. All the pleasures Muslims are deprived from while living their mortal life on earth will be given to them more splendidly in heaven. In Heaven they will eat the desirable meat and drink the agreeable wine.

There is no better than the Koranic verses in this regard:

The similitude of paradise which the pious have been promised, therein are rivers of water ever pure, and rivers of milk of unchanged taste, and rivers of a beverage a delight to the drinkers, and rivers of honey clear and pure, and for them therein is every kind of fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord. Are these like those who abide in the fire forever, and are made to drink boiling water tears their bowels asunder? (Muhammad, 15)

**Surely the righteous shall dwell in Bliss;
Reclining upon soft couches gazing around;
You will recognize in their faces the glow of bliss;
They shall be given of a pure drink sealed;
Whose seal shall be musk, for this let the strivers strive;
And a mixture of Tasnim;
A fountain at which those closest to Allah do drink (Al Mtaffifin, 22-28).**

6- Gambling

All forms of gambling are forbidden in Islam. In Islam man is not permitted to do a forbidden act even if it leads to some good. In Islam the ends do not justify the means. Would a man sell drugs to finance the building of a mosque? Islam urges man to rely on Allah and earns his income with his feet firmly planted on the ground and not relies on dreams and national lottery. Gambling is addictive by nature, a practice that takes money from the poor with the perceived, yet illusive promise that they may win something without having to work for it.

It is a basic principle in Islam that man must not take which he has not earned or worked for. Gambling means getting a profit without working for it, that is the principle on which gambling is prohibited in Islam.

The form most familiar to the Arabs was gambling by casting lots by means of arrows, on the principle of a lottery. The arrows were marked and served the same purpose as a modern lottery ticket. The carcass of a slaughtered animal was divided into unequal parts. The marked arrows were drawn from a bag. Some were blank and those who drew them got nothing. Others indicated prizes, which were big or small. Whether the participants in the game got a big share or a small share or nothing depended on pure luck.

The principle on which the prohibition is based is that the participants in the game gain what they have not earned, or lose on a mere chance. Division of meat in this way is therefore forbidden, as it is a form of gambling. Dice and wagering are rightly held to be within the definition of gambling.

The Koran says:

Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, what has been hallowed to other than Allah, the beast strangled, the beast beaten down, the beast fallen to death, the beast gored, and that which has been partly eaten by a wild animal unless you are able to slaughter it (in due form before its death); and that which is sacrificed (slaughtered) on stone-altars. Forbidden also is the division of meat by raffling with arrows. That is ungodliness...(Al-Maidah, 3).

The Koran makes it clear that prosperity does not come through gambling. Gambling causes families to break, societies to suffer, and the economy to deteriorate. It leads to addictions, depletes individual and family resources, and creates a false economy and superficial jobs that add nothing to the local or national gross product. It also promotes the notion that man may take that for which he has not earned or worked for, which violates the ethical foundation of any decent society.

The Koran teaches that the price of gambling is hatred and discord among men, and studies bear witness to this fact. Gamblers often resort to crime in order to pay debts, appease bookies, maintain appearances, and garner more money to gamble.

Gambling makes a person rely on accidents, luck, and wishful thinking for his earnings instead of hard work. This is an attitude that directly harms not only himself and his family, but also the society in which he lives because he deprived it from the benefit of his labor.

Wealth has to be earned from lawful business activities. Money should not be spent on unlawful products and services, nor should money be spent to show off wealth or spent in vain. Allah owns the wealth of the world permanently, and humans are the temporary holders of it.

Those who profit from gambling in the modern world are the gambling industry moguls who invest heavily in lobbying local governments for permission to open their establishments. Local governments also receive a nominal return in taxes and licensing fees. However, legalized gambling consistently fails to live up to the promised return, and in fact inflicts greater harm in terms of economic and social costs.

Allah has declared in the Koran that gambling is an abomination and unlawful:

O you who believe! Most certainly intoxicants and gambling and idol worship and fortune telling are an abomination of Satan's handiwork, so shun it, that you may prosper. (Al Maidah, 90).

It is strange that the past scriptures of the Jews and the Christians i.e. the Torah and the Bible have no mention of prohibition of gambling. It is unbelievable that the books revealed to the Prophets of the Israelites would not have the provision of prohibition of gambling despite the fact that gambling entailed economic and spiritual corruption of their nation.

The Methodist Church has slammed all forms of gambling as harmful instrument of the Devil. The church based this on the verse **“nor do anything whereby thy brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak”** (Romans 14:21), arguing that gambling harms society and so must be shunned. However as seen quite common within the Christian Church, a lot of principles are being compromised on, and most churches actually allow gambling. The Roman Catholics even allow bingo to be played within their institutions. Judaism is split over its verdict on the lottery. The majority of rabbis say that it is permitted. Of those some say that, although permitted, a gambler is not suitable as witness, nor his charity accepted!

Prophet Muhammad said:

“Whosoever play backgammon is as if he dyes his hands with the flesh of swine and its blood.”

“Whoever says to his companion ‘Come on, let’s gamble’ let him give in charity (as penance)”

“A time will come upon the people when one will not care how one gains one’s money, legally or illegally.”

“The flesh and body that are raised on unlawful sustenance shall not enter paradise. Hell fire is more deserving to the flesh that grows on one’s body out of unlawful sustenance.”

7- Dead meat and blood

The prohibition of dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine and that on which other names than that of Allah have been invoked are indicated in the Koran.

If an animal dies by strangling, or by a violent blow, or a headlong fall, or by being gored to death, or by being attacked by a wild animal, the presumption is that it becomes carrion, as the life-blood is congealed before being taken out of the body. If the life-blood still flows and the solemn mode of slaughter in the name of Allah as a sacrifice is carried out, it becomes lawful as food (2).

The meat on which Allah's name has not been mentioned while slaughtering, and that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah, or has been slaughtered for idols, is also forbidden (Al-Maidah, 3).

8- Reba (usury)

The concept of economic exploitation is totally prohibited in Islam. Usury is a form of economic exploitation and Islam prohibited this kind of business. Because of such economic monopoly and exploitation in a capitalistic system, the rich will become richer and the poor will become poorer.

Reba literally means 'to grow; to increase, to add, to rise, to swell.' Reba technically refers to the premium that must be paid by the borrower to the lender along with the principal amount borrowed. In other words, it denotes the amount that a lender

receives for a fixed rate in excess of the principal. In English Reba is usually translated as 'Interest or 'Usury'.

Reba in Islam is of two kinds: Reba Al-Nasi'ah and Reba Al-Fadl. Al-Nasi'ah means to postpone or to wait. It refers to the time period that is allowed for the borrower to repay the loan in return for the addition or the premium. Reba Al-Fadl is the excess over and above the loan paid in kind. It lies in the payment of an addition by the debtor to the creditor in exchange of commodities of the same kind.

Allah prohibited Reba for several reasons. Reba in Islam is considered a form of injustice and exploitation. The one who lends one dollar for two dollars gets the extra dollar for nothing. Dependence on interest prevents people from working to earn money. The value of work will consequently be reduced and the lender will not bother to take the trouble of running a business or risking his money in trade or industry. This will lead of depriving people of benefits, and the business of the world cannot go on without industries, trade and commerce, building and construction, all of which needs capital at risk.

Permitting the taking of interest discourages people from doing good to one another, as is required by Islam. If interest is prohibited in a society, people will lend to each other with good will, expecting back no more than what they have loaned, while if interest is made permissible, the needy person will be required to pay back more on loans than he has borrowed, thus weakening his feelings of good will and friendliness toward the lender.

The lender is very likely to be wealthy and the borrower poor. If interest is allowed, the rich will exploit the poor, and this is against the spirit of mercy and charity. As a result, the rich becomes richer and the poor becomes poorer. This generates envy and hatred among the poor and the rich, resulting in social disorders, conflicts and at times breeds revolution and movements.

The holy Koran has emphatically instructed Muslims not to require each other's property wrongfully:

O believers consume not your goods between you in vanity, except there be trading, by your agreeing together... (An-Nisa, 29).

Islam is not an ascetic religion. It takes a positive view of life as the natural outcome of the belief that human beings are the vicegerents of Allah on earth. The goals of socio-economic justice and equitable distribution of income and wealth are integral parts of the moral philosophy of Islam. One of the socio-economic reforms made by Islam was the prohibition of Reba. Islam blocks the way for anyone who tries to increase his capital through lending on usury or interest (Reba), whether it is at a low or a high rate.

Prohibition of reba in the Koran was mentioned in several verses:

And what you give in usury, that it may increase upon the people's wealth, increases not with Allah; but what you give in alms, desiring Allah's Face, those they receive recompense manifold (Ar-Rûm, 39).

And for their taking usury, that they were prohibited, and consuming the wealth of the people in vanity; and We have prepared for the unbelievers among them a painful chastisement (An-Nisa, 161).

Those who devour usury shall not rise again except like the standing of a person beaten by Shaytân (Satan) leading him to insanity; that is because they say, 'Trading is like usury.' Allah has permitted trading, and forbidden usury. Whosoever receives an admonition from His Lord and stops eating Reba shall not be punished for the past, and his affair is committed to Allah; but whosoever reverts, those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever (Al-Baqarah, 275).

O believers, fear you Allah; and give up all outstanding gains from usury if you are (truly) believers (Al-Baqarah, 278).

O believers, devour not usury, doubled and redoubled, and fear you Allah; haply so you will prosper (Al-Imrân, 130).

Prophet Muhammad considered Reba among the seven major sins. Abu Huraira narrated:

The Prophet said, "**Avoid the seven great destructive sins.**" They (the people) asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What are they?" He said, "**To join partners in worship with Allah; to practice sorcery; to kill the life which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause; to eat up usury (Reba), to eat up the property of an orphan; to give one's back to the enemy and fleeing from the battle-field at the time of fighting and to accuse chaste women of anything touching their chastity.**"

Jabir reported: The Prophet cursed the receiver and the payer of interest, the one who records it (the contract) and the two witnesses to the transaction and said, "**They are all alike (in guilt).**"

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said: "**Allah would not allow four persons to enter paradise or to taste its blessings: he who drinks wine, he who takes Reba, he who usurps an orphan property without right and he who is undutiful to his parents.**"

Reba is also prohibited in the Bible:

"Do not charge your brother interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest." (Deuteronomy 23: 19).

"Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you." (Leviticus 25: 36).

"If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest." (Exodus 22: 25).

Reba is also prohibited in the Gospel. Jesus came to fulfill the Law of the Torah. He said:

[17] **"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."**

[18] **For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled."**

Although Reba (usury) is condemned in Judaism and Christianity, it has become in the 7th century a lucrative business when the poor and the needy could not find any other way but acquire goods on credit from greedy traders for high rates of interest. It was a cruel exploitation of the needy.

Because Islamic rules are based on sound and firm concepts and principles, it does not condemn one particular form of Reba, but stands against it entirely in theory and in practice. All usurious dealings aiming at making profits by any means are forbidden in Islam.

Today, financiers and money lenders control the flow of money into the market and thereby impose their wishes and interests rather than seek to meet the needs of the people or serve the public interest. Their aim is not to provide regular employment or long-term security of income, leading to happiness and social stability, but simply to maximize their own profits, even if that means the suffering and deprivation of millions or the destruction of the security and welfare of the rest of mankind.

Those with vested interests objected to the abolition of Reba, claiming that trade is just the same as usury. But Allah, the God of all three Abrahamic traditions has made trade lawful and usury unlawful. Their argument rested on the false assumption that the objective of both trade and Reba was to make gains and benefits. But trading is open to the risk of profit and loss and requires real tangible input from the trader, while Reba transactions are aimed at bringing a guaranteed return to the lender which, under all circumstances, are usurious hence forbidden. Allah has permitted trading for many reasons that make it beneficial for human life and the absence of guaranteed returns is first among them.

Similarly, printing currency notes without any base or beyond the reserves required to maintain its stability is a modern form of Reba since it causes fall in purchasing power of the money (3).

9- Suicide

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. No one can claim proprietorship.

To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and earth...(Al-Baqarahh, 284).

No soul can die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed time.

It is not given to any soul to die, save by the leave of Allah, at an appointed time... (Al-Imran, 145).

Muslims are commanded then not to kill their souls which Allah has made sacred. Committing suicide is killing a sacred soul that originally belongs to Allah its Creator and not to man. When Allah first created man He breathed unto him His soul; a learned soul that distinguishes between right and wrong, and therefore is subject to reckoning in the Day of Judgment. The soul is a gift, a trust from Allah given to each individual of His servants. It must be kept as a trust within the human body until it is taken back by Allah in the appointed time and not before. None has the right to take his or her soul except the real owner, the Creator, Allah. Sacrificing one's soul by killing it is in fact violating the trust Allah has put in each human body. The recompense of such criminal act is a severe torment in the Hereafter.

10- Apostasy

Because the religion of Islam is the last divine Message to mankind, and the culmination of all former religions, it came perfect and complete.

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (Al-Maidah, 3).

The last and complete religion for mankind was expressed in the Koran, as a divine and comprehensive Book dealing with all aspects of human life. The Koran leaves nothing behind, small or great, but it has numbered it. Allah has turned about in it every manner of similitude. For that purpose Allah guarded the Koran and preserved it from corruption. By adhering to the religion of Islam in its final and complete form, Allah considered Muslims as the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; they enjoin equity and forbid all that Islam has forbidden, and they believe in Allah and conform their will to His blessed will.

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, binding to honor, and forbidding dishonor, and believing in Allah (Al-Imran, 110).

Those whom Allah wills to guide, He opens their breast to Islam; those whom He wills to leave astray, He makes their breast close and constricted, as if they have to climb up to the skies where the air gets thin, the pressure is reduced and the oxygen gets less and less that he can hardly breathe. Thus does Allah afflict those who refuse to believe.

Whomsoever Allah desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow, tight, as if he were climbing to heaven. So Allah lays admonition upon those who believe not (Al-An'am, 125).

The Koran strongly warns the ungodly and the impious of a severe torment in the Hereafter, and announces joyful tidings to those who believe in the Oneness of Allah and work righteous deeds. The Koran gives also a cautionary notice against the ascription to Allah of plurality and warns those who say that Allah has begotten a son.

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down upon His servant the Book and has not assigned unto it any crookedness.

Right, to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give good tidings unto the believers, who do righteous deeds, that theirs shall be a goodly wage therein to abide forever.

And to warn those who say, 'Allah has taken to Himself a son.

No knowledge have they of such a thing, they nor their fathers; a monstrous word it is, issuing out of their mouths; they say nothing but a lie (Al-Kahf 1-5).

The Koran strongly teaches that, infidels indeed are those who declare that Allah (God) is the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary. The Koran also warns those who say: 'God in Trinity', for Allah is only One and absolutely One. If the wrong-headed do not desist their foolish thoughts about Allah and persist in perusing this line of thought must expect a painful doom.

They are unbelievers who say, 'Allah (God) is the Messiah, Mary's son.'

For the Messiah said, 'Children of Israel, serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord.

Verily whoso associates with Allah anything, Allah shall prohibit him entrance to Paradise, and his refuge shall be the Fire; and wrongdoers shall have no helpers.'

They are unbelievers who say, 'Allah (God) is the third of three.' No God is there but one God.

If they refrain not from what they say, there shall afflict those of them that disbelieve a painful chastisement.

Will they not return to Allah and pray His forgiveness?

Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (Al-Maidah 71, 72).

Those who blasphemed against Allah after they have believed in Him then went on in increasing in their disbelief, never shall their penitence be accepted, and these are they who have been lost in the maze of error. Those who believed in Islam then disbelieved in it, and died while they were disbelievers, the offer of as much gold as the earth can treasure shall not be accepted from them in expiation of their guilt. They will have no helper, and never will their repentance be accepted and on the Day of reckoning awaits them a painful chastisement.

Surely those who disbelieve after they have believed (in Islam) and then increase in unbelief – their repentance shall not be accepted; those are the ones who stray.

Surely those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving, there shall not be accepted from any one of them the whole earth full of gold, if he would ransom himself thereby; for them awaits a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helper (Al-Imran 90, 91).

Those who denied Allah and renounced faith and died captivated in disbelief have come within the measure of Allah's wrath. Such-like persons have earned the curse of Allah and of the angels and of all mankind.

Those who disbelieve (in Islamic monotheism) and die disbelieving – upon them shall rest the curse of Allah and the angels, and of men altogether, therein dwelling forever; the chastisement shall not be lightened for them; no respite shall be given them (Al-Baqarah 162, 163).

Allah instructed Muhammad to say to the Jews and the Christians (People of the Book): "Why do you deny the Koran when Allah sees all what you do! Why do you stand in the way to prevent Allah's truth from guiding people to the right path making it your aim to pervert the truth and crook the path of rectitude to your own ends when you bear witness to the fact that this is the path where providence is the guide? Allah is not unmindful of all that you do."

Allah ordered Muhammad to say to Muslims: "If you obey the people of the Book, they shall turn you renegades after you have conformed to Islam. But how would you disbelieve when Allah's Revelations are narrated to you and Allah's Apostle is in your midst! And whoever holds firmly to Allah, then he is indeed guided to the right path."

The Koran says:

Say: 'People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the Signs of Allah? Surely Allah is Witness of the things you do.' Say: 'People of the Book, why do you bar from Allah's way, desiring to make it crooked, while Allah is Witness to what you do.'

O believers, if you obey a sect of those who have been given the Book, they will turn you after you have believed, into unbelievers.

How can you disbelieve, seeing you have Allah's signs recited to you, and His Messenger among you?

Whosoever holds fast to Allah, he is guided to a straight path (Al-Imran 99-101).

Allah ordered the believers to give credence to Muhammad's mission and revere Allah in the manner appropriate to His absolute Sovereignty and adhere to Allah's system of faith and worship, and die not except in a state of Islam.

As we read in the Koran:

O believers, fear Allah as He should be feared, and see you do not die, save as Muslims (Al-Imran, 102).

It should be pointed out that the contemporary doctrines of Judaism and Christianity include a degradation of Allah's status, as well as what amounts to insulting Him. These doctrines imply attributing partners to Allah like sons, and ascribing to Him human biological qualities such as having an offspring, procreating, getting tired, oblivion, weeping and regretting. Allah's Prophets are also degraded by attributing to them major moral defects. To Muslims, whoever holds such beliefs is a disbeliever without doubt.

True faith in Islam means to believe in Allah, all His angels, all His holy Books, all His Messengers, Day of resurrection, and divine preordainments. According to Islam, disbelieving or rejecting one or more of these items amounts to total blasphemy.

The Koran teaches that the believing Jews were upon the truth right up until they rejected the Prophets John the Baptist and Jesus Christ and the revelation he conveyed. In this manner, the Jews lived in submission to Allah not on His terms, but on their terms. When Allah sent Prophets or revelation they did not like, they chose to remain upon the religion of their forefathers rather than upon the religion of Allah. In this manner, they fell into disobedience and disbelief.

Similarly, Jesus' followers were upon the truth, right up until they rejected the final prophet Muhammad. Again, Jesus' followers submitted to Allah, but only on their terms. And that is not good enough. When called upon to honor the final revelation, the Holy Koran and the prophet who conveyed it, they rejected the final Message and fell into the same disobedience and disbelief as their Jewish cousins.

According to Islam, the religion of truth has always been Islam (i.e. submission to the will of Allah), for that what all prophets taught. However, the refinement of Islam is to be found in the final revelation and in the teachings of the final prophet. In revealing the final revelation, Allah abrogated all preceding religions and revelations. Hence, the only group that submits to Allah's true and pure religion in the present day is the Muslims.

Islam states clearly that everyone is born a Muslim and is therefore monotheistic by nature. We read in the Koran that humanity has been created with the natural disposition towards the unity of Allah. This is to be expected, for Allah, who has breathed His Spirit into each of us, is Himself the example of perfect unity. In the words of Prophet Muhammad: **"Every person is born with the innate religious faith (to submit to Allah in Islam)."** Thus when an individual accepts Islam, he is not turning his back on any prior revelation but rather is returning to the original and true revelation of Allah and to his own nature as a creation of Allah. This being the case, Islam is man's birthright – other religious or ideological systems are either corruption or outright denials of Islam.

Judaism and Christianity are therefore not accepted as viable religions after the advent of Islam. Islam has superseded them.

Allah says in the Koran:

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers (Al-Imran, 85).

Based on the above, apostasy is totally forbidden in Islam. Muslims as believers in the Koran and the Oneness of Allah, would blaspheme against Allah if they convert to man-made Trinity, which is considered in Islam as the most heinous and unforgivable sin. According to the teachings of the Koran, if Muslims turn back from their faith and die in disbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter; they will be the dwellers of the Fire and therein shall they remain forever.

...They will not cease to fight you (people of the Book), till they turn you from your religion, if they are able; and whosoever of you turns from his religion, and dies disbelieving, their works have failed in this world and the next; those are the inhabitants of the fire; therein they shall dwell forever (Al-Baqarahh, 217).

Some Christians proclaim that Islam is not a tolerant religion because it does not allow apostasy. The Christians goes on to suggest that Muslims should abandon their religion, and adopt the ways of the worst error: disobedience to and rebellion against Allah, and commit the unforgivable sin of ascribing partners to Him. Truly Allah speaks the truth when He says:

Never will the Jews be satisfied with thee, neither the Christians, not till thou followest their religion.

Say: 'Allah's guidance is the true guidance.' If thou followest their caprices, after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have against Allah neither protector nor helper (Al-Baqarahh 120).

This is why Muslim jurists are unanimous that apostates must be executed.

Chapter 2

Inheritance in Islam

In the ancient world woman inherited nothing, and when she inherited, she was treated like a minor. She had no independent legal personality. In the pre-Islamic society, women were sometimes objects of inheritance. Certain other old systems of inheritance allowed women to inherit but not in the form of a definitely prescribed share. They simply allowed a progenitor to make a bequest in her favor, if he so desired.

The main reason of the deprivation of women of inheritance was to prevent the transfer of wealth from one family to another. According to the old belief, women's role in procreation was insignificant. The mothers served only as receptacles, where the seed of the father developed into a child. On this account they believed that the children of a man's son were his children only and a part of his family, but the children of a man's daughter were not a part of his family, for they were a part of the family of their parental grandfather. Thus, had a daughter received an inheritance, that would have meant the transfer of property to her children, who belonged to a family unconnected with that of the deceased.

In the old days religion was the basis of the formation of the family. The grandfather used to be the religious head of the family. The execution of religious ceremonies and rituals was handed down to succeeding generations through the male descendants only. The ancients regarded only men as the means of preserving progeny. The father of the family not only gave life to his son, but also passed to him his religious beliefs and rituals. According to the Hindu Vedas and the Greek and the Roman laws, the power of procreation was confined to men only, and women were forbidden to be involved in religious affairs except through their fathers or husbands. As they could not take part in the execution of religious ceremonies, they were naturally deprived of all family privileges. Hence, when the system of inheritance came into being, they were excluded.

The exclusion of woman from inheritance had other reasons. As the ancients believed, woman was not fit to be a good soldier. In societies in which great value is attached to the heroic deeds and the power of fighting, and a warrior was regarded superior to a hundred thousand non-fighters, woman was deprived of inheritance, because she lacked the fighting capacity (4)

In some Western countries, until recently, and still even until now, the whole estate of the deceased is given to his/her eldest son.

As indicated by Dr. Sherif Abdel Azim in his comprehensive article entitled, "Women in Islam Versus Women in the Judea-Christian Tradition" (4), one of the most important differences between the Koran and the Bible is their attitude towards female inheritance of the property of a deceased relative. The Biblical attitude has been succinctly described by Rabbi Epstein: "The continuous and unbroken tradition since the Biblical days gives the female members of the household, wife and daughters, no right of succession to the family estate. In the more primitive scheme of succession, the female members of the family were considered part of the estate and as remote

from the legal personality of an heir as the slave. Whereas by Mosaic enactment the daughters were admitted to succession in the event of no male issue remained, the wife was not recognized as heir even in such conditions (5).

Why were the female members of the family considered part of the family estate? Rabbi Epstein has the answer: "They are owned – before marriage, by the father; after marriage, by husband (6).

According to the Biblical rules of inheritance, a wife is given no share in her husband's estate, while he is her first heir, even before her sons. A daughter can inherit only if no male heirs exist. A mother is not an heir at all while the father is. Widows and daughters, in case male children remained, were at the mercy of the male heirs for provision. That is why widows and orphan girls were among the most destitute members of the Jewish society.

Christianity has followed suit for long time. Both the ecclesiastical and civil laws of Christendom barred daughters from sharing with their brothers in the father's patrimony. Furthermore, wives were deprived of any inheritance rights. These iniquitous laws survived till late in the last century (7).

Among the pagan Arabs before Islam, inheritance rights were confined exclusively to the male relatives. The Koran abolished all these unjust customs and gave men and women shares in the properties left by the parents and the kindred. With the coming of the Koran, Muslims mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters had received inheritance rights more than fourteen hundred years before Europe recognized that these rights even existed.

The Koran states:

To the men a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, and to the women a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, whether it be little or much, a share apportioned (An-Nisa, 7).

When a Muslim dies there are four duties which need to be performed: payment of funeral expenses; payment of his/her debts; execution of his/her will; distribution of remaining estate amongst the heirs according to the Sharia (Islamic law).

In certain cases a dying man or woman, think of his/her parents and next of kin, not in a spirit of injustice to others, but in a spirit of love and reverence of those who have cherished him. A verbal will is allowed then, but it is expected that the testator will be just to his heirs and not depart from what is considered equitable. For this reason definite shares were laid down by the Koran for heirs. These Koranic shares limit the testamentary power, but do not abrogate it.

For example, amongst kin there are persons (e.g., an orphan grandson in the presence of surviving sons) who would not inherit under the interstate scheme, and the testator might like to provide for him. Again, there may be outsiders for whom he may wish to provide. In such cases jurists have held that he has powers of disposition up to one-third of his property. But he must not be partial to one heir at the expense of another, or attempt to defeat lawful creditors. If he try to do this, those who are witnesses to

his oral disposition may interfere in two ways. One way would be to persuade the testator to change his bequest before he dies. The other way would be after death, to get the interested parties together and ask them to agree to a more equitable arrangement. In such a case they are acting in good faith, and there is no fraud. They are doing nothing wrong. Islam approves of every lawful device for keeping brethren at peace, without litigation and quarrels. Except for this, the changing of the provisions of a will is a crime, as it is under all laws (2).

