

Muhammad Hedayetullah
Vanier College, Montreal

LIFE AND ITS VALUE IN ISLAM

To write on a subject like the present one, one should begin with the teaching of the Qur'ān – the sacred scripture of Islām – in order to examine the kind of life and its value prescribed therein. A careful study of the message of the Qur'ānic teaching makes it clear "that the basic *élan* of the Qur'ān is moral, whence flows its emphasis on monotheism as well as on social justice"¹. Moral law is God's "Command", man must submit to it, this submission is called Islām,² and its implementation is called "Service" (*Ibādat*)³ to God. Because the Qur'ānic emphasis is on the moral law, the One God (Allāh) that it commands is primarily the God of justice, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, etc., and the belief that it prescribes is called 'ethical monotheism'.

Bound by these basic principles, a Muslim (one who has submitted to the will of Allāh) has no option but to live a life believing in One God and practising an ethical monotheistic system (Islām).

In the Qur'ānic world-view, man is placed at the centre as the primary agent or God's best creation, His vicegerent (*khalfā*) on earth who is endowed with the "Trust" which other creations failed to accept, to develop it for his benefits but within the framework of His laws and regulations. Thus man's moral order *vis-à-vis* God and his fellow humans assumes a greater significance. Thus Fazlur Rāḥmān says, "As the Qur'ān gradually worked out its world-view more fully, the moral order of men comes to assume a central point of divine interest in a full picture of cosmic order which is not only charged with a high religious sensitivity but exhibits an amazing degree of coherence and consistency" (P.33). The Qur'ānic God is the only Creator Who communicated to His

1. Fazlur Rāḥmān, *Islam*, London, 1966, p. 32.

2. Cf. "Islām" in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islām (SEI)*.

3. "Ibadat" in *SEI*.

vicegerent-man-His *amr* (command, order or revelation) charging him with the responsibility of ordering himself and his society in accords with the divine laws, as laid down in the Qur'an.

With this background, we can now proceed to examine some of these commands. Of the many commands, in order of importance, five are fundamental for ordering a Muslim's life and his society. Thus, they are called the Five Pillars of Islām, meaning that the entire structure of Muslim life and society rests on them. These essential guidelines are obviously designed to help Muslims in their creative actions for man and his betterment."⁴ Man has been given the most immense potentialities and is endowed with qualities to develop himself and his society.

To begin with, it may be mentioned here that in the Islāmic system, there is no dichotomy or contradiction between spiritual and secular life. That means, a Muslim's life is truly productive and fulfilling when he/she is an active person in all aspects of life-religious or spiritual, social (householder), political (managing state affairs), economic (engaging in legal business), and in matters of ethics and morality-with in the guidelines prescribed by the Muslim Law (The *Shari'ah*).⁵

The Five Pillars are: (1) Faith (*al-'Imān*), (2) Prayer (*Salāt*) (3) Poor/Welfare-tax (*Zakāt*) (4) Fasting (*Sawum*) and (5) Pilgrimage (*Hajj*). These pillars are unique in Islām for various reasons.

To begin with, the confession of the unity of God (*waḥdaniyat/shahada*) in Islām is called uncompromising ethical monotheism, as mentioned before, in the sense that there must not be any idea of any other being or force sharing with Allāh thissunity/ (Cf. 37.35;

4. Fazlur Raḥmān, p. 35. By "man" here we should mean only those who have submitted (*aslamā*) to the will of God-the believers.
5. Cf. Gibb, H.A.R., *Mohammedanism*, 2nd. ed., New York, 1962, pp. 88-106; Fazlur Raḥmān, pp. 68-84.
6. The word comes from the root '-m-n which means "security from fear or rest of mind, also means trust". Then, it suggests that one can have peace and rest of mind when one has faith and trust in God.
7. For comprehensive and analytical discussions on the Five Pillars, see articles in *SEI* and also in Gibb, pp. 53-68.

47.19;112.1,3,4). In other words, it is not only religiously sin to believe in more than one divinity but it is also unethical even to conceive of another divinity alongside Allāh. Needless to say, it does provide an extra strength to one's faculty of belief. Although some had arrived at a monotheistic conception of God before but there certainly is a difference between the earlier conception and the one Muḥammad preached. "For Muḥammad's monotheism was, from the very beginning, linked up with a humanism and a sense of social, and economic justice whose intensity is no less than the intensity of the monotheistic idea,"⁸

However, the Faith increases as well as decreases. That means, Faith must be translated into actions (*āmāl-i-ṣaliḥa*-good *karma*). Good actions increase the Faith whereas bad actions decrease it in the form of sins and sufferings. In short, Faith and actions must go hand in hand to live a good life, as prescribed by the *Shari'ah*. Thus the Qur'ān repeatedly says: 'Those who have faith and do good actions they are the successful ones' (Cf.2.25,277). "And Al-Ghazzālī shows with great psychological truth and beauty how good deeds go to nourish faith."⁹

The teaching of the Qur'ān as a whole maintains human responsibility for works. However, the Qur'ān holds fast to the complementary truths of God's omnipotence and man's responsibility without reconciling them rationally. Man, being wise and conscious, is responsible for his deeds; God gave him the power of choosing between good and bad. That means, man actually acquires for himself good or bad.

The Qur'ān contains basic prescriptions for the Muslim Community. These rules were elaborated by jurists in later times to constitute what is known as 'Islamic Law' (*The Shari'ah*).

The second pillar, Prayer (*Salāt*)¹⁰, extremely important in many respects, is the formal or ritualistic prayers (discourse with God) five times a day. The Qur'ān emphasises prayer because it prevents from evil' and helps man to conquer difficulties.

8. Fazlur Raḥmān, p. 12.

9. *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, quoted by D.B. Macdonald in "Imān," *SEI*.

10. Cf. "Salāt" in *SEI*: also see Watt, W. Montgomery, in *Islamic Surveys Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 162-63; Fazlur Raḥmān, p. 36.

To begin with, the spiritual aspect of these prayers is pivotal in the sense that the Qur'an emphasises on concentration in these words: "Certainly, successful are those believers who have concentrated in their prayers" (23.1-2). Unlike ordinary prayers, these prayers are preceded by ritualistic physical purification (Cf. 4. 43: 5.6).¹¹

Needless to say, as concentration is the key to success, a Muslim must begin the whole process with an unconditional intention (*niyyah*) until the end of the prayer. Besides spiritual merits, the actual performance of these prayers also requires different physical positions and postures such as standing, upright, bowing, straight, prostration and sitting. It goes without saying, these physical motions certainly provides some exercise albeit they are not intended to be end in themselves but only means to an end-spiritual merits. Thus a well-known writer says, "The climax is when the worshippers touch the ground with their foreheads in acknowledgement of the might, majesty and mercy of God".¹²

Although these prayers can be performed individually at home or at any other place where there is no visible dart or image, the Prophet emphasised on their performance in congregation for obvious reasons. The Muslims are a Community (*Ummah*)¹³ of believers organised universally on the basic principles of brotherhood and equality (Cf. 3. 103) whence flows the idea of sharing and caring. Meeting othermembers of the Community five times a day undoubtedly enhances those principles and promote fellow-feelings through direct contacts on a regular basis. Thus the members are able to know one another close enough to see if some are in need of any help-caring and sharing.

11. Purifications are of two types, viz., *waḍū* (ablution) washing of some parts of the body for the five daily prayers as in 5.6. The other is *gusul* (bath/shower) after sexual emission, major surgery, after menses (*ḥyḍ*) and 40 days after child-birth (*nifās*) when daily ritualistic prayers again become incumbent. But in the case of severe sickness during which time use of water is not allowed or if water is not available at all then *tayammum* (wiping) with pure sand or dust of those parts as in 4.43.

12. Watt, pp. 162-63.

13. Cf. "Ummah" in *SEI*; also see Watt, W. Montgomery *Muhammad at Medina*: Oxford, 1972, pp. 238-49.

The communal aspects of Muslim prayers are more elaborate and practical in the three other must-congregational prayers, namely Fridays (Cf. 62.9) and the two Annual 'Id (festival) prayers—one following the *Ramadān* and the other is of the sacrifices) when almost the whole Community—men, women and children—of one region assemble to pray and socialise. The socialisation aspects of the two festival prayers are unique for they involve not just meeting and embracing on the prayer site, but the subsequent family visitation featured by sumptuous meals. But again it is not just to feed and be fed, rather usually it is not just to feed and be fed, rather usually it is characterised by informal but informative meetings about the Community as a whole especially about conditions of individuals or families of the Community who might need some help.

The main thrust of the Qur'ānic message is to perform these prayers regularly for while non-performance is a great sin performance is characterised as a key to success here and hereafter. Similarly, the Prophet is reported to have emphasised on the performance of these prayers for performance is not only obedience to Allāh's commands but also is a sign of blessed life here and hereafter.