When payment of funeral expenses, payment of debts and execution of will have been resolved, the task is to determine which of the relatives of the deceased are entitled to inherit, then to determine the quantum share entitlement of each of the heirs concerned. The Islamic inheritance shares are in fact limits set by Allah and must be obeyed.

And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, and transgresses His limits, He will cast him into the Fire, to abide therein; and he shall have a disgraceful torment (An-Nisa 13, 14).

According to Koranic teachings the male shall inherit the equivalent of what is apportioned to two females. If the heirs are females and their number exceeds two then they equally share the two thirds of what the deceased has left. If one daughter be the only heir, then she has the rightful claim to one half.

If the deceased has left a child with his parents, then each of the parents shall have a rightful claim to the six. But if the deceased has left no child and his immediate heirs are the parents, the one third goes to the mother, and the rest to the father; if the father however, has also brothers and/or sisters then the mother inherits only one six.

Allah charges you, concerning your children: to the male the like of the portion of two females, and if they be women above two, then for them two-thirds of what he leaves, but if she be one then to her a half; and to his parents to each one of the two the sixth of what he leaves, if he has children; but if he has no children; and his heirs are his parents, a third to his mother, or, if he has brothers, to his mother a sixth, after any bequest he may bequeath, or any debt (An-Nisa, 11).

The reason why Islam allots females half the inheritance share given to males who have the same degree of relation is due to the fact that the financial obligations of men in Islam far exceed those of women. Men had to provide for their family whereas women could keep all their money for themselves. In Islamic society women are usually taken care of by their families or their husbands, whereas men would usually finance a family and relatives. Also men had to pay the dowry to women in marriage while women did not have to pay anything to men. The groom must provide his bride with a marriage gift. This gift becomes her exclusive property and remains so even if she is later divorced. The bride is under no obligation to present any gifts to her groom. Moreover, the Muslim husband is charged with the maintenance of his wife and children. The wife on the other hand, is not obliged to help him in this regard. Her property and earnings are for her use alone except what she may voluntarily offer her husband.

According to Islam, it is the duty of man by law to assume all financial responsibilities and maintain his dependents adequately. All financial burdens are born by him alone. In contrast, woman has no financial responsibilities whatsoever except very little of her personal expenses. She is financially secure and provided for. If she is a wife, her husband is the provider; if she is a mother, it is the son; if she is a daughter, it is the father; if she is a sister; it is the brother, and so on. In Islam woman is not responsible for the maintenance of anybody else besides herself, and whatever money she makes will be hers.

When a woman gets less than a man does, she is not actually deprived of anything that she worked for. The property inherited is not the result of her earning or her endeavors. It is something coming to her from a neutral source, something additional or extra. It is something that neither man nor woman struggled for. It is a sort of aid, and any aid has to be distributed according to the urgent needs and responsibilities especially when the distribution is regulated by the Law of Allah (4).

The Koran also teaches that men have a rightful claim of half what their wives have left if they have no child, but if they have a child, then men are entitled to one quarter only of what their wives have left after a legacy, they might have bequeathed, has been paid besides a due debt.

The wives shall have a rightful claim to one quarter of what their husbands have left in the event their husbands have no child, but if they have a child then one eighth only of what their husbands have left goes to them after a legacy, they might have bequeathed, has been paid besides a due debt.

If the deceased be a man or a woman have no direct heirs, but only a maternal brother and/or sisters, then each of them shall have a rightful claim to one sixth.

If the maternal brothers and /or sisters are more than two, then they go shares in the one third, man and woman alike, after a legacy which might have been bequeathed has been paid besides a due debt, without prejudice to any of the heir's rights or claims. This is an authoritative commendation decreed by Allah, the Omniscient, Wise.

And for you a half of what your wives leave, if they have no children; but if they have children, then for you of what they leave a fourth, after any bequest they may bequeath, or any debt.

And for them (your wives) a fourth of what you leave, if you have no children; but if you have children, then for them of what you leave an eighth, after any bequest you may bequeath, or any debt.

If a man or a woman have no heir direct, but have a brother or a sister, to each of the two a sixth; but if they are more numerous than that, they share equally a third, after any bequest he may bequeath, or any debt not pre-judicial; a charge from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Clement (An-Nisa, 12).

If a man dies and he has neither child nor a father but he has a sister, then she has the rightful claim to one half of what he has left. And should the opposite be the case, he inherits all her property if she has no child. And if the deceased has two sisters or more, then they go share and share alike in two thirds of what he left. And if there are

brothers and sisters, then the general principle of inheritance applies; the male inherits the equivalent of what is apportioned to two females.

They will ask thee for a legal verdict.

Say: "Allah pronounces you concerning the indirect heirs.

If a man perishes having no children, but he has a sister, she shall receive a half of what he leaves, and he is her heir if she has no children. If there be two sisters, they shall receive two-thirds of what he leaves; if there be brothers and sisters, the male shall receive the portion of two females. Allah makes clear to you, lest you go astray; Allah has knowledge over everything (An-Nisa, 176).

Allah knows best about the needs of his servants whether men or women. The law of inheritance in the Koran is an authoritative commendation decreed by Allah, the Omniscient, and Wise.

The divine justness and equitability of the Islamic laws of inheritance have been highly appreciated by many non-Muslim scholars such as Professor Almaric Rumsey (1825-1899) of King's College, London, the author of many works on the subject of the Muslim law of inheritance and a barrister-at-law, who stated that the Muslim law of inheritance, "Comprises beyond question the most refined and elaborate system of rules for the devolution of property that is known to the civilized world." (8).

Chapter 3

Wealth in Islam

Most people are carried away by the thrills of life.

Islam teaches that the purpose of existence on earth is more meaningful than being slaves to worldly gains. There can be no meaningful life better than that prescribed by our Creator Allah. Every act done according to Allah's way is an act of worship. Man is the beneficiary and Allah is in no need of him:

O men, you are the ones that have need of Allah; He is the All-sufficient, Worthy of All Praise (Fātir, 15).

Islam does not consider wealth and materialism as an objective in life, but rather piety which is the road for attaining Allah's consent. In this regard the Koran says:

And this life is nothing but leisure and a diversion, indeed the hereafter is the life, if only they knew (Al Ankabout, 64).

And know that your wealth, and your Children are only a trial, and that with Allah is a great reward (Al-Anfal 28).

Whoso desires the present life and its adornment, We will pay them in full for their works therein without retraction.

Those are they for whom in the world to come there is only the Fire; their deeds therein (in the life of this world) are futile and all that they were doing is in vain (Hood, 15-16).

And set for them the similitude of the present life; it is as water that We send down out of heaven, and the plants of the earth mingle with it; and in the morning it is straw the winds scatter; and Allah is Omnipotent over everything. Wealth and sons are the adornment of the present world; but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness, are better with Allah in reward, and better in hope (Al Kahf, 45-46)

Most surely the similitude of the life of this world is as water that we send down from the sky, it mingles with the plants of the earth which grew thereby, from which people and cattle eat, until when the earth arrays itself ornately and is ripened in beauty, so that its owners presume they have power over it, then our command comes upon it, by night or by day, and we render it as stubble as though it had never flourished yesterday, thus we expound the signs for a people who reflect (Yunus, 24).

The Prophet said:

"The best richness is the richness of the soul."

In Islam, the world is not for sale because money in reality is the property of Allah. Muslims had been appointed by Allah as a trustee over His money that he had given to them. As Allah's successor on earth, Muslims were ordered to deal with money rightly and justly according to the divine revelations sent to Muhammad in the Koran. All economic resources are treated as divine blessings bestowed upon mankind, and are enjoyed by all in accordance with the rules and the values set out in the Koran and the Sunnah.

The Koran says:

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and expend of that unto which He has made you successors. And those of you who believe and expend shall have a mighty wage (Al-Hadid, 57, 7).

Because money is the property of Allah, and man is a guardian and a trustee over it, then it is an obligation upon him to follow the instructions and directives of the owner of that money. What does Allah want from Muslims when dealing with His money?

Allah says in His Koran:

O you who believe, do not consume money amongst yourselves in unlawful ways, but let there be amongst you trade by mutual good will. And don't destroy yourselves; indeed Allah has been most Merciful to you (An-Nisa 4, 29).

All Muslims are entitled to earn their living according to the Islamic Law (Shariaa). Islam does not prevent one from striving and seeking wealth as long as this seeking is by means that are good and lawful.

"Allah had forbidden you to be undutiful to your mothers, to bury your female infants alive, parsimony and usurpation of the property of others. And He disapproved for you three things: vain talk and gossip, excessive questioning and wasting wealth."

In Islam money is not sought for itself, rather, it is sought for the benefits it can bring about. Money is a means not an end. The means are praised or blamed according to the results they bring about, either good or evil. The Machiavellian thought, 'the ends justify the means' is totally rejected.

The Prophet said:

"If the son of Adam had two valleys full of gold, he would wish for a third, for nothing can fill the belly of the son of Adam except dust when he dies. And Allah forgives the one who repents to Him."

"Being rich does not mean having a big amount of property, but rather that of having self-contentment."

"It is difficult for a man laden with riches to climb the steep path that leads to bliss."

In Islam money is a means of worshipping Allah and establishing His laws. It is a means of righteousness and rectification-a means of kindness, connection and solidarity amongst Muslims. It is not permissible for a Muslim to regard money as other than what it really is. It is not allowed to take money as a god and worship it. It is not allowed to obtain money from unlawful sources. Unlawful money will not protect man from any sickness, and will not cure him from any disease. Unlawful money will not put off death when one's time is up. On the Day of Judgment everyone will be asked by Allah about how he acquired his wealth and how he spent it. In that day all people will stand before Allah from whom no secret is hidden, a God who knows the treachery of the eyes and what is concealed in the breasts.

On that day, someone from mankind will say:

"My wealth has been of no profit to me, my power has perished from me." Al-Haaqqah, 29-19).

The Prophet said:

"The flesh and body that are raised on unlawful sustenance shall not enter paradise. Hell fire is more deserving to the flesh that grows on one's body out of unlawful sustenance."

The Prophet also said:

"Allah is pure, and He accepts only that which is pure."

Wealth in Islam has to be earned from lawful business activities. Money should not be spent on unlawful products and services, nor should money be spent to show off wealth or spent in vain. Allah owns the wealth of the world permanently, and humans are the temporary holders of it.

In order to promote the development of a balanced economy and to protect society from exploitation, Islamic Law forbids monopolies, unreasonable restrictive trade practices, usury, the use of coercion in the making of contracts and the publication of misleading advertising, fraud, gambling, cheating, embezzlement, trickery, bribery and theft in all its types. The same goes for consuming the money of orphans oppressively and transactions involving that which is unlawful, such as selling wine and pork. Also any lack of proficiency and proper conduct in one's dealings, and extortion, which is the seizure of another's money without right and other ways in which money is transferred between people to be possessed and consumed without any consent.

Allah says:

"O you who believe, eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him you worship."(Al-Baqarahh 2,172).

Chapter 4

Women in Islam

In Islam, women are as human as man. They are not evaluated on basis of their gender, but on basis of their faith and character. Allah says:

"And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, be it male or female, - believing - they shall enter Paradise, and not be wronged a single date-spot." (An-Nisa, 124).

So there is no difference in the level of woman's humanity or honor in Islam. In Islam man and woman are equal in rights; but equality is not synonymous to similarity. Islam believes that man and woman are equal but dissimilar. Islam looks at their different roles in society not as superior or inferior but as complementary to each other.

Women in Islam got all the rights they hope for. Woman in Islam is the queen of the family, half the society, has the right to marry, divorce, work, inherit, keep her family name after marriage, work as judge, minister, fight battles with men...etc. Again, sex in Islam means marriage and no sex without marriage.

Women are highly respected in Islam. The Prophet said:

"Avoid the seven great destructive sins. These are to join partners in worship with Allah, to practice sorcery, to kill without right a living being, to extort the property of an orphan, to flee from the battlefield at the time of fighting and to slander chaste and innocent believing women."

Islam teaches that the woman is not inherently inferior to man; rather man and woman are of similar nature. They both are equal in intellectual and spiritual capacity.

Furthermore they are equally responsible for their deeds before Allah.

In Islam woman has a primary role to play in the constitution and running of the family. Prophet Muhammad taught his followers that paradise lies under the feet of the mother. In other words one must respect, honor and be good to one's mother. It is noticeable in Muslim homes how the entire family pivots around the mother, and it is extremely rare in Muslim countries to hear of a mother or father being farmed off into a nursing home when they grew old.

Islam places great emphasis on the role of the Muslim woman as a wife and particularly as a mother. Muslims are often of the opinion that the best position of the woman is in the home with her children and family. However, the Muslim woman is not prohibited from leaving her home to pursue education, a career or other worthwhile goals that profit not only her but society as well. The Koran establishes the spiritual equality and mutual responsibility of man and woman in verses such as the following:

And their Lord answers them: "I waste not the labor of any that labors among you, be you male or female – the one of you is as the other (Al-Imran, 195).

A husband is commanded by the law of Allah to treat his wife with equity, respect her feelings and show kindness and consideration. He not only should avoid hurting her but also should bear with her if she ever does something disagreeable, so long as this clemency does not spoil her and she does not habitually behave out of bounds.

The Koran reads:

..and treat them (women) kindly (Al-Nisa, 19).

The Prophet said,

"Fear Allah, fear Allah in the matter of women. They are weak partners, a trust from Allah with you, and they are made by the divine word permissible for you."

He also said,

"Whoever of you whose wife behaves in a disagreeable manner and he responds by kindness and patience, Allah will give him rewards as much as Job will be given for his patience."

Also, the Prophet last sermon stresses kindness to women.

The relationship of the Muslim husband to his wife is not that of master to slave. Rather the entire responsibility of economic support is placed on the shoulders of the husband alone. The Muslim husband is responsible for the protection, happiness and maintenance of his wife. He is responsible for the cost of her food, clothes and accommodation. He cannot demand of his wife that she also become economically productive to support the family, although she is able to do this if she desires. The Koran explains this responsibility of men to women in the following verse:

Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have spent their wealth. Righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded (Al-Nisa, 34).

One of the main duties of the wife is to contribute to the success and blissfulness of the marriage. The wife must be faithful, trustworthy and honest. She must not allow any other person to have access to that which is exclusively the husband right i.e. sexual intimacy. She must not receive or entertain strange males in the house without his knowledge and consent. She should not be alone with a strange male. She should not accept gifts from other men without his approval. This is meant to avoid jealousy, suspicion and gossip. The husband possessions are her trust. She may not dispose of his belongings without his permission.

A wife should make herself sexually attractive to her husband and be responsive to his advances. The wife must not refuse her husband sexually as this can lead to marital problems and worse still-tempt the man to adultery. The angels curse women who refuse their husbands, for this is one of the wife's most important roles. The Prophet said:

"A wife must run to her husband if he calls her, even if she is occupied at the oven."

The purpose of obedience in the relationship is to keep the family unit running as smoothly as possible. The man has been given the right to be obeyed because he is the leader and not because he is superior. Obedience does not mean blind obedience, it is subject to conditions.

The wife must accept that if there is a dispute between her and her husband, he has the final word. In other words, she must accept his leadership. Authority is not the equivalent to power, much less absolute power, so men should not consider their position as one of power and the woman's as subservience or submission. The office of leadership is not founded for the man. It is allocated to him and he is appointed to it because he is better qualified for the position. The man as part of the family unit is bound by the rule of the office. He is answerable to Allah at all times so he is not given free reign to rule as he pleases. His leadership is not unquestionable. If he does something unethical the wife is entitled to tell her husband that his behavior is unacceptable in Islam. The rights and obligations of each of the sexes are complementary. These rights and obligations are set out to give the marital relationship the best chance of success and survival. Just because a Muslim wife must obey her husband and cooperate with him it does not mean she is oppressed. It is Allah who knows what is best for His creation. If we have true faith we will accept Allah's law so that we can prosper in this life and in the next.

The Prophet said:

"Allah Most High will ask each guardian about his charge. Did he guard or waste this trust? A man will even be asked about his family."

"All of you are guardians and responsible for your own charges. The ruler is a guardian and he is responsible for his subjects. A man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for his charges. woman is a guardian in her husband's house and is responsible for her charges. A servant is a guardian of the property of his master and is responsible for his charges. A son is a guardian of the property of his father and is responsible for his charges. For all of you are guardians, and all of you are responsible for your charges."

The Prophet also said:

"When a woman gives in charity from her husband's house, reasonably and without waste, she receives the reward of what she has spent and her husband receives his reward for having earned it and the storekeeper will have a similar reward. The reward of one does not decrease those of the others."

The important point that should be made is that the religion of Islam has great respect for the woman. It does not teach that she is without a soul or that she is the root of all evil, neither does it define a woman as being inferior and must be kept in seclusion and subjugation.

The Prophet companion Abu hurairah narrated the the Prophet said:

"Among the Muslims the most perfect, as regards his faith, is the one whose character is excellent, and the best among you are those who treat their wives well." (Tirmidhi 278, 628, 3264 and Abu Dawud).

Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, narrated that the Prophet said:

"Among the believers who show most perfect faith are those who have the best disposition, and are kindest to their families." (Tirmidhi 3263).

The Prophet said:

"He, who wishes to enter paradise at the best gate, must please his father and mother."

Both Judaism and Christianity preach that the fall of Adam from the Garden of Eden was the fault of Eve and as such women are to blame. This is not the teaching of Islam; the Koran directs all the responsibility to Adam himself, while adding that Allah turned to Adam in mercy and forgave him his sin. Therefore, Adam's sin stops with Adam himself, and Allah does not hold mankind responsible for the sin of Adam and rejects the concept of original sin.

We are often asked why Muslim women are covered. The attire of a Muslim woman is that of modesty, where her figure is not apparent for outsiders and her head is covered with a scarf. In the present days where rape is a common occurrence in the West she finds modest clothing to be a protection from unwarranted advances by the opposite sex.

Western culture pretends to have liberated women and the Western media frowns upon Islam as oppressive to female rights. American women struggle to fit into this culture, and became extremely conscious of their appearance at all times. So much pressure is placed on women in the West to conform to an impossible ideal of beauty that demands them to be thin, fit and wear provocative clothes. Women are not allowed to grow old and their bodies are for public scrutiny. Eating disorders (anorexia and bulimia nervosa) are very common. At the same time they have to have brilliant careers and be good partners to their husbands, boy friends and children. Family values are weakening amongst the youth so that there are an increasing number of single parents.

In western societies, a typical woman's top priority in life is to enhance her physical beauty rather than her intellect. Her spirituality has no room in a society preoccupied with her attractiveness. Therefore, she would spend her life striving more to realize her femininity than to fulfill her humanity (4).

Women in western societies are portrayed as very sexy, lady like, independent enough so that men have no real responsibility toward them or the children they help create, but independent enough that they are continually in search of new men as boyfriends. It would seem that a western woman's happiness hinges largely upon her access to nightclubs, alcohol and revealing clothes. The absence of such apparent freedom and

luxuries in Islamic societies is seen as an infringement of her basic rights. However, such superficialities have very little to do with true happiness.

It is strange that the religion that had revolutionized the status of women is being singled out and denigrated as so repressive of women. Islam should be viewed as a religion that had immensely improved the status of women and had granted them many rights that the modern world had recognized only in the last century. In fact, women in Islam are given more rights, since the Koran was revealed to the Prophet more than 1400 years ago compared with the only recently rights given to non-Muslim women in western countries.

No wonder most of those who choose to become Muslims in a country like Britain are women. In the U.S. women converts to Islam outnumber male converts by 4 to 1. Islam has too much to offer for today's women: dignity, respect and protection in all aspects and all stages of their lives from birth until death, in addition to the recognition, the balance and means for the fulfillment of all her spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional needs.

At a time when Islam is faced with hostile media coverage particularly where the status of women in Islam is concerned, it may be quite surprising to learn that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and even more ironic to discover that the majority of converts to Islam are women.

Many may ask why American women would embrace Islam that not only supposedly oppresses women, but takes all their freedom and independence and treats them as a second class citizen! American women have good reasons for rejecting the freedom that women claim to have in the American society. They discovered that Islam is the only religion that truly liberates them by guarding their chastity, respecting their gender and giving them status and position. In Islam they found a system that gave them the ultimate respect for being mothers and acknowledged the fact that they were equal to men in every way except one; physical strength.

Muslims discipline in matters of sex strikes a positive note with many young people nowadays who lean towards modern 'value conservatism'. Many a western woman who feels hunted down by men in the street as a mere sex object admires Muslims at whose dress and composure send the clear signal that they are not cheap game. Given the ongoing exploitation of women in pornography, fashion shows, beauty contests, and sexually explicit commercials, many western women, partisans of women's emancipation, now understand that their Muslim sisters pursue the same aim – female dignity – but do so more successfully.

The strict Muslim position on abortion – ruling it out except if the mother's life is in real danger – commands more and more respect in 'pro life' western circles who deplore that even Catholic bishops nowadays permit abortion for all kinds of reasons. Islam is seen as taking a clear-cult pro life position in favor of the child.

Ambassador Herman Eilts, in a testimony in front of the committee of Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives of the United States congress in 1985 said, "The Muslim community of the globe today is in the neighborhood of one billion. That is an impressive figure. But what to me is equally impressive is that Islam today is the

fastest growing monotheistic religion. This is something we have to take into account. Something is right about Islam. It is attracting a good many people. Yes something is right about Islam and it is about time for the West finds that out." (4).

Chapter 5

The veil in Islam

The West considers the veil in Islam as the greatest symbol of women's oppression and servitude. The question then arises: Is it true that there is no such thing as the veil in the Judea-Christian tradition?

According to Rabbi Dr. Menachem Bayer, Professor of Biblical Literature at Yeshiva University, in his book, "The Jewish woman in rabbinical literature", it was the custom of Jewish women to go out in public with a head covering which, sometimes, even covered the whole face leaving only the eyes free. He quotes some famous ancient Rabbis saying: "It is not like daughters of Israel to walk out with heads uncovered," and, "cursed be the man who lets the hair of his wife seen... a woman who exposes her hair for self-adornment brings poverty."

Rabbinical law forbids the recitation of blessings or prayers in the presence of a bareheaded-married woman since uncovering the woman's hair is considered nudity. Dr. Bayer also mentions that "During the Tannaitic period the Jewish woman's failure to cover her head was considered an affront to her modesty. When her head was uncovered she might be fined four hundred zuzim for this offense." Dr. Bayer also explains that veil of the Jewish woman was not always considered a sign of modesty. Sometimes, the veil symbolized a state of distinction and luxury rather than modesty. The veil personified the dignity and superiority of noble women. It also represented a woman's inaccessibility as a sanctified possession of her husband.

The veil signified a woman's self-respect and social status. Women of lower classes would often wear the veil to give the impression of a higher standing. The fact that the veil was the sign of nobility was the reason why prostitutes were not permitted to cover their hair in the old Jewish society. However, prostitutes often wore a special headscarf in order to look respectable. Jewish women in Europe continued to wear veils until the nineteenth century when their lives became more intermingled with the surrounding secular culture. The external pressures of the European life in the nineteenth century forced many of them to go out bareheaded. Some Jewish women found it more convenient to replace their traditional veil with a wig as another form of hair covering. Today, most pious Jewish women do not cover their hair except in the synagogue. Some of them, such as the Hasidic sects, still use the wig (4).

What about the Christian tradition? It is well known that Catholic nuns have been covering their heads for hundreds of years, but that is not all. St. Paul in the New Testament made some very interesting statements about the veil:

"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. It is just as though her head was shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her head cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought to not cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from

man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.”

Among the Canon laws of the Catholic Church today, there is a law that requires women to cover their heads in church. Some Christian denominations such as the Amish and the Mennonites keep their women veiled to the present day. The reason for the veil, as offered by their Church leaders is "The head covering is a symbol of woman's subjection to the man and to God" which, is the same logic introduced by St. Paul in the New Testament (4).

It is clear then that Islam did not invent the veil, but it just endorsed it. The Koran urges the believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty, and then urges the believing women to extend their head covers to cover the neck and the bosom:

Say to the believers, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. Allah is aware of the things they do...And say to the believing women that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms... (An-Nûr 30, 31).

The Koran is quite clear that the veil is essential for modesty:

O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their bodies (when abroad) so that they should be known and not molested (Al-Ahzâb, 59).

Thus, the only purpose of the veil in Islam is protection. The Islamic veil, unlike the veil of the Christian tradition is not a sign of man's authority over woman nor is it a sign of woman's subjection to man. The Islamic veil, unlike the veil in the Jewish tradition, is not a sign of luxury and distinction of some noble married women. The Islamic veil is only a sign of modesty with the purpose of protecting women, all women. The Islamic philosophy is that it is always better to be safe than sorry (86).

In fact, the Koran is so concerned with protecting women's bodies and women's reputation that a man who dares to falsely accuse a woman of unchastely will be severely punished:

"And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations) flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after; for such men are wicked transgressors." (An-Nûr, 4).

The strict Koranic attitude is opposed with the extremely lax punishment for rape in the Bible:

If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives (Deut. 22:28-30).

One must ask a simple question here, who is really punished? The man who only paid a fine for rape, or the girl who is forced to marry the man who raped her and lives with him until he dies? Another question that also should be asked: which is more protective to women, the Koranic strict attitude or the Biblical lax attitude?

Some people, especially in the West, would tend to ridicule the whole argument of modesty for protection. Their argument is that the best protection is the spread of education, civilized behavior, and self-restraint. But this is not enough, for if civilization is enough protection, then why is it that women in North America dare not walk alone in a dark street or even across an empty parking lot? If education is the solution, then why is it that a respected university like Queen's has a walk home service mainly for female students on campus? If self-restraint is the answer, then why are cases of sexual harassment in the workplace reported on the news media every day? A sample of those accused of sexual harassment, in the last few years, includes: navy officers, managers, university professors, Senators, and Supreme Court justices, the President of the United States, and even catholic priests!