The Third Pillar is the Poor/Welfare-tax (*Zakāt*)¹⁴, another unique obligation in Islām relating to the socio-religious and economic life of the Community. The payment of the *zakāt* has a double purpose—it purifies the payer's soul or his/her wealth, on the other, a relief for the needy. We cannot exaggerate that the *Zakāt* system is the heart and soul of the Islamic socialism as such a wealthy Muslim cannot claim to be living in complete conformity with the precepts of the Qur'ān who fails to pay the *zakāt* or, to say in another way, does not share his/her wealth with the less fortunate brethren of the Community for it, the Qur'ān, almost invariably commands performance of the *ṣalāt* and paying of the *zakāt* together as if they are inseparable for those who are under obligation. In one place the Qur'ān says, "You will not attain unto piety until you spend of that which you love..." (3.92). At the same time, the Qur'ān threatens with the punishment of hell for "those who hard gold and silver and do not spend it for Allāh's purposes"

14. Cf. "Zakāt" in *SEI*; also see Cragg, K., *The House of Islām*, 2nd. ed., England, 1975, pp. 46-47.

(9.34sq). There are utterances attributed to the Prophet and his companions which put no limitations on the payment of *zakāt* and some companions, such as Abū Dharr, held the view that one should not keep anything more than bare necessity (cf. "*Zakāt*" in *SEI*.)

The idea behind all these sayings is simple: The wealth of the Community must not be hoarded by some rather it should be distributed and circulated to the extent that no one should starve in the Community while others (rich ones) having festivals.

In addition to this incumbent poor-tax, the Qur'ān repeatedly encourages paying of the voluntary almsgiving or charity (*Ṣadaqa*).¹⁵ Thus "Charity, sometimes referred to in general terms and sometimes by the word *zakāt* (both in turn e.g., 2.261-80), continues to be one of the chief virtues of the believer, and must be based on a corresponding frame of mind".¹⁶ The word *ṣadaqa* means "to speak the truth" which is explained, says T.H. Weir, "by pointing to the fact that the giving of alms by a Muslim is a witness to the truthfulness of his religion".¹⁷

In a nutshell, almsgiving, obligatory or voluntary is one of the virtues prescribed in Islām. The main thrust of the giving points to one of the fundamental principles that every Muslim (rich in particular) must share his/her wealth with other members of the *Ummah*, especially those who are in need so that the Islāmic ideals of caring and sharing are translated in actual life.

The Fourth Pillar is Fasting (*Ṣawum*) during the month of Ramaḍān (Cf. 2.183-5, 87).¹⁸ To begin with, the fast consists of total abstinence from food, drink, sexual intercourse, smoking and observance of the entire code of ethics and morality such as lying, cheating, backbiting, etc. from dawn to dusk for the whole month of Ramadan.¹⁹ In fact, there is a saying (*ḥadīth*) attributed to the

15. Cf. "*Sadaqa*" in *SEI*. The word "*Sadaqa*" is derived from the verb *ṣadaqa*, meaning "to speak the truth".

16. Joseph Schacht, "*Zakāt*" in *SEI*, p. 654.

17. "*Sadaqa*" in *SEI*, p. 483; also cf. 4. 114; 9. 79; 58. 12.

18. Cf. Goitein, S.D., *Studies in Islāmic Institutions*, Leiden, 1966, pp. 90-110; also cf. "*Ramaḍān*" and "*Sawm*" in *SEI*.

19. There are exceptions: Terminally mental and physical patients; under age 10; menstruating women; pregnant mother on doctor's advice not to fast; *nifās* (40 days after child-birth) time; travellers for religious purposes; soldiers in fighting

Prophet who is reported to have said that 'a Muslim cannot be fasting and be playful at the same time', "refrain from indecent talk, slander, calumnies, lies and insults, avoid such actions as, although not actually forbidden, might arouse passion in oneself or in others, refrain from being cupped or bled, etc".²⁰ In another *ḥadīth*, God told the Prophet Muḥammad "Fasting is for Me" meaning that a Muslim can escape fasting, if he/she wants, pretending reasons not to fast, in the first place, or to break the fast in the middle of the day, but does not do so only because of the fear of God.

In addition to spiritual purification, fasting, especially during the day time when people live a normal life (eating, drinking, merry making, etc.) does provide an experience to realise what happens to those who are not fortunate enough to have nourishment regularly. The physical aspect of fasting has become so much pronounced in our times that some well-to-do Muslims provide provisions to the less fortunate brethren of the Community on a regular basis during the month of Ramaḍān so that they can also perform these obligatory fasts.