Something is fundamentally wrong in Western societies. A radical change in the Western society's life style and culture is absolutely necessary. A culture of modesty is badly needed, modesty in dress, in speech, and in manners of both men and women. A society, which expels young women from schools because of their modest dress, is simply harming itself.

Who was getting no respect, who was not free, who was really oppressed? A girl acting as a society's hore by wearing skin tight jeans, getting cat calls from boys and rolling by in cars, or a Muslim girl wearing hijab (veil) covering the hair, arms and legs? The veil is protecting the woman from harm and corruption. It doesn't restrict the freedom of the woman to move about and to carry out all her normal duties.

Islam does not oppress women as falsely proclaimed, but rather liberates them and gives them the respect they deserve. Muslim women feel that because they cover themselves up they are not seen as a sex symbol, and because people cannot judge them on their appearance, they have to judge them as a human being. That's quite liberating.

Women converted to Islam say they feel more valued. The head covering hides them from the lustful stares of other men. In Islam a woman should no go around showing herself to everybody, only for her husband. Even the man is not allowed to show certain parts of his body to none but his wife. Allah has commanded Muslim women to ccover themselves for their modesty. If we look around at any other society, we found that in the majority of cases women are attacked and molested because of how they are dressed.

It is one of the great ironies of our world today that the very same headscarf revered as a sign of holiness when worn by catholic nuns for the purpose of showing the authority of man, is reviled as a sign of oppression when worn for the purpose of protection by Muslim women (4).

The veil and modesty continues to flourish in the Muslim countries as the norm rather than the exception. The vast majority of Muslim women do not want to abandon the veil for the bikini in order to show that they are liberal as the West demand. If a woman is described as liberal and progressive by the West for exchanging the veil for a mini-skirt, then surely a move to complete nudity would be welcomed as the peak of progress. Equally, a career path that begins with the bikini can easily move next to the beauty contest and then modeling, which itself can move from topless to full nudity, and hence, even, to the porn industry.

As it seems, the impact of these liberal values is dramatically dangerous to the societies of the West. This is clearly discerned in the distorted and erroneous sexual behavior of people living in the West where the societies are devoid of moral values. So why is it that those societies that raise the flag of women's rights end up only facilitating the selling of her flesh, be it in the form of lewd pop videos, the fashion industry, advertising, and then end up calling it 'liberation'!

It should be pointed out that social disorder has been transported to Islamic countries from Western societies, which have falsely labeled it as “personal freedom.” It is that disorder which condones people remaining unmarried, not raising families, roaming around causing corruption, fulfilling their lusts in vile and base manners. It is the disorder of a society, which progressively regresses, licensing ever more lewd and unnatural behavior.

Muslims are clearly under attack. Not only under physical attack and persecution in various parts of the world, but also through ideological assault. As it seems, Muslims are being subjected to attacks on their morality. The enemies of truth seek to corrupt the morals, values and virtues of people in general and Muslims in particular. Various phenomena which are nowadays commonplace: movies peddling nudity and lust, styles of clothing and fashions which reveal ever more of the nudity, pornographic and semi-pornographic magazines; are all part of the conspiracy and onslaught.

And they work corruption in the land. And Allah does not love those who work corruption (5, 64).

Chapter 6

Marriage and sex in Islam

The existence of pairs is a universal phenomenon and one of the characteristics of creation. The need of marriage is a necessity for the realization of that human aspect which makes a person human. Sex in Islam means marriage; there is no sex outside marriage in Islam.

The West argues however, why should two people marry one another especially if the commitment is just as if the two were married? If two people loved each other, then their bond is their love and commitment. What is wrong with free love? Women worry that they won't be able to find the right guy to marry if they keep themselves so reserved.

From the Islamic perspective, marriage is no longer sacred when women slept with men without commitment. Woman's most intimate secret places had been violated. Woman's purity, the most beautiful thing in her, had so long vanished. In the West woman is no longer a queen in man's kingdom but a slave. A commodity sold and bought by man. In Western societies woman is like a piece of paper torn into shreds by her numerous lovers. Each took away a piece of her purity. The scrap that is left usually deters man from getting married. Sex without marriage is not a modern lifestyle but clear injustice to woman. In an open society dominated by man, as is the case in the West, women look as merchandise ready for sale in a market for slave trade.

Islam neither condemns sexual relations like certain religions, nor does it allow it freely. Islam urges men and women to control and regulate their desires, so that they remain dignified and not become like animals. Marriage is the only legitimate way to indulge in intimacy between a man and a woman. Islam considers sex without marriage clear fornication.

Muslims look at life from a purely religious perspective. Allah has created men and women as company for one another so that they can procreate and live in peace and tranquility. The Koran says:

And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Undoubtedly in these are signs for those who reflect (Ar-Rūm, 21).

Allah has appointed for you of yourselves wives, and He has appointed for you of your wives sons and grandsons, and He has provided you of the good things. What, do they deny Allah's blessing? (An-Nahl, 72).

These verses of the Noble Koran clearly show that in contrast to other religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism etc. which consider celibacy or monasticism as a great virtue and a means of salvation, Islam considers marriage as one of the most virtuous and approved institutions. The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) declared, **“There is no monasticism in Islam.”** He further ordained,

"O you young men! Whoever is able to marry should marry, for that will help him to lower his gaze and guard his modesty." (Al-Bukhari).

The Prophet regarded modesty as a great virtue. He said,

"Modesty is part of faith." (Al-Bukhari).

The importance of the institution of marriage receives its greatest emphasis from the following narration of the Prophet:

"Marriage is my Sunnah (tradition). Whosoever keeps away from it is not from me."

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah said:

"When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half."

The Prophet considered marriage for a Muslim as half of his religion because it shields him from promiscuity, adultery, fornication, homosexuality etc., which ultimately lead to many other evils like slander, quarreling, homicide, loss of property and disintegration of the family. According to the Prophet the remaining half of the faith can be saved by piety.

In a beautiful tradition the Prophet has given the most important point that should be considered by every Muslim when selecting his bride:

"Whoever marries a woman solely for her power and position, Allah will only increase him in humiliation. Whoever marries a woman solely for her wealth, Allah will only increase him in poverty. Whoever marries a woman because of her beauty, Allah will only increase him in ugliness. But whoever marries a woman in order that he may restrain his eyes, observes cautiousness, and treat his relations kindly, Allah puts a blessing in her for him and in him for her."

The Prophet is reported to have said that a woman is ordinarily sought as wife for her wealth, for her beauty, for the nobility of her stock, or for her religious qualities; but blessed and fortunate is he who chooses his mate for piety in preference to everything

When the Prophet was asked about the best thing to be treasured, he replied:

"The tongue in remembrance of Allah, the heart filled with thanks to Allah, and a pious wife who helps in virtuous deeds."

In another narration the Prophet said:

"The best thing to be treasured is the devoted wife who causes pleasure when seen, obeys orders instantly and takes full care of herself and her husband's property when he is away."

This implies that women should be chosen on the basis of high morals, religious devotion, and not merely on her attractiveness or other mundane wealth.

The consent of both the man and the woman is an essential element of marriage, and the Koran gives women a substantial role in choosing their own life partners:

Do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree between themselves in a lawful manner (Al-Baqarah, 232).

So as it seems, riches and wealth are but superficial, but the beauty of faith is transcendent.

Marriage is the foundation of civilization. It is an undertaking of great obligation dissolved in the delight of sexual allurements and enjoyment. Marriage is mentioned in the Koran with honor as a tradition of the Prophets.

Indeed, We sent messengers before you, and gave them wives and children (Ar-Ra'd, 38).

It is the obligation of the individual and of the generation towards coming generations that they are reared righteously and afforded proper upbringing and education. And where can this proper upbringing and morality be achieved other than under the shade of marriage and stable family life?

Allah describes the believers as being "**merciful among themselves**", how is this love and mercy going to develop in the community if not by its starting out in the building block of society, the family?

“And of His Signs is that He has created for you from your own selves, mates that you might incline to them (with love, companionship, intimacy, etc.) and He has placed between you love and mercy.” (Ar-Rûm, 21).

This love and mercy will be picked up by children, and from this family unit and others like it, it extends to the surrounding community, until it permeates the entire society, such that they truly display the characteristic of the believers "**Merciful amongst themselves.**" So, marriage is the naturally correct way and the proper path for extending civilization by such human procreation that allows for inhabitation of the earth, construction of civilization and furthering the religion of Allah.

In the West, at the age of 15, boys and girls leave their parents and live together without restriction. Men and women live also together without obligation fearing the consequences of a miserable marriage leading to divorce. If kids are born, they are bastards facing disgrace and disgust from the society. The explanation is “it’s a free country.” In Islam Freedom has its borders and limitations. Women have the right to live decently in their homes with their devoted husbands and kids. Here they become ladies as Allah wished them to be; otherwise they will become a commodity treated in a disgraceful manner.

As far as interfaith marriages are concerned, Islam does not encourage them. The general rule of Islam is that Muslims should marry Muslims. Marriage between

Muslims and atheists are not permissible at all. In such cases man or woman should accept Islam before entering into a legal marriage. Allah almighty says:

And do not marry *Al-Mushrikât* (idolatresses), until they believe. And indeed a slave woman who believes is better than an idolatress, though you may admire her. And do not marry idolaters, until they believe. A believing slave is better than an idolater, though you may admire him. Those call unto the Fire; and Allah calls unto Paradise, and pardon, by His leave, and He makes clear His signs to the people; haply they will remember (Al-Baqarah, 221).

This verse proclaims that a Muslim man may not marry an idolatress woman nor may a Muslim woman marry an idolater man, because there is a great difference between the two systems of belief. Islam invites people to Paradise, while *Shirk* (idolatry or polytheism) leads them to the Fire of Hell. While Muslims believe in the One God Allah, all His messengers and Books, and the Hereafter, *mushrikeen* (idolaters) associate others with Allah, reject all or some of His messengers, and deny the Hereafter. Marriage means a marital life surrounded by love peace and harmony, how then would it be possible for such conflicting beliefs and practices to co-exist peacefully under the same roof?

As stated in the Koran, Islam is the true religion of Allah (God). Religion with Allah is Islam. Allah will accept on the Day of Judgment only Islam as His religion. Muslims are enjoined by the teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, to believe in all prophets who came before Muhammad including Jesus and Moses, while the Jews do not believe in Jesus or Muhammad, and the Christians do not actually believe in Prophet Muhammad as the last and seal of all prophets. This shows that their belief is incomplete. It is also important to denote that Islam rejects completely the concept of Trinity adopted in present Christianity. Trinity in the sight of Islam amounts to clear blasphemy. As the Koran teaches, associating partners with Allah by considering Him as one in three or three in one is an act of clear polytheism that is totally unlawful. Considering Jesus in present Christianity as god or son of God is also a heinous sin in Islam.

It should be added here that Muslims are not separated from Jews and Christians by Books of the same Creator but by the changes that some of the rabbis and the priests have made to the true teachings of Moses and Jesus.

From here came the command of Allah for not allowing a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man as man is responsible for his wife and children, and responsibility cannot be given to someone who is polytheist or incomplete in his belief. Since Islam is absolutely opposed to polytheism and atheism, it would obviously be impossible to a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man to live together in harmony and love.

Based on the above, when a Muslim wife tries to teach her kids to love and respect all prophets and believe in them as the Koran states, her non-Muslim husband might not agree, because he believes only in his prophet. He will interfere in the way she raises her kids, and prevent her from raising them in an Islamic way. In this case she will have only two options, whether she leaves the whole thing as it is, and does nothing about it, a matter that is against her religion, and abrogating of the Islamic law, or she protests, and this will sure lead to more marital problems.

Because the non - Muslim husband doesn't believe in Islam he might object to the Islamic practices of his wife. He could object to the veil (hijab) which the wife would wear. He might force his wife to dress more moderately especially when accompanying him to a party. He could ask his wife to sit with him while he consumes alcohol. He might force her to serve alcohol for him and a couple of friends after dinner although he knows well that consuming alcohol is considered as a huge sin in Islam. He might ask his wife to cook pork for him. The husband may find it convenient to eat pork and drink while his wife is offering prayers. It is highly likely for the man to teach his children the religion he follows. A non-Muslim man with a Muslim wife would then teach their child to be a Christian or Jew. In such situation the mother might retaliate by teaching her child the Islamic religion.

As Islam teaches, the man is the head of the household, the one who maintains the family, and he is responsible for his wife. And while Islam guarantees freedom of belief, Judaism and Christianity do not guarantee the wife of a different faith freedom of belief and practice, nor do they safeguard her rights. Since this is the case, how can Islam take chances by letting Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men who neither honor their religion nor are concerned to protect their rights? How a Muslim woman live with such a man while her religion requires of her the observance of certain worships, duties and obligations, as well as certain prohibitions.

As it can be seen, there are a lot of issues that can arise between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim husband. According to the Koran, the husband is the head of the household and his wife should obey him. Allah does not put the Muslim woman in a position that a non-Muslim husband becomes her head in her own private life. Allah has spared her to suffer from being under the authority of a non-Muslim husband. A Muslim woman should thus know that Allah has really honored her by not allowing her to marry a non-Muslim man.

In conclusion, marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man would be a major sin. Unless the man truly accepts Islam, the Muslim woman would be living in sin and her relationship with the man she married will be illegitimate in the eyes of Allah.

Under certain circumstances however, Islam allows Muslim men to marry non-Muslim women. Allah says in the Koran:

Today the good things are permitted to you, and the food of those who were given the Book is permitted to you, and permitted to them is your food. Lawful to you in marriage are chaste women from the believers, and chaste women from those who were given the Book before your time when you have given their due (bridal money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage), desiring chastity (i.e. taking them in legal wedlock) not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as lovers. Whoso disbelieves in the faith (i.e. the Oneness of Allah and on all other articles of the faith like Allah's angels, all his books, all his messengers, the Day of Resurrection and divine preordainment), his work has failed, and in the world to come he shall be among the losers (Al-Maidah, 5).

It should be pointed out that the above verse refers to the people of the Book as those who received the exact teachings of Moses and Jesus without any alteration. The term "People of the Book" by no means refers to the present Torah or Pentateuch or the Bible which were written by various authors decades and centuries after their respective prophets. The term "Book" does not affirm in any manner the validity of the present Bible (canonized in 325 AC) or the Torah (written over an uncertain period (estimated around 1500-1350 BC) as Allah's message as their followers vehemently argue and would like Muslims to take the word "Book" for their Bible or Torah.

The above verse describes that a Muslim man can marry a woman from the people of the Book on the same terms as he would marry a Muslim woman, i.e. he must give her an economic and moral status, and must not actuate merely by motives of lust and physical desires. Not all the women among the people of the Book are illegible to marry Muslim men but only the chaste ones. Apart from these, a Muslim man is not allowed to marry any other woman. A non-Muslim woman marrying a Muslim man is expected to eventually accept Islam. Any man or woman, from any race or faith, upon accepting Islam, can freely marry any Muslim, man or woman, provided the objective is purity, and chasteness and not lewdness.

Usually no problems arise when a Muslim man marries a Jewish or a Christian woman. Man being the head of his household, is more capable to handle the needs and problems of his non-Muslim wife. The success of such marriage can be based only on the husband's respect for his wife's beliefs; otherwise a good relationship can never develop. The Muslim believes that both Judaism and Christianity originated in divine revelation, although later distortions were introduced into them. He also believes that Allah revealed the Torah to Moses and the Gospel to Jesus. Accordingly, the Christian or Jewish wife of a Muslim lives under the protection of a man who respects the basic tenets of her faith, her Scripture, and her prophets.

In such marriage the Muslim husband must be kind and passionate to his wife. He should reflect Islam in his manner and character and invites his wife to Islam by teaching her the tenets and principles of the religion before their kids are born to such marriage.

It is worth mentioning that the Muslim jurists, Aby Haneefa, Alshafei and Mâlek held that it is reprehensible for Muslim men to marry women from the people of the Book if they live in non-Muslim countries. They argued that in non-Muslim countries, mothers will be able to influence the children the most. Therefore there is a high possibility that the children will not grow up as good Muslims unless both parents are Muslim. Some jurists even went as far as saying that Muslim men are prohibited of marrying women from the people of the Book if they live in non-Muslim countries.

According to the teachings of Islam, children are given the religion of their father, and so legally speaking, the offspring of a union between a Muslim and a woman from the people of the Book would be Muslim. Muslim men are islamically prohibited from forcing their wives to become Muslim. Religious coercion is prohibited in Islam. However in Christianity and Judaism a similar prohibition against coercion does not exist. Christian men may force their Muslim wives to convert to their religion. Because Islam is the last divine revelation to mankind, it came with the Koran, a

complete Book emphasizing the Oneness of Allah and severely warning against believing in the concept of trinity as origin of belief, or in some prophets or books without the others. Therefore, a Muslim woman abandoning the Oneness of Allah and converting to other religions associating partners with Allah, or revering only their Books and prophets while not admitting or recognizing others, has in fact rejected her religion and became apostate. Apostasy in Islam is an unforgivable sin.

Chapter 7

Polygamy in Islam

The West alleges that Muslims practice polygamy, a matter that is totally rejected by the Christians and the Westerners in general.

It is an accepted fact that at birth the ratio of males to females is about equal, but in child mortality more males die than females. In most human societies, females outnumber males. At any given time there are more widows in the world than widowers.

In a country like Guinea there are 122 females for every 100 males. In Tanzania, there are 95.1 males per 100 females. Great Britain 4 million, Germany 5 million, Russia 7 million. The USA has a surplus of 7.8 million women, women who would be unable to get their share of a husband.

The American problem of surplus women is compounded. Ninety eight percent of its prison population is male. There is however, in addition, 25 million sodomites. Euphemistically they call them "gays" a once beautiful word meaning – happy and joyous – now perverted!

The city of New York has one million more women than men. The situation is getting worse by the fact that one third of the male population in this city is "gay" (homosexuals/sodomites). The church with their millions of born again votaries are amazingly silent on this topic!

What should a society do towards such unbalanced sex ratios? There are various solutions, some might suggest celibacy, and others would prefer female infanticide, which does happen in some societies in the world today! Others may think the only outlet is that the society should tolerate all manners of sexual permissiveness: prostitution, sex out of wedlock, homosexuality, etc.

Islam did not invent polygamy for it existed before Islam in every religion and civilization. Islam in fact is the first religion to actually limit the number of wives to four.

Mankind has practiced polygamy for thousands of years. Many of the ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. King Solomon is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. His father Prophet David had ninety-nine and Jacob had four. Abraham had two wives and several concubines from whom his offspring became as numerous as the stars. No early society put any restrictions on the number of wives or put any conditions about how they were to be treated. Jesus was not known to have spoken against polygamy. As recently as the seventeenth century, polygamy was practiced and accepted in the Christian Church. The Mormons-Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day saints- has allowed and practiced polygamy in the United States.

Monogamy was introduced into Christianity at the time of Paul when many revisions took place in Christianity. This was done in order for the church to conform to the

Greco-Roman culture where men were monogamous but owned many slaves who were free for them to use; in other words, unrestricted polygamy. Early Christians invented ideas that women were “full of sin” and man was better off to “never marry.” Since this will be the end of mankind these same people compromised and said, "Marry only one."

In the American society many times when relations are strained, the husband simply deserts his wife. Then he cohabits with other immoral woman without marriage. Actually there are three kinds of polygamy practiced in Western societies: serial polygamy, that is, marriage, divorce, marriage, divorce and so on any number of times; a man married to one woman but having and supporting one or more mistresses; and an unmarried man having a number of mistresses.

Islam condones but discourages the first and forbids the other two. Wars cause the number of women to greatly exceed the number of men. In a monogamous society these women, left without husbands or support, resort to prostitution, illicit relationships with married men resulting in illegitimate children with no responsibility on the part of the father, or lonely spinsterhood or widowhood. Some Western men take the position that monogamy protects the rights of women. But are these men really concerned about the rights of women? The society has so many practices, which exploit and suppress women, leading to women’s liberation movements from the suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the feminists of today.

The truth of the matter is that monogamy protects men - allowing them to play around without responsibility. Easy birth control and easy legal abortion has opened the door of illicit sex to woman and she has been lured into the so-called sexual revolution. But she is still the one who suffers the trauma of abortion and the side effects of the birth control methods. Taking aside the plagues of venereal disease, herpes and AIDS, the male continue to enjoy himself free of worry. Men are the ones protected by monogamy while women continue to be victims of men’s desires. Polygamy is very much opposed by the male dominated society because it would force men to face up to responsibility and fidelity. It would force them to take responsibility for their polygamous inclinations and would protect and provide for women and children.

Among all the polygamous societies in history there were none, which limited the number of wives. All of the relations were unrestricted. In Islam, the regulations concerning polygamy limit the number of wives a man can have while making him responsible for all the women involved.

Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you will not be able to deal justly with them, then only one or one that your right hand possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice (An-Nisa, 3).

The quoted verse occurs in the context of orphan girls under the custody of a guardian who, in the interest of preserving the property of the orphan girls, is instructed to marry one, two, three or four, provided he can treat them justly. The verse also underscores the reality that treating with justice among multiple wives is impossible,

and, therefore, a Muslim is advised to stick to one wife. The question of honor of the home is extremely central to the Koran and therefore, whether it is a woman who is unfaithful to her husband or a husband who is unfaithful to his wife, the matter deserves to be resolved quickly to preserve the sanctity of the family.

If a woman fear rebelliousness or aversion in her husband, there is no fault in them if the people set things right between them; right settlement is better; and souls are very prone to avarice. If you do good and are god-fearing, surely God is aware of the things you do (An-Nisâ', 128).

Another verse says that a person is unable to deal justly between wives, thus giving permission but discouraging.

You will never be able to deal justly between wives however much you desire (to do so). But (if you have more than one wife) do not turn altogether away (from one), leaving her in suspense (An-Nisa, 129).

The Western world mock at polygamy, which was practiced by the Prophets, and yet feigns tolerance towards the millions of sodomites and lesbians in its midst! It is a joking matter in the West for a man to keep a dozen mistresses, and beget a dozen bastard children every year. Such lecherous creatures are proudly labeled as "studs." "Let him sow his wild oats, but don't hold him responsible!" says the West.

Islam says: "make man responsible for his pleasures." There is a type of man who is prepared to take on extra responsibility, and there is a type of woman who is prepared to share a husband. Why place obstacles in their way?

While the provision of polygamy makes the social system flexible enough to deal with all kinds of conditions, it is not necessarily recommended or preferred by Islam. Taking the example of the Prophet is instructive. He was married to one woman, Khadijah, for 25 years. It was only after her death when he had reached the age of fifty that he entered into other marriages to promote friendships, create alliances or to be an example of some lessons to the community; also to show the Muslims how to treat their spouses under different conditions of life.

The Prophet was given inspiration from Allah about how to deal with multiple marriages and the difficulties encountered therein. It is not an easy matter for man to handle two wives, two families, and two households and still be just between the two. No man of reasonable intelligence would enter into this situation without a great deal of thought and very compelling reasons.

For societies having more women than men, the most honorable outlet is to allow polygamous marriage as a culturally accepted and socially respected institution. Polygamy in most African societies is such a respectable institution that some Protestant churches are becoming more tolerant of it. A bishop of the Anglican Church in Kenya declared that, "Although monogamy may be ideal for the expression of love between husband and wife, the church should consider that in certain cultures polygamy is socially acceptable and that the belief that polygamy is contrary to Christianity is no longer tenable." After a careful study of African polygamy, Reverend David Gitari of the Anglican Church has concluded that polygamy, as

ideally practiced, is more Christian than divorce and remarriage as far as the abandoned wives and children are concerned (4).

It should be noted that in many Muslim societies today the practice of polygamy is rare since the gap between the numbers of both sexes is not huge. One can safely say that the rate of polygamous marriages in the Muslim world is much less than the rate of extramarital affairs in the West. In other words men in the Muslim world today are far more strictly monogamous than men in the Western world.

It has to be added that polygamy in Islam is a matter of mutual consent. No one could force a woman to marry a married man. Besides, the wife has the right to stipulate that her husband must not marry any other woman as a second wife. The Bible on the other hand, sometimes resorts to forcible polygamy. A childless widow must marry her husband's brother, even if he is already married regardless of her consent (Genesis 38:8-10).

Billy Graham, the eminent Christian evangelist has recognized this fact:

“Christianity cannot compromise on the question of polygamy. If present-day Christianity cannot do so, it is to its own detriment. Islam has permitted polygamy as a solution to social ills and has allowed a certain degree of latitude to human nature but only within the strictly defined framework of the law. Christian countries make a great show of monogamy, but actually they practice polygamy. No one is aware of the part mistresses play in Western society. In this respect Islam is a fundamentally honest religion, and permits a Muslim to marry a second wife if he must, but strictly forbids all clandestine amatory associations in order to safeguard the moral probity of the community.”

Philip Kilbride, an American anthropologist of Roman Catholic heritage, in his provocative book, “Plural marriage of our time” proposes polygamy as a solution to some of the ills of the American society. He argues that plural marriage may serve as a potential alternative for divorce in many cases in order to obviate the damaging impact of divorce on many children. He maintains that many divorces are caused by the rampant extramarital affairs in the American society. According to Kilbride, ending extramarital affairs in a polygamous marriage, rather than a divorce, is better for the children. He also suggested that other groups would also benefit from plural marriage such as elderly women who face a chronic shortage of men and the African Americans who are involved in man-sharing.

The founders of the Mormon Church Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, claiming a new revelation in 1830 preached and practiced unlimited polygamy to solve the problem of surplus women (4).

The world today possesses more weapons of mass destruction than ever before and the European churches might sooner or later, be obliged to accept polygamy as the only way out. Father Hillman has thoughtfully recognized this fact:

“It is quite conceivable that these genocidal techniques (nuclear, biological, chemical...) could produce so drastic an imbalance among the sexes that plural marriage would become necessary means of survival... Then contrary to previous custom and law, an overriding natural and moral inclination might arise in favor of

polygamy. In such a situation, theologians and church leaders would quickly produce weighty reasons and biblical texts to justify a new conception of marriage.