The last Pillar is the Pilgrimage (*Al-Hajj*) to Mecca, once in a lifetime incumbent only on those who can afford it (Cf.3.96).²¹ Like other pillars, *Hajj* also has both spiritual and physical dimensions: It is very difficult to describe exactly in our language the spiritual experience of the annual congregation at Mecca of the Muslims of all nations and colours from every corner of the globe (I had the opportunity to experience it this year).

condition. However, save the terminal patients, who are required to keep substitutes at home to fast for them, all others must recompense when they come back to normal life.

20. C. C. Berg, "Sawm" in *SEI*, P. 505.

21. Cf. Levy, R., *The Social Structure of Islām*, Cambridge, 1965, pp.161-62; also see "*Hadbj*" in *SEI*. The word in the Qur'ān (*man istata ..* "who can afford the way to Mecca) implies who can pay for the journey and has the physical capacity. In short, possession of wealth (*ḥsāb*) a certain amount, makes the *Hajj* obligatory on the owner. However, if the owner cannot make it due to physical problems, he/she must send someone, who is either not under obligation to do it or who has already performed his own, to do it. A woman can go only with her immediate relations, if she does not have a husband, with whom her marriage is forbidden.

Internally, pilgrims are spontaneously transformed into a condition which cannot be expressed in words because of being overwhelmed by the awe-stricken feelings which vibrate in their hearts. Tears flow unabashed as weeping becomes almost a normal phenomenon. For sure, this is one such occasion when worship performs turns to be exclusive for God without any other thoughts. Individual invocatory liturgies are whispered in total submission. On occasions, the atmosphere, particularly of the inner sanctuary, turns to be something like whispering-gallery. On others, one tends to be selfish (begging God's mercy for oneself) but the overall intention is to pray for all Muslims, beginning with others, of course, finally directing to oneself.

Outwardly, every pilgrim, irrespective of their socio-economic conditions, wear the same unseamed white clothes, symbolising purity and equality, and uttering loudly the same formula called the *Talbiya* (O God, I am here at your service, you have no peers or partners, certainly the praise and the gift are for you and the *mulk* (reign, repeatedly),²² during the state of *Ihrām* (being forbidden to do any harm, let alone killing, to any life including a blade of grass nor can they be merry-making) until the end of the *Hajj* period on the 10th day of the lunar month of *Dhū Al-Hajj*.

During the circumambulation *Tawāf*, anti-clockwise, around the temple/kaba at Mecca, and the running (*Sa'yī*) between the *Šafā* and *Marwa* hills, all the pilgrims, again irrespective of their colours and nationalities, including gender, perform these rituals shoulder to shoulder without any hitch, whatsoever.

Finally, it is no exaggeration to say that the Islāmic pilgrimage is the largest and most impressive display on earth up to date of brotherhood and egalitarianism that the Qur'ān emphasised in *sūra* (chapter) 3.103, and the Prophet spoke about it, along with other basic principles of Islām, categorically, in his sermon on the occasion of his Farewell-Pilgrimage. Thus Fazlur Raḥmān says, "In his remarkably effective 'Farewell Pilgrimage' address, the prophet enunciated and formally pronounced those principles succinctly summed up all the developments that had underlain Islāmic movement in its actual progress and towards which it had tended as

22. Cf. "'Talbiya'", "'Tawāf'" and "'Sa'yī'" in *SEI*.

its goal. These are the principles of humanitarianism, egalitarianism, social justice, economic justice and solidarity" (p.25).

Apart from these pillars, the Qur'ān has enacted other important principles or legislations as guidelines for the Muslims to live a life worthy of human beings, God's vicegerent. Before dealing with specifics, the Qur'ān calls upon the Muslims to strive (*jihād*) to live a decent life even by surrendering their properties and their lives in the way of Allāh (cf. 4.95; 8.72; 9.20; 49.15) to command good and forbid evil in order to establish Islāmic sociomoral order.²³