What is more dignifying to a woman? An accepted and respected second wife as in the Islamic approach or a virtual prostitute as in the 'civilized' allies approaches? In other words, what is more dignifying to a woman, the Koranic prescription or the theology based on the culture of the Roman Empire?

Speaking on the issue of the Prophet marriages, it is a historical fact that before the advent of Islam, it had been the habit of men to marry an unlimited number of women. The Old Testament states that David had 100 wives and Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Islam, however, limited marriage to only four wives.

The Prophet of Islam did not marry any of his nine wives for the reasons that the orientalist falsely claim. It was not carnal desires, which made the Prophet marry any of his wives. If he was as they claim, he wouldn't have been the young man married to a woman 15 years his senior. He was 25 when he married Khadijah who had been married twice before and had many children. The Prophet lived all his youth with her in happiness. When she died, he called that year "The year of grief". He loved, respected and kept praising her even after her death.

After Khadijah died the Prophet married other women not for lust or worldly desires, but for the good of Islam in order to strengthen the ties between the people and the new religion, especially because the kinship and blood relations were well respected among the Arabs. By marrying those women the Prophet aimed at unifying the Arabs and solving many problems. His wives became the mothers of the believers, teachers of the Muslim Ummah (nation) in family and women affairs, and related a lot about the Prophet's family life.

The Prophet is nearer to the believers than their selves; his wives are their mothers...(Al-Ahzab, 6).

Allah granted the Prophet something that is not allowed to any other Muslims. He allowed the Prophet to keep the wives that he had married and did not order him to divorce, replace any of them, or marry anymore women.

A'isha, the Prophet second wife, got married when she was 9. Getting married so young was the tradition of the Arab tribes at that time. The Prophet raised her and looked after her in compassion until she reached puberty and became fully matured, then lived with her as man and wife. When the Prophet died, she was 19. Her 10 years with the Prophet were of the life of a fully dedicated disciple, trainee, and scholarly student. She was the source of knowledge for mostly every companion. She was of the main sources for revealing knowledge and information of the private life of the Prophet. She was a big celebrity in politics and the best example of generosity. Her life is a token of a person who lived on earth, but never liked anything of earthly life. She was always looking forward to joining the Prophet in heaven.

Chapter 8

Jihad in Islam

The concept of Jihad is one of the highest concepts in Islam. The Islamic word 'Jihad' in the Western media is wrongly interpreted as 'terrorist', 'fundamentalist' and 'holy war'. If we translate the words 'holy war' back into Arabic, the meaning would be 'al-harb al-muqadassa' and not 'jihad'. Translating the term 'jihad' as 'holy war' is due to the Christian use of the term 'holy war' to refer to the Crusades of the Middle Age against Muslims. The term Jihad therefore, should not be confused with holy war since the latter does not exist in Islam, nor will Islam allow its followers to be involved in a holy war like that of the medieval Christian crusaders.

The term Jihad literally means 'struggle'. Muslims believe that there are two kinds of Jihad. The first and most important Jihad is the inner struggle of the soul which every Muslim wages against egoistic desires to live a life in the service of Allah. This is achieved by following the five pillars of Islam, and abiding by the Islamic principles mentioned in the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This sort of Jihad is a war against man's own selfishness, desires and bestial passion when they get in the way of serving Allah. It is indeed a struggle to put Allah ahead of one's wealth, family, worldly ambitions and life.

Allah said in the Koran:

Say: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, your possessions that you have gained, commerce you fear may slacken, dwellings you love – if these are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and to struggle in his way, then wait till Allah brings His command; Allah guides not the people of the ungodly (Al-Tawba 23, 24).

The Prophet said:

"The greatest Jihad is that for the conquest of self."

"The best Muslim among the believers is the one who does not harm the Muslims with either his tongue or his hand. The one with best belief among the believers is the one who has the best characters. The emigrant is the one who abandons all that Allah has forbidden. And the best jihad (struggle for the sake of Allah) is to struggle against oneself for the sake of gaining the pleasure of Allah, to whom belongs might and majesty."

Those who strive and struggle to live as true Muslims, usually their lives are made difficult due to persecution by their opponents. They are advised to migrate to a more peaceful land and continue with their struggle in the cause of Allah. Allah says in the Koran:

But the believers, and those who emigrate and struggle in Allah's way – those have hope of Allah's compassion; and Allah is All-forgiving, All-compassionate (Al-Baqarah, 218).

Allah tests the believers in their faith and their steadfastness:

Or did you suppose you should enter Paradise without Allah knows who of you have struggled and who are patient? (Al-Imran, 142).

Surely we will try you with something of fear and hunger, and dimunition of goods and lives and fruits; yet give thou good tidings unto the patient (Al-Baqarah, 155).

A man asked the Prophet, "What kind of Jihad is better?" The Prophet replied, "**A word of truth in front of an oppressive ruler.**" (Sunan Al-Nasa'i, no. 4209).

The Messenger of Allah said:

...the Mujahid (one who carries out jihad) is he who strives against himself for the sake of Allah, and the Muhajir (one who emigrates) is he who abandons evil deeds and sin." (Sahih ibn Hibbanm, no. 4826).

The Prophet also said:

"If you see evil, your duty is to stop it by your hand. If you cannot, you must oppose it by your mouth. But if you cannot, you should undo it in your heart."

Allah specifically praises those who strive to convey His Message:

Who is better in speech than one who calls (other people) to Allah, works righteous, and declares that he is from the Muslims (Al-Hjurât, 33).

The true believers in the sight of Allah are those who strive for His cause:

The (true) believers are only those who believe in Allah and his Messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their selves for the cause of Allah. Such are the truthful (Al-Hujurât, 15).

The second kind of Jihad is an armed conflict. Fighting in Allah's cause is given the utmost importance in Islam, and is one of the pillars on which the religion stands. Muslims are ordered to fight and sacrifice themselves for a noble cause like defending their homeland against the enemy, or defending their religion. They call this fight 'Jihad' which means fighting in the cause of Allah.

Abdullah bin Mas'ûd narrated that he asked Allah's Messenger: "O Allah's Messenger! What is the best deed?" He replied, "**To offer prayers at their early fixed stated times.**" I asked, "What is next in goodness?" He replied, "**To be good and dutiful to your parents.**" I further asked, "What is next in goodness?" He replied, "**To participate in Jihad in Allah's cause.**" (Sahih Al bukhari, Vol.4, Hadith No. 41).

The Prophet also said in this respect:

"To strive for the cause of Allah from daybreak to noon and sunset is better than the goods and enjoyment of the whole worldly life."

But Islam lays down extremely strict rules as to what sort of conflict is permissible. Fighting is permissible to defend one's life, family, property, land and religion. When war is undertaken it must be pushed with vigor, but only to restore peace and freedom. In any case limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees or crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms.

It is wrong to say that Islam teaches its followers to resign meekly and passively to their fate of destiny. Rather Islam challenges the believer to fight against wrong and oppression and to strive for the establishment of righteousness and justice. Muslims stand equal, rich and poor; both strive to die in the cause of Allah. Although Islam teaches its followers to be merciful and incline towards forgiveness even in time of war, it never teaches them to turn the other cheek.

The early Muslims fought many battles against their enemies under the leadership of the Prophet. When the pagans of Quraysh brought armies against the Prophet, the Muslims fought to defend their faith and community (9).

The Koran adds:

Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits. Lo! Allah loves not transgressors...And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist let there be no hostility except against transgressors (Al-Baqarahh 190, 193).

If they seek peace, then seek you peace. And trust in Allah for He is the One that Heareth and knowest all things (Al-Anfâl, 61).

After the immigration of the Prophet from Makkah to Medina many of the Muslims were exiles from Makkah. They left their homes and properties back in Makkah and immigrated with the Prophet to Medina. The pagans in Makkah established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the pilgrimage during the recognized period of truce. Allah ordered the Muslims after ten years of persecution on the hand of the Quraishites to fight back in order to restore their rights and spread the religion of Islam.

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged – surely Allah is able to help them – who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say, 'our Lord is Allah'...(Al-hajj 39, 40).

When Muslims fight to defend their land or religion, they seek not only to win, but also martyrdom. Martyrdom exists as an active and powerful force in the ideology of Islam. The Koran declares that those slain in Allah's way are not dead but alive.

And say not of those slain in Allah's way, 'They are dead'; rather they are living. But you are not aware (Al-Baqarahh, 154).

Count not those who were slain in Allah's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord, by Him provided, rejoicing in the bounty that Allah has given them, and joyful in those who remain behind and have not joined them, because no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow, joyful in blessing and bounty from Allah. And that Allah leaves not to waste the wage of the believers (Al-Imran, 169-171).

If you are slain or die in Allah's way, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are a better thing than that you amass.

Surely if you die or are slain, it is unto Allah you shall be mustered (Al-Imran 157, 158).

And those who emigrated in Allah's way and were slain, or died, Allah shall provide them with a fair provision; and surely Allah is the best of providers. He shall admit them by a gate that is well-pleasing to them; and surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Clement (Al-Hajj 58, 59).

These verses of the Koran convey the undeniable message that for martyrs there is a unique and immediate reward. This belief in the special qualities of a martyr found immediate expression in the practice of Muslims so that, among the dead, only the bodies of martyrs need not be washed before burial as they are rendered pure by the very act of martyrdom. The martyr has erased his past sins and purified himself by giving his life as a sacrifice in the service of Allah. The Koranic concept of martyrdom thus became embedded in the consciousness of Muslims.

Not only does a martyr in the cause of Allah enter paradise, but he does so automatically, his admission is guaranteed. Further rewards, as reported by Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) are that the fighters in Allah's cause will, if killed in the struggle receive privileges otherwise unattainable: he escapes the test in the grave by the interrogating angels; he does not need to path through barzakh (the purgatory limbo); he receives the highest of ranks in paradise, sitting near the throne of Allah. The Prophet described dar al-shuhada (house of martyrs) as the most beautiful abode of paradise.; on the Day of Judgment any wounds the martyr received in battle will shine and smell like musk; his death as a martyr frees him of all sin such that he does not require the intercession of the Prophet; he is purified by his act and so he alone is not washed before burial; awaiting him is a garden of cool breezes, beautiful companions, couches, fruit and drink, and nearness to Allah.

The Prophet said:

"No one who dies and enters paradise would wish to come back to this world even if he were to be given ownership of the whole world and whatever is in it, except the martyr who on seeing the superiority of martyrdom, would like to come back to the world and get killed again."

The Apostle of Allah said:

"If anyone fights in Allah's path...Paradise will be assured for him. If anyone

sincerely asks Allah for being killed (in His cause) and then dies or is killed (not in a battle), there will be a reward of a martyr for him...If anyone is wounded in Allah's path, or suffers a misfortune, it will come in the Day of Resurrection as copious as possible, in color saffron, and its odour musk; and if anyone suffers from ulcers while in Allah's path, he will have in him the stamp of the martyrs." (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 14, Number 2535).

Jihad is not a war to force the faith of Islam on others, as many Westerners conceive of it. Jihad should not be interpreted as a way of compulsion of the belief on others, since there is an explicit verse in the Koran that says:

There is no compulsion in religion (Al-Baqarah, 256).

Jihad is not a defensive war only, but is also a war against any unjust regime. If such a regime exists, a war is to be waged against the leaders, but not against the people of that country. People should be freed from the unjust regimes and influences so that they can freely choose to believe in Allah.

Im wartime as well as peacetime, Islam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping and hijacking when carried out against civilians. Whoever commits such violations is considered a murderer in Islam and should be punished. During wars, Islam prohibits Muslim soldiers from harming civilians, women, children, the elderly and religious men like priests and rabbis. It also prohibits cutting down trees, and destroying civilian constructions.

There is no allegiance to Islam. There is faith in Allah and Islam is an act of submission to Allah's will that requires Muslims to live in peace with all communities on earth, including the Jews and the Christians. However, if any group of humanity engages in hostility against Muslims then they are required to defend themselves. There is no blind friendship or loyalty in Islam. If friendship to any human being, regardless whether that person is a Muslim, Jew, or Christian leads to corruption in society, then Muslims are to shun such company and loyalty.

Jihad in Islam also includes: helping allied people who may not be Muslims; removing treacherous people from power; defending through preemptive strikes; freeing people from tyranny; gaining freedom to convey the Message of Islam in an open and free environment (9).

Muslims are instructed by the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet to free people from the bondage of immorality, fear, crime, exploitation, prejudice, superstition and mythology. Justice and equity must prevail.

The Koran says:

Allah commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners; and when you judge between the people, that you judge with justice.

Good is the admonition Allah gives you; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing (An-Nisa, 58).

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable – that is nearer to god-fearing. And fear Allah; surely Allah is aware of the things you do (Al-Maidah, 8).

Of those We created are a nation who guide by the truth, and by it act with justice (Al-A'râf, 181).

Surely Allah bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonor, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember.

Fulfill Allah's covenant, when you make covenant, and break not the oaths after they have been confirmed, and you have made Allah your surety; surely Allah knows the things you do. (An-Nahl 90, 91).

Those who if We establish them in the land, perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and bid to honor, and forbid dishonor; and unto Allah belongs the issue of all affairs (Al-hajj, 41).

There is a wrong claim that Islam has spread by the sword! The emphatic answer is no. The Koran states:

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error (Al-Baqarah, 256).

The following is a good answer of the question, 'Did Islam spread by the sword?'

The Christian missionary, T.W. Arnold wrote:

"...of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions - so that the very survival of these churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of Mohammedan governments towards them." (10).

Chapter 9

Tolerance in Islam

Muslims believe that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are but three forms of one religion which in its original purity was the religion of Abraham. There are traditional and mythological connections between Islam and Judaism. Both go back to the core of belief – to the idea of One Omnipotent, universal Allah.

Muslims invented the concept of religious tolerance. The Koran is the only Holy Book with a verse that calls for shunning compulsion in religion. Allah ordered Muslims not to quarrel with the people of the Book (Jews and Christians). Muslims believe in the revelation which came down to them and in that which came down to Jews and Christians. Muslims believe that Allah is one for all people and all religions.

The Koran teaches:

”Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks.”

In another verse the holy Koran says:

Dispute not with the people of the Book save in the fairer manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered.' (Al'Ankabut, 46).

The Koran also emphasizes the sanctity of human life:

”Because of this (Cain killing Abel) did We (Allah) prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption done in the land, shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind together (Al-Maida, 32).

Although the Koran criticized the Jews for fighting the Prophet and conspiring with the Arab pagans against him, for corrupting the Hebrew Bible, for killing their prophets and for not adhering to what was revealed to Moses, Islam as a religion is not anti-Semitic.

Islam is similar to Judaism, in that both see themselves as both spiritual descendants of Abraham and followers of the same prophets. Islam encourages toleration and respect for Jews and Christians, as both are considered by Islam as “People of the Book”, meaning they share common scriptures and prophets. Even Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam did business with the Jewish tribes of his city and he ordered Muslims to share food with their Jewish neighbors.

The Koran says:

“Let there be no violence in religion”, and “Fight against the unbelievers until they cease persecuting you, but if they desist, then let there be no hostility.”

These Koranic words were taken to heart when the Arab-Muslims occupied Spain in the medieval age and formed their state which they called Al-Andalus (Andalusia). The tolerance they showed to the Spaniards had no equal in the history of conquerors. The first Muslims who made Spain their home never felt that the other monotheistic religions were mortal enemies. They considered the Jews and Christians as "People of the Book" and to have the same Message as Muslims. According to Muslim opinion, the ideas which Judaism had begun and Christianity had developed further, had reached their perfection in Islam. Instead of unity based on one religion, the Arabs built a society where all religious faiths shared a common life.

Al-Andalus became a remarkable country for its age - a land of peaceful co-existence and harmony. The Christians and Jews were allowed to pursue their religions, subject to certain small taxes as laid down in the Koran – no one was forced to convert. The Jews and Christians were allowed to retain their possessions and their beliefs and religious practices, and to continue their way of life within the framework of the society despite the fact that both these communities denied the continuance of the prophetic tradition beyond their respective prophets, Moses and Jesus. The Arabs had never compelled the Jews or Christians to renounce the Bible or the Gospel and to embrace the Koran. This allowed for a remarkable accommodation between all the faiths, producing a society which became progressive and evolving.

Side by side the Arabs lived with the Christian and Jews in peace. The Jews, who had been virtually eliminated from the peninsula in the seventh century by the Christians, grew once more in numbers and flourished. At the end of the eighth century, the whole of Andalusia was the most populous, cultured and industrious land of all Europe, and remained so for centuries.

The tolerance of the Muslims-nurtured by the spirit of Islam-turned Andalusia into the top cultural centre on European soil. In the ensuing centuries it became a bridge between the Islamic East and the Christian West, bringing all the accumulated knowledge of mankind up to that period into the emerging nations of Christendom, setting them off on the road to progress and advancement.

Arabic became the mark of culture for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike and the most unifying factor for all the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. Christians and Jews entered the main stream of Muslim society and were eventually Arabized to a degree that they no longer were distinct from the Muslims.

Due to the open society in the Iberian Peninsula, the Jewish golden age in literature developed under Muslim rule, especially during the 10th and 12th centuries. During this period, when Jews in the remainder of Europe were not tolerated, in Andalusia, the Hebrew tongue developed its grammar and vocabulary on the model of the Arabic language. The uncommon openness of life in this medieval state gave a chance for a great number of Jews to become renowned literary men in both Arabic and Hebrew.

The Muslim world made a remarkable contribution to science, notably mathematics, and medicine. Baghdad in its heyday and southern Spain built universities to which thousands flocked. Rulers surrounded themselves with scientists and artists. A spirit of freedom allowed Jews, Christians and Muslims to work side by side. The Jewish renaissance arose from the fusion of the Arab and Jewish intellectual worlds. Jews watched their Arab counterparts closely and learned to be astronomers, philosophers, scientists and poets. Jews became prominent advisors to Arab leaders. Jewish historians refer to that time period as "The Golden Age of Judaism."

There was thus no pressure of Jews in Andalusia to retire into a ghetto. There were no laws and scarcely any customs that confined Jews to any place or occupation. When their gates were shut they were the ones who shut them.

In the remainder of Europe however, all life revolved around rigid Christianity. Truth within the church could only be conceived by faith alone, as opposed to reason. That is, until Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century reconciled faith and reason. In this, he was greatly influenced by Muslim philosophers like Averroes (Ibn Rushd) whose books had been translated into Latin in the 11th century after the fall of Toledo.

In the subsequent years, the classical legacy, long outlawed by the Church, was made available through the translation of Arabic books. Along with Arab learning, developed throughout the Islamic world, the classical tradition was reaccepted by Christendom, setting the West on the road to greatness (11).

Jews and their rabbis, gained prominence in the courts of Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul, performing the duty of palace physicians, finance officers, and even government ministers. As a minority, Jews exempt from Islamic law (Sharia), and the government allowed them a degree of self-rule by appointing Jewish leaders to implement Jewish law for their communities. Important synagogues spread all over the major cities of the Middle East, and relations between Muslims and Jews had been relatively calm for over a thousand years.

William Draper in "History of Intellectual Development of Europe" wrote:

"During the period of the Caliphs the learned men of the Christians and the Jews were not only held in great esteem but were appointed to posts of great responsibility, and were promoted to the high ranking job in the government...He (Caliph Haroon Al-Rasheed) never considered to which country a learned person belonged nor his faith and belief, but only his excellence in the field of learning."

Marcel Clerget in "La turquie, Passé et present", Paris, 1938, wrote:

"Many proofs of high cultural level of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent are to be found in the development of science and law, in the flowering of literary works in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, in the contemporary monuments in Istanbul, Bursa, and Edirne, in the boom and luxury industries; in the sumptuous life of the court and high dignitaries, and last but not least in its religious tolerance. All the various influences – notably Turkish, Byzantine, and Italian mingle together and help to make this the most brilliant epoch of the Ottomans."

In the time of the reign of Theodoric, king of Ostrogoths, in Italy, however, the Catholic Church was not content with this harmony between the three religions in Spain. The Church felt bound to impose the official religion on all people living in Spain. In the religion of the official Church there was only intolerance and rejection of any religion other than the one it had formulated. By claiming that God had become man, and died for humanity so that everyone who believed this would go straight to heaven, it logically followed that there is no longer need for another prophet on earth. A man can do what he pleased and still go to heaven provided that he bowed before the cross and said he believed in Christ. The appearance of another prophet after Jesus like Muhammad was therefore very embarrassing for the official Church, especially when so many people accepted his guidance and followed him. Because of the Arab territorial expansion in Europe, and their denial of the central dogma of Christianity, Jesus as the son of Allah, the church was bound to subvert Islam, and to eradicate the Muslims, in the same way that it had eliminated the Unitarian followers of Jesus before them.

After 600 years of continuous ruling in Spain the Arabs became weak and divided. Commencing with the Burgundian Crusades of 1017, the precursors of the more notorious crusades to the east, the Christians began to make significant inroads into the Iberian Peninsula. The taking of Barbastro in 1064, caused the slaughter of thousands of Muslims. It was an invariable custom with the Christians, whenever they took a town by force of arms, to ravish the daughters in the presence of their fathers, and the women before the eyes of their husbands and families. But on the taking of Barbastro the excesses of this kind of rape committed by them passed all belief; the Muslims had never before experienced anything like it. The crimes committed by the Christians on this occasion were so overwhelming that there is no pen eloquent enough to describe them.

The Spanish inquisition began with the reign of Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella. Following the crusades and the re-conquest of Spain, and the defeat of the Arabs who reigned Spain for 800 years, Ferdinand and Isabella chose Catholicism to unite Spain. In 1478 they asked permission of the Pope to begin the Spanish inquisition to purify the people of Spain. They began by driving out Jews and Muslims.

In 1483 Tomas Forqemada became the inquisitor-general. He was responsible for establishing the rules of inquisitorial procedure and creating branches of the inquisition in various cities. He remained the leader of the Spanish inquisition for fifteen years and was responsible for the execution of thousands of Spaniards, Muslims and Jews.

The Spanish inquisition brought about a reign of terror throughout Europe which led to impoverishment, exile and death of thousands of Jews, and Muslims. The Spanish inquisition was unjust and evil because it was concerned in large part with the converters. These were Jews and Muslims who converted under duress and were suspected of secretly practicing the Jewish or Islamic faith. The Jews and Muslims were pushed to convert to Catholic faith. The Catholic faith was then endangered by pseudo convert from Judaism and Islam. Accused heretics were identified by the general population and brought before the tribunal. They were given a chance to confess the heresy against the Catholic Church and were also encouraged to indict other heretics. If they admitted their wrongs and turned in other aggressors against the

church they were either released or sentenced to a prison penalty. If they would not admit their heresy or indict others the accused were publicly introduced in a large ceremony before they were publicly killed or sentenced to a life prison. Jews were singled out for persecution because of their identity as Jews.

While millions of Christians and Jews continue to live in the Muslim countries after 14 centuries of Muslim domination, there is no trace of the millions of Muslims who lived for centuries in Spain and Portugal. The Muslims were totally eliminated from Spain so that not even one man was left to give the Muslim call for prayer. If the Muslims had used force, there would not have been any Christian left in Spain to have kicked the Muslims out. They did not use the sword to convert Spaniards to the Islamic faith. Evidence of their past existence can only be found in beautiful palaces like Alhambra in Granada, flamenco music and dancing, Portuguese fado singing, and the abundance of Arabic words in the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

The Spanish inquisition's reign of terror was abolished by Bonaparte in 1834, but it wasn't until January of 1968 when the files of the office of the inquisition at the Vatican were closed.

To simply say that Catholics had sinned is to sidestep the most important aspect of these sins. What remains important about the inquisition and the forcible conversion of native people is the involvement of the church's authority with these sins.

The end of the Arabs and Jews epoch in Spain was not the end of a Jewish life in Arab lands. Jews have lived in the Middle East since before the time of Jesus and up to the present day. Many of the lands they lived in were Arab. The Jews lived in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Yemen, and in each of these places they lived in peace with their neighbors. Such peaceful life continued unabated until the creation of the state of Israel on Arab land in 1948. This event helped sour relations between Arabs and Jews.

Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch wrote the following text in the latter part of the twelfth century, after five centuries of Muslim rule in that region:

"This is why the God of vengeance, who alone is All-Powerful, and changes the empire of mortals as He will, giving it to whomsoever He will, and uplifting the humble beholding the wickedness of the Romans who throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity, brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans. And if in truth we have suffered some loss, because the Catholic churches, that had been taken away from us and given to the Chalcedonians, remained in their possession; for when the cities submitted to the Arabs, they assigned to each denomination the churches which they found it to be in possession of (and at that time the great churches of Emessa and that of Harran had been taken away from us); nevertheless it was no slight advantage for us to be delivered from the cruelty of the Romans, their wickedness, their wrath, and cruel zeal against us, and to find ourselves as people." [Michael the Elder (Great) as quoted in "Michael the Elder, Chronique de Michael Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche", J.B. Chabot, Editor, Vol. II, Paris, 1901].

Islam is spreading today for the same reasons it spread rapidly in the past: the reasons of believing in the Oneness of Allah, and following His path of salvation to win Paradise in the Hereafter.

The Koran advises against using force to change people's religion:

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in Allah, had laid hold of the most firm handle, unbraiding; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqarahh, 256).

Or being the aggressor:

And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but aggress not: Allah loves not the aggressors (Al-Baqarahh, 190).

Muslims are asked to refrain from vengeance against prisoners of war or civilians:

And if you punish (your enemy), then punish them with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, better it is for those patient.

And be patient, your patience is not but from Allah. And grieve not over them, and be not distressed because of what they plot (An-Naml 126, 127).

The Prophet lived in a place where people of different religions, languages, races and tribes all coexisted. It was very difficult for those societies to live together in peace and security and check those who sought to spread dissension. Yet, the justice of the Prophet was a source of peace and security for those other communities, just as much as it was for Muslims. During the time of the Prophet Christians, Jews and pagans were all treated equally. The Prophet abided by the verse:

There is no compulsion in religion (Al-Baqarah, 256).

Allah also revealed to the Prophet the kind of justice and conciliation he needed to adopt towards those of other religions:

Therefore call thou, and go straight as thou hast been commanded; do not follow their caprices. And say: 'I believe in whatever Book Allah has sent down; I have been commanded to be just between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. We have our deeds and you have your deeds; there is no argument between us and you, Allah shall bring us together, and unto Him is the homecoming (As-Shura, 15).

The word "Kill" in the Bible is found 442 times in the Revised Standard Version, and 271 times in the King James Version compared to 40 times in the Koran translated by Pickthall and 22 times in that translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

The facts show that Islam tolerates non-Muslim minorities within the Muslim nation and treats them as independent communities free to worship and live according to

their own religious laws. This was outlined in the Covenant made by the Prophet in Medina which became the world's first written constitution in 622 AD.

In contrast, the Christian Romans used force to convert all the countries under their dominion to Christianity. When Roman Catholicism became the state religion, the Romans persecuted the Orthodox Christians who did not convert. The number of Orthodox Christians killed by Rome reached 2000,000 (elshaab.com, 1/4/99, page 2).

The spread of Islam in the 7th century threatened the Romans and Persians who shared dominion over Arabia and collected heavy taxes from the Arabs. This led to a series of wars between the Romans and Persians on one side and the Muslims on the other. The Muslims won the war with Persia and restricted the Romans to Asia Minor until the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in the 16th century. This spread the Muslim influence over the Western world from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. The equity and justice with which Muslims conducted the affairs of the Islamic states and their pious personal lives led many Christians, Jews and others to embrace Islam.

After the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain, the real holy wars were those initiated by the crusaders against the Muslims in the Middle East. The Crusaders were brutal in their treatment of Muslim prisoners of war and civilians. When the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, they killed 70,000 Muslims. When the Muslims re-conquered Jerusalem they didn't kill one single soul.

Orthodox Christians were considered heretics and therefore did not escape the Crusader's brutality. The Orthodox Churches, which were safe during centuries of Muslim rule, were looted by the Crusaders.

The crusades were not an unfortunate episode during the Dark Age in Europe that ended a long time ago. These crusades continued when Napoleon invaded Egypt with his troops. He ordered his troops to destroy the face of the sphinx and the tip of the great pyramid to leave his mark on them. His cavalry desecrated al-Azhar mosque with their horses. The French soldiers burned the rare manuscripts in its library to keep warm.

Napoleon was proud that he had ordered beheading 5-6 people daily and parading their heads in the streets to scare the population!

After defeating the Turks in Jaffa, Napoleon ordered his troops to kill about 2500 Turkish soldiers from the city garrison who surrendered. The soldiers were led to the shore and the French kept firing at them until they ran out of ammunition then finished them off with bayonets. The water turned red from the blood of the slain Turks. In the city, the killing, raping, looting and burning lasted for two days and did not stop until the French troops were too exhausted to continue.

When a survivor of the Java massacre killed a French general, his hands were cut, his wrists were burned then he was impaled. After his slow death, his head was severed and was given to a French surgeon who showed the skull to his students in Paris as an example of a terrorist and a criminal!

It seems that the principles of the French revolution: Freedom, equality and brotherhood did not apply to Muslims. This was later confirmed when the French occupied Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and declared them French territories. One million Algerian died while fighting the French along the years of occupation. During occupation of the Muslim countries, the French citizenship was given to Jews and Christians but not to Muslims!

Abdel Wahab El-Messeri (Al-Ahram Weekly, 23-29 December 1999, issue No. 461) reported:

"In the course of my research for the encyclopedia of Jews, Judaism and Zionism, I was surprised to find how frequently the word 'Muselmann' (Muslim) appeared in the Auschwitz concentration camp lists. According to one source, the victims who were led off to the gas chambers were called 'aliens', and according to other sources 'Muselmanner'. In the Encyclopedia Judacia, I came across the following entry:

"Muselmann (Muslim in Germany) was a commonly used terms in the concentration camps, used to refer to the prisoners who were on the brink of death... The term was primarily used in Auschwitz, but was also used in other camps."

We see here an epitome of one central dimension of the Western mentality. Whenever it destroys its victims it perceives them as 'other,' and the other since the time of the Crusades, has always been the Muslim. In the middle ages, Muslims and Jews were closely linked in the Western mind.

The Nazi experience is an authentic product of this Western mindset. The Nazis were the standard bearers of this vision. They epitomized the Western confrontation with the oriental civilization closest to Europe: the Islamic civilization. The connotation of the term 'Muselmann' was simply extended to include the 'other' in general, whether Slavs, Jews, or Gypsies, as has occurred in a similar manner with the word 'Arab' in Zionist discourse.

In modern time, the words fundamentalist and terrorist have frequently replaced the word 'oriental',

Muslims revere Prophet Moses, Jesus and all other Prophets and consider Judaism and Christianity earlier phases of the primordial religion of Allah, Islam. The Muslims in Bulgaria, for example were very active in protecting Jewish groups from persecution, and King Hussein V of Morocco refused to hand over his Jewish subjects to the Vichy government in France.

The Serb Christians waged war on the Muslim civilians in Bosnia and Kosovo. In Bosnia, more than 200,000 Muslims have been killed and more than 1400 mosques have been destroyed or damaged. About 200 villages have been destroyed in Kosovo and about 250,000 refugees have fled for their lives.

When the Serb Christians invaded Kosovo, they destroyed all mosques despite the fact that the Christian monasteries were safe for centuries in the predominantly Muslim Kosovo.

The United Nations records document countless atrocities against Muslim civilians by the Jews in Palestine. The massacres in Kafr Qasim, and Dir Yassin by the Jewish terrorist gangs before the UN divided Palestine into a Palestinian and Jewish states are famous examples. The Israeli troops massacred 200 Palestinians in a single village on the day Israel came into being in 1948.

Reports just after the Dir Yassin killings spoke of some 249 deaths. Up to 700,000 Palestinians fled from their towns and villages or were driven out by Jewish troops.

Other infamous massacres include the massacres in Palestinian refugee camps in Sabra and Shatila, and the recent massacre in Qana. More than 200 women, children and old men who were seeking shelter near a UN camp were killed by deliberate Israeli bombing.

The value of property, seized by Israel from 700,000 Palestinians who fled Palestine in 1948, is estimated at more than 6 billion dollars excluding interest.

Violation of the civil, religious and human rights of the Muslim and Christian minorities in Israel had no effect on the flow of unlimited aid to Israel. Israel has destroyed about 400 mosques and 400 churches since the UN divided Palestine into Palestinian and Jewish states in 1948.

Israel occupied southern Lebanon for 20 years, killing tens of thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands of Lebanese civilians.

It seems that the US policy of linking foreign aid to human rights and religious persecution does not apply to Israel.

The mentality of the Crusades still exists today under the guise of fighting terrorists or Muslim fundamentalists, or fighting the spread of weapons of mass destruction thus leaving the Muslim countries vulnerable to the threat of mass destruction by Israel and others, or stemming the tide of immigration by North Africans to Europe.

The United States labeled Muslim countries as 'rogue nations' that oppose peace with Israel. Despite the American media attempts to demonize the Muslims, the fact show that about 80% of the 23 million refugees in the world today are Muslims!

Iraq was put under sanction for ten years. A whole generation of Iraqis was murdered by the sanction. The US further bombed the defenseless Iraq into the Stone Age. This led to the death of one million Iraqis to date. Later, the US fully occupied Iraq under the famous lie 'Iraq has weapons of mass destruction'.

Muslim militants in the Middle East are resisting Israel occupation of the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria. This occupation violates international law and numerous UN resolutions. Targeting the militants and picturing them as terrorists will not bring peace to the Middle East. Ending the occupation will bring peace and help the moderates on both sides build a better future for all the people in the Middle East.

The Muslim militants are the product – not the cause - of the anger and frustration in the Muslim countries which are helpless to defend themselves in the face of the Israeli arrogance backed by unlimited US support.

Respecting the rights of the Muslim countries and implementing the UN resolutions protecting the rights of the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese would bring just peace in the Middle East. This would also restore the friendly and beneficial relations the US had with all the Muslim countries after World War II.

Chapter 10

Islam and democracy

Democracy is not separate from Islam; in fact it is very much embedded in its ideology. In Islam there is no dictatorship, popism or totalitarianism. Islam does not believe in any kind of Monarchy or oligarchy.

In Islam compulsion is incompatible with religion because religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force. Allah says in His holy Book:

There is no compulsion in religion. Truth has come clear from error; therefore whoever disbelieves in evil and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqarah, 256).

If it had been Allah's plan not to grant the free will that he has granted to man in order to choose between belief and disbelief, His omnipotence could have made all mankind believers. But this would bring no merit on them. Allah wished to endow man with faculties and capacities, so that he should strive and explore faith, and bring himself into harmony with Allah's will. Men of faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing faith, by imposing it on others by physical compulsion. Forced faith is no faith. Muslims should strive spiritually and let Allah's plan work as He wills.

And if your Lord had pleased, whoever is on the earth would have believed, all of them together. Would you then compel the people to become believers? (Yunus, 99).

The Prophet of Allah is sent to teach and direct people to the right path. He is not sent to force their will, or punish them, except insofar as he may receive authority to do so. Punishment belongs to Allah alone. And punishment is certain in the Hereafter, when true values will be restored.

Then give warning! You are only to warn them; you are not their overseer (Al-Ghashiah 21, 22).

All Prophets form one brotherhood; their Message is one, and their religion and teaching are one; they all serve the one true God, Allah, who loves and cherishes them; and they owe their duty to him and Him alone.

Islam welcomes cooperation with humanity altogether because Islam emphasizes that the nation of humanity is one nation.

Surely this nation of yours is one nation, and I am your lord; so serve Me (Al-Anbiya, 92).

Surely this nation of yours is one nation, and I am your Lord; so fear Me (AlMu'aminun, 52).

After the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Medina in 622CE, he established the first Islamic state. For 10 years he was not only the leader of the emerging Muslim community in Arabia, but also the political head of Medina. He ruled as political head as a result of the tripartite compact that was signed by the Muslim immigrants from Makkah, the indigenous Muslims of Medina, and, significantly, the Jews of Medina. The Prophet chose to draw up a historically specific constitution based on the eternal and transcendent principles revealed to him but also sought the consent of all who would be affected by its implementation. Thus, the first Islamic state was based on a social contract that was constitutional in character, and had a ruler who ruled with the explicit written consent of all the citizens of the state.

The constitution of Medina established the importance of consent and cooperation for governance. According to this compact, Muslims and non-Muslims were equal citizens of the Islamic state, with identical rights and duties. Communities with different religious orientation enjoyed religious autonomy. The constitution of Medina established a pluralistic state. The principles of equality, consensual governance, and pluralism were central to the compact of Medina (12).

In establishing the compact of Medina, the Prophet demonstrated a generous democratic spirit towards its entire inhabitants whether Arabs or Jews.

Allah of His mercy made the Prophet's heart ever tender in the resentment of the calamity which his people in the battle of Uhud brought upon themselves by disobeying his orders and, thus, being defeated. Allah made the Prophet speak to them in gentle voice of peace. For, had he been unsparing in reproof and harsh hearted, they would have broken the bonds of loyalty and would have broken away from him. Allah, therefore, ordered him to give up resentment against them, and to ask Allah's forgiveness for them, and consult with them upon matters on which he received no divine authoritative instructions.

It was by Allah's mercy that you were kind to them, had you been harsh and hard of heart, they would have dispersed from around you, so pardon them, and pray for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter and when you reach a decision, place your trust in Allah, surely Allah loves those who put their trust in Him (Al-Imran, 159).

In this mode of consultation, the Prophet was personally involved. The Prophet was asked to consult with his companions, but ultimately to decide on his own. Consultation here is mandated but is not binding.

When the Prophet knew that the infidels of Makkah were coming to attack his city, Medina, with 3000 fighters, he consulted his companions about the most effective way to defend the city. His companion Salman al-Farsi advised him to dig a deep and wide trench around the open side of Medina. The unbelievers were unable to cross the trench but put the city under siege for one month. They ran out of food and water, and they were forced to go back to Makkah when Allah sent a severe wind which destroyed their tents and dispersed their animals.

Cooperation between people is an Islamic imposition. The following verse is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood. Mankind is

descended from one pair of parents and therefore all people are equal before Allah. The most honorable of them in the sight of Allah is the most righteous.

O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

...Help one another to piety and god-fearing; do not help each other to sin and enmity. And fear Allah; surely Allah is severe in punishment (Al-Maidah, 2).

The political system of Islam depends totally upon Ashura (consultation). Shura, as a principle, is rooted in the Koran itself. There is in the Koran a whole chapter called 'Ashurara'. Shura is an Arabic word for consultation. It was the method by which pre-Islamic Arabian tribes selected leaders and made major decisions. Scholars of Islam agree that the principle of Shura, or consultative decision-making, is the source of democratic ethics in Islam.

Shura is predicated on three basic percepts. First, that all persons are equal in human and civil rights. Second, the public issues are best decided by majority view. And third, the three principles of justice, equality and human dignity, which constitute Islam's moral core, and from which Islamic conceptions of human and civil rights derive, are best realized, in personal as well in public life, under Shura governance.

In the Koran the community of the faithful is described as the one that – among its other attributes – administers its affairs by mutual consultation. This mode of consultation is depicted as constituting the very process by which binding decisions on public matters are reached. The community here is deliberating on public matters collectively. The next verse shows clearly that Shura in Islam is a binding decision-making process.

And those who respond to their Lord and establish prayer and who on matters other than those Allah has decreed, conduct them by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We bestow on them (As'Shura, 38).

Ibn Kathir said while explaining the previous verse: "Shura is mentioned after answering the call of Allah (Islam), and performing prayer, which is the pillar of Islam. After Shura is mentioned, Zakat (alms giving) and charity are mentioned. So, mentioning Shura between prayer and Zakat is an indication of its importance.

Islam stipulates popular consent (rida al awam), as a pre-requisite to the establishment of legitimate political authority, and collective deliberation (ijtihad jama'i), as a requisite to the proper administration of public affairs. Beyond that, Islam stipulates collective responsibility (mas'ulyah jama'yyah), for maintaining the public good of society. And by affirming all humans as equal before Allah, Islam stipulates equality before the law. By rejecting man's subservience to anyone but Allah, Islam stipulates freedom as the natural state of man; hence liberty within the limits of law is an Islamic stipulation. The famous question asked by the second caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, "When did you enslave the people, knowing that they were born free by their

mothers?" speaks volumes about Islam's innate resentment of anything that arbitrarily violates personal freedom (13).

Any thorough reading of Islam would show that there are authentic Islamic positions stressing public consent, collective deliberation, shared responsibility, personal freedom, justice, equality, and dignity of the human individual, all conceived within the Shura framework of governance.

"The best person you can employ," says the Koran, in the words of a thoughtful daughter counseling her father **"is the one who is competent and honest."** Surely in the weighty matter of governance, the people ought to be able to employ through election, those they deem the most competent and honest amongst them.

Allah gives another example of consultation in the Koran when narrating the story of the Queen of Sheba. She consulted her chieftains seeking their view regarding the contents of a letter sent to her from the Prophet Solomon:

She said, "O council, see, a letter honorable has been cast unto me. It is from Solomon, and it is "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Rise not up against me, but come to me in surrender."

She said, 'O council, pronounce to me concerning my affair; I am not used to decide an affair until you bear me witness.'

They said, 'we possess force and we possess great might. The affair rests with thee; so consider what thou wilt command.' (Al-Naml 32, 33).

The principle of Shura was applied to its full extent by the Holy Prophet as mentioned above, and fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam. The first four caliphs after the Prophet were chosen by Shura.

The first caliph after the Prophet, Abu Bakr, established a council of prominent Sahāba (companions of the Prophet) and consulted them regularly in matters concerning the Islamic state. After the expansion of Islam to vast areas, the second caliph Omar established further another consultation body in which only the Muhagereen (immigrant companions of the Prophet) participated. The purpose was to discuss and solve the many problems and issues arising from the countries recently joined to the new Islamic state. The council then had its two houses like modern democratic systems. Islamic history is full of examples that how the caliph consulted the council and how the members reacted, criticized and gave their opinions.

If we look at the political system during the rule of the four caliphs who came after the Prophet, we can see a well disciplined government, whose caliph is politically elected by the majority of Muslims. The caliph had limited sovereignty and power. His main role was confined to establish peace and security in the society, armed forces, foreign policy and distribution of financial resources.

There was complete supremacy and rule of law. Courts were independent and free to give its verdict on any matter presented before them, if it was against state or caliph. The government couldn't interfere in their decisions. The Caliph had no right to forgive or condone those who were convicted by the courts. All people were equal before the law, whether rich or poor, ruler or farmer. Nothing was hidden from people

in matters regarding government and state. In Friday prayer in the big mosque, the caliph normally discusses with the people the important issues of the state. The caliph was held responsible before his people, and every person could enquire about anything he sees disturbing his life. Democracy was ruling in its best form.

The Koranic concept of sovereignty is that it is universal, transcendental, indivisible, inalienable, and truly absolute. Allah the absolute is the primary law-giver, while the caliph (Allah's agent on earth) enjoys marginal autonomy necessary to implement and enforce the laws of Allah.

Allah is therefore the primary sovereign, but sovereignty has been delegated in the form of human agency:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am setting in the earth a viceroy.'
They said. 'What, wilt Thou set therein one who will do corruption there, and shed blood. While We proclaim Thy praise and call Thee Holy?'
He said, 'Assuredly I know that you know not.' (Al-Baqarah, 30).

The concept of Khilafa (caliphate) in Islam means Allah's delegation of authority to the nation (ummah) to maintain peace, justice and prosperity on earth according to his instructions. The concept is universal in that every individual member of the nation is legally obligated to ensure the proper execution of the delegated authority. Representative governance, through which alone this collective obligation can be properly fulfilled, thus becomes constitutionally mandatory in Islam. Absolute, cosmic sovereignty belongs to Allah, but sovereignty on earth, Allah has delegated to the nation (ummah), the people, through the mandate of caliphate (khilafa). By collectively enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, the nation would move ahead, achieving unprecedented heights in human development (13).

The political task is to reflect on how this Allah-given agency can be best employed in creating a society that will bring welfare and goodness to the population now and in the future.

The caliphs considered the caliphate as a test from Allah. If they tyrannize, their punishment will be greater than ordinary persons because they have been given the responsibility to rule over people by implementing equity and justice as indicated in the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet. In that they are Allah's vicegerent on earth with the purpose of giving people their due and protect their rights.

Abu Bakr, the first caliph said in his inaugural speech, "O people! I have been appointed as a ruler upon you even though I am not the best among you. If I perform well, you should help me and guide me. If I do wrong, you must keep me on track. Truth is a trust and lie is distrust. Your weakest will be a stronger near me until I make him get his right back, and your strongest will be a weakest near me until I compel him to give you your right back. The nation which forgets Jihad (struggle for the cause of truth), Allah disgraces it, and the the nation which spreads evil, Allah spreads miseries in it. If I obey Allah and His Prophet, you must obey me, and if I disobey Allah and His Prophet, you are not bound to follow me. May Allah bless you."

Upholding these principles, the second caliph Omar said, "Where I do right, assist me; where I do wrong correct me."

Once Omar became sick. He was advised to take honey. There was honey in the exchequer but he refused to take it without public consent. He went to the mosque and asked the people, "If you allow me then I shall take a bit of honey."

This was the sense of responsibility Omar had. He gave the people the right to criticize him. An ordinary person wouldn't hesitate to oppose and contradict the caliph himself.

Once Omar was addressing a crowd in the mosque, and proposed that women should lower their dower. A woman stood up and asked him in a loud voice, "Fear Allah, who are you to bind us?" The woman was right in her claim. Omar immediately realized that she was right and he was wrong, so he said, "Praise be to Allah that a woman from Medina knows better than Omar."

The fourth caliph Ali ibn abi Taleb sent a letter to his governor to Egypt, Malik ibn al-Ashatar al-Nukha'i. Ali wrote:

"Know, O Malik that I am sending you to a country which has been subjected before you to both just and unjust rulers, and so the people will judge you in the same way that you now stand in judgment of your predecessors. Therefore, let good works be your true assets. Discipline yourself, and covet not that which is not rightfully yours. Train your heart to feel compassion for the people, to love them and be kind to them. Do not behave like ferocious beasts toward them, snatching away their sustenance, for the people are of two categories: either your brothers in religion, or your fellow human beings."

Historically the term caliph was used as the title of the monarchs who ruled the medieval Muslim empire. In the Koran, the Arabic words for caliph and caliphate have a different meaning. These terms in the Koran have the more general meaning of steward and stewardship. In this way, Adam, as the first human is identified as Allah's caliph or steward on earth as mentioned in the verse above. The Prophet is instructed to remind humans that Allah made them the caliphs (stewards or trustees) of the earth.

It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth, and has raised some of you in rank above others, that He may try you in what He has given you. Surely thy Lord is swift in retribution; and surely He is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (Al-An'âm, 165).

In this way, the term caliphate refers to the broad responsibilities of humans to be the stewards of Allah on earth. This stewardship is bestowed on the entire group of people, the community as a whole. Such a society carries the responsibility of the caliphate as a whole and each one of the individuals shares the divine caliphate. This is the point where democracy begins in Islam. Every person in an Islamic society enjoys the rights and powers of the caliphate of Allah and in this respect all individuals are equal.

The Koran has presented Shura as a principle, and not as a system of governance. The Koran thereby has left it to successive generations of Muslims to continue to strive toward a more perfect realization of the Shura principle.

The Shariah (Islamic law) does not specify how Shura should be conducted or how many people need to be consulted under all circumstances. It has neither specified a way to select such people nor has it specified a method for surveying opinions or collecting votes. All the Shariah does is to show that Shura is an obligation on the leader and, at the same time, a right for the nation. It also made it clear that Muslims should conduct their affairs by Shura.

Today world democracies are suffering from a major vacuum, which is the vacuum of spirituality. Islam can provide the framework for combining democracy with spirituality. In Islam the sovereignty of one man contradicts the sovereignty of Allah. Blind obedience to one man-rule is contrary to Islam. The Islamic state is built on the affirmation of the "Oneness of Allah". All people are created equal, and they worship only one God, Allah. Also the noblest of them in the sight of Allah is the most Godfearing and not the wealthiest or the most powerful. These Islamic principles provide the foundation of Islamic democracy. A form of a democratic system can be formulated comprising these ethics.

Democracy must now start in Muslim countries, not as a cultural import, but as an imperative of civilized life rooted in and supported by the ideas and ideals embedded in their own Islamic heritage. These principles and values are universal, permanent, and non-relativistic: the principle of justice, equality and human dignity, and values such as faith, reason, virtue, knowledge, cooperation, personal integrity, and economic prosperity. A concrete and progressive expression of these principles and values can come about under neither authoritarian nor totalitarian governance, but rather under Shura, or democratic governance that is committed to the supremacy of these principals and values.

It is high time that Muslims re-visit Islam and re-examine its moral ideas, and to justify demands for reform by indigenous Islamic criteria for Shura governance. If they do so earnestly, they will see that Shura governance is essentially democratic governance – liberating, uplifting and conducive to progress.

Islam called the Arabs to Shura more than fourteen centuries ago, at a point in history when the rest of the world had but a faint idea about democracy (13).

The absence of democracy in Muslim countries is by no means on account of Islamic teachings or the incompatibility of democracy with Islam, but due to a host of factors: political, historical and cultural. Deeper historical and cultural influences must be considered in order to understand the political situations in many Muslim countries today. The early Islamic democracy breathed its last within thirty years of the holy Prophet's death. The institution of monarchy crept in under Roman influence. The capital of Islam had shifted from Medina to Kufa in Iraq and then to Damascus in Syria, once part of the Roman Empire. During the caliphate of the fourth caliph Ali ibn Abi Taleb, the Muslim community fell in a civil war. Power was eventually grasped by the Ummayyad caliphs and then the Abbasid caliphs. The Ummayyad caliph, Muawiyah who seized power without the consent of the Muslims operated from

Damascus and adopted Roman monarchical ways. There were also rival caliphates in Egypt and Al-Andalus, which included much of the current-day Spain. Later the rulers of the Ottoman Empire claimed the caliphate. The nominal Ottoman caliphate was dissolved in 1924. The authoritarian culture remains unchanged in many Muslim countries today.

During this long period of authoritarianism, the caliphs ruled over the many Islamic states, and none were chosen by Shura; all reached power by inheritance or by might. The Muslim clergy counseled submission to these rulers as long as they rule by the Islamic law, but also stressed the duty of the ruler to rule by Shura as stated by the verses above.

During the last century French and British occupation also played a significant role in shaping the political structure, thus severing Muslims from Islam. American interests in the region also played an important role.

Today, many Muslim countries are in various stages of democratization. For example, nearly 800 million out of 1.4 billion Muslims live in democracies, and unlike the US, four Muslim nations have or had women heads of government. Turkey, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan have elected women to power, and Iran has a woman vice president. As it seems, it is just a matter of time before the entire Muslim world democratizes.

The West sometimes claims that Sharia (Islamic law) is anti-democratic. The truth however, is that Sharia is decidedly democratic. The reason for Islam's great record of tolerance and pluralism in the past is the correct understanding and application of the Sharia. The Shariah is elicited from the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Koran advocates consultative governance, and the practice of the Prophet, as enshrined in the Compact of Medina, treats minorities equally, and he governed by consent and consultation.

There is another claim that the West is more secular than the Muslim countries. In the United States however, there is currently a president who believes in "faith-based initiatives" and has Bible sessions in the White House. The United States has also had Christian Mullahs running for president like Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson. The federal government also employs thousands of chaplains and actually provides religious services. The Christian Right is a major political force and Christian values (abortion, gay unions) do shape the political landscape. American politics is not entirely secular.

Today, the Muslim world suffers from a deep sense of insecurity, largely from the West, which it sees as a force determined to separate Muslims from Islam. We have seen how insecurity can immediately undermine the protection of rights. Even the US, the most powerful and democratic state – undermines many rights guaranteed under the Bill of rights. When Muslim societies will feel safer and will be assured that the West is not seeking to reconolize them or destroy their faith, they too will become more democratic and protective of individual rights. Muslims fear the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive strike. When more secure, Muslim understanding of their faith becomes more liberal, as in Islamic Spain, and when insecure, Muslims interpretation of their faith becomes more conservative, as in Afghanistan under the Taliban (14).