Some times the Qur'ān calls upon mankind in general reminding them of their origins and what followed therefrom and their duty not only towards their Lord but also towards their mothers who bare them (cf. 4.1). There are also commands in the Qur'ān quite similar to those of the Bible such as: "And serve Allah. Ascribe no thing as partner unto Him. (Show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is of kin (unto you) and the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess. Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful" (4.36, tr. Pickthall). Concerning the parents, there are commands to treat one's parents with extreme kindness even they profess a different faith (cf. 17.23-24; 46.15ff). In the same vein, as above, the Qur'ān further lays down maxims concerning orphans, poor and neighbours succinctly, but strongly, in these words in ch. 107: "Did you see the one who repudiates the Faith? He it is who maltreats the orphan and does not exhort (others) to feed the poor, Woe betide those who (although they)

23. The word *jihād*, used during the Meccan period (610-22) in the sense of striving since its technical meaning, armed conflict (*qitāl*) was not possible. However, the situation in Madina (622-32) changed. Because of the existence of a strong Muslim Community, mostly destitutes, *jihād* came to assume its technical meaning-fighting with arms only against those who fight you (2. 190-93, 216) and who drove you out of your hearth and home but on aggression. Notwithstanding, none of the Muslim schools of jurisprudence has made *jihād* as an essential tool for preaching Islām under normal circumstances. In fact, the Prophet is reported to have said: "Best of *jihād* is with your tongue (speech) and with your heart. Nevertheless, a small sect, namely the Khārijite, has used *jihād* in its technical sense and declared it to be one of the "pillars of Faith".

pray, are (yet) neglectful of their prayers; those who pray for show and (even refuse the use of) utensil (to needy people)".

These are only a few of the many Qur'anic precepts laid down to guide the Muslims to live a life that is meritorious in the sight of God. A Muslim cannot be selfish or self-centered, neglectful of others, cannot be miser for in many verses of the Qur'an Muslims are commanded to spend (*anfiqū*) to give to those who are needy (cf. 2.215 etc).

To ingrain untainted ethical quality in man, the Qur'an has put total ban on alcohol (*khamar*), gambling (*mayser*) and all kinds of games of chances (cf. 2.219) for both alcohol and gambling "are works of the devil... who wants to sow enmity and rancour among you" (5. 90-91).

One of the most revolutionary and sweeping reforms of the Qur'an is in the matters of family, which has been declared as the basic social institution and foundation, an anchor, for individuals to live a life in accord with the socio-moral precepts, referred to before. In light of the pre-Islamic customs and practices in this matter, Islām has declared the twin institutions of marriage²⁴ and family somewhat sacred and elevated the status of women to such a height that the Prophet is reported to have said "the paradise is below your mother's feet". Considering the type of reforms he carried out in many areas of life, the above-mentioned saying is considered to be authentic. Woman is "given a fully-pledged personality".²⁵ Chapter 4 of the Qur'an is named *Al-nisā'* (Woman) to draw attention to it, in particular, where woman's affairs, *inter alia*, are dealt with elaborately. It is quite extraordinary that for the first time in the Semitic history women have been made partners with men in the law of inheritance²⁶ (cf. 4. 11-12, 19; 58. 1-3 etc). The spouses are declared to be each others "garments" and even at night during the month of Ramaḍān, they are allowed to have normal family life (*rafath*-sexual relationship) (cf. 2. 187); the woman has been granted the same rights over man as man over his wife, except,

24. Cf. "Nikah", "Mahar" in SEI.

25. Fazlur Raḥmān, p. 38.

26. Cf. "Mirath" in SEI; also see Levy, pp. 144-49.

that man, being the guardian, protector and bread-winner, is a degree higher (cf. 4. 34).

Not with standing marriage declared sacred, unbreakable, divorce²⁷ is allowed under abnormal circumstances when family life becomes bitter, and instable to the extent of endangering life, instead of peace and love, as it is intended to be; however, *inter-alia*, not before exhausting mediation efforts from both sides (cf. 4.35, 127). Although the primary focus of the Qur'ān about marriage is on monogamy, polygyny was allowed to face a very difficult situation in the wake of the battle of Uḥud in 625 when the Muslims suffered heavy losses; it was primarily to protect the widows and the orphans (cf. 4. 2-30) but only on condition of equity and justice, between wives. This condition is extremely crucial since the Qur'ān says, "if you fear that you cannot maintain justice, then only one...." (4.3). However, the Qur'ān itself adds a principle, considering the psychological aspect of the "justice", that "you shall never be able to do justice among wives no matter how hard you try to do so" (4.128).