Chapter 11

Human rights in Islam

Islam is not only a religion; it is a complete way of life. Islam guides Muslims from birth to grave. Islam is a guide to humanity for all times until the Day of Judgment. The legal basis of Islam is the Shariah (Islamic Law) that controls and organizes all walks of the Muslim life. The teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet cannot be changed. A Muslim is not free to do what he wishes. He is under the Islamic Law, which is derived and assimilated from the Koran, the example of the Prophet (Sunnah), the final analogy (Qiyas) and the general consensus (ijmaa) of the Islamic ummah (nation).

To Muslims the Koran is the Magna Carta of human rights and a large part of its concern is to free human beings from the bondage of traditionalism, authoritarianism, tribalism, racism, sexism, slavery or anything else that prohibits or inhibits human beings from actualizing the koranic vision of human destiny embodied in the classical proclamation:

And that the final end is unto thy Lord (An-najm, 42).

Islam is a complete religion. The Koran says:

Say O Muhammad, 'Shall I seek a judge other than Allah? For it is He who sent down to you the Book (the Koran) well-distinguished; and those whom We have given the Book (Torah, Gospel) know it is sent down from thy Lord with the truth; so be not thou of the doubters (Al-An'âm, 114).

And We have brought to them a Book that We have well-distinguished, resting on knowledge, a guidance and a mercy unto a people who believe (Al-A'râf, 52).

A Book whose verses are set clear, and then distinguished, from One All-Wise, All-Aware (Hûd, 1).

Islam is a perfect religion

Allah declares in the Koran:

...Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (Al-Mâidah, 3).

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said, "**The most perfect believer in respect of faith is he who is best of them in manners.**" (Abu Dawud 4665).

As Islam teaches, Allah is the absolute and the sole master of men and the universe, His mercy encompasses all His servants; and since He has given each man or woman human dignity and honor, by breathing into him or her of His own spirit, it follows that all mankind is substantially the same, and no distinction can be made among them, on account of their differences such as nationality, color or race.

Every human being is thereby related to all others and all become one community of brotherhood in their honorable servitude to Allah. In such a heavenly atmosphere the Islamic confession of the Oneness of Allah stands dominant and central, and necessarily entails the concept of the Oneness of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind.

Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed under all circumstances whether such a person is resident within the territory of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is at peace or at war (15).

Islam has been from its inception very concerned with issues of human rights. Because Islam as a religion is perfect and complete, these rights given by Allah cannot be abolished by any temporal ruler or human agency. Eternal and immutable, they ought to be exercised since everything that Allah does is for a just purpose.

He has created the heavens and the earth with truth. High, is He Exalted above all that they associate as partners with Him (An-Nahl, 3).

We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them in play; We created them not save in truth; but most of them know it not. Surely the Day of Decision shall be their appointed time, all together, the day a master shall avail nothing a client (no man can help another), and they shall not be helped, save him upon whom Allah has mercy; He is the All-Mighty, the All-compassionate (Ad-Dukhân 39-42).

The issues of human rights in Islam are the following:

1- Right to life

Human life is sacred in Islam and cannot be spilled without justification. If anyone violates this sanctity of human blood by killing a soul without right, the Koran equates it to the killing of the entire mankind.

...Whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, or for corruption done in the land, should be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether... (Al-Maidah, 32).

Say: 'Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you: that you associate not anything with Him, and to be good to your parents, and not to slay your children because of poverty; We will provide you and them; and that you approach not any indecency outward or inward, and that you slay not the soul Allah has forbidden, except by right. That He has charged you with; haply you will understand (Al-An' am, 151).

As indicated in the above verse, homicide is considered as the greatest sin only next to polytheism. The tradition of the Prophet reads:

"The greatest sins are to associate something with Allah (son, idols, angels, saints ...etc) and to kill human beings."

In all these verses of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet the word 'soul' (nafs) has been used in general terms without any distinction or particularization which might reveal that the persons belonging to one's nation, the people of a particular race or religion should not be killed. The injunction applies to all human beings and the destruction of human life is totally prohibited.

It is rather surprising however, that in the Talmud, the religious book of the Jews, there is the view that if a non-Israelite is drowning and you tried to save him then you are a sinner! If the Israelites regard it necessary to save the life of a human being at all, it should be the life of an Israelite. As far as other people are concerned, according to this view, they do not seem to be human enough to deserve protection of their souls. In their literature the concept of 'Goyim' for which the English word 'Gentile' and the Arabic word 'ummi' (illiterate) is used, is that they enjoy no human rights; human rights are reserved only for the children of Israel.

The Koran has mentioned this belief of the Israelites and quotes the Jews saying:

That, because they say: 'There is no way over us as to the common people. They speak falsehood against Allah while they know it (Al-Imran, 75).

The Prophet also said regarding the dhimmis (non-Muslim citizens living in Muslim states):

"One who kills a man under covenant (dhimmi) will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise."

2- Right of ownership

Along with security of life, Islam has with equal clarity conferred the right of security of ownership of property. In the address which the Prophet delivered on the occasion of the Farwell Hajj (pilgrimage) he said:

"Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection."

Everyone is free to own property and earn his living. As we read in the Koran:

...Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned..." (An-Nisa, 32).

The Koran goes so far as to declare that the taking of the people's possessions or property is completely prohibited unless they are acquired by lawful means as permitted in the laws of Allah, the Koran. The Koran categorally declares:

And eat not up your property among yourselves in vanity, nor seek by it to gain the hearing of the judges that you may knowingly devour a portion of the property of others wrongfully (Al-Baqarahh, 188).

3- The right to basic necessities of life

The essence of Islam is to serve Allah and do acts of charity for poor Muslims. Anyone who is suffering from deprivation has the right in the property and wealth of the Muslims; irrespective of the fact whether he belongs to Islam or any other religion. Allah has established this right over Muslims which they have to honor and respect.

It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the east and to the west (in prayers), but true piety is to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets, to give of one's substance, however cherished, to kinsmen, and orphans, the needy, the traveler, beggars, and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril, these are they who are true in their faith, these are the truly god-fearing (Al-Baqarah, 177).

Serve Allah, and associate naught with Him (in worship). Be kind to your parents, and the near kinsman, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is of kin, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion at your side, and to the traveler, and to that your own hand own (slaves), Surely Allah loves not the proud and boastful (An-Nisa, 36).

Surely the god-fearing shall be among gardens and fountains taking whatsoever their Lord has given them; they were good doers before that. Little of the night would they slumber, and in the mornings they would ask for forgiveness; and the beggar and the outcast had a share in their wealth (Adh-Dhariyat 15-19).

4- Right to respect

The Koran considers all human beings high and noble and are worthy of respect:

We have honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and preferred them greatly over many of those We created (Al-Isrâ', 70).

There is no fault in Allah's creation. Allah gave to man the purest and best nature. The Koran declares that human beings have been made in the best of moulds:

We indeed created man in the fairest stature (At-Teen, 4).

Allah honored human beings because of all creation they alone chose to accept the trust (free will to choose between good and evil). The heavens and the earth refused to carry the trust lest they should betray it, but man was less fair to himself, and carried it. Man's duty is therefore to preserve the pattern on which Allah has made him. By breathing something of His own spirit into him, and making him His vicegerent, Allah exalted him in rank and position even higher than the angels, for the angels had to make obeisance to Him. Man's position as vicegerent also gives him will and discretion, and if he uses them wrongly he falls even lower than the beasts. If man rebels against Allah, and follows after evil, he will be abased to the lowest possible

position. For Judgment is sure. Those who use their faculties aright and follow Allah's law will reach the high and noble destiny intended for them (paradise). However, those who rebel and break His law will be severely punished in the Hereafter. Allah is just and wise; therefore, the righteous have nothing to fear, but the evil ones cannot escape punishment. Thus because man has been endowed with the ability to think, to have knowledge of right and wrong, to do the good and avoid the evil, and on account of the promise which is contained in being human, namely, the potential to be Allah's vicegerent on earth, the humanness of all human beings is to be respected and considered to be an end in itself.

The Prophet said:

"He is not a believer whose neighbor cannot feel safe from his harm."

5- Protection of honor

In the address delivered on the occasion of the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet did not only prohibit the life and property of the Muslims to one another, but also any encroachment upon their honor, respect and chastity.

No believer, man or woman, should laugh at another in contempt, nor call each other with nick names, a pagan custom below the dignity of Islam. The Koran teaches that men must not laugh at other men with the intention of producing a specified deriding or ridiculing. It may be that the laughees are better than the laughers in many aspects. Similarly, nor women should laugh at other women. Moreover, Muslims are required not to defame one another nor nickname each other by insulting or repulsive incorrect names. Such like persons are guilty of wrongful actions.

Muslims are required to avoid suspicion and the conjecture of the existence of something evil or wrong without proof, nor play a spy upon each other, or peer into the nature of other people's actions nor slander one another, by speaking evil or falsehood or speaking maliciously behind his or her back. This will be like eating the flesh of his dead brother.

O believers eschew much suspicion; some suspicion is a sin. And do not spy, neither backbite one another; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother dead? You would abominate it. And fear you Allah; for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful (Al-Hujurat, 12).

O believers let not any people scoff at another people who may be better than they; neither let women scoff at women who may be better than themselves. And find not fault with one another, neither revile one another by nicknames. An evil name is ungodliness after belief. And whoso repents not, those – they are the evildoers (Al-hujurat, 11).

The Koran also states that those who engage in malicious scandal-mongering and love to spread indecency among the people will be grievously punished in both this world and the next.

On the return from the expedition of the Banu Mustaliq, when the march back to Medina was ordered, Aisha the Prophet's wife was not in her tent, having gone to search for a valuable necklace she had dropped. As her litter was veiled, it was not noticed that she was not in it, until the army reached the next halt. Meanwhile, finding the camp had gone, she sat down to rest, hoping that someone would come back to fetch her when her absence was noticed. It was night and she fell asleep. Next morning she was found by Safwan, who has been left behind in the camp expressly to pick up anything inadvertently left behind. He put her on his camel and brought her, leading the camel on foot. Rumor of improper intimacy was propagated by the hypocrites and the enemies of Islam, a rumor which caused real pain to the Prophet and to those related until Allah revealed Aisha's innocence and exposed the hypocrites and enemies of the faith.

Those who came with the slander are a band of you; do not reckon it evil for you; rather it is good for you. Every man of them shall have the sin that he has earned charged to him; and whosoever of them took upon himself the greater part of it, him there awaits a mighty chastisement.

Why, when you heard it, did the believing men and women not of their own account think good thoughts, and say, "This is a manifest calumny?"

Why did they not bring four witnesses against it? But since they did not bring the witnesses, in Allah's sight they are the liars.

But for Allah's bounty to you and His mercy in the present world and the world to come there would have visited you for your mutterings a mighty chastisement.

When you received it on your tongues, and uttering with your mouths things of which you had no knowledge, and reckoned it a light thing, and with Allah it was a mighty thing.

And why, when you heard it, did you not say, 'It is not for us to speak about this; glory be to thee! This is a mighty calumny?'

Allah admonishes you, that you shall never repeat the like of it again, if you are believers. Allah makes clear to you the signs; and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

Those who love, that indecency should be spread among those who believe, there await them a painful chastisement in the present world and the world to come; and Allah knows, and you know not (An-Nur 11-19).

There are three things here reprobated by way of spiritual teaching: (1) if others speak an evil word, that is no reason why you should allow it to defile your tongue; (2) if you get a thought or suspicion which is not based on your certain knowledge, do not give it currency by giving it expression; and (3) others may think it is a small matter to speak lightly of something which blasts a person's character or reputation, but in the eyes of Allah it is a most serious matter, particularly when it involves the honor and reputation of pious women (2).

Allah abhors words uttered in immoral manner and detests open contempt cast at others unless it is redressing grievances.

Allah likes not the shouting of evil words unless man has been wronged; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. If you do good openly or in secret or pardon an evil, surely Allah is All-Pardoning, All-Powerful (An-Nisa 148, 149).

In Islam woman's chastity has to be respected and protected under all circumstances, whether she is Muslim or non-Muslim.

Those who slander chaste women in wedlock that are heedless but believing shall be accursed in the present world and the world to come; and there awaits them a mighty chastisement (An-Nur, 23).

The limbs and faculties of the slanderers will stand as witnesses against them in the Day of Judgment:

On the day when their tongues, their hands and their feet shall testify against them as to their actions. Upon that day Allah will pay them in full their just due, and they shall know that Allah is the manifest Truth (An-Nur 24, 25).

The great caliph Omar said: "It is only because of Islam that we gained 'Izzah' (honor, dignity, and pride) and if we seek ('Izzah) outside of Islam, Allah will humiliate us."

6- Brotherhood

The enforcement of the Muslim brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's Sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realized until this ideal is achieved.

The believers indeed are brothers; so set things right between your two brothers, and fear Allah; haply so you will find mercy (Al-Hujurat, 10).

Allah also says in the Koran:

O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

This Koranic verse begins with 'O mankind', meaning it is not only addressing the Arabs but all of humanity. It also indicates that mankind is all the same because it has been created from one man and one woman. It shows that all human beings are created through the same process, not in a manner in which some are created with a better mechanism than others. The verse clearly shows that Allah is the One who made human beings into races and tribes. These differences are rather a sign from Allah indicating His Omnipotence.

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and the variety of your tongues, and colors. Surely in that are signs for all living beings (Ar-Rûm, 22).

Islam, however, limits the purpose of these distinctions to differentiation and knowing each other, and not to tribalism, racism, nationalism, and colonialism. The only source of preference or greatness among human beings is not on a national or group level, but it is at the individual level. Individual piety is the only thing that makes a person better in the sight of Allah than all others, no matter what nation or country they are part of. This only criterion of preference, god-fearing, is not measurable by human

beings but by only Allah who knows the real intentions of His servants and everything they do. This ideal brotherhood rooted in Islamic teaching made the notable Historian A.J. Toynbee states:

"The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue."

A man once visited the Prophet's mosque in Medina. There he saw a group of people sitting and discussing their faith together. Among them were non-Arab Muslims; Salman who came from Persia; Suhayb who grew up in the Eastern Roman Empire and was regarded as a Greek, and Bilal who was black from Africa. The man then said:

"If the Medinan tribes of Aws and Khazraj support Muhammad, they are his people (i.e. Arabs like him). But what are these people doing here?"

The Prophet was very angry when he heard what the man said. He immediately went to the mosque and summoned people to prayer. He then addressed them saying:

"O people know that the Lord and Sustainer is One. Your ancestor is one, your faith is one. The Arabism of anyone of you is not from your mother or father. It is no more than a tongue (language). Whoever speaks Arabic is an Arab."

The Prophet said:

"Let people stop boasting about their ancestors. One is only a pious believer or a miserable sinner. All men are sons of Adam, and Adam came from dust (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi).

The Prophet said:

"Whoever has pride in his heart equal to the weight of an atom shall not enter Paradise." A man inquired about a person who likes to wear beautiful clothes and fine shoes, and he answered, **"Allah is beautiful and likes beauty."** Then he explained, **"Pride means rejecting the truth because of self-esteem and looking down on other people."** (Muslim).

The Prophet condemned Arab racial pride:

"You should listen to and obey your ruler even if he was an Ethiopian slave whose head looked like a raisin." (Bukhari).

7- Right to justice

The supreme task entrusted to human beings by Allah, of being Allah's deputies on earth, can only be accomplished by establishing justice which the Koran regards as pre-requisite for authentic peace. Without the elimination of the injustices that invade the personal and collective lives of human beings, it is not possible to talk about peace in Koranic terms (16).

The Prophet of Islam said:

"Allah will ask the rulers about any shortcomings in ruling those whom Allah has put under their guardianship." (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 4, Hadith no. 661).

Justice is one of Allah's attributes, and to stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interests or the interests of those who are near or dear to us. The Islamic justice searches out the innermost motives, because the Muslim has to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things and motives are known. Some people may be inclined to favor the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favor the poor because they are helpless. Partially in either case they are wrong. The Muslim must be fair and just, without fear or favor. Both the rich and the poor are under Allah's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favored at the expense of others.

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kinsmen, whether the man be rich or poor; Allah stands closer to either. Then follow not caprice, so as to swerve; for if you twist or turn, Allah is aware of the things you do (Al-Nisa, 135).

Revelation is like a balance, by which man can weigh all moral issues. Allah has sent down the Koran and the Books which were sent down before in conformity with truth and in agreement with reality and with the balance of reason and justice. The balance may also refer to Allah-given faculty by which man can judge between right and wrong.

It is Allah who has sent down the Book with the truth, and also the Balance. And what shall make thee know? Haply the Hour is nigh (Ash-Shura, 17).

Allah enjoins justice and deeds of wisdom and piety, and benevolence to those who are in need, and forbids all that is wrongful and obscene, and all that is offensive. Allah urges Muslims to what is good and laudable, that they may hopefully remember.

Surely Allah bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonor, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember (An-Nahl, 90).

To do justice and act righteously in a favorable environment is meritorious enough, but the real test comes when the Muslim does justice to people who hate him, but no less is required of the Muslim by Allah.

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable – that is nearer to god-fearing. And fear Allah; surely Allah is aware of the things you do (Al-Maidah, 8).

Allah commands Muslims that they should render back the trusts to their owners and that when they judge between men they judge with justice.

Allah commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners; and when you judge between the people that you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing (An-Nisa, 58).

Allah ordered Muslims not to encroach upon the property of the orphan, unless it be with the motive of improving, advancing or raising it to a better quality or condition until he reaches maturity and be able to take charge of it. Also, Muslims must not fraudulently scant the measure and the weight but dispense them equitably to the full. When they express their thoughts in words or pronounce a judgment, they must observe justice even if the person in question be related. They should avoid breach of promise and breaking a vow. Their words and actions must fulfill the solemn promise and keep the vow.

And that you approach not the property of the orphan save in the fairer manner, until he is of age. And fill up the measure and the balance with justice. We charge not any soul save to its capacity. And when you speak be just, even if it should be to a near kinsman. And fulfill Allah's covenant. This He commands you that you may remember (Al-An'am, 152).

Three things are mentioned in the Koran as gifts from Allah; the Book, the Balance and iron. The Books (Torah, Gospel, and Koran) command good and forbid evil; justice compels the ruler to give to each person his due; and iron that stands as the emblem of strength, power, discipline and law. Out of iron is made steel and from steel and iron are made implements of war against tyranny and falsehood and to be of service in preserving peace as well as effecting one's object to do what is needed in life.

Indeed We sent our Messengers with the clear signs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men may uphold justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great might, and many uses for men, and so that Allah might know who helps Him, and His Messengers, in the unseen. Surely Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty (Al-Hadid, 25).

When the Prophet migrated to Medina, he was faced by two classes of men, the hypocrites and the Jews. It had been a cause of great grief and disappointment to him that some among them showed so much insincerity, cunning and hardness of heart. There were men among the Jews who were eager to catch up any lie against the Prophet. They did not deal honestly with their Law, and misapplied it, by distorting the meaning. They were also hungry for ill gotten gain and for eating people out of their property. But because Allah loves those who judge in equity, He ordered His Prophet that should the Jews or the hypocrites come to him seeking his judgment in certain points in dispute, then he may accept to judge between them, or he may decline to do so. If he declines they cannot hurt him in the least, but should he accepts to sit in judgment, then he must judge between them in equity, for Allah loves those who judge in equity.

The Koran says:

They are people who listen to falsehood, and consume the unlawful. If they come to thee, judge between them, or turn away from them; if thou turnest away from them, they will hurt thee nothing; and if thou judgest, judge justly between them; Allah loves the just (Al-Mida, 42).

The Prophet abided by Allah's commands even with such difficult people, and never made any concessions in his implementation of justice. He became an example for all times obeying the words of his Lord:

My Lord has commanded justice (Al-A'raf, 29).

The agreement that was made with the Christians of Najran in the south of the Arabian Peninsula was another fine example of the justice of the Prophet. One of the articles in the agreement reads:

The lives of the people of Najran and its surrounding area, their religion, their land, property, cattle, and those of them who are present or absent, their messengers and their places of worship are under the protection of Allah and guardianship of His Prophet.

The Compact of Medina, signed by the Muslim immigrant from Makkah, the indigenous Muslims of Medina, and the Jews of Medina, is another important example of justice. As a result of this compact, which established justice between communities with differing beliefs and ensured the protection of their various interests, long years of enmity were brought to an end. One of the most outstanding features of the treaty is the freedom of belief it established. The relevant article reads:

The Jews of Banu Auf are one nation with the Muslims; the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs.

Article 16 of the treaty reads:

The Jew who follows us is surely entitled to our support and the same equal rights as any one of us. He shall not be wronged, nor his enemy be assisted.

The Prophet's companions remained true to that article of the treaty, even after his death, and they even practiced it with regard to Berbers, Buddhists, Brahmans, and people of other beliefs (23).

8- Equality

Our age is said to be the age of freedom and restoring unto every man his dignity. Our age however, is still unable to think of terms of human dignity, and this is the dark specter of social concern of the present time. Despite man's conquest of space and mastery over the forces of nature, he has not been able to rid himself of the primeval prejudice of race and color. The stark reality of our time has brought in its trail a great desolation and frustration as we find ourselves face to face with chaos, wars, the miserable conditions of living of the masses of mankind and the exploitation of one nation by another. All this has led to selfishness, fear, hatred; class, tribe and race

discrimination; and subsequently the division of man against man is the order of the day.

Islam is a religion of equality. It equalizes all humans and equalizes all races. It equalizes all prophets and revealed Books. A Muslim must believe in all Prophets and all revealed books.

Islam believes in the unity of the human race. Humanity is one single family of Allah. All mankind are the creatures of One God, Allah. All people that existed on earth derived from their father Adam and their mother Eve. There is no racism in Islam. Men are one and not White or Black, Arian or non-Arian, Occidental or Oriental. In Islam all humans are created by Allah and to Allah all will return.

The Koran declares human equality as to their origin:

Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate (Eve), and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women; and fear Allah by whom you demand (your mutual rights) and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely Allah ever watches over you (An-Nisa, 1).

All people began by having one religion and one language; but as they increased in number, they spread throughout the earth. This inevitably led to difference of nature, color and language and even in religion.

Mankind was one community, then they differed among themselves, so Allah raised Prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners... (Al-Baqarahh, 213).

According to Islam Allah has given man the right of equality as a birthright. Allah proclaims to all mankind that He weighs them not by parentage, lineage, descent or rank in life, but by the image their hearts reflect. Before Allah people are all one, they all are the descendants of one father and one mother. However, differences and conflicts arise among them in as much as they are close to, or far from, compliance with Allah's Law and way of life. As the Koran teaches, the most honorable of people in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing.

O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

Based on this quality and as confirmed by Islam, all people are equal in freedom in the sight of the Islamic Law. This slogan was launched by Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab more than fourteen centuries ago when he said:

"When did you enslaved people whose mothers had borne them free."

The above mentioned Koranic verses clearly indicate that the whole humanity with its diverse races, was originally one, deriving its existence from One Creator and all barriers that separate humanity by race and color must vanish and the superiority of a

person is judged by his conduct only. A good Muslim considers himself a fusion of all races. Anyone who enters into the fold of Islam become part and parcel of this fraternity, forgetting all pride and prejudice. On the basis of this principle Islam seeks to build an intellectual, moral, ideological and international society, as against the existing tribal, racial, linguistic and national societies, which have turned the world into a racial holocaust.

The current division of the human race should not lead nations to treat one another with contempt or disgrace and usurp each other's rights. As indicated by the above verse, the superiority of man over another is only on the basis of Allah-consciousness, purity of character, and high morals. This superiority based on piety and good conduct does not justify that certain groups of people should play lord or assume airs of superiority over other human-beings. Assuming airs of superiority is in the sight of Allah a reprehensive vice which no pious man can ever dream of perpetrating, because this runs counter to human equality which has been laid down by the Koran as a general principle.

The Prophet said:

"No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab. Nor does a white man have any superiority over a black man or the black man any superiority over the white man. You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from clay." (al-Bayhaqi and al-Bazzaz).

The Prophet also said:

"You are sons of Adam, and Adam came from dust. Let the people cease to boast about their ancestors." (Abu Dawud).

The Prophet also said:

"No one has any superiority over another except in goodliness." (Ahmad).

Speaking on the aspect of equality before Allah in Islam, the famous poetess of India, Sarojini Naidu says:

"It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call for prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim: 'Allah Alone is Great'...I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes man instinctively a brother." (S. Naidu, *Ideals of Islam, vide Speeches & Writings, Madras, 15818, PP. 169*).

In the words of Professor Hurgone:

"The league of nations founded by the Prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show candle to other nations." He continues: "The fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of the League of Nations."

The world has not hesitated to raise to divinity, individuals whose lives and missions have been lost in legends. Historically speaking, none of these legends achieved even a fraction of what Muhammad accomplished. All his striving was for the sole purpose of uniting mankind for the worship of one God on the code of moral excellence. Muhammad or his followers never at any time claimed that he was a son of God or the God-incarnate or a man with divinity – but he always was and is even today considered as only a Messenger chosen by the only God, Allah.

In this manner Islam established equality for the entire human race and struck at the very root of all distinctions based on color, race, language or nationality.

9- Right to privacy

In Islam the rule about dwelling houses is strict, because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent and well ordered life.

Muslims are demanded not to enter houses which are not their own until they have asked permission and greet their inhabitants first. If no one replies, the Muslim has no right to enter it until he gets the owner permission. He should withdraw in case no permission is received. If he is actually asked to withdraw, as the inmates are not in a condition to receive him, he should withdraw. Even if the owners are his friend, he has no right to take them by surprise or enter against their wishes.

O believers do not enter houses other than your houses until you first ask leave and salute the people thereof; that is better for you; haply you will remember. And if you find not anyone therein, enter it not until leave is given to you. And if you are told, 'Return' return; that is purer for you; and Allah knows the things you do (Al-nur, 28).

10- Individual's right to freedom

Slavery was widely prevalent in Arabia at the time of the advent of Islam, and the Arab economy was based on it. Not just the Koran insists that slaves be treated in a just and humane manner:

Serve Allah and join none with Him (in worship). Be kind to parents, and the near kinsman, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is of kin, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion at your side, and to the traveler, and to that your right hands own (slaves). Surely Allah loves not the proud and boastful (An-Nisa, 36).

But it continually urged the freeing of slaves by urging Muslims to set the prisoners of war free, either by an act of grace or against ransom.

It is not piety that you turn your faces towards east and west (in prayers) but piety is the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, the Prophets, and gives his wealth in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to the poor, and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, perform prayers and give the alms, and who fulfill their covenant when they make it, and who are patient in extreme poverty and ailment (disease)

and at the time of fighting (during the battles). Such are the people of truth and they are the pious (Al-Baqarahh, 177).

Islam has clearly forbidden the primitive practice of capturing a free man, to make him a slave, or to sell him into slavery. The Prophet said:

"There are three categories of people against whom I shall myself be a plaintiff on the Day of Judgment. Of these three, one is he who enslaves a free man, then sells him and eats his money."

Islam solved the problem of slaves that were in Arabia by encouraging the people in different ways to set their slaves free. The Muslims were ordered that in expiation of some of their sins they should set their slaves free. Freeing a slave by one's own free will was declared to be an act of great merit, so that it was said that every limb of the man who manumits a slave will be protected from Hell-Fire in lieu of the limb of the slave freed by him.

The result of this policy was that during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (27 years) all the old slaves of Arabia were liberated. The Prophet alone liberated as many as 63 slaves. The number of slaves freed by his wife Aisha, was 67, Abbas liberated 70, Abd Allah ibn Omar liberated one thousand, and Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf purchased thirty thousand and set them free. Similarly other companions of the Prophet liberated a large number of slaves (17).

Thus the problem of the slaves of Arabia was solved in a short period of thirty or forty years. After this the only form of slavery which was left in Islamic society was the prisoners of war who were captured in the battlefield. These prisoners were retained by the Muslim government until their government agreed to receive them back in exchange for Muslim soldiers captured by them, or arranged the payment of ransom on their behalf. If the soldiers they captured were not exchanged with Muslim prisoners of war, or their people did not pay their ransom money to purchase their liberty, then the Muslim government used to distribute them among the population and thus brought them in contact with the Islamic society. This was a more humane and proper way of disposing of them, than retaining them like cattle in concentration camps. Over and above, their guardians were ordered to treat them well. The result of this humane policy was that most of the men who were captured on foreign battlefields and brought to Muslim countries as slaves, embraced Islam and some of their descendants became great scholars, imams (religious leaders), jurists, commentators, statesmen, generals of the army, and some of them became even the rulers of the Muslim world.

The Prophet, even though he was the recipient of divine revelation, was required to consult the Muslims in public affairs. Allah addressing the Prophet says:

...and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs

Since the principle of mutual consultation is mandatory in Islam:

And those who answer the call of their Lord (to believe that he is the only one Lord, Allah, and to worship none but Him alone), and perform prayers, and who

(conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them. (Ash-Shura, 38).

It is a Muslim's fundamental right, as well as responsibility, to participate in as many aspects of the community's life as possible. The Koranic proclamation that:

There shall be no coercion in matters of faith (Al-Baqarahh, 256), guarantees freedom of religion and worship. This means that non-Muslims living in Muslim territories should have the freedom to follow their own faith without fear or harassment. A number of koranic passages state clearly that the responsibility of the Prophet Muhammad is to communicate the Message of Allah and not to compel anyone to believe:

Clear proofs have come to you from your Lord. Whoso sees clearly, it is to his own gain, and whoso is blind, it is to his own loss; I am not a watcher over you (Al-An'am, 1040).

Had Allah willed, they would not have taken others besides Him in worship. And We have not appointed you a watcher over them neither are you their guardian (Al-An'am, 107).

The right to exercise free choice in matter of belief is unambiguously endorsed in the Koran:

Say: "The truth is from your Lord; so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve." Surely We have prepared for the evildoers a fire, whose pavilion encompasses them; if they call for succor, they will be succored with water like molten copper, that shall scald their faces – how evil a potion, and how evil a resting place (Al-Kahf, 29).

The Koran also states clearly that Allah will judge human beings not on the basis of what they profess but on the basis of what their belief and righteous conduct:

Those who believe (in the Koran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with the Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

The Koranic dictum, "**Let there be no compulsion in religion**" (Al-Baqarahh, 256), applies not only to non-Muslims but also to Muslims. Those however who renounced Islam after professing it and then engaged in acts of war against Muslims are to be treated as enemies and transgressors (16).

The right to freedom includes the right to be free to tell the truth. Haqq (truth) is one of Allah's attributes. Standing up for the truth is a right and a responsibility which a Muslim may not disdain in the face of the greatest danger or difficulty:

O believer, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kinsmen, whether the man be rich or

poor; Allah stands closer to either. Then follow not caprice, so as to swerve; for if you twist or turn, Allah is aware of the things you do (An-Nisa, 135).

Islam has laid down the principle that no citizen can be imprisoned unless his guilt has been proven in an open court. To arrest a man only on the basis of suspicion and to throw him into a prison without proper court proceedings and without providing him with the opportunity to prepare his defense is not allowed in Islam.

11- The right to protest against tyranny

Among the rights that Islam had conferred on human beings is the right to protest against government's tyranny. In Islam, all power and authority belong to Allah, and man, His vicegerent on earth, has only a delegated power known as the trust. Everyone who becomes a recipient of such a trust or power has to stand in reverence before his people and serve them truthfully according to the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet lest he would be exposed to the wrath of Allah if he deviated from truth. This was acknowledged by the first caliph after the Prophet, Abu Bakr who said in his first address to his people: "Cooperate with me when I am right but correct me when I commit error; obey me so long as I follow the commandments of Allah and His prophet; but turn away from me when I deviate."

12- Freedom of expression

Islam gives the right of freedom of thought and expression to all citizens of the Islamic state on the condition that it should be used for the propagation of virtue and truth and not for spreading evil and wickedness. Islam does not give anybody the right to use abusive or offensive language in the name of criticism. One who tries to deny the right of freedom of expression to his people is openly at war with Allah. It is the duty of the faithful Muslim to warn and reprimand the evil-doer and try to stop him from doing it (17).

The Holy Koran has described this quality of the faithful in the following words:

They enjoin what is proper and forbid what is improper (At-Tawba, 71).

In contrast, describing the qualities of a hypocrite, the Koran mentions:

They bid what is improper and forbid what is proper (At-Tawba, 67).

The Prophet said:

"If anyone of you comes across an evil, he should try to stop it with his hand (using force); if he is not in a position to stop it with his hand he should try to stop it by means of his tongue (he should speak against it). If he is not even able to use his tongue then he should at least condemn it in his heart. This is the weakest degree of faith."(Muslim).

The Holy Prophet demanded that his companions tell the truth and express their views fearing no blame. He said:

"He who holds back from telling the truth is dumb devil."

13- Freedom of association

Islam has given people the right to freedom of association and formation of parties or organizations. This right should be exercised for propagating virtue and righteousness and must not be used for spreading evil and mischief. Addressing the Muslims the Koran declares:

you are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honor, and forbidding dishonor, and believing in Allah.... (Al-Imran, 110).

If the entire Muslim community is not able to perform this duty then:

Let there be a community among you, calling to good, and bidding to honor, and forbidding dishonor; those are the prosperous (Al-Imran, 104).

14- Freedom of conscience and conviction

In Islam religion and faith are matters of conscience and no power or compulsion can affect them. The holy Koran has laid down the injunction:

There should be no coercion in the matter of faith (Al-Baqarahh, 256).

This verse clearly indicates that compulsion and faith cannot co-exist. Religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if influenced by force.

Though there is no truth and virtue greater than the religion of Islam, and in spite of the fact that Muslims are enjoined to invite people to embrace Islam, they are not asked to enforce this faith on them. Whoever accepts Islam he does so by his own choice. Muslims will welcome such a convert to Islam with open arms and admit him to their community with equal rights and privileges. But if somebody does not accept Islam, Muslims will have to respect his decision, and no pressure will be put on him to change his mind (17).

Allah has given man the freedom to believe in Him or not. He guided him to the right path, and left him to choose to be grateful or to deviate from what is just and right.

As we read in the Koran:

Surely We guided him upon the way whether he be thankful or unthankful (Al-Insān, 3).

If he is thankful he will accept guidance, and join the company of the blessed. If not, his account is with Allah on the Day of judgment.

When the Message of Islam had been transmitted to mankind the duty of the Prophet was completed. The Prophet is not responsible for the deeds of the people to whom he transmitted the Message. Forcing people to believe was not his responsibility. The Koran states this fact in several verses as follows:

Then remind them. Thou art only a reminder; thou art not charged to oversee them (Al-Ghashiyah, 21-22).

But if they turn away, We sent thee not to be a guardian over them. It is for thee only to deliver the Message (Al-Shûra, 48).

Surely We have sent down upon thee the Book for mankind with the truth. Whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss; thou art not a guardian over them (Az-Zumur, 41).

The Prophet explained the religion to everyone, but left them free to make up their own minds.

After conveying Islam Prophet Muhammad left people to their consciences; he accepted those who believed in what he preached as his brothers and sisters in religion, but he showed no hostility to those who did not accept Islam and who wanted to maintain their former beliefs; rather he accepted their beliefs.

The Prophet was reported to have said, "He who unfairly treats a non-Muslim who keeps a peace treaty with Muslims, or undermine his rights, or burdens him beyond his capacity, or takes something from him without his consent; then I am his opponent on the Day of Judgment." (Abu Dawud and Al-Bhaqi).

It was also reported that the Prophet said: **"He who harms a non-Muslim who keeps a peace treaty with Muslims has harmed me, and he who harms me has harmed Allah."** (Al-Tabarni in Alawsat with a good chain of transmission).

The Prophet also said: "Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise." (Sahih Muslim).

This principle is a form of religious commitment all Muslims must adhere to. With the adoption of this principle later Muslim officials refrained from forcefully enforcing Islam on people who did not choose the religion. Starting from the time of the four great Caliphs all Islamic leaders allowed non-Muslims to practice their own beliefs. It is for this reason that throughout history non-Muslim minorities could preserve their existence in various Islamic cultures.

The second Caliph, Omar ibn Elkhattab used to ask those who came to him from various provinces about the well being of non Muslims and whether they have any complaints from any kind of oppression in these provinces.

The fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abu Taleb said, "They pay capitation tax so that their properties and lives may be as ours."

15- Protection of religious sentiments

Along with freedom of conviction and freedom of conscience, Islam has given the right to the individual that his religious sentiments will be given due respect and nothing will be said or done which may encroach upon this right.

It has been ordained by Allah in the Holy Koran:

Abuse not those to whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah or they will abuse Allah in revenge without knowledge. So We have decked out fair to every nation their deeds; then to their Lord they shall return, and He will tell them what they have been doing (Al-An'am, 108).

Islam does not prohibit people from holding debate and discussion on religious matters provided that these discussions are conducted in decency.

Dispute not with the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) save in the fairer manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; and our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered (Al-Ankabut, 46).

16- Protection from arbitrary imprisonment

Islam recognizes the right of the individual that he will not be arrested or imprisoned for the offences of others. Islam believes in personal responsibility. Man is responsible for his acts, and the consequences of his actions cannot be transferred to someone else. The Holy Koran has laid down this principle clearly:

No bearer of burdens shall be made to bear the burden of another (Al-An'am, 164).

17- Equality before law

Islam gives its citizens the right to absolute and complete equality in the eyes of the law. As far as the Muslims are concerned, there are clear instructions in the Holy Koran that in their rights and obligations they are all equal:

The believers are brothers to each other. So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy (Al-Hujurat, 10).

The Prophet said:

"Life and blood of Muslims are equally precious" (Abu Dawud; Ibn Majjah).

If the unbelievers repent and embrace Islam then they form with Muslims one brotherhood and they acquire the same rights and obligations as other Muslims have.

Yet if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then they are your brothers in religion; and We distinguish the signs for a people who know (Al-Tawba, 11).

As far as the non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state are concerned, their rights were well expressed by the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abitaleb:

"they have accepted our protection only because their lives may be like our lives and their properties like our properties." (Abu Dawud). In other words, their lives and properties are as the lives and properties of the Muslims.

Discrimination of people into different classes was one of the greatest crimes that according to the Koran, pharaoh used to indulge in:

Now pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and had divided its inhabitants into sects, abasing one party of them, slaughtering their sons, and sparing their women; for he was of the workers of corruption (Al-Qassas, 4).

18- Rulers are not above the law

Islam clearly insists and demands that all officials of the Islamic state, whether he be the head or an ordinary employee, are equal before the law. None of them is above the law or can claim immunity.

A woman belonging to a high and noble family was arrested in connection with theft. The case was brought to the Prophet, and it was recommended that she might be spared the punishment of theft. The Prophet replied:

"The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allah because they punished the common men for their offenses and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes; I swear by Him Who holds my life in His hand that even if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, had committed this crime, I would have amputated her hand."

The second caliph Omar ibn El-Khattab said:

"I have myself seen the Prophet, may Allah's blessings be on him, taking revenge against himself (penalizing himself for some shortcoming or failing)."

On the Battle of Badr, when the Prophet was straightening the rows of the Muslim army he unintentionally hit the belly of a soldier in an attempt to push him back in line. The soldier complained, "O Prophet, you have hurt me with your stick." The Prophet immediately bared his belly and said: **"I am very sorry, you can revenge by doing the same to me."** The soldier came forward and kissed the abdomen of the Prophet and said that this was all that he wanted.

During the caliphate of Omar, Muhammad the son of Amr ibn al-'As, the governor of Egypt, whipped an Egyptian. The Egyptian went to Medina and lodged his complaint with the righteous caliph who immediately summoned the governor and his son to Medina. When they appeared before him in Medina, the caliph handed a whip to the Egyptian complainant and asked him to whip the son of the governor in his presence. After taking his revenge and the Egyptian was about to hand over the whip to Omar, he said to the Egyptian: "Give one stroke of the whip to the honorable governor as well. His son would certainly have not beaten you were it not for the false pride that he had in his father's high office." The plaintiff submitted: "The person who had beaten me, I have already avenged myself on him." Omar said: "By Allah, if you had beaten him (the governor) I would not have checked you from doing so. You have spared him of your own free will." Then Omar angrily turned to Amr bin al-'As and said: "O Amr, when did you start to enslave the people, though they were born free of their mothers?"

When the Islamic State was flourishing in its pristine glory and splendor, the common people could equally lodge complaints against the caliphs of the time in the court and the caliph had to appear before the judge to answer the charges. And if the caliph had any complaints against any citizen, he could not use his administrative powers and authority to set the matter right, but had to refer the case to the court of law for proper adjudication (17).

19- The right to participate in the affairs of the state

According to Islam, governments are actually representatives of Allah. Allah has promised those who have conformed to his system of faith that He shall depute them on earth in order that they may maintain His Law, and He will support them with power to establish His religion of Right, and He will confirm for them their religion which He has chosen for them as the appropriate system of faith and worship. He will also exchange the fear and dread which fell upon them for peace of mind and soul, provided that they adore Him with appropriate acts and rites and do not incorporate with Him other deities.

The Koran says:

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them that He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange, after their fear security: 'They shall serve Me not associating with Me anything. Whoso disbelieves after that, those they are the ungodly.' (An-Nûr, 55).

The correct method recommended by the Holy Koran for running the affairs of the state is through consultation:

And their business is conducted through consultation among themselves (Ash-Shura, 38).

According to this principle it is the right of every Muslim to either participate directly in the affairs of the state or through his representatives that are elected by free and independent choice of the people.

Choice of heads of state is explicitly stated by Omar, the second caliph of Muslims after the Prophet, to be a right of the people.

20- Right to acquire knowledge

The Holy Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – stands alone in the religious annals of the world as the advocate of scientific inquiry. The pages of the Koran abound with passages which invite our attention to an empirical study of the natural phenomena and emphasize the conquest of nature by man. In fact, the inductive method of inquiry, which is the basis of modern scientific and philosophical thought, is one of the most valuable gifts of the Koran to the world (18).

The Koran puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge and encourages Muslims to learn not only of Allah's laws and religious injunctions, but also to seeing, contemplating and reasoning about the world of creation and its diverse phenomenon. The Koran places the gaining of knowledge as the highest religious activity, one that is most pleasing in Allah's eyes.

The Holy Koran repeatedly orders Muslims to contemplate the universe, creatures, animals, seas, stars, human body and plants.

To cite just a few verses to substantiate this statement, the Koran says:

And of His signs is the creation of the heaven and earth and the variety of your tongues and hues. Surely in that are signs for a people who hear.

And of His signs he shows you lightening, for fear and hope, and that He sends down out of heaven water and He revives the earth after it is dead. Surely in that are signs for a people who understand.

And of His signs is that the heaven and earth stand firm by His command; then, when He calls you once and suddenly, out of the earth, lo you shall come forth (Ar-Rum 20-25).

And He has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together, from Him. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflect (Al-Ghashiah, 13).

What, do they not consider how the camels were created, how heaven was lifted up, how the mountains were hoisted, how the earth was outstretched? (Al-Ghashiah, 17-20).

It is no wonder, therefore, that during the age of Islam's glory, its followers became the pioneers of civilization and the inaugurators of the modern scientific era. It can honestly be said that but for Islam there would have been no modern scientific civilization.

It is because of the Koranic teachings that Muslims built a civilization and contributed to its advancement by excelling in medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, engineering and all social sciences.

The Koran was very successful in educating the early Muslims into becoming fully developed humans, spiritually, mentally and physically, at both the individual and community levels. It did that in a quantum step; achieving a huge positive differential quality in the shortest time for the benefit of the maximum number of people at the least social cost.

Briffault, a great non-Muslim authority of the West says in his reputed work, 'The making of humanity':

"Neither Roger Bacon nor his later name-sake has any title to be credited with having introduced the experimental method. Roger bacon was no more than one of the apostles of Muslim science and method to Christian Europe... Science is the momentous contribution of Arab civilization to modern world... though it was not

science only which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life." (P. 202).

"The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture; it owes its existence. The ancient world was, as we saw, pre-scientific. The astronomy and mathematics of the Greeks were a foreign importation never thorough acclimatized in Greek culture, the Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation and experimental inquiry were altogether alien to Greek temperament... What we call science arose in Europe as the result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs." (P. 190).

The first revelation received by the Prophet was a verse instructing him to read. So reading to acquire knowledge is essential in Islam.

Recite: In the Name of thy Lord who created man of a blood-clot.

Recite: And thy Lord is the most Generous who taught by the pen, taught man that he knew not (Al-'Alaq 1-5).

The Koran exhorts believers to pray for increasing their knowledge:

So high exalted be Allah, the true King.

And hasten not with the Koran before its revelation to thee is completed, and say, 'O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.' (Taha, 114).

The famous prayer of the Prophet was:

"Allah grants me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things."

The Prophet said:

"Seek knowledge even though it be in China."

China was mentioned to indicate a distant place.

The Prophet also said:

"Seeking knowledge is every Muslim's duty."

"Acquire knowledge, it enables its professor to distinguish right from wrong; it lights the way to heaven. It is our friend in the desert, our company in solitude and companion when friendless. It guides us to happiness, it sustains us in misery, and it is an ornament amongst friends and armor against enemies."

Islam commands scholars to disseminate knowledge and not to hide it so that everyone may benefit by it. This is stated by the Prophet:

"Whosoever is asked about some (religious) information, yet he conceals it will be bridled on the Day of Judgment with a bridle of fire." (Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi).

There is a vital difference between the spirit of modern West and the spirit of Islam. While the modern West has employed science mostly for the satisfaction of its craving after power and pleasure, Islam seeks in the scientific inquiry a means to the service of humanity and spiritual elevation by praising and glorifying Allah for His miraculous creation, and hence firmly believe in Him as the One and only true God and worship Him alone.

How beautifully has the Koran inculcated this idea in the following verse:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day there are signs for men possessed of minds who remember Allah, standing and sitting and on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, Thou hast not created this for vanity. Glory be to Thee! Guard us against the chastisement of the Fire (Al-Imran 190, 191).

An astronomer can try to calculate the earth's orbit around the sun, but no matter how close he comes to accuracy, all he can discover is what Allah has already established. In that sense there is no such thing as new knowledge. All knowledge is with Allah, and the only knowledge that we have is what Allah wants us to discover.

21- Right to good life

Muslims have the right to live a good life. In a just society all the earlier mentioned human rights could be exercised without difficulty, thus leading to happiness and a good quality of life.

It is he who made the earth submissive to you; therefore walk in its tracts, and eat of His provision; to Him is the uprising (Al-Mulk, 15).

Islam teaches how to balance the needs of this life and the next. Islam does not accept the idea that renunciation of this world is the best means to get salvation in the next. Catholicism and Buddhism teach that by living a reclusive life, one can attain higher spirituality. Buddhism even taught the recluse must make his living by begging. Islam rejects the whole notion of the alleged goodness of renouncing the world. Islam teaches that best means of advancement in the next life is by getting involved in the affair of this world by commanding good and forbidding evil; by helping one another in righteousness and piety; by doing Jihad, by struggling against all forms of evil, injustice, tyranny, and intolerance. Islam does not teach rejection of the world, it teaches involvement, struggle, and change (19).

Islam therefore condemns all forms of life-denying asceticism, world-renunciation and self-mortification. It is the privilege of those who have faith in Allah to enjoy the beautiful and good things of life Allah has bestowed on them.

Say: 'Who has forbidden the ornament of Allah which He brought forth for His servants and the good things of His providing?' Say: 'These, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be exclusively for those who believed in this present life. So We distinguish the signs for a people who know (Al-A'raf, 32).

22- Right to leave one's homeland under oppressive conditions

It is the duty of Muslims to emigrate from places where Islam was being persecuted and suppressed, even if it involved forsaking their homes, and join the Muslim community among whom they can live in peace and with whom they could help in fighting the evils around them. Muslims' duty is not only to enjoin good but also to prohibit evil. The Prophet himself in order to fulfill his mission had to immigrate from Makkah his place of birth to Medina where he was able after years of preparing and organizing the believers to overthrow the fortress of evil. This event (Hijrah) has great historical and spiritual significance for Muslims who are called upon to move away from their place of origin if it becomes an abode of evil and oppression, thus preventing them from fulfilling their obligations to Allah or establish justice. Staying with the disbelievers even though immigration was obligatory for them is considered a sin (16).

Those who are caught in the jaws of death discrediting themselves with wrongful actions shall be questioned by the angels of death who disembody their souls: "What has become of you?" They will reply, " Weak and oppressed were we in the earth." The angels will say, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourself away from evil?" Such men will find their abode in Hell. The weak persons unable to immigrate may be excused, and Allah may hopefully forgive them, for He is ever Merciful, Forgiving

And those the angels take (their souls in death) while still are wronging themselves (as they stayed among the disbelievers) the angels will say, 'In what circumstances were you?' They will say, 'We are abased in the earth.' The angels will say, 'But was not Allah's earth wide, so you might have immigrated in it?'

Such men, their refuge shall be Hell – an evil becoming!

Except the weak ones among men, women, and children who, being abased, cannot devise a plan and are not guided to a way; for these there is hope that Allah will forgive them, for Allah is All-Pardoning, All-forgiving (An-Nisa 97-99).

And He who immigrates in the cause of Allah because of persecution, oppression, or the like shall find a good many places of refuge and abounding resources. And he who quits his homeland with the motive principle of migrating to where he can best serve Allah's purpose and observe His Apostle shall win Allah's grace. And if it happens that he comes upon the encounter with death on the way, before he has reached his destination; he shall be graced just the same; his reward has thus early been incumbent on Allah.

Whoso immigrates in the way of Allah will find in the earth many refuges and plenty. Whoso goes forth from his house an immigrant to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage shall have fallen on Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-compassionate (Al-Nisa, 100).

23- Justice and compassion in war

"I command you to ten precepts: Slay not a woman or a child, nor an aged man, cut not down a tree that beareth fruit, and lay not waste a cultivated land, and destroy not a sheep, nor a camel save for food, and lop not a date tree nor burn it, and conceal not plunder and be not faint of heart," Caliph Abu Bakr's instruction to Muslim army leaving for the Syrian front.

24- Tolerance in Islam

Allah says in the Koran about His Messenger Muhammad – peace be upon him: **We have sent you as a mercy to all the worlds** (Al-Anbiya, 107).

The tolerance and kindness of the Prophet was remarkable and not even his worst enemies could deny it. When the Prophet migrated to Medina, his role as a mere religious leader ended; he was now the political leader of the state, governed by the precepts of Islam, which once had been distraught by decades of war. The Prophet then had to lay down a constitution that would ensure peaceful coexistence of all parties, the Jews, Christians, Muslims and Arab pagans. The constitution explained the responsibilities of all parties, their obligations towards each other, and certain restrictions which were placed on each. All parties were to obey what was mentioned therein, and any breach of its articles was regarded as an act of treachery (24).

The first article of the constitution was that all the inhabitants of Medina as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christians, and idolaters, were: "one nation to the exclusion of all others." People of other faiths were protected from harm as much as the Muslims, as is stated in another article, "To the Jews who follow us belong help and equity. He shall not be harmed nor his enemies be aided."

Another example of tolerance shown by the Prophet was when he traveled to Al-Taif to preach Islam to its citizens. Al-Taif was a city located in the mountains nearby to Mecca. The leaders of Al-Taif however were harsh in their treatment of the Prophet. They insulted him, and stirred up some gangs of the town to stone him and made his feet to bleed. He sat supplicating to his Lord with tears in his eyes. Here the angel Gabriel came to him and said: "Allah has heard what your people said to you, and saw how they rejected you. He has ordered the angel of the mountains to obey whatever you tell him to do." The angel of the mountains called the Prophet, greeted him and said: "If you wish, I will crush them between the mountains of Mecca." The Prophet said: "Rather I hope that Allah will bring forth from their loins those who will worship Allah alone and not associate anything with Him." (Bukhari and Muslim).