In a *milieu*, like the Islāmic, based on brotherhood and egalitarianism and characterised as socio-morally just, the institution of slavery, though long established, could not be allowed to continue untouched. However, in view of the deeprooted attachment of the then Arabian society to this institution plus not to upset the social harmony in a revolutionary manner, Islām did not abolish slavery outright, but at the same time did not leave it, as it had been, without creating some mechanism to put an end to it gradually. Thus the Qur'ān unmistakably commands (the Muslims) to treat the slaves, along with parents, near kindred, orphans, the needy, the neighbours,.....the fellow-travellers and the wayfarer, with kindness (cf.4.36). In the first place, it is extraordinary that Islam has instantly raised the status of slaves on the same level alongside of our parents and kins. That being the case, socially and morally that person (the slave) cannot be treated differently in a Muslim Community. For all practical purposes, this is the status (though not formal freedom) that a slave looks for. But the Qur'ān has not stopped at the door of "kind treatment" of

27. See "Talak" in SEI: cf. also 2. 228-32, 236-37, 241; 33, 49; 65. 1-7.

the slaves as an end in itself, instead, it went further and has made many provisions to free them which is declared as one of virtues and actually commanded the Muslims to allow them (slaves) to buy their freedom easily (cf. 24. 33).²⁸ Going one step farther, Fazlur Rahman says: "Liberating the neck" (*fakk raqaba* is not only praised as a virtue, along with feeding the poor and orphans, but is declared, to be that 'uphill path' which is absolutely essential for man to tread" (pp. 38-39; cf. 90. 10-16).

As we have considered so far, the Qur'ān has abundantly stressed not only on the humane treatment of the slaves, but also made practical provisions for making their freedom easy.²⁹ Further, the Qur'ān warned those Muslims who were not willing to give provisions to their slaves lest they become equal in status and respect (cf. 16. 71). As is well-known, the Prophet took considerable pain in insisting that the *Ummah* is based on the basic principles of equality and brotherhood: "believers are brothers", as the Qur'ān says, and Islām is well-known for levelling the society on "Faith", in place of the tribal structure, yet some Muslims (the Arabs) apparently could not desist from boasting their genealogy. To this, the Prophet is reported to have said: "There are no genealogies in Islām"... , while others forbid emulation and boasting over ancestry" (Levy, p. 56).

To say the least, despite these sayings and principles, the question of integration of the former slaves into the Muslim *milieu*, was quite thorny, even though eventually it was resolved. Thus commenting on this tricky subject, a writer says: "The doctrine that Islam bestowed equality on all who accepted it can have meant no more than that the Arabs of Muhammad's time need no longer pride themselves on their ancestry, but it is nevertheless a fact that as Muhammadanism (*sic*) grew older, the stigma attaching to the status of the slave gradually disappeared" (Levy, pp. 73-4). And in the long run, some slaves acquired as much status, wealth and political power, as any other Muslim could afford, which enabled them to establish Islamic rule in Central Asia (the Ghaznavid dynasty), in India (the Slave dynasty) and in Egypt (the Mamlūk

28. Cf. Watt, *Medina*, pp. 293-96.

29. See Levy, pp. 80-81; also cf. 4. 92; 5. 89; 58. 3.

dynasty).³⁰ This brings us to the point that in spite of initial difficulties, (former) slaves in Islām enjoyed equal rights in the society and worked for Islām along with other Muslims shoulder to shoulder. Not only that, former slaves married with other Muslims freely.³¹ This, of course, is consistent with the basic principles of Islām—brotherhood and equality.

Relating to life and its value in Islām, there is another issue of prime importance, namely, the dietary rules: Islāmic culture, being based on ethical monotheism, is somewhat puritanical in many respects, dietary matters are no exception. Since the Muslims are required to adhere to strict dietary rules, the Qur'ān has laid down rules as to what they eat. To be precise,

Forbidden unto you (for food) are carrion and blood and swine-flesh (in all forms and fat, e.g. lard), and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from a height, and that which hath been killed by (the goring of) horns, and the devoured of wild beasts, saving that which ye make lawful (by the death-stroke), and that which hath been immolated unto idols. And (forbidden is it) that ye swear by the divining arrows. This is an abomination.... Whose is forced by hunger (life-threatening), not by will, to sin: (for him) lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (5.3 tr. Pickthall; also cf. 5. 4-5; 6. 119-20, 122, 146).

This is one of the instances of Islāmic dynamism: The system is flexible enough to grant permission to consume anything to save a life—the most precious thing. Nonetheless, not certainly to ignore clear restrictions. The dietary rules send a special message: Consuming what is forbidden, unconditionally, is to commit sins, to begin with, but it also has a long term effect for nourishment (*ghidhā*) plays a vital role in shaping one's character and behaviour, as is well-known.

In this connection, there is another kind of restriction, an ethical restriction: In a *ḥadith*, recorded in the canonical compilations

30. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

31. See *ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

(*ṣiḥā-sitta*-the six authentic compilations) the Prophet is reported to have said: "Eat, drink and wear whatever you like, save the forbidden things, without feeling proud about it". Needless to say, Islām imposes moral code in every aspect of Muslim's life obviously to be consistent with its basic principle-ethical monotheism.

Constant to the same principles, as mentioned before, the Qur'ān has legislated essential precepts concerning another very important aspect of Muslims' life, viz., usury (*Ribā*),³² obviously, meant to guide them in their day-to-day life to sustain sociomoral and economic justice. The question of usurious practice of lending money is inextricably linked to the Islāmic concept of morals for both the Qur'ān and the Prophet, in his sayings (*ḥadith*), exhorted the Muslims to share (lend or give in charity) their wealth (*ni 'amat Allāh*-Allah's gift) with fellow-Muslims without taking any interest.

In Mecca (the birth place of Muḥammad, the Prophet in 570 A. D.), being a bustling commercial city in pre-Islāmic Arabia, the practice of lending money with interest, often at an exorbitant complex rate, was common. But in a Muslim *milieu*, described above, this kind of immoral practice could not be allowed to persist. Thus the Qur'ān categorically prohibited *ribā* (interest or rent) as a deadly sin while encouraged *bay* (transfer for equivalents) in the following words:

Those who expend (spend) their wealth night and day, secretly and in public, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.

Those who devour usury shall not rise again except as he rises, whom Satan of the touch prostrates; that is because they say, 'Trafficking is like usury'. God has permitted trafficking, and forbidden usury. Whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and gives over, he shall have his past gains, and his affair is committed to God; but whosoever reverts-those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.

32. Cf. "*Ribā*" in *SEI*; also see 2. 278-80; 3. 130; 30. 39; Watt, *Medina*, pp. 296-98.

God blots out usury, but freewill offerings He augments with interest. God loves not any guilty ingrate (2. 274-76) ³³

The seriousness of usury can be understood from the fact that, the Qur'ānic prohibition was also echoed by the Prophet in his farewell pilgrimage address in these words:- "All dues of interest shall stand cancelled and you will have only your capital back; Allāh has forbidden interest, and I cancel the dues of interest payable to my uncle 'Abbās bin 'Abdul Muṭṭalib".³⁴

Pursuant to the same objective of enforcing right conduct, the Qur'ān has prescribed morals in other matters such as contracts are to be fulfilled (cf. 5. 1), and debts are to be recorded in writing (cf. 2. 282-83). Adultery and fornication are to be severely punished (cf. 24.2),³⁵ the adulterers shall marry each other or an idolater (cf. 24.3). And a charge of adultery against honourable women must first be established by four witnesses, otherwise punish the accusers with eighty whips and never accept their testimony afterwards (cf. 24. 4). And theft is punished by cutting off hand of both male and female thieves (cf. 5.38).³⁶

Needless to say, these precepts, among many others, are intended to guide the Muslim Community, which is progressive yet must maintain fundamental human values and freedom and responsibility in order to be exemplary for others. Thus the Qur'ān says, "You are the best Community that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and you believe in Allāh" (3.110). Despite this community-based responsibility, the Muslims, however, are individually answerable directly to God for their deeds, and no one's sins taint anyone else (cf. 17.15; 35. 18; 39.7).

33. Tr. A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, London, 2nd. impr., 1963, p. 69; also, cf. Levy, pp. 256-57, 336-37.

34. Cf. Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb Sirāt-i-Rasūl Allāh*, p. 988 quoted by Ghulām Sarwar, *Islām: Belief and Teachings*, 4th ed., London, 1989, p. 119.

35. The adulterer and the adulteress, scourge ye each one of them (with) a hundred stripes. And let not pity for the twain withhold you from obedience to Allāh, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of believers witness their punishment (24. 2 tr. Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.

36. According to *The Sharī'ah*, repeat offender's limbs are to be cut off from the opposite sides e. g. first right hand, second time left leg, 3rd. time left hand and so on.

Apparently, to emphasise the importance of the Community, God reminds the Muslims in clear language how He brought them together and what they are required to do in the following words:

And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allāh, and do not scatter. And remember Allāh's favours unto you: How you were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that you became as brothers by His grace; and (how) you were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. Thus Allāh made clear His revelations unto you, that perhaps you may be guided.