When the Prophet conquered Makkah, its leaders came to him fearing that he would kill them as all conquerors do. The Prophet said to the tribe of Quraish, "O people of Quraish! What do you think I will do to you? Hoping for a good response they said, "You will do good, you are a noble brother, son of a noble brother." The Prophet said: "Go! You are free." He said that to the people who had hated him, rejected his call, displayed insolent arrogance towards his religion, stood and fought against him, killed his beloved companions, deformed the dead body of his dear martyred uncle, Hamza, and even eaten his body liver with wild rancor.

Habbar ibn al-Aswad was a vicious enemy to the Prophet and Islam. He inflicted a serious injury to Zainab, daughter of the noble Prophet when she decided to migrate to Medina. She was pregnant when she started her migration. Habbar, physically assaulted her trying to stop her from leaving. He intentionally caused her to fall down from her camel. She was badly hurt and lost her baby. Later on when he decided to come to the holy Prophet to embrace Islam, the merciful Prophet magnanimously forgave him.

In the year 631 CE, the Prophet received a delegation of Christians from Najran in Medina. They were received in the Prophet's mosque wearing their crosses. The companions of Prophet Muhammad tried to prevent them from praying in the mosque, but the Prophet allowed them to pray in the mosque, and they did so facing east.

The Prophet sent a message to the monks of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai:

"This is a message written by Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, far and near. Verily I defend them by myself, the servants, the helpers and my followers, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs, nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to Muslim's houses..."

During the life of the Prophet, the Jews in Medina had a synagogue and an educational institute, Bait al-Midras. The Prophet preserved the institute and gave protection to the Jews.

A funeral of a Jew passed before the Prophet. As a sign of respect, the Prophet stood up. The Prophet was asked: "Why did you stand up for a Jewish funeral?" The Prophet replied: "Is it not a human soul?" (Al-Bukhari).

It is reported that the Prophet gave some charity to a Jewish family (24).

Chapter 12

Misconceptions about Islam

Most of Western writers, especially under the influence of the Church, and also for obvious political reasons, have never failed to accuse Islam of false accusations. Examples of such accusations are: Islam was spread by the sword; Muhammad wrote the Koran in the 7th century, Muhammad copied the Bible; Muslims worshipped the black stone, Islam oppresses women; the word "Allah" came from al-lot, the moon God of the pagan Arabs; Islam is a recent religion invented by Muhammad and it is a mixture of Jewish and Christian philosophies; Islam is a violent religion; Islam oppresses women; Muslims marry four women; Islam is not a tolerant religion; the Koran is not authentic and is invented by Muhammad ...etc.

Such baseless accusations were clarified in the previous chapters. In this chapter however, I will discuss three main accusations in an attempt to remove the misconceptions about Islam from the minds of non-Muslims who were deceived by the lies of the biased media of the West.

Misconception 1

Islam is a recent religion invented by Muhammad.

Islam was and is forever the only approved religion of Allah for all mankind. The first teachings of Islam were given to the first man and the first Prophet of Allah, Adam – peace be upon him. And thus the journey of mankind started with Islam. Allah taught Adam Islam, and according to His Will and Plan, He descended Adam to earth to spread Islam and be His viceroy on the earth for a test.

God whose proper name is Allah sent about 124,000 Prophets. They came in different parts of the world, at different times for conveying the teachings of Islam they received through revelations from Allah. No people were left without their Prophet who will represent them on the Day of Judgment. Allah will question the Prophets and their people as to whether the Prophets conveyed His Message of Islam (there is no God worthy of worship but Allah) and what was the reaction of the people to His Message. Even though Allah knows in advance that His Prophets had completely delivered their Messages without shortcomings, it was His wish to establish the truth before giving His verdict, regarding those who submitted and believed, and those who transgressed and disobeyed. Muhammad was the last Prophet of Islam who came with an unchangeable Book, the Koran, to re-establish the Oneness of Allah on earth, and to warn people for the last time of a severe punishment if they don't believe in the unity of Allah.

Misconception 2

Islam is a violent religion.

As stated in most of the previous chapters, Islam is a peaceful religion. The word "Islam" means peace. Muslims love all humanity as their Prophet commands them:

"Keep your heart and soul pure, free from malice and grudge against any one and every one, from dawn to dusk, and from dusk to dawn every day of your life."

Non-Muslims in their attempts to misguide people about Islam use the koranic verses out of their context to distort their original meaning. The nation of Islam is a peaceful community, but Muslims never turn themselves into a doormat for the ruthless. The Koran allows punishment of wanton wrongdoers to the full extent to the injury they commit.

In Islam war is permissible in self-defense and under well defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigor, but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah. In any case strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, no trees or crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms.

If the disbelievers in Allah want forcibly to prevent Muslims from exercising their sacred rites, they have declared war on Islam, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fail rooting out the tyranny.

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, but aggress not: Allah loves not the aggressors. And slay them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they expelled you; persecution is more grievous than slaying.

But fight them not by the Holy Mosque until they should fight there; then, if they fight you, slay them – such is the recompense of unbelievers – but if they give over, surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

Fight them, till there is no persecution and the religion is Allah's; then if they give over, there shall be no enmity save for evildoers (Al-Baqarah 190-193).

Muslims were driven by persecution from their homes in Makkah, for no other reason than that they worshipped Allah, the one and only true God. They had as much right to be in Makkah and worship in the Ka'ba as the other idolaters of the tribe of Quraysh; yet they were tortured and exiled for their faith. Under intense unbearable persecution, with stones raining on him from all sides, enemies besieging him with designs of his murder, the Prophet immigrated to the city of Medina. After repeated efforts of reconciliation had utterly failed, circumstances dragged the Prophet to the battlefield. After more than ten years of vanquish and humiliation, Allah ordered Muhammad and his companions to fight in self-defense his persecutors who were still chasing after him. It was here that the Prophet could not flee persecution any longer and was forced to indulge in wars with his enemies. Allah, the Almighty saved His chosen Prophet and made his enemies suffered defeat at his hands one by one.

Leave is given to those against whom war is made, because they were wronged- surely Allah is able to help them- who were expelled from the habitations without right, except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah." (Al-Hajj, 39, 40).

The little Muslim community was not only fighting for its own existence against the Makkan idolaters, but also for the very existence of the Faith of Islam.

Muhammad changed the known strategies of war. His wars against his enemies were compassionate and characterized by fulfilling the duty to Allah. The total number of casualties in all the wars that took place during his lifetime when the whole Arab peninsula came under his banner does not exceed a few hundreds in all. Even in the battlefield Muhammad taught the Arab barbarians to pray in congregation to Allah the Almighty. During the dust and storm of warfare wherever the time for prayer came, and it comes five times every day, the congregation prayer had not to be postponed even on the battlefield. A party had to be engaged in bowing their heads before Allah while the other party was engaged with the enemy. After finishing the prayers, the two parties had to exchange their positions.

Allah says in the Koran:

When you (O messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in the prayer, let a party of them stand with you (in prayer), and let them take their weapons. When they bow themselves, let them be behind you; and let another party who have not prayed come and pray with thee, taking their precautions and their weapons. The unbelievers wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your baggage, so they would attack you in a single rush. There is no fault in you, if rain molests you, or if you are sick, to lay aside your weapons; but take your precautions. Allah has prepared for the unbelievers a humbling chastisement (An-Nisa, 102).

To the Arabs who would fight for forty years on the slight provocation that a camel belonging to one tribe that strayed into the grazing land belonging to another tribe, and both sides had fought till they lost 70,000 lives in all; threatening the extinction of both the tribes, to such furious Arabs the Prophet of Islam taught self-control and discipline to the extent of praying even on the battlefield. In an age of barbarism, the battle field itself was humanized and strict instructions were issued not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a child or woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm nor burn it, not to cut a fruit tree, not to molest any person engaged in warship. His own treatment with his bitterest enemies is the noblest example for his followers. At the conquest of Makkah, he stood at the zenith of his power. The city which had refused to listen to his mission, which had tortured him and his followers, which had driven him and his people into exile and which had unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles away, that city now lay at his feet. By the laws of war he could have justly avenged all the cruelties inflicted on him and his people. But what treatment did he accord to them? Muhammad's heart flowed with affection and declared:

"This day, there is no reproof against you and you are all free." This day" he proclaimed, "I trample under my feet all distinctions between man and man, all hatred between man and man."

The chief objective of Muhammad's wars against the infidels was to unite human beings. And when once this object was achieved, even his worst enemies were pardoned. Even those who killed his beloved uncle, Hamzah, mangled his body, ripped it open, even chewed a piece of his liver.

The Koran commands Muslims not to be blinded by hatred to commit injustice:

O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for Allah. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable; be equitable – that is nearer to god fearing. And fear Allah; surely Allah is aware of the things you do (Al-Maidah, 8).

The following verse teaches that good deeds against evil eliminate enmity and foster friendships between enemies. The Koran instructs:

Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel (the evil) with that which is fairer than verily he, between whom and you there was enmity (will become) as though he was a close friend (Fussilat, 34)

If we are going to pull verses out of the Koran that speak of killing unbelievers, what our readers would say if we pull passages out of the Old Testament which speak of God having the Jews kill men, women and children during ancient times, simply because they were not Jews! Those who say that Islam is the religion of the sword should know that the word 'sword' is never mentioned in the Koran while the Old Testament mentioned it several times.

The massacres of Canaanites, Jacobites, Philistines and several other peoples are gruesomely mentioned in the Bible. As indicated in the Old Testament the Jews spared neither men, women, children nor even the animals, and pets of their enemies.

In this connection, I have 61 verses from the Old and New Testaments clearly stating evil, genocide and wars spread by Judaism and Christianity (20). The following are just a few among dozens of similar passages found in the Old Testament and the Gospel:

1- The Old Testament

A- Genocide and wars against non-Jews

[Numbers 25:4] And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

[Deuteronomy 20:16] But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee (for) an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.

[Deuteronomy 20:16] But thou shalt utterly destroy them; (namely), the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the jubusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

[Judges 1:4] And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites, and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

[Ezek. 9:5] And the Lord said, "Go through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have you pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women.

[Num. 31:1] And the Lord said unto Moses, "Avenge the children of the Mid'anites..They warred against the Mid'anites, as the Lord commanded Moses, and

they slay all the males. And they took all women as captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. Moses said, "Have you saved all the women alive? Now kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that has known a man by lying with him, but all the young girls who have not known a man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves."

[Josh 6:16] Joshua said to the people of Israel, "The Lord has given you the city (of the Canaanites)..all silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: They shall come into the treasury of the Lord. The people utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

[Samuel 15:3] Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.

[Ezekiel 9:6] "Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.

B- Killing, kidnapping and slavery

[Josh 16:10] So the Canaanites have dwelt in the midst of E'phraim to this day, but become slaves to do forced labor (see also Joshua 17:13 and Judg. 1:30).

[Deut.20:10] When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if its answer to you is peace and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, then you shall besiege it,...You shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies.

[Amos 9:1] I will slay that left of them with the sword, not one of them shall flee away...I will command the sword, and it shall slay them.

C- Gentiles in the Bible

[Isia 49: 22] Thus the Lord said, "Behold I will lift up my hand to the gentiles, and raise up my signal to the people, and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet."

[Isia. 60:4] Lift up your eyes round about, and see, they all gather together, they come to you. The wealth of the nations shall come unto you and the sons of the foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto you...Men may bring unto you the wealth of the nations.

With their kings led in your possession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste. You shall suck the milk of the nations, you shall suck the breasts of kings (in K.J. version: gentiles).

[Isia. 61:15] And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine dressers. But you shall be named the priests of the Lord. Men shall call you the ministers of God. You shall eat the riches of the nations and in their glory shall you boast yourselves (in K.J. version: gentiles).

D- The Jews takes usury from the gentiles only!

[Deut. 23:19] Do not charge your brother interest, you may charge a foreigner interest, but not a brother Israelite. (The word Israelite according to the Good News Bible)

[Deut. 15:1] Every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother. Of a foreigner you may exact it. But whatever of hand shall release.

E- Chosen people, racism, supremacy

[Deuteronomy 7:2-3] Neither shall thou make marriage with them; their daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

[Deuteronomy 7:6]...For thou art a holy people unto the Lord Thy God: the Lord Thy God has chosen thee to a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth.

[Ezra 9:12] Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever, that ye may be strong and eat of the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever.

2- The New Testament

A- The Gospel portraying a violent Jesus:

[Math. 10:34] "Do not think that I have come to make peace on earth? I have not come to bring peace, but a sword, for I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother." Said Jesus!

[Luke. 12:49] "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it were already kindled...Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for from henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother." Said Jesus!

[Luke. 19:27] for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.

[Luke 14:26] If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life: he cannot be my disciple.

B- Racism

Paul said: in [Gal. 2:15], "We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not gentile sinners."

[Gal. 4:22] For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave, and by a free woman. But what does the scripture say? "Cast out the slave and her son, for the son of slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. So, brethren we are not children of the slave but of the free woman."

To Muslims, such violence teachings reflect distortion in the Old and New Testaments. They seem to contradict every thing Moses and the Prophets after him until Jesus could ever stand for or even think of. If the Prophets who came before Muhammad had ever said so, they would have certainly violated the Ten Commandments and in turn jeopardized their own salvation.

Misconception 3

Islam was spread by the sword

History makes it clear that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever accepted.

Most of the Western writers, especially under the influence of the Church, have never failed to accuse Islam of spreading by force of the sword. The causes of this prejudice lie mainly in the fact that the spread of Islam has often occurred at the expense of Christianity. While Islam for centuries gained numerous conversions from Christianity without much effort, Christianity has almost never been able to achieve conversions from Islam in spite of sophisticated means and well-organized missionary activities, and it has always been at a disadvantage in its competition with Islam for fourteen centuries. The defeat of Christianity in the face of Islam has caused its missionaries and most of the Christian orientalists to develop an inferiority complex within themselves by depicting Islam and introducing it as a regressive, vulgar religion of savage peoples.

As mentioned earlier, Muslims ruled Spain for nearly 800 years. During this time and up to when they were finally forced out, the non-Muslims (Jews and Christians) under the rule of Muslims were alive and flourishing. In addition, Christian and Jewish minorities have survived in the Muslim lands of the Middle East for centuries. If Islam taught that all people are supposed to be killed or forced to become Muslims, how did all of those non-Muslims survive for so long in the middle of the Islamic Empire?

After ruling for 800 years in Spain the Muslims were totally eliminated from that country so that not even one man was left to give the Muslim call to prayer. If the Muslims had used force, military or economic, there would not have been any Christian left in Spain to have kicked the Muslims out. Today, Islam is still spreading all over the world, and Muslims have no sword!

The Muslims were also the masters of India for a thousand years, but eventually when the sub-continent received independence in 1947, the Hindus obtained three-quarters of the country and the Muslims the balance of the one-quarter. Why? Because the Muslims did not force Islam down the Hindus' throats! In Spain and India, the Muslims obeyed the Koranic injunction to the letter:

Let there be no compulsion in religion, for truth stands out distinct from error (Al-Baqarahh, 256).

The Muslim conquerors understood from this command that 'compulsion' was incompatible with true religion because religion depends on faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force. Force can conquer but cannot convert. The Muslims adhered to the commandment of Allah in the lands over which they held sway.

But what can the accusers say about countries where no single Muslim soldier had set foot? It is a fact that over a hundred million Indonesians are Muslims, yet no conquering Muslim army ever landed on any of its over two thousand islands.

The overwhelming number of Malaysia's people is Muslims yet no Muslim soldier had landed there either!

The majority of the people on the East coast of Africa as far down as Mozambique, as well as the bulk of the inhabitants of the West coast of the continent are Muslims, but history does not record any invading hordes of Muslims from anywhere. What sword? Where was the sword? It is the sword of intellect. The Muslim trader did the job. His honest dealings with customers and the pious and exemplary life he lived achieved the miracle of conversion. (21).

One may wonder, are those entering Islam in the United States and Europe in thousands every day were compelled to revert by force? Is it possible to believe that those highly intellectual people in America, and Europe, who are well protected from their governments and breathe human rights and enjoy respectable citizenship, had entered Islam by force? The answer would only be that they embraced Islam after deep thinking, long meditation, and adequate comparison between the different religions and in the end they reached the ultimate truth of Islam crystallized in the Oneness of Allah.

It is not an important issue for Muslims if non-Muslims embrace Islam or not. Every soul in the Hereafter shall be pledged for its own deeds. All people will be accountable to Allah soon, and they will harvest the fruit of their deeds in the earthly life, whether good or bad. Man is free to believe or not believe in the one true God, and then to Allah is his return where he would receive his punishment or his reward. Because Islam is the last warning to mankind, Muslims were ordered to make the Message of Islam clear to the world by explaining its teachings and tenets, and that, they did perfectly well. The Koran, the Sunna and the Islamic Law are all there in books translated from Arabic into almost all languages of the world, and can be found in libraries and in several Islamic sites on the web.

Robert Briffault, the renowned historian, acknowledges in his book 'The Making of Humanity':

"It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European civilization would have never assumed that character which enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as to assign the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme course of its victory – natural sciences and the scientific spirit... What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry; of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics, in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced to the European world by the Arabs."

L. Stoddart in 'The New World of Islam' wrote:

For the first five centuries of its existence, the realm of Islam was the most civilized and progressive portion of the world. Studded with splendid cities, gracious mosques and quiet universities, the Muslim East offered a striking contrast to the Christian West, which was sunk in the night of the dark ages. This bright civilization lasted for a long time. Down to the terrible disaster of the thirteenth century A.D. it still displayed vigor and remained ahead of the Christian West."

There is ample evidence quoted by various writers showing how Islam has succeeded in doing this to various peoples of various regions. Isaac Taylor, in his speech delivered at the Church Congress of England about the effects and influence of Islam on people, said:

"When Mohammedanism is embraced, paganism, fetishism, infanticide, and witchcraft disappear. Filth is replaced by cleanliness and the new convert acquires personal dignity and self-respect. Immodest dances and promiscuous intercourse of the sexes cease; female chastity is rewarded as a virtue; industry replaces idleness; license gives place to law; order and sobriety prevail; blood feuds, cruelty to animals and slaves are eradicated... Islam swept away corruption and superstitions. Islam was a revolt against empty polemics... It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature. The virtues which Islam inculcates are temperance, cleanliness, chastity, justice, fortitude, courage, benevolence, hospitality, veracity, and resignation... Islam preaches a practical brotherhood, the social equality of all Muslims. Slavery is not part of the creed of Islam. Polygamy is a more difficult question. Moses did not prohibit it. It was practiced by David and it is not directly forbidden in the New Testament. Muhammad limited the unbounded license of polygamy. It is the exception rather than the rule... In resignation of God's Will, temperance, chastity, veracity, and in brotherhood of believers they (the Muslims) set us a pattern which we should do well to follow. Islam had abolished drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution, the three curses of the Christian lands. Islam has done more for civilization than Christianity. The conquest of one-third of the earth to his (Muhammad's) creed was a miracle."

Muhammad Asad, a Jewish convert to Islam pointed out:

"Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other, nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure."

The great civilization of Islam had great staying power, its non-Muslim citizens were proud to be part of it. The spread of Islam stands in contrast to the actions of the followers of Christianity, who since the time of the Emperor Constantine have made liberal use of the sword – often basing their conduct on Biblical verses. This was especially true of the colonization of South America and Africa, where native peoples were systematically wiped-out or forced to convert.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that Christianity of the Roman Church of the dark ages was not a compassionate loving religion for centuries. Roman Church did not allow the freedom of faith. Pope Boniface VIII issued the bull *Unam sanctam* on October 1302 that there is only one true church outside which there is no salvation; there is but one body of Christ, with one head not two; that head is Christ and his representative, the Roman Pope.

It is interesting to note in this respect that when the Mongols invaded and conquered large portions of the Islamic Empire, instead of destroying the religion, they embraced it. This is a unique occurrence in history – the conquerors embracing the religion of the conquered! Since they were the victors, they certainly could not have been forced to become Muslims! The largest Muslim country in the world today is Indonesia – and there were never any battles fought there! So where was the sword?

Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to mankind and not to force people to compel:

Truly Allah was gracious to the believers when he raised up among them a Messenger from themselves, to recite to them His signs and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before they were in manifest error (Al-Imran, 164).

We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings (Al-Anbiya, 107).

We know very well what they say; you are not a tyrant over them. Therefore remind by the Koran him who fears My threat (Qaf, 45).

The very principle of Islam is persuasion and not to force. There is no compulsion in religion:

No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in Allah, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking; Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Al-Baqarah, 256).

One may ask: Why have so many millions embraced the religion of Islam? Decidedly, Islam itself was the main cause for its triumph. It has been spreading ever since it came into being. There must be something in the religion itself to explain its persistence and spread and to account for its present hold over so large of a proportion of the dwellers of the earth.

A.J. Arberry who translated the Koran into English (*The Koran*) in (*Aspects of Islamic Civilization*, p.12), wrote:

"The rapidity of the spread of Islam, noticeably through extensive provinces which had been long Christian, is a crucial fact of history. This, and the urgency of the

simple Message carried, holds the key to the mystery of one of the greatest cataclysms in the history of religion. When all military, political, and economic factors have been exhausted, the religious impulse must still be recognized as the most vital and enduring."

Marmaduke Pickthall who also translated the Koran into English (*The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān*) wrote in his foreword:

"The Qur'an cannot be translated...The book is here rendered almost literally and every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the Glorious Qur'an, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Qur'an - and peradventure something of the charm in English. It can never take the place of the Qur'an in Arabic, nor it is meant to do so."

Brockelman, who is usually very unsympathetic and partial, also recognizes the religious values of Islam as the main factor for the spread of Islam (*History of the Islamic peoples, p. 37*).

Rosenthal makes his point as follows:

"The more important factor for the spread of Islam is the religious law of Islam which was designed to cover all manifestations of life." (*Political Thought in Medieval Islam, p. 21*).

In Muslim lands, Muslims, Christians and Jews have lived as neighbors for almost fifteen hundred years. They didn't dialogue. They didn't debate. They lived in peace and tranquility. The fact that Christianity and Judaism continued to exist alongside Muslims, who were and still are the majority, speaks of Muslim tolerance. The fact that Jews throughout the centuries fled Christian lands and took refuge in Muslim countries, demonstrates, beyond a doubt, Muslims' respect of non-Muslim's beliefs.

It is impossible that Western civilization will last long since it is materialistic and far from satisfying man's perennial needs. Western sociologists such as Oswald Spengler and others predict the collapse of this civilization, which is against basic human nature and values. Islam has been available to humanity for fourteen hundred years and the luminous world of the future can be founded upon the firm foundation of Islamic ethics, spirituality and its socio-economic and political structure (22).

Reference cited

- (1) Islam and abortion.
Arafat El Ashi
[http:// www. Crescent life.com/family/islam – and – abortion. Htm.](http://www.Crescentlife.com/family/islam-and-abortion.htm)
- (2) The Meaning of the Holy Koran – Text, Translation and Commentary.
Abdullah Yusuf Ali.
Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2005.
- (3) The Logic Behind Prohibition of Reba in Islam.
Abid Ullah Jan and Rory Winter.
Published December 10, 2006.
[http:// www. icssa.org/article – detail – parse, php.](http://www.icssa.org/article-detail-parse.php)
- (4) Women in Islam versus women in Judeo-Christian Tradition. The Myth and the Reality.
Sherif Muhammad, Ph.D Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
[http:// www. unn.ac.uk/societies/Islamic/women/judiochri.htm.](http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/Islamic/women/judiochri.htm)
- (5) Epstein, op. cit., pp. 175.
- (6) Ibid., pp. 121.
- (7) Cage, op. cit., pp. 142.
- (8) Moohummudan Law of Inheritance (1880) Preface iii.
Rumsey, A.
- (9) Jihad explained.
M. Amir Ali, Ph.D., published by the Institute of Islamic Information and Education.
[http:// www. irshad.org/islam/iiie/iiie_18.htm.](http://www.irshad.org/islam/iiie/iiie_18.htm)
- (10) Arnold, Sir Thomas W.
The preaching of Islam - a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith.
Westminster A. Constable & Co. London, 1896, pp. 80.
- (11) Islamic Tolerance in Al-Andalus.
Habeeb Saloum.
- (12) Islam and Democracy.
David Smock: Special Reports: US Institute of Peace.
[http:// www. usip.org/pubs/special reports.](http://www.usip.org/pubs/special-reports)
- (13) The Shura Principle in Islam.
Sadek Jawad Sulaiman.
[http.:// www. alhewar.com/Sadek Shura. Htm.](http://www.alhewar.com/Sadek-Shura.htm)

(14) Debate: Islam and Democracy.
Daniel Pipes. Muqtedar Khan's response and rebuttal to the questions introduced in the debate.

(15) Human rights in Islam.
III & E Brochure Series, No. 7.
Published by the Institute of Islamic Information and Education (III & E).
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/humanerelation/humanrights>.

(16) Are human Rights Compatible with Islam?
The Issue of the Rights of Women in Muslim Communities.
Riffat Hassan, Ph.D. University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.

(17) Human Rights in Islam.
Abu al-A'la Maududi.
http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/books/M_hri/index.htm.

(18) Islam and Christianity in the modern World.
Muhammad Fazl ur-Rahman.
Noor Publishing House Farashkhana, Delhi – 110 006.

(19) A Revolution without Revolutionaries.
Sherif Mohamed.
<http://www.islamvoice.com/islam/islam/Islamic/revolution.htm>.

(20) Evil, Genocide, and wars spread by Judaism and Christianity.
<http://www.allahuakbar.net/jew/evil.htm>.

(21) Muhammad the Greatest.
Ahmad Deedat.
<http://www.Muhammad.net/mg/Muhammad G30.htm>.

(22) The Crossroads. Izmir – Turkey, 1995.
Taha F. Unal.

(23) Justice in Islam.
The Prophet with non-Muslims.
By: Harun Yahia.
<http://islamonline.net>.

(24) Miscellaneous issues – Rights of non-Muslims in Islam.
Sources: The Real Image of Prophet Muhammad.
The Religion of Islam.
<http://alsiraj.net>.