And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful (3.103-4).³⁷

Further, the Qur'ān tells (apparently as a warning for the Muslims in reference to the previous peoples who disobeyed God and consequently suffered): "That is because Allāh never changes the grace He has bestowed on any people until they first change that which is in their hearts, and (that is) because Allāh is Hearer, Knower" (8.53, etc).

To close this part of the subject, it is fitting to quote another important verse of the Qur'ān which gives a comprehensive picture of what Islām requires of man (Muslim) and what he must do to comply with the commands of God to live a righteous life:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allāh and the Last Day and the angels and the Scriptures and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and pays the poor-tax. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.³⁸

37. Tr. Pickthall; also cf. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, M., *Muslim Institutions*, London, 4th impr. 1968, pp. 17ff.

38. Tr. *ibid.*; also see 2. 277.

Having discussed the religio-spiritual life of Islām, it is necessary to discuss, briefly, its secular life to get a complete picture of life and its values in this system. Having combined in himself both religious and secular functions, the Prophet set the example of the complete Islāmic life. His political career suddenly began as he signed the Charter of Madina. Thus a writer says, "On arriving in Medina, Muḥammad concluded with the local Arab tribes a pact which...., bound them to recognise his personal authority, which his position as the Prophet gradually transformed, in the eyes of the faithful, into that of God".³⁹ From that stepping-stone, he eventually assumed overall authority of the nascent Islāmic state without being incompatible with his prophetic life. Hence it is rightly said...., "and in the difficult task of guiding the little flock of the faithful, Muḥammad has assumed the role of a judge, a lawgiver, and a chief, functions for which it would appear that he had become fit, suddenly and miraculously, as soon as he had planted his foot in the Quba', at the gates of Medina".⁴⁰ Here, his successful family life must be added to the list of his functions.

The Qur'ān was his constitutional guide, and his words and deeds (*ḥadīth* or *sunnah*) complemented and supplemented what was either not complete in it or not covered at all by it; and only long after him, did the Muslim jurists establish The *Shari'ah* (The Law) by adding their own judgement (*Ijtihad* plus *Ijmā'* = Consensus) and Analogy. Thus The *Shari'ah*⁴¹ has become the "infallible" decree for running Islāmic states up to our times. However, the Qur'ān had already made the religio-secular obedience incumbent on the Muslims in these words:

O ye who believe! Obey Allāh, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have dispute concerning any matter, refer to Allāh and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers of Allāh and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end (4.39).

Further,

O ye who believe! Lift not up your voices above the voice of the Prophet, not shout when speaking to him as ye shout

39. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, p. 18.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 17

41. Cf. Levy for a complete analytical account of The *Shari'ah*, pp. 150-91.

one to another, lest your works be rendered vain while ye perceive not (49.2-3 tr. Pickthall).

On the strength of these maxims, subsequent Muslim rulers (Khalifas and Sultāns) developed even the theory: "The Sultān is a Shadow of God on Earth" echoing the ancient Semitic theory of "Divine Kingship", obviously, with the object of keeping a grip on their subjects to maintain peace and order eventually prosperity. (Ironically, Muslim governments have so far met with more *coup d'etat* and revolutions than any other governments in the world).

At any rate, for running the administration, Muslim rulers are always guided by their religious advisers (*muftis*) to deal with cases, not covered by the *Shari'ah*. The duties of Muslim rulers consist of, *inter alia*, religious, civil, defence, finance, judiciary, and public works.⁴² Adequate provisions have also been made by the Prophet himself to protect the non-Muslim subjects (*dhimmis*).⁴³

In summary, this is an account of life and its values in Islām considered, succinctly, from every angle as the Muslims themselves live everyday. In the course of examination, it has become abundantly clear that a Muslim, true to his/her tradition, must live an ideal life – complex and active in all respects – the exemplary life of the Prophet himself and other great Muslims, which, of course, excludes the life of the celibate and secluded mystics.

42. Cf. *ibid.* for a detailed discussion on Muslim administration, pp. 294-99.

43. "Dhimmi" and "Jizya" in *SEI*; also see Watt, pp. 246-66; Brockelman, C., (*History of the Islāmic Peoples*), tr. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann, New York, 1960, p. 28; Levy, pp. 66-67, 254-55, 309-11; for Hindus in India see Hedāyetullāh, M., *Kabir: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 19-22, notes 71, 73 and 78.